

The *Habitus* of Mackenzie King:

Canadian Artists, Cultural Capital and the Struggle for Power

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Abstract

This dissertation analyzes the struggle between William Lyon Mackenzie King, Canada's longest-serving Prime Minister (1922-1930, 1935-1948), and Canadian artists to define and determine the nature and distribution of arts and culture in Canada prior to the 1949 Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences. Using Pierre Bourdieu's theories of *habitus*, "fields" of knowledge and power, and religious, social and cultural capital, the dissertation analyzes the central paradox of why—despite his decades-long involvement in half-a-dozen artistic disciplines—King failed to implement cultural policies as Prime Minister that would have benefited Canadian artists and the arts and culture in Canada. The dissertation applies Pierre Bourdieu's model of social change in which "priests" with conservation strategies and charismatic "prophets" with subversion strategies compete among the "laity" for consumers of their respective symbolic goods to document how artists organized locally and nationally to accumulate social, cultural and political capital in their attempt to compel the federal government to implement their cultural objectives—state support for the arts.

The dissertation posits that Mackenzie King's inability to control his sexual impulses led him to espouse a conception of art whose primary function was to project Christian character and ideals. By establishing King's religious and sexual *habiti*, I am able to show why he felt compelled to project such an idealized characterization in works of art depicting himself, members of his family, and public figures whose service to the nation he felt should be emulated by Canadians. As Leader of the Liberal Party, Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and as Prime Minister, King was able to use his political and economic power in the political field over three decades (1919-1948) to define who was a real artist and who was not, what constituted artistic legitimacy and what was the artistic and economic value of Canadian cultural production. The dissertation suggests that the analysis of King's relationship with the arts and artists provides the key to unlocking the enigma of Mackenzie King and that in the struggle between artists and the Prime Minister over the nature and distribution of arts and culture in Canada, the artists won.

Dedication

**I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Dr. Maria Wagner.
Without her encouragement and support, this study could not have been written.**

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Introduction:

This dissertation seeks to analyze the struggle between William Lyon Mackenzie King and Canadian artists to define and determine the nature and distribution of arts and culture in Canada prior to the 1949 Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences.

Historians have ranked Mackenzie King, Canada's longest-serving Prime Minister (1922-1930, 1935-1948), among the greatest of Canadian Prime Ministers. But they have also characterized him as one of our most enigmatic statesmen and as a philistine who had no interest in arts and culture. This dissertation argues, to the contrary, that King was Canada's most cultured political leader and its first de facto Minister of Culture. The dissertation is a major revisionist reassessment of King that documents his extensive life-long exposure to and involvement with the arts and artists beginning in 1882 when his father introduced the seven-year old King to the Canadian painter Homer Watson.

Using Pierre Bourdieu's theories of *habitus*, "fields" of knowledge and power, and religious, social and cultural capital, the dissertation analyzes the central paradox of why—despite his decades-long involvement in half-a-dozen artistic disciplines—King failed to implement cultural policies as Prime Minister that would have benefited Canadian artists and the arts and culture in Canada. The dissertation in turn documents how artists organized locally and nationally to accumulate social, cultural and political capital in their attempt to compel the federal government to implement their cultural objectives—state support for the arts.

In my first chapter, "The Enigma of Mackenzie King," I describe how King's direct relationship with arts and culture was hidden by a political mask created by himself, the Liberal Party, by his biographers and, after his death, by his executors and how a second private inner mask of his own creation further obscured his relationship with artists and hid his spiritualist pursuits. I also describe my research methodology and discuss Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus* and "field"

which assert that social agents will act in a predictable manner depending on the nature of their *habitus* and forms of capital and the social construction of their field. My dissertation suggests that the analysis of King's relationship with the arts and artists provides the key to unlocking the enigma of Mackenzie King.

In my second chapter, "Mackenzie King's *Habitus* and Pierre Bourdieu's Concept of Social and Cultural Capital," I begin to deconstruct the outer and inner masks created by King and his biographers from the 1920s to the 1970s. The chapter analyzes the causal factors of aspects of King's personality and beliefs as they relate to culture and the arts. The chapter documents the formation of King's *habitus* through his family up-bringing, exposure to the arts, religious training, the beginnings of his magical thinking, his university education, strong identification with his grandfather, William Lyon Mackenzie, and King's own construction of his "character" through literature and the arts. The chapter also discusses Pierre Bourdieu's concept of social and cultural capital and shows their influential role in the formation of King's *habitus* and rise to political power.

In Chapter III, "The Conflict Between Mackenzie King's Religious and Sexual *Habitus*: Sins of the Flesh and the Projection of Character," I document how King's inability to control his sexual impulses led him to espouse a conception of art whose primary function was to project Christian character and ideals. King laboured to project such an idealized character for himself and thereby created yet another prominent mask he presented to the outside world. Establishing King's religious and sexual *habiti* enables me to show why King felt compelled to project such an idealized characterization in works of art depicting himself, members of his family, and public figures whose service to the nation he felt should be emulated by Canadians.

In my fourth and fifth chapters, I analyse the interplay between King's developing *habitus* and artists inside and outside Canada. Chapter IV, "Mackenzie King's Structured *Habitus* at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," focuses on his cultural activities during his university studies from 1891 to 1900, demonstrates that King's cultural *habitus* was largely established by the time he

entered the civil service in Ottawa in August of 1900, and suggests that his extensive, ongoing contact with the arts and artists provided him with the cultural capital that enabled him to exercise his cultural authority with assured confidence when he became Prime Minister the end of December 1921.

Chapter V, “The First Fruits of *Habitus*: The Harper Monument and *The Secret of Heroism*,” analyzes Mackenzie King’s pivotal role in the creation of the Bert Harper memorial on Parliament Hill in 1906 and his writing of a purported memoir of Harper, *The Secret of Heroism*. These two art projects not only provided him with his first experience in commissioning public art but also began endowing him with the cultural capital and cultural authority with which he so successfully resisted the demands of Canadian artists for government support when he became Prime Minister of Canada. The chapter also reveals that the ideals projected in *The Secret of Heroism* were not Bert Harper’s but King’s own and that the ostensible memoir serves as a manifesto of King’s religious, cultural and political *habiti* which illuminates his subsequent involvements and activities in arts and culture.

In Chapter VI, “The Field of Cultural Production and Mackenzie King’s Cultural Authority 1900-1930,” I analyze King’s actions in the cultural field in order to provide the context for his competition with Canadian artists and cultural nationalists over the accumulation of cultural capital and cultural authority. As Leader of the Liberal Party, Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and as Prime Minister, King was able to use his political and economic power in the political field over three decades (1919-1948) to define who was a real artist and who was not, what constituted artistic legitimacy and what was the artistic and economic value of Canadian cultural production. In this chapter, I discuss King’s implementation of cultural policies to maintain government control over radio broadcasting for political reasons and his failure to similarly control film distribution. I further document through archival evidence that in addition to serving as Prime Minister and Minister for External Affairs, Mackenzie King also assumed the functions and responsibilities of Canada’s first de facto minister of culture already in the early 1920s.

Chapter VII, “Prophets and Priests: Canadian Artists and the Struggle for Cultural Democracy,” presents Pierre Bourdieu’s model of social change in which “priests” with conservation strategies and charismatic “prophets” with subversion strategies compete among the “laity” for consumers of their respective symbolic goods. The chapter discusses the major cultural leaders who served as the subversive “prophets” in Bourdieu’s paradigm who initiated the agitation for state support of arts and culture. These included the theatre director Roy Mitchell, the arts critic Augustus Bridle, the Group of Seven painters Lawren Harris and Arthur Lismer, the writer and editor F.B. Housser, the painter, novelist and playwright Bertram Brooker, the literary nationalist and critic William Arthur Deacon, the experimental theatre director and playwright Herman Voaden, the cellist and community arts activist Marcus Adeney, the sculptor Elizabeth Wyn Wood, the Irish-Canadian playwright John Coulter, and the art critic, editor and professor of art Walter Abell. I discuss how these cultural leaders accumulated social and cultural capital through their writing and public lectures, by editing books, periodicals and collections of essays on the arts, by founding art societies and by beginning to make a political turn in the late 1930s marked by the founding of the Allied Arts Council in 1938 and the Kingston Conference of Canadian Artists in 1941.

In chapter VIII, “Mackenzie King in the Fields of National and International Cultural Production,” I examine whether King looked at all artists as “service providers” who supplied him with the cultural commodities he required, whether for his private use or for public works of art. The chapter documents King’s interactions with the French sculptor Pierre-Charles Lenoir, the English sculptor Frederick Lessore and the miniature portrait painter Louise “Louie” Burrell, the Italian sculptor Giuseppe Guastalla, the Canadian sculptors mile Brunet and Emanuel Hahn, and the Canadian-American sculptor Robert Tait McKenzie. I examine how he encountered, dominated and utilized these artists, what he asked of them and how he criticized their work, how he determined in his own mind who was a real artist and who was not, and how he established the financial and symbolic value of the works created by these artists.

Chapter IX, “The Prophets’ ‘March on Ottawa,’” documents how artists—the charismatic “prophets” with subversion strategies—founded the Federation of Canadian Artists and organized to generate cross-Canada cultural and political support for their aim of establishing cultural democracy in Canada. I analyze how they came to formulate their artists’ *Brief* and presented their demands for government support of arts and culture to the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment in June of 1944. I also document the “prophets” efforts to win over the Canadian public as consumers of their symbolic goods through their own writings and publications, in the daily press, and on CBC radio as well as the support their far-reaching proposals received from the public, the media and politicians.

In chapter X, “The ‘Priestly’ Mackenzie King,” I analyze how King fulfilled Bourdieu’s role of a “priest” with conservation strategies that defended orthodoxy as he obstructed the artists’ demands for cultural democracy. The chapter documents how King derived his cultural authority from his ongoing contact with artists such as the painters Stanley Gordon Moyer, Sir William Orpen, J.W.L. Forster and Josef Hilpert, the actor and producer Sir John Martin-Harvey, and the sculptor mile Brunet, the designer of the Canadian pavilion at the 1937 World’s Fair in Paris. The chapter also analyzes how King impeded the organizing by artists and cultural nationalists—the “prophets” with subversion strategies—and even members of his own administration lobbying for government support of arts and culture such as Deane Russell, Secretary of the government’s Interdepartmental Committee on Canadian Hand Arts and Crafts. The chapter discusses the founding of the Canadian Arts Council and King’s disregard for the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment—the main government agency the artists believed would endorse their demands for government assistance. I also analyze how King sought to control the National Gallery of Canada and its director, Eric Brown, and two members of the Gallery’s board of trustees: its chairman H.S. Southam and his greatest rival in the field of cultural politics, Vincent Massey.

In the conclusion to this dissertation, I document Mackenzie King’s interactions with the Austrian sculptor Felix de Weldon, the American sculptor Avard Fairbanks and the English

portrait painter Frank O. Salisbury during WW II and return to my central research question of why King failed to introduce cultural policies that would have fostered arts and culture in Canada. The chapter pays particular attention to the creation of King's 1945 portrait by Frank Salisbury that was installed in Parliament in 1947 to mark his twentieth anniversary as Prime Minister. I trace the increasing influence of King's religious *habitus* on his actions and beliefs and how he aimed to transform Ottawa into a City of God. The chapter suggests that King's apparent success in imposing his cultural authority and aesthetic on the federal government was short-lived and that the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences repositioned artists into a more central position in society. I propose that Vincent Massey can also be regarded as a "prophet" with subversion strategies combating the orthodoxy of the "priestly" Mackenzie King and that in the struggle between artists and Mackenzie King over the nature and distribution of arts and culture in Canada, the artists won.

Chapter I: The Enigma of Mackenzie King

My research analyzes the struggle between William Lyon Mackenzie King and Canadian artists as they sought to define and determine the nature and distribution of arts and culture in Canada prior to the Massey *Report*.¹ This investigation is illuminated by several key concepts by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) who perceived the role of sociology to be “the construction of a general theory of the economy of practices.”² He characterized social space as “this invisible reality that cannot be shown but which organizes agents’ practices and representations”³ and posited that social agents compete and struggle over economic, political, cultural, social and symbolic capital in specific arenas or “fields” of knowledge and power.⁴

Most historians have ranked Mackenzie King among Canada’s greatest Prime Ministers for his political leadership in winning Canada’s autonomy from the British Empire, keeping English and French Canada united during Canada’s enormous war effort in World War II and inaugurating the Canadian social welfare safety net.⁵ For J.L. Granatstein and Norman Hillmer, “Mackenzie

¹ Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences. *Report*. Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1951. The Commission, appointed by Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent on April 8, 1949—less than five months after Mackenzie King resigned as Prime Minister—was chaired by the diplomat and arts patron Vincent Massey.

² Pierre Bourdieu, “The Economy of Symbolic Goods” in his *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 93.

³ Pierre Bourdieu, “Social Space and Symbolic Space” in his *Practical Reason*, 10.

⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. Randal Johnson, ed. (Columbia University Press, 1993) and Pierre Bourdieu, “Field of Power, Literary Field and Habitus” in Simon During, ed. *The Cultural Studies Reader* (Third edition. London and New York: Routledge, 2007).

⁵ Norman Hillmer and J. L. Granatstein, “Historians rank the best and worst prime ministers,” *Maclean’s* 10:16 (April 21, 1997) and J.L. Granatstein and Norman Hillmer, *Prime Ministers: Ranking Canada’s Leaders* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1999). In the second *Maclean’s* survey of Canadian political leaders in 2011, King slipped into third place with an average score of 4.52 behind Wilfrid Laurier at 4.59 and John A. Macdonald at 4.54. See Norman Hillmer and Stephen Azzi, “Canada’s Best Prime Ministers,” *Maclean’s*, June 10, 2011.

King was Canada's greatest prime minister, party leader, and politician."⁶ Michael Bliss judged King "the greatest and most interesting of Canada's prime ministers."⁷ Ian McKay perceived King as "the country's most significant early twentieth-century liberal theorist and politician" and "so obviously one of the pivotal organic intellectuals of the twentieth-century liberal state."⁸ And in 2011 Allan Levine judged King "the greatest and most peculiar prime minister Canada has ever had and likely will ever have."⁹

In contrast with Mackenzie King's social prominence and political power, most Canadian artists with the exception of cultural leaders such as Lawren Harris, Bertram Brooker, Arthur Lismer and Herman Voaden were disempowered. In Canada, the entire movement of artists uniting to form societies and organizations—from the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts in Ottawa in 1880 to the Arts and Letters Club in 1908, the Group of Seven in 1920, the Canadian Group of Painters and the Dominion Drama Festival in 1933, the Allied Arts Council in Toronto in 1938, the Federation of Canadian Artists in 1941 and the Canadian Arts Council in 1945—can be seen as artists networking across disciplines within the field of cultural production to accumulate social, cultural and symbolic capital and thereby improve their marginal social and economic position within Canadian society.

⁶ Granatstein and Hillmer, 84.

⁷ See Michael Bliss, *Right Honourable Men: The Descent of Canadian Politics from Macdonald to Chrétien* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2004), 123. In his autobiography, *Writing History: A Professor's Life* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2011), Bliss recalled that "the more I reflected on Mackenzie King, prime minister off and on from 1921 to 1949, whom it had become fashionable to ridicule for his strange ideas about spiritualism, his sexual anxieties, and his total lack of charisma, the more I admired his intelligence, his understanding of the country, and his effectiveness...I judged him Canada's best." (321)

⁸ Ian McKay, "Canada as a Long Liberal Revolution: On Writing the History of Actually Existing Canadian Liberalisms, 1840s-1940s" in *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution*, eds. Jean-François Constant, Michel Ducharme (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 427,403.

⁹ Allan Levine, *King: William Lyon Mackenzie King—A Life Guided by the Hand of Destiny* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2011), 398. Levine entitled his Conclusion "Canada's Greatest Prime Minister."

In 1944, the year fifteen national arts organizations presented their joint “Brief Concerning the Cultural Aspects of Canadian Reconstruction” to the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment,¹⁰ Emil Ludwig characterized King as the great mediator whose “most outstanding talent is a power of reconciling contrary elements” and who, “wherever he arrived, pacified the passions of men and women in dissension.”¹¹ Why did King not fulfill such a mediating role in the field of arts and culture instead of actually actively opposing artists, cultural nationalists and even members of his own administration agitating for government support of arts and culture? Why has this question not even been asked during more than the six decades since King’s death and why have historians accepted the construction of a completely false public persona of King and his involvement with arts and culture?

Pierre Bourdieu proposed that the practices of social agents are generated by a *habitus*, which causes them to think, feel and act in a certain manner whether dealing with questions of politics, religion, spiritualism or the arts.¹² For half a century until his death in 1950, Mackenzie King was Canada’s most cultured politician and therefore would appear to have been a natural ally and supporter of Canadian artists. But despite his ongoing personal contacts with Canadian, European and American artists over half a century, King did not actively further the arts and culture in Canada. Within the political field of power, King was virtually unchallenged. He had no serious rivals within the Liberal Party, which he led for 29 years, and not only occupied the position of Canada’s longest-serving Prime Minister (1922 to 1930 and 1935 to 1948) but also that of the longest-serving head of government in the entire free world. King has been the subject of over eleven hundred books, articles, pamphlets, and dissertations, radio and television programs,

¹⁰ See Session 1944 House of Commons. Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment. *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence No. 10*. June 21, 1944. (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1944).

¹¹ Emil Ludwig, *Mackenzie King: A Portrait Sketch* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1944), 7.

¹² Pierre Bourdieu, “The Genesis of the Concepts of ‘Habitus’ and ‘Field’” *Sociocriticism 2:2* (1985) and “Structures, Habitus, Power. Basis for a Theory of Symbolic Power” in Nicholas B. Dirks, Geoff Eley, Sherry B. Ortner, eds. *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) and “Structures, Habitus and Practices” in *The Polity Reader in Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994) and “Habitus” in J. Hillier, E. Rooksby. *Habitus: A Sense of Place* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

works of fiction, poems and plays.¹³ Yet his life-long contacts and relationships with artists in Canada and internationally and his struggle for power in the Canadian field of culture and the arts have not been comprehensively investigated to date. This lack of research accounts for the mere six fleeting references to King, totaling less than two hundred words, in Jonathan F. Vance's 2009 *History of Canadian Culture*.¹⁴

Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus* and "field" assert that social agents will act in a predictable manner depending on the nature of their *habitus* and the social construction of the field. I am applying and testing Bourdieu's theories to the pre-1950s Canadian cultural field by analyzing the persistent opposition of Prime Minister Mackenzie King to Canadian artists struggling for an indigenous artistic self-expression and culture that would be stimulated and supported by government support. Examining the formation of King's *habitus* will explicate my central research question: why did King's half-century-long direct involvement with artists and the arts—both in Canada and internationally—fail to make him a champion of the arts?

Research Methodology

In his *Pierre Bourdieu*, Richard Jenkins describes the French sociologist's research strategy of "participant observation" in which "a genuine degree of participant comprehension can, ideally, be attained: in which the ethnographer can 'get inside the skin' of his or her research subjects, thinking as they think."¹⁵ I am able to achieve a great degree of such "participant observation" in order to "get inside the skin" of my research subject by drawing on Mackenzie King's diaries, correspondence and published and unpublished writings as well as the writings of political and cultural leaders he admired. The 50,000 pages of King's diaries from 1893 to 1950 accessible with a word search function on the Library and Archives Canada website have proven to be

¹³ George F. Henderson's *W.L. Mackenzie King: A Bibliography and Research Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998) alone lists 1,068 secondary sources.

¹⁴ Jonathan F. Vance, *History of Canadian Culture* (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2009).

particularly valuable “inside” source material. The diaries not only cover, on an almost daily basis, fifty-seven years of King’s life but also contain numerous pre-1893 references and thus illuminate both the formation and the functioning of King’s *habitus*.¹⁶ As James Davison Hunter points out, “It is important...to acknowledge the historical character of habitus. Rooted in neither nature nor revelation, habitus is, rather, a slow product of history. It is, as Pierre Bourdieu put it, the unconscious that has forgotten its historical origins.”¹⁷

King intended his diaries to serve as the factual basis for his autobiography, which he intended to write upon his retirement from public office. That his diary was not primarily a self-serving account of what King believed the Canadian public and “history” wanted him to report is suggested by the provision in his will that the diaries be destroyed by his executors after his death. These fortunately recognized the historical importance of his diaries and, over a fifty-year period, eventually made them accessible to the public and future historians. While some historians have charged that King’s diary accounts were always self-serving, his first “official” biographer, R. MacGregor Dawson, described King as “an excellent diarist in most respects—very reliable as to facts, though inclined when expressing opinions and analyzing motives (his own and others) to be swayed by prejudice and wishful thinking. For the most part, however, his factual material is exceptionally accurate.”¹⁸ J.W. Pickersgill, editor of the four-volume *The Mackenzie King Record*, asserted that “these diaries are an amazing combination of intimate, personal details with the most careful and painstakingly accurate reporting of events in which he

¹⁵ Richard Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu*. Revised edition. (London and New York: Routledge: 2002), 55.

¹⁶ See <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/politics-government/prime-ministers/william-lyon-mackenzie-king/Pages/diaries-william-lyon-mackenzie-king.aspx>

¹⁷ James Davison Hunter, *The Death of Character: Moral Education in an Age Without Good or Evil* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 222. Hunter is paraphrasing Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 78-79. Bourdieu refers here to “the ‘unconscious.’”

¹⁸ R. MacGregor Dawson, *William Lyon Mackenzie King: A Political Biography 1874-1923* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958), viii.

had a part.”¹⁹ The revisionist historian C.P. Stacey similarly referred to the diaries as “the most important single political document in twentieth-century Canadian history. It is also a social and a personal record of absorbing interest, chronicling in great detail, and with sometimes shattering frankness, the personal experience of one human being.”²⁰

My own reading of King’s innumerable diary references to the arts is that they accurately reflect his thinking and aesthetic. By combining my analysis of the “inside” information from my research subject’s diaries, correspondence and other primary source materials with the extensive secondary historical and cultural analysis of Mackenzie King²¹ and other Canadian cultural figures, I will be able to avoid the “official accounts” of King commissioned by his executors from which his involvement with the arts and spiritualism are largely excluded and in which his conflicted sexual practices that profoundly shaped his *habitus* are not mentioned. Through a detailed analysis of his diaries, I believe I will be able to establish what Bourdieu would call the formation of King’s *habitus*, the generative basis of his actions, practices, dispositions and beliefs.

In this chapter, I will discuss how King has long been perceived as an enigma and how his failure to support Canadian artists was paradoxical in view of his idolizing of British Prime Minister William Gladstone and the poet and cultural critic Matthew Arnold, both of whom supported the

¹⁹ J.W. Pickersgill and D.F. Forster. *The Mackenzie King Record. Volume 2, 1944-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 3.

²⁰ C.P. Stacey, *A Very Double Life: The Private World of Mackenzie King* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1976), 9-10. Bernard Saint-Aubin similarly affirms regarding King’s diaries that “Il avait une passion pour le détail et l’exactitude et il craignait toujours de faire la moindre erreur de fait. C’est un document d’une grande fiabilité...King a rendu un immense service à la postérité et à la histoire.” See Bernard Saint-Aubin, *King et son époque* (Montréal: Éditions La Presse, 1982), 167.

²¹ The great bulk of these primary and secondary materials are listed in George F. Henderson’s immensely useful 367-page long *W.L. Mackenzie King: A Bibliography and Research Guide*. A great amount of King’s correspondence and other documents are available on microfilm at Library and Archives Canada. Comparing King’s thinking in his diaries, correspondence and public speeches is essential. As he observed in his January 10, 1925 diary of what he felt to be a

creation of a national theatre accessible to all through government support. This question of the role of the state in fostering arts and culture is one through-line of this dissertation. As discussed in a subsequent chapter, artists struggled to make “culture” accessible to all Canadians rather than the possession of the small economic and social elite to which Mackenzie King belonged. They also redefined the usage of the term from its high art associations related only to works of art to a wider social-anthropological definition encompassing “the whole way of life of a community, and the ways in which this is inscribed into the places, artefacts and performances of that community.”²² The use of the term “culture” in this dissertation refers to this wider social-anthropological definition.

This chapter establishes the polarity between what Matthew Arnold, in his famous essay *Culture and Anarchy*, referred to as Hellenism and *Hebraism*. At the beginning of the 1900s, King thought he identified with Hellenism, the attainment of culture through the unfettered pursuit of beauty and intelligence. That Arnoldian ideal also inspired many Canadian cultural leaders.²³ King’s *habitus*, however, increasingly turned him towards *Hebraism*, the predisposition to let religious thought and practices predominate his thinking and actions. The chapter also describes how King’s direct relationship with arts and culture was hidden by a political mask created by himself, the Liberal Party, by his biographers and, after his death, by his executors. A second inner mask of his own creation further obscured his relationship with artists so that a number of historians have come to perceive King as a philistine. Sandra Gwyn, for example, reported as characteristic of King Yousuf Karsh’s anecdote that Duncan Campbell Scott, “no admirer of Mackenzie King, loved telling the story of how, after inviting him to read at a literary evening at Kingsmere, King first hushed the company to listen as his little dog Pat beat out a series of

self-serving address by Sir Campbell Stuart to the Canadian Club in Ottawa, “Public speaking is a great test of a man’s power to conceal himself, in speaking of the things which he has to do.”

²² David Chaney, *The Cultural Turn: Scene-Setting Essays on Contemporary Cultural History* (London: Routledge, 1994), 40.

²³ On Arnold’s influence on Canadian artists and critics, see Denis Salter, “Hector Willoughby Charlesworth and the Nationalization of Cultural Authority” in Anton Wagner, ed. *Establishing Our Boundaries: English-Canadian Theatre Criticism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

horrible discords on the piano, and then turned brightly to the elderly poet, saying, ‘Now, Scott, it’s your turn.’²⁴ King’s astute English friend Violet Markham also recalled that in artistic matters “it must be admitted he was a Philistine. He could appreciate good literature, but, as the phrase goes, he had no eyes.”²⁵ This dissertation examines how King’s various *habiti* distorted what he saw with the “eyes” he had.

As a result of his double masking, King also became identified in the public imagination as a philistine rather than as an arts connoisseur. Bruce Hutchison reported that King’s summer residence on his Kingsmere estate outside Ottawa was “heaped up with antique furniture, pictures of indifferent taste, and bric-a-brac to suit an old maid’s fancy.” From his own visits to Laurier House, King’s primary residence in Ottawa, the journalist described “items of sculpture, bas-relief, and painting which King had collected in Europe, most of it hideous. The dining room, darkly paneled, with dim oil portraits of Laurier, Gladstone, the Rebel [King’s grandfather, William Lyon Mackenzie], and King’s other predecessors staring down from the walls, was a candlelit cavern where a guest was likely to feel spirits at his elbow.” By 1977 J.L. Granatstein, in his *Mackenzie King: His Life and World*, suggested that “King never displayed any marked interest in things artistic.” And in 2003 Douglas Ord, in *The National Gallery of Canada: Ideas, Art, Architecture*, asserted that the former Prime Minister did not have “much interest at all in art. Whatever his wider political skills, King bore the privately circulated nickname of ‘Babbitt Rex,’ after the small-town philistine in Sinclair Lewis’s novel *Babbitt*.” What probably sticks most in our contemporary theatrical imaginations is Allan Stratton’s portrait of Mackenzie King as the farcical table-rapping spiritualist Momma’s boy in his 1981 comedy *Rexy!* and Michael

²⁴ Sandra Gwyn, *The Private Capital: Ambition and Love in the Age of Macdonald and Laurier* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1984), 469. King had a very special relationship with his three Irish terriers, all named Pat (1924-41, 1936-47, 1948-50). Perhaps as only a dog owner and dog lover can appreciate, they were not only his loving companion and obedient/disobedient child but also at times became in his estimation a messenger from God, his little “Angel Dog” and his “hound of heaven.” See, for example, Diary July 7, 1939. Though he wrote about Pat on an almost daily basis, I have not found any references in King’s diaries to his dog playing on the piano.

²⁵ Violet Markham, *Friendship’s Harvest* (London: Max Reinhardt, 1956), 163.

Hollingsworth's even more exaggerated cartoonish caricature in his 1993 Video Cabaret production of *The Life & Times of Mackenzie King*, revived in 1995 and 2011.²⁶

Revisionist historians have gradually deconstructed King's outer and inner masks. But even his most recent biographer, Allan Levine, in his *King: William Lyon Mackenzie King—A Life Guided by the Hand of Destiny*, failed to perceive that the analysis of King's relationship with the arts and artists provides the key to unlocking the enigma of Mackenzie King.

The Enigmatic Mackenzie King

According to the writer and journalist Bruce Hutchison, the most stimulating and discerning analyst of Canada's tenth prime minister, there were seven Mackenzie Kings Canadians never knew: the rejected suitor, the peerless executive, the self-deceiver, the blind isolationist, the bewildered appeaser, the ruthless schemer and the dying enigma.²⁷ To this long list of unknowns must be added still another—the failed Medici—and its baffling paradox: King was Canada's most cultured prime minister but, unlike President Roosevelt in the United States and Prime Minister Churchill in the United Kingdom, he refused to use government resources to support artists and bring their works to his nation's public.

²⁶ See Bruce Hutchison, *The Incredible Canadian: A Candid Portrait of Mackenzie King: His Works, His Times, and His Nation* (Toronto: Longmans, 1952), 79, 81; J.L. Granatstein, *Mackenzie King: His Life and World* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1977), 115; Douglas Ord, *The National Gallery of Canada: Ideas, Art, Architecture* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 103; Allan Stratton, *Rexy!* (Toronto: Playwrights Co-op, 1981) and Michael Hollingsworth, *The Life and Times of Mackenzie King* in his *The History of the Village of the Small Huts* (Winnipeg: Blizzard Publishing, 1994). Excerpts from the 1993 production of *The Life & Times of Mackenzie King* can be seen on the Video Cabaret website <http://www.videocab.com> Hollingsworth has described his writing and production style as “the goons of history in their very own Goon Show.” Cited in J. Kelly Nestruck's review, “Who knew Ottawa could be so funny?” *Globe and Mail*, November 15, 2011.

²⁷ Bruce Hutchison, “Seven Mackenzie Kings Canadians Never Knew,” *Maclean's Magazine* 77:19 (October 3, 1964): 12. The article is a pre-publication excerpt from his *Mr. Prime Minister, 1867-1964* (Don Mills, Ontario: Longmans, 1964).

For if any single individual could have laid the foundation for a cultural revolution and cultural democracy in Canada before the Massey Commission, that person was Mackenzie King. He was intimately familiar with all aspects of the arts and was a strong advocate of greater social and industrial democracy. Unknown to Canadians before his death in 1950, King was also the country's foremost spiritualist, thus sharing a belief in a greater metaphysical and spiritual reality that also inspired theatre directors, painters, writers, playwrights, editors and literary critics such as Roy Mitchell, Lawren Harris, Arthur Lismer, F.B. Housser, Bertram Brooker, Herman Voaden and William Arthur Deacon. Why, then, like his idols British Prime Minister William Gladstone and the poet and culture critic Matthew Arnold, did Mackenzie King not become a champion for the arts in Canada?

Bram Stoker, Henry Irving's business manager at the Lyceum Theatre, recorded that Gladstone visited the Lyceum from 1881 to 1895 and that he invited Irving to Downing Street in 1882. "The public seemed to take a delight in seeing him at the theatre, and he appeared to take a delight in coming," Stoker recalled in his *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving*. The first time Gladstone was recognized by the audience in the Lyceum in 1881, there "came a quick and sudden roar that seemed to shake the building. We could hear the 'Bravo Gladstone!' coming through the detonation of hand-claps."²⁸ Anselm Heinrich argues that "Gladstone's vigorous support of the theatre—even at a time when it was not popular to do so—paved the way not only for an increasing recognition of the performing arts but also for the founding of a national theatre...Gladstone was remembered for his support of a morally uplifting, educational, and national theatre that had a neatly defined function in society."²⁹

Mackenzie King's early awareness of Gladstone is indicated by his notation of Gladstone's resignation as Prime Minister in his diary on March 2, 1894, when he was still an undergraduate

²⁸ Bram Stoker, *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving* (London: William Heinemann, 1906), Vol. 2, 27, 28 and Vol. 1, 167-168.

²⁹ Anselm Heinrich, "William Gladstone and the Theatre," *Theatre Survey* 52:1 (May 2011): 85, 90. See also Jeffrey Richards, *Sir Henry Irving: A Victorian Actor and His World* (London; New York: Hambledon and London, 2005), 77-82.

student at the University of Toronto. He read George William Erskine Russell's biography *The Right Honourable William Ewart Gladstone* while crossing the Atlantic in July 1900 after he terminated his Harvard travelling scholarship in Europe to accept the position of editor of the *Labour Gazette* in Ottawa offered him by the postmaster general William Mulock.³⁰ After reading the chapter on Gladstone in Newell Dwight Hillis' *Great Books as Life Teachers: Studies of Character, Real and Ideal* in August of 1900, King "sprang from my chair with the words 'Oh God I want to be like that man,' and my whole nature thirsted for the opportunity to do the work even as he did his, to be strong in my ideals, true to the most real purposes & firm in the struggle for the right & true."³¹

King began reading John Morley's three-volume *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*³² in September of 1904 and noted in his diary that "the generous nature of Gladstone is splendidly portrayed as is his conception of duty & obedience to the Divine Will. I am quite sure that peace is to be found in such a way of life as in no other. It is the true way because in harmony with the eternal realities and the purpose of God in the Universe."³³ Already in 1901, he had consoled his

³⁰ Diary July 20, 1900. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this was one of the turning points in King's life.

³¹ Diary August 12, 1900. See Newell Dwight Hillis, "The Christian Scholar in Politics—A Study of the Life of William Ewart Gladstone," in his *Great Books as Life Teachers: Studies of Character, Real and Ideal* (Chicago, New York, Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1899), 307-331. King's Library at Laurier House also contains copies of James Ewing Ritchie's 1898 *The Real Gladstone: An Anecdotal Biography*, call number FE.50.1230.1, and George Barnett Smith's *Thoughts from the Writings and Speeches of W.E. Gladstone* (London: 1894), FE.50.1221.1. King introduced Smith as the speaker at the Canadian Club of Ottawa November 12, 1904 in the presence of Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier and Goldwin Smith. In his diary of October 22, 1932, King refers to reading "aloud some of Goldwin Smith's 'My Memory of Gladstone' [London: Unwin, 1904], a gift from dear father to me on a birthday 28 years or more ago."

³² John Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1903).

³³ Diary September 16, 1904. Margaret Elizabeth Bedore, in her "The Reading of Mackenzie King" (PhD diss., Queen's University, 2008), affirms that "John Morley's *The Life of Gladstone* holds a special place in King's collection and his diary suggests that it provided a key source of inspiration to the young King. Gladstone was the model that King followed his entire life." (19) See Chapter Three, "King's Reading on William Ewart Gladstone and Other British Liberals," 63-116.

mother Isabel King after the death of her sister Lybbie by assuring her that he “believed, that if opportunity came in the future, I might become the Premier of this country.”³⁴ In 1905 he commissioned J.W.L. Forster to paint a portrait of his mother sitting in a chair before a fire looking down on an open book, the fingers of her right hand marking a particular passage on the page. It was only after election returns in 1921 indicated that King’s Liberals had defeated the Conservatives and that he would be forming the next government that King revealed the secret of the iconic painting in his study to his closest friends, Joan and Godfroy Patteson: the open book his mother was contemplating in the 1905 painting was Morley’s *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, at the chapter entitled “The Prime Minister.”³⁵



J.W.L. Forster’s 1905 portrait of Isabel King.

³⁴ Diary September 2, 1901.

³⁵ Diary December 6, 1921. Forster provides a description of painting the 1905 Isabel King portrait at Kingsmere in Newton MacTavish, *Ars Longa* (Toronto: Ontario Publishing, 1938), 162-65. After he became Prime Minister, King publicly associated his country retreat Kingsmere with Hawarden, Gladstone’s Welsh country estate. See Edwinna von Baeyer, *Garden of Dreams: Kingsmere and Mackenzie King* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1990), 105-106. In 1935 King received a letter from Lady Gladstone “enclosing a photograph of Lord Gladstone and tributes paid at the time of his death and telling me that the portrait of Gladstone which Lord Gladstone [his son] was having painted for me is being finished by Sir Charles Thompson.” Diary June 24, 1935.

He also recalled Gladstone and Forster's painting upon being returned to office as Prime Minister in the 1935 election when he thought "of days at Woodside—of Gladstone then Prime Minister—and of a vision as a lad there—of being ready to resign for principle rather than hold on to office & of being called to form different ministries. It was an 'amazing last touch.'"³⁶

It is unclear what King knew of Gladstone's involvement with the arts though an entry in his diary in March of 1908, eight months before he was first elected to Parliament, records that "Gladstone it was I think that spent £60,000 for an original Raphael which is being exhibited."³⁷ The two political leaders nevertheless shared many similar cultural and religious interests and beliefs. Like Gladstone who had befriended Charles Kean and Henry Irving, King had a decades-long friendship with Sir John and Lady Martin-Harvey, Irene Rooke and the Canadian-born Margaret Anglin whom he had known even before first seeing her on stage as Roxane in Richard Mansfield's *Cyrano de Bergerac* at the Hollis Theatre in Boston in 1899.

And like Gladstone, King revered Shakespeare, writing after seeing Henry Irving as Shylock in Ottawa in 1904 and recalling appearing as an extra with Irving and Ellen Terry throughout the whole of Act IV in *The Merchant of Venice* at the Grand Opera House in Toronto February 21, 1894, "Shakespeare's language is so wonderful, perfect music throughout."³⁸ When he invited Donald Wolfitt to tea before seeing him in *King Lear* at the Capitol Theatre in Ottawa in 1948, he read him parts of his father's essay, "Our English Shakspeare," published in the *Canadian Monthly* in July 1876.³⁹ And as he read Macready's *Reminiscences* while planning his memoirs in 1949, he not only concluded that "dear father most truly was in the Macready tradition—in his love for classical art & ready sacrifice for his children" but was himself "deeply moved" by Macready's "reverent religious nature, in one constantly before the public, his very high purpose

³⁶ Diary October 14, 1935.

³⁷ Diary March 3, 1908.

³⁸ Diary January 29, 1904.

³⁹ Diary January 5, 1948.

in his art. I have tried to do something of the same kind in seeking to uphold high standards in public life.”⁴⁰

Gladstone’s convictions about state support for the arts had been influenced by reading Matthew Arnold’s 1882 *Irish Essays* in which, in “The French Play in London,” Arnold advocated government subsidies for a national theatre and civic theatres.⁴¹ Arnold had first published his essay in the August 1879 *Nineteenth Century* after attending performances by the Comédie Française of classic and contemporary French plays, with Sarah Bernhardt as the star performer, at the Gaiety Theatre in London. He contended that the English middle class was returning to the theatre because the human spirit needed something in addition to religion as a guide for conduct. “It has the need also for expansion, for intellect and knowledge, for beauty, for social life and manners.” Arnold found the English theatre “without organization, or purpose, or dignity, and no modern English drama at all except a fantastical one” and proposed that the state-subsidized Comédie Française serve as a model for the English stage. He could hear the Parisian actors advising,

believe that the state, the nation in its collective and corporate character, does well to concern itself about an influence so important to national life and manners as the theatre. Form a company out of the materials ready to your hand in your many good actors or actors of promise. Give them a theatre at the West End. Let them have a grant from your Science and Art Department... Let your two or three chief provincial towns institute, with municipal subsidy and co-operation, theatres such as you institute in the metropolis with State subsidy and co-operation. So you will restore the English theatre. And then a modern drama of your own will also, probably, spring up amongst you, and you will not have to come to us for pieces like *Pink Dominoes*.⁴²

Even after the departure of the Comédie Française, Arnold thought when he passed the Gaiety Theatre that he could still see “a fugitive vision of delicate features under a shower of hair and a

⁴⁰ Diary February 27, 1949. King’s library at Laurier House contains the 1875 edition of Frederick Pollock’s *Macready’s Reminiscences and Selections from His Diaries and Letters*, FE.50.422.1.

⁴¹ Anselm Heinrich, 84.

⁴² Matthew Arnold, “The French Play in London,” in his *Irish Essays And Others* (London: Smith, Elder, 1882), 235, 241, 242.

cloud of lace, and hear the voice of Mdlle. Sarah Bernhardt saying in its most caressing tones to the Londoners: ‘The theatre is irresistible; *organise the theatre!*’⁴³

As with Gladstone, there is no direct evidence that Mackenzie King was aware of Arnold’s views on the desirability of state support for a national theatre. The literary and cultural link between King and Arnold is much stronger than with Gladstone, however. He had bought a copy of Arnold’s *Sweetness and Light* as a gift in 1898 while a student at Harvard⁴⁴ and began reading his poetry and essays extensively two years later in Ottawa. Arnold became King’s favourite poet whose works he recited for nearly half-a-century. After first reading “Switzerland,” “A Summer Night,” “Rugby Chapel” and “Morality” from the *Selected Poems of Matthew Arnold* he enthused in 1901, “the night was a revelation to me of a new soul; a supremely refined intellectual & spiritual beauty characterized its thought & expression. I became an admirer of Matthew Arnold’s. Have loved him as a noble soul to be read, studied & enjoyed, a real inspiration, bringing the greatest truths to us in the way we need them most.”⁴⁵ And after reading “Tristram and Iseult” the following day, he “thought it more beautiful than Tennyson’s account...I never knew Matthew Arnold before; I can never cease to love & reverence him now.”⁴⁶

King read Arnold’s essays “Culture and Anarchy” and “Literature and Dogma”⁴⁷ at the same time he was discovering his poetry. After reading “Culture and Anarchy,” he found that “the keen

⁴³ Ibid., 243.

⁴⁴ Diary December 24, 1898.

⁴⁵ Diary September 7, 1901. King’s library at Laurier House contains the 1878, 1900 and 1910 editions of *Selected Poems of Matthew Arnold*, call numbers FE.50.30.2, FE.50.30.4 and FE.50.30.3.

⁴⁶ Diary September 8, 1901.

⁴⁷ After reading the preface to “Literature and Dogma” King recorded in his diary, “I like exceedingly his view of culture ‘the acquainting oneself with the history of the human spirit, the best that has been thought in the world.’ I agree with him that the right interpretation of the Bible requires culture, that it should not be taken as dogma but as revealing truth.” Diary September 29, 1901. After delving further into the essay he concluded, “I must say Arnold’s method of criticism appeals strongly to me & strikes me as eminently fair. It is too what I really believe in accord with my reason. He brings out in Christianity just what is its essentials, and in the Gospel’s account of Christ & the bible’s story throughout all that is needful to its purpose—as I

critical analysis of English life & character to be found in some of the chapters is most instructive & enjoyable.”⁴⁸ In his 1869 *Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism*, Arnold posited that England’s Puritan religious heritage and Liberal political ideology of personal liberty and self-serving materialism in an industrial society—what Arnold referred to as “our middle-class...maxims of every man for himself in business, every man for himself in religion”—resulted in social fragmentation, intellectual stagnation and an absence of “a sound centre of authority” that could unify and stimulate the nation. “We are in danger of drifting towards anarchy,” Arnold warned. “We have not the notion, so familiar on the Continent and to antiquity, of *the State*—the nation, in its collective and corporate character, entrusted with stringent powers for the general advantage, and controlling individual wills in the name of an interest wider than that of individuals.”⁴⁹

Hellenism or Hebraism

Arnold was certain that the threat of social and spiritual anarchy was caused primarily by what he called *Hebraism*—the predisposition to let religious thought and practices strictly dominate one’s thinking and actions—and that this threat could only be overcome by the pursuit and attainment of culture. He defined culture as “a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world, and, through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits, which we now follow staunchly but mechanically.”⁵⁰ “The very principle of the authority which we are seeking as a defence against anarchy,” Arnold proposed, “is right reason, ideas, light.”⁵¹

am inclined to view it. His breadth of view & evident culture is most delightful & most enviable.” Diary October 24, 1901.

⁴⁸ Diary October 6, 1901.

⁴⁹ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. Jane Garnett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 56. King’s library at Laurier House contains the 1901 and 1908 editions of *Culture and Anarchy And Friendship’s Garland*, FE.50.711.3 and FE.50.711.4.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

This pursuit of perfection through beauty and intelligence—what Arnold called “sweetness and light”—was not the privilege of an elite few but extended to all members and classes of society. “Culture, which is the study of perfection, leads us...to conceive of true human perfection as a *harmonious* perfection, developing all sides of our humanity; and as a *general* perfection, developing all parts of our society...the sweetness and light of the few must be imperfect until the raw and unkindled masses of humanity are touched with sweetness and light...individual perfection is impossible so long as the rest of mankind are not perfected along with us.”⁵²

Arnold juxtaposed *Hebraism* with the concept of Hellenism, the pursuit of the classic Greek ideal of beauty and intelligence, harmony and complete human perfection. The uppermost idea with Hellenism, Arnold suggested, was “to get rid of one’s ignorance, to see things as they are, and by seeing them as they are to see them in their beauty;” to achieve “an unclouded clearness of mind, an unimpeded play of thought,” “spontaneity of consciousness” and “the letting a free play of thought live and flow around all our activity.” “If we look at the world outside us we find a disquieting absence of sure authority,” Arnold argued. “We discover that only in right reason can we get a source of sure authority, and culture brings us towards right reason.”⁵³

King found “Hebraism and Hellenism,” chapter IV of *Culture and Anarchy*, “a splendid chapter, one of the finest & most thoughtful essays I have ever read, deep in its view of the currents of our life & right too I think. It is the Hebraising spirit which is characteristic of the independent Saxon & pervades Christian thought. It makes for progress but the Hellenising is no less essential for true progress; it is this spirit which seizes a man, when he wishes, to devote his life to the pursuit of truth; it is the other which would make a reformer of him.” He concluded that “Hellenism sits as a white light above the world shedding its beauty & guidance on men. We need more of it. I

⁵² Ibid., 9, 52, 141.

⁵³ Ibid., 97, 107, 116-117, 119.

need more of it, have all my life; need it above all else as a guide to my feet & a light unto my path.”⁵⁴

King was keenly aware of the conflict within himself over whether to pursue the path towards *Hebraism* or Hellenism. During his university studies, he had vacillated over whether to enter academia, become a minister or enter politics. He had turned down the possibility of a professorship from Harvard to accept the editorship of the *Labour Gazette* and was appointed Deputy Minister of Labour in September of 1900. Reading Arnold a year later, he still questioned his decision to pursue the path of the reformer rather than the Hellenising pursuit of beauty and unfettered intellectual inquiry. “When under the influence of such writing I am caused to ask myself, is it not better to return to the scholarly life; its rewards are more soul satisfying & soul ennobling is the only reality. I am conscious of my falling away from light & truth. The old thought of the church returns but there remains much between; I may some day enter it as a profession. I will certainly enter some intellectual pursuit in the cause of truth. At present such course would be unwise. I have real work here & now.”⁵⁵

Culture and the State in Canada

In *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold perceived the state as the expression of “our collective best self, our national right reason...culture suggests the idea of *the State*. We find no basis for a firm State-power in our ordinary selves; culture suggests one to us in our *best self*.”⁵⁶ In Canada, poets also agitated for state support of artists and culture. Their very inability—even for acclaimed published poets—to make a living from their art made the question of state support for culture part of public discourse.

The federal government had begun assisting a handful of Canadian writers soon after Confederation by giving them employment in the civil service. Charles Sangster (1822-1893)

⁵⁴ Diary October 13, 1901.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

published his acclaimed *The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay, and Other Poems* at his own expense in 1856 and *Hesperus, and Other Poems and Lyrics* in 1860. He was nominated as a clerk in the Post Office Department in 1868 by postmaster general Alexander Campbell and worked there, with little time for writing, for eighteen years. Archibald Lampman (1861-1899) began working as a clerk in the Post Office Department in 1883 and, with financial support from his wife, published *Among the Millet and Other Poems* in 1888 and *Lyrics of Earth* in 1895. He continued working in the Post Office Department until his death, a consequence of rheumatic fever when he was a child, at the age of thirty-seven. Charles Mair (1838-1927) published *Dreamland and Other Poems* in 1868, when he received his first brief government appointment from the Minister of Public Works, William McDougall, and *Tecumseh: A Drama* in 1886. Interior Minister Clifford Sifton appointed Mair as an immigration agent in 1898, a position he held until the age of eighty-three in 1921. John George Bourinot (1836-1902) was appointed as a second clerk assistant of the House of Commons in 1873, became the clerk of the Commons in 1880 and held that position until his death. His extensive writings on history and political science included *Our Intellectual Strength and Weakness: A Short Historical and Critical Review of Literature, Art and Education in Canada* in 1893. Duncan Campbell Scott (1862-1947) joined the Department of Indian Affairs in 1879 and was its deputy superintendant from 1913 to 1932. He wrote virtually all of his poetry, short stories and plays during this period while also serving as president of the Ottawa Drama League, with its well-equipped theatre, the Ottawa Little Theatre, from 1923 to 1936.⁵⁷

The poet, novelist and playwright William Wilfred Campbell (1860-1918), the most prominent of the more than two dozen artists with whom Mackenzie King came to closely interact, was a central figure in the debate about government responsibility for artists and culture. Campbell won

⁵⁶ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 91, 150, 72, 71.

⁵⁷ Frank M. Tierney, "Sangster, Charles," Robert L. McDougall, "Lampman, Archibald," David Latham, "Mair, Charles" and Margaret A. Banks, "Bourinot, Sir John George" in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, accessed on-line June 21, 2013. R.L. McDougall, "Scott, Duncan Campbell" in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, accessed on-line June 21, 2013. Sandra Gwyn, "'An Oxygenic Essence'" in her *The Private Capital*, 430-446. Iris Winston, *Staging a Legend: A History of Ottawa Little Theatre* (Carp, ON: Creative Bound, 1997), 21.

considerable symbolic capital in the form of a literary reputation in North America and England but left his family impoverished when he died in Ottawa in 1918. Although he died before the rise of cultural nationalism in the 1920s, Campbell is important in Canadian cultural history for being instrumental in having the question of whether the state had a responsibility to give financial support to Canadian artists being debated in Parliament already in the early 1890s. Campbell became King's closest artist friend, deepening the puzzle why he refused to assist other artists when he was Prime Minister in the 1920s, 30s and 40s.

Wilfred Campbell accumulated cultural capital when he succeeded in having his poetry accepted for publication in the *Atlantic Monthly* and other American periodicals in 1885. He published his first book of poetry, *Snowflakes and Sunbeams*, in 1888. His second, *Lake Lyrics and Other Poems*, published the following year, established his literary reputation as "laureate of the lakes." *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in New York paid him forty dollars for his poem "The Mother" in 1890, reprinted in the *Globe* and the *Week* in Toronto and in other newspapers. Yet as Carl F. Klinck noted, "Campbell had earned a total of more than three hundred and fifty dollars by his periodical poetry before the end of 1893, but not a cent of it appears to have been Canadian money. The chief remuneration which came to him from sources at home consisted of about fifty dollars for short stories."⁵⁸

In 1891, two Members of Parliament, Richard Chapman Weldon, Dean of the Dalhousie University Law School and the Conservative MP for Albert, New Brunswick, and Alexander McNeill, Liberal-Conservative MP for Bruce North, Ontario, sponsored Campbell for a civil service position. "They hoped to set a precedent for the support of poets and thinkers 'valuable especially,' McNeill said, 'to a young country like ours, where we are apt, from the very nature of our conditions, to regard everything from too much of a utilitarian point of view.'" Wilfrid Laurier, Leader of the Liberal Opposition to Prime Minister John Abbott's Conservatives, commended McNeill's suggestion. "Mr. Campbell," Laurier said, "is one of the real living poets

in the English language. If the Government could, as I am sure they might do, give him a position which would put him beyond the wants of life, which would give him the opportunity of cultivating his poetic talents and genius, it would be money well applied, and on both sides of the House, and in all parts of the country, the Government would win hearty approval.”

Yet John Abbott, Canada’s third Prime Minister who was also leader of the Conservative Party in the Senate, did not want to establish a precedent for government support of artists. According to the May 18, 1892 *Debates of the Senate*, Abbott asserted that “We cannot inaugurate a system of pensioning gentlemen who are supposed to possess some particular literary ability...But suppose he were Tennyson, the poet laureate himself, I do not see that we have as yet adopted any rule or principle that would justify us in giving him a pension, for it amounts to that.” Campbell continued working as a clerk in the Departments of the Secretary of State, Militia and Defence, the Privy Council, and in the Dominion Archives, responsible to the Department of Agriculture, from 1908 until his death ten years later at the age of fifty-seven.⁵⁹ At his funeral, Rev. W.T. Herridge declared that “the passing of our greatest singer is a national calamity.”⁶⁰

While the federal government employed three of English-Canada’s most prominent poets in the early 1890s, this did not constitute a reflection of the esteem in which the arts were held by politicians or the public. Campbell’s case illustrates, in fact, the low social and economic status of the Canadian artist and the struggle he and she faced in the Canadian field of cultural production. “Campbell is deplorably poor,” Archibald Lampman wrote of his poet neighbour in February of 1892. “In comparison with him I am a small Croesus. Some members of the Government lured him here last summer under promise of doing something for him, and all that it has amounted to so far is a temporary clerkship at \$1.50 a day.” In order to assist Campbell, Lampman and Duncan Campbell Scott persuaded the *Toronto Globe* to give the three poets space

⁵⁸ Carl Frederick Klinck, *Wilfred Campbell: A Study in Late Provincial Victorianism* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1942), 84. Laurel Boone, “Campbell, William Wilfred” in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, accessed on-line June 21, 2013.

⁵⁹ Klinck, 77, 78, 268.

for a weekly cultural column entitled “At the Mermaid Inn,” for which each contributor received three dollars a week. Their column, which ran from February 6, 1892 until July 1, 1893, frequently appraised the state of Canadian culture and the social status of artists.⁶¹

Their assessments for the *Globe*'s 40,000 readers were remarkably frank and damning. “How utterly destitute of all light and charm are the intellectual conditions of our people and the institutions of our public life! How barren! How barbarous!” Lampman wrote in one of his first articles. “It is true that this is a new and struggling country, but one would think that the simplest impulse of patriotism, if it existed at all in our governing bodies, would suffice to provoke some attempt at remedy.” Lampman had attended “what is called the National Art Gallery at Ottawa” with its “walls of a poor and average-looking room” and had not been impressed by the European and Canadian paintings exhibited. “If our public men had any interest in the beauty, the honour, the real well-being of this country they could as well as not provide that a hundred thousand dollars or double that amount be annually set apart by the government for the purpose of buying good pictures.” “One would think that no sacrifice would be deemed too great,” he suggested, “which might tend to relieve in any respect the arid poverty of our social and intellectual life.”⁶²

Duncan Campbell Scott agreed that “our country furnishes for the literary man absolutely no chance of living by his art.” For those wishing to write plays, there was no indigenous professional theatre in which to develop their craft. After comparing the responses of theatre audiences to productions in England and New York, Scott commented that “Our own audiences would have an equal appreciation if they had a chance to exercise their native taste. But unfortunately the ‘stage’ is non-existent in Canada, and it will be some decades yet before we add that final flower of culture to our national civilization.”⁶³

⁶⁰ Laurel Boone, ed. *William Wilfred Campbell: Selected Poetry and Essays* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1987), 2.

⁶¹ Lampman to E.W. Thomson, February 16, 1892. Cited by Barrie Davies, “Introduction” to *At the Mermaid Inn: Wilfred Campbell, Archibald Lampman, Duncan Campbell Scott in The Globe 1892-93* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), vii-viii.

⁶² February 27, 1892. *At the Mermaid Inn*, 24, 25.

⁶³ September 24 and May 7, 1892. *At the Mermaid Inn*, 154, 71.

Perhaps because Wilfred Campbell was the most impecunious of the three writers, he wrote the most frequently about the poor economic conditions of artists and how they were forced to subjugate their creative self-expression to the production of cultural commodities. “The most promising Canadian writers are poets,” he ventured but “poetry is not in any age of the world a marketable article.” He reported that most literary periodicals did not pay their contributors. “In this case both editor and contributor are lowering the status of the profession which it should be their first duty to uphold. The result is the endless amount of twaddle and inane matter that goes to fill up the journals of this class.” Periodicals and magazines advertised for short stories but then boiled “the idea asked for down not only as to subject but even as to space and style. The result is that the work is truck work done for the money.” He informed *Globe* readers that “The growth of large publishing houses as commercial ventures has turned literature into a trade. A certain class of clever-mediocre men have usurped the place of the old literary men, and genius is being gradually driven out. Even poetry is regarded as a business.”⁶⁴

Pierre Bourdieu posited that social agents compete against one another for position in their particular field. Campbell asserted that such rivalry was destructive of both Canada’s cultural and national life. “Sad to say, we are less a people with one aim and sympathy,” he suggested, “than we are a bundle of cliques, each determined to get what it calls its rights and caring little for matters outside of its own interests. And be these cliques provincial, racial, religious, partisan, or founded on mere self-interest they are one and all ruinous in the long run to the welfare of the country in its development as a nation.” He charged that, due to the lack of unbiased criticism, literary standards and the entire literary field were being distorted by writers using their social capital to attain a higher status than their work merited.⁶⁵

Nearly three decades before the founding of the Canadian Authors Association in 1921, Campbell suggested that Canadian writers had more to gain from co-operating rather than competing against one another. Reporting the founding of the Association of American Authors

⁶⁴ May 21, April 23, August 6, 1892 and February 4, 1893. *At the Mermaid Inn*, 77, 59, 127, 252.

⁶⁵ 10 December, 1892 and February 4, 1893. *At the Mermaid Inn*, 208, 251.

in 1892, he asked, “Could not such an association be formed in Canada?” “We have many writers, and we have no association to bring them together, or develop and encourage our literary spirit.” Campbell argued that “No class of literary workers in the world today needs so much encouragement as do the Canadians. We have an uphill fight against a narrow spirit of local contempt at the hands of the very class that could help us if it desired to. Therefore Canadian writers would do well to band together on a practical basis of a common fellow feeling.” Referring to the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, established by an Act of Parliament in 1882, he proposed, “The artists have their gatherings, and why should not the literary folk do likewise?”⁶⁶

Wilfred Campbell and the Theatre

Campbell today is thought of primarily as a poet. In his lifetime, however, the artist also had strong ambitions to become a playwright and wrote for the live stage rather than as a closet dramatist. He completed his first poetic dramas in 1893, published together in Ottawa by J. Durie as *Mordred and Hildebrand*, in 1895. *The Brockenfiend* appeared in 1896 in the monthly magazine, *The Lounger*, which Campbell edited. His tragedy *Morning* was published by the Lounger Press in Ottawa the following year. The University of Toronto *Acta Victoriana* issued the fifth act of his historical tragedy *Daulac* in 1898. In 1908 the play was published in its entirety by William Briggs in Toronto, along with *Mordred*, *Hildebrand* and *Morning*, in his *Poetical Tragedies*, the only anthology by a nineteenth-century English-Canadian playwright.⁶⁷ Campbell used his social capital to try to establish himself as a playwright. “The Countess of Aberdeen placed his manuscript of *Mordred* in the hands of Sir Henry Irving at Ottawa in

⁶⁶ June 4, 1892. *At the Mermaid Inn*, 87.

⁶⁷ The poet’s prolific playwriting is also indicated by five additional unpublished plays in the William Wilfred Campbell fonds at the Queen’s University Archives: *The Admiral’s Daughter*, the Scottish historical drama *The Heir of Linne*, the romantic tragedy *The Prince of Montelli*, the tragedy *Sanio, the Avenger*, and the drama *In John Winter’s House*.

February, 1894. Earl Grey submitted the same play to Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree at His Majesty's Theatre in London in March or April, 1909.”⁶⁸

Wilfred Campbell's inability to support himself through his writing in Canada made it inevitable that he would look to Britain as an alternative market. Mackenzie King became involved in his friend's attempts to establish himself in the British field of cultural production in 1906 and perceived first-hand the artist's difficulty in transforming cultural into financial capital.⁶⁹ Five years later Campbell again appealed to King from London for his assistance in transitioning from the Canadian to the British field of cultural production. “I feel that this is a crisis in my life,” he wrote in July of 1911 to King who was then an MP and Minister of Labour in Ottawa. “I must do something if I am to achieve any more success in Letters. There are great theatres & actors here and I have friends here who have offered to introduce me. But to do this I must stay here in London.” He informed King that “I have several dramas I have been brooding over for years” and asked his friend to use his connections with Prime Minister Laurier and Governor General Lord Grey.

The poet had applied to be transferred from the Archives Branch of the Department of Agriculture to the Canadian High Commission in London and had written both to Lord Strathcona, who was very proud of his work as “the poet Laureate of Canada,” and to Sir Wilfrid Laurier. “Both were sympathetic with my aim which is to get in touch with the Literary and Dramatic world over here.”⁷⁰ Campbell was convinced that Mackenzie King would augment his political capital and influence in the 1911 federal election. When King resigned from the civil service in 1908 to run for Parliament in North Waterloo, the poet had confidently predicted to his friends seeing him off at the train station in Ottawa, “Gentlemen ... we have seen history made

⁶⁸ Klinck, 126-27. See also Murray D. Edwards, *A Stage in Our Past: English-language Theatre in Eastern Canada from the 1790's to 1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 102-111 and Harry M. Logan, “Wilfred Campbell's *Mordred*: Sources and Structure,” *Canadian Drama*, 4:2 (Fall 1978).

⁶⁹ Campbell to King, June 29, 1906. King to Campbell, July 13, 1906. Campbell to King, August 6, October 4 and September 10, 1906. LAC reel C1905, pages 4460-77. Diary October 4, 1906.

tonight.”⁷¹ In 1911 he wrote King, “I realize that you are in the stiffest contest since Laurier came into Power and I do hope that the old man will be allowed to die in harness and that you may have a good chance to reach the place that should be yours.” With his leave of absence expired and back at work at the Dominion Archives, Campbell was certain that “your party will come back with a reduced majority. But the general opinion is that it is a close fight and that there will be many changes.”⁷² The poet failed to read the public mood in 1911. On September 21, King lost his own seat as the Conservatives captured 134 ridings to the Liberals 87. Campbell’s prospects for a transfer to London vanished with the Liberal defeat.

Mackenzie King Lobbies the Federal Government

Paradoxically, Mackenzie King became even more engaged in attempting to assist the artist’s family after Campbell’s death on January 1, 1918. Only a day after the poet’s demise, he talked with Colonel Carnegie of the Imperial Munitions Board to which Campbell had been loaned by the Archives as a historian. Carnegie spoke to Sir Joseph Flavelle, the multi-millionaire industrialist, philanthropist and Chair of the IMB, who authorized the payment of \$1,000 [\$14,650 in 2014 dollars] to Mrs. Campbell in recognition of the artist’s services to the Board.⁷³ King noted that Flavelle “suggested that the three of us confer together as to the best method of effecting what I had proposed in the way of a pension being provided by the Government for Mrs. Campbell.” The following day he spoke with both Wilfrid Laurier and Sydney Fisher, his former Minister of Agriculture, “about my feeling that the state should do something for Campbell in view of his services. Neither Sir Wilfrid nor Mr. Fisher committed himself but I know that the conversation was quite enough to secure their approval of anything that may be

⁷⁰ Campbell to King, July 4 and July 28, 1911. LAC reel C1914, pages 15149-56 and 15159-60.

⁷¹ Henry S. Ferns and Bernard Ostry, *The Age of Mackenzie King: The Rise of the Leader* (London: William Heineman and Toronto: British Book Service Canada, 1955), 98.

⁷² Campbell to King, August 5, and September 14, 1911. LAC reel C1914, pages 15161-64.

⁷³ I am converting dollar amounts by using the Bank of Canada’s Inflation Calculator. According to the Bank’s website, its Calculator uses monthly consumer price index data from 1914 to the present “to show changes in the cost of a fixed ‘basket’ of consumer purchases. These include

done.” On January 7, King spoke with Sir William Thomas White, the Minister of Finance, “about a petition to the Government for a pension to Mrs. Campbell and explained the circumstances to him and urged his support. He said if the petition was presented he would be inclined to receive it sympathetically.”⁷⁴

In February, King spoke to Martin Burrell, Minister of Mines and Secretary of State, and to Newton Wesley Rowell, President of the Privy Council, who “said he was sure Council would act on any report the committee might bring in.” King was joined in his lobbying efforts by a “committee” of Campbell’s friends. Duncan Campbell Scott spoke to Arthur Meighen, the Minister of the Interior and Superintendent of Indian Affairs, “who is favorable.” Arthur Doughty, the Dominion Archivist, wrote to Prime Minister Borden “strongly advocating that something be done and had received a reply mentioning that his letter had been forwarded by the Prime Minister to the sub-committee of Council in charge of the matter.” King also spoke with Charles Joseph Doherty, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada. Doherty, King recorded, “told me he would be glad to see that the application of the Royal Society for a pension to Mrs. Campbell would be favorably considered.”⁷⁵

On January 17, 1918, King forwarded a confidential memorandum outlining the artist’s civil service and artistic contributions to Duncan Campbell Scott, the Royal Society of Canada Honorary Secretary, which the RSC could use to lobby on behalf of the poet. He explained that he was “seeking, as one of Campbell’s friends, to take a sort of supervision over some of Mrs. Campbell’s affairs.” King’s memorandum argued that Campbell had served in the civil service for twenty-five years and that the artist supported his wife and four children, his wife’s mother,

food, shelter, furniture, clothing, transportation, and recreation.” See <http://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/related/inflation-calculator/>

⁷⁴ Mackenzie King, “Memorandum re the late William Wilfred Campbell,” January 3 and 7, 1918. LAC reel C1953, pages C786-89.

⁷⁵ Ibid. February 13, 1918. Page C797. Campbell had been elected to Section Two of the Royal Society of Canada, devoted to English literature, history and allied subjects, in 1894. He served as vice-president of the Section in 1900, was its president in 1901 and its secretary from 1903 to 1911. See Klinck, 94.

and four grandchildren on a salary, which had risen to just \$2,050 [\$34,000 in 2014 dollars] in 1917. The poet could not, King reasoned, have built up financial reserves on his civil service salary. Furthermore, so far as finances were concerned, the poet's life "was one bitter struggle against adverse circumstances. Though his writings brought him a wide reputation as an author and a poet, and helped to give Canadian National Literature the place it holds in the world to-day, they contributed very little to his income."⁷⁶

The President of the Royal Society of Canada, the writer William Douw Lighthall, had written Prime Minister Borden on January 16 informing him that the Council of the RSC had unanimously resolved at a special meeting that it "recommend to the Government the propriety of granting an annuity to the widow of the late Dr. William Wilfred Campbell. Dr. Campbell's position as one of our foremost literary men was widely recognized. His work is animated by the highest ideals and has thus been of great value to our nation." King informed Duncan Campbell Scott that he had spoken to the Prime Minister "and Sir Robert told me there was a committee of Council to which the matter would be referred." He suggested that "we might give special attention to these members in any representation it may be possible to have made from influential quarters." Prime Minister Borden responded to W.D. Lighthall on January 24, informing him that he was "commending to the consideration of a Special Committee of the Cabinet which deals

⁷⁶ King to Scott, January 19, 1918. Mackenzie King, "Memorandum in support of a Memorial to the Government of Canada for a Pension to the Widow of the late William Wilfred Campbell, LL.D." LAC reel C1933, pages 36298-36302. Campbell had contributed to a superannuation fund for twenty-five years but had died just before he and his wife had become eligible beneficiaries. "In all the circumstances," King argued, "the Government would be more than justified in recognizing the services to Canada and the British Empire of one whose verse and prose has shed luster around the name of our country by granting to his widow a pension which will be the means of relieving her in her present distress and safeguarding her in coming years against still further adversity." The government was providing pensions to the widows of soldiers who had fallen in World War I. "These very men, could their voices be heard, would be the first to proclaim the justice of a like provision for the widow of one whose life was dedicated, as few lives have ever been, to the service of Canada and the furthering of British ideals." Another copy of the Memorandum can be found in LAC reel C1953, pages C792-95. King also assembled a chronology of Campbell's life that listed the publication of his *Mordred* and *Hildebrand*, his *Poetical Tragedies* and his essay, "Shakespeare and the Latter-Day Drama," published in the *Canadian Magazine* in November of 1907. See LAC reel C1953, pages C790-91.

with such matters, your suggestion regarding an annuity to the widow of the late Dr. William Wilfred Campbell.” King wrote to Scott two days later thanking him for the copy of Borden’s communication. He concluded about the collective lobbying of the Prime Minister and his Cabinet, “It seems to me that nothing has been left undone which should have been done in this matter, and I think we have reason confidently to expect a favorable consideration of the application which has been made. Should such be the result, I know how genuinely pleased you will be.”⁷⁷

But King’s and the Royal Society’s concerted lobbying of Prime Minister Borden and his Cabinet on behalf of Campbell appears to have been unsuccessful. In his obituary of the poet for the Royal Society, W.D. Lighthall wrote that “Wilfred Campbell was one of those outstanding literary figures who brought credit to the Canadian people as being a nation not without ideals.” He referred to his financial position, “Financially he always had a hard struggle, in which he fought bravely for those dependent on him, and which constantly hampered his genius.” Lighthall did not mention—as he surely would have—that the federal government had recognized Campbell’s contributions to Canada by granting a pension to his widow.⁷⁸ Regardless of the outcome, *the paradox remains that King engaged in a very concerted effort with the Royal Society of Canada to lobby the federal government on behalf of his artist friend. Yet a quarter century later, he would be unresponsive when Canadian artists and sixteen national arts societies, led by the Federation of Canadian Artists and the Canadian Arts Council, lobbied King and his government to support arts and culture in the mid-1940s.*

⁷⁷ Lighthall to Borden, January 16, 1918. King to Scott, January 23, 1918. Borden to Lighthall, January 24, 1918. Scott to King, January 25, 1918. King to Scott, January 26, 1918. LAC reel C1933, pages 36305-10. In his letter of January 25, Scott informed King that he had given his memorandum to T. Cooper Boville, the Deputy Minister of Finance, who “did not know of any special committee and thought that it was the usual Treasury Board committee that dealt with the estimates. He said that he had heard the matter discussed favourably.”

⁷⁸ W.D. Lighthall, “William Wilfred Campbell,” *Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 1918 (Ottawa: Hope, 1918), vi.

King again supported the principle of state intervention and lobbied another sitting Prime Minister to promote culture when Governor General Lord Bessborough asked him to speak at the Dominion Drama Festival finals in Ottawa in April of 1934. King had been Leader of the Opposition since 1930 when R.B. Bennett's Conservatives defeated the Liberals. But Bennett's mandate was drawing to a close and widespread public disenchantment with his policies during the depth of the Depression made it appear likely that King and the Liberals would be returned to office in the next election. King's 1934 speech to the DDF therefore had additional importance and resonance.

The key to King's address was his Arnoldian perception that—not unlike his many labour-management negotiations in the past—“The drama [was] a mirror of the problems of life—‘Society’ needing to [be] taught—the educated to be educated; the play the means of revealing the problems of the people; the mercenary, the wrong methods needing to be exposed; the need for social justice & peace.” Later in the evening he recorded that after he rose from his front seat at the Ottawa Little Theatre to deliver his speech, with the Governor General and Lady Bessborough, Alice Massey and the wives of the American ambassador and the Speaker of the House of Commons sitting nearby, “The suggestion of extension of State functions etc. to provide Building for National Art Gallery, National Theatre & National Opera all went across in good fashion.”⁷⁹

The *Ottawa Citizen* reported the next day that the Leader of the Opposition had urged “that provision be made by the government of the day for the erection of a building to house a national theatre, opera and art gallery.” Noting that Prime Minister Bennett was scheduled to speak the following night, King suggested that the audience and Festival organizers “impress upon him the desirability of including such a building in the government's program of public works for the relief of unemployment.” “He wished to express a word of approval to His Excellency [Lord Bessborough] for having made the Dominion Drama Festival possible. Great changes were taking place in the social order and social justice and the guarantee of peace would have to be the

⁷⁹ Diary April 27, 1934.

result of education on the part of those who had it or believed they had it.” It is worth quoting the *Ottawa Citizen* article at some length for the way it reveals the paper’s strong support of arts and culture, discussed in chapter X.

It was inevitable, he said, with the development of machinery that the hours of labor would become shorter and there must be provision for filling the hours of leisure or unemployment. How better could the hours of leisure be filled than by recreation of the true kind which would bring out latent talents. Drama furnished a fine medium for bringing out what was best and finest in the community.

‘I hope,’ said Mr. King, ‘that drama will not only be national but international. Art is the common teacher and heritage of mankind.’ Such competition, he thought, would develop a greater understanding between the nations competing. That, however, was for the future. At present the development of national drama was the end to be attained. To assist this and fine arts generally, Canada should have a national theatre and national opera.

Mr. King was applauded with enthusiasm. While he might not agree with Mr. Bennett on matters of national policy, said Mr. King, the Prime Minister, if he did something along those lines, would be assured of the very hearty support and co-operation of the leader of the opposition.⁸⁰

King was surprised by the *Ottawa Citizen* coverage of his address since, as he noted in his diary, “my remarks last night were interpreted as meaning a public building for all three purposes—a National Gallery, a National Opera and a National Theatre—I had said & meant that the latter should come in time—but the press went in for all three at a shot & National Theatre in particular.” Prime Minister Bennett, in his remarks at the Festival, made no reference to King’s suggestion that the federal government should subsidize the arts in Canada.⁸¹ But J. T. Grein, the renowned English theatre manager, playwright, critic and national DDF adjudicator, “expressed

⁸⁰ “Build National Theater As One Relief Project: Rt. Hon. Mackenzie King Suggests Building to House National Theater, Opera and Art Gallery—Would Support Such Move If Made By Govt.,” *Ottawa Citizen*, April 28, 1934, 30. Maria Tippett, in her *Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts before the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) noted that Bennett “contributed to the cultural life of Winnipeg by allocating federal funds to a civic and provincial relief project which provided for the construction of the Winnipeg Auditorium.” (71). Built in 1931-32, it consisted of an eight-hundred-seat concert hall and a main auditorium seating 4,075. The multi-purpose building housed the Winnipeg Art Gallery, the Manitoba Museum, the Centennial Concert Hall and the Winnipeg Convention Centre.

⁸¹ “Prime Minister Tells Why Exit Postponed,” *Ottawa Citizen*, April 30, 1934, 17.

the hope that a National Theatre would be built, that he might live to see it or hear about it & he said over the entrance he would like to see Goethe's words 'The Good, the Great, the Beautiful.'" King himself felt "How wonderful it would be if I yet might help to inspire our country with these three notes to have a department of fine arts & expression given to it in the life of the nation—helping the soul of our people—the opposite of the Bennett type of money & power." He was confident that such a cultural renaissance "will come yet I warrant."⁸²

But who would determine what was "The Good, the Great, the Beautiful"? Who would pay for the creation of that beauty and what would bring about a cultural renaissance in Canada? What were the implications of King's statement at the DDF that he hoped "that drama will not only be national but international" and to the sculptor Walter Allward, the architect of Canada's famous World War I memorial at Vimy, that "Art knew no boundaries"?⁸³ He was highly gratified when in 1934 "Atticus" of the London *Sunday Times* referred to King's literary tastes and named him, next to the South Africa's Jan Smuts, as "the most cultured of Dominion statesmen."⁸⁴ Why did Mackenzie King then not initiate the building of a national art gallery, a national theatre and a national opera as Prime Minister?

An in-depth analysis of King's *habitus* suggests the answer. In subsequent chapters of this dissertation, I will analyze the enigma of why King did not follow the Arnoldian precept that culture must be extended to all members and classes of society and that the state was the expression and instrument of "our collective best self" when King and the Liberals were returned to power a year later in the 1935 election.

⁸² Diary April 28, 1934.

⁸³ Diary August 13, 1937.

⁸⁴ Diary November 7, 1934. In 1936, after dining at Government House in Ottawa with Governor General Lord Tweedsmuir (the novelist and historian John Buchan), King noted that Atticus "apparently, at present, is Beverley Baxter." Diary November 17, 1936. On February 11, 1940 King received "an article by Atticus (Beverley Baxter) on myself and Smuts, very nicely written." The Canadian-born Conservative MP was a former theatre critic and editor of the *Daily Express* in London. Baxter's World War II drama *It Happened in September* premiered at the St. James Theatre in 1942 and was published by Hutchinson in London in 1943. He was appointed theatre critic of the *Evening Standard* that year by Lord Beaverbrook.

This enigma of why King failed to enact beneficial cultural policies for Canadians (with the exception of public control of radio broadcasting, for which he had a political motivation) can only be unraveled by examining the larger mystery of the personality of Mackenzie King and his failure—in Arnoldian terms—to aim for the attainment of his own individual “*harmonious* perfection, developing all sides of our humanity.” This is the central paradox I am investigating: why did King’s half-century-long direct involvement with artists and the arts—both in Canada and internationally—fail to make him a champion of the arts and instead transform him into an invisible, insurmountable obstacle to Canadian artists and cultural nationalists lobbying for government support of art and culture? To unravel this paradox, we first have to uncover the official mask constructed by King and the Liberal Party that largely obscured his involvement with the arts and artists.

The Masking of Mackenzie King

King, in effect, wore a double mask. By isolating himself from the public at his Kingsmere estate and restricting his friendships, he constructed an inner mask that shielded his private life and at the same time camouflaged his life-long involvement in arts and culture and spiritualist pursuits. He usually associated with artists in private or within a small circle of elite political and social leaders and sought to erase his educational achievements (a B.A., LL.B. and M.A. from the University of Toronto and a Ph.D. from Harvard) from “ordinary” Canadians who, he believed, would not value such a cultured Prime Minister. Yousuf Karsh, who began photographing King in 1939, provided one explanation for this paradox. In his *Karsh Canadians* he observed, “Perhaps I should have suspected the vast gulf between Mackenzie King’s public image and his private life.” Karsh noted his own artistic difficulty in creating photographic images of the Prime Minister because “King wished me to depict the man he visualized himself to be.” “Above all he was anxious to discourage the slightest animation or brightness in his personality because, I suppose, it contradicted the grey, colourless legend of his own making, the legend of solemn

wisdom, compassion, and reliability.”⁸⁵ Frances Loring, who sculpted Prime Minister Robert Borden’s monument on Parliament Hill, similarly stated in 1955 that “I would never want to have to do Mackenzie King...I can’t get any impression there. Undoubtedly there’s a strong personality, but it doesn’t come through. You can’t feel it.”⁸⁶

King wanted to erase the very cultural distinctions he had established through his life-long contact with the arts and artists because he feared the electorate would resent his higher social status and cultural capital. His primary outer mask was that of the wise political leader and steward of the nation constructed by the Liberal Party and by King himself. Only two years after King’s death, Bruce Hutchison, in his illuminating *The Incredible Canadian: A Candid Portrait of Mackenzie King*, agreed that even through Karsh’s “inspired lens” King could “never appear more than commonplace because he would never share and finally could not be himself.”⁸⁷

Many other writers and historians have commented on the enigma of Mackenzie King. For Kenneth McNaught, in his *The Pelican History of Canada*, he was “an unprepossessing, pudgy little man who remained a bachelor and was almost psychotically devoted to his mother’s memory.” King, McNaught asserted, “is the most enigmatic personality of Canadian political history.”⁸⁸ Allan Levine discussed his “extremely secretive” nature in his *Scrum Wars: The*

⁸⁵ Yousuf Karsh, *Karsh Canadians* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 90. King recorded in his March 8, 1944 diary that he “almost broke the little man’s heart by speaking out too emphatically” because Karsh had photographed him laughing during wartime. “It clearly was a mistake his trying to catch me in a smiling mood and I sought to have him see wherein I differed from other men in public life by not desiring to be exhibitionist in the least, nor the typical politician with his ways of trying to catch the applause of the crowd. That I had a very serious view of the war and all that underlay it, and did not wish to find myself exhibited to the world in other than the serious mood which is my own.”

⁸⁶ Elspeth Cameron, *And Beauty Answers: The Life of Frances Loring and Florence Wyle* (Toronto: Comorant Books, 2007), 286-7.

⁸⁷ Bruce Hutchison, *The Incredible Canadian*, 5. Hutchison was editor of the *Victoria Daily Times* and author of *The Unknown Country: Canada and Her People* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1942 and Toronto: Longmans, Green, 1943. The book won the Governor General’s Literary Award in 1942. Hutchison won the Award again in 1952 for *The Incredible Canadian*.

⁸⁸ Kenneth McNaught, *The Pelican History of Canada* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1969), 227.

Prime Ministers and the Media, citing a 1948 *Montreal Gazette* editorial that King was about as “informative as a gagged clam.”⁸⁹ Mackenzie King himself noted in his diary that his close friend Joan Patteson “drew my attention to a cartoon in the *Gazette* in which I am pictured as a sphinx in the centre of a pyramid.”⁹⁰

For other writers, King was an enigma but nevertheless embodied the very essence and soul of Canada. Reginald Hardy, the president of the Ottawa Parliamentary Press Gallery, entitled a series of articles about King published in the *Southam* newspapers in 1948, “Mr. Canada.”⁹¹ To his English friend Violet Markham, King appeared as “the father of his people and one of [Canada’s] greatest sons.”⁹² In *The Incredible Canadian*, Bruce Hutchison suggested that “The mystery of William Lyon Mackenzie King is not the mystery of a man. It is the mystery of a people... We do not understand King because we do not understand ourselves ... The two things, man and nation, are inseparable.” Hutchison predicted that “However the current riddle of Canada may be dissected in the future, at the core will be found the enigma of King, who was its authentic expression.”⁹³

Poet and playwright Nathaniel Benson, writing a year after King’s death in 1950, had hailed the late Prime Minister as an astute political leader and profound thinker “whose great heart encompassed this great land.”⁹⁴ (Benson had befriended King through his 1930 *The Patriot* which dramatized the flight of his grandfather, William Lyon Mackenzie, after the unsuccessful

⁸⁹ Allan Levine, “The Trials of Mackenzie King,” in his *Scrum Wars: The Prime Ministers and the Media* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1993), 125, 126. See also Mark Bourrie, “The Myth of the ‘Gagged Clam’: William Lyon Mackenzie King’s Press Relations,” *Global Media Journal* 3:2 (2010), 18.

⁹⁰ Diary November 9, 1946.

⁹¹ These articles became the basis of Hardy’s biography *Mackenzie King of Canada* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949).

⁹² Violet Markham, *Return Passage* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 84.

⁹³ Hutchison, 1, 2.

⁹⁴ Nathaniel A. Benson, “*In Memoriam Principis*”: *A Memorial Tribute to my Honoured Friend, the late Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada, The Right Honourable W.L. Mackenzie King, O.M., P.C. (1874-1950) on the First Anniversary of His Death, July 22, 1951*. (Privately printed, Toronto: 1951).

1837 Rebellion.)⁹⁵ Robertson Davies, in his 1970 novel *Fifth Business*, represented King as the incarnation of Canada in a darker vein. In Dunstan Ramsay's words, "Mackenzie King rules Canada because he himself is the embodiment of Canada—cold and cautious on the outside, dowdy and pussy in every overt action, but inside a mass of intuition and dark intimations."⁹⁶

The depiction of King by other Canadian poets and novelists has been still more equivocal. Margaret Atwood contrasted Davies' construction of King with F.R. Scott's poem "W.L.M.K." "We had no shape / Because he never took sides, / And no sides / Because he never allowed them to take shape..."⁹⁷ Scott's 1957 poem continues: "He seemed to be in the centre / Because we had no centre, / No vision / To pierce the smoke-screen of his politics... / Let us raise up a temple / To the cult of mediocrity."⁹⁸ For novelist Hugh MacLennan (who caricatured King as the philistine business tycoon Huntley McQueen in his 1945 *Two Solitudes*),⁹⁹ King was within his own person "the incarnation of the Canadian ambiguity. We elected him again and again, and he obliterated the opposition even while most of us professed to detest him. He was a mystery during his lifetime because he deliberately tried to make himself invisible. He was dead for twenty-five years before we at last discovered what he was really like... as there was no television to destroy him, the ambiguities remained concealed."¹⁰⁰ Atwood observed that in the popular imagination King "is enjoying new symbolic popularity as a secret madman who communed

⁹⁵ Nathaniel A. Benson, "The Patriot" in his *Three Plays for Patriots* (Ottawa: Graphic, 1930).

⁹⁶ Robertson Davies, *Fifth Business* in *The Deptford Trilogy* (Bungay, Suffolk: Penguin, 1985), 370.

⁹⁷ Margaret Atwood, "Canadian Monsters: Some Aspects of the Supernatural in Canadian Fiction," in *The Canadian Imagination: Dimensions of a Literary Culture*, ed. David Staines (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 100.

⁹⁸ F.R. Scott, "W.L.M.K." in his *The Eye of the Needle: Satire, Sorties, Sundries* (Montreal: Contact Press), 1957, 21, 22.

⁹⁹ See Hugh MacLennan, *Two Solitudes* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1989), 10, 14, 17, 78, 102, 103, 106, 109, 114, 116, 117, 216, 254, 268, 272. See also Elspeth Cameron, *Hugh MacLennan: A Writer's Life* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 180-181 and George F. Henderson, *W. L. Mackenzie King: A Bibliography and Research Guide*, 265-266.

¹⁰⁰ Hugh MacLennan, "Fiction in Canada—1930 to 1980," in *The Arts in Canada: The Last Fifty Years*, eds. W.J. Keith and B. -Z. Shek (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 31.

every night with the picture of his dead mother and believed that his dog was inhabited by her soul.”¹⁰¹

Yet only a year after Mackenzie King retired following twenty-two years as prime minister, Bruce Hutchison wrote in 1949 that King was already “almost forgotten” because of his double masking. “Of Mr. Mackenzie King we really know nothing at all because we have never inquired.” Hutchison attributed this lack of public knowledge to the reticence of Canadians to pry into the private lives of their political leaders. “We have denatured our history, squeezed all the juice out, hidden the actors behind official masks.”¹⁰² In his *Scrum Wars: The Prime Ministers and the Media*, Allan Levine in turn described how the Conservative and Liberal parties used newspapers, many of which they had founded or purchased, to propagandize their economic and political policies and win public support for their candidates in elections. Before the advent of television, this use of newspapers for highly partisan political purposes rather than an objective analysis of events and personalities also applied to the biographies of political leaders.

The Political Mask

In 1921 Augustus Bridle, one of the founders of the Arts and Letters Club in Toronto in 1908 and associate and then editor of the *Canadian Courier* 1908-1920, published a collection of profiles of Canadian political leaders—under the pseudonym “Domino”—entitled *The Masques of Ottawa*. At the *Canadian Courier*, Bridle had given his critical support to the painters who would emerge as the Group of Seven, after ten years of collaborative effort, in 1920.¹⁰³ At the Arts and Letters Club, he had instigated the writing and publication of *The Year Book of Canadian Art*

¹⁰¹ Atwood, 100.

¹⁰² Bruce Hutchison, “Canadian Reticence,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, December 5, 1949. Cited in Edward McCourt, “Canadian Letters,” in *Royal Commission Studies. A Selection of Essays Prepared for the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1951), 78.

¹⁰³ On Bridle, the Arts and Letters Club and the Group of Seven, see Charles C. Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1995).

1913, the first nation-wide survey of literature, architecture, music, painting and sculpture.¹⁰⁴ As president of the Club 1913-1914, he presented a copy of *The Year Book*—to which he had contributed articles on choral conductor Augustus Vogt, orchestral music in Ontario and chamber music in Toronto—to former Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier when Laurier visited the Club in December 1913.¹⁰⁵ Laurier, Bridle reported in his profile in *The Masques of Ottawa*, “listened with great gravity to a short programme of music, asked the names of the composers and the players and spent most of his brief speech denying that he was anything but a philistine in art, and pledging himself if ever he was Premier again to do more for Canadian art than had ever been done before.”¹⁰⁶

In 1921 Bridle had also begun writing articles for the *Toronto Star*,¹⁰⁷ which appointed him music editor in 1922 and then book, film and drama editor. He organized free concerts under the auspices of the *Star* and in 1927 staged his own symbolic pageant, *The Heart of the World*, featuring the 2000-member Canadian National Exhibition Chorus, at the CNE Coliseum. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that Bridle framed *The Masques of Ottawa*, published shortly before the December 1921 election that brought the Liberal Party and King to power, in theatrical terms. He entitled his introduction “The Play-House Called Ottawa” and wrote that “Parliament is its great show. Politicians are the actors.” Referring to the new Parliament buildings constructed after the fire of 1917, Bridle ventured that “the Ottawa of today is a strange spectacle for the prophets. The great new Opera House is all but finished, when no seer can tell whether the plays to be put on there by the parties of the future will be as epic and worthwhile as those staged by the actors of the past.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ See *The Year Book of Canadian Art 1913*. Compiled by the Arts and Letters Club of Toronto. (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1913).

¹⁰⁵ Margaret McBurney, *The Great Adventure: 100 Years at The Arts & Letters Club* (Toronto: Arts and Letters Club, 2007), 20-21.

¹⁰⁶ Augustus Bridle, “A Political Solar System: Rt. Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier,” in his *The Masques of Ottawa*. By “Domino” [pseud.] (Toronto: Macmillan, 1921), 42. Copy in King’s library at Laurier House, call number FE.50.1315.1.

¹⁰⁷ See for example “Unusual Art Cult Breaks Loose Again” and “Pictures! Pictures! Who’ll Come an’ Buy,” May 7 and November 16, 1921.

¹⁰⁸ Bridle, 7, 8, 30, 31.

In his profile of Mackenzie King, Bridle referred to the address on democracy, which Laurier had given to the University of Toronto Literary Society, also in December of 1913, at which he sat at a table next to the thirty-nine year old King. He became engrossed by the “irrepressible vitality” of the “restless, thick-bodied, sparse-haired man who seemed younger than his years” and who “like a bird to a succession of swinging boughs...hung upon the golden utterances of his old chieftain and political mentor.”¹⁰⁹

Bridle recalled meeting King a second time after a political meeting three years later when he spoke enthusiastically about John D. Rockefeller Jr. and the Rockefeller Foundation, which had commissioned what would become his magnum opus, *Industry and Humanity*.¹¹⁰ But King also talked “with equal gusto upon his intimate knowledge of a certain popular song writer in Chicago, the story of whose life he told with vivid strokes of descriptive pathos; and upon his still more intimate acquaintance with the late William Wilfred Campbell, poet, whom he had seen in the same moment feed his pigs in a near suburb of Ottawa, and create a line of poetry—which King quoted—‘The wild witchery of the winter woods.’ He was seized with the idea that a Foundation such as the Rockefeller should subsidize poets and song-writers.”¹¹¹

Two of King’s biographers incorrectly attributed this account that King favoured subsidies for artists to his studies at the University of Toronto in the 1890s. Hutchison referred to King as “a boy who mooned over the poets and worshipped at the feet of Duncan Campbell Scott, who thought the state should subsidize dramatists and song writers.”¹¹² Reginald Hardy, in his chapter

¹⁰⁹ Augustus Bridle, “The Grandson of a Patriot: Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie King,” in his *The Masques of Ottawa*, 52.

¹¹⁰ William Lyon Mackenzie King, *Industry and Humanity: A Study in the Principles Underlying Industrial Reconstruction* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1918).

¹¹¹ Bridle, “The Grandson of a Patriot,” 60. Sandra Gwyn, in her *The Private Capital: Ambition and Love in the Age of Macdonald and Laurier* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1984), 445, reported that King and Campbell “were particularly known for strolling through the National Gallery of a Sunday afternoon, declaiming poetry aloud.” King does not reference such excursions in his diaries.

¹¹² Hutchison, *The Incredible Canadian*, 21.

“College Years,” portrayed King “becoming quite excited and enthusiastic over the possibility of subsidizing poets and song-writers. When a friend suggested that a foundation should be set up to assist struggling writers and artists King thought the idea was a good one... ‘The wild witchery of the winter woods!’ once mused Campbell in King’s presence, as he poured a bucket of slop into the feed-trough for his pigs. King was amazed that anyone could wax lyrical while engaged in such a mundane task.”¹¹³

This attribute of King being interested in and favouring subsidies for artists is not the public persona constructed for and by King in his biographies published in the 1920s, ‘30s and ‘40s. According to Augustus Bridle in *The Masques of Ottawa*, King faced almost insurmountable obstacles in reconciling French and English Canada: farmers wanting a low tariff for cheaper goods from the U.S. and abroad and Canadian manufacturers insisting on a protectionist high tariff; Canadians wanting close political, economic and military ties to the British Empire and those wanting a more independent Canada. Bridle thought reconciling these divergent interests would be a “fantastic experiment in administration” and anticipated the public mask King would wear in the attempt to achieve victory at the ballot box for the next quarter century. “We may trust Hon. Mackenzie King to simulate a vast moving-picture smile of high benevolence and great sagacity as he contemplates such a fantasia—with himself as the chief tight-rope performer and Niagara roaring below.”¹¹⁴

Constructing the Political Mask

The Mackenzie and King families had already begun carefully protecting and constructing the persona of King’s grandfather, William Lyon Mackenzie, the leader of the 1837 Rebellion, in the second half of the 1800s. At the urging of Mackenzie King’s mother Isabel Mackenzie King, Charles Lindsey, her brother-in-law, published his hagiographic biography *The Life and Times of William Lyon Mackenzie* (Toronto: Randall, 1862) a year after Mackenzie’s death. Lindsey

¹¹³ Hardy, 32, 33.

¹¹⁴ Bridle, 64.

argued that Mackenzie's insurrection led to responsible government in Canada. As Charlotte Gray writes in *Mrs. King: The Life and Times of Isabel Mackenzie King*, "Charles began in earnest the myth-making that cast William Lyon Mackenzie as the Great Canadian Patriot. The Little Rebel's ruined reputation began to be rehabilitated."¹¹⁵ When John Charles Dent published his *The Story of the Upper Canadian Rebellion* (Toronto: C.B. Robinson, 1885) which denigrated Mackenzie, John King, Mackenzie King's father, countered with *The Other Side of the 'Story,' Being Some Reviews of Mr. J.C. Dent's First Volume 'The Story of the Upper Canadian Rebellion'* (Toronto: James Murray, 1886). And when one of Canada's leading intellectuals, William Dawson LeSueur, completed a revisionist biography of Mackenzie for George Morang's "The Makers of Canada" series in 1908 using manuscripts in the Lindsey family, Mackenzie King and the Lindseys obtained a court injunction that stopped the book's publication until 1979.¹¹⁶ LeSueur's manuscript, King recorded in his diary, was "a vile production" that could "serve as a campaign document for the Tories" and was part of a conspiracy "to have Mackenzie written down instead of up."¹¹⁷

Instead of the critical study by LeSueur, it was G.G.S. Lindsey's (Charles Lindsey's son and Mackenzie's grandson) revised and enlarged edition of his father's biography, *William Lyon Mackenzie*, (Toronto: Morang, 1908), that was published in Morang's "The Makers of Canada." A.B. McKillop has called the suppression of the LeSueur biography, in which Mackenzie King took a leading part, as perhaps "the most lamentable episode in the history of critical intellectual enquiry in Canada."¹¹⁸

King saw this manufacturing of history and "truth" from a different political and spiritual perspective. Just before the publication by Morang in 1935 of Norman McLeod Rogers'

¹¹⁵ Charlotte Gray, *Mrs. King: The Life and Times of Isabel Mackenzie King* (Toronto: Viking, 1997), 47.

¹¹⁶ See William Dawson LeSueur, *William Lyon Mackenzie: A Reinterpretation*, ed. A.B. McKillop (Toronto: Macmillan, 1979).

¹¹⁷ Diary April 28, 1908 and December 27, 1911.

¹¹⁸ See A.B. McKillop, "The Critic as Historian," in *A Critical Spirit: The Thought of William Dawson LeSueur*, ed. A.B. McKillop (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), 249.

Mackenzie King, he referred in his diary to the biography *Sir John A. Macdonald* by “the great imperialist statesman” Sir George Robert Parkin, published by Morang in 1908, and to Parkin’s son-in-law William Lawson Grant (editor of the twelve-volume *The Makers of Canada* published by Oxford University Press in 1926) “who would destroy Mackenzie because not an imperialist.” He could “see God’s law of retribution working out in reference to treatment of grandfather and treatment of myself. Is it not all curious and strange and like the old Greek tragedies—Nemesis—to think that Morang should now be the instrument to write [sic] this wrong, so far as Mackenzie and myself are concerned, in this new book coming out.” He also “thought of having Hepburn [Mitch Hepburn, the Liberal Premier of Ontario] see that the schoolbooks are rewritten—from a Liberal point of view. I thought our scholars will undo the wrong there has been by further research...getting rid of the cancer in our literature, that is what all this lying & falsity is—the need for truth.”¹¹⁹

Mackenzie King was fully aware of—and also an active participant in—the construction of his own official outer mask. When he re-read his first biography, Owen Ernest McGillicuddy’s *The Making of a Premier: An Outline of the Life Story of the Right Hon. W.L. Mackenzie King, C.M.G.* (Toronto: Musson, 1922) while contemplating writing his own autobiography in 1949, he found that its last chapters “seemed to me very childish almost.”¹²⁰ The anonymous journalist author of the highly partisan *The Life Story of Mackenzie King*, published for the 1926 election, continued to construct King’s outer mask by characterizing him as “the most outstanding Canadian of the day, who is leading the Liberal Party in the fight for the preservation of Canada’s constitutional rights.” He also asserted that King “is probably the most vilified and abused man in the Dominion of Canada. Never has any political leader had to meet the constant barrage of abuse, misrepresentation, and slander that has been the portion of Mackenzie King in the land of the living. More epithets have been flung at him than would fill a book.” The writer was certain that “to know him is to love him.”¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Diary March 9, 1935.

¹²⁰ Diary February 21, 1949.

John Lewis and Norman McLeod Rogers, in their introductions to the 1925 *Mackenzie King the Man: His Achievements* and the 1935 *Mackenzie King*, both asserted that “The leader of a political party, being under constant fire from his foes, has a right to be described by his friends.”¹²² H. Blair Neatby surmises that Rogers, a professor at Queen’s University, “must sometimes have regretted undertaking the task because King insisted on supervising every detail. Not surprisingly, King had found the first draft ‘inadequate and disappointing’; somehow King’s dedication to humanity and his great achievements were not adequately presented. He found it necessary to redraft many sections in order to bring out the full story of his family heritage and his ‘life’s work in politics & reform.’ King was a little more satisfied with the revised version; it gave the proper emphasis to his moral courage, his sincerity, his vision, and his ideal of public service.”¹²³

King’s biographers *were* his friends or Liberal party loyalists with whom he carefully constructed his public persona. He had hired John Lewis, an editor at the *Toronto Star*, as Editor of Political Literature and Political Activities, at an annual salary of \$5,000 [\$65,000 in 2014 dollars], after King was elected Leader of the Liberal Party and promised Lewis an appointment to the Senate if the Liberals were elected.¹²⁴ In 1925 he met with Lewis “to talk over outline of sketch of myself which he has agreed to prepare for Liberal publicity purposes” and revised Lewis’ manuscript in July. “It is part of the necessity of the political situation to get out some kind of a sketch before a campaign. This fortunately is written with a sense of proportion and perspective which Lewis so admirably commands.” King nevertheless “dislike[d] the self boosting, advertising for political

¹²¹ *The Life Story of Mackenzie King* (Montreal: Montreal World Publishing, 1926), 3.

¹²² John Lewis, *Mackenzie King the Man: His Achievements* (Toronto: Morang, 1925), 1. Norman McLeod Rogers, *Mackenzie King* (Toronto: George N. Morang, 1935), vii. When he inscribed a copy of his biography for King in April of 1935 Rogers wrote: “In appreciation of his devoted service to our country and in remembrance of an association and friendship which have meant much more to me than the pages of this book will reveal.” Copy at Laurier House Library FE.50.337.1ab

¹²³ H. Blair Neatby, *William Lyon Mackenzie King: Volume III 1932-1939 The Prism of Unity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 97-98.

¹²⁴ Diary December 13 and 15, 1919 and February 5, 1920.

ends.”¹²⁵ When Lewis, then managing editor of the *Toronto Globe*, resigned from the paper after its publisher, William Gladstone Jaffray, interfered with his pro-Liberal editorials, King decided to appoint him to the Senate though he could see that “when his biography comes out it will be said, & by some believed, there was a bargain.”¹²⁶ King and leading financial backers of the Liberal Party then contemplated purchasing the *Globe* to ensure its political support.¹²⁷

King and the National Liberal Organizing Committee had also hired Andrew Haydon as executive secretary of the National Liberal Council, at a salary of \$7,500 per year [\$97,000 in 2014 dollars].¹²⁸ After King appointed him a Senator, Haydon authored *Mackenzie King and the Liberal Party* for the 1930 federal election. Already in 1930, Haydon constructed King as the successor to Lord Durham, John A. Macdonald and Wilfrid Laurier in the struggle to achieve Responsible Government. “Building upon foundations well and truly laid,” Haydon assured his readers, “the Rt. Hon. Mr. King deserves to be ranked among our greater statesmen, and will assuredly be so remembered in our future history.”¹²⁹

The author of the political pamphlet *Mackenzie King* (Toronto: Printers Guild, 1935) published for the 1935 federal election was the Ontario Liberal MP William Henry Moore whom King had appointed to the Tariff Advisory Board in 1927. F.A. McGregor, author of *The Fall & Rise of Mackenzie King: 1911-1919* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1962), had been King’s private secretary from 1909 to 1925 when King appointed him a commissioner for the Combines Investigation Act 1925-1949. He then asked McGregor to assist him in the task, never actually initiated, of writing his memoirs. Norman McLeod Rogers, author of the 1935 *Mackenzie King*, was his private

¹²⁵ Diary February 21 and February 12, 1925 and July 13, 1925.

¹²⁶ Diary August 14, 1925.

¹²⁷ Levine, *Scrum Wars*, 145.

¹²⁸ Diary December 13, 1919.

¹²⁹ Andrew Haydon, *Mackenzie King and the Liberal Party* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1930), 10. Haydon was censured by the Senate for his role in the 1931-32 Beauharnois Scandal. He was also forced to resign as the Liberal Party campaign treasurer when a Senate investigation revealed that the Beauharnois Light, Heat and Power Co. had donated \$700,000 to the federal and Quebec Liberal Party to win permission to generate electricity using the St. Lawrence River.

secretary 1927-29, was elected to Parliament in 1935, became Minister of Labour in King's Cabinet and was appointed Minister of National Defence in 1939.

King also had a friendship and shared common spiritual beliefs with Emil Ludwig, the German author of the 1944 *Mackenzie King: A Portrait Sketch*. In his diary, he commented on “the bond which so quickly attracted each of us to the other” and on making corrections and revisions in Ludwig's text.¹³⁰ He was particularly pleased that Ludwig had opened and closed his biographical sketch with a reference to J.W.L. Forster's 1905 iconic painting of his mother, William Lyon Mackenzie's youngest daughter, which played such an important role in his private family mythology. Ludwig had written, “A quiet, distinguished library, lined with books, is made radiant by the portrait of a woman. It also inspires the man who in this room prepares his task of governing a great nation...”¹³¹ King “could not help but think how marvelously he had really delineated the real secret of my public life and work, the story of my mother, and how she becomes in a way the central point toward which the events of the early political history of Canada's struggle for self-government and from which came the evolution of free government not only in Canada but indeed for the different nations of the Empire, fulfilling the teaching that the weak things of the earth are the ones that confound the strong.”¹³²

In 1949 King also thoroughly read the manuscript of Reginald Hardy's *Mackenzie King of Canada*—“the life story of a great Canadian”¹³³ told by “one of Mr. King's sincere admirers”—and insisted Hardy omit references to his spiritualist practices and to his relationship with his

¹³⁰ Diary November 7, 1943 and April 15 and June 21, 1944. Reading several articles in *Maclean's*, including one on himself and his Cabinet in 1941, King had “discern[ed] clearly the efforts of the Tories to create a sort of fictitious personage out of myself. . . I do feel there is need for me to get more before the public and to have some kind of helpful government publicity in regard to myself. The worst of the latter is that I have to leave it to others to see that this service is performed.” Diary April 13, 1941.

¹³¹ Ludwig, 1.

¹³² Diary June 21, 1944. After his friend Cordell Hull, the former American Secretary of State, congratulated King for Ludwig's biographical sketch, he recorded that Hull counseled him “to get someone to write your biography in a large way while you can direct it. Otherwise later on people will write what they think themselves.” Diary December 31, 1945.

companion, Joan Patteson. Since St. Laurent rather than King was now Prime Minister, he also threatened legal action to prevent its publication under the title “Mr. Canada” because that title “was harmful to myself & the party.” Hardy in turn threatened, should the case come to court and he be called to testify, that he “would have to tell some things which he ‘suppressed.’”¹³⁴

When Oxford University Press published his biography under the revised title *Mackenzie King of Canada*, Hardy addressed the question of whether King—in writing his own memoirs—would be merely reinforcing the official mask constructed around his persona by himself and the Liberal Party. “The question is: will King, in writing his memoirs, produce an intimate, human document which will permit the secret recesses of his mind and heart; or will it be merely a serious, analytical and historical study of his own career as a public servant, political leader and Prime Minister?” From his own experience as a journalist and biographer, Hardy observed of King’s inner mask that “there are those who will say that King is emotionally incapable of baring his private life to the world. It has been said of him that he regards public display of personality as akin to the larger indecencies. Will he write about Billy King as well as about W.L. Mackenzie King, the statesman?”¹³⁵

But the creation and reinforcement of King’s public mask only continued after his death. In June of 1949 the Rockefeller Foundation, for whom King had been a senior labour consultant 1914-18, had awarded him a grant of \$100,000 [\$1,017,000 in 2014 dollars] to be used for “the production of studies in the public and private life of W.L. Mackenzie King, under his personal direction.”¹³⁶ King died a year later so his executors used the funds to commission three

¹³³ Hardy, viii.

¹³⁴ Diary January 7 and April 14 and 15, 1949. On October 12, 1949 King added of Hardy’s biography, “much in it I do not like—a cheap sort of thing—an effort at being sensational. I wish it had never been written.”

¹³⁵ Hardy, 360.

¹³⁶ Jean F Dryden, “The Mackenzie King Papers: An Archival Odyssey,” *Archivaria* 6 (Summer 1978): 50.

biographies.¹³⁷ In the introduction to the first volume, R. MacGregor Dawson wrote that the literary executors did “not desire a purely laudatory work, but a truthful account as written and interpreted by one who is in general sympathy with Mr. King and his work and career” (viii).

The literary executors also commissioned J.W. Pickersgill to edit four volumes of excerpts from Mackenzie King’s diaries.¹³⁸ Pickersgill was yet another Liberal politician who had a direct stake in protecting and constructing King’s public persona. He was seconded to Mackenzie King’s office from the Department of External Affairs in October of 1937, began assisting him in the preparation of his speeches in the summer of 1938 and was in the Prime Minister’s Office until King’s retirement in 1949. King appointed him one of his four executors. He became a special assistant to Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent, became clerk of the Privy Council in 1952, secretary of state in 1953 and also held Cabinet posts in the Lester Pearson government 1963-67. Pickersgill was the principal arbiter of access to the King papers from 1968 to 1977 when, upon his insistence, he and another executor, Robert Gordon Robertson, Clerk of the Privy Council 1963-75, personally burned the separate spiritualism diaries King kept from 1932 to 1948.¹³⁹ King’s spiritualist papers were not opened to the public until January 1, 2001. In her detailed study of the Mackenzie King Papers, Jean Dryden concluded that “by keeping the sensitive parts of the personal series closed...the Executors sought to keep the emphasis on the political side of King’s career.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ R. MacGregor Dawson, *William Lyon Mackenzie King: A Political Biography 1874-1923* and H. Blair Neatby, *William Lyon Mackenzie King: Volume II The Lonely Heights, 1924 -1932* and *William Lyon Mackenzie King: Volume III The Prism of Unity 1932-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958, 1963, 1976). Dawson had won a Governor General’s Literary Award in 1947 for *The Government of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1946) and in 1949 for *Democratic Government in Canada* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1949).

¹³⁸ J.W. Pickersgill, *The Mackenzie King Record. Volume 1, 1939-1944*, (and with D.F. Forster) *The Mackenzie King Record. Volume 2, 1944-1945*, *The Mackenzie King Record. Volume 3, 1945-1946* and *The Mackenzie King Record. Volume 4, 1947-1948* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960, 1968, 1969, 1970).

¹³⁹ Dryden, 63, 66, 57. Fortunately King recorded his dream visions and spiritualist beliefs and practices in his regular diary on an almost daily basis so that his relationship to the occult can be clearly established.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 66, 68.

Like the King biographies published in the 1920s, 30s and 40s, the official biographies commissioned by King's literary executors focused on the major political events during his life. The four volumes of excerpts from King's diaries similarly excluded references to his private life and involvement in the arts and highlighted King's importance as a politician and statesman. Even in this endeavour, Pickersgill could not refrain from shielding King from criticism via his editorial pen. The Canadian government had supplied the American military with the uranium used to develop the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August of 1945 after gaining control of Eldorado Gold Mines Limited in July of 1942 and nationalizing the renamed Eldorado Mining and Refining Limited in January of 1944.¹⁴¹ When he first heard that the Americans had dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, King wrote in his diary, "We now see what might have come to the British race had German scientists won the race [to develop the atom bomb]. It is fortunate that the use of the bomb should have been upon the Japanese rather than upon the white races of Europe."¹⁴² Pickersgill edited the published diary excerpt to read: "We now see what might have come to the British people had German scientists won the race....," omitting King's subsequent racist statement.¹⁴³ King's recent biographer, Allan Levine, decried Pickersgill's editing of "selective and sanitized excerpts from the diaries" and cited James Ears's assessment that their publication "in the bowdlerized and truncated form" in *The Mackenzie King Record* constituted "the Pacific scandal of Canadian letters."¹⁴⁴

The Unmasking of Mackenzie King

But not all writers and historians who had worked with Mackenzie King acquiesced in maintaining the mask of his public persona. Five years after King's death Henry Stanley Ferns, a member of his secretarial staff 1940-44, published, with Bernard Ostry, the first critical

¹⁴¹ See Robert Bothwell, *Eldorado: Canada's National Uranium Company* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 126, 149.

¹⁴² Diary August 6, 1945.

¹⁴³ J.W. Pickersgill and D.F. Forster, *The Mackenzie King Record. Volume 2, 1944-1945*, 451.

¹⁴⁴ Levine, 20-21.

biography of Canada's longest-serving Prime Minister, *The Age of Mackenzie King: The Rise of the Leader* (London: William Heineman and Toronto: British Book Service Canada, 1955). Throughout his career, King had positioned himself as the friend of workers and the labour movement. Ferns and Ostry charged that King essentially sold himself to corporate and state interests wanting to end strikes and work stoppages. The authors also highlighted King's prominent role in the formulation of the federal government's policies of excluding Japanese, Chinese and Indian workers from Canada following the anti-Asian riots in Vancouver in 1907.

When *The Age of Mackenzie King* was published, the biography was widely condemned by reviewers in Canada for blackening King's reputation. Ferns believed that many of these reviewers were supporters of the Liberal party. As he related in his autobiography *Reading from Left to Right*, the authors were impeded during their research for their biography when they were denied access to King's diaries and correspondence by his executors. Bernard Ostry had to threaten to go to the media when the Public Archives refused him further access to public papers since the King Estate had appointed an "official" biographer, R. MacGregor Dawson, to research and write his life story. Ferns wrote that at a time when the Liberals still formed the Government, "Monopoly was the policy of the literary executors of Mackenzie King because they wanted to see constructed an acceptable image *now* when the image would be of political advantage. If nothing more, they wanted 'the intellectual space' occupied at once so that alternative interpretations were impeded, delayed, or made impossible."¹⁴⁵ Ferns also charged that Pickersgill exerted government influence on the CBC to cancel a TV program about *The Age of Mackenzie King* initiated by Bernard Ostry.¹⁴⁶

Yet the official mask of King's public persona *was* rendered in part when in 1951 Blair Fraser, *Maclean's* Ottawa editor, exposed the extent of King's involvement with the occult in "The Secret Life of Mackenzie King, Spiritualist." Fraser revealed "the best-kept secret of his career:

¹⁴⁵ Henry S. Ferns, *Reading from Left to Right: One Man's Political History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 302.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 304-307.

the fact that the Prime Minister of Canada had been for more than twenty-five years a convinced and practicing spiritualist.”¹⁴⁷

Fraser’s revelation generated numerous newspaper articles across Canada that reported King’s spiritualist beliefs but nevertheless assured their readers that his beliefs and occult practices had not affected his actions in the political arena. “Argus” in *Le Devoir* cited these assurances by King’s executors and official biographer. “Ces familiers admettent que M. King s’adonnait au spiritisme, mais ils protestent qu’il ne s’en est jamais remis aux messages ou conseils des esprits pour orienter les affaires de l’Etat canadien.”¹⁴⁸ The general tone of the majority of this newspaper coverage followed that of a *Victoria Times* article published in 1950 after reports of King’s involvement with spiritualism first emerged in the July 22, 1950 *Psychic News* in London and in *Time Magazine*: “What has been said of him was true: He was a good man. Leave the rest.”¹⁴⁹

An even greater shock followed the publication in 1976 by the distinguished military historian C.P. Stacey of his revisionist biography *A Very Double Life: The Private World of Mackenzie King*. It further documented his spiritualist beliefs and occult practices as first revealed by Blair Fraser and enlarged public knowledge of King’s private life by exposing his romantic entanglements, King’s consorting with prostitutes and his strong sexual conflict.¹⁵⁰ Stacey had been granted partial access to the King diaries by his executors while researching his military histories and presented a completely different portrait of the Prime Minister than that constructed in the three “official” biographies and in the four-volume *Mackenzie King Record*.

¹⁴⁷ Blair Fraser, “The Secret Life of Mackenzie King, Spiritualist,” *Maclean’s Magazine* 64:24 (December 15, 1951), 7-8.

¹⁴⁸ Argus, “Le spiritisme de Mackenzie King,” *Le Devoir*, December 17, 1951.

¹⁴⁹ “Always on the Ground,” *Victoria Times*, October 25, 1950.

¹⁵⁰ C.P. Stacey, *A Very Double Life: The Private World of Mackenzie King* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1976). Stacey had won a Governor General’s Literary Award in 1948 for *The Canadian Army 1939-1945* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1948).

Michael Bliss was one of several historians who attacked Stacey for besmirching King's reputation. He charged that *A Very Double Life* "had immense impact in further vulgarizing the image of the man who was Prime Minister of Canada." And like the newspaper articles of the 1950s, Bliss asserted that King's private life, including his occult and sexual practices, had no effect on his political activities. "No one, including Stacey, had shown that these activities had the slightest effect on King's conduct of government."¹⁵¹

This dissertation argues on the contrary that King's sexual conflict and obsession with his peculiar mixture of Christianity and spiritualism produced a cult of ancestor- and self-worship that seriously damaged his relationship with Canadian artists and impaired Canadian culture in general. The dissertation will document that King primarily sought out and assisted artists who shared and reinforced his spiritualist beliefs, subordinated art for his own emotional needs as a medium of communication "beyond the veil," and demanded exact verisimilitude in artistic representation for this purpose rather than valuing varieties of individual artistic self-expression. This innate artistic conservatism and demand for realism made King violently opposed to artistic innovation, modernism and degrees of abstraction as represented by the Group of Seven painters and other artists.

This dissertation therefore argues that aspects of King's personality and beliefs *did* greatly affect his relationship to the arts and culture in Canada. As William Henry Moore suggested in his 1935 *Mackenzie King*, "For me, King's personality merges in his work, and I simply cannot distinguish between them...I doubt if anyone can successfully disassociate Mackenzie King from his work."¹⁵²

In the next chapter, "Mackenzie King's *Habitus* and Pierre Bourdieu's Concept of Social and Cultural Capital," I will begin to deconstruct the outer and inner masks created by King and his biographers from the 1920s to the 1970s. The chapter will begin to analyze the causal factors of

¹⁵¹ Bliss, 124-125, 128.

¹⁵² William Henry Moore, *Mackenzie King* (Toronto: Printers Guild, 1935), 12.

aspects of King's personality and beliefs as they relate to culture and the arts using Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*. Bourdieu's theory unravels the enigma of Mackenzie King and solves my central research question: why did King's half-century-long direct involvement with artists and the arts—both in Canada and internationally—fail to make him a champion of the arts? Why did he not follow his idols, Matthew Arnold and British Prime Minister William Gladstone, and support state assistance for arts and culture? Instead, why did he become still another Mackenzie King Canadians never knew—the failed Medici?

Chapter II:

Mackenzie King's *Habitus* and Pierre Bourdieu's Concept of Social and Cultural Capital

In her memoir *Friendship's Harvest*, Violet Markham, the English writer, Liberal politician and Mackenzie King's benefactor and lifelong friend, recalled that "No figure in contemporary history has excited more diverse views, or given rise to such contradictory estimates of character. I sometimes thought his personality might be likened to a set of Chinese boxes which fit so surprisingly into each other, each box different in size and colour and yet making a perfect whole."¹⁵³ Vincent Massey, one of King's few rivals in the political and cultural field over two decades, similarly wrote in his memoirs that "I knew Mackenzie King probably as well as anyone. I was one of the few people who addressed him by his nickname, 'Rex.'" Yet Massey added regarding his relationship with King while President of the National Liberal Federation in the early 1930s and as High Commissioner to Great Britain 1935-46 that "I often failed to receive his complete confidence, and to me he was often quite incomprehensible...It was not easy to serve as complicated a being as Canadian public life has ever produced."¹⁵⁴

As outlined in Chapter I, the enigma of Mackenzie King resulted largely from his construction of an outer political mask and a second inner mask that obscured his relationship with artists and hid his spiritualist pursuits. In this and the next chapter, I will analyze what Pierre Bourdieu would have called Mackenzie King's *habitus*—his internalized structuring aesthetic dispositions resulting from socialization within his family, educational and religious background, and past and present experiences. These elements of King's *habitus* are some of the "boxes" Violet Markham referred to which she believed composed a "perfect whole." In this chapter I will also discuss the role of social and cultural capital in the formation of King's *habitus* and rise to political power.

¹⁵³ Violet Markham, *Friendship's Harvest* (London: Max Reinhardt, 1956), 144.

¹⁵⁴ Vincent Massey, *What's Past Is Prologue: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Vincent Massey* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1963), 447, 448. I examine the rivalry between King and Massey in chapter X.

Reginald Whitaker has suggested that “Any attempt to make Mackenzie King’s mind a unified and harmonious whole is akin to squaring a circle.”¹⁵⁵ This dissertation does not contend that an examination of King’s life through a Bourdieusian lense could determine the “essence” of his character and personality. But an examination of King’s cultural and political *habiti* does provide us with a considerable degree of predictive ability about his actions in these fields and illuminates my central research question. Why did King—despite his almost daily reading of literature, listening to music on the radio, attending theatre, opera, and music performances, galleries and film screenings, surrounding himself with paintings and sculpture, and commissioning artists in Canada, Germany, France, Italy and England—not enact cultural policies to assist Canadian artists and Canadian culture?

When the CBC radio culture critic Arthur Phelps described the presentation of the artists’ *Brief* by sixteen national arts organizations to the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment in June of 1944, he reported that someone in the audience commented, “Here begins the revolution,” and that another voice added, “Yes, but not the bloody kind; a Canadian kind.”¹⁵⁶ Yet the concepts and methodology Pierre Bourdieu first derived from his analysis of the anti-colonial struggle for national liberation in Algeria¹⁵⁷ are also applicable to the struggle for power and symbolic capital by Canadian artists in the first half of the twentieth century. In this dissertation I analyze works of art collected by Mackenzie King in his residences and examine them as symbolic objects and signifiers. In particular, I consider what they signified to King, how that meaning was generated by his aesthetic *habitus* and why that *habitus* failed to generate cultural policies when he was Prime Minister. I focus primarily on works of art assembled by King at Laurier House, his residence in Ottawa bequeathed to him by

¹⁵⁵ Reginald Whitaker, *A Sovereign Idea: Essays on Canada as a Democratic Community* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), 48.

¹⁵⁶ Arthur Phelps, June 25, 1944 *Canadian Pattern* broadcast.

¹⁵⁷ See Michael Grenfell, “Algeria” in his *Pierre Bourdieu: Agent Provocateur* (London: Continuum, 2004); Jeremy F. Lane, “Peasants into Revolutionaries?” in his *Pierre Bourdieu. A Critical Introduction* (London: Pluto Press, 2000); and Pierre Bourdieu, “The Kabyle House or the World Reversed” in his *The Logic of Practice*. Richard Nice, trans. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990). Algeria won its independence in 1962.

Lady Laurier, where he lived from January 1923—a little more than a year after becoming Prime Minister—to his death in 1950.

In a 1961 publication, the Public Archives of Canada, the repository of King's private and public papers, described his study and workroom on the third floor of Laurier House and concluded that "one might almost say that Canada was governed for twenty-two years from this room."¹⁵⁸ King decorated virtually all of Laurier House with works of art and other objects that had special symbolic significance for him.¹⁵⁹ King's half-century long collecting of paintings, sculpture, other works of art, books and photographs closely relate to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the accumulation of cultural and symbolic capital. As he wrote in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, "Of all the conversion techniques designed to create and accumulate symbolic capital, the purchase of works of art, objectified evidence of 'personal taste', is the one which is closest to the most irreproachable and inimitable form of accumulation, that is, the internalization of distinctive signs and symbols of power in the form of natural 'distinction', personal 'authority' or 'culture'."¹⁶⁰ King's more than five decades-long contact with artists and his collecting and purchasing of works of art instilled within him the belief that he was the paramount cultural authority and arbiter of artistic taste in Canada.

¹⁵⁸ Public Archives of Canada. *Laurier House: Former Residence of Two Prime Ministers of Canada, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Rt. Hon. W.L. Mackenzie King* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1961), 5.

¹⁵⁹ These significations by works of art also applied to King's residence on his Kingsmere estate and to his Parliamentary office. As he was about to sign Canada's declaration of war against Germany in September of 1939, "I suddenly lifted my eyes off the paper and was surprised to see my grandfather's bust immediately opposite, looking directly at me—the eyes almost expressing a living light. He was the one person in my thoughts as I affixed my signature to the order-in-council." Diary September 9, 1939. When he spoke to the Parliamentary Press Gallery in May of 1948 about his eventual retirement, he assured reporters he would not be resigning as Prime Minister at once but "would wish to have time myself to remove a few pictures from the walls." J.W. Pickersgill and D.F. Forster, *The Mackenzie King Record. Volume 4, 1947-1948* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 285. Seeing the bust of his grand-father in his office a year later during his last day in the House of Commons, he "could not refrain from reverently and quietly kissing its lips, realizing what his life had meant to mine and what I trust mine has meant to him." Diary April 30, 1949.

Bourdieu's Definition of *Habitus*

Pierre Bourdieu hypothesized that “mental structures are internalized social structures.”¹⁶¹ By analyzing King’s socialization within his family and university studies, we can begin to comprehend the development of his beliefs and dispositions. In his *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Bourdieu posited that practices are produced by a *habitus* and defined *habitus* as “a socially constituted system of cognitive and motivating structures” and as “the universalizing mediation which causes an individual agent’s practices, without either explicit reason or signifying intent, to be none the less ‘sensible’ and ‘reasonable.’” According to Bourdieu, a social agent acts almost instinctively and unconsciously in a certain situation as a result of past experiences in similar situations and according to his or her perception as to the best chance for achieving the highest beneficial outcome.

Despite its embodied structure, the *habitus* does not replace conscious reasoning. As Bourdieu further outlines, *habitus* constitutes “a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a *matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions* and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks, thanks to analogical transfers of schemes permitting the solution of similarly shaped problems, and thanks to the unceasing corrections of the results obtained, dialectically produced by those results.”¹⁶² Like habit formation in the basal ganglia section of the human brain, the *habitus* thus

¹⁶⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Richard Nice, trans. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 282.

¹⁶¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Sociology in question*. Richard Nice, trans. (London: Sage, 1993), 61.

¹⁶² Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 76, 79, 82-83. Bourdieu states further that “The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively ‘regulated’ and ‘regular’ without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to

also has a time-saving function. Charles Duhigg cites scientific studies which found that “more than 40 per cent of the actions people performed each day weren’t actually decisions, but habits...behavioral habits prevent us from becoming overwhelmed by the endless decisions we would otherwise have to make each day.”¹⁶³ William James had already made an even more far-reaching observation in the chapter “The Laws of Habit” in his *Talks to Teachers on Psychology*, which King studied at Harvard at the end of the 1890s. “Ninety-nine hundredths or, possibly, nine hundred and ninety-nine thousandths of our activity is purely automatic and habitual, from our rising in the morning to our lying down each night,” James suggested. “*For this we must make automatic and habitual, as early as possible, as many useful actions as we can, and as carefully guard against the growing into ways that are likely to be disadvantageous.*” James’s conclusion that “we are thus mere bundles of habit”¹⁶⁴ anticipates Bourdieu’s analysis of various *habiti* of the kind I am investigating in this dissertation.

In his concluding remarks to *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives*, the French sociologist asserted that his theory of practice which he had developed over a period of three decades was never intended to be merely read as a theoretical treatise but was intended to be tested by being put into practice.¹⁶⁵ I am engaging in such a testing of Bourdieu’s theoretical concepts by applying them to the empirical reality presented by Mackenzie King’s diaries and other primary and secondary sources. This is the kind of “*comprehension through use*” and the development of “a *modus*

attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor.” (72) He defined *disposition* as “first the *result of an organizing action*, with a meaning close to that of words such as structure; it also designates a *way of being*, a *habitual state* (especially of the body) and, in particular, a *predisposition*, *tendency*, *propensity*, or *inclination*.” (214, fn. 1.)

¹⁶³ Charles Duhigg, *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do and How to Change* (London: William Heinemann, 2012), xvi, 202.

¹⁶⁴ William James, *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on Some of Life’s Ideals* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 48. Italics in original, citing James’s chapter “Habit” in his 1890 *Principles of Psychology*. See William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 126.

¹⁶⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, “Concluding Remarks: For a Sociogenetic Understanding of Intellectual Works” in Craig Calhoun, Edward LiPuma, Moishe Postone, eds. *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 271-272.

operandi” that Bourdieu himself advocated.¹⁶⁶ The suitability of using Mackenzie King’s diaries to trace the development and maturation of his *habiti* is suggested by King’s own comment that “The purpose of this diary is mainly that of a study of the circumstances which occasion certain results and how best to determine the right course of action.”¹⁶⁷

The Victorian Family of John King

The basis for King’s *habitus* was established by his family upbringing, which helped to shape his cultural, political and religious values and sense of family honour for the rest of his life. His father, John King, had a distinguished academic and cultural background that strongly influenced his family. He received his BA and MA from the University of Toronto in 1864 and 1865, winning first prize for the best MA thesis, “Our English Shakspeare” [sic]. He was twice elected president of the University College Literary and Scientific Society and had also won first prize as English essayist and public speaker from the College. In his 1866 presidential inaugural address to the Literary and Scientific Society, he described its aims “to create a new spirit of inquiry” in terms similar to what Matthew Arnold would articulate as Hellenism in his *Culture and Anarchy* three years later. The Society’s members, King declared, claimed “to have an interest in all those successes which mark the progress of literature and science, wheresoever gained. We wish to be considered as humble followers of these—joined in an earnest endeavour to discover their great truths, whensoever and wheresoever met with in the wide circle of human knowledge.”¹⁶⁸ While still a student, he contributed to and briefly edited the Ontario *Berlin Telegraph* and “all his life... was a contributor to the newspaper press and other publications.”¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 271.

¹⁶⁷ Diary April 5, 1944.

¹⁶⁸ “*Inaugural Address Delivered Before the University College Literary and Scientific Society, by the President, John King, M.A., October 26, 1866* (Toronto: Globe Printing Company, [1866?]), 10.

¹⁶⁹ Murray W. Nicolson, *Woodside and the Victorian Family of John King* (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1984), 21 and John Lewis, *Mackenzie King the Man: His Achievements* (Toronto: Morang, 1925), 17.

After having been admitted to the bar in 1869, John King was appointed assistant law clerk of the Ontario Legislative Assembly and private clerk to the Speaker of the House but relinquished these positions to establish his own law practice in Berlin, Ontario, in 1870.¹⁷⁰ He married Isabel Mackenzie, the youngest of William Lyon Mackenzie's thirteen children, in 1872. Their children, Bella, William Lyon, Jennie and Max were born in Berlin in 1873, 1874, 1876 and 1878.

Although Berlin's population, according to the 1871 Dominion Census, was only 2,743—73% of which were German by ethnic origin—the town provided an unusually varied cultural environment. Starting in the early eighteenth hundreds, the surrounding area had been settled by Pennsylvania German Mennonites and by German tradesmen, artisans, craftsmen and industrialists emigrating from Germany from the 1820s to the 1870s. Both groups continued practicing their cultural traditions.¹⁷¹ Carl F. Klinck observes of particularly the Lutheran and Roman Catholic immigrants of the 1840s and 1850s that, “seen in historical perspective, the early Germans have the glow of an old world culture, a rich language, and arts which had taken centuries to develop.”¹⁷²

In his exhaustive study, *Woodside and the Victorian Family of John King*, Murray Nicolson established that the King family attended musical festivals and orchestral, choral and theatrical performances. “The Kings went to Toronto to see opera and grand concerts and, with the children... attended the German festivals and plays in Berlin.”¹⁷³ John King drafted the address on behalf of English-speaking residents for the May 2, 1871 *Friedensfest*, the peace and cultural festival with special concerts and German choirs, organized in Berlin to celebrate Germany's

¹⁷⁰ Nicolson, 21.

¹⁷¹ John English and Kenneth McLaughlin, *Kitchener: An Illustrated History* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1983), 31, 235, 9, 70.

¹⁷² Carl F. Klinck, “Early Theatres in Waterloo County: An Article Based Upon the *Berliner Journal*, 1859-1899,” *Waterloo Historical Society Annual Report* 39 (May 1951), 15.

¹⁷³ Nicolson, 31. Rev. James Francis Dickie, the minister of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Berlin who assisted at the Kings' marriage in Toronto on December 12, 1872, also recalled that the couple attended “a minstrel show together in Detroit.” Diary February 17, 1930.

victory over France in the Franco-Prussian War.¹⁷⁴ A photograph of the 1886 *Sängerfest*, the German choral festival, shows King seated front row centre before a large standing assembly of festival participants, suggesting his social standing in the community.¹⁷⁵ According to Gottlieb Leibbrandt, the orchestral and choral components of these festivals attracted audiences in the thousands from surrounding communities and attained a particularly high artistic standard. Theodor Zöllner organized the Berlin Philharmonic Society in 1883 and during the decade conducted works such as Haydn's *Creation*, Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, Mendelssohn's *Hymn of Praise* and *St. Paul*, and Handel's *Messiah*. By the 1880s, Berlin had become recognized as Canada's "German capital."¹⁷⁶

Murray Nicolson notes that following industrialization beginning in the 1820s, "Berlin became a highly developed industrial town with banks and insurance companies. It had all the components of a regional metropolis servicing the needs of a richly productive agriculture hinterland."¹⁷⁷ According to Henry Ferns and Bernard Ostry, "John King prospered moderately and soon came to occupy a position in the top strata of provincial society." As the attorney for the municipal and county authorities, counsel for the local bank and frequent Crown Prosecutor, "The volume of his private legal business was so great that he was obliged to open a branch office in the nearby town of Galt."¹⁷⁸ Yet John King's high social position was relative to society in Berlin and was much lower in a metropolis such as Toronto and in Canada as a whole. As Reginald Whitaker observed, King's "family was neither particularly wealthy nor especially prestigious in the eyes of high society or the corporate boardrooms of St. James and Bay Street. Indeed the King family

¹⁷⁴ Gottlieb Leibbrandt, *Little Paradise: The Saga of the German Canadians of Waterloo County, Ontario, 1800-1975* (Kitchener: Allprint Company, 1980), 166-170. English and McLaughlin, 32.

¹⁷⁵ English and McLaughlin, 51.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 50-52, xvii. Leibbrandt, 138,140.

¹⁷⁷ Nicolson, 15.

¹⁷⁸ Henry S. Ferns and Bernard Ostry, *The Age of Mackenzie King: The Rise of the Leader* (London: William Heineman and Toronto: British Book Service Canada, 1955), 12-13.

was something of a classic case of small town gentility swamped by the rising tide of new money which came with the industrialization of the country in the late nineteenth century.”¹⁷⁹

In order to acculturate his family to their social environment in Berlin, John King hired a German tutor to teach the family German as well as singing and piano to the children.¹⁸⁰ Isabel and John King belonged to the Glee Club while Bella and Jenny sang in the St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church choir. When Joan Patteson played hymns on Isabel’s piano in Laurier House in 1923, her playing brought back “the music of dear mother’s voice & the picture of father singing and Bell playing & the Sunday evenings at home in the past.” For Mackenzie King these memories were “worth more to me than words can express.”¹⁸¹ The Kings’ home “Woodside” on the edge of Berlin, where the family lived from 1886 to 1893, was decorated with engravings, paintings, sculpture busts and photographs. John King collected and wrote poetry, loved books and was particularly proud of his library. “This interest in literature,” Nicolson suggests, “became part of the inheritance bestowed upon the King children.”¹⁸² When he sent one of his father’s articles to the Governor General Viscount Willingdon and Lady Willingdon in 1927, Mackenzie King described it as “a splendid article” which revealed a “fine public man. Father had great & generous gifts in the matter of writing—might have been one of the country’s ablest writers &

¹⁷⁹ Whitaker, 48.

¹⁸⁰ Mackenzie King acknowledged Berlin’s ethnicity when he ran for Parliament in the riding of North Waterloo in 1908 by addressing a rally in Victoria Park in German at which he introduced Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier. Gottlieb Leibbrandt reproduces an English translation of the speech from the September 30, 1908 *Berliner Journal*, 192-193 and in the German original in *Little Paradise: Aus Geschichte und Leben der Deutschkanadier in der County Waterloo, Ontario, 1800-1975* (Kitchener: Allprint Company, 1977), 250-251. King defeated the sitting Conservative MP by 263 votes. The 1911 Census indicated that 66.5% of the 33,619 residents of North Waterloo County were of German origin. Dawson, 191, 214.

¹⁸¹ Diary February 25, 1923.

¹⁸² Nicolson, 36, 34, 38, 50, 25. After great controversy and public violence, Berlin’s name was changed to Kitchener on September 1, 1916 to counter anti-German sentiment during World War I. Lord Kitchener was a war hero and had been Great Britain’s Secretary of State for War. See English and McLaughlin, “Berlin Becomes Kitchener,” 107-134 and Rych Mills, *Kitchener (Berlin) 1880-1960* (Charleston, SC: Acadia, 2002), 8, 10.

authors. I feel grateful for his help & example in this as in much else, above all the example of a good life, noble purpose, aims & associations.”¹⁸³

In the late 1940s, both Mackenzie King and his only surviving sibling, Jenny, assisted with the restoration and recreation of their childhood home. According to Jennie, Woodside “had a great deal to do in giving us our love of beauty.” When he visited the former family home in 1947, King remembered vividly “how my father used to be writing poetry as well as working on his law cases way on into the night. I could see too what a tremendous influence that environment must have had on my thought and imagination.”¹⁸⁴ A year later he contemplated writing his memoirs in the form of chapters such as “home and its influence.”¹⁸⁵

Inspired by his father’s cultural interests, Mackenzie King became president of the Berlin High School literary society during his senior year in 1891 and, according to his first official biographer R. MacGregor Dawson, also “took part in amateur theatricals.” At Woodside, “plays—with liberal improvisations—were a favourite recreation, and Willie’s discovery after some time at collegiate that he could make coloured smoke greatly enhanced the dramatic effects.”¹⁸⁶ Isabel King had taught music and dancing before her marriage and supervised her children’s piano studies on her piano in the living room at Woodside. She also sketched and skillfully painted china.¹⁸⁷ The whole family engaged in outdoor reading sessions, drawing,

¹⁸³ Diary January 16, 1927. The article was “Horatio Nelson Lay: A Pioneer of British Influence in the Far East,” *Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 14:2 (1914).

¹⁸⁴ Nicolson, 10, 86. When he passed through Kitchener and saw Woodside while campaigning for the 1930 federal election, King recalled “a happy boyhood there” which “helped to bring me to my present position.” Diary July 25, 1930.

¹⁸⁵ J.W. Pickersgill and D.F. Forster, *The Mackenzie King Record. Volume 4, 1947-1948* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 427.

¹⁸⁶ R. MacGregor Dawson, *William Lyon Mackenzie King: A Political Biography 1874-1923* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958), 12, 11.

¹⁸⁷ King describes a dream vision before waking in his diary of August 21, 1940, which “seemed to relate to the painting of some china which I remember my mother did when I was a little child. I have always been very proud of it and have the plates still. Amongst other things, they represented oyster shells. Mother had done the painting herself and the plates were burnt in a kiln

painting, singing and dancing.¹⁸⁸ Despite their mother's cultural influence at Woodside, Murray Nicolson concludes that "Quite clearly the greatness of Mackenzie King was bequeathed from a brilliant father... From his library, two sons would be raised to love literature, education and social concern, reflecting his world-view. But most importantly, it was the environment in which one of Canada's future prime ministers would have his intellect sharpened."¹⁸⁹

In addition to his books, John King's cultural environment in Berlin also had an international connection through the journal *Canadian Monthly*, which published his remarkable fourteen-page MA essay, "Our English Shakspere," in December of 1876. Its breadth of knowledge of English history and culture, vivid comparisons between Shakespeare and European classical dramatists, acute observations of Shakespeare's dramatic style and characterizations, and ease of expression reveal the erudition of John King's mind that so impressed Mackenzie King.¹⁹⁰ The journal was part of John King's cultural and political studies, which enabled him to attain Matthew Arnold's ideal of "getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world."¹⁹¹ In 1876, for example, *The Canadian Monthly* featured substantial dramatic columns by the *Toronto Mail* theatre critic E.R. Parkhurst analyzing local and foreign professional touring productions in Toronto,¹⁹² "Literary Notes" announcing

at Galt. I remember being greatly interested in this as a child." Examples of Isabel King's painted china can still be seen at Woodside, designated a National Historic Park in 1954.

¹⁸⁸ Nicolson, 54.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. 25, 26. In 1944 King recalled of his father that "he must have had an exceedingly happy life at Woodside where he was at the height of his intellectual vigour." Diary December 16, 1944.

¹⁹⁰ See John King, "Our English Shakspere," *Canadian Monthly* 10:6 (December 1876), 501-514.

¹⁹¹ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. Jane Garnett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 5. In 1937 King recorded in his diary that "Father so often spoke of Dr. Arnold [Matthew Arnold's father, the headmaster of the famous Rugby School], held him up as an example." He particularly associated his father with Matthew Arnold's poem "Rugby Chapel" which he read on his father's birthday and on the anniversary of his death. Diary August 30, 1937 and August 30, 1917 and September 15, 1946.

¹⁹² See for example his "Music and the Drama" column in the October, November and December *Canadian Monthly*, Vol. 10, nos. 4-6, 1876. For an analysis of Parkhurst's cultural concerns, see Ross Stuart, "The Critic as Reviewer: E.R. Parkhurst at the *Toronto Mail* and *Globe*, 1876-1924"

the latest publications in Canada, the U.S., England and Europe; a “Current Literature” column discussing publications such as “Mr. Gladstone’s paper, in the *Contemporary Review*, on ‘The Courses of Religious Thought;’” original poetry and essays ranging from free thought to spiritualism.¹⁹³

According to Murray Nicolson, Mackenzie King’s parents also encouraged their children to enlarge their cultural horizons. They “encouraged reading, writing and musical skills and active discussions in a multitude of topics to give the children an expanded world view.”¹⁹⁴ In one of the early biographies vetted by Mackenzie King, John Lewis similarly affirmed that “there can be no doubt that among the formative influences of his life, in literary and academic pursuits and in disinterested public service, none were stronger than the example and stimulus of his father. From earliest childhood the library was the meeting place for the members of the household. There, books and the daily press were read aloud and public affairs freely discussed.”¹⁹⁵

It was also John King, rather than his mother, who first introduced his son to Canadian painters. Mackenzie King counted among his earliest childhood memories his father driving a horse-drawn carriage from Berlin to Doon, Ontario, to visit the Canadian artist Homer Watson in 1882. “I well recall the day,” he wrote in his diary, “when sister and I drove with Mother to visit the Perrys and called at Homer Watson’s home and how impressed I was at seeing his paintings and the friendship that existed between my father and himself.”¹⁹⁶ King recalled the visit as “my first acquaintance with an artist” and that “reverence for his work was implanted in my soul then by

in Anton Wagner, ed. *Establishing Our Boundaries: English-Canadian Theatre Criticism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

¹⁹³ George Hague, “Some Jottings on Free Thought and Kindred Topics, From a Practical Point of View,” and Mrs. R. Corson, “Spiritualism,” *Canadian Monthly* 10:1 (July 1876).

¹⁹⁴ Nicolson, 35.

¹⁹⁵ Lewis, 19. Owen Ernest McGillicuddy, *The Making of a Premier: An Outline of the Life Story of the Right Hon. W.L. Mackenzie King, C.M.G.* (Toronto: Musson, 1922), 13.

¹⁹⁶ Diary September 9, 1947. According to Watson’s biographer, Muriel Miller, “John King had already prophesied that Homer Watson would become one of Canada’s outstanding painters and the two met often.” See Muriel Miller, *Homer Watson: The Man of Doon* (Toronto: Summerhill Press, 1988), 40.

dear father.”¹⁹⁷ He also noted that it was his father “who secured [John Wycliffe Lowes] Forster for the family portraits.”¹⁹⁸ Forster painted a portrait of Christiana MacDougall, John King’s mother, at the turn of the century, King’s mother in 1901, his father and King himself in 1902 and his mother again in 1905.

The rich cultural environment in Berlin and in King’s family home that transmitted high esteem for music, painting and literature were the impetus for King’s cultural pursuits and accumulation of cultural capital during and after his university studies. Establishing this early cultural stimulus only deepens the enigma of why King did not support Canadian artists and Canadian culture when he was in a position to do so as Prime Minister.

Oedipus or *Habitus*

Murray Nicolson’s research into King’s upbringing is significant because it undermines the assumption that many of King’s practices were generated by an Oedipus complex that began in his childhood. As poet Dennis Lee phrased it in his 1974 *Alligator Pie*, “William Lyon Mackenzie King / Sat in the middle & played with string, / And he loved his mother like anything— / William Lyon Mackenzie King.”¹⁹⁹ Joy Esbrey, in her 1980 biography *Knight of the Holy Spirit: A Study of William Lyon Mackenzie King*, confidently affirmed that “the record reveals a classical pattern of oedipal conflict with its associated idealization of the mother and rejection of the rival male.” According to Esbrey, in dealing with his parents King was frequently “acting out the oedipal fantasy characteristic of an early age.”²⁰⁰ Charlotte Gray, in her 1997 biography of King’s mother, *Mrs. King: The Life and Times of Isabel Mackenzie King*, similarly observed that “The idea of a son admiring his mother’s underclothes is stunning to a modern sensibility, and the undertones of their relationship are clearly erotic. The passion that

¹⁹⁷ Diary June 18, 1933.

¹⁹⁸ Diary January 24, 1932.

¹⁹⁹ Dennis Lee, “William Lyon Mackenzie King” in his *Alligator Pie* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1974), 28.

was suppressed by the banality of Isabel's marriage was given full rein with Willie."²⁰¹ And in his 2011 biography Allan Levine still asked, "Did Mackenzie King suffer from one of the worst cases of Oedipus complex ever chronicled, as is generally believed?" Levine concluded that "Reading the gushing depictions of Isabel in King's diary, or some of her letters to him or other members of the family about him, is not only uncomfortably revealing of their mother-son intimacy but also makes it difficult to dispute that this relationship was beyond the norm even given Victorian sensibilities."²⁰²

Murray Nicolson challenged the characterization by Bruce Hutchison and other biographers of Isabel King as the dominant figure in Mackenzie King's childhood. "Quite clearly the emphasis placed on the relationship of Isabel King with her son has been distorted, a phenomenon that developed in Mackenzie King's middle age... There is no doubt that a fixation grew between Willie and his mother. But this was a post-Woodside phenomenon." Nicolson affirms that John King was the central figure in Mackenzie King's early formative years. "It was in the library at Woodside that the early thrust to social idealism and service to mankind was initiated. John King was the motivating force in the development of his children's minds."²⁰³

The Beginnings of King's Religious *Habitus* and Magical Thinking

Mackenzie King's religious faith and spiritualist beliefs that feature so prominently in his later life were also significantly determined by his family upbringing. Charlotte Gray writes of Isabel Mackenzie's religious background that "For Scots Presbyterians like the Mackenzies, the Sabbath was not a day of rest and joyful hymn-singing. It was a day to reflect on their sins and misdemeanours and the slim hope that, despite their wicked thoughts and actions, after death

²⁰⁰ Joy E. Esbrey, *Knight of the Holy Spirit: A Study of William Lyon Mackenzie King* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 11, 16-17.

²⁰¹ Charlotte Gray, *Mrs. King: The Life and Times of Isabel Mackenzie King* (Toronto: Viking, 1997), 248.

²⁰² Allan Levine, *King: William Lyon Mackenzie King—A Life Guided by the Hand of Destiny* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2011), 34.

²⁰³ Nicolson, 96, 27, 96.

they might find themselves among the elect in Heaven.”²⁰⁴ John King was deeply religious, a non-drinker, and active in the St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Berlin for twenty years as secretary of its board of management. According to Murray Nicolson, “Another link which bound the family together and formed a major part of the socializing aspects of the King home was their profound belief in their religion and interest in their church...there were several religious paintings in the home and...the religious feasts were celebrated in a solemn way with the reading of selected literature.”²⁰⁵ King and his siblings attended Sunday school, and with their parents, Sunday services in the morning and evening. King’s sisters Jenny and Bella taught Sunday school at St. Andrew’s. This generational transmission of religious beliefs is also illustrated by King’s recollection of reciting Psalm 40 from the Scottish Psalter to his mother as a child and receiving “a penny for learning paraphrases by heart.”²⁰⁶

While both Isabel and John King socialized their children in conventional religious beliefs, Isabel also nurtured Mackenzie King’s emotional belief in magical thinking that exerted such a strong influence in his later life. Nicolson notes that at Woodside, “When the children were young Isabel read and told fairy tales to them at bedtime.” King recalled an even earlier residence in Berlin on Margaret Street where the family lived from 1878 to 1886 and hearing his mother “tell in bed, stories of the life of Christ and crying as a child when we came to the part of His Crucifixion.”²⁰⁷ After attending Sunday communion on his birthday in 1905, he recorded that “as always happens” he “was unable to sing through the paraphrase ‘Twas on that night’ without crying bitterly. Ever since a little child, the sacrifice and love of our Saviour as portrayed in that hymn has moved me deeply.” He added that “The tragedy of the Cross is very real to me; the pain of it, is in the love that was misunderstood, and the injustice. One cannot think of the

²⁰⁴ Gray, 6. Dawson, 17.

²⁰⁵ Ibid. 20, 54, 38. It is worth noting that according to the 1871 Dominion Census, only 5.2% (or 143 persons) of Berlin’s population were Presbyterian while 1,184 Lutherans composed 43.2%. See English and McLaughlin, 248.

²⁰⁶ Diary April 24, 1938. King cites one of these paraphrases he learned as a child in his June 21, 1937 diary: “He took me from a fearful pit, and from the miry clay, and on a rock, set my feet, establishing my way.”

²⁰⁷ Nicolson, 36, 39.

sadness of the heart of Christ who loved those who crucified him without grief. It is impossible to imagine anything more tragic.”²⁰⁸ He also recalled the story told by his mother of going to see a black fortune teller in Kingston when she was a girl of seven in 1850. She correctly predicted that when Isabel returned home she would discover that her brother had narrowly escaped drowning while canoeing and also rightly predicted that another girl accompanying Isabel would make a very unfortunate marriage.²⁰⁹

Isabel’s superstitious folk belief in fortune tellers persisted for decades and was an activity also engaged in during social occasions with friends at Woodside. Bella wrote Mackenzie King in 1893 that their mother wanted “to get the fortune teller to tell our fortunes. I don’t know whether it is right or wrong.”²¹⁰ The town of Berlin had in fact passed a by-law in 1873 prohibiting (along with vagrants, mendicants, prostitutes and gamblers) “every person pretending or professing to tell fortunes or using any subtle craft, means or device, by palmistry or otherwise to deceive or impose upon any person.”²¹¹ King assimilated his mother’s supernatural folk belief in fortune tellers. In 1896 he paid \$1 to Mrs. Menden, an old fortune teller in Toronto, “who told my fortune in a remarkable manner” and “told me some strange truths.”²¹² He also recalled having been taken to see a phrenologist as a child and was again astonished when he had his head read for a shilling by the phrenologist O’Dell at the London Phrenological Institute in England in 1900. He had initially gone to see O’Dell “as a sort of joke to take advantage of the rate offered to persons of limited means” but afterwards concluded that “All that he said as to faults, as to acceptance of beliefs, facts, opposition, desire to lead & impress men etc. I think is true.”²¹³

²⁰⁸ Diary December 17, 1905.

²⁰⁹ Diary March 22, 1946. The incident appears to have occurred when William Lyon Mackenzie returned with his family from exile in the U.S. and briefly stayed with his brother-in-law George Baxter on his farm near Kingston before settling in Toronto in May of 1850.

²¹⁰ Nicolson, 32.

²¹¹ English and McLaughlin, 49, 216.

²¹² Diary May 2, 1896. Among the dozen accurate observations by Mrs. Menden recorded by King in his diary was that he “was fond of intellectual girls & did not care particularly for dances.”

²¹³ Diary May 15, 1948 and January 11, 1900. Among the detailed observations of O’Dell’s reading recorded by King was that “my reason controlled my lower nature” and that “I was

Paul Craven noted an example of King's magical thinking at the very beginning of his diary in 1893 during his third year at the University of Toronto. Craven referred to King's "first contact with the supernatural: for seven nights in a row he opened his Bible to 'Chapters in which I found some verse which spoke of my going into the ministry.'" ²¹⁴ On one of these King recorded, "Last night again I read a similar verse directing me to go into the ministry. This has been the most wonderful revelation I have ever known." ²¹⁵ F.A. McGregor, King's secretary for fifteen years who transcribed his handwritten diaries from 1893-1935, wrote in his biography that opening a book at random had become an enduring "practice of his." On the morning of the balloting at the 1919 Liberal Leadership Convention that would elect him Leader of the Liberal Party, "His first impulse on waking was to reach for his book of devotional readings, *Daily Strength for Daily Needs*, to see what 'message' it might have for him on this momentous day, what augury for good or ill it might reveal, what word that could be interpreted as divine guidance." King "was always resentful of any scoffing of 'unbelievers' so blind as not to see, as he did, that the divine will could be revealed through such common-place acts as the opening of a book." Recording these "messages" in his diary he admonished sceptics, "Look ye who doubt, and say whether or not ye believe there is a God who rules the world." ²¹⁶

There are several references in King's diaries where he recalls incidents during his childhood of magical thinking, the belief that wishing or praying for something can bring about desired effects, and countless indications that such beliefs extended to his adult life. In 1917, eleven months before his mother's death, he refused to accept the prognosis of doctors that his mother was dying.

domestic in my tendencies & would like home life but that most women would not interest me. I needed a woman whom I believed to be better than myself."

²¹⁴ Paul Craven, *'An Impartial Umpire': Industrial Relations and the Canadian State, 1900 - 1911*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 60. See references in King's diary November 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

²¹⁵ Diary November 13, 1893.

²¹⁶ F.A. McGregor, *The Fall & Rise of Mackenzie King: 1911-1919* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1962), 342.

I was thinking today of the time as a child I prayed to save a kite from escaping & the string was caught in the clover. I prayed for a dog 'Gyp' that was lost and found him in a street in Waterloo. I prayed for [his brother] Max's recovery from typhoid after the doctors gave him up in 1893 & he recovered. I prayed again in regard to his tuberculosis after the Drs. including Dr. Gibson said there was no hope. Now after the doctors have said the same regarding mother, I see her recover now. God grant she may keep my faith strong despite my fatigue & help me to continue to pray.²¹⁷

In his *Canada's King: An Essay in Political Psychology*, Paul Roazen commented that "King's tendency towards magical thinking was obviously marked even if it rarely seemed to surface politically."²¹⁸ George Serban, in his *The Tyranny of Magical Thinking: The Child's World of Belief and Adult Neurosis*, related magical thinking to primitive man's belief in animism, the thinking of children, neurotics and believers in religion as well as to dissociative psychological states. He also noted that "the specific patterns of adult thinking are rooted in childhood thinking."²¹⁹

William Lyon Mackenzie and "Little Old Grandpa"

In addition to fairy tales and Biblical stories, Mackenzie King was also "rocked to sleep with his mother's tales of her rebel father's exploits."²²⁰ While Joy Esbrey challenged the conventional view that "Willie learned of his grandfather's deeds and beliefs at his mother's knee" and suggests that "the role of Mackenzie in his grandson's life has been consistently overrated,"²²¹ Bruce Hutchison more convincingly characterizes Mackenzie, along with King's father, as "the two men most responsible for King's public career." "It was the dead grandfather, more than anyone else," Hutchison asserted, "who, through the sole agency of his daughter, made King into

²¹⁷ Diary January 29, 1917. When King, in a March 10, 1939 diary entry, described praying and using faith healing to cure his ailing terrier Pat he noted, "That belief started as a child in the finding of my little dog 'Gyp' when I could not have been more than 10 or 12 years old."

²¹⁸ Paul Roazen, *Canada's King: An Essay in Political Psychology* (Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic Press, 1998), 133.

²¹⁹ George Serban, *The Tyranny of Magical Thinking: The Child's World of Belief and Adult Neurosis* (New York: Dutton, 1982), 141.

²²⁰ Reginald Hardy, *Mackenzie King of Canada* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), 5.

²²¹ Esbrey, 15.

a Prime Minister. The feverish specter of the Canadian Rebel, William Lyon Mackenzie, haunted the infant and dogged the man. The mother made sure of that.”²²² Ferns and Ostry agreed with Hutchison that Isabel King’s “pride in her father’s memory was one of the great experiences of her son’s life which partly explains the enormous importance Mackenzie King came to attach to his mother as the presiding deity of his household and his life itself.”²²³

John Courtney, in his study of King’s character, agreed with Hutchison and Ferns and Ostry that through the influence of his mother, King came to identify with William Lyon Mackenzie as “a surrogate father, in this case the idealized grandfather as presented to King through his mother’s fantasies.” “Mrs. King’s tales made an indelible impression on the mind of her young child. William Lyon Mackenzie King bore more than his grandfather’s name. As a child, King was charged, subtly and discretely, with the responsibility of righting a wrong, of correcting an injustice...there ‘was a score to be settled’ on her family’s behalf.”²²⁴ MacGregor Dawson cited a November 28, 1897 letter from King to his parents that refers to this early inspiration by Mackenzie. “I have thoughts again of an old ambition—one I used to feel as a very little child—that Canadian politics was a splendid field for work. I sometimes hope that in future years I may be able [to] represent a cause which I love as none other, an upholder of the rights of the many against the privileges of the few.”²²⁵

Some of King’s biographer’s disagreed whether it was his mother or father who named their son William Lyon Mackenzie.²²⁶ There was agreement, however, that King in his boyhood was called “the Rebel” by other schoolmates and “little old grandpa” by his siblings for his

²²² Bruce Hutchison, *The Incredible Canadian: A Candid Portrait of Mackenzie King: His Works, His Times, and His Nation* (Toronto: Longmans, 1952), 12.

²²³ Ferns and Ostry, 14.

²²⁴ John C. Courtney, “Prime Ministerial Character: An Examination of Mackenzie King’s Political Leadership” in John English and J. O. Stubbs, eds. *Mackenzie King: Widening the Debate* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1977), 63, 61. Dawson, 27-28.

²²⁵ Dawson, 69.

²²⁶ Charlotte Gray (68) wrote that John King selected the name; Allan Levine, in his *King* (28), posited that Isabel King insisted on William Lyon Mackenzie.

sanctimonious lecturing about how they should lead their lives.²²⁷ In one of the first biographies, Owen McGillicuddy quoted King recalling that “The story of my grandfather’s struggles in the early history of Ontario fired my imagination, and I must admit that from time to time I had dreams of representing North York some day.”²²⁸ William Lyon Mackenzie—in addition to Jesus Christ—evolved from King’s magical thinking into one of his leading life narratives as he carried this dream of an heroic Mackenzie from childhood to adulthood.

When he read Charles Lindsey’s *The Life and Times of William Lyon Mackenzie* as a twenty-year-old in 1895, he “could feel his blood coursing through my veins.” “I can feel his inner life in myself. I have greater desire to carry on the work he endeavored to perform, to better the condition of the poor, denounce corruption, the tyranny of abused power and uphold right and honorable principles.”²²⁹ In 1905 he informed Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier that he wanted to leave the civil service and run for public office. He explained “that the influence of my mother’s father had been strong in my life” and that “as a child I had hoped & prayed for the opportunity to take up the work he had left and to carry it on, revealing its true significance to the world.”²³⁰

Four days after he was first elected as a Liberal Member of Parliament in 1908, King informed Laurier that he had inherited through his mother “a hatred for injustice and love for the poor & a determination to vindicate the justice of the cause Grandfather contended for. Sir Wilfrid said he expected to [see] me go to the very front & rapidly.”²³¹ As if anticipating Pierre Bourdieu’s definition of *habitus* as “structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures,” Bruce Hutchison concluded that from childhood, “King was becoming vaguely in his own mind a product of history and a future maker of it.”²³²

²²⁷ Hutchison, 16; Nicolson, 36, 34; Dawson, 14; Levine 28; Gray, 82.

²²⁸ Owen Ernest McGillicuddy, *The Making of a Premier: An Outline of the Life Story of the Right Hon. W.L. Mackenzie King, C.M.G.* (Toronto: Musson, 1922), 14. Also quoted in Hardy, 5.

²²⁹ Diary June 17 and June 22, 1895.

²³⁰ Diary November 4, 1905.

²³¹ Diary October 30, 1908.

²³² Hutchison, 16.

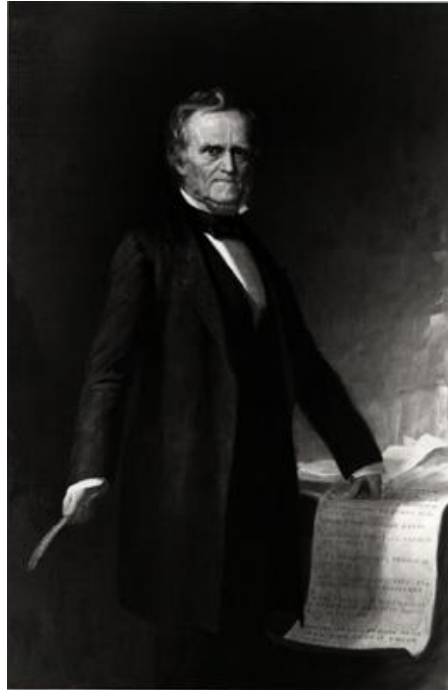
We can observe an example of this influence of his parents' beliefs and of works of art in their home—as well as King's own propensity to reify what he considered to be heroic individuals in works of art—when he placed a bust of Mackenzie in the Prime Minister's Office in the Parliament Buildings in 1937. As he recorded in his diary, "I remember, as a little lad, having the thought that my grandfather's bust ought to be in the Parliament Buildings, at Ottawa. This as long ago as the days when I saw it in the Normal School Buildings, Toronto, at the age of 16 or thereabouts," i.e. in 1891 when he began attending the University of Toronto and for the first time visited Mackenzie's grave. King added that "I brought with me, from our old home in Toronto, a bust of Mackenzie which was over my father's library case at Woodside, when we were living in Berlin. I have had it in my bedroom at Laurier House since I came to reside here...That vision of youth has been fulfilled beyond all that one could possibly have dreamed."²³³

As will be discussed in the next chapter, this making and the writing and rewriting of history also involved works of art and their public display in an effort to increase the esteem of the persons depicted, primarily in paintings and sculptures. King was delighted recording in his diary in 1900 that "the city council of Toronto has voted \$250 for an oil portrait of grandfather to be hung in the new city hall."²³⁴ The *Toronto Globe* acclaimed J.W.L. Forster's full-sized portrait of William Lyon Mackenzie; it devoted two full pages to the painting and its subject and enumerated the reform measures of the petition to the King Mackenzie holds in one hand: "Responsible government," "Representative reform," "Legislative control of the Revenue," "Legal Sale of Public Lands," "Secularization of the Clergy Reserves," "Establishment of Municipal Councils," "Abolition of Exclusive Ecclesiastical Privileges," "Exclusion of Judges from the Executive Council and the Legislature," "Impeachment of Public Servants who Betray Their Trusts." The Liberal paper also endorsed the call by a leading Conservative newspaper that a monument be erected in Mackenzie's honour and that a replica of Forster's portrait be placed in

²³³ Diary December 31, 1937.

²³⁴ Diary April 24, 1900.

the Ontario Legislature.²³⁵ According to Murray Nicolson, John King had “tried to promote a movement to honour Mackenzie and to have a portrait of him placed in the Ontario legislature.”²³⁶ The Premier of Ontario, George Ross, subsequently implemented this suggestion by having Forster paint a copy of his portrait for the legislative building.²³⁷



J.W.L. Forster's 1900 William Lyon Mackenzie portrait.

King hung another portrait of Mackenzie by Forster “which gave me much pleasure” in his residence in Ottawa in 1907. But he was disappointed by a replica which Forster painted for the Public Archives in 1931, demonstrating his characteristic insistence on controlling not only the content but also the form of works of art: “head too large, body too small, background too bright, colourings too vivid, features too stern & tense, no repose... What I dislike most is the

²³⁵ “Toronto’s First Mayor. W.L. Mackenzie’s Portrait on Walls of New City Hall. Reminiscences. Scenes Recalled by the Picture. Mackenzie’s Career,” *Toronto Globe*, December 22, 1900, 1, 5, 6.

²³⁶ Nicolson, 37.

²³⁷ J.W.L. Forster, *Under the Studio Light: Leaves from a Portrait Painter’s Sketch Book* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1928), 92.

modernistic colouring, a sort of electric blue colouring playing over it all. The old man I fear had tried to add some note of originality and has spoiled the work.”²³⁸



Walter Allward's 1940 bust of William Lyon Mackenzie.

King was greatly interested in Nathaniel Benson's short play about Mackenzie, *The Patriot*, and invited Benson and his wife, along with Nellie McClung, to luncheon at Laurier House in 1938.²³⁹ Three days later he unveiled the bas relief sculptures of William Lyon Mackenzie and other participants in the 1837 Rebellion created by Emmanuel Hahn that were featured on the Pioneer Memorial Arch in Niagara Falls.²⁴⁰ In 1940 he again inscribed his grandfather among the pantheon of Canada's great founding statesmen with Walter Allward's Mackenzie monument, erected outside the Ontario legislature in Queen's Park in Toronto. He also frequently spoke about Mackenzie in private and in public speeches. After 1933, Mackenzie in turn frequently spoke to King from the beyond in spiritual séances over "the little table."

²³⁸ Diary October 13, 1907 and April 7, 1931.

²³⁹ Diary July 23, 1933, February 28, 1938 and June 15, 1938. See Nathaniel Benson, *Three Plays for Patriots* (Ottawa: Graphic, 1930). King describes visiting the Bensons in their small apartment on April 27, 1938.

King's religious/spiritual *habitus* did not generate irrational practices centered around his mother until the period of World War I, though their genesis can be noted much earlier. For Murray Nicolson, it was John rather than Isabel King or William Lyon Mackenzie as a "surrogate father" who first launched King in the direction of Christian service and social and political reform that led to his premiership of Canada. "Willie carried John King's concept of the social gospel with him when he left Woodside... The religion Willie had been taught in John King's household remained with him and often served to resolve his troubled mind."²⁴¹

Social and Cultural Capital

Nicolson's assertion that King's father—rather than his mother—exerted the formative influence on Mackenzie King until the 1900s is strongly supported by Pierre Bourdieu's concept of social and cultural capital and their influential role in agents' lives.

Bourdieu expanded the traditional monetary meaning of capital—referring to an economic resource that can be used to generate further wealth—to include symbolic forms of capital such as social, cultural, intellectual, political and religious capital. He believed financial capital could be transformed into sub-types (such as social and cultural capital) and vice versa via "a wider anthropology of cultural exchanges and valuations." Cultural capital can be objectified in the form of cultural goods or galleries and museums or embodied through education, family background, "taste" and the desire for the recognition of distinction.²⁴² Social capital can be accumulated through "useful or prestigious network relations" to attain mutually beneficial interests.²⁴³ Analyzing the interactions and cross-affiliations of leading cultural figures and other intellectuals, collectors and patrons that generated the creation of social networks and social capital in Canada before 1918, Laurier Lacroix concluded that "The constitution of groups and

²⁴⁰ Diary June 18, 1938.

²⁴¹ Nicolson, 69.

²⁴² Robert Moore, "Capital" in Michael Grenfell, ed. *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts* (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008), 102, 104, 106.

²⁴³ Michael Grenfell, "Methodological Principles" in *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, 222.

the resulting ‘connectedness’ are expressions of the feelings of trust and identification between individuals that make a society more creative.”²⁴⁴ In his editor’s introduction to Bourdieu’s *The Field of Cultural Production*, Randal Johnson summarizes that cultural capital “participates in the process of domination by legitimizing certain practices as ‘naturally’ superior to others.”²⁴⁵

Isabel Mackenzie King possessed little financial, social or cultural capital. She embodied the stigma of her father, the leader of the failed 1837 Rebellion that led to the deaths of dozens in battle, the arrest of over eight hundred on the charge of high treason, the indictment of one hundred thirty four rebels for treason, the hanging of Samuel Lount and Peter Matthews in Toronto and seventeen rebels in Kingston and London, Ontario, and the sentencing of ninety-two others to servitude in the Van Diemen’s Land penal colony in Australia, where thirteen died.²⁴⁶ William Lyon Mackenzie was not included in the pardon of rebels in 1843 and was not pardoned until 1849.

Isabel Mackenzie had been born in poverty in New York City in 1843 during her father’s twelve-year-long exile. When Mackenzie died in 1861, Isabel, her two sisters and their mother were again living in debt in the house on Bond Street in Toronto that had been purchased by her father’s supporters in 1859. Over three thousand people had contributed a total of \$7,000 to purchase the Bond Street property.²⁴⁷ But as Charlotte Gray writes in her biography *Mrs. King*, “Once her father died...the Mackenzie’s social circle gradually contracted.” Isabel’s marriage in 1872 to John King, who had established his legal practice in Berlin, enabled her to escape her

²⁴⁴ Laurier Lacroix, “The Pursuit of Art and the Flourishing of Aestheticism Amidst the Everyday Affairs of Mankind” in Charles Hill, general ed. *Artists, Architects & Artisans: Canadian Art 1890-1918* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2013), 44.

²⁴⁵ Randal Johnson, “Editor’s Introduction: Pierre Bourdieu on Art, Literature and Culture” in Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*. Randall Johnson, ed. (Columbia University Press, 1993), 24.

²⁴⁶ Barry Wright, “The Ideological Dimensions of Law in Upper Canada: The Treason Proceedings of 1838” *Criminal Justice History* 10 (1989), 138, 135, 139, 171. See also Mark Frank, *1837 Rebellion: A Tour of Toronto and Nearby Places* (Toronto: Red Robin Press, 1993), 71.

poverty and low social status. Her mother, however, who died the same year, had willed the Bond Street house to Isabel's two unmarried sisters so that she was "left completely dependent on her husband."²⁴⁸

The significant role of social and cultural capital is even more clearly evident in John King's life. He, too, had lived in poverty after his Scottish-born father, a professional soldier in the British Royal Artillery, died of consumption four months before John King's birth in Toronto in 1843. His penniless widowed mother found refuge in the home of her brother, Dougall McDougall, a writer on reform politics for George Brown's *Globe* and other publications, as well as a newspaper editor, publisher and one of the founders of the Canadian Press Association in 1859. McDougall purchased the *Berlin Telegraph* and German-language *Der Deutsche Canadier* (The German Canadian) in 1857. He not only provided the financial means for John King to pursue his university studies but was also a role model to both John and Mackenzie King through his involvement in reform politics, journalism and public service as county registrar.²⁴⁹ By the time of Mackenzie King's birth in December of 1874, his father had practiced law in Berlin for five years and because of his Scottish background, education and profession was part of the elite in Berlin society. As Murray Nicolson notes, "The leading English-speaking families who formed an urban cultural elite in Berlin were of English and Scottish descent... what divided them from the majority German population was their professional status, superior education and their social class."²⁵⁰

Mackenzie King's parents strove to achieve a high social and economic status that would be commensurate with John King's position as a lawyer. But because the majority of Berlin's

²⁴⁷ Nancy Luno, *A Genteel Exterior: The Domestic Life of William Lyon Mackenzie and His Family* (Toronto: Toronto Historical Board, 1990), 97.

²⁴⁸ Gray, 45, 56. Luno, 107.

²⁴⁹ Nicolson, 13, 20, 21. When he addressed the House of Commons Parliamentary Press Gallery after having been awarded a life membership on his 70th birthday in 1944, King recalled that his father had been a member of the Canadian Press Association as early as 1876 and had been presented with an oil portrait of himself by the CPA in 1895. Diary December 16, 1944 and January 31, 1895.

population was German-speaking, limiting John King's legal practice, the family struggled economically to adhere to their middle-class social position. They rented rather than owned their large house and could not always afford to employ a maid. Charlotte Gray speculates that King's reputation was damaged when he sued the editor of the Berlin *Daily News* in 1879 in order to defend his uncle Dougall McDougall from charges of standing bail for a prostitute so that her lists of clients (possibly including John King himself) would not be made public. He won a judgment of \$100 plus costs against the paper but, according to Gray, "the scandal dogged John King all his life."²⁵¹

He relocated his family in 1893 when he was offered a part-time lectureship on criminal law and evidence in the Law School of Upper Canada at Osgoode Hall and established a legal practice in Toronto. Yet he continued to be in debt and in February of 1900 his paintings, including a couple of Homer Watsons, were nearly seized because he had failed to repay a chattel mortgage on the paintings for \$300.²⁵² He had also mortgaged the family's furniture and taken out loans against his life insurance. By the mid-1890s when Mackenzie King had begun endowing himself with cultural capital and status through three University of Toronto degrees, he was becoming greatly disappointed that his father had failed to establish a successful legal practice and was no longer "a great man inspiring his sons to noble effort." "He has not made more of himself & does not do so now... he dawdles away his time & his life... lives as though he were a gentleman at leisure, when he is in debt."²⁵³ When he settled his father's estate upon his death in 1916, King considered that the "one shortcoming of his life" was "the failure to keep income above outlay at all times."²⁵⁴

²⁵⁰ Nicolson, 12, 14.

²⁵¹ Gray, 76, 199. English and McLaughlin, 48, 216.

²⁵² Dawson, 22, 82. Gray, 206-208. Nicolson 57. Nicolson gives the date as 1902.

²⁵³ Diary September 22, 1898.

²⁵⁴ Diary October 18, 1916. While he did not have a flourishing legal practice, John King did become an expert in the law of libel and slander and published over a dozen articles and books on the subject. Mackenzie King recalled in 1944 that his father had "at one time retainers for some 40 newspapers including Maclean's magazines." Diary December 16, 1944.

In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Pierre Bourdieu theorized that classes with limited economic capital but rich in cultural capital invest in their children's education in order to maintain and increase the family's overall capital. He wrote that, as was the case with John King, "The members of the professions (especially doctors and lawyers), relatively well-endowed with both forms of capital, but too little integrated into economic life to use their capital in it actively, invest in their children's education but also and especially in cultural practices which symbolize possession of the material and cultural means of maintaining a bourgeois life-style." According to Bourdieu, such cultural practices "provide a social capital, a capital of social connections, honourability and respectability that is often essential in winning and keeping the confidence of high society, and with it a clientele, and may be drawn on, for example, in making a political career."²⁵⁵ This is precisely what occurred in King's family and in Mackenzie King's own rise to political power.

Social and Cultural Capital in Mackenzie King's Career: An Overview

An overview of the role of social and cultural capital in the accumulation of King's political capital and rise to power is illuminating in itself. Such an initial examination also begins to reveal the formidable opponent Canadian artists would have to overcome when they challenged the economic, social and political status quo in the late 1930s and 1940s through their demands for federal government support for arts and culture.

John King provided the financial and cultural capital—augmented by Mackenzie King's scholarships, tutoring of German and French (at 50 cents an hour) and freelance journalism—that enabled his son to obtain his BA, L.L.B and MA from the University of Toronto in 1895, 1896 and 1897 and his MA from Harvard in 1898. He also assisted with the medical studies of King's

²⁵⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 120-121.

brother Max who received his M.D. from the University of Toronto in 1902 after returning from the Boer War.²⁵⁶

John King had stressed the importance of cultural capital in his 1866 address to the University College Literary and Scientific Society. “Those riches of mind which are to be found in the great Commonwealth of Letters” and “such elements of mental and moral vigour as are here sought to be developed” were essential, he suggested, not only for progress in Ontario but also for “that true national greatness” of the Confederation of the provinces which was about to follow.²⁵⁷ Mackenzie King was also well aware of the value of his father’s library as cultural capital, both in Berlin and after the family moved to Toronto. According to Murray Nicolson, “he referred to his home in Toronto as one of the ‘Library Houses,’ for the library had been transferred from Woodside and continued to be a focal point in the household.” When he returned to Woodside in 1947, King still recalled that “It was the library at Woodside and the library at 4 Grange Road which was most in my thoughts.”²⁵⁸

In her chapter on Mackenzie King in *Friendship’s Harvest*, Violet Markham suggested that “He had made his own way in the world without the smallest adventitious help from influence, wealth, or social position.”²⁵⁹ This was hardly the case. Markham herself described in her autobiography *Return Passage* how when Governor General Lord Grey first introduced the two at a dinner party in Rideau Hall on Trafalgar Day in Ottawa in 1905, he had endowed King with social and political capital. “During the evening Lord Grey crossed the room and said to me: ‘There’s a young man here I want you to meet—he’ll be Prime Minister of Canada some day.’”

²⁵⁶ Nicolson, 63. Charlotte Gray, “Dr. Max King: the sad life and early death of Mackenzie King’s physician brother,” *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 158:8 (April 1998), 1066.

²⁵⁷ “*Inaugural Address Delivered Before the University College Literary and Scientific Society, by the President, John King, M.A., October 26, 1866,*” 9,7.

²⁵⁸ Nicolson, 8, 30.

²⁵⁹ Markham, 146.

And so I found myself shaking hands with a stranger whom I described in my diary ‘as a most charming and able young man, full of the right ideals’—Mackenzie King.²⁶⁰

MacGregor Dawson described the nature of the social and political capital Earl Grey provided to King as “an opening to be mentioned here, a recommendation to be made there, a word of advice in season.”²⁶¹ King himself recorded in his diary that when he informed Prime Minister Laurier two weeks after meeting Violet Markham that he wanted to leave the civil service to enter politics, Laurier replied that the Governor General had also made such a recommendation to him. “I was dining on Thursday night with His Excellency, Earl Grey, and he was talking of your work and of yourself and said to me, that young man should be in politics.”²⁶² Earl Grey was also responsible for the Commander of the Order of St. Michael and St. George conferred on Mackenzie King in 1906 by King Edward VII. The Governor General had already objectified his esteem for King’s talents and future political career by giving him as a Christmas present the six-volume *Life and Writings of Joseph Mazzini* (London: Smith, Elder, 1891) by Giuseppe Mazzini, the Italian revolutionary who fought for the unification of Italy.²⁶³

And when King, still Deputy Minister of Labour, travelled to London in March of 1908 to lobby the British government to restrict the immigration of Indians to Canada, Earl Grey wrote Lord Elgin, the Colonial Secretary, vouching that “You will find Mackenzie King...a satisfactory person to talk to. He is level-headed and well-informed, and absolutely straight.” King’s status as a representative of the Canadian government (and also as a special envoy of President Theodore Roosevelt who wanted to halt the immigration of Japanese to America) endowed King with enormous political capital, which provided him with numerous contacts with leading government officials, politicians in government and in opposition, aristocrats and social reformers. Already in 1908 the British MP Andrew Bonar Law—himself a future Prime Minister in 1922—predicted to

²⁶⁰ Violet Markham, *Return Passage* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 82 and in her *Friendship’s Harvest*, 143. Diary May 15, 1944.

²⁶¹ Dawson, 190.

²⁶² Diary November 4, 1905.

former Prime Minister Arthur James Balfour that “‘You will welcome Mr. King some day as the Prime Minister of Canada’—to which Balfour gave the courteous reply that he hoped so.” The same year, Earl Grey convinced Wilfrid Laurier to send King as the government representative on a five month-long mission to the International Opium Commission in Shanghai, China, with side trips to Peking and Bombay, India, in an attempt to pressure those countries to restrict emigration of their nationals to Canada.²⁶⁴

In addition to John King, Earl Grey was but one of many individuals, along with Postmaster-General William Mulock, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Violet Markham, Charles William Eliot (the president of Harvard University), John D. Rockefeller Jr. and Peter Larkin, the wealthy founder of the Salada Tea Company and treasurer of the Ontario Liberal Association, who provided King with political, financial, social or cultural capital at crucial turning points in his career. John King’s journalism and service as president of the North Waterloo Reform Association had brought him in contact with leading politicians, newspaper editors and intellectuals. He was on friendly terms with Sir Oliver Mowat, the attorney-general and Liberal premier of Ontario 1872-1896, William Ritchie, chief justice of the Supreme Court, John Willison, editor of the *Toronto Globe* 1890-1902, and the historian and critic Professor Goldwin Smith.²⁶⁵

John King’s newspaper contacts facilitated his son’s search for part-time freelance journalism for the *Globe* in 1893 and subsequently for the *Mail*, *Empire* and the *News*.²⁶⁶ Of course not all of his social networking was successful. In the mid-1890s, he failed when he attempted to use his connection with George Ross, the Ontario Minister of Education, to secure a position for

²⁶³ Diary January 21 and March 4, 1906. Dawson, 174. The six volumes are located in the Laurier House library, call numbers FE.50.709.1-FE.50.709.5.

²⁶⁴ Dawson, 151, 152-160, 161, 176.

²⁶⁵ Lewis, 18. Gray, 67, 103. Ferns and Ostry, 345, 346. Levine, *King*, 30-31.

²⁶⁶ In 1948 King commented how strange it was that he was just leaving to be a pall bearer at the funeral of Joseph Atkinson, the editor and owner of the *Toronto Star*, when Atkinson had been a pall bearer at his father’s funeral in 1916. “There has been a very close association between families there from earliest days.” Diary May 10, 1948. On the founding of the *Star*, see Allan Levine, *Scrum Wars: The Prime Ministers and the Media*. (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1993), 48-49.

Mackenzie King in the provincial government and again was unable to secure a fellowship for King at the University of Toronto, even with the support of William Mulock, George Ross and John Willison.²⁶⁷ He was also unsuccessful in securing a judicial appointment for himself even though William Ritchie reminded Prime Minister Laurier of his work for the North Waterloo Reform Association, his contributions as a public speaker for the Liberal party and his journalism “for Liberal papers in the counties of Waterloo, Wellington, Perth, Kent, Lennox and Addington and York.”²⁶⁸

But when Mackenzie King arrived at Harvard to study for a second MA degree in September of 1897, he brought a letter of introduction from Goldwin Smith to Charles Eliot Norton, Harvard professor of the history of art, cousin of the University president Charles W. Eliot, and, according to McGregor Dawson, “probably the most distinguished American scholar of his day.” “His friendship will be invaluable,” King wrote his father. “I stood on the pinnacle of Cambridge, and Cambridge you know stands on a high elevation.” Smith had also written King a letter of introduction to Professor William Ashley, the former chair of political science at the University of Toronto who had transferred to Harvard.²⁶⁹ John King had befriended Goldwin Smith through his association with the Canadian Press Association as early as 1876. The Kings’ home on 147 Beverley was near the Smiths’ mansion on The Grange (the original building for the present Art Gallery of Ontario) and in 1904 they became even closer neighbours when they rented a house on 4 Grange Road.²⁷⁰

John King had also befriended William Mulock, “one of the most important men in the Liberal Party in Ontario, and one of the shrewdest and richest men in the community,” while attending law school at Osgoode Hall in the 1860s. Mulock was first elected to Parliament in 1882 (in North York, the riding William Lyon Mackenzie had represented) and served as Postmaster-General 1896-1905 and as the first Minister of Labour 1900-1905 in Wilfrid Laurier’s

²⁶⁷ Nicolson, 70.

²⁶⁸ Ritchie to Laurier, January 31, 1901 cited in Ferns and Ostry, 13.

²⁶⁹ Dawson, 75, 29, 70-71.

²⁷⁰ Nicolson, 23. Gray, 264.

government.²⁷¹ John King and Mulock had served for many years together in the University of Toronto Senate and the Kings frequently spent Christmas with the Mulocks. Robert Blackburn suggests that Mackenzie King was virtually a Mulock operative during the student strike of 1895, dramatized by James Reaney in *The Dismissal*.²⁷² At the turn of the century, King's sister Jenny served as chaperone for the Mulock family and as a paid companion for Mrs. Mulock and John King chaired a fundraising committee for a portrait of Mulock in honour of his service as University of Toronto vice-chancellor.

So when Mackenzie King wrote an exposé in 1897 while studying at Harvard of the starvation-wages “sweating system” in the Canadian garment industry—including work for government contracts with the post office department for postal uniforms—John King convinced his son to discuss the matter with William Mulock before publishing the article.²⁷³ Mulock took immediate steps to begin to remedy the worst abuses of starvation sub-contracting for government contracts and commissioned Mackenzie King to conduct an investigation and suggest measures for further governmental reform. King's *Report to the Honourable the Postmaster General of the Methods Adopted in Canada in the Carrying out of Government Clothing Contracts* was published by the Government Printing Bureau in 1899. When he sailed from Boston for Europe at the end of September 1899 on a Harvard travelling scholarship, he carried with him introductions obtained by his father from Mulock to novelist and playwright Gilbert Parker and Lord Strathcona,

²⁷¹ Ferns and Ostry, 13, 346.

²⁷² James Reaney, *The Dismissal or Twisted Beards & Tangled Whiskers* (Erin, Ontario: Press Porcepic, 1978). Blackburn writes that “William Lyon Mackenzie King, a fourth-year student who was a principal speaker at two pre-strike rallies, was in touch behind the scenes with his father's friend, William Mulock, establishing political credit with the man who was to call him to Ottawa and make him a deputy minister only five years later.” See Robert H. Blackburn, “Mackenzie King, William Mulock, James Mavor, and the University of Toronto Students' Revolt of 1895,” *Canadian Historical Review* LXIX:4 (1988), 490.

²⁷³ Hardy, 38, 39. Nicolson, 59, 71-72. Gray, 189-196. Dawson, 65-70. See [Mackenzie King], “Toronto and the Sweating System,” *Toronto Daily Mail and Empire*, October 9, 1897, Part 2, p. 10.

Canada's High Commissioner in London, and to William Faber, the Canadian government representative in Paris.²⁷⁴

He also carried a letter of introduction from Goldwin Smith to the Bodleian librarian at Oxford “in which he speaks of me as ‘his friend.’” Jane Addams, founder of Hull House in Chicago, the first settlement house in the U.S. where King had been a resident while studying at the University of Chicago prior to entering Harvard, provided an introduction to the reformer Percy Alden, first warden of the Mansfield House Settlement in east London. Her “fine letter... was a very pleasant one, written as to a friend and in kindest terms.”²⁷⁵ William Cunningham, professor of economic history at Cambridge and London University who taught King at Harvard in 1899, also gave King an introduction. John and Isabel King had hosted the Cunninghams during their visit to Toronto, including a luncheon reception at the Kings' home attended by Rev. Armstrong Black and Professor Clark of Trinity College. Goldwin Smith was unable to attend the event because of a bad cold. In his diary King recorded that “Had he been there the greatest minds at Toronto at that time would probably have all been at the one table together, scholars of world repute.”²⁷⁶ William Ashley, King's professor of political science at Harvard, wrote King an introduction to the Fabian reformers Sidney and Beatrice Webb and advised him to take quarters at the Passmore Edwards Settlement in London.²⁷⁷ Furthermore, according to MacGregor Dawson, in his social networking in England, “King's friendship with Charles Eliot Norton gave him an invaluable *cachet*, for Norton's reputation stood high.”²⁷⁸

Mackenzie King's reactions to the numerous paintings and sculpture he saw in galleries, churches, palaces and public squares in England and on the continent will be discussed in a later

²⁷⁴ Gray, 194. His father also sent him a certificate of identification from Mayor Shaw of Toronto. “It bears the city seal & gives reasons for my mission abroad.” Diary October 11, 1899.

²⁷⁵ Diary September 19, 1899.

²⁷⁶ Diary September 20 and 24, 1899. Dawson, 74.

²⁷⁷ Diary September 25, 1899. Dawson, 29, 70-71, 84. King had studied the Webbs' *Industrial Democracy* (London: Longmans, Green, 1897) at Harvard. Sidney Webb was one of the founders of the London School of Economics and with Beatrice Webb an early member of the Fabian Society.

chapter. Nine months after he sailed for Europe, William Mulock invited King to accept the editorship of the *Labour Gazette* in Ottawa and used his father to pressure King to accept his offer rather than a teaching position at Harvard. Two months later, on September 15, 1900, King was appointed Deputy Minister of Labour under Mulock and held that position until he himself was sworn in as Minister of Labour in Laurier's government on May 10, 1909.

King lost his seat in September of 1911 when Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal government was defeated by Robert Borden and the Conservatives over the issue of free trade with the United States. After heading the federal Liberal Information Office for two years and editing the *Canadian Liberal Monthly* (at an annual salary \$2,500), King's connection with Harvard brought him out of the political wilderness and catapulted him into the top ranks of American capitalism. A bitter strike at the Rockefeller-controlled Colorado Fuel and Iron Company resulted in the infamous Ludlow Massacre in April of 1914 when the Colorado National Guard attacked 1,200 striking coal miners. In that armed confrontation and subsequent Colorado Coalfield War, dozens of miners, their wives and children, and mine guards were killed. The multi-millionaire Rockefellers—John D. Rockefeller, Sr. was commonly referred to as the richest man in the world—faced a public relations disaster and badly needed a labour conciliator with extensive labour relations expertise such as King had acquired in the Department of Labour. Charles W. Eliot, President Emeritus of Harvard, was a trustee of the Rockefeller Foundation—with John D. Rockefeller, Jr. as president—which had assets in excess of \$100 million.

The invitation to King to come to New York for a consultation came from Jerome Greene, secretary of the Foundation, who had been secretary to President Eliot at Harvard. Eliot telegrammed King at “perhaps the most critical [moment] of my whole life.” He pressed upon him that the “opportunity offered by request to you from Rockefeller group is immense. You might greatly serve all white race industries and shew way [sic] to industrial concord in whole world. I urge that you inform yourself fully about the opportunity and then seize it. Well worth a temporary abandonment of Canadian prospects.” King had been disinclined to associate himself

²⁷⁸ Dawson, 88.

with the Rockefellers but Eliot's strong advice made him reconsider. As he recorded in his diary, "From no other man in the world, saving alone Sir Edward Grey [the British Liberal statesman and Foreign Secretary], could a message of the kind have meant as much."²⁷⁹ According to Rockefeller's biographer Raymond Fosdick, "On the recommendation of Charles W. Eliot, King was selected to head the research."²⁸⁰

King accepted the position of head of the Rockefeller Foundation's Department of Industrial Relations at an annual salary of \$12,000 [\$246,000 in 2014 dollars]. He worked for the Foundation until the end of 1918, writing under its auspices his magnum opus *Industry and Humanity: A Study in the Principles Underlying Industrial Reconstruction*, published by Houghton Mifflin in New York and Thomas Allen in Toronto in 1918. His success as a labour consultant for the Rockefellers led to lucrative contracts for industrial investigations for companies such as Standard Oil of Indiana, International Harvester, Great Western Sugar, Consolidation Coal, General Electric and Bethlehem Steel. King's income for 1918 was \$22,000 [\$322,000 in 2014 dollars] which, as he reflected, "surely is achievement in a financial way quite undreamed of."²⁸¹

Summary

Pierre Bourdieu theorized that the practices of social agents "(whether individuals, groups or institutions)" are determined by the relations of their *habiti* and the amount of capital they possessed within a specific social arena or "field" of practice.²⁸² Mackenzie King's career and rise to power demonstrates how symbolic forms of capital such as cultural, social and political capital can transform into one another to produce still greater amounts of capital which in turn can be transformed into financial capital via what Robert Moore referred to as "a wider

²⁷⁹ Diary December 31, 1914, page 6. Dawson, 227-232. F.A. McGregor, *The Fall and Rise of Mackenzie King: 1911-1919* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1962), 93, 94.

²⁸⁰ Raymond B. Fosdick, *John D. Rockefeller, Jr.: A Portrait* (New York: Harper, 1956), 153. Levine, 89-91.

²⁸¹ McGregor, 271-272.

anthropology of cultural exchanges and valuations.”²⁸³ As the revisionist historians Henry Ferns and Bernard Ostry observed sarcastically, “He told Rockefeller he was indispensable to Laurier and he told Laurier he was indispensable to Rockefeller.”²⁸⁴

John King had invested a great amount of capital in creating a cultural environment for Mackenzie King in Berlin and in supporting his university education. It was this cultural and intellectual capital that Governor General Earl Grey recognized in King, since “his knowledge extended to topics familiar to very few in the civil service [King’s field of practice at the time], which underwent its first genuine reform only in 1908, all offices hitherto having been filled largely through patronage.”²⁸⁵ Reginald Whitaker summarized the intellectual capital of the early King by stating that his general reputation “among contemporaries was that of a bright young man with advanced ideas.”²⁸⁶

King also used the social capital provided by his father, Earl Grey, and many others to increase his cultural and political capital. He was able to transform this cultural and political capital into significant financial capital working for the Rockefellers and other leading American industrialists. His work for John D. Rockefeller, Jr. also provided him with significant additional social and political capital. As Raymond Fosdick noted, “what began as a business relationship was soon to grow into a lifelong friendship...King had proved to be not only an indispensable guide but probably the closest friend JDR Jr. would ever have.”²⁸⁷

King’s social and cultural capital derived from his association with Rockefeller immediately led to an offer in December of 1918 from Mrs. and Mr. Andrew Carnegie for King to become the director of the Carnegie Corporation, with its endowment of \$130 million. The annual salary

²⁸² Karl Maton, “Habitus” in Michael Grenfell, ed. *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, 51-53.

²⁸³ Robert Moore, “Capital” in Michael Grenfell, ed. *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, 102.

²⁸⁴ Ferns and Ostry, 334.

²⁸⁵ Dawson, 148.

²⁸⁶ Reginald Whitaker, *A Sovereign Idea: Essays on Canada as a Democratic Community* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), 47.

²⁸⁷ Fosdick, 154, 171.

offered was \$25,000. There was an additional offer to write Carnegie's biography (he would die a year later in 1919) for \$100,000 [\$1,465,000 in 2014 dollars]. King fully recognized the great amount of financial, social and political capital the directorship of the Carnegie Foundation offered: "to meet the best people of the world, to be in touch in a commanding way with the affairs of the world on the subjects which I have most at heart, industrial peace, international peace, social well-being." But he also realized that that capital would largely derive from his position in New York rather than being created by himself and his *habitus* in the field of Canadian politics and he decided to return to Canada. For "to be a benefactor with someone else's money is not as noble a part as giving one's own life in the service of others. It is life service that must be my part to be true to myself and my traditions."²⁸⁸

Following the death of Laurier in 1919, King capitalized on the political capital he had accumulated from supporting Laurier's anti-conscription policy during World War I and refusing to join Conservative Prime Minister Robert Borden's Unionist Government. He had been defeated as a Liberal candidate over the issue of conscription in the December 1917 federal election. But because of his loyalty to Laurier, he won the 1919 Liberal Party leadership contest with the overwhelming support of Quebec delegates. Laurier had told King when the Rockefeller Foundation first made its offer in 1914 that "it will be a stepping stone to something else."²⁸⁹ To win the Liberal Party leadership, King branded himself as the Laurier loyalist and labour-management conciliator who could lead the Party into the future, citing many of the recommendations he had made in his *Industry and Humanity*. By winning the Liberal Party

²⁸⁸ McGregor, 272-275. King had been first introduced to the Carnegies by the British Quaker MP Allan Baker in 1917. At that meeting Carnegie's confidential secretary, John Poynton, informed Carnegie "that I had been spoken of as a future premier of Canada." Diary March 7, 1917. King had first met Baker when he arranged a luncheon meeting for him with Wilfrid Laurier on Laurier's 73rd birthday to discuss the outbreak of World War I. Afterwards Baker "wrote Carnegie a strong letter in reference to myself; he wants Carnegie to know me better, that I may help to further the peace work through him, particularly with reference to the churches." Diary November 20, 1914. The Carnegie Corporation also controlled other endowments such as the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Learning and the Carnegie Peace Foundation of which Harvard University President Charles W. Eliot was one of the founding trustees.

²⁸⁹ Diary March 7, 1917.

leadership, King transformed his increased cultural capital gained from working for the Rockefellers and other major American industrialists into political capital. As he replied to the congratulatory wire from John D. Rockefeller, Jr. after winning the Party leadership, “but for all that your great and generous nature has made possible within these difficult years, I should neither be in the position I am today, nor be in a condition of body and mind to bring to the tasks ahead the energies they demand.”²⁹⁰

This conveyance and convertibility of financial, political, social, intellectual and cultural capital is also demonstrated by King’s relationship with other leading figures and institutions in his career. It can hardly be a coincidence that Charles W. Eliot and Harvard University granted King a Ph.D. at his request in 1909 a few days before he joined Wilfrid Laurier’s Cabinet as Minister of Labour without King actually having written an original Ph.D. thesis.²⁹¹ Violet Markham, “who combined affection with a strong sense of King’s importance in the political future of Canada,” converted the social capital of her friendship with King into financial capital following his defeat in the 1911 federal election. She sent King £200 to help cover his election expenses and, “for Canada’s sake as fully as your own,” guaranteed him £300 a year for the next three years to cover his living expenses.²⁹² Allan Levine estimates that this amount was “the equivalent today of about \$25,000 annually.”²⁹³

²⁹⁰ Fosdick, 171. Mark Bourrie, in his analysis of King’s relations with journalists and editors, noted that King refined his public relations skills by working for the Rockefellers and that “a solid understanding of media manipulation techniques was part of his mechanism for gaining and holding power...His media coercion mechanisms survived into the last years of his regime, and he manipulated the press until the very moment he announced his retirement.” See Mark Bourrie, “The Myth of the ‘Gagged Clam’: William Lyon Mackenzie King’s Press Relations,” *Global Media Journal* 3:2 (2010), 15, 13, 27.

²⁹¹ King submitted a dozen reports he had written for the Canadian government under the title “Publicity and Public Opinion as Factors in the Solution of Industrial Problems in Canada” as his thesis. Of these, Harvard accepted “Oriental Immigration to Canada” as his thesis topic. King’s *Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Methods by which Oriental Labourers Have Been Induced to Come to Canada* had been published by the Government Printing Bureau in Ottawa in 1908. See Dawson, 198-199. Craven, 52.

²⁹² Dawson, 224.

After King won the leadership of the Liberal Party, a direct correlation between the increase in his political and financial capital becomes apparent. Lady Laurier willed him her residence, Laurier House, in Ottawa. After her death in 1921, when King had become Prime Minister, Peter Larkin, the multi-millionaire “Tea King of America,” and a Liberal Party stalwart who had also contributed to King’s election campaigns in 1908, 1911 and 1917, provided King with substantial financial assistance. Four days after the December 1921 election, he presented King with \$40,000 [\$448,000 in 2014 dollars] to cover the extensive renovations required for Laurier House. Two months later, King appointed Larkin High Commissioner to London, a post he held until his death in 1930. In 1925 Larkin contributed \$25,000 [\$349,000 in 2014 dollars] to a private fund for King, deposited in the Old Colony Trust Company in Boston, that over a decade grew to \$225,000 [\$3,847,000 in 2014 dollars] with contributions by other wealthy donors such as Senator Arthur Hardy, Sir Herbert Holt, president of the Royal Bank, and Robert Young Eaton, president of the T. Eaton Company.²⁹⁴

By the end of 1930, King estimated his wealth at nearly half a million dollars (\$6.5 million in 2014 dollars), not including Laurier House and his Kingsmere estate in Gatineau.²⁹⁵ In 1945 King received a legacy of \$50,000 [\$684,000 in 2014 dollars] from the will of his former political patron, Sir William Mulock, who had died at the age of 101. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. presented King with \$100,000 [\$1.1 million in 2014 dollars] in shares on the occasion of King’s seventy-fourth birthday, December 17, 1948 and his retirement as Prime Minister, and provided an additional \$100,000 to enable King to write his memoirs in 1949.²⁹⁶ When King’s own will was probated a year later, “his enormous wealth was revealed. In property and investments, he was worth approximately \$750,000, a notable sum in 1950, with the equivalent purchasing power

²⁹³ Levine, *King*, 86.

²⁹⁴ Dawson, 398-399. C.P. Stacey, *A Very Double Life: The Private World of Mackenzie King* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1976), 131. Roy MacLaren, *Commissions High: Canada in London, 1870-1971* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006), 225, 226, 227. Diary July 7, 1929.

²⁹⁵ Diary August 19, 1930. H. Blair Neatby, *William Lyon Mackenzie King: Volume II The Lonely Heights, 1924 -1932* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), 302. Levine, *King*, 125.

²⁹⁶ McGregor, 15. Levine, *King*, 396.

today of at least \$7 million.” Violet Markham, who had always thought of King as a poor man, was “staggered” when she read the amount of his estate and asked, “where on earth has all this money come from?”²⁹⁷

For Henry Ferns and Bernard Ostry the obvious answer was that King had sold himself and the Liberal Party to business interests. “He died a wealthy man, and his wealth came largely from gifts from wealthy Canadians and Americans. After he became leader, the Liberal Party never wanted for money, and the longer he remained leader the more money was available.”²⁹⁸

A more subtle interpretation is that King skillfully manipulated the enlargement of symbolic and financial capital but ultimately sold out his own ideals.²⁹⁹ When he discovered Matthew Arnold, he wanted to follow the path of cultural capital, the pursuit of perfection through beauty and intelligence “as a guide to my feet & a light unto my path.”³⁰⁰ He had been acutely aware of the insufficiency of his own cultural knowledge even after receiving his M.A. from Harvard. “I do wish I had read more, more of works on history, literature, poetry & art. I know little, almost

²⁹⁷ Levine, *King*, 400.

²⁹⁸ Ferns and Ostry, 331. This generalization is inaccurate. King periodically lamented in his diary about the lack of election preparedness and resources of the Liberal party and expressed his anger that he was expected to be both Prime Minister and party organizer and fundraiser. In 1926 for example, after the Liberal newspaper editor Rupert Davies, the father of playwright Robertson Davies, had assumed control of the *British Whig* in Kingston, he wrote King “not so much as Prime Minister, but as the head of the Party and as one who I know desires to see the friends of the Party get the preference wherever possible,” and lobbied King for government printing contracts. “If, in the next two or three years we could receive printing orders from the Government totalling \$100,000 [\$1.338 million in 2014 dollars], it would be a tremendous help in placing the British Whig Publishing Company on a sound financial basis and in that way help me to do something for the Party.” See Douglas Fetherling, *A Little Bit of Thunder: The Strange Inner Life of the Kingston Whig-Standard* (Toronto: Stoddard, 1993), 181.

²⁹⁹ I am referring here to King’s cultural ideals rather than to his lucrative labour-management relations work in the U.S. or to his interventions in industrial disputes while working at the Department of Labour in Canada. As Paul Craven has noted, while his labour legislation and interventions in industrial disputes usually favoured management, “it is essential to note that King and his policy retained the favour of the official voice of the labour movement.” See Craven, 236.

³⁰⁰ Diary October 13, 1901.

nothing, of any of these; this has been a serious mistake in my life to this point.”³⁰¹ King still felt this deficiency a year later while residing at Mrs. Humphry Ward’s Passmore Edwards Settlement in London during his Harvard travelling scholarship. The same day that the famous Victorian novelist and niece of Matthew Arnold showed him the proofs of her latest book and Leonard Huxley spoke about the imminent publication of his biography of his father, *Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley*, King lamented “I feel daily that I am very poorly read, a scholar who has read nothing; especially do I feel it when with those who are cultured & scholars themselves.”³⁰²

King strove to increase his cultural capital, writing for example two years later after learning Matthew Arnold’s poem “Self-Dependence” by heart, “This is an additional possession nothing can take away, save loss of memory, or disease; it is a most beautiful, strong & noble production.”³⁰³ But despite continuing his reading, attending the theatre, art galleries, films and opera and posing for and commissioning works of art, King’s pursuit of a political career distanced him from actual creative self-expression and curtailed his intellectual development. He had already noticed himself in 1904 that Prime Minister Laurier’s speeches “seem to be more of a reiteration of the same truths & views than wide in their range of thought or subject discussed.” “This is perhaps inevitable,” King concluded, “once launched as a leader the day for gaining intellectual capital is past. I must learn this. I must learn now is the time to become prepared or the day will pass & the opportunity not be known.”³⁰⁴ But according to his long-time secretary and biographer F.A. McGregor, by the time King assumed the leadership of the Liberal party after the death of Laurier in 1919, he was still troubled by his own intellectual limitations. “Not only had his reading been too circumscribed, he felt, but everything he had been doing in recent years had been done in haste, ‘leaving little in the way of intellectual capital of a kind likely to be of service in public affairs.’”³⁰⁵

³⁰¹ Diary December 7, 1898.

³⁰² Diary December 28, 1899.

³⁰³ Diary October 14, 1901.

³⁰⁴ Diary February 21, 1904.

³⁰⁵ McGregor, 329.

When in 1938 King read aloud to Joan Patteson before the fire from the poet Herbert Asquith's biography *Moments of Memory*, he found it "full of inspiration—beautifully written." But he complained to Patteson "about the common place nature of our lives, getting away from the larger vision, the tendency to talk of small domestic things, and then of my not doing the things I should be doing in my position." As with Mrs. Humphry Ward and Leonard Huxley in December of 1899, King did not feel himself the intellectual equal of British politicians and Prime Ministers he had known such as Arthur Balfour and Herbert Henry Asquith. "I know really very little of anything, in the light of minds like Asquith, Balfour & men like Herbert Asquith. I feel as if I were almost an imposter to be in the post I am." King had become in part a victim of his own changing *habitus* and ever increasing political capital that had overwhelmed his cultural capital. "Behind it all," he concluded, "I feel it is due to the past, the service of other lives, grandfather's & father's & Mother's, and that yet there is work to be done."³⁰⁶ In 1946 he lamented, "How I wish I had paid more attention to literature, to history, public speaking, been more thorough in my reading and understanding of affairs. I might have accomplished a great deal."³⁰⁷ A year before his death he regretted "knowing so little of American history & American authors, painters, actors & public men—U.S. culture; something I should have known & emulated."³⁰⁸

At the end of his life King was chagrined at the amount of financial capital he had accumulated, "it being so much larger than I had thought...I will have no peace of mind or heart so long as my possessions in savings & investments are what they are." What he had really wished for all his life was religious capital. He had just heard a sermon at St. Andrew's in Ottawa on the text "the Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure in a field, which when a man finds he sells all that he has &

³⁰⁶ Diary April 18, 1938. The poet Herbert Asquith was the son of Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith.

³⁰⁷ Diary June 19, 1946.

³⁰⁸ Diary July 10, 1949.

buys the field.” King prayed to God “for guidance as I seek to get free of all I possess of National possessions to possess in larger measure the treasure of the Kingdom of Heaven.”³⁰⁹

Canadian artists trying to accumulate their own social, cultural and political capital while lobbying the federal government to support arts and culture had virtually no idea about the complex nature of their main adversary in government. My next chapter, “The Conflict Between Mackenzie King’s Religious and Sexual *Habitus*: Sins of the Flesh and the Projection of Character,” will further explore what may have been the primary cause of their antagonistic relationship.

³⁰⁹ Diary April 3, 1949.

Chapter III:
**The Conflict Between Mackenzie King's Religious and Sexual *Habitus*: Sins of the Flesh
and the Projection of Character**

Three months before he was defeated by R.B. Bennett in the hotly-contested 1930 federal election, Mackenzie King wrote in his diary, "My emotional nature is a little of a conundrum to me. I feel certain if I were married and had the natural outlet for my emotional powers, especially at times of great strain, I would rest better. It is the thwarting of nature's demands which seem to me lies much at the root of what I suffer—also the mental conflict that goes with the struggle to keep to an ideal of conduct."³¹⁰ He had concluded two years previously that not being married was "the greatest handicap" since within marriage "life & ambitions could be shared with the wife who would be keen to watch & further one's purest & highest interests."³¹¹

King's conflict between his instinctual sexual drive and his moral and religious aspirations was his greatest impediment to attaining what already in 1902 he described as his "great master passion," to sway the thought and actions of Canadians through the ministry, university teaching or politics. "I can conceive of nothing which would so give me the sense of satisfaction & self-realization as to be able to influence the lives of men, from a platform or a pulpit," he confided in his diary after his first year as deputy minister in the Department of Labour in Ottawa. "My desire is unquestionably to reach large audiences of men, to influence them in a direct personal way to better living and higher thinking and firmer believing in the present realities of life. I believe God has endowed me with a power to do this and that it is not ambition merely," he wrote. "My aim in life is to [be] able to reveal the purpose of God in the Universe and in the lives of men; to this great master passion of my moral and spiritual nature all else is subservient and must ever be."³¹²

³¹⁰ Diary April 6, 1930.

³¹¹ Diary June 17, 1928.

³¹² Diary January 19 and 20, 1902.

In this chapter I will examine the hypothesis that King's tremendous life-long feelings of guilt resulting from the conflict between his religious and sexual *habitus* led him to espouse a conception of art whose primary function was to project Christian character and ideals. King laboured to project such an idealized character for himself and thereby created yet another prominent mask he presented to the outside world. Establishing King's religious and sexual *habiti* will enable me to show why King felt compelled to project such an idealized characterization in works of art depicting himself, members of his family, and public figures whose service to the nation he felt should be emulated by Canadians.

I will first describe what King perceived character to be, his Presbyterian upbringing, which so strongly shaped his moral values, and King's belief that he existed in a universe ruled by religious and spiritual laws. I will discuss how historians and biographers have viewed King's sexuality and the controversy over his relations with prostitutes and masturbatory practices. I then argue that the profound moral conflict and guilt feelings caused by King's sexual practices affected both his perception of his own physical self-image and his self-representation in paintings, sculpture, photography and newsreels. At the conclusion of the chapter, I discuss how King used music, theatre, opera, poetry and literature—as well as readings of religious texts, philosophy and psychology—to purify his mind, control his will and sexual instincts in an attempt to modify and construct his own *habitus*. Subsequent chapters will trace how King's inner conflict distorted his relationship with Canadian artists and impeded Canada's cultural development.

Nicholas Garnham and Raymond Williams assert that “the habitus is a unified phenomenon. It produces an ethos that relates all the practices produced by a habitus to a unifying set of principles.”³¹³ This was clearly not so with Mackenzie King whose sex instinct was at war with

³¹³ Nicholas Garnham and Raymond Williams, “Pierre Bourdieu and the Sociology of Culture: An Introduction” in *Media, Culture and Society: A Critical Reader*. Richard Collins, James Curran, Nicholas Garnham, Paddy Scannell, Philip Schlesinger, Colin Sparks, eds. (London: Sage Publications, 1986), 120.

his spiritual aspirations until his death. His “baffling” character with its “set of Chinese boxes” observed by his friend and benefactor Violet Markham³¹⁴ and King’s outer and inner “masks” attest to the absence of such a unified *habitus*. King’s case adheres much more closely to Harvey Young’s proposition in *Embodying Black Experience* that “We are never entirely trapped by our habitus for three reasons: (1) within habitus, there is room for difference through interpretation; (2) we have multiple habitus; (3) we can change our habitus... We are the sum total of a series of overlapping habitus. Each works together to determine who we are and how we act.” For this study of Mackenzie King, Young also observes significantly that “we change our habitus through the acquisition of new tastes.”³¹⁵

In the first official biography sponsored by King’s executors, MacGregor Dawson noted that, despite John King’s limited financial means, ensuring that King’s mother was always fashionably dressed to assure the family’s access to Toronto society in the 1890s “was a major occupation—almost an obsession—of the family.”³¹⁶ Like his family’s attempt to camouflage its lack of financial capital, Mackenzie King had a similar obsession, covering what he perceived to be his inner sinful nakedness with “character,” his “breastplate of righteousness” and “the whole armour of God” which he hoped would vanquish his sexual drive and conceal his lack of religious capital and moral authority.³¹⁷

³¹⁴ Violet Markham, *Return Passage* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 83 and Violet Markham, *Friendship’s Harvest* (London: Max Reinhardt, 1956), 144.

³¹⁵ Harvey Young, *Embodying Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory, and the Black Body* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 21, 22.

³¹⁶ R. MacGregor Dawson, *William Lyon Mackenzie King: A Political Biography 1874-1923* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958), 25. Charlotte Gray, *Mrs. King: The Life and Times of Isabel Mackenzie King* (Toronto: Viking, 1997), 104-105.

³¹⁷ J.W. Pickersgill, *The Mackenzie King Record. Volume 1, 1939-1944* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), 89. In Robertson Davies’ *The Manticore*, David Staunton suggests that “Mr. King had made himself unpopular early in the war by urging the Canadian people to ‘buckle on the whole armour of God.’” See Robertson Davies, *The Manticore* in his *The Deptford Trilogy* (Bungay, Suffolk: Penguin, 1985), 452-453. The reference may be to King’s December 16, 1942 CBC radio broadcast, “Temperance and a Total War Effort.” “The coming year can hardly fail to see all our armed forces engaged in a life and death struggle with the enemy. We may be called upon to witness the greatest ordeal through which our young country has ever been

The term character abounds in his own writings and in that of his biographers. For King, “character” was created by oneself and external circumstances. It had a meaning akin to “soul,” what he believed to be the essence of an individual that determined his or her thoughts and actions. “Character was not the child of Destiny, the shadow of Circumstance—it was the one immortal creation of which man was capable. ‘What a man sows, that shall he also reap,’” King wrote in his 1906 *The Secret of Heroism*, his homage to his late close friend and associate in the Department of Labour, Bert Harper. “In character was the harvest of all that a man ever thought, or willed, or did.”³¹⁸ “Character” as King conceived it can thus be seen as the visible and invisible manifestation of a person’s *habitus*. As William James advised teachers regarding the education of the will, “Your task is to build up a *character* in your pupils; and a character, as I have so often said, consists in an organized set of habits of reaction.” He elaborated that such habits of reaction consist of “tendencies to act characteristically when certain ideas possess us, and to refrain characteristically when possessed by other ideas.”³¹⁹

King felt that character was more than simply a list of principles and was disappointed by a church service in 1899 that seemed “useless” because it was “merely the recital of written creeds & forms & the reading of the same by the priest.” “When will men realize that their souls are in reality, themselves, that a man makes for himself his heaven or hell, that character is a growth & tends toward fixity, and that things external are tangible & pass away—forms, creeds, spoken pardons, incense, all,” he asked in his diary. “Character alone endures, the real man, as he is winnowed of his professions & confessions & sifted to the bottom of what he is. Truth, love,

obliged to pass. To be equal to that ordeal, we must put on the whole armour of God.” See *Canada and the Fight for Freedom* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1944), 243-44. In 1933 King interpreted a dream about losing his coat to represent a warning about losing “the armour by which I am clad, to beware of temptation.” Diary September 29, 1933.

³¹⁸ W. L. Mackenzie King, *The Secret of Heroism: A Memoir of Henry Albert Harper* (Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1906), 138. Cited in Owen E. McGillicuddy, *The Making of a Premier: An Outline of the Life Story of the Right Hon. W.L. Mackenzie King, C.M.G.* (Toronto: Musson, 1922), 48.

³¹⁹ William James, *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on Some of Life’s Ideals* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 108.

character, none of these lie on the surface, all are deep, and few fathom far into them!”³²⁰ Two weeks later he departed for Europe on his Harvard travelling scholarship writing, “In faith I go forth, trusting in Him to make the year one of gain in many ways & mostly I trust in Christian character, bring me nearer to truth & purity, make me a better, nobler & abler man.”³²¹

Besides Christian teachings, character was also created by an individual struggling against and overcoming adversity. When he lost his seat in Parliament in the 1911 election and suddenly was without an occupation, King reflected that “this period may help to develop character, that is what is most needed in leadership. If I gain in character & knowledge, the time will be better spent than if it had been lived in office.”³²²

Following his work as a labour consultant for the Rockefellers, King stressed in his 1918 *Industry and Humanity* that “character remains the basis of confidence” in relations between labour and capital. He emphasized “the importance of character as a first requisite in persons endowed with influence and authority. Disillusionment in such cases shatters confidence, and works irreparable injury to honest and generous souls...Character is the determining factor in all things.”³²³ He was greatly impressed by John D. Rockefeller, Jr.’s “true Christian character” and testified in 1915 before the United States Congressional Commission on Industrial Relations investigating the Ludlow Massacre in Colorado that Rockefeller alone was able to bring about greater change in labour relations than either American public opinion or any amount of union organizing. “I think that the conscience of Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Junior, is more powerful on

³²⁰ Diary September 10, 1899. On King’s belief that church rituals came “between the individual conscience and its responsibility to God,” see also Diary September 17, 1899.

³²¹ Diary September 26, 1899.

³²² Diary December 17, 1911.

³²³ W.L. Mackenzie King, *Industry and Humanity: A Study in the Principles Underlying Industrial Reconstruction* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1918), 170-171, 485.

that, and will affect social justice in Colorado quicker than any other single force that you could bring to bear.”³²⁴ By contrast, he often found labour leaders to be deficient in character.³²⁵

In politics, King had chosen British Prime Minister William Gladstone as his role model while still a student at university primarily because of Gladstone’s strong Christian character. In her analysis of King’s readings about Gladstone Margaret Bedore concludes, “King believed that ‘what people wanted above all else in a leader was the feeling they could trust & be sure of him.’ Political leadership was all about character. A leader with a strong character ‘could be depended on with certainty for certain things.’ It was better than ‘brilliancy’ or ‘popularity.’”³²⁶ When he first ran for Parliament in 1908, the September 22 *Globe* featured King’s picture on its front page with the legend “No Moral Decay Here.”³²⁷ And at the end of his political career, King was greatly pleased when Senator Harris introduced a resolution at the August 1948 National Liberal Convention called to elect a new leader of the Liberal Party to succeed King that referred to his “character being the basis of my success.”³²⁸

Yet while projecting an ideal Christian character for himself, King was painfully aware that his sexual feelings and practices were in complete violation of the religious, social and cultural norms of what constituted good character. “‘Character is the only religion,’” he quoted his mother in 1914.³²⁹ Lust was one of Christianity’s Seven Deadly Sins. King’s Scottish Calvinist family background, inculcated by his Presbyterian Church and family upbringing, posited a world

³²⁴ F.A. McGregor, *The Fall & Rise of Mackenzie King: 1911-1919* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1962), 145, 167. Henry S. Ferns and Bernard Ostry, *The Age of Mackenzie King: The Rise of the Leader* (London: William Heineman and Toronto: British Book Service Canada, 1955), 212-213.

³²⁵ Paul Craven, *‘An Impartial Umpire’: Industrial Relations and the Canadian State, 1900 - 1911* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 84, 134, 366.

³²⁶ Margaret Elizabeth Bedore, “The Reading of Mackenzie King.” Ph.D. thesis, Queen’s University, 2008, 115. King here is citing remarks on political leadership made by Goldwin Smith at a dinner organized by King at the Rideau Club in Ottawa. See Diary November 12, 1904.

³²⁷ Ferns and Ostry, 96.

³²⁸ J.W. Pickersgill and D.F. Forster, *The Mackenzie King Record. Volume 4, 1947-1948* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970). 359.

³²⁹ Diary December 11, 1914.

in which men and women, since Adam's fall, were born in deepest sin. In the Calvinist doctrine of election, two out of ten were predestined to go to heaven and the other eight predestined to go to hell.³³⁰ Herman Melville described this religious belief as "that Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and original Sin."³³¹ Margaret Atwood, in *Survival*, summarized the conception of the Calvinist God as "Guilt, guilt and more guilt. But for the Children, even more than for the Parents, it is a guilt without final cause and therefore a guilt without final atonement or expiation."³³²

Mackenzie King's Religious *Habitus*

Few previous studies of King have examined the effect of his religious upbringing on his personal and political views. Paul Craven remarked at the conclusion of *'An Impartial Umpire'* that "What is quite surprising in the literature is the lack of a detailed study of the consequences of the King family's brand of southern Ontario Presbyterianism for his world-view." Craven suggested that "Simply from the standpoint of our understanding of what made King tick, this is an important lack, and it may be found to have broader implications as well."³³³ F.A. McGregor, in *The Fall & Rise of Mackenzie King: 1911-1919*, did emphasize the importance of King's religious belief when he ran for the Leadership of the Liberal Party in 1919. King's private secretary from 1914 to 1925, McGregor wrote that "Mackenzie King's apparent lack of concern about the leadership...lay in his belief that the whole course of his life was, in a very special way, determined by invisible forces beyond his control or any human control. He was Calvinist

³³⁰ William Klempa, "Presbyterians and Canadian Literature and Music" in William, Klempa ed. *The Burning Bush and a few Acres of Snow: The Presbyterian Contribution to Canadian Life and Culture* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1994), 101. Murray Nicolson notes that "Like his father, John King was a firm believer in Presbyterianism" and that within his own church "he would conduct discussions or write letters about unconditional predestination or man's free agency." See Murray W. Nicolson, *Woodside and the Victorian Family of John King* (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1984), 22.

³³¹ Cited in Joseph C. McLelland, "Ralph and Stephen and Hugh and Margaret: Canlit's View of Presbyterians" in William, Klempa ed. *The Burning Bush and a few Acres of Snow*, 118.

³³² Margaret Atwood, *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (Toronto: Anansi, 1972), 139. Cited in Klempa, "Presbyterians and Canadian Literature and Music," 104.

enough to believe in predestination; he was realist enough to apply the doctrine to the circumstances of his own life.” From his long association with King, McGregor believed that “With him it was a conviction that God had a unique mission for him ‘to help work out His Will in the world,’ to take an important part in the public life of Canada, to be a leader, and eventually to be the country’s prime minister. Over and over again throughout the years he had affirmed his confidence in his own destiny, recognizing in every advance a manifestation of the Providence of God, and in every setback a testing of his faith. The ‘Unseen Hand’ and the ministry of his guardian angels were but synonyms for the Providence of God.”³³⁴

King’s subsequent biographers who focused on his political career downplayed the importance of his religious beliefs for the next half-century. MacGregor Dawson, the first “official” biographer appointed by King’s executors, merely described the King family as “strongly Presbyterian.” J.W. Pickersgill in *The Mackenzie King Record*, marginalized and trivialized King’s life-long involvement with religion. “He was sincerely religious and an almost militant Presbyterian; his beliefs, however, were highly personal and he was convinced that a host of unseen witnesses hovered about him and guided his conduct in emergencies.”³³⁵ Allan Levine suggested that King “existed in a fire-and-brimstone environment, where everything was black and white or good and evil.”³³⁶

Two other biographers drew a distinction between the institutional church and family religious influences. Blair Neatby, the second “official” biographer, proposed that “Mackenzie King was not a Presbyterian as a result of his theological convictions; he was a Presbyterian because he came from a Presbyterian family.”³³⁷ C.P. Stacey observed that many passages in King’s diary

³³³ Craven, 373.

³³⁴ McGregor, 330-31.

³³⁵ Dawson, 17. J.W. Pickersgill, *The Mackenzie King Record. Volume 1, 1939-1944* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), 4.

³³⁶ Allan Levine, *King: William Lyon Mackenzie King—A Life Guided by the Hand of Destiny* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2011), 41.

³³⁷ H. Blair Neatby, *William Lyon Mackenzie King: Volume II The Lonely Heights, 1924 -1932* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), 205.

“reflect a violently emotional religiosity, doubtless largely the result of family background.”³³⁸

This dichotomy is an artificial one for, as has been discussed in chapter II, Pierre Bourdieu emphasized that cultural values and practices—including religious ones—were replicated within the family. James Davison Hunter has also suggested that moral instruction, like the kind Mackenzie King received from his parents, “is an exercise in the transmission of culture. It is a mechanism by which character is etched into a person’s identity and existence.”³³⁹

Such a convergence and almost exact replication of institutional Presbyterian theology with and within individual beliefs and practices can be seen when comparing King’s religious beliefs with Max Weber’s characterization of Calvinism (the Reformed faith that was the precursor to Presbyterianism) in his 1905 *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Weber hypothesized that the Calvinist doctrine of predestination produced “a feeling of unprecedented inner loneliness of the single individual...No one could help him...the complete elimination of salvation through the Church and the sacraments...was what formed the absolutely decisive difference from Catholicism.”³⁴⁰ King’s diaries corroborate Weber’s theory when he admitted on an Easter Sunday in 1938 that his spiritual aspirations had once again succumbed to his body’s physical needs. “I have not been able to keep the six weeks of Lent free of failing—my thoughts have been betrayed by the assertion of some force within, which seems to overthrow the spiritual nature in the conflict with the carnal,” he recorded. “This has happened three times in the six weeks & has left me with a sense of banishment—some full communion broken. I can only pray God will restore my soul and endow it with Heavenly power and peace, that I may achieve that for which I am destined.”³⁴¹

³³⁸ C.P. Stacey, *A Very Double Life: The Private World of Mackenzie King* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1976), 160.

³³⁹ James Davison Hunter, *The Death of Character: Moral Education in an Age Without Good or Evil* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 26.

³⁴⁰ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Talcott Parsons, trans. (London: Routledge, 1993), 104, 105.

³⁴¹ Diary April 17, 1938.

Weber pointed out that in Calvinism, by eliminating the private confession of the Catholic Church, “There was no place for the very human Catholic cycle of sin, repentance, atonement, release, followed by renewed sin...the means to a periodical discharge of the emotional sense of sin was done away with.”³⁴² There was thus no manner in which Mackenzie King could easily purge his tremendous guilt feelings over his sexual thoughts, feelings and actions. His only consolation was his conviction that he was one of God’s elect despite his sins and that God’s forgiveness would allow him to escape from sin and to redeem himself. After backsliding through “unholy thought and action” on a communion Sunday in 1902 he wrote, “I have been sad at heart all day, my conscience rebukes me greatly and I have reason to be ashamed and humbled before God.” He felt, however, that “one thing gives me hope. God changes not, and the heart can win its way back into the light of His love, by worthy action and noble thought. I am liable to err, to be indolent by the way, to let the chain of indifference and selfish pursuit of momentary pleasure drag me down to a lesser and baser self, but with God’s help I will rise above these things and be the man God intended me to be.”³⁴³

Another central doctrine of Calvinism was that of the “calling,” the commandment for men and women to labour in the world in some specific manner for the increased glory of God. “Success in a calling eventually came to be regarded as a ‘sign’—never a means—of being one of the elect.”³⁴⁴ Fulfilling one’s calling on behalf of God not only meant following his commandments but also judiciously using time. As Weber noted, “Waste of time is thus the first and in principle the deadliest of sins...Loss of time through sociability, idle talk, luxury, even more sleep than is necessary for health...is worthy of absolute moral condemnation... every hour lost is lost to labour for the glory of God.”³⁴⁵

³⁴² Weber, 117, 106.

³⁴³ Diary June 3, 1902. On April 8, 1938 King wrote in his diary after describing a dream featuring a “Jezebel type...dressed in an alluring fashion” that “I trust God knows how hard to overcome all feelings & control them. Perhaps I shall yet conquer. My prayer is that I may.”

³⁴⁴ Anthony Giddens, “Introduction” to Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Talcott Parsons, trans. (London: Routledge, 1993), xiii.

King expressed this concern with not wasting his God-given time—later this would become almost an obsession—on the very first page of his diary. In his first entry on September 6, 1893, written two years after enrolling at the University of Toronto, he stated that “The chief object of my keeping this diary is that I may be ashamed to let even one day have nothing worthy of its showing, and it is hoped that through its pages the reader may be able to trace how the author has sought to improve his time.” King had been reading Goethe’s *Faust* when he bought his diary and, on a page designed for “Memoranda,” wrote the following citation:

“Make good use of your time, for fast
Time flies, and is forever past;
To make time for yourself begin
By order – method – discipline;”
Goethe’s – ‘Faust’”³⁴⁶

In subsequent diary entries he would frequently acknowledge the limits of his God-given time when writing about his plans and aspirations for the future by adding the proviso, “If I am spared.”

During his university studies, King felt three different but related callings: the ministry and university teaching (where he could propagate Christian values), and politics. At the beginning of 1895, he expressed “my most sincere prayer and wish for myself” that during the year “I may accomplish a very great deal as an humble worker in the Master’s Vineyard.” He described himself as “One who has great sympathy for the poor, the outcast, the fallen and despised” and prayed, “May I be enabled to help many such and to carry out in no little measure the beautiful command ‘Rescue the Perishing / Care for the dying / Snatch them in Pity from sin or the grave. / Weeping o’er the erring ones / Lift up the fallen / Tell them of Jesus the Mighty to save.’ May

³⁴⁵ Weber, 157, 158.

³⁴⁶ Diary September 6, 1893. King had probably also already seen *Faust* on stage. When he attended a performance of Lewis Morrison’s popular adaptation, with Morrison as Mephistopheles and Mrs. Morrison as Marguerite, at the Grand Opera House on January 3, 1895, he found the play “very good” but noted that it “had not the same effect upon me as last time I heard it two years ago.”

many such be helped by one who longs to be ‘a brother’ to many who need a brother’s help and love.”³⁴⁷

At the end of his Harvard studies in 1899, his mind was still “filled mostly with thoughts of religion. I see there is a distinct work for me to do. I feel the call to do it & when I see how men are around me I feel as though I were not obeying the inner voice which bids me speak & act.”³⁴⁸ The persistence and power of King’s religious *habitus* and notion of his “calling” is illustrated by his account in 1917 of taking care of his ailing mother in his Roxborough living quarters in Ottawa a year before her death. He believed having to cope with his mother’s failing health—even as he was struggling to complete his major study for the Rockefeller Foundation, *Industry and Humanity*—was “sent to help to lead me closer to Him, to increase my faith in Him, to make me like I see the Christ in my painting over mother’s bed, to be a ‘strong son of God.’ This is my wish, my aim, in this world of wrack & ruin of hypocrisy, of selfishness & materialism. This is my mission. To reveal the Christ in public life and service.”³⁴⁹ As will be seen in subsequent chapters, it would become inevitable that King also insisted that public art with which he was associated express this same ideal of Christian service.

Religion, Spirituality and a Universe of Laws

King drew a strong distinction between institutionalized religion—including the Presbyterian Church—and a man’s and woman’s personal religious belief and relationship with God. He felt inclined “more as Emerson & Carlyle do to the God in the Universe,” he recorded in his diary in 1901, and “less to the orthodox teachings as usually put.”³⁵⁰ “There is a vast difference between theology & religion, the church as an institution apart from the State & the spirit of Christ as a part of the life of man,” he wrote in 1919. “The latter is the only true ideal.”³⁵¹ King began each morning by reading the Bible for guidance and attended Sunday services at St. Andrew’s

³⁴⁷ Diary January 1, 1895.

³⁴⁸ Diary November 25, 1899.

³⁴⁹ Diary January 26, 1917.

³⁵⁰ Diary March 17, 1901.

Presbyterian Church in Toronto or Ottawa. Like his father, he attended services of other Christian denominations and reported on church activities as part of his free-lance newspaper work in Toronto. In his diary, he often evaluated services like a performance, writing in 1897 that “The service was beautiful in every way. Nothing gives me greater pleasure than the church service or a good theatre. In both I find great inspiration. In both I can utter the prayers & longings of my heart.”³⁵²

King wanted sermons and services to stimulate his intellect and purify his faith and emotions. He could not identify with the zeal and devotion of many Catholic parishioners, writing after visiting churches and the cathedral in Milan, “the more I visit Catholic churches the more I feel superstition & idolatry are too strongly combined & that the real Christ is seldom seen & the essence of religion little known. The religion is institutional throughout.”³⁵³

Paralleling his religious beliefs, King at the turn of the century began to develop a wider life philosophy and world-view that gradually merged with the tenets of his Christian faith. Its fundamental credo was that humanity lived in a spiritual universe that was greater than physical reality and that this spiritual universe was organized on the basis of fundamental laws. As Reginald Whitaker described him, King’s “faith in the underlying unity of the material and

³⁵¹ Diary August 29, 1919.

³⁵² Diary August 8, 1897. In 1931 King commented on the Presbyterian Moderator of the Assembly, Dr. Brown: “The Moderator’s address was like his sermon last night, too loud, too forceful, commonplace in large part, here and there some telling phrases, but anything but the kind of thing which leaves one in a reverent frame of mind. I do not care for the excessively militant style of pulpit oratory especially where a man creates his own men of straw to knock them down.” Diary October 26, 1931.

³⁵³ Diary June 15, 1900. In Paris King had written, “There is something, to my mind, most common & derogatory to a pure religion in the sort of cheap looking & fanciful childlike display which one sees at such shrines in most Catholic churches. Some brotherhood of partly shorn priests were walking about & my whole nature revolted against them, as being in a way a reproach & a stumbling block in the way of a pure religion which finds its highest expression in true freedom & liberty, in light & in truth.” In Berlin he wrote, “The more churches I see the more do I become out of patience with ‘formal’ religion. Catholic churches are like centres of

spiritual, in the essential order and pattern in the material world which could be discovered by human science but which was founded in a divine purpose which itself transcended the material world, was the basis on which King built his political and economic ideas.”³⁵⁴

King articulated this world-view in 1899 in London when he was asked to respond to a presentation on materialism and modern science by Herbert Burrows, the prominent socialist activist and theosophist. The evening had been organized by Gertrude Toynbee, the sister of the late economic historian and social reformer Arnold Toynbee, whom King idolized. Burrows criticized the materialist conception of the origin of mind in matter found in German psychology. King concurred, expressing his belief that “everything acts according to law & nothing to chance, but the laws of the spiritual world are different in kind from those of the natural, though the latter may be part but not all of the former.” He also stated his conviction, “I believe we have yet to discover to what a great extent the so-called spiritual laws, e.g. faith & result of, are acting in our lives regarding daily material experiences.”³⁵⁵ Reading Henry Drummond’s *Ideal Life* [Toronto: Revell, 1898] confirmed his belief in a moral universe, “that nothing exists which is not governed by law, that nothing is ruled by chance, that for everything there is cause and effect, and that nothing exists without its influence for all time.”³⁵⁶

idolatry & in many Protestant ones the bible is a sort of fetish.” See Diary entries March 12 and 21, 1900.

³⁵⁴ Reginald Whitaker, “The Liberal Corporist Ideas of Mackenzie King” in his *A Sovereign Idea: Essays on Canada as a Democratic Community* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), 55.

³⁵⁵ Diary November 29, 1899. Burrows suggested that it could be proven to scientists that human consciousness could exist independently of the body “by experiments in clairvoyance, and ‘spirits’ where it was evident that the ‘consciousness’ was in place other than the body at a particular time & distinct & might be free & was not annihilated on death.” King also came to believe in the continuation of personality after death and would himself engage in occult experiments in the 1930s. His belief that God resolved the scientific and philosophic conflict between the spiritual and material is suggested by his comment, “Einstein’s theory of Space being everything seems to me sound. Space & Ether = God, that was the equation.” Diary June 18, 1930.

³⁵⁶ Diary April 12, 1900.

King never wavered in this belief in the functioning laws of the spiritual world. At times he referred to them under the Greek concept of nemesis, “the working out of the eternal laws of truth and justice,” and wrote of “the nemesis that seemed to follow yielding to temptation as revealed in writings, plays, the scriptures, etc.”³⁵⁷ He saw the same concept at work as karma, “the Hindu doctrine of our paying ourselves for all the evil we have done and receiving our reward to the extent that we, ourselves, have given ‘help to others.’ With it is accompanied the thought that we work out, in this station, our own fate while here on earth and before passing into a higher realm of existence. It is a doctrine thus expressed in which I believe absolutely.”³⁵⁸

King’s bedrock belief thus was that he lived in a moral universe that meted out rewards or punishment depending on human behaviour. “There is no doctrine I so completely abhor as that of this world being controlled by blind material forces,” he wrote to a fellow psychical researcher, Stanley de Brath, in 1936. “There is none in which I believe more strongly than that of a Divine order which pervades the universe.”³⁵⁹ King believed that the pattern of his own life “all speaks of some profound realities that lie deeper than race or creed or class or birth, a part of some mystery revealing, rightly understood, something of the eternal verities. The relation of the laws of reward and retribution controlling a universe that in reality is a spiritual and not a material universe.”³⁶⁰ Even before he entered public life in the summer of 1900, King was painfully aware that he was violating God’s commandments. “The truth is I am not the man I ought to be; I am the sort of man I most despise, a hypocrite, who plays fast & loose with life & deals lightly with holy things...I deceive myself hourly and am to myself a thing to be pitied &

³⁵⁷ Diary November 2, 1935 and December 4, 1938.

³⁵⁸ Diary October 1, 1943.

³⁵⁹ King to Stanley de Brath, December 31, 1936. Cited in Bedore, 253.

³⁶⁰ Diary June 21, 1944.

despised.”³⁶¹ He had “been like Peter. I denied my lord for a girl’s sake” and concluded that “Chastity is the gate of the censors.”³⁶²

The Sexing of Mackenzie King

How could King reconcile his bedrock beliefs in “character” and in a divine spiritual universe meting out rewards and punishments with what he believed to be his sinful sexual practices and thoughts?

The enigma of King’s sexual feelings and practices has been analyzed and debated by several of his biographers. In his 1976 *A Very Double Life: The Private World of Mackenzie King*, which first publicly revealed King’s sexual conflicts, C.P. Stacey noted that “The British politician who wrote that King ‘gave one the feeling that he was an entirely sexless creature’ was far from being alone in his view; but it is clear that his impression was inaccurate.”³⁶³ Paul Roazen, after interviewing Paul Martin, Sr., Minister of National Health and Welfare in King’s Cabinet, for his *Canada’s King: An Essay in Political Psychology*, reported that “Martin seemed to anticipate, which was not at all the case, that my mind might be searching for possible latent homosexual traits in King.”³⁶⁴ Heather Robertson also speculated whether Godfroy Patteson, manager of the Molson’s Bank in Ottawa, accepted King’s close friendship with his wife Joan because “he may have guessed that King was not a sexual threat, or believed rumours that he was ‘queer.’”³⁶⁵

Just before and after his death, several writers had characterized King as being effeminate. Reginald Hardy observed, “He had a flair for colour and design, an appreciation of women’s

³⁶¹ Diary May 4, 1900.

³⁶² Diary April 24 and January 5, 1898. In his January entry, King resolved in vain that “this book shall not have to record some of the sins of the old ones...I feel a strong spirit within me, more of the love of Christ.”

³⁶³ Stacey, 11.

³⁶⁴ Paul Roazen, *Canada’s King: An Essay in Political Psychology* (Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic Press, 1998),

clothes, of interior decorating, of many other things that interest the average woman. As a result he was never at a loss for a word when in their company.” He also noted that “King, with his 182 pounds, has always had to wage an unceasing battle against increasing weight and a tendency towards softness.”³⁶⁶

Bruce Hutchison, in many ways the shrewdest observer of King and one of his most fervent supporters, was particularly bothered by what appeared to him as King’s feminine mind and character. Relating how William Lyon Mackenzie, after the failed 1837 Rebellion, escaped across the Niagara River disguised as an old woman, Hutchison could not refrain from commenting parenthetically that this was “a disguise which King would often wear himself in times of retreat.” Relating King’s lecturing to a newsboy’s club he had founded while attending the University of Toronto and telling stories to the young patients of the Sick Children’s Hospital on Sundays, Hutchison commented that “this was out of character for a college boy and somewhat on the effeminate side.” And describing King’s first five years as head of the Liberal Party in the early 1920s—when he had not yet become the undisputed Leader he would be in later years—Hutchison observed that King “was tasting the royal jelly. He would finally become the queen.”³⁶⁷ Robertson Davies’ 1970 characterization of King as “dowdy and pussy in every overt action” reflected these perceptions of King’s alleged effeminacy.³⁶⁸ In her 1980 psychological study, *Knight of the Holy Spirit*, Joy Esberey concluded that “King’s established

³⁶⁵ Heather Robertson, *More Than a Rose: Prime Ministers, Wives, and Other Women* (Toronto: Seal Books, 1992), 206.

³⁶⁶ H. Reginald Hardy, *Mackenzie King of Canada* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), 162, 373.

³⁶⁷ Bruce Hutchison, *The Incredible Canadian: A Candid Portrait of Mackenzie King: His Works, His Times, and His Nation* (Toronto: Longmans, 1952), 13, 20, 75. As Vaughn Palmer observed in his introduction to the 2011 edition, “Long after his first meeting with William Lyon Mackenzie King, the thing Bruce Hutchison remembered most about the prime minister was ‘the plump little hands, soft and delicate as a woman’s.’” See Vaughn Palmer, “Introduction to the Wynford Edition,” Bruce Hutchison, *The Incredible Canadian: A Candid Portrait of Mackenzie King: His Works, His Times, and His Nation* (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2011), iii.

³⁶⁸ Robertson Davies, *Fifth Business in The Deptford Trilogy* (Bungay, Suffolk: Penguin, 1985), 370.

behaviour pattern was closely akin to the nurturant female role, as his passivity and his desire to serve the poor and the needy demonstrate... The female style closely resembled that of the ideal mother, one who supports, protects, and heals, providing safety, security, and strength.”³⁶⁹

Mackenzie King’s Sexual *Habitus*

The question of King’s sexual identity and practices has been a controversial one among historians and King’s biographers. In his chapter “Strolls in the Sub-World” in *A Very Double Life*, Stacey recorded King’s consorting with prostitutes while attending the University of Toronto and similar subsequent encounters at the University of Chicago and at Harvard in the 1890s. The evidence he cited was the frequent entries in King’s diaries to his late-night “strolling”—what more recently would be referred to as “cruising”—for female companionship and “wasting” both his money and God-given time. In Toronto, he wished he “could overcome sin in some of its more terrible forms;” confessed in Chicago that “there has been a fierce war of flesh & spirit all day. When shall I subdue the evil in me?” and in Boston “went completely to the devil with my passions, wasted money & came home sad. God only knows why I am so weak.”³⁷⁰

Stacey made three observations that support the argument I am making in this dissertation. The first is his conclusion that Mackenzie King “was tormented by the sexual urges that drove him to associate with prostitutes, and by the religious beliefs that told him that associating with prostitutes was sin.” The second is his assessment that King’s sexual conflict in 1898 drove him near madness. “He himself frequently said that he came to the brink of insanity; and those who

³⁶⁹ Joy E. Esbrey, *Knight of the Holy Spirit: A Study of William Lyon Mackenzie King* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 97.

³⁷⁰ Stacey, 42, 46, 48. King’s diaries from 1900 to 1916 are strangely silent regarding prostitution in Ottawa. In his biography of R.B. Bennett, John Boyko notes that when Bennett arrived in Ottawa as a newly elected MP in 1911, “Two blocks from the Hill was the wicked ByWard Market where for sale or rent was every temptation the lonely or lecherous could conjure.” See John Boyko, *Bennett: The Rebel Who Challenged and Changed a Nation* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2012), 80.

read his diary will be inclined to agree.” The third is Stacey’s passing reference to the fact that King used visual mementos of his family in an attempt to subdue his instinctual self. He cited King’s description of one of his “strolls” at the beginning of his studies at Harvard in 1897, which found him wandering “like a lost child at the biddings of passion.” “I got home by Heavenly protect’n without having fallen, but O God what a struggle, looked at sad picture of mother & resolved to start again.”³⁷¹ I will analyze King’s use of photographs, paintings and sculpture to project character ideals and regulate behaviour in subsequent chapters. Such tokens, mementos, photographs and works of art depicting his family maintained their power until the end of King’s life. When he examined family papers two decades after the death of his parents and two siblings, he recorded in his diary that “touching these old letters was like having Father, Mother, Bell & Max right beside me again. They are as alive as life itself.”³⁷²

For historians confronting the new depiction of King revealed by Stacey’s *A Very Double Life*, his struggles to curb his masturbatory tendencies and encounters with prostitutes produced amusement, denial and embarrassment that King’s reputation as a political leader was being undermined. Historians and the public were not prepared to consider whether King’s sexuality could be a causal factor that affected his beliefs and actions. Paul Craven, at the beginning of *An Impartial Umpire*, satirized the new popular version of King made familiar by newspaper condensations of *A Very Double Life*: “a plump little man on a furtive and euphemistic stroll, ever conscious of the position of the hands of his watch, and plunged into periodic misery over the position his own hands have adopted.”³⁷³

Michael Bliss, in *Right Honourable Men*, asserted that King’s tremendous guilt feelings largely resulted from his terror of the physical consequences of masturbation. He charged that Stacey “seemed to know nothing about sexual attitudes of the period, or the historical literature on the idea of masturbatory insanity.” “All the late-nineteenth-century ‘sex manuals’ taught that habitual masturbation would probably lead to insanity...Most of the sexual torments recorded in

³⁷¹ Stacey, 49, 48. The reference is from King’s diary entry for October 20, 1897.

³⁷² Diary January 3, 1938.

his diaries seem obviously a record of agonized attempts to avoid seminal emissions that he thought would destroy his body and his mind.”³⁷⁴ Heather Robertson, on the other hand, suggested that “masturbation may have saved King’s sanity.”³⁷⁵

Joy Esberey challenged Stacey’s very assertion that King consorted with prostitutes. She suggested that since the seven deadly or capital sins of Christianity included not only lust but also pride, avarice, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth, “it is probable that when King used the term sin in his diary he could have been referring to any of these.” “C.P. Stacey’s assumption that the term is synonymous with lust and its physical manifestation, sexual intercourse, is not in this author’s view tenable on the evidence available.” Esberey also suggested that King’s late-night “strolls” could have been to “gambling saloons, liquor parlours, pornographic bookstores, a burlesque show, or any activity of a frivolous though non-sexual nature....In the face of the lack of evidence this author prefers to leave the question of King’s alleged patronizing of prostitutes as unproven.”³⁷⁶ J.L. Granatstein and Norman Hillmer, in their 1999 *Prime Ministers: Ranking Canada’s Leaders*, similarly contended that the references in King’s diaries to his “strolls,” “wasted time” and attempts to rescue prostitutes “might just as easily have been voyeurism, simple time-wasting, or failed efforts at social work.”³⁷⁷ Allan Levine, in his 2011 *King*, was also equivocal about King’s encounters with prostitutes in the mid-1890s. “Were the countless references in his diaries during this period to ‘strolls’...proof of encounters with ladies of the

³⁷³ Craven, 12.

³⁷⁴ Michael Bliss, *Right Honourable Men: The Descent of Canadian Politics from Macdonald to Chrétien* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2004), 133, 132. King did write in his diary that “I have been allowing the lusts of the flesh & the world to destroy my intellect and will” but followed this with his much stronger prevalent religious belief that he was “not the man I should be or must be if I am to be the man that God intended me to be.” See Diary March 15, 1908. He had recorded a medical lecture on venereal diseases on October 12, 1898 while attending Harvard: “the lecturer described syphilis, its stages etc.; the room was filled with men; some had to leave during lecture & 2 fainted outright. It was most instructive though not attractive, a very necessary sort of lecture to be given to college students. It was a great lesson to many there tonight.”

³⁷⁵ Robertson, 209.

³⁷⁶ Esberey, 30, 32, 31, 32.

³⁷⁷ J.L. Granatstein and Norman Hillmer, *Prime Ministers: Ranking Canada’s Leaders* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1999), 85.

evening on Toronto's King Street? 'Maybe' might be the best answer...We will never know exactly what King meant by these confessional passages and whether or not he was a young adult 'john.'³⁷⁸

What interests me about Mackenzie King is not whether he was "a good man. Leave the rest,"³⁷⁹ as the *Victoria Times* urged its readers upon his death in 1950 but whether and how King's sexual practices affected his perceptions of the role of the arts in society over half a century. It is therefore necessary to examine his sexual *habitus*, his "socially constituted system of cognitive and motivating structures" and "system of lasting, transposable dispositions" in sexual matters over a period of decades and not just during his university studies. For as Pierre Bourdieu posited, these structured dispositions were in themselves "predisposed to function as structuring structures."³⁸⁰

We know a great deal about King's sexuality, from his childhood on, from Paul Roazen's *Canada's King: An Essay in Political Psychology*. Roazen analyzed King's medical records from 1916 when he suffered a near mental breakdown and, at the suggestion of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., was examined at the John Hopkins hospital and medical school in Baltimore by the Canadian-born and educated Dr. Lewellys Franklin Barker, president of the American Neurological Association. Barker referred King to Dr. Adolf Meyer, whom Roazen called "the most important single figure in the history of North American twentieth century psychiatry." Meyer's notes of his interview with King revealed that King recalled his "First sex(ual) exp.(erience) very vivid. A girl touch(ed) him and spoke of her fa(ther) or some other adult to him when he was 4 or 5 y(ears) old. Then contact with the talk of servants."³⁸¹

³⁷⁸ Levine, 43, 44.

³⁷⁹ "Always on the Ground," *Victoria Times*, October 25, 1950.

³⁸⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 76, 82, 72.

³⁸¹ Roazen, xlii, 86-87.

Since King was born on December 17, 1874, his first sexual experience would have occurred around 1879 when his family still lived on Margaret Street in Berlin. This first sexual encounter at such a young age appears to have been a traumatic one. King does not refer to his sexual initiation directly in his diaries but we do find his perception of a threatening female childhood sexuality in a startling diary entry two decades later. “While driving I passed a little girl who in the most desperate manner flirted by raising her dress, which was short a little towards her knee & smiling rather prettily. I believe her to have been innocent enough, not fast, but quite conscious of what she possessed.”³⁸² “Fast” was one of King’s slang words for sexually active women and “fast women” synonymous with prostitutes.³⁸³ That King was not sexually active as a teenager is suggested by Murray Nicolson’s observation, “During his high school days, Willie never had any close friendships with girls.”³⁸⁴ The fear of the female body can also be inferred from King’s own admission that, at the age of 22, he “was fond of intellectual girls & did not care particularly for dances.”³⁸⁵ His life-long abhorrence of female nudity may also have derived from his first sexual encounter as well as from his religious upbringing.

The description King gave to Dr. Meyer in 1916 of his experiences with prostitutes, “At college 2 or 3 expeditions. None during the last 6 y(ea)rs,”³⁸⁶ greatly minimized the many encounters with prostitutes he described in his diaries over a decade.³⁸⁷ Stacey alone recorded four such incidents

³⁸² Diary September 11, 1899. King’s sexual initiation may also be reflected in a sex dream he recorded in his diary on December 16, 1934. In it a lady garbed in white silk was “anxious to indulge in pleasures that were forbidden” and a “little girl seemed to be very tender in her touches and to be quite unconsciously, as though quite right seeking to influence my passions.”

³⁸³ See for example diary entries March 25, 1896 and January 19 and March 12, 1900.

³⁸⁴ Nicolson, 35.

³⁸⁵ Diary May 2, 1896.

³⁸⁶ Roazen, 87.

³⁸⁷ When King began his diary on September 6, 1893, he was already familiar with prostitution. He wrote of a “wasted” night and “the wickedness of the world” on September 7 and referenced seeing “three ‘jolies femmes’ on King Street” on September 15. After recording that he “had time strolling about” in Toronto on August 7, 1896, he added the following day that “Some good angel has watched me again this week & though I had been walking on a ledge & slipped many times yet has kept me from falling.” For further diary descriptions of how King was “very restless,” “wandered about,” “spent \$1.25 after being in the company of one I met,” and on occasion actually “sinned,” see diary entries for October 9 and 26, 1893; November 25, 1893;

in which money changed hands and he admitted not having read “the whole enormous corpus” of the King diaries.³⁸⁸ In 1896, exhausted from writing exams at the University of Toronto, King “came home completely fagged out, had supper, went out & strolled all over city like a lost child & acted like one; wasted 45 cents; tried to avoid temptation but seemed set on it and was not willing to resist. Got home about 11:30.”³⁸⁹ In another financial transactions in Chicago the same year, he “got into another trap, cost me \$1” (after having lunch downtown for 35 cents) and “felt terribly sorry & disgusted at my action.”³⁹⁰ He nevertheless was able the next day to urge Jane Addams, the director of the Hull House settlement where he was a resident for several weeks, to organize “a group of workingmen to study the life of Christ & to make an effort to follow Him in all our acts.”³⁹¹ In his cash account for 1897, King recorded that he paid ten cents for a street-car on October 30 and “wasted \$3.50.”³⁹² After another “interval wasted on the streets,” he asked himself, “Oh God, when will I be altogether a man & less a beast”?³⁹³ In 1899, while staying at the Passmore Settlement House in London, he again recorded having “wasted” two shillings and “wasting much valuable time, worse than wasting it.”³⁹⁴

The timing of King’s “strolls” on occasion appears odd and, like his experience in Chicago, these encounters with prostitutes contradicted his public religious and cultural affirmations. Some of

February 1, 2, and 4, 1894; February 19, 1894; March 2 and 3, 1894; April 6, 1894; July 18 and 26, 1894; March 17, 1896; March 21, 1896; April 27, 1896; May 23, 1896; July 21, 22, and 29, 1896; August 20 and 21, 1896; November 19, 1896; December 14, 1896; April 20, 21 and 23, 1897; May 7, 1897; June 15, 1897; July 29, 1897; August 7, 1897; September 28, 1897; October 20, 1897; October 30, 1897; November 21, 1897; December 15, 1897; December 20, 1897; February 3, 4, 5 and 10, 1898; March 10, 1899; October 13 and 14, 1899; October 10, 1901 and June 3, 1902.

³⁸⁸ Stacey, 15.

³⁸⁹ Diary April 25, 1896.

³⁹⁰ Diary November 19, 1896.

³⁹¹ Diary November 20, 1896.

³⁹² Diary December 31, 1897, page 10. Before visiting Hull House again on April 21, 1897, King “must have looked at or met over 500 prostitutes, mostly young girls” in saloons, dives and houses of prostitution in the district. “I have never seen so much of the social evil. Came through untouched.”

³⁹³ Diary December 15, 1897.

³⁹⁴ Stacey, 76. Diary October 14, 1899.

these meetings occurred after he attended the theatre. He “sinned” after seeing Irving and Ellen Terry in Tennyson’s *Becket* at the Grand Opera House in Toronto in 1894, after having spent a week convincing the young Mina to give up her life of prostitution. He was forced to ask himself, “Can I wonder at others weaker than myself doing so?”³⁹⁵ In 1896 he very much enjoyed seeing Camille D’Arville in *Madeline or The Magic Kiss* but then at 11 pm “got very restless” and “wasted \$1 tonight.”³⁹⁶ He also recorded his pleasure at seeing Julia Marlowe in a matinee performance of *As You Like It* at the Hollis Theatre in Boston in 1899. “The play was a very pleasing one & Miss Marlowe’s acting simply beautiful. There was something so pure & beautiful & lovely in all her actions, her voice, its laugh & all.” Yet at eight o’clock the same evening, he “called on Miss H. We played a game of checkers together. I told her this must be the last call. I was very tired but having some one soul to talk with I was much at rest. Whenever I am weary & worn, then am I apt to err. Yet some good Providence has kept me, but what sort of haphazard life is this!...This is playing with life & the game is ‘cheating self & time.’”³⁹⁷

Intense intellectual strain could also cause him to seek sexual release. In 1897, after hearing a lecture by the socialist Eugene Debs in Chicago and lecturing himself on the life of Arnold Toynbee at the Washington Park Congregational Church, he “found it hard not to wander about after the lecture.”³⁹⁸ “Out for a stroll” back in Toronto two months later, he “wandered about & again rather forgot the narrow path though I returned home safely, somewhat ashamed of my weakness. He asked himself, “Will I ever overcome this devil?”³⁹⁹ That fall, on his first day in Cambridge to attend Harvard University, he “went for a stroll after dinner; met a young girl; was anxious to talk with someone; lonely a little & restless.”⁴⁰⁰ Near the end of his Harvard studies,

³⁹⁵ Diary February 19, 1894. For an analysis of another of King’s attempts to “rescue” prostitutes, see John R. Graham, “William Lyon Mackenzie King, Elizabeth Harvie, and Edna: A Prostitute Rescuing Initiative in Late Victorian Toronto,” *Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality* 8:1 (Spring 1999).

³⁹⁶ Diary March 21, 1896. “Cash Account,” Diary December 31, 1896, p. 4.

³⁹⁷ Diary March 25, 1899.

³⁹⁸ Diary June 15, 1897.

³⁹⁹ Diary August 21, 1897.

⁴⁰⁰ Diary September 28, 1897.

King was depressed following a dinner at Professor Charles Eliot Norton's where he "felt powerless to express myself or approach a decent subject" and "felt first inclined to go & waste time."⁴⁰¹

King's habit of consorting with prostitutes continued after he entered the civil service in Ottawa. In 1901 he gave a well-received lecture at the Methodist Church on "The Economic World of Today: Its Agitations & Prospects, the Relation of the Church Thereto." Afterwards the noted Methodist minister Rev. Salem Bland "said the apostle of Sweetness & Light [Matthew Arnold] would have rejoiced & Carlyle have lost his pessimism had both been there." But despite the high compliment, that night King "wasted the time & worse than wasted it, being overtired & worn; I should have gone to bed; a restless fit & I gave way to it by going out." He admonished himself, "Oh fool. When will I learn self-control, the first element of greatness."⁴⁰²

King's statement to Dr. Meyer in 1916 about his contacts with prostitutes, "None during the last 6 y(ea)rs," allows the inference that he did have sexual contacts until 1910, a year before his defeat in the 1911 federal election. C.P. Stacey asserted that King had an encounter with a prostitute on April 9, 1917, noting this was the morning the Canadian Corps stormed Vimy Ridge. King had been in a "restless mood" and, instead of staying with his ailing mother, followed "a path of pleasure when one of duty was so plainly mine." His mother nearly died during his absence and King took her near-death as a sign: "It was as if God had wished to say to me How long!"⁴⁰³

While King's description of this incident is not conclusive, it does appear that he also may have had sex with prostitutes at Laurier House in the 1930s. When Paul Roazen interviewed one of his private secretaries for *Canada's King*, he reported that "King's valet supposedly complained about his having to get 'pomade' off King's trousers ('pomade' was used then to keep a woman's

⁴⁰¹ Diary April 20, 1899.

⁴⁰² Diary October 10, 1901. Stacey, 77.

⁴⁰³ Stacey, 153-154. Diary April 9 and 10, 1917.

hair in place) and the butler was said to have been shocked to find King in a compromising situation in his study.”⁴⁰⁴ Heather Robertson, in *More Than a Rose: Prime Ministers, Wives, and Other Women*, posits provocatively that “from the age of eighteen until he was in his forties, and possibly after, King regularly cruised the streets at night looking for sex. Women had to be bought, but they were cheap and plentiful. Sex with prostitutes allowed King to play out the forbidden act of making love to his mother, whom he knew wasn’t ‘pure.’”⁴⁰⁵

King did not “regularly” cruise the streets at night nor do his diaries ever consciously impugn his mother’s virtue. I have located only one dream vision recorded by King in his diary in 1932 in which his mother appeared as a Jezebel figure. At the train station in Berlin, “I was in time for the train, but it seemed to me that I was arguing with mother and resenting her effort to hold me by pleading for me to love her, or to be absorbed by her love; it was a selfish love I felt that was seeking its own—The kind I have experienced with others but never with her. She seemed to be in a sort of reddish colouring, dress and hair.”⁴⁰⁶

Electric and Magnetic Currents and the Torment of the Sinner

There is much more evidence in *Canada’s King* and in King’s diaries regarding the physical sensations he felt in his body than about psychological factors—as Heather Robertson speculates—that led to his guilt-ridden masturbatory practices. He had begun writing about his nerves already in 1897 when they were “almost shattered” from overwork. The following year he noted that “my mind has pained me much; it is like a clock out of order; it is as though the

⁴⁰⁴ Roazen, 137. Since Laurier House had a police guard, it would be interesting to know whether any police records exist of such visits. King’s ability to “spot” prostitutes is indicated by his diary entry of June 19, 1934 written after coming home from his office at 11 pm the night before with his private secretary Howard Henry. He described the prostitute as “a perfectly dressed & appearing person, carrying a red umbrella...a woman quite alone, very smart in appearance, etc. For the moment I stopped to look at her & was going to say a word to Henry ‘to beware.’—I felt it would be unworthy of my position to do so even in jest, so I said nothing & physically turned my back toward the woman who was walking in an opposite direction.”

⁴⁰⁵ Robertson, 201.

mainspring had broken & it was running too fast. I start nervously from one thing to another. It is a losing of control which I must regain at once. No more of this. I alone can work out my destiny & I must not let nerves & impulses get the better of me.”⁴⁰⁷

In August of 1897, King had feared he would suffer a breakdown after the great love of his life, Mathilde Grossert, a nurse he had met in Chicago while hospitalized with typhoid fever, broke off their relationship. She had written him, “My worst fears are confirmed—neither your letter nor your actions are those of a sane man.”⁴⁰⁸ King recorded his own turbulent emotional reactions in his diary. “I hope this terrible sadness will soon pass away. I am in fear & trembling; my frame is much shaken & tonight I am almost afraid to be alone.” The next day he added, “Oh such a sadness comes into my heart; it depresses & depresses & depresses; I can hardly rise above it.”⁴⁰⁹ By September 9 he noted his “mind more at rest...I was fast becoming insane & it may be some time before I am quite myself again.” In January 1899 he resolved to consult a physician about his nerves but was informed by Dr. Cheever in Boston that his feelings were “perfectly natural, that I must simply cease to worry. He gave me some powders which I had made up at a druggists.”⁴¹⁰ In 1904, while Deputy Minister of Labour, King had another attack of nerves. “The chief thing is that I feel most terribly depressed, sort of weighed down in mind & body, as though life were a burden and to weep were natural. I cannot account for it save by nerves which are a little unstrung & need mastery. I must seek to master them.”⁴¹¹

When King began drafting *Industry and Humanity* in January of 1916, he again began coping with an aggravated nervous condition and conflict with his sex instinct. “My thoughts have turned away from the ideals I have cherished and I have found myself in an encounter with my own nature such as I have never known before. It has been at times as though a fire would devour

⁴⁰⁶ Diary November 6, 1932.

⁴⁰⁷ Diary August 19, 1897 and October 17, 1898.

⁴⁰⁸ Stacey, 61.

⁴⁰⁹ Diary April 25 and 26, 1898.

⁴¹⁰ Diary September 9, 1898, January 20 and 25, 1899.

⁴¹¹ Diary December 5, 1904.

me and I have been unable to get rest by night or day.”⁴¹² In June he resolved to seek medical assistance in Ottawa, fearing that “there may be some injury to my spine, that the pressure on the nerves of it is the cause. I shall consult a physician if the rest and change does not eliminate the feelings I sometimes have, for it holds me back in my work and besides makes me most uncomfortable both alone and in the presence of others.”⁴¹³ Dr. Chevrier examined his spine on July 1 and found him in perfect physical health but “nervously overwrought.” At the end of the month, Chevrier certified that King “is suffering from the incipient symptoms of a severe form of neurasthenia which have been brought on by overwork.” Neurasthenia was a widely used medical term encompassing a range of meanings from tired nerves and excessive work and family pressures to Freud’s emphasis on sexual factors such as insufficient sexual activity.⁴¹⁴

King had been coping with tremendous work and family pressures. His favourite sister, Bella, had died in 1915, his only brother Max was suffering from tuberculosis, his mother was ailing and on August 30, 1916 he suffered another blow with the death of his father. When he was examined by Dr. Barker at John Hopkins in October of 1916, he again insisted that his spine be x-rayed to try to locate the cause of the very physical tingling sensations that were tormenting him. We know what these sensations were from Barker’s examination of King and his records of this “very interesting case.” “The principle [sic] subjective disturbance is that of being influenced electrically by others and of influencing others in this way.” In his physical examination, Barker observed that King had “hallucinations of perineal sense...Has sensations; referred to the perineal region,” the area between the scrotum and the anus.⁴¹⁵

Dr. Barker and Dr. Meyer assured King that his tingling sensations were hallucinations and that his sexual feelings were normal. After King had an abscessed tooth and adenoids removed—suspected physiological causes of his “hallucinations”—Barker informed him that the x-ray of his spine showed that everything was in order. He spoke to him again “of my view of sex

⁴¹² Diary June 22, 1916.

⁴¹³ Diary June 27, 1916.

⁴¹⁴ Diary July 1, 1916. Roazen, 63, 64-65.

problems, said he thought I over exaggerated significance of perfectly natural phenomena, that there was danger in so doing by a healthy man; he advised reconciling in thought any conflict between the animal and spiritual nature. He had to do this himself, had been through the same conflict.” King was extremely grateful to Barker for his counsel and the free treatment he received thanks to the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research. “I told him he had been like a little saviour to me, in helping me out of the torment of the sinner.” When he was discharged from John Hopkins on November 11, his hospital diagnosis included “Psychoneurosis” and “Psychasthenia” which Paul Roazen explains were “a Freudian term implying the existence of a sexual conflict” and “phobias and obsessions.”⁴¹⁶

King felt immensely relieved after his treatment at John Hopkins and published his 567-page *Industry and Humanity* in 1918. But the physical and psychological conditions that produced his symptoms had not been addressed nor eliminated by his treatment in Baltimore. In June of 1918 he confessed that “carnal temptations have absorbed too much of my thought. I have not exerted the will to overcome I should have. I am not satisfied with myself as a man.”⁴¹⁷ In December of 1920 he “had another day of terrific struggle” because of “thoughts wandering in other directions” and “found it next to impossible to work.” The following day, King “suffered a terrible depression this afternoon from yesterday” and concluded that “There are mysterious phenomena of which we have not begun to gain a knowledge that control and sway our lives.”⁴¹⁸ A little more than a year after he became prime minister on December 29, 1921, he again experienced a “terrible depression which made me feel that death itself would be a happy release from everything.” He could not sleep, “was restless and thoughts difficult to control” so that he “felt a violent impulse almost to go out and waste time in revelry of any kind.”⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁵ Roazen, 73, 75, 77.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid. 98, 100, 77.

⁴¹⁷ Diary June 24, 1918.

⁴¹⁸ Diary December 13 and 14, 1920.

⁴¹⁹ Diary February 3, 1923.

References to magnetic currents reappear in his diary in 1928 when, as Prime Minister, he gave a dinner in honour of the British MP and Colonial Secretary, Leo Amery. King described his toast to Amery and the Empire as a failure, the result of problems that seem to have been affecting him for some time. “I had hoped I might do well in speaking tonight but somehow all day I felt a great depression, as though I might cry. I found it hard to have a clear free mind when I got up to speak. It is the sex passions I think that when one is asleep, tear & wear one & a magnetic force that at times reacts, or allows itself to be drained by others. I cannot understand the mystery of it.”⁴²⁰

King’s physical sensations were so intense that, as he wrote the following year, “there have been times when it seemed to me the passions would tear my very skin while I was asleep. I have wakened suffering from an inner fire and have been next to useless throughout the day.” Were it not for occasional rest, “which is a sort of fleeing from the pursuit of the furies—the passions within, the thousand & one demands of people from without—I do not know what I would do.”⁴²¹ In another “restless” night in 1932, “It seemed almost impossible to control a certain

⁴²⁰ Diary June 23, 1928. He had recorded on April 23 that “I was so filled with a sort of internal fever as not to be able to care about anything or anyone & in a combative sort of mood. It is I believe a sort of passion fever, that it is hard to account for, the worm that never dies.” On October 9, 1929, he noted that he was “reading each night a little of a volume entitled ‘Personal Magnetism’ [Theron Q. Dumont. *Personal Magnetism: The Secrets of Mental Fascination* (Chicago: Advanced Thought Publishing, 1914), a simple book but with much good teaching. I have been happy today & more my real self in overcoming self than for a long time past.” He would re-read the book on April 11, 1933.

⁴²¹ Diary May 24, 1929. For other references to King feeling as if his body were on fire and “almost consumed alive,” his lack of will power, inability to control his thoughts, “the animal side of one’s nature,” his “brute instinct controlling the high and nobler impulses,” and “the working of passions within during sleep,” see Diary March 25, 1929, November 11, 1930, June 9, 1931, November 17, 1931, June 1, 1932, May 1 and 2, 1933, June 13, 1933, May 15, 1934, May 17 and December 17, 1935, November 15, 1937, April 3, 1938, April 17, 1938, April 23, 1938, April 29, 1938, July 24, 1938, September 29, 1938, March 10, 1939, April 2, 1939, July 7, 1939, September 15, 1939, October 10, 1942, and January 18, 1949. Part of King’s aversion to “intoxicants” also relates to his uncontrollable sex drive. He largely abstained from liquor during the 1937 Imperial Conference in London, “no whiskey—no cocktails—or anything of the kind, but once or twice & instead of them have taken sherry, champagne or a little wine & a little port. I am sure I would have been better off had I taken nothing at all. I enjoyed the relief at the time

surging of feeling which I find difficult to understand and control. Whether it be due to outside influences or to inner impulses only I do not know.”⁴²²

King, of course, could also be sexually aroused without feeling electric currents. He had noted that before he spoke at the Prince Albert Exhibition in August of 1933 that “the performance in front of the grand stand of girl dancers, in costume of Indians, was quite beautiful to watch.” That evening he experienced another restless night and observed that “the performance of the dancers at the Exhibition was not without its effect on my emotions, in occasioning restlessness. All this is interesting as revealing one’s nature and the forces that play upon it, what has to be guarded and guided day by day & hour by hour.”⁴²³ In 1934, after he had felt “‘the thorns in my flesh’ buffeting me during the night,” King thought “this morning’s chapter on Corinthians seemed to point to it being the conflict arising from natural or spiritual impulses...I want to be wholly freed from these conflicts of sense vs. soul.”⁴²⁴

King had first heard about electric currents from his mother who told him in 1914 that his grandfather, William Lyon Mackenzie, “used to put glass non-conductors on the foot of his bed to help store his nervous energy.”⁴²⁵ His preoccupation with magnetic forces intensified in the 1930s when he felt not only powerful physical sensations and magnetic currents but found these combined with dreams—or what he preferred to call “visions”—of not only the living but also the dead. Before she died in 1917, Isabel King had promised her son “to come to me from the Great Beyond & let me know of her existence.” In 1932 King felt the sexual electric current when he dreamed of his mother. When he took her in his arms, “she reached over & kissed me very sweetly. As she went to kiss me I felt as it were an electric current from her lips to mine...I thought of her promise to come to me in dreams when she could & her saying in our conversation

but it has robbed me of the natural rest and caused me to have thoughts I might have avoided...it roused thoughts I should not have had.” Diary June 11, 1937, pages 11, 12.

⁴²² Diary April 9, 1932.

⁴²³ Diary August 2 and 3, 1933.

⁴²⁴ Diary February 18, 1934.

⁴²⁵ Diary December 11, 1914.

when she could get in touch with my magnetism she would. Clearly what I felt in the electric current was that.”⁴²⁶

Heather Robertson cites another of King’s “Vision of dear mother—celestial materialization” in 1935 in which he gave her “a pretty little gown I had secured for her while abroad.” King “seemed to be in my underclothing as I came near her side” when he took her in his arms. “She put her lips to mine as I lifted her up & kissed me, in a manner that it seemed to me, breath seemed to come from her to me.” Robertson speculated about the origin of this and other of King’s dream visions. “What really happened between Mother and Willie? Was King, at sixty, having incestuous fantasies about a woman dead nearly twenty years? Or was he playing out, in the safety of a sleeplike trance, a sexual trauma that had actually occurred?”⁴²⁷

King could acknowledge a sexual feeling for his mother in his dreams. In his diaries, he also acknowledged breaking social and religious taboos with other women. Some of King’s biographers have questioned whether King had a sexual relationship with Marjorie Herridge, the wife of Rev. Dr. William Thomas Herridge, minister of St. Andrew’s in Ottawa, “the wealthiest Presbyterian congregation in Canada.”⁴²⁸ Mrs. Herridge had introduced King to the poetry of Matthew Arnold in 1901 and, according to Allan Levine, the two “instantly bonded on an emotional and possibly sexual level.”⁴²⁹

Whether King had a strictly platonic relationship with the married Joan Patteson has also been a subject of debate. That he considered her not only his closest friend and spiritual companion but

⁴²⁶ Diary December 25, 1931, April 12 and 14, 1932.

⁴²⁷ Diary January 5, 1935. Robertson, 210, 211. King recorded another “very very vivid” dream in his diary on March 24, 1929 in which he seemed to be sleeping at home. “Suddenly dear mother came to my room & slipped quietly into my bed beside me as if not to alarm me.”

⁴²⁸ Stacey, 86.

⁴²⁹ Levine, 61. On King’s relationship with Marjorie Herridge, see also Stacey, 86-105, Edwinna von Baeyer, *Garden of Dreams: Kingsmere and Mackenzie King* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1990), 47-51, Robertson, 94, 205, 211 and Louise Reynolds, *Mackenzie King: Friends & Lovers* (Victoria: Trafford Publishing, 2005), 47-69.

also had sexual feelings for her is clearly indicated by a 1933 diary entry. When he phoned her and “was delighted indeed to hear her voice—the electrical effect of it & our talk together was a phenomena I watched deliberately with interest. It was useless for me to try to control it, as it took possession of me as if I had a battery within which was being charged. There is something here I have yet to understand, a physical hour of magnetic attraction that defies space.”⁴³⁰ King again referred to the magnetic current between himself and Joan Patteson—and the medical condition identified by Dr. Chevrier eighteen years before—after they watched a film together in 1934. “With the sympathetic attraction of Joan’s nature & mine, there was the drawing out of a natural magnetic current—which in Nature has its natural outlet in marriage & which leads to marriage in Nature—but which when thwarted leaves the nerves drawn, as it were & produces reactions which occasion a sort of Neurasthenia.”⁴³¹

King also felt a sexual attraction for Princess Cantacuzene whom he had first met in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1899 when she was still Julia Grant, a granddaughter of President Ulysses S. Grant, before her marriage to a Russian prince. In 1932 he believed she was exerting a sexual influence on him and became “conscious as I have never been before of magnetic forces sweeping as it were through me—some attractive power which it was impossible to resist, and which seemed to gain an almost infinite strength.”

I seemed to be certain that it was thoughts on the part of Princess Cantacuzene to whom I had written and who in all probability had received my letter...This afternoon about three thirty I received a wire from Princess Cantacuzene as follows: ‘Deeply grateful for your thought of me.’...I am wondering if what I experienced last night was self-intoxication, as it were, my own thoughts, or influence of spirits round about, brought near my own thoughts, or nature’s urge swept free as it were after being dammed. This I have to learn. I felt I was ‘experimenting’ and as such alone permitted my thoughts to have the sweep they had.⁴³²

⁴³⁰ Diary November 16, 1933.

⁴³¹ Diary December 28, 1934. King identifies the film as *Thine Is My Heart*, “the story of Schubert’s life,” but the correct title may have been *Here Is My Heart*. See Diary December 27, 1934.

⁴³² Diary May 10, 1932. After speaking to Princess Cantacuzene in New York on the telephone from Laurier House the night of July 27, 1932, King confessed the next day that “I was not true to my best self last night.” “Why I do not hold to the way that I know to be right, I cannot say. It is a lack of discipline of the will and a desire to follow the path of inclination through lack, I

King wanted to understand his feelings of “fire through the veins” and to “comprehend my own nature & learn above else to control & subdue every part that does not administer to what is highest and best in life.”⁴³³ He feared “that I have aroused part of my nature which should be subdued by writing the letter I did to Princess Cantacuzene—that may be the fire that shuts us out of Paradise. It may, on the other hand, be part of a divine fire which controlled means power and understanding.”⁴³⁴

Further correspondence with Princess Cantacuzene convinced King that “experimenting with one’s will incurs dangers with it which cannot be too greatly guarded against. What I want to record here is the certain knowledge of the influence of forces which affect one’s entire being and which are so real as to be unmistakable. Are there evil forces as well as good at work & do evil spirits find their way into control that is the question to be solved.”⁴³⁵

The magnetic currents struck King not only while dreaming at night but also in his daytime activities as a politician. He referred to one such physical reaction, evoking parallels with the “serpentine fire” of kundalini yoga, after speaking in the House of Commons for four hours and twenty minutes as Leader of the Opposition on January 29, 1934. “On the way driving home in the car & after going to rest I felt that physical sensation of the sexual organ which I have experienced after great efforts in speaking before, but I felt it possible to control it. It must have to do with some magnetic power which develops as one speaks.”⁴³⁶ In Naples in November of 1934, King “seemed to be completely overwhelmed by magnetic attraction from some source, where I cannot say, but nothing has ever been stranger or less possible to resist. I could not but

imagine, of not having a home of my own and partly a desire to experiment. Last night’s conversation over the long distance left no doubt as to the experiment.” Diary July 28, 1932. I interpret King’s remark to mean that he masturbated either while speaking to Cantacuzene on the telephone or afterwards.

⁴³³ Diary May 7, 1932.

⁴³⁴ Diary May 8, 1932.

⁴³⁵ Diary May 31, 1932.

⁴³⁶ Diary January 30, 1934.

yield to it despite all I know & believe & have experienced. It was as if all the force within me were being driven towards someone who was completely answering the need. This I cannot explain. It is some phenomenon doubtless associated with failure to have married.”⁴³⁷ He felt this “influence of another” particularly “when partially asleep than when awake & when the control of the will was not so strong.”⁴³⁸

In 1935 a letter from the wife of the Polish Consul General in Ottawa, Madame Adamkiewicz, inviting King to dinner “seemed to rouse something in my nature quite unaccountable except on some theory of magnetic attraction. It made it difficult to rest one evening, and impossible to control one’s thoughts, though no words had been spoken or exchanged.”⁴³⁹ In 1937 he had a dream that he interpreted as being either about black magic or animal magnetism. He concluded, “I suppose this is the magnetic force which destroys the body unless controlled & which controlled becomes celestial fire, stimulating the creativeness of the mind & causing one’s thoughts to be transmitted.”⁴⁴⁰ In 1942 a gift of Chinese vases and a photograph from Mrs. Soong, the wife of the former Minister of China to Washington, Dr. T.V. Soong, caused King again to speculate about “some force or directing influence, making itself felt & known—the power of attraction—a strange mystical sort of thing.”⁴⁴¹ He recorded beginning “to feel a surge of unrest, which it was difficult to control,” “found it hard...to control my thoughts” and “feelings

⁴³⁷ Diary November 12, 1934.

⁴³⁸ Diary April 23, 1934.

⁴³⁹ Diary June 16, 1935. King first recorded feeling “much attracted by her personality” on December 24, 1934. He described a vision in which Madame Adamkiewicz appeared “in the flowing garb as it were of some Greek goddess, like the Thracian Victory, but bound with strappings around the waist, sufficient strappings to make it appear she was bound.” King interpreted her “bound and lying posture” as representing “the spirit of woman that must be freed.” For an account of their discussion about the physical vs. spiritual nature of men and women, see Diary January 27, 1935, pages 2-3.

⁴⁴⁰ Diary October 17, 1937.

⁴⁴¹ Diary September 3, 1942. For additional references to magnetic currents, see Diary entries for November 6, 1932, January 8, 1933, September 11, 1933, November 5 and 13, 1934, May 17, 1935, September 11, 1935, October 1, 1935, November 13, 1937, January 11, 1938, August 15, 1939, October 3, 1939 and November 22, 1943.

began to control me” before falling asleep as late as September 1949, less than ten months before his death at the age of 75 in 1950.⁴⁴²

Sinners of Oscar Wilde’s Type

The sexual references in King’s diaries clearly are all aimed at women and we find no such expressions of overt sexual desire directed towards men. His diary and other sources provide only a few insights that might support the speculation by Paul Martin, Sr., that King had possible latent homosexual traits. Fred McGregor, King’s private secretary from 1909 to 1925 and one of his literary executors who transcribed the hand-written diaries King wrote from 1893 to 1935, described his many failed attempts to find a wife. Sir Wilfrid Laurier had highly recommended one of these prospective spouses, Miss Howard, as a very fine person whom Laurier had known “since she was very small.” But King came away from a dance with her feeling that “it was not wise to ‘follow up’ our friendship.” “There is something lacking. Without that something, nothing else counts.” That missing “something” may well have been the absence of a strong physical attraction on King’s part. McGregor observed that a number of such relationships with women and potential wives “never got beyond the point of warm and understanding friendship.”⁴⁴³

C.P. Stacey pointed to this “contrast between King’s readiness to go with the girls of the streets—his strong sexual urges can hardly be doubted—and his awkward and timid approach to

⁴⁴² See Diary January 18, January 30, February 1, June 6, July 14, August 26 and 27, and September 27, 1949. It should be noted that King’s belief in magnetic currents also had a wider, non-sexual, spiritualist dimension. When Joan Patteson, on the way with King to see his “ruins” on his Kingsmere estate, mentioned an article in *Saturday Night* on the next Governor General, John Buchan, having a Roman ruin with a temple for an altar on his grounds, King perceived a magnetic synchronicity. “All these are evidences of a ‘something round about’ which not only makes all things work together, but brings together all related things, a sort of magnetic something that attracts from the visible & invisible what is kindred to itself.” Diary May 17, 1935.

⁴⁴³ McGregor, 85-86, 91. Diary January 17, 1912.

a ‘respectable’ woman.’⁴⁴⁴ King could lust after women’s bodies in his dreams and with prostitutes but he did not seem to desire the physicality and sexuality of “respectable” women’s bodies. When he was correcting the final proofs of his *Industry and Humanity* in 1918, he wondered “if the book will bring me the wife I long so much for. Whether some woman will see my soul in it & love me because of it & reveal herself to me. It is the soul only that I want, the soul that will inspire & uplift.”⁴⁴⁵



Mackenzie King with his sister Bella and John and Isabel King in the late 1880s.

If King lacked a strong heterosexual desire for “respectable” women, what is the evidence that he may have harboured secret same-sex desires? We can only speculate about the possible significance of the studio photograph of the two-year old King in a girl’s dress and shoes because such attire for young boys was common in the 1870s.⁴⁴⁶ A photo of the King siblings, with the seven-year old William in an exaggerated standing pose, bent arm at the waist, could be read as

⁴⁴⁴ Stacey, 64.

⁴⁴⁵ Diary October 10, 1918.

⁴⁴⁶ The Library and Archives Canada photo C-007332 is reproduced in Allan Levine, in the photograph facing page 326.

gay body language with our contemporary eyes.⁴⁴⁷ He repeated this gesture in a photo at the age of about fourteen taken with his parents and sister Bella.⁴⁴⁸ We should probably not try to interpret as an example of the twenty-year old King experimenting with his gender identity his description of attending a fancy dress ball in 1894 as “Clementine,” dressed in a white duck suit and broad rimmed hat. “With a little flower as powder I soon made up very well.”⁴⁴⁹

Can we really read anything into King’s remark in 1898 that attending the gym “is putting me in splendid shape. My shoulder & arms are a mass of muscles; I weigh 150 lbs. stripped” and into his friend George’s comment that “he wished he were a girl that I might love him”?⁴⁵⁰ When he called the “loathsome” horse dealer “Fatty Bates” a “sort of male prostitute” while tutoring Harvard classmates Peter and Robert Gerry in the millionaire high society set in Newport in 1899, he was referring to the fact that Bates kept mistresses, gambled, drank, had two different prostitutes at meals with him and was thus “a man utterly wanting shame with no morality & only grossness.”⁴⁵¹ The diaries give no indication that King conceived what kind of person a male prostitute really was.⁴⁵²

We can also take at face value his 1895 diary entry that he “was kept busy this afternoon hustling about to invite the boys who are not members of the ‘Not Out club’” for a dance he was

⁴⁴⁷ The LAC photo C7352 is reproduced in Edwinna von Baeyer, 14.

⁴⁴⁸ The LAC photo C-002854 is reproduced in Stacey, photo facing page 96 and in Levine, in the third photograph facing page 326.

⁴⁴⁹ Diary August 14, 1894. At another fancy dress ball the following year he and his friend Jack Falconbridge appeared as “the ‘Heavenly Twins’ dressed in long baby robes with little hoods & ribbons; we were blackened with corks; he was ‘Angelica,’ I was ‘Diabolo.’” See Diary August 9, 1895.

⁴⁵⁰ Diary March 15, 1898.

⁴⁵¹ Diary September 3, 1899.

⁴⁵² Diary September 3 and August 29, 1899. Did male prostitutes exist in Toronto at the time? C.S. Clark, in his 1898 *Of Toronto the Good*, noted “it is to be remembered, that as Mrs. Besant says, a girl has this advantage over a boy, she can sell herself, where a boy cannot, so that where poverty makes a girl a prostitute, it makes a boy a thief.” See C.S. Clark, *Of Toronto the Good. A Social Study. The Queen City of Canada as It Is* (Montreal: Toronto Publishing Company, 1898. Facsimile edition, (Toronto: Coles, 1970), 89.

organizing at his Kappa Alpha fraternity at the University of Toronto and his 1899 letter to Rev. Endicott Peabody, headmaster of the Groton School for Boys in Massachusetts, “asking him if he knows of an opportunity for me to get a boy to travel with. If I could get one for a year, I would be tempted to go abroad next year.”⁴⁵³ Was he referring to an attempted homosexual pick-up when, describing one of his nightly strolls in Boston, he “met a middle-aged man, respectable looking, even gentlemanly, in fact, but a bestial slave”⁴⁵⁴ Did he mean that Francis Charles Montague, one of Arnold Toynbee’s biographers who invited him to lunch in Oxford in 1900, was effeminate when he described him—though “a pleasing individual” and “very pleasant & kind”—as “rather too ladylike in some ways”⁴⁵⁵

The diaries also do not tell us whether King felt same-sex desire when he called the aviator Charles Lindbergh, who had landed with his plane in Ottawa for the Diamond Jubilee of Confederation celebrations in 1927, a more beautiful character than he had ever seen. “He was like a young god who appeared from the skies in human form – all that could be desired in youthful appearance, in manner, in charm, in character, as noble a type of the highest manhood as I have ever seen.”⁴⁵⁶ Or what he felt when, campaigning in his riding of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, in 1933, he called the young man showing him about “a young god, clean looking & bright smile—blue eyes clear etc.”⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵³ Diary January 3, 1895 and March 12, 1899.

⁴⁵⁴ Diary August 19, 1899.

⁴⁵⁵ Diary March 3, 1900.

⁴⁵⁶ Diary July 2, 1927. Lindbergh had completed his celebrated first solo airplane flight across the Atlantic Ocean with the Spirit of St. Louis on May 21. By contrast, when he later saw a newsreel of the July 1-3 ceremonies on Parliament Hill, King did “not like my own appearance anywhere—a little fat round man, no expression of a lofty character; a few glimpses here & there of the happier self—driving with Lindbergh.” Diary July 22, 1927. Seeing the “movietone” of the review on Parliament Hill on Remembrance Day in 1936 again filled him “with a sense almost of shame.” “My hair was completely disordered and blowing in the wind, making a caricature of a man attempting to speak. I looked, too, very tired in the picture. I shall have to pay more attention to public appearances and the publicity attached thereto.” Diary December 1, 1936.

⁴⁵⁷ Diary July 27, 1933.

Yet the nature of Mackenzie King's relationship with Bert Harper—his roommate and second in command at the Department of Labour—and the question of whether their relationship extended beyond a close friendship needs further investigation. When he lamented Harper's death from drowning in his diary in 1902 he wrote, "He has gone quickly, the soul of the man that I loved as I have loved no other man, my father & brother alone excepted."⁴⁵⁸ C.P. Stacey assured his readers that when the two moved into shared living quarters in Ottawa in October of 1900, "I feel sure that what King thought he was setting up at 202 Maria Street [now Laurier Avenue West] was not a male love-nest but a sort of family circle, a private world where he could find refuge and support." He argued that "King was an insecure person. He felt the need for support, and he found it in constant close, private, quasi-domestic companionship with trusted friends."⁴⁵⁹ Stacey found that by the time they graduated from the University of Toronto with their B.A. degrees in 1895, King and Harper "had established a special relationship." Yet he firmly rejected all inferences of homosexuality. "It was a consciously romantic and affectionate friendship, but the picture King's diary gives us is not of what C.S. Clark called 'sinners of Oscar Wilde's type.'⁴⁶⁰ Allan Levine similarly affirmed that "No two heterosexual males likely adored each other more."⁴⁶¹

In his 1898 *Of Toronto the Good: The Queen City of Canada as It Is*, C.S. Clark described the wide scope of sexual activities carried out by men and women in Toronto (population nearly two hundred thousand) in the 1890s. A journalist and former employee of the Department of Justice and Agriculture until 1893, Clark cited police reports indicating that the number of houses of prostitution rose from 35 (with an average of four women living in each house) to 174 in 1894 and then fell to 46 in 1895 as a result of "competition from women living singly so as not to

⁴⁵⁸ Diary January 1, 1902.

⁴⁵⁹ Stacey, 80, 72. These trusted friends could be male or female. After his defeat by R.B. Bennett's Conservatives in the 1930 federal election, King vowed to stay on as Leader of the Opposition and rebuild the Liberal Party. "What I feel most in need of is one person, man or woman with whom to share the effort." Diary November 5, 1930.

⁴⁶⁰ Stacey, 78, 79.

⁴⁶¹ Levine, 59.

come within the scope in the law.”⁴⁶² He also reported frequent soliciting on the streets, the availability of abortions, newspaper advertising for condoms (“**Rubber Goods of ALL KINDS For Sale**”), widespread sexual abuse of domestic servants, sex in parks and in the suburbs and paid and unpaid sex in boat houses and on Toronto Island.⁴⁶³ “The island,” Clark asserted, “is simply an open air place of prostitution, or charnel house.” Rather than being a city of churches as Toronto liked to perceive itself, Clark concluded that “The whole city is an immense house of ill-fame, the roof of which is the blue canopy of heaven during the summer months.” He therefore advocated the licensing of houses of prostitution in order to combat venereal diseases and “keep respectable girls free from corruption.”⁴⁶⁴ Clark identified Yonge, Queen, King, Church and York Streets as particularly active areas for “street walkers.”⁴⁶⁵ After King reviewed *The Waifs of New York* at the Toronto Opera House for the *Globe* in 1896 and “wasted a lot of time - \$1; got home after 1 o’clock,” he concluded “I must guard myself down town.”⁴⁶⁶

According to *Of Toronto the Good*, Mackenzie King had a much wider range of opportunities to engage in sexual activities than merely “strolling” for prostitutes at night. Furthermore, Clark had assured his readers that homosexual acts were also being committed in Toronto and Ottawa. “Consult some of the bell boys of the large hotels in Canada’s leading cities, as I did, and find

⁴⁶² Clark, 92. King may have observed such a house when he and a friend “went for a little walk along Wellington St.” and “saw an excellent illustration of wickedness clothed in loveliness in a house on this St.” Diary July 20, 1894.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., 91, 123, 127, 104, 105. King recorded of one of his strolling expeditions at night that he “met another person; we walked down to Riverdale Park. I stayed out rather late getting home about one o’clock.” Diary July 9, 1894.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., 135, 96, 101, 106, 86, 87, 103. In the context of these wide-spread sexual activities, Clark also referred to public moralists objecting to “pictures of ballet dancers being posted on the streets of Toronto, because it corrupted public morals, by which they mean, I presume, creating unholy desires on the part of boys and men.” He also asserted, “the man who would visit a house of ill-fame to feast his eyes on the charms of women has no longer any excuse for doing so. The opera, and in a greater degree the ball room supply the substitute where society charms us with as much nakedness as they dare expose to view...A few years ago aestheticism used to be the craze. Now, to secure popularity a thing must be sensuous.” See Clark, 112, 99.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., 131-132, 134, 135.

⁴⁶⁶ Diary April 27, 1896. King’s review appears in “Music and Drama,” Toronto *Globe*, April 28, 1896, p. 2.

out what they can tell from their own experiences...Some of Canada's leading citizens could be implicated just as Oscar Wilde was implicated, if some of these bell boys chose to make public what they know." He referred to two merchants in Toronto who had solicited and assaulted boys of about sixteen or seventeen years of age. "Both these men are so well known in Toronto that there is scarcely a boy who does not know of their reputation."⁴⁶⁷

Clark referred to sexual acts rather than to homosexual relationships at a time when such a visible relationship would have been virtually impossible for King. What was therefore remarkable about his friendship with Bert Harper was both their co-habiting and the intimacy of their personal and emotional bond. In extant correspondence, they address one another as "My Dear Rex" and as "Dear Bert" or "My Dear Bert." Harper wrote King on July 8, 1901 about climbing King Mountain overlooking Kingsmere Lake in the Gatineau Hills outside of Ottawa where they had spent much of the summer. "I have decided to take regular doses of mountain air for the balance of this month. I climbed the mountain yesterday in a rain-storm, and had the pleasure of standing by the cross in a bleak wind, with rain-clouds swishing around my legs and floating over the tree-tops beneath. It was prime, but I missed you." King replied to Harper on July 16, 1901 "to assure you of my love and affection for you, and to wish you God's blessing on

⁴⁶⁷ Clark, 90. Steven Maynard, in "'Horrible Temptations': Sex, Men, and Working-Class Male Youth in Urban Ontario, 1890-1935," *Canadian Historical Review* 78:2 (June 1997) references sex acts by a Yonge Street store owner with a youth as early as 1886. But the great majority of the 313 court cases he examines in Toronto, Ottawa and other cities occurred after the first decade of the 20th century, many in darkened theatres. By contrast, Rictor Norton traces the emergence of a working class subculture of homosexuals in London in the beginning of the 1700s when its population began reaching up to 750,000 inhabitants, providing a cover for outlawed activities. In addition to theatres, this subculture featured clandestine ale or coffee houses—called molly houses—where homosexual men could socialize and—in some establishments—even have sex in a backroom despite the fact that the sentence for the crime of sodomy was death by hanging. See Rictor Norton, *Mother Clap's Molly House: The Gay Subculture in England 1700-1830* (Gloucestershire: Chalford Press, 2006). Similar clubs did not appear in Toronto until the late 1960s, 70s and 80s. In *The Myth of the Modern Homosexual: Queer History and the Search for Cultural Unity* (London: Cassell, 1997), Norton dismisses the social constructionist theory that homosexuals developed into a distinct "species" only a century ago through the medical profession and capitalist urbanization by citing historical evidence documenting homosexuals and lesbians in most parts of the world for over two millennia.

the work which you have set before us in your letter to me. You are a great help and comfort to me and my life, and I would feel my work but partly done if you were not there to share it with me.” He wrote Harper again on November 18, 1901. “Your long personal letter, which I read last night after returning from Nelson, was a great joy to me, and I can assure you that all the feelings expressed therein are but the counterpart of my own, which are very real to me.”⁴⁶⁸

King’s feelings for Harper were so strong that his death helped to stir his belief in the continuity of life after death. When he heard Schumann’s *Träumerei* played by a violin soloist at the annual concert of the Ottawa Choral Society, he wrote in his diary that it “was most beautiful, though sad. It made me feel that I lay with my head on Bert’s breast as he caressed it. Poor dear old Bert, my thoughts were much of him, he seems so long away. I miss him most in the happiness I have.”⁴⁶⁹

The following week he attended “an event of one’s life” when he heard a recital by the international violin virtuoso Jan Kubelik at the Russell Theatre. His playing of Wieniawski’s *Carnaval Russe* “had parts in it which to my mind were like the flashes of summer lightning from an infinite beyond over an infinite deep, with a voice of the infinite singing through them. If the wind has a voice we heard it tonight. If there is a stream which reaches Heaven itself we heard it there.” The heavenly music turned his thoughts to Harper and the beyond. “All through the evening dear old Bert was ever in my thoughts, it seemed as if he might be giving us a glimpse into what is his daily & hourly association—or rather what is ever with and about him, for infinity has no divisions of time and immortal life, no boundaries of sense or place.” After pieces by Lalo, Bach, and a “most magnificent” composition by Paganini, Kubelik played *Träumerei*. King again found the piece “the sweetest saddest music I have ever heard. It was as though Bert had me lay my head again upon his breast, and sang of the infinite love which lies beyond the vale of tears.”⁴⁷⁰

Though he did have an annotated copy of *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* “by C.33” in his library at Laurier House, the name Oscar Wilde makes only four appearances in King’s diaries over a

⁴⁶⁸ Correspondence, Henry Albert Harper fonds, Library and Archives Canada, MG 30 A28, Vol. 1.

⁴⁶⁹ Diary January 30, 1902.

⁴⁷⁰ Diary February 5, 1902.

period of more than half a century.⁴⁷¹ At a luncheon for Lord Middleton in 1908, Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier recounted speaking to a lawyer representing the Marquess of Queensberry (the father of Lord Alfred Douglas, Wilde's lover) "when he was sued by Oscar Wilde for libel having sent in a card to Wilde at his club with the words 'a sodomite,' written after his name." The Marquess must have been among those who believed a man's character was revealed by his countenance for when his lawyer asked him what evidence he had that Wilde was a sodomite he replied, "look at his face."⁴⁷² It would be a quarter of a century later before King again noted in his diary, "I read a little of the trial of Oscar Wilde—I bought the book out of curiosity & to get a wider understanding of life—I found the first chapters of real interest."⁴⁷³

In *The Private Capital*, Sandra Gwyn asserted that the fourth Governor General of Canada, the Marquis of Lorne "was, almost certainly, a homosexual, and not always one who remained in the closet" and that he refused all contact with Oscar Wilde during his two-day lecture visit to Ottawa because "Perhaps, even in 1882, the Marquis of Lorne's reason for avoiding Wilde so studiously was the need to be circumspect."⁴⁷⁴ The day before his arrival in Ottawa, Arthur J. Graham, editor of the *Canadian Illustrated News*, had written about Wilde's first lecture in Montreal on May 15 for the American culture weekly, *Music and Drama*, and recalled Wilde as a

⁴⁷¹ [Oscar Wilde], *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* "by C.33" (New York: Brentano's, 1909). The copy, call number FE.50.1002.1, is marked with single vertical lines characteristic of passages King found of particular interest on pages 26, 29, 34, 36 and 37. King does not mention reading *The Ballad* in his diary. C.33 referred to cell block C, landing 3, cell 3 in Reading Gaol where Wilde served most of his sentence of two years hard labour for homosexual offences after his conviction in 1895.

⁴⁷² Diary January 12, 1908. This appears to be the only time the word "sodomite" appears in King's diaries. The fourth and final reference to Wilde occurs in 1935 describing a dinner given by Prime Minister R.B. Bennett at the Chateau Laurier in honour of the Japanese minister to Canada, Prince Tokugawa, at which King was present. Tokugawa referred to Canada's exclusion of Japanese immigrants by jesting he would like to return to Canada as an agricultural labourer or as a wine cellar keeper in the home of a bachelor. Since Bennett was a well-known bachelor, King thought Tokugawa "made a bad break" citing "Oscar Wilde having said a bachelor's house was one in which the champagne was the best. It is errors of this kind that liquor leads a man into." Diary January 14, 1935.

⁴⁷³ Diary November 5, 1933.

student at Oxford. “The playful tossing of handkerchiefs to and fro and kitten-like gambols in the cloisters, alternating with the courtship of the coy choir boy, formed a class of amusements which did not harmonize with my own ideas of the beautiful.” According to Kevin O’Brien, in his *Oscar Wilde in Canada*, “This effrontery at best is accusing Wilde of being a sissy. But Graham is more likely accusing Wilde of homosexuality.” In Toronto, J. Ross Robertson’s *Evening Telegram* satirized the artist as “Miss Oscar Wilde.”⁴⁷⁵

Like the Marquis of Lorne, Mackenzie King was faced with a similar decision in 1934 while, like Oscar Wilde, he was engaged in a stereotypical “feminine” activity of shopping in Rome for furniture, cushion coverings and fabrics for what he planned would become an Italian Room in Laurier House.⁴⁷⁶ Mrs. Arthur Strong, who was helping King with his purchases, asked him about William Lygon, the 7th Earl Beauchamp. He had called on her and spoken highly of King. Lygon was certain Mackenzie King would become the next Prime Minister of Canada. The Earl was appointed by British Prime Minister Asquith as a member of his Cabinet, 1910-15, where he served alongside Lloyd George and Winston Churchill. In 1929 he occupied the Chancellorship of the University of London. Married with three sons and four daughters, Lygon was denounced and outed as a homosexual to King George V by his own brother-in-law, the second duke of Westminster, two years later. The Earl Beauchamp, Labour MP Hugh Dalton confided in his diary, “has had a persistent weakness for footmen, and has been finally persuaded by Simon and

⁴⁷⁴ Sandra Gwyn, *The Private Capital: Ambition and Love in the Age of Macdonald and Laurier* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1984), 183, 182.

⁴⁷⁵ Kevin O’Brien, *Oscar Wilde in Canada: An Apostle for the Arts* (Toronto: Personal Library, 1982), 70, 107.

⁴⁷⁶ “Looked over material for covering sofas, bedspreads—blue curtains, gold curtains etc. for the bedrooms of Laurier House & sofa cushions (Paola Veronese colours, coats of arms of Florence etc.) I feel it best to make these purchases at once, knowing the cost of inferior material at Ottawa & Toronto; these reproductions of 15 century fabrics in perfect colour & design & good quality appear to be a real opportunity. I let myself in for from 2 to 300 in expenditure, but I believe it is both necessary & wise.” Diary November 7, 1934.

Buckmaster to sign an undertaking not to return to England. The King didn't want a scandal because he was a Knight of the Garter!"⁴⁷⁷

In *his* diary, King recorded more circumspectly that Lord "Beaverbrook had told me about his behaviour & why he is not allowed to return to England. Lord Buckmaster had to tell him he must cut everything & get out between 6 & 12 at night as a warrant was out for his arrest; he cannot return. It would be worse than the Oscar Wilde scandal so Mrs. Strong said, people had told her the most awful things of him—he is going to live here a while, then to an island in the Pacific, Tahiti." King had received a warning about approaching danger in a dream vision. When Mrs. Strong spoke to him about the Earl Beauchamp, he believed this was the warning of his dream. "She spoke of wanting my advice about having him call on her—no doubt he wishes to call on me—I evaded any replies or commitments. I felt as we were talking a sort of sulphurous atmosphere...I am sure this was the warning I had had & I profited by it, by saying nothing."⁴⁷⁸ King had come a great distance from his self-description in 1895 as "a brother" who "has great sympathy for the poor, the outcast, the fallen and despised."⁴⁷⁹

Anticipating an imminent federal election that would return him as Prime Minister, King was not about to endanger his political prospects by associating with a homosexual fugitive from the law. Less than a handful of his dream visions support Paul Martin, Sr.'s suspicion that he might have harboured possible latent homosexual tendencies. In a 1904 dream King beheld "a beautiful woman who seemed to be in my eyes all absolutely all I could wish for in a woman. She was beautiful to look upon and she was good & pure & lovely...a Venus di Milo in stature...I knew I loved her instantly seeing all I most desired in woman in her. I felt her presence purge my whole

⁴⁷⁷ David Dutton, "Biography: William Lygon, 7th Earl Beauchamp (1872-1938)," *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* 23 (Summer 1999), 20.

⁴⁷⁸ Diary November 7, 1934. Instead of fleeing to Tahiti, Lygon died of cancer in New York in 1938, still estranged from his family. King had met Strong twenty years previously when she came to Ottawa to give a lecture on art and he helped her show slides. Over the telephone she had told him that he "was all fire, fire, fire when she knew me at Ottawa" and that "we should have seen more of each other." See Diary November 5, 1934.

⁴⁷⁹ Diary January 1, 1895.

soul. I seemed without sin & holy. I was most happy.” After travelling through a rich pastoral setting, King sees the woman again but in the presence of his brother Max who impresses him with his “fine noble manly look.” Max informs him that he is engaged to the girl. King records feeling “delighted she was to be in the family, felt happy that in some way she was to be mine too, a sister, for I loved her more than anyone I had ever seen. All day the dream has been as real to me as an actual experience.”⁴⁸⁰

H. Blair Neatby describes a similar vision King dreamt in March of 1934 in which he saw “a woman I knew of refined nature and good character, standing naked on a pedestal, also posing in different positions...What impressed me was the beauty of her form—her natural beauty—and quite evident chastity and purity.” King then entered another room where he found “a young woman and a young lad in bed in the same room, the latter might have been brother and sister. There was no suggestion of immorality of any kind.”⁴⁸¹ Could these two dreams suggest King had a latent homosexual desire for his brother Max? King recorded another dream on June 17, 1930 at the start of the federal election in which he encountered two naked men at the water’s edge as he was about to board a vessel for England. He interpreted the two nude men as representing R.B. Bennett and Conservative MP Robert Manion “with allegation we have stolen their clothes.”⁴⁸²

While King was able to verbalize his admiration while dreaming for women standing naked and posing in different positions, he suppressed expressing similar admiration for the nude male body, even when idealized in sculpture. Though he was familiar with Tait McKenzie’s sculptures and reputation, had personally visited his studio at the University of Pennsylvania, had received a signed copy of Christopher Hussey’s 1930 *Tait McKenzie: A Sculptor of Youth* with its 45 photographs of nude figures, and stayed overnight in the artist’s summer home with its studio in Almonte, Ontario, in 1933 —there is absolutely no reference in King’s diaries or correspondence

⁴⁸⁰ Diary December 4, 1904.

⁴⁸¹ H. Blair Neatby, *William Lyon Mackenzie King: Volume III 1932-1939 The Prism of Unity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 77-78.

⁴⁸² Levine, 449-450.

to the fact that the sculptor was famous for portraying young male athletes in the nude. The artist had presented King with a copy of *Tait McKenzie* during his visit to Ottawa in January of 1931. In his letter of thanks the following month, King wrote that “I had meant to write you before this to express again my appreciation of your most welcome of gifts—the autographed copy of the book about your work. It is something of which I am indeed proud and for which I cannot thank you too warmly.”⁴⁸³ Yet King’s thanks do not constitute a genuine approval of the raw physicality of McKenzie’s sculptures. King’s whole construction of his character and *habitus* was based on the suppression of his physical “lower material” self by his will and “higher” spiritual self. Tait McKenzie’s idealization of the physical—what the 1920 *Westminster Gazette* reviewer had called making “his models pagan gods” and the sculptor himself in 1928 “the body is the expression of the soul” —violated King’s spiritual and religious *habitus*.⁴⁸⁴ As will be discussed in chapter IX, King was therefore strongly disinclined to let the sculptor give free expression to his artistic imagination and exerted complete control over McKenzie’s commissions from the Canadian government.

The Dog-Faced Man

Because of the religious and social condemnation of homosexuality, King could never acknowledge these dreams as actual homosexual desires. What he did frequently obsess about in his diary was, in a perverse twist on Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, that he perceived both his physical appearance and representations of himself to be the outer manifestation of his inner moral turpitude. He hated his own countenance and physical appearance because he knew his face veiled the soul of a perpetual sinner, “the loathsome opposite of all I would like to

⁴⁸³ Tait McKenzie refers to Hussey’s study in his letter to King of February 1, 1931. LAC reel C2326, page 159402. “You mentioned that you might want some extra copies of the book about my work. If you do they can be obtained by writing to John Archinal, 2014 Pine St. Philadelphia, Pa., who is handling the copies that I still have available.” Interestingly, the Hussey title is not found in King’s library at Laurier House or in the list of titles transferred from Laurier House to Library and Archives Canada.

⁴⁸⁴ Unnamed 1928 *Toronto Star* article by Robert E. Knowles, cited in Jean McGill, *The Joy of Effort: A Biography of R. Tait McKenzie* (Bewdley, Ontario: Clay Publishing, 1980), 119.

be.”⁴⁸⁵ When the *Ottawa Journal* published an account of the Department of Labour in 1901, King objected to his photo used to accompany the article. “I pray I do not look like the cut. It has a nose of a criminal and eyes of a dissolute; the expression is mostly of a negro convict.”⁴⁸⁶

King’s negative self-image persisted until the end of his life. One of his fellow students and roommates at the University of Toronto had been the future writer Norman Duncan who later sent him seven inscribed published works.⁴⁸⁷ When King picked Duncan’s *The Mother* off his library shelf in 1935 and opened the book at the chapter about the “dog faced man,” he was sure that it was his mother seeking to comfort him. “She had known the pain I feel at my appearance, when I see my face as it so often appears in photographs...with all the disappointment I experienced on that account. She was telling me to pray as the means of realising what was best, and of driving out whatever it is within, that holds back that expression of true nobility of character which I would prize and do prize above all else.”⁴⁸⁸

But King was unable to “drive out” his instinctual “material” lower self. He believed that only purity of heart enabled one to see God and to fulfill His purpose. “Christ appeals to us as the ideal, the man of perfect character,” he wrote in 1900. “Life is a search after character; it alone is real.”⁴⁸⁹ He would recall the spiritual beauty of his sister Bella who he knew was praying for him and guiding him from the beyond until the end of his life and wanted to appropriate her inner and outer beauty. “It is not physical beauty that counts, save as it is the expression of the beautiful

⁴⁸⁵ Reynolds, xix.

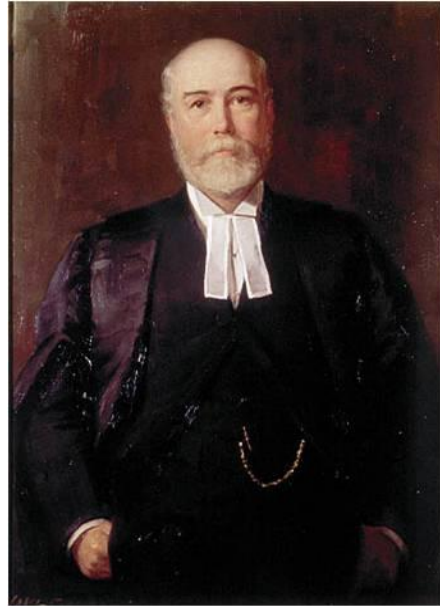
⁴⁸⁶ Diary March 30, 1901.

⁴⁸⁷ Norman Duncan, *The Way of the Sea* (1903), Laurier House library call number FE.50.1284.1; *Dr. Luke of the Labrador* (1904), FE.50.1279.1; *Dr. Grenfell’s Parish* (1905), FE.50.1282.1; *The Mother* (1905), FE.50.1314.1; *Going Down from Jerusalem* (1909) FE.50.1275.1; *The Suitable Child* (1909), FE.50.65.2; and *Battles Royal Down North* (1918), FE..50.59.5

⁴⁸⁸ Diary April 7, 1935. Five months later King again expressed his “sense of shame and despair” from looking at his photographs. But he was elated at an “excellent” newsreel of himself he saw at the Regent Theatre in Ottawa. “I saw myself a strong man and with a countenance that should appeal...at last my soul seems to beginning to shine through my face.” Diary September 13, 1935.

⁴⁸⁹ Diary April 1, 1900.

soul within. It is the soul within which in the end brings beauty—immortality... Oh that God may give to me—the look that is in my sister’s face.”⁴⁹⁰



J.W.L. Forster’s 1902 portrait of John King.

This obsession with his self-image, physical decay and the projection of an idealized character in works of art is already evident in King’s first significant direct interaction with a Canadian artist, John Wycliffe Lowes Forster (1850-1938), who was commissioned by John King to paint his family’s portraits. In his diary, King described sitting in Forster’s studio on Wellesley Street in Toronto for two hours while the artist nearly finished the portrait of his fifty-eight year old mother, Isabel Grace Mackenzie, in 1901. “Mr. Forster is watching the characteristic lines in her face. I was a little saddened to see that her face in some way is losing a little of its fullness, that lines are beginning to show a little...Still this picture will be like her & show some of her great refinement, strength & beauty, though it would be impossible for a human being to paint these as they really are.”⁴⁹¹ This question of how to project artistically inner human character and purity, particularly King’s own, would become a fixation for him for the next half-century. Forster

⁴⁹⁰ Diary March 14, 1938.

⁴⁹¹ Diary March 16, 1901.

completed a portrait of John King in 1902. King found it “a most beautiful painting and very good, bringing out the strength, the sweetness and the goodness of father’s nature & face.”⁴⁹²



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J.W.L. Forster’s 1902 portrait of Mackenzie King.

In 1902 his parents suggested that King, then twenty-eight, also have his portrait painted. He had only completed his second year as Deputy Minister of Labour in Ottawa and laughed, feeling that sitting for a portrait at his age would have “the appearance of infinite conceit.” But after seeing the portrait of his father, he decided to sit for Forster as well. “I am young now, I have done a certain amount at this time,” he reasoned. “Life has not yet begun to put its mark too heavily upon my features & if God spare me, it may be interesting to see in later days how these lines come...The painting comes at a time of crisis. I must go on to manhood now, in an earnest & real

⁴⁹² Diary September 23, 1902. When he retouched parts of his parents’ portraits in Ottawa in 1931, Forster told King that “he regarded the one he did of father as one of his very best.” Diary February 12, 1931.

way, do everything with a view to noble & manly life. I feel that in this alone lies happiness or even life.”⁴⁹³ In another sitting with Forster three days later, he found it

very interesting to watch the progress of the painting and see how bit by bit the lines were introduced, the shading added and the character blocked out. I fear my face has not as much character in it as at some earlier and more earnest periods of my life. It is the intense moral struggle, begetting an earnestness and self discipline which makes character, and in this I have not been of late what I was in earlier years. Yet I am ever striving, admitting perhaps exceptions which I seek to justify on a higher morality than the conventionally accepted.⁴⁹⁴



J.W.L. Forster’s 1901 portrait of Isabel King.

When Forster first painted his mother in 1901, posing her in a high collar and formal dress looking out straight at the viewer, King regretted that “the attitude is more that of one who was given to public view in society or life, which mother is not.” He would have much preferred a painting based on “a photo we have of mother sitting in a chair & looking down at a book, the Mother’s face.” We know how King felt about his mother’s face from his description after she

⁴⁹³ Diary September 23, 1902. The crisis King refers to related to his deepening relationship with Marjorie Herridge for he added, “We must each rise to heights unknown by our natures before. I decided then to have the painting made.”

⁴⁹⁴ Diary September 25, 1902.

heard of the death of her sister Lybbie in Chicago in early September 1901. As he accompanied his grieving mother in a horse-driven stagecoach from Kingsmere to Ottawa, “My heart was full of admiration for my mother, of compassion & sympathy for her; she was so noble, so heroic, so brave.”

Her character revealed itself in all its strength & tenderness. I kept my arm around her & as I looked at the side of her face, with her forehead bare to the cold breeze, her white curls & hair flowing behind, the profile against the night worked out with all the lines which great grief & great self control brought to her face; it was the face of only the greatest, the noblest, the strongest, the best. Had it been the face of a Luther, a Savonarola, Elisha, or other great prophet of God, it could not have been more beautiful. I worshipped that face & wished & prayed that I might ever attain to something of the greatness that was in it.”⁴⁹⁵

King was still seeking to project his own idealized character and despairing about his physical appearance three decades later when he contacted Forster in 1932 because he wanted “a picture that will bring out my real nature & character & this I think Forster can do better than any other.” His mother appeared to him in a vision that he associated with the Forster portrait. “How I have longed to look like either my mother or my father, to have some note of real distinction or goodness in my countenance.” When Miss Pearle Thurston, the portrait sculptress, told him he had his mother’s features, he “could have wept for joy. I would give all I have to look like her or father—good true beautiful souls.”⁴⁹⁶

For Foster, too, the depiction of his subjects’ character was one of his primary artistic objectives. “There dwells in the human form a wondrous, world-encompassing spirit,” he wrote in the preface to his 1928 *Under the Studio Light: Leaves from a Portrait Painter’s Sketch Book*. “The portrayal of the material features must reveal the spirit which invests and forms them, in a measure limited only by the intelligent skill and reverence of the artist. In other words Realism and Idealism are essentially and indivisibly one.”⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁵ Diary September 2, 1901.

⁴⁹⁶ Diary January 20, 1932.

When King commissioned a bust of himself from the Italian sculptor Giuseppe Guastalla and posed for him in his studio in Rome in 1934, he was finally “delighted, more than delighted” because the sculptor had made it “exceedingly life-like & very satisfactory” and had projected his character ideal. “I am sure it is one of the wisest things I have ever done.” Guastalla had “produced a wonder portrait. I cannot yet see myself as others see me. He thinks my head has been a good one for modelling, likes the lines of strength & indications of suffering & has secured well the play of features.”⁴⁹⁸ Guastalla was finally achieving the ideal representation of himself King had seen in a vision earlier that year. “My face had a look of strength & peace & quiet confidence—the type of face I like to see,” he wrote of his vision. “The type of man I should like to be in public life.”⁴⁹⁹

Controlling the Will and Constructing King’s Own *Habitus*

Blair Neatby could not be more wrong in his assessment that “devout as he was, Mackenzie King did not think of himself as a poor sinner who must rely on the Grace of God to save him from damnation. He knew unquestioningly that he had the Christian virtues of piety, honesty, continence, and temperance.”⁵⁰⁰

Very much on the contrary, King was tormented by his knowledge that his consorting with prostitutes and masturbatory sexual practices were gross violations of his concept of character and religious beliefs. As James Davison Hunter suggested, “The most basic element of character is *moral discipline*. Its most essential feature is the inner capacity for restraint—an ability to inhibit oneself in one’s passions, desires, and habits within the boundaries of a moral order.”⁵⁰¹ King’s thoughts and conduct threatened his fervent desire, as he wrote in Chicago on the last day

⁴⁹⁷ J.W.L. Forster, *Under the Studio Light: Leaves from a Portrait Painter’s Sketch Book* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1928), vii.

⁴⁹⁸ Diary November 11, 1934.

⁴⁹⁹ Diary July 6, 1934.

⁵⁰⁰ Neatby, *William Lyon Mackenzie King: Volume II The Lonely Heights, 1924 -1932*, 205.

⁵⁰¹ James Davison Hunter, *The Death of Character: Moral Education in an Age Without Good or Evil* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 16.

of his twenty-first year, to come nearer “to my Great Father in Heaven” and “to the great heart of the Universe.”⁵⁰² By his sexual thoughts and practices, he not only violated the code of his own character instilled by his father and mother but also rejected their “nobility of character” embodied by them.

The great deficiency King perceived in his character also had a significant social and political dimension. As Hunter posited, “In both classical and biblical cultures—civilizations that have been so deeply formative to our own—people well understood there to be a direct association between the character of individuals and the well-being of the society as a whole. Individual character was essential to decency, order, and justice within public life.”⁵⁰³ As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, King believed a good Christian character was essential for success in political life in Canada. It was British character and ideals that won his allegiance to the British Empire rather than, as Goldwin Smith advocated, to continentalism and union with the United States. “The argument for British connection to my mind,” he wrote in 1906, “is to be found in British ideals & British character. Were not these things of greater value than material considerations in the true greatness of a people, much might be said for this continent being one, free from the complications of European or Asiatic entanglements.”⁵⁰⁴ In the 1930s and during World War II, he perceived his own inner conflict between the senses and the spirit reflected in world events. A “war of sense versus soul, lies beneath the world war of today. It is the material (fleshly desires, lust, sensations, etc.) vs. the spiritual forces waging conflict against each other in the world—an outer manifestation of the inner strife & the power the respective forces have gained.”⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰² Diary December 16, 1896.

⁵⁰³ Hunter, 4.

⁵⁰⁴ Diary January 14, 1906. King spoke about ideals and character when he addressed the Men’s Club in Toronto about the 19th Ward of Chicago and “spoke strongly against known vices as ruining the race & had a confidential talk with some of the men.” Diary December 21, 1896.

⁵⁰⁵ Diary September 4, 1936.

Mackenzie King developed and used a number of different strategies, often simultaneously, for over half a century to construct and fortify his religious/spiritual *habitus* so that it could prevail over and control his sexual *habitus* in an attempt to achieve the unified ethos referred to by Garnham and Williams. He was not unique in this life-long attempt. As James Davison Hunter observed, “By the end of the nineteenth century character was regarded as something one could explicitly develop.”⁵⁰⁶

Many of King’s strategies to strengthen his mind and will were corrective attempts to control his sexual thoughts and practices. One of these was the use of King’s diary itself. After completing one of his “strolls” in Cambridge in 1897 he lamented, “Had I read my diary before going out I would not have gone so far.” And after making only 33 entries in his diary for all of 1915 and the first five months of 1916, he began writing a few entries again in June of 1916, noting that he “recommenced this record as a means of keeping myself true to my highest purpose and faithful in the discharge of duty.” In 1930 he referred to “keeping diary as a spiritual discipline.” Like reading his inspirational “little books & bible from day to day—What a reward!” his diary was “Another guide, this daily record maintained as a discipline to keep me true to my best self.”⁵⁰⁷

Another of King’s strategies was to find a “noble” woman who would enable him to become righteous as well while also satisfying his sexual needs. He wrote of one such idealized prospective wife, “I feel in her power already & feel that she is stronger & better than I am & will make a truly noble man of me... The truth is Nature’s laws must be first obeyed; they are the omnipresent laws of God. We are certain of disobeying God if we disobey Nature & it is by nature that I love [A] & to go contrary to that love, to please anyone in the world is only to wreck myself.”⁵⁰⁸ In addition to evoking the laws of God, King also privileged the mind as a means of

⁵⁰⁶ Hunter, 55.

⁵⁰⁷ Diary September 28, 1897, June 22, 1916 and June 1, 1930.

⁵⁰⁸ Diary March 11 and May 26, 1898. When he transcribed King’s handwritten diaries from 1893 to 1935 in the early 1950s and cited references to his various romantic affairs in his *The Fall and Rise of Mackenzie King*, F.A. McGregor “for obvious reasons substituted letters for the names that appear in the diary.” See McGregor, 86; Jean F. Dryden, “The Mackenzie King

controlling his sexual thoughts and urges. Two months after beginning his diary, he found that “unless we guard ourselves continually we are apt to forget God and continually err. I hope to be able to keep closer to him and above all to have pure thoughts; if the mind is pure surely the body will be.”⁵⁰⁹

King observed that the arts also had this cleansing effect on his mind and body. While studying for his courses at Harvard in 1898, he “found it exceedingly hard to concentrate my mind; felt the most fearful temptation to go out & about the streets; kept in only by going down [to] the parlor & reading while one of the boys played the piano. I could feel the clouds of confusion part as the music broke in upon me. In a short time I was completely soothed.” He could also achieve the same effect by playing the piano himself. “The piano did me much good, comforted me & cleared my thoughts.” He wrote of this psychological and emotional effect of music, “I felt as though I would like to lie down in waves of music as if this were the only thing that would soothe me.”⁵¹⁰

For King, theatre and opera performances could achieve this same therapeutic effect. After he went to the Princess Theatre in 1895 and saw Ada Rehan in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, he recorded in his diary, “I never remember seeing anything more lovely. I was lost, inspired.” He “exceedingly” enjoyed *The Tempest*, again with Rehan, in 1897. “It was mild & soothing, also beautiful.” And when he attended the comic opera *The Bride Elect* “with practically the last money I had” the following year, he “enjoyed it very much; [it] was a great relief to my mind.” After hearing *Faust* at the Grand Opera in Geneva in 1936, he could “not recall ever being so completely taken out of myself by music and feeling in listening to the singing of another, that I was joining in it as though it were all part of some great flame of prayer that was ascending from the earth to the skies.”⁵¹¹

Papers: An Archival Odyssey.” *Archivaria* 6 (Summer 1978), 55. For a description of another of King’s ideal women who “makes me long for the higher and nobler life to the exclusion of all else,” see Diary January 25, 1911.

⁵⁰⁹ Diary November 24, 1893.

⁵¹⁰ Diary February 5, April 2 and January 29, 1898.

⁵¹¹ Diary November 14, 1895, June 1, 1897, January 22, 1898 and October 10, 1936.

King's diaries make clear that his *habitus* was not only replicated and shaped by his family upbringing and university studies but was also constructed by himself through the arts and the ongoing reading of literature promoting idealism and spirituality, and subsequently of psychology texts which he read to strengthen his will and spirituality in order to control the sexual urges of his "material" self. He was very much aware of the underlying concepts of *habitus* which William James discussed in the chapter "Habit" in his 1890 *Principles of Psychology*. The 23 year-old King had himself met James in the home of Professor Norton during his M.A. studies at Harvard and thought Mrs. James "a splendid woman & Mr. James a splendid man. I hope I may get to know them well."⁵¹² He listed "James – Psychology" in a December 31, 1899 diary entry, "Books to read through." A year later, in an early indication of his later spiritualist pursuits, he read James' *Human Immortality: Two Supposed Objections to the Doctrine*, writing later in his diary of his studies at Harvard that "I remember the night the lecture was given in 1898 though I did not go to it." Reading James' lecture confirmed his long-held "conviction that the reality is the immortal life about us, that all our existence here is a sort of stage play. That 'the furniture of earth & choir of Heaven' may be but such that when we throw off the tenement of clay, our real life develops freed from the trammels of the ills & temptations that flesh is heir to and the limitations of finite barriers."⁵¹³

At the end of World War I, he recorded reading the chapter "The Will" in James' *Talks to Teachers on Psychology* (1899), noting that he "enjoyed it exceedingly. My mind licks up his writing like a cat milk from a saucer. I find it fascinating – stimulating and instructive." He added that he had been "interested in watching the working of my own mind and the control of my will—I believe the secret of success & power & goodness lies there."⁵¹⁴ In her dissertation "The Reading of Mackenzie King," Margaret Bedore noted that King "sometimes rebuked himself for

⁵¹² Diary July 21, 1898.

⁵¹³ Diary February 2, 1902. King had "read chapter on 'association of ideas,' James" on June 26, 1918.

⁵¹⁴ Diary July 10, 1918.

neglecting certain types of reading but in general he followed James's advice that 'ten minutes a day of poetry, of spiritual reading or meditation and an hour or two a week at music, pictures, or philosophy' would keep his 'higher spiritual side alive.'⁵¹⁵

For King, literature and poetry had the same capacity as music and the visual arts for transcending the adverse realities of the material present. He agreed with Professor Charles Eliot Norton, after reading twenty pages of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, that "the mind needs something to stir the imagination & that poetry takes one out of himself into this other world."⁵¹⁶ So King began each morning reading the Bible and his inspirational "little books" and resolved to "commit more poetry to memory. It is helpful to me. It fills my mind with better thoughts & keeps out others. The great struggle in life is for a pure mind & a pure heart; the two are inseparable."⁵¹⁷ He surrounded himself with paintings "to keep my spirit soaring"⁵¹⁸ and used sculpture to immortalize the idealized Christian service and spirituality he perceived in his parents, his grandfather, himself, Bert Harper, Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier and his friend and public servant, George Arthur Doughty, the Dominion Archivist.

Works of Art as Signifiers and Their "Associations"

In Mackenzie King's magical thinking and religious and political beliefs, works of art therefore were not only significant for their formal aesthetic qualities but also for their function as

⁵¹⁵ Ibid, 132. James exerted a persistent influence on King. When he read James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, he found "his whole attitude & method of analysis very helpful" since (as Prime Minister) he was "having to study 'Varieties of political Experiences' and look for the common ground beneath" Diary January 11, 1928. *Varieties* also lent James' authority to King's own spiritual pursuits. "It has been immensely helpful. I liked what I read quoted from [Principal John] Caird on the infinite & finite; it accords so completely with what I believe." Diary January 12, 1928.

⁵¹⁶ Diary November 16, 1898.

⁵¹⁷ Diary January 28, 1899. The most important of these inspirational "little books" was Mary W. Tileston's *Daily Strength for Daily Needs*. He was given the 1905 edition by his sister Bella and later received his mother's 1901 edition. King also read Harry Emerson Fosdick's *The Meaning of Prayer* (New York: Association Press, 1916). See Bedore, 294, 165.

⁵¹⁸ Diary April 6, 1934.

signifiers bearing “associated” meanings. King used the word “association” from the first day of starting his diary on September 6, 1893, at the age of 19, while attending University College. He noted that “This diary is to contain a very brief sketch of the events, actions, feelings and thoughts of my daily life. It must above all be a true and faithful account...the writer hopes that in future days—be they far or near—he may find great pleasure both for himself and friends in the remembrance of events recorded, surrounded, as they must be, by many an unwritten association.”

Three months later he chronicled that “My heart filled as I sang ‘for you I am praying;’ hymns have a great effect on me and I trust they always will have tender associations; will always cling to them.”⁵¹⁹ Tangible historical objects for King could also serve as mnemonic instruments, recalling—and allowing him to be part of—the world’s great cultural past. In London in 1908 he was deeply impressed by the monument to Gladstone on Fleet Street. “The figures symbolical of Education, Brotherhood, Courage and Aspiration, bespeak the virtues of his life & virtues which I would like to be known & remembered by. I find it hard to repress emotion as I look at Gladstone’s monument in the Abbey & this one in Fleet St. His moral greatness is what I admire so much.”⁵²⁰ As this example illustrates, for King the process of signification was two-directional. Works of art and other physical and intangible objects were signifiers that conveyed “associations” but King also projected his own symbolic meaning onto the external world. Surveying his extensive landscaping of his grounds and gardens on his Kingsmere estate in 1932, he noted with great satisfaction that “this little garden is a thing of very great beauty. It was originally the worst spot in the grounds, a swamp & mass of tangled tree roots & branches & bracken. Now it is lovely beyond words. To me it symbolizes a neglected soul taken and redeemed & revealing the beauty that is within.”⁵²¹ He identified lily-of-the valley with his mother since it had been one of her favourite flowers. A certain elm tree had the same association: “the one near the gate in its graceful purity & aristocratic bearing makes me think of

⁵¹⁹ Diary December 3, 1893.

⁵²⁰ Diary March 15, 1908.

⁵²¹ Diary June 13, 1932.

dear Mother.”⁵²² Birds also reminded him of Isabel King. “They were like messengers of love from heaven.”⁵²³

Mackenzie King’s life-long friendship with the English actress Irene Rooke (1878-1958) illustrates how associated significations he projected onto an artist could meld with and even overshadow the great acting talent he perceived in her. Rooke played Ophelia to Gordon Craig’s Hamlet for eight performances when Craig substituted for an indisposed actor in Ben Greet’s 1897 Olympic Theatre production⁵²⁴ and played other major parts in works by Oscar Wilde, John Galsworthy and George Bernard Shaw.⁵²⁵ In a 1945 diary entry recording one of his visits with Rooke in London, King referred to “a friendship which now runs over 40 years.” “When I first saw her on the stage, I thought she was the greatest actress I had ever seen and many others felt the same way about her acting,” and “She still has the same beautifully modulated voice that she had when on the stage.”⁵²⁶ Corresponding with the actress the same year, he congratulated her on her writing, “your gift all but unparelled of expressing, in writing, what you, in former years, expressed so vividly in your acting—yes, the feelings, the emotions of the situation that you were seeking to portray.”⁵²⁷

King had sent Irene Rooke a photo of J.W.L. Forster’s 1905 painting of his mother reading at the fireside which the actress, as she informed King, used to “make up” her costume for her role of Cromwell’s mother in John Drinkwater’s 1921 *Oliver Cromwell*.⁵²⁸ She sent King a photograph of herself in the role inscribed with Cromwell’s mother’s lines to her son near the conclusion of

⁵²² von Baeyer, 111, 71.

⁵²³ Diary July 10, 1948.

⁵²⁴ Edward Craig, *Gordon Craig: The Story of His Life* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1968), 101.

⁵²⁵ “Irene Rooke, (1878-1958), Actress,” National Portrait Gallery website accessed March 9, 2014.

⁵²⁶ Diary October 29, 1945. When Rooke visited King while he was recuperating from heart trouble in London in 1948, they “talked of the time we met in Ottawa.” Diary October 27, 1948.

⁵²⁷ King to Irene Rooke, November 6, 1945. King again refers to himself and Rooke being “a wee bit older than we were 40 years ago but that is in appearance, not at heart.” All the correspondence with Rooke I am citing can be found in the Irene Rooke fonds, Library and Archives Canada.

the play: “My dear son. I leave my heart with you. A good night.” King placed Rooke’s inscribed photograph on a night table near his bed at Laurier House so that before he went to sleep and when he awoke in the morning “My eyes fell on the picture of dear mother (so it seemed)” and he “felt sure this meant Mother was at my side this Christmas morning.”⁵²⁹ He identified Rooke as Cromwell’s mother so strongly with his own mother that he referred to her photo and cited her last lines in his diary on nine occasions over an eight-year period.⁵³⁰

King’s correspondence with Irene Rooke reveals two additional “associations” she conveyed to him in addition to the evocation of his mother shown by his diaries: the exemplary struggle of his reformer grandfather, William Lyon Mackenzie, and a still larger, all encompassing spiritual and mystical signification. In 1928 he referred to the “letter you wrote me from His Majesty’s Theatre June 1923” which he had placed “in front of the painting of my dear mother, which you speak of as the inspiration of your ‘Mrs. Cromwell.’” “That letter gave me a happiness I shall never be able to put into words,” he wrote the actress. “To me, there is something mystically wonderful about the association of Cromwell’s Mother and mine, if for no other reason than that her son was the leader in the struggle for the rights of the people in his day, and my mother’s father the leader in a like struggle in his. I like to feel that there is a spiritual inheritance which some of us share as well as a physical one, and that the Leaders of Reform of all the ages constitute a great brotherhood,”⁵³¹ a brotherhood of which King felt himself to be an integral part.

King had seen Rooke perform in *Oliver Cromwell* during his trip to London in October of 1923 and replied to one of her letters about the production from the Ritz Hotel. “It delights me beyond words to know that my dear mother’s spirit is finding expression in the role you have been playing, and that you have found in the little picture of her which I gave to you, some of the

⁵²⁸ Diary December 16, 1939.

⁵²⁹ Diary December 25, 1936.

⁵³⁰ Diary January 4, 1933, October 5, 1934, October 14, 1935 [upon hearing the news of the Liberal electoral sweep in the federal election that returned King as Prime Minister], December 25, 1936, December 17, 1938, January 1 and December 16, 1939, December 18, 1940, and January 23, 1941. See also January 6, 1929 and September 14, 1935.

⁵³¹ King to Rooke, February 19, 1928.

inspiration which has helped you to interpret and to picture Cromwell's Mother." The Prime Minister confided to the actress that "Nothing in life has touched me more deeply than your action in this regard. It is to me one of the profoundly sacred experiences of my life, and with all my heart I thank you for the reverence you have done her memory." King came to believe that "there is a spiritual mystery in all this which you must allow me to explore with you. You have come nearer reality in your discernment than you are even aware of." Alluding to the "secret" that his mother in Forster's 1905 portrait is shown reading Gladstone's biography at the chapter entitled "The Prime Minister," King wrote, "I will tell you one or two things about my dear mother's life and its association with Cromwellian episodes that you will scarcely have thought possible and one or two secrets about the painting that I have carefully concealed from the world but which would be a happiness to reveal to you. Somehow your letter has brought me very near to the Infinite in which all the past and present and future are one; the invisible was never more real to me."⁵³²

For King it was a maxim that meaning was not only communicated directly but also indirectly through signs. This was particularly the case in his daily reading of the Bible, in his various spiritualist practices, and in his attempts to interpret the "dream visions" he saw almost every morning before waking with their frequent "psychic associations" and "evidence of spiritual guidance from beyond." These associated significations were not apparent to several of King's biographers who only assessed his works of art and other objects for their aesthetic values. In *The Incredible Canadian*, Bruce Hutchison described the drawing room of Laurier House as "crammed with gilt and crimson plush, with gigantic vases and glass-covered tables to hold worthless ornaments, in all an assemblage of expensive junk sufficient to stock a high-class

⁵³² King to Rooke, October 3, 1923. There is a gap in King's handwritten diary from September 21 to December 2, 1923 so we lack his commentary on Drinkwater's *Oliver Cromwell* and Irene Rooke's acting. F.A. McGregor, King's former secretary who transcribed his handwritten diaries from 1893-1935, annotated the September 20 diary entry. Without explanation, he wrote that "There is a typewritten diary for the period (Sept. 21 to Dec. 2—pp. 1-298) from which no entries have been copied." Library and Archives Canada has not made this diary available on its website

secondhand store. No piece was ever moved an inch. Everything, threadbare and with upholstery protruding, remained unchanged to King's last hour."⁵³³

What Hutchison, J.L. Granatstein, Douglas Ord and other writers failed to realize was that King was primarily a collector rather than an art collector. T. B. Robertson of the *Winnipeg Free Press* clearly made this distinction for his readers in 1925. In his "Meet the East" column on "The Prime Minister," he sought to peer behind the official mask King presented when sitting on the government front bench in the House of Commons and to discover "what sort of person the Prime Minister is underneath all this pother of speech and papers; what does he like to do when he is following his own natural bent?" After King invited him to dinner at Laurier House, Robertson discovered that "The Prime Minister is a collector." "When you enter his house, the first thing you see standing in the hall is a Queen Anne armchair...All this antiquity, these period chairs and bits of furniture, and bronze ornaments, and clocks, and glassware, and china, and old silver, and Turkey rugs, and Japanese lacquer, and mediaeval oil paintings, have been gathered together by a mind for which all these curious and beautiful old things possess genuine charm and fascination."

Robertson reported that King "likes things which have associations, stories, attached to them, and the result of his exertions has been to fill his house with historic objects so that the rooms seem to sound faintly with whispers and murmurs of the past." Among the many objects he highlighted in his article were "the goosequill pen Gladstone used to sign his last official paper;" a letter from Carlyle; "the last pens used by Laurier;" "a silver bronze head [by Giuseppe Guastalla], the youthful face, pure as a seraph's, contemplating the future with the calm gaze of unclouded hope—'Visions.' 'Isn't it lovely?' And it is lovely." Robertson further listed "little bits of pottery that were made in Syria centuries before the Christian era;" "a small white head of Sir Walter Scott that was tumbled down by the Ottawa earthquake and had its skull broken but has been

<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/politics-government/prime-ministers/william-lyon-mackenzie-king/Pages/diaries-william-lyon-mackenzie-king.aspx>

⁵³³ Bruce Hutchison, *Mr. Prime Minister, 1867-1964*, 284; "Seven Mackenzie Kings Canadians Never Knew," 28; *The Incredible Canadian*, 80, 81.

quite neatly glued together again;” and in King’s library, “Isabel Grace Mackenzie’s portrait [by J.W. L. Forster], a kind sweet face; and in a little gilt box a lock of her white hair and her wedding ring; and hanging on the portrait stand, the old palette, with its faded paint stains, from which the picture was painted. Associations! The Prime Minister likes to link them together.”⁵³⁴

Analyzing King’s *habitus* enables us to comprehend how he read various “associations” and the meaning he projected onto works of art. The importance he ascribed to the associated meanings—rather than purely aesthetic considerations—of art works also accounts in part for the paradox of his persistent exposure and contact with artists, literature, theatre, music, painting, sculpture, photography and film over half-a-century failing to result in cultural policies King could have implemented to assisted artists and the arts.

Analyzing King’s cultural *habitus* thus is not, as Bruce Hutchison suggested, a question of determining whether King’s aesthetic taste was “hideous” or not. Rather, the question is to determine how works of art were signifiers for King and what multiple meanings they signified. King himself frequently used the word “association” to refer to additional meanings provided for him by a work of art, such as what or whom it depicted, where it was purchased or who gave the work as a gift to him and at what moment it was received. When in 1908, for example, he visited the Cheshire Cheese tavern in London, where Samuel Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith, Boswell, Burke and others were said to have congregated, he admired Emily May Osborne’s 1873 oil painting of ladies visiting Johnson, *Hero Worship*, on sale for seven guineas. “I looked at it & regarding it, with the exception of Johnson’s face—a fairly good piece of work—said I would take it, at that price. What I valued most was the association, & it is by no means a poor piece of work.”⁵³⁵

For King works of art and other objects maintained important associated meanings throughout his life. In 1914 he purchased for \$25 [\$500 in 2014 dollars] a painting by Princess Patricia of a

⁵³⁴ T.B.R., “Meet the East: The Prime Minister,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 9, 1925, 13. Diary March 30, 1925.

sunset on the Pacific Coast she had donated to a sale in aid of Belgian war relief. In his diary he recorded that “Its purchase was largely a matter of sentiment, first because of the pleasant talks I have had with the Princess and what she has told me of her interests and work, and secondly, because I am glad to have in one part of a room a painting by Queen Victoria’s granddaughter, when I have in another part the proclamation offering £1,000 on grandfather’s head, issued in the name of Queen Victoria.”⁵³⁶ In November of 1941, on the anniversary of his sister Bella’s birth, King recorded the arrival at Laurier House of the large painting by Frank Salisbury of the King and Queen at the entrance to the Canadian Parliament as well as letters from the U.S. and New Brunswick informing him that he was being sent “a chair and an ink stand which belonged to Mackenzie when he was at Queenston” and “a hand which had been made from the knocker on the door of D’Arcy McGee’s house at the time the latter was assassinated.” He noted that “This combination of gifts are in the nature of memorials and have their association with today.”⁵³⁷

In the next chapters of this dissertation, I will analyse in greater detail this interplay between King’s *habitus* at the turn of the twentieth century and artists inside and outside Canada.

⁵³⁵ Diary March 15, 1908.

⁵³⁶ Diary November 25, 1914.

⁵³⁷ Diary November 15, 1941, pp.4, 5.

Chapter IV:

Mackenzie King's Structured *Habitus* at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

Mackenzie King participated so actively in cultural activities and events over six decades, particularly in theatre, opera, painting and sculpture, that only a few essential elements of his artistic involvement can be analyzed in this dissertation. In this chapter I will focus on his cultural activities during his university studies from 1891 to 1900. I intend to demonstrate that King's cultural *habitus* was largely established by the time he entered the civil service in Ottawa in August of 1900. A brief overview of how his pattern of cultural involvement that would continue for the rest of his life began in the early 1890s is therefore instructive. King's extensive, ongoing contact with the arts and artists provided him with the cultural capital that enabled him to exercise his cultural authority with assured confidence when he became Prime Minister.

This chapter also examines Mackenzie King's idealist religious world-view and the development of his cultural *habitus* while attending the University of Toronto, the University of Chicago and Harvard. I analyze King's censoring moral gaze and the profound impact of his first, ten-month-long European tour in 1899-1900 that solidified both his cultural and spiritual/moral *habiti*. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how King's conservative cultural turn at the close of the twentieth century failed to conform to changes cultural historians such as S.E.D. Shortt, Walter Benjamin and Edward Shorter ascribed to the year 1900, and King's first portrait commissions from the painters Anton Weber in Berlin and J.W. Forster in Toronto in 1900 and 1901.

Just enumerating the highlights of Mackenzie King's attendance at theatre and opera performances suggests both the quantity and quality of the productions and artists he witnessed in Canada, the U.S., England and in Europe. King's journalism while studying at the University of Toronto, particularly for the *Toronto Globe* from December 1893 to September 1896, included covering concerts, recitals, theatre, art exhibits and lectures on Shakespeare and other literary and artistic topics. He saw performances by international touring stars such as Helena Modjeska in

Macbeth in 1893, Henry Irving and Ellen Terry in Tennyson's *Becket* and Irving in *The Bells* in 1894 and Ada Rehan in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1895. He not only appeared as a supernumerary with Irving and Terry in *The Merchant of Venice* in 1894 but again—with Irving as King Arthur, Terry as Guinevere and Julia Arthur as Elaine—as a knight in a procession following the Holy Grail, music by Sir Arthur Sullivan, in J. Comyns Carr's adaptation of Tennyson's *King Arthur* in 1895.

King attended other memorable productions and performances for the next half-century. While attending the University of Chicago in 1897, he saw Rehan again in *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Tempest*. In Boston in 1898 while studying at Harvard, he saw Denman Thompson's *The Old Homestead*, Rehan in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Julia Arthur in *Pygmalion & Galatea*, and the following year, Richard Mansfield and Margaret Anglin in *Cyrano de Bergerac* and Julia Marlowe in *As You Like It*. He saw Beerbohm Tree in *King John* at Her Majesty's Theatre in London, *Tannhäuser* and *Romeo and Juliet* at the Paris Opera and *Lohengrin* at the Munich Opera in 1900; Melba in *Tannhäuser* in Boston in 1901; Irving again in *The Merchant of Venice*, *Waterloo* and *The Bells* in 1904; Forbes-Robertson in *Hamlet* and Caruso in *Pagliacci* at the Metropolitan Opera in 1914; Sir Herbert Tree in Toronto in *Henry VIII* in 1916, George Arliss in *Alexander Hamilton* in New York in 1917, *Parsifal* at the Met in 1921; and Sir John and Lady Martin-Harvey in Ottawa in 1921, 1926, 1928 and 1932. As Canada's head of state, he saw *Aida* from the President's box at the Paris Opera in 1928, watched the "triumphal" opera *Faust* after attending a session of the League of Nations in Geneva in 1936 and attended the New York premiere of Robert Sherwood's *There Shall Be No Night*, about the Nazi invasion of Finland, in 1940. Edward Johnson invited King to his private box at the Metropolitan Opera in 1943 to hear Melchior and Traubel in *Tristan und Isolde*. Two days later, he saw Paul Robeson in the Theatre Guild production of *Othello* at the Shubert Theater, designed by Robert Edmond Jones, and called Robeson's *Othello* "one of the greatest performances I have seen in my life."⁵³⁸ In 1945 Dame Sybil Thorndyke secured him the royal box for a sold-out Old Vic production of *Henry IV* at His Majesty's Theatre. In Ottawa, he saw Donald Wolfitt in *The Merchant of Venice* and *King*

⁵³⁸ Diary December 13, 1943.

Lear in 1947 and 1948. In Paris, the President of the French Republic provided King with his box at the Grand Opera the same year for a performance of *Samson et Dalila* by Camille Saint-Saëns.

In the visual arts, King purchased or commissioned works of art or posed for his own portraits from over two dozen painters, sculptors and photographers between 1899 and 1949. These include the Canadian painters John Wycliffe Lowes Forster, John Russell, Stanley Gordon Moyer, John Wesley Cotton, Homer Watson and Carl Ahrens; the German painter Anton Weber; the English miniature portrait painter Louise “Louie” Burrell, Kathleen Shackleton and Arthur Guthrie; the Irish portrait painter Sir William Orpen; the British portrait painter Frank O. Salisbury and the American caricaturist Oscar Berger. He commissioned or posed for sculptors from six countries: the British Frederick Lessore and Vernon and Sydney March (the sculptors of the National War Memorial in Ottawa); the Italian Giuseppe Guastalla; the French Pierre Charles Lenoir; the Canadians mile Brunet, Walter Allward, Emanuel Hahn, Robert Tait McKenzie, Cléophas Soucy and Pearle Thurston; the Austrian Felix Weihs de Weldon and the American Avard Fairbanks. He posed as well for the Canadian portrait photographers Frederick William Lyonde and Yousuf Karsh. In addition to writing about his experiences with these artists in his diary, he also commented on seeing films in Ottawa until 1949.

King visited the studio of George Frederick Watts and the late Edward Burne-Jones in England in the winter of 1899 and lived in the home of the painter Anton Weber in Berlin in 1900. In subsequent years he visited the homes or studios of Pierre Charles Lenoir in Paris, Giuseppe Guastalla in Rome, J.W.L. Forster, Homer Watson, Carl Ahrens, Tait Mackenzie, Walter Allward, Emmanuel Hahn, the poet W.W. Campbell and playwright Nathaniel Benson in Canada, Frank Salisbury in London and the March brothers in Kent. He in turn posed in Laurier House for Stanley Gordon Moyer, Forster, Kathleen Shackleton, Arthur Guthrie, Pearle Thurston, Felix Weihs de Weldon, Avard Fairbanks and Yousuf Karsh.

King had further direct personal contact with artists when he entertained Margaret Anglin, Sir John and Lady Martin-Harvey, J.W.L. Forster, Sydney March, mile Brunet, Tait McKenzie and Frank Salisbury at Laurier House along with other artists such as the cellist Madeleine Monnier, the American composer Percy Grainger, the Canadian composer and music impresario Charles A.E. Harriss, the Dominion Carillonneur and composer Percival Price, the American playwright Robert Sherwood, Shirley Temple, and the writers Nathaniel Benson and Nellie McClung. In addition to Margaret Anglin, King also saw and met Canadian artists who had achieved professional success abroad and in Canada: the soprano Béatrice La Palme with the Montreal Opera Company in 1912; Sarah Fischer, “the Canadian Prima Donna” who sang and played his mother’s piano at Laurier House on the tenth anniversary of her death in 1927; Edward Johnson in *Faust* at the Metropolitan Opera the same year and the young French-Canadian tenor Raoul Jobin at the Paris Opera in 1936. King saw the popular Canadian satirical revue, *The Dumbbells*, in 1922; attended the Ottawa Little Theatre in 1932, 1933 and 1941; the Dominion Drama Festival in 1933, 1934 and 1936; and performances of *The Army Show* and *Meet the Navy* in 1943.

Mackenzie King greatly enjoyed these cultural activities and associations with artists or he would not have engaged in them or recorded them so assiduously in his diaries for six decades. Then why did he not become an advocate for the arts like his idols, British Prime Minister Gladstone and Matthew Arnold, and initiate cultural policies to assist Canadian artists while he was Prime Minister of Canada?

There are two explanations for this apparent paradox. The first relates to King’s “double masking” discussed in Chapter I, his need—in contrast to constructing his outer political public mask—to preserve his inner private mask that concealed his efforts to venerate members of his family and project his own idealized character in works of art. The second more startling hypothesis, analyzed for the first time in this dissertation, is the proposition that *for two decades* Mackenzie King—because of his extensive cultural capital and supreme cultural authority in government—*was* Canada’s first de facto minister of culture, in addition to being Prime Minister

and Minister for External Affairs. He therefore could largely manipulate the machinery of government as he desired without the need to enact cultural policies. I will document King's various activities as Canada's first de facto minister of culture in chapter VI, "The Field of Cultural Production and Mackenzie King's Cultural Authority 1900-1930."

Mackenzie King's Idealist Religious World-View

Mackenzie King's persistent opposition to artists calling for federal government support of culture in the 1930s and 1940s is all the more paradoxical because many of the prominent cultural leaders from the first decade of the century onwards shared his disdain for materialism and, like King, allied the arts with the spiritual. As will be discussed in chapter VII, the theatre director Roy Mitchell, the painters Lawren Harris, Arthur Lismer and Bertram Brooker, and the playwright and director Herman Voaden turned to theosophy and mysticism as a result of the crisis in orthodox Christian belief resulting from the rise of scientific materialism and Darwinist thought following the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* in 1859. Since "Darwin has proved that there was no fall of man," as the King family's friend, Goldwin Smith, asked in 1902, "if there was no fall, how can there have been an incarnation or a redemption, and what becomes of the whole edifice of orthodox Christianity?"⁵³⁹

This crisis in orthodox Christian belief deeply affected the intellectual and academic community as the classical humanities—philosophy, literature and the classics—were strongly challenged by the disciplines of history and the political and social sciences in university education. As S.E.D. Shortt observed in *The Search for an Ideal*, the late nineteenth-century Canadian academic community "was clearly characterized by two antithetical modes of thought: idealism and empiricism." During this age of transition, the idealist response "held as its central postulate the belief that the world was a part of a larger spiritual reality of which man could become aware only through intuitive perception...the professor was essentially a moral tutor while the student

attended university to develop ‘character’ rather than accumulate facts.” The contrary empiricist world-view “was premised on the belief that metaphysical speculation was of little value in dealing with the material world; the only secure foundation for knowledge and, consequently, social policy, was the empirical observation of reality.”⁵⁴⁰

In his examination of this principal debate of the nineteenth century, the confrontation between science and religion, Shortt concluded that “by 1900 idealism was a dying system of belief. In part this was a reflection of the emergence of an urban industrial society which placed a premium on planning and cost benefit analysis rather than metaphysical declarations.” According to Shortt, “By 1914, then, it was obvious that the idealist approach to thought and reality had all but succumbed to the empiricist attack.”⁵⁴¹

Paradoxically, though he often felt called to the ministry, King’s studies at the University of Toronto, the University of Chicago and at Harvard were almost exclusively empirical in the field of economics, political science and history. In his freelance journalism, he wrote a series of enthusiastic articles about experiments with the Roentgen X-rays at the University of Toronto⁵⁴² and made his reputation as a journalist and reformer writing about the slave-labour “sweating system” in the garment industry and on slum conditions in Canada and the U.S.⁵⁴³ His 1897 M.A.

⁵³⁹ Cited in Ramsay Cook, “A Republic of God, a Christian Republic” in his *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 30.

⁵⁴⁰ S.E.D. Shortt, *The Search for an Ideal: Six Canadian Intellectuals and Their Convictions in an Age of Transition 1890-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 143, 7, 6.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 144, 145.

⁵⁴² [Mackenzie King], “Tried in Toronto—Marvellous Feats of the New Photography,” *Toronto Globe*, February 10, 1896, p. 9; “The Rays—Result of Experiments at the University,” *Toronto Globe*, February 12, 1896, p. 6; “The Local Experimenters in the New Photography,” *Toronto Globe*, February 13, 1896, p. 10; “The Roentgen Rays With Reproductions of Photographs Taken at Toronto University,” *Toronto Globe*, February 22, 1896, p. 1.

⁵⁴³ [Mackenzie King], “In Chicago Slums—The Work of Hull House Among the Poor,” *Toronto Globe*, January 16, 1897, p. 9; “Crowded Housing, Its Evil Effects,” *Toronto Daily Mail & Empire*, September 18, 1897, Part 2, p.7; “Foreigners Who Live in Toronto—An Historical Sketch of the Nationalities Represented and a Summary of Their Social, Economic and Political Condition,” *Toronto Daily Mail and Empire*, September 25, 1897, Part 2, p. 7 and October 2,

thesis at the University of Toronto, revealing his life-long interest in labour conditions, was on the International Typographical Union. Thorstein Veblen, one of his professors at the University of Chicago, published part of King's research in his *Journal of Political Economy*.⁵⁴⁴

But unlike the artists referred to, King easily incorporated Darwin, whom he began reading “carefully & rather sceptically” in 1895, into his religious world-view.⁵⁴⁵ He was introduced to Herbert Spencer and his philosophy of evolution by his Harvard economics professor Frank Taussig in March of 1898, studied his *Principles of Sociology*, and became “more impressed with the greatness of science.”⁵⁴⁶ He strongly believed that he had inherited many desirable traits from his grandfather and parents and concluded in 1898 that “it does not need an acquaintance with Darwinian & race progress to teach me that every thought or act for good in me is but a reflection of the good which was long ago in them.” Rather than undermining his Christian beliefs, science “becomes to me increasingly the true interpreter of religion—there is no conflict.” On the contrary, he was convinced that “Science will lead men to God as nothing else has done.”⁵⁴⁷ King “got much from this reading of Spencer. The doctrine of Evolution I believe in firmly. It strengthens my belief in God & the completeness of life only in immortality.”⁵⁴⁸

1897, Part 2, p. 10; “Toronto and the Sweating System—An Investigation of the Matter by a Representative of The Mail and Empire,” *Toronto Daily Mail and Empire*, October 9, 1897, Part 2, p. 10; “The Story of Hull House,” *Westminster* [Toronto], November 6, 1897; “Sweating System in Montreal” and “Sweating System in Montreal City,” *Montreal Herald*, April 16, 1898, p. 9 and April 23, 1898, p. 2; “The Sweating System in Canada—Conditions Which Obtain in the Manufacture of Ready-Made Clothing,” *Toronto Globe*, November 19, 1898, p. 5.

⁵⁴⁴ W. L. Mackenzie King, “Trade-Union Organization in the United States,” *Journal of Political Economy*, 5:2 (March 1897), 201-215 and “The International Typographical Union,” *Journal of Political Economy*, 5:4 (September 1897), 458-84. King recorded attending “a splendid lecture by Veblen on effect of Socialism on Art” on June 11, 1897. He purchased Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class* on April 8, 1899 while at Harvard, noting “I am anxious to read it through.”

⁵⁴⁵ Diary July 1, 1895.

⁵⁴⁶ Diary March 11 and October 25, 1898.

⁵⁴⁷ Diary February 27, 1898 and October 30, 1898. See also November 2, 1898.

⁵⁴⁸ Diary October 29, 1898.

In his 1906 *The Secret of Heroism*, King succinctly summarized the rational and spiritual choices presented by Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* to young intellectuals such as himself: "two theories were possible, either all was chance, or there was design. If chance, there could be no ultimate meaning of things, no relation between the parts, either between the universe and man or man and his fellows; truth and right there might be, by arrangement, but they could not be absolute; duty might exist, but under what law? No, the world, man,—these clearly were to be accounted for in some more rational way." King concluded that "The only alternative was design." "A creator and an infinite purpose were essential to design; the creator, the finite mind conceived of as God, the infinite purpose, His will. To know God and to do His will became then the chief end of man."⁵⁴⁹

Even the mass destruction and slaughter of millions during World War I did not shake King's religious views and the religious *habitus* they engendered. Rather, he reaffirmed the same idealist belief system he had developed during his university studies which S.E.D. Shortt had suggested "had all but succumbed to the empiricist attack" by the beginning of World War I. In his 1918 economic and social study, *Industry and Humanity*, King called for a shift in emphasis "from the sacredness of possession to the sacredness of life" and asserted that "It is in the image of God Himself, not after the pattern of some industrial model, that all men, from the humblest to the greatest, have been created...The universe of spirit, not the material universe, needs now to be explored." Because of his own and John D. Rockefeller, Jr.'s strong Christian belief, King made it evident in *Industry and Humanity* that for him spirituality was synonymous with Christianity. He concluded his 567-page tome by asking,

Is it too much to believe that, having witnessed Humanity pass through its Gethsemane, having seen its agony in its Garden of Fears, having beheld its crucifixion upon the cross of Militarism, Labor and Capital will yet bring to a disconsolate and brokenhearted world the one hope it is theirs alone to bring; and that, in the acceptance of principles which hold deliverance from the scourges that beset Mankind, they will roll back the stone from

⁵⁴⁹ W.L. Mackenzie King, *The Secret of Heroism: A Memoir of Henry Albert Harper* (New York, Chicago, Toronto, London and Edinburgh: Fleming H. Revell, 1906), 136-37.

the door of the world's sepulchre to-day, and give to Humanity the promise of its resurrection to a more abundant life?⁵⁵⁰

In *Industry and Humanity*, King urged that the Darwinian Law of the Survival of the Fittest in industrial disputes be replaced by a higher Law of Christian Service. He also perceived this function of promoting Christian values and service as the fundamental purpose of the arts. When he saw the “good healthy simple country folk” in Denman Thompson’s *The Old Homestead* in 1898, for example, he noted approvingly that “The moral of the play is good...if the stage had more such plays it would be a great power for good.”⁵⁵¹ By contrast, the following year he “did not care much” for Gustav Kerker and Hugh Morton’s musical comedy *The Belle of New York* because of its “worldly indifference.” “Whatever a man may do, he loves good & likes to see it emphasized & not ridiculed as this play ridicules it.”⁵⁵²

This moral idealist world-view was the basis of the religious/philosophic divide at the end of World War I between Mackenzie King and Lawren Harris (recovering from a nervous breakdown after his brother Howard was killed in action in France), Roy Mitchell at Hart House Theatre and Arthur Lismer at the Ontario College of Art and Design. “Art,” Lismer would proclaim a decade later in Bertram Brooker’s *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada*, “is the outward expression of the self-assertion of a nation—the totem of our tribe.”⁵⁵³ King strongly held different views about all the elements of Lismer’s paradigm: what constituted artistic self-expression and cultural nationalism, what constituted the “tribe” and what were the totems it worshipped.

The Development of King’s Cultural *Habitus* at University

⁵⁵⁰ William Lyon Mackenzie King, *Industry and Humanity: A Study in the Principles Underlying Industrial Reconstruction* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, Boston and New York: Mifflin, 1918), 305, 83, 124, 528-29.

⁵⁵¹ Diary April 2, 1898.

⁵⁵² Diary March 4, 1899.

⁵⁵³ Arthur Lismer, “Art Appreciation” in Bertram Brooker, ed. *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-1929* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1929), 66.

The paradox of King immersing himself in cultural activities without ever fully recognizing the fundamental importance of artistic self-expression as a valid goal in itself is already apparent during his university studies. The arts critic Hector Charlesworth, referring in his *Candid Chronicles* to his initial mundane non-arts journalistic writing, also confessed to leading a “double life” in Toronto in the 1890s. “For when a boy of sixteen I had made Beauty my mistress and whatever my pursuits I have never lost sight of her,” he wrote in a chapter on musicians and painters. “My primary interest always lay with the arts.” He recalled that “Mr. King and I covered many assignments together in the old days when he was a most enthusiastic journalist” and that King was “keenly interested in the theatre.”⁵⁵⁴ Yet for Mackenzie King, beauty was never a desired end in itself. He always perceived beauty within a spiritual context, subservient to achieving what he believed constituted Christian service. After he read Maurice Maeterlinck’s essays “The Deeper Life,” “The Inner Beauty” and “The Invisible Goodness” in Maeterlinck’s *The Treasure of the Humble* in London in 1899, he agreed that “The conception that Soul loves beauty and is always attracted by it seems to me right & true, the beautiful being the expression of God as it were to our senses and feelings.”⁵⁵⁵

King’s cultural *habitus* shaped by his family upbringing in Berlin, Ontario, led him to follow musical and literary pursuits he had observed in his parents. He tried writing poetry like his father and joined the University College Literary and Scientific Society where John King had

⁵⁵⁴ Hector Charlesworth, *Candid Chronicles: Leaves from the Note Book of a Canadian Journalist* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1925), 315, 195. Charlesworth’s aesthetic philosophy beginning in the 1890s thus was similar to Oscar Wilde’s as expressed in his public lectures in Canada in 1882. As Kevin O’Brien, in *Oscar Wilde in Canada: An Apostle for the Arts* (Toronto: Personal Library, 1982), summarizes Wilde’s basic philosophy: “He loved Beauty. Against the nineteenth-century ideals of progress, utilitarianism, and the ethos of the striving middle class, Wilde sought the fine things of life for himself, and, in his early career, for the public. Beauty was his God, and Art the means to Heaven.” (143) On Charlesworth and the arts, see Denis Salter, “Hector Willoughby Charlesworth and the Nationalization of Cultural Authority” in Anton Wagner, ed. *Establishing Our Boundaries: English-Canadian Theatre Criticism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

⁵⁵⁵ Diary December 23, 1899. King’s library at Laurier House contains two annotated editions of Maeterlinck’s *The Treasure of the Humble* (New York: Dodd Mead, London: George Allen, 1908) and (London: Arthur L. Humphreys, 1911), call numbers FE.50.1074.1 and FE 50.1074.2.

begun making his reputation.⁵⁵⁶ He played the piano and joined the University Glee Club but since he had also not inherited his mother's musical talents and had trouble singing in key, became the Club's treasurer. His freelance journalism, following the example of his father and uncle, enabled him to write highly favourable reviews of Glee Club concerts in 1893, 1894 and 1895.⁵⁵⁷

King was earning four dollars a week as a cub reporter for the *Toronto Globe* and another three dollars weekly (with a dollar increase the following year) writing for the *Mail and Empire* while earning his LL.B. from the Osgood Hall Law School in 1896. He covered primarily the police court ("over 40 drunks were taken in by the police since last court") but also all kinds of local news and cultural events. He was very much aware of the remarkable variety of Toronto's social life he was witnessing. After seeing Ada Rehan in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Princess Theatre, he recorded in his diary: "Look at this for the phases of life I have seen today—criminal & pauper—political—religious—death—academic—theatrical, have been in 5 different worlds, what a training for a student of Social Science."⁵⁵⁸

Because of his youth and since he was only a second-stringer King, unlike Hector Charlesworth, never developed his own critical voice in his arts coverage. The anonymous lead *Globe* critic described Henry Irving's 1895 production of *King Arthur* at the Grand Opera House as a "brilliant success," called Irving "that great master of theatrical effects" and highly praised "the procession of the Holy Grail, with its figures of knights, priests and choristers" as well as other

⁵⁵⁶ Thirty manuscript pages of King's poetry written in high school and at university can be found on microfilm in the W.L.M. King Papers at Library and Archives Canada, MG26, reel C1965, pages 15718-48. Future references to correspondence and documents on microfilm in the King Papers will be cited with the reel and page numbers given. MacGregor Dawson republished one of King's "mawkish" poems from the February 1, 1895 *Varsity*. See R. MacGregor Dawson, *William Lyon Mackenzie King: A Political Biography 1874-1923* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958), 32.

⁵⁵⁷ For a chronological listing of 255 of King's unsigned newspaper articles (referenced in his diaries), most written for the *Toronto Globe* from October 5, 1893 to November 19, 1898, see "Section B: Articles" in George F. Henderson's invaluable *W. L. Mackenzie King: A Bibliography and Research Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 35-61.

scenes. “In their freshness, beauty and delicacy” these were “as unlike the ordinary stage scenery as can be imagined.”⁵⁵⁹ In his diary the twenty-one year old King, who appeared as one of the knights in that procession along with other student extras, merely recorded that “the experience is well worth the time, trouble & discomfort—it is a little world, a splendid Economic study...A lot of Varsity fellows took part.”⁵⁶⁰

The following year King had the opportunity of reviewing Minnie Maddern Fiske in a sparsely attended performance of *A Doll's House* at the Grand Opera House when Madame Albani appeared in a sold-out recital at Massey Music Hall the same night. He again did not appear aware of the significance of the Ibsen production and merely noted that the play “has been given in this city a number of times, but perhaps has never been put on in better form” and described Fiske’s Nora Helmer as “a bright and pleasing character, who plays her double part required by that character with much skill.” About Fiske’s own low life “tragic sketch,” *A Light From St. Agnes*, which followed *A Doll's House*, King commented that “It was short and put in a very natural way, but the characters and the scene are not of the kind to prove attractive.”⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁸ Diary November 14, 1895.

⁵⁵⁹ Music and Drama” and “As King Arthur: Henry Irving in a New Role at the Grand—Miss Terry as Guinevere,” *Toronto Globe*, September 28 and September 27, 1895. Theatre historians have not yet identified the anonymous lead *Globe* critic of the mid-1890s. E.R. Parkhurst began reviewing for the *Globe* in 1898. In his chapter “Memories of Irving” in *Candid Chronicles*, Charlesworth recalled that Irving “lavished fortunes on beautiful stage pictures; and such productions as *Faust*, Tennyson’s *Becket*, and Comyns Carr’s *King Arthur* contained vistas of beauty almost incredibly lovely in recollection.” He added that *King Arthur* was “the most beautiful of all his productions.” Charlesworth, 388, 389.

⁵⁶⁰ Diary September 27, 1895.

⁵⁶¹ “Music and the Drama,” *Toronto Globe*, February 22, 1896, p.7. In his diary he recorded of the two productions that “one I commended the other written by herself I criticized rather severely as not being of a refined character, though the central thought was good.” Diary February 21, 1896. By contrast, Hector Charlesworth became an ardent defender of independent actor-managers such as Fiske and vigorously attacked the monopolistic practices of the New York Theatrical Syndicate, “the octopus which is called the Theatrical Trust,” in 1897 and 1898. See Salter, 153-54.

In his diary, King was brutally blunt about what he thought of “new women” on and off stage. When he saw Rehan again in *The Taming of the Shrew* in Boston two years later he recorded, “The last few words of the Shrew [‘Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper... And craves no other tribute at thy hands / But love, fair looks, and true obedience’] pleased me greatly and told me the true story of what a woman’s love ought to be. After all that is what a man seeks, it is the love, and a man should be looked up to by his wife & be strong in her eyes.” “New women,” he concluded, “are a perversion.”⁵⁶²

King’s journalism for “Music and Drama” columns gave him free tickets to review productions and concerts so there are frequent references in his diary to seeing actors and actresses “behind the scenes.” He discussed acting with Lewis Morrison and Mrs. Morrison (Florence Roberts), appearing together as Mephistopheles and Marguerite in *Faust* in 1895, and “Took mother down tonight & introduced her to Mr. Morrison behind the scenes.”⁵⁶³ Morrison found King “a most idealistic lad. Goes in for social reform and things like that” and was sure “he will be a great man some day. A reporter who goes in for social reform must be an oddity!”⁵⁶⁴

King also appears to have had personal connections with actresses. He invited Nadine Winston to an oyster supper after her performance as Marguerite in John Griffith’s *Faust* at the Toronto Opera House in 1895 and “enjoyed her company very much.” Having seen *The Bells* “put on so beautifully by Irving,” he attended another production of the play at the Grand Opera House three days later only “to see Miss Winston who went through her part very indifferently.” The next day

⁵⁶² Diary May 7, 1898.

⁵⁶³ Diary December 28, 1895. Charlesworth characterized Morrison as “a Jewish actor of very considerable distinction. He starred for many seasons in a rather commonplace version of Goethe’s *Faust* (which many of his admirers supposed was the work of Shakespeare), and physically he was an ideal representative of Mephisto, with a peculiarly vibrant intonation and dark, lustrous eyes.” He described Florence Roberts as “an exquisitely idyllic Marguerite, and she later became immensely popular on the Pacific Coast as an exponent of heavy emotional roles.” Charlesworth, 370.

⁵⁶⁴ Charlesworth, 195. On King’s friendship with the Morrisons, see his diary for January 3, 6, 7 and December 25-30, 1895 and January 1 and March 15, 1896; October 25 and 30, 1898; October 11-12, 1901; and April 8 and December 12, 1946.

he visited her at the Palmer House to say goodbye. “She was very tired & so was I. I felt resolved to do only what was right & tried to direct her thoughts along the same line.” Probably referring to Winston’s “morals” rather than her acting skills, he concluded, “She is a girl with little to admire.”⁵⁶⁵

King had a much longer relationship with Miss A. Ramsay, whose recital of poetry in Scottish, oriental, and other costumes in St. George’s Hall he reviewed in 1896. King never gave her first name in his diaries but provided a glowing description in his *Globe* review. “Miss Ramsay’s stage presence is exceptional; besides being tall and handsome, she possesses a charm of manner and grace of movement and expression which are very attractive. Her voice is well modulated, and in the most passionate passages is kept in thorough control.”⁵⁶⁶ In his diary he recorded that he “Liked Miss Ramsay’s recital very much. I gave her a good notice which will be helpful to her as ‘first criticism.’”⁵⁶⁷ In possession of “a number of tickets,” he invited his father and mother to the recital, subsequently introduced his mother to Miss Ramsay and her mother, and socialized with her even while recording in his diary incidents of “strolling” and being saved from “falling” by “some good angel.” The two met again in London, England, in the winter of 1899 when Ramsay found small parts on the London professional stage and King was in the city on his Harvard travelling scholarship. He felt “inclined to speak to her about giving up the sort of slavish part she has” in Beerbohm Tree’s company. “I do not think it is doing her good & her life must be lonely & hard here.” When he saw her in Tree’s production of *King John* at Her Majesty’s Theatre, he was astonished that “Miss Ramsay merely walked on & off the stage & stood still for a while—what a part to be playing for 2 years!” He concluded, “What a waste of life. I do not wonder she is disillusioned. An actor’s life at best is a very poor sort of thing. Why they should be sought after is hard to understand. I suppose because the public applaud them.”⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁵ Diary November 13, 16 and 17, 1895.

⁵⁶⁶ “Music and the Drama,” *Toronto Globe*, March 27, 1897, p.10.

⁵⁶⁷ Diary March 26, 1896.

⁵⁶⁸ Diary January 3 and 4, 1900. On Miss Ramsay, see entries for July 4, 8, 10 and August 6 and 8, 1896; July 25, 1897; October 13, 24 and November 3 and 15, 1899; January 19, 26, and February 16, 1900.

Mackenzie King's Moral Gaze

Mackenzie King's conviction that beauty and the arts had to serve a higher moral purpose than mere individual self-expression was a natural outgrowth of his *habitus* developed by his family upbringing and university studies. As Bourdieu posited in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, the *habitus* is the "product of a chronologically ordered series of structuring determinations." "The *habitus* acquired in the family," Bourdieu writes, "underlies the structuring of school experiences (in particular the reception and assimilation of the specifically pedagogic message), and the *habitus* transformed by schooling, itself diversified, in turn underlies the structuring of all subsequent experiences... from restructuring to restructuring."⁵⁶⁹

By the time King received his MA from the University of Toronto in the summer of 1897 and left the city for graduate studies at the University of Chicago and then at Harvard, his views on the arts, morality and social problems had already taken shape and reflected the cultural values he had absorbed at the end of the Victorian period. Four of King's *Globe* articles in 1896 reporting on public lectures on the arts reveal the moral and artistic ideals he had assimilated.

When Provost Welch of Trinity University lectured on the novelist George Eliot, Mary Anne Evans' pen name, he highlighted not only "the strongly-marked moral purpose" of her novels but also the "great moral catastrophe" of her private life.⁵⁷⁰ Evans had abandoned her religious faith and lived openly with the married philosopher and theatre critic George Henry Lewes. King never abandoned this belief that the value of a work of art he commissioned or purchased from painters and sculptors over the next four decades was inextricably tied to the "character" and "noble soul" of their creators.

⁵⁶⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 86, 87.

⁵⁷⁰ "George Eliot. A Brilliant Lecture by Provost Welch," *Toronto Globe*, February 3, 1896, p.8.

This championing of the ideal was also the essence of a public address by Dr. Theo. Rand to the Toronto branch of the Women's Art Association. In his lecture chaired by Lucius O'Brien, the first president of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, Rand suggested that "much might be done in art by way of idealization through allegorical personification. Literature had set an example which painting should follow."⁵⁷¹ James Mavor, King's former political science professor, addressed the Women's Art Association on "the problem of beauty" in an address entitled "The Art of Seeing and the Seeing of Art." He queried what is beauty, what is good and what is truth and outlined various aesthetic theories that sought to account, on an objective and subjective basis, for the pleasure derived from viewing art. Mavor emphasized the subjective "which regarded beauty not as a quality of the object, but rather of the mind, and therefore as non-existent apart from the observer."⁵⁷²

The longest of King's *Globe* articles was on a lecture before the Women's Art Association on the British painter George Frederick Watts. The lecturer was E. Wyly Grier, also a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts who, over the next three decades, became a violent opponent of modern art and the paintings of the Group of Seven and their followers. Grier had been a personal friend of Watts when he studied painting in London. King wrote that Grier praised his fellow painter for "delighting the physical eye," his "almost sensual abandonment to beauties of form and color" and for displaying "the perfections of the body." But the greatest strength of Watts' paintings, Grier and King reported, lay in what his paintings suggested—"some great and moving idea which dominated the mind and heart of the painter as he carried on his work, and which is communicated by that work to the mind and heart of the appreciative onlooker."⁵⁷³

Conveying such a "great and moving idea" is also what King sought to achieve in public sculptures he helped to commission from 1901 to 1940. One of Watts' many popular canvases was of Sir Galahad, inspired by Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, which King read to his mother and

⁵⁷¹ "Suggestions for Art Study," *Toronto Globe*, February 20, 1896, p. 10.

⁵⁷² "The Problem of Beauty," *Toronto Globe*, April 2, 1896, p. 8.

⁵⁷³ "George Frederick Watts. A Brilliant Lecture on the Life and Works of the Great Portrait Painter—The Characteristics of His Art Described," *Toronto Globe*, March 19, 1896, p. 5.

sisters in 1899. In his diary he noted that “there is a crystal-like purity which sparkles through all of Tennyson’s writings, and an ennobling and inspiring ring... the historian of a future age will look back upon Victoria’s reign as the great & glorious age. Never was court more pure, perhaps, in English history. Such poetry as this makes a nation’s life blood rich.”⁵⁷⁴ Four months later King saw Watts’ *Sir Galahad* painting at Eaton College at the beginning of his European tour and found the work one of “the finest things I have thus far seen in England.”⁵⁷⁵ King had also read Tennyson with his University of Toronto undergraduate friend Bert Harper, whom he hired in October of 1900 as his associate editor for the Department of Labour publication, the *Labour Gazette*, in Ottawa. When the two friends moved to new shared living quarters in a house at 331 Somerset Street, hanging “what few pictures we have” in September of 1901, a print of Watts’ *Sir Galahad* was among the pictures hanging above the desk in Harper’s study.

With what gaze did Mackenzie King view works of art? Besides his references to prostitutes, I have found only a handful of entries in his diaries where he overtly describes looking at women as sexual objects of desire with what Laura Mulvey would characterize in the mid-1970s as a “male gaze.”⁵⁷⁶ Returning by an overnight train to Toronto in 1898, he could see from his upper berth “the lady in the berth below making her toilet. What man could have resisted the temptation to look?” he asked himself. “I should have, and might have but did not. However, I fought hard against possible temptations last night and won completely.”⁵⁷⁷

King expressed this same mixture of desire and self-reproach for feeling such desire the following year when he attended an amateur performance at the Casino Theater in aid of a hospital in Newport, Rhode Island. While tutoring his Harvard fellow students Peter and Robert Gerry to cover his expenses (“\$2 an hour & together at \$3.50 an hour”), he vented one of his frequent outbursts against the excessive privileges, consumption and wealth of high society. “The

⁵⁷⁴ Diary July 21, 1899. On July 28 he added, “What a real possession these Idylls have become to me. What a stimulus to nobler action and to purer love!”

⁵⁷⁵ Diary December 9, 1899.

⁵⁷⁶ Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 16:3 (Autumn 1975), 6-18.

⁵⁷⁷ Diary January 4, 1898.

fashionable society of Newport were there en masse. The sight was alluring,” he confided in his diary.

As I looked down from the gallery on the women below the sight was intoxicating. Women with all the adornment wealth could bestow, in low necked dresses, bare arms, many displayed their breasts almost entirely. They are the beauties of N.Y. & other places. As I looked at a group of them in pale blue with white gauze etc., it was like looking into a sea in which mermaids were bathing. Society runs close to the border of abandonment. Yet these people believe themselves to be above all others in the world! The play was good but a ‘moth & the flame’ dance was most suggestive.⁵⁷⁸

Much more typical of King’s diaries are expressions of his censoring moral gaze. His response to viewing a work of art was not only a matter of the artistic image itself but, as James Mavor had suggested, “rather of the mind” of the observer. A vivid example occurred in 1902 when a female friend sent King “a beautiful picture” from Italy: “a woman’s head & breast full of beauty & life, though with a slight touch of the sensual—hardly that, but approaching it, about it.” King’s conclusion whether the image was sensual or not was “Honi soit qui mal y pense,” shamed be he who thinks evil of it.⁵⁷⁹

As King grew older, his moral conservatism put him increasingly at odds with contemporary mores. Already in 1900, he commented after seeing Arthur Wing Pinero’s *Gay Lord Quex* at the Globe Theatre in London that “The play was a ‘society’ one, suggestive in the extreme, running at every point to the verge of seduction & scandal. It was well acted, but to what end!”⁵⁸⁰ In 1921, just nine months before he became Prime Minister, he attended a theatre box party for Leo Edwards’ and Don Roth’s musical *The Merry Whirl* organized by the May Court Club in Ottawa and had a reaction similar to when he attended the benefit performance in Newport in 1899. He

⁵⁷⁸ Diary April 7 and September 5, 1899.

⁵⁷⁹ Diary February 9, 1902. On April 29, 1938 King recorded receiving another picture “which impressed me with its great beauty. It was in my [dream] vision which was towards morning as if the picture had come to life and the person in it conversing with me.” He noted that after looking at the picture the night before, he “had difficulty in going to sleep but managed so to do, overcoming an all powerful sort of sensation which I feared might be too strong to resist” and wondered if “there could have been mental telepathy half way round the globe—quite possible.”

⁵⁸⁰ Diary January 19, 1900.

conceded that the musical had been well staged but found it “really the sort of thing one sees at a Broadway Theatre in New York. Women but partly dressed & going through all sorts of dances, the last kind of thing to help the moral tone of the community or those taking part. It seems to me this age has gone mad; there is a spirit of the devil incarnate abroad. Young women especially are taking the broad road to destruction with little or no thought.” He concluded that “It was really a sad sight when one thought of it being the society group of Ottawa & many of the best homes.”⁵⁸¹ When he looked at English magazines in 1939, he deplored “the depraved tastes of today, nakedness, suggestiveness etc.—all a reversion to animalism.”⁵⁸²

Mackenzie King’s First European Tour 1899-1900

By the time King sailed for England and Europe in 1899, he had recorded viewing paintings in Toronto, Chicago and Boston over a period of five years. In Toronto he visited the free Art Gallery in 1894, “looked at pictures of German art” at St. John’s Hospital in 1895, “never saw so many magnificent paintings in my life as Mr. Osler has. They are simply grand,” in the home of the financier and philanthropist Edmund Boyd Osler in Rosedale, and admired a Tintoretto and other beautiful oil paintings in Mrs. Riordon’s home.⁵⁸³ He visited the Art Gallery in Chicago while residing at Hull House in December of 1896 and art exhibits in Boston, including one at the Art Gallery where he “recognised one of Constable’s paintings,” while attending Harvard in 1897.⁵⁸⁴

King experienced a much more intense exposure to painting and the arts at “Shady Hill” in Cambridge, the home of Charles Eliot Norton, the professor of art history at Harvard, where he saw “a fine painting of Turner’s and one of Titian’s.” He attended Norton’s last lecture on fine arts before his retirement from Harvard in 1898 in which “he spoke of the Greeks, of their art & learning, of what the Roman had gained from them & of what we might gain from a civilization

⁵⁸¹ Diary March 30, 1921.

⁵⁸² Diary June 19, 1939.

⁵⁸³ Diary June 12, 1894, October 16 and December 5, 1895, June 29, 1899.

⁵⁸⁴ Diary December 16, 1896, July 12 and 13, 1898 and December 5, 1897.

which was greater than ours.”⁵⁸⁵ Norton not only invited King into his family and social circle but also asked him to stay at Shady Hill while the Nortons lived in the country in the summer of 1898. According to R. MacGregor Dawson, “King wrote home enthusiastically describing his delight at being able to live in this ‘home of greatest culture on this continent’ with its walls hung with paintings by Tintoretto, Veronese, and Turner, its library containing the Ruskin diary and books once owned by Gray and Coleridge, its dining room where Dickens and many other literary figures had once been entertained.”⁵⁸⁶

King was also directly introduced to some of the ideas of the Victorian art critic John Ruskin through Norton, Ruskin’s literary executor. After supper at Shady Hill, he “had a most delightful talk with Prof. Norton on Ruskin of whom he is a great personal friend. He told me the story of his life, showed me many of his sketches & the Journal he kept in 1840. It was intensely inspiring.” King called the encounter “one of the eventful evenings of my life.”⁵⁸⁷ But it is an exaggeration to suggest, as Rodney Fowler has, that King’s “cultural understanding and aesthetic tastes had been irrevocably shaped by the ideas of Ruskin and the other writers he had read at Shady Hill as is evidenced by his later life.”⁵⁸⁸ King had already read Ruskin’s essays on work, war and the relationship between taste and morality in *The Crown of Wild Olive* while attending the University of Chicago in November of 1896 and for his course on socialism with Thorstein Veblen.⁵⁸⁹ He does not discuss Ruskin’s aesthetic ideas in his diaries. Rather he was “much of the school of Ruskin & Carlyle on social questions. The duties of the individual etc.”⁵⁹⁰

King was in London when Ruskin died in January of 1900 but again did not discuss his views on art and culture. Instead, he was moved reading in the newspaper “the reference in a sketch of Ruskin’s life to his having knelt by the roadside with a peasant whom he saw praying, believing

⁵⁸⁵ Diary February 3 and May 31, 1898.

⁵⁸⁶ Dawson, 75.

⁵⁸⁷ Diary November 25, 1897.

⁵⁸⁸ Rodney A. Fowler, “The Image of Canada: National identity in the capital’s landscape.” Ph.D. Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1998, 152, fn. 8.

⁵⁸⁹ Diary November 15, 1896 and June 9, 11 and 17, 1897.

⁵⁹⁰ Diary August 18, 1898.

it would help and please the man and uniting with him in his faith.”⁵⁹¹ When he attended the memorial service for Ruskin in Westminster Abbey, he remarked on the impressiveness of the first hymn, “He Giveth His Beloved Sleep,” that “The Dead March from Saul played at the conclusion was also most impressive,” and that “once or twice the light broke through the windows & across the nave” but did not relate Ruskin’s life to the arts.⁵⁹² Reading selections from Ruskin’s *The Stones of Venice* and “a little of Ruskin’s Modern Painters” in March of 1901 again did not lead him to compare Ruskin’s aesthetic ideas with his own perceptions on the arts.⁵⁹³

Rodney Fowler similarly exaggerates the importance of King attending the exhibition of the Society of Arts and Crafts in Boston in April of 1899 when Mrs. Marsh “explained to him the moral values and practical purposes behind the design of the craftwork thereby bringing his aesthetic sensibilities *au courant*.” The arts and crafts movement in England had been inspired by Ruskin’s writings and the design reforms instigated by William Morris. Charles Eliot Norton was the first president of the American Society of Arts and Crafts, incorporated in Boston in 1897.⁵⁹⁴ King’s description of attending the SAC’s 1899 exhibition is simply, “I went with [Mrs. Marsh], or rather took her, to the Crafts & Arts exhibition at Copley Hall. We talked about the pictures & she explained to me some matters of design & art painting.”⁵⁹⁵ The development of King’s aesthetic cannot be explained by one personal encounter with a leading cultural figure such as Charles Eliot Norton, the reading of one author such as Ruskin or attending a single cultural event. The development of his cultural *habitus* was rather, as Pierre Bourdieu suggested, the

⁵⁹¹ Diary January 23, 1900. King makes another reference to this anecdote while travelling on the train to Paris from Dieppe on March 8, 1900.

⁵⁹² Diary January 25, 1900.

⁵⁹³ Diary March 27 and 30, 1901.

⁵⁹⁴ On Norton and the American Society of Arts and Crafts, see T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 66-67. Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr, the co-founders of Hull House, were among the founders of the Chicago Arts and Crafts Society in 1897. King resided at Hull House in late 1896.

⁵⁹⁵ Fowler, 153. Diary April 11, 1899. King recorded in his December 31, 1899 cash account book that he bought the program for the Arts and Crafts exhibition for 25 cents.

“product of a chronologically ordered series of structuring determinations... from restructuring to restructuring.”⁵⁹⁶

King’s ten-month long European tour on his travelling scholarship from Harvard from September 27, 1899 to July 20, 1900—during which he visited over two dozen galleries, palaces and churches in England and on the continent—was one of these important structuring determinations. Already at the beginning of his tour, he was greatly impressed by cultural institutions such as the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool, “a most magnificent collection,” where he was “delighted with Burne-Jones painting of ‘Arthur in Avalon.’” He visited the National Gallery three times (once with Miss Ramsay) and admired paintings by Turner, Veronese, Landseer, Gainsborough and Constable and also attended the “inspiring” lecture on the National by the educator Sir Joshua Fitch.⁵⁹⁷ At the National Portrait Gallery he admired and “was particularly taken” by the “many splendid portraits” of Huxley, Darwin, Mill, Carlyle, Dickens, Shelley, Keats, Wellington, Hume and others. “I always feel better after looking at fine paintings; the impression of having been in the presence of pure beauty remains long with me.”⁵⁹⁸ He enjoyed the Tate Gallery, “both the building, rooms and pictures,” even more than the National Gallery. “The paintings were by Millais, Poynter, Waterhouse, Constable, Leighton, Watts & Landseer etc. I was much taken with the Knight Errant by Millais & Psyche by Lord Leighton & indeed all of Millais charmed me. I was delighted with almost all & could not choose between many of them.”⁵⁹⁹

King also followed artistic creation from its beginnings in artists’ studios to its display in affluent homes of high culture. At the estate of Mrs. Humphry Ward (Mary Augusta Arnold, a niece of Matthew Arnold), the popular Victorian novelist and founder of the Passmore Edwards Settlement where King stayed in London, he saw one of Burne-Jones’ “Pan” paintings, his sketch

⁵⁹⁶ Bourdieu, 86, 87.

⁵⁹⁷ Diary October 5 and 10, 1899, November 15, 1899, January 10 and February 4, 1900.

⁵⁹⁸ Diary January 23, 1900.

⁵⁹⁹ Diary February 24, 1900.

“Stoning of Stephen,” and other beautiful oil paintings.⁶⁰⁰ When he visited the studio of the late painter, he recorded liking his “Merlin & Vivien...Arthur in Avalon, the Ear of Love, Love Consulate & Love Disconsolate or some such title...Aurora, the Casting Out of Satan, Pan & the Shepherd & Shepherdess, Fortitude, and several more.” He also noted that “I do not think I like his women as much as I used to; still there is a sort of spiritual mysticism in their faces which appeals strongly to me.”⁶⁰¹

King was able to clarify for himself what he found beautiful during his visits to major art galleries, churches and palaces on the continent. At the “magnificent” Louvre in Paris, he very much liked a Murillo painting of the Madonna but realized that “there were hundreds of names I had never seen or heard of before.” He concluded that “In the matter of fine arts I feel my education has been a failure. I once thought it strange such a course should be given at Harvard but now believe under a good many there might be more of education in it than in most others. It would help one to see & know & love the Beautiful which is the aim of life.” At the Louvre, he singled out “the magnificent statue of the Venus de Milo and the other famous female figure with wings (without head or arms) [the Winged Victory of Samothrace]. It has a beautiful position at the top of a flight of stairs. The Venus in a room at the end of a long hall, the presiding deity.”⁶⁰²

Like his aesthetic appreciation of the realism of classical Greek sculpture, for King the greatest artistic accomplishments were to be found in the largely realistic depictions of the human figure in religious works by old masters such as Rembrandt, Van Dyke, Andrea Del Sarto and Titian. In Munich, he was struck by the Alte Pinakothek, one of the world’s leading art galleries, and religious paintings by Rubens, Van Dyck, Rembrandt, Titian, Andrea del Sarto and “5 paintings of boys by Murillo which I thought exceptionally fine [such as *Beggar Boys Eating Grapes and Melon*].” Of Rubens’ canvases, he “was inclined to think the smaller & more delicate paintings

⁶⁰⁰ Diary November 13, 1899. In April of 1908, the Wards received £4,000 from the sale of a Rembrandt. See John Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward: Eminent Victorian Pre-eminent Edwardian* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 415.

⁶⁰¹ Diary January 14, 1900.

⁶⁰² Diary March 9, 1900.

finer, because possessed of more soul... I liked best the ones with more covering & less the purely made form, though he was a master in painting the human form. He can make the flesh look like life." He was delighted by Titian's paintings of a Madonna and Child and "of Christ 'The Crown of Thorns' carrying the cross... There is something of infinite worth about his work, a richness or majesty which the other paintings do not seem to reach." During his day-long visit to the gallery, he was "surprised to find that quite unconsciously the pictures which pleased me most were those connected with the life of Christ, or Madonnas... doubtless because in them the artist [Titian] had succeeded to portrait [sic] that which is likest unto God in man, the purity & nobility of soul."⁶⁰³

It is this combination of realism and spirituality that King privileged in painting and sculpture. At the Pitti Palace in Florence, "certainly the finest gallery I have ever seen," he again highlighted paintings by Raphael, Titian, Tintoretto, Andrea Del Sarto, Rubens, Van Dyke, Rembrandt, Murillo and Michelangelo, noting of Del Sarto's canvases that "a wonderful soft mysticism seems to pervade his work." But Rubens "cannot paint a holy family; his figures are all too sensual and he lacks the fine spiritual insight which these others seem to possess."⁶⁰⁴ He had already expressed his dislike for Rubens' nudes at the art gallery in Dresden. "He has a fondness for gross figures & though he paints human flesh as though it were real, the more delicate forms possess greater beauty."⁶⁰⁵

Though short of funds, King confirmed his aesthetic taste by purchasing copies of paintings that most impressed him. When he presented copies of a contemporary painter, Heinrich Hofmann

⁶⁰³ Diary May 30, 1900.

⁶⁰⁴ Diary June 21, 1900. When, at the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, he saw "Hercules Between Vice and Virtue" which he attributed to Rubens (it was actually painted by his pupil Jan van den Hoecke), he added that "I am coming to care less for him [Rubens], saving his portraits; there is a sensual grossness about too much of his work, though the execution is wonderful." He also wrote that at the Uffizi "The nude figures by Titian of Venus [such as the very realistic and erotic "Venus of Urbino," one of whose hands caresses her pubic area], I did not care so much for." By contrast, Del Sarto's work "is full of a human soul." Diary June 22, 1900.

⁶⁰⁵ Diary May 28, 1900.

(1824-1911), as a birthday present to his closest friend, Bert Harper, at the end of the year, the gift was “two splendid engravings of Hofmann’s *Christ, the Child*, and *Christ, and the Rich Young Man*.”⁶⁰⁶ King had been struck by Hofmann’s *Christ in the Temple*, which he saw in Dresden. His lengthy description of the painting in his diary reveals his own identification with a youthful Christ as an ideal and idealized exemplary figure as well as his aesthetic preference for Hofmann’s Christian realism. “This face once seen can never be forgotten, it is full of purity, beauty, youthful vigour, strength and love. It is beautifully radiant,” he wrote. “It portraits [sic] the Christ as might have been filled only with the knowledge of the greatness of the message he had to bring, full of all truth and all beauty and speaking humanly, still unsaddened by a knowledge of the viciousness of the world and the depravity of mankind.” He concluded that the painting “has all of the best elements of a child’s unwavering faith and joy in it, as though there must be but the one truth and all men should know it at once, nothing of the ‘man of sorrows’ in it yet.”⁶⁰⁷

During his Harvard travelling scholarship, King came to a number of realizations about his aesthetic, spiritual and social values that would remain with him for the next half-century. One apparently simple insight was that art was meant to be experienced with others. On his last day in Florence, he returned to the Uffizi Gallery and Pitti Palace to view his favourite old masters. In his diary he confided that “It was with regret that I left wondering if I ever might return again & hoping I might with some fond one to share this beauty & inspiration with. We yearn for companionship & love when we are where beauty dwells.”⁶⁰⁸ King had already made it a practice to share his love for and reading of poetry and literature with his parents, sisters and Bert Harper and would continue to do so with his closest female friends, Marjorie Herridge and Joan Patteson. His numerous visits to public art galleries imply that he believed the access to and

⁶⁰⁶ *The Secret of Heroism*, 147. In his diary of December 9, 1900 King recorded giving Harper “the small photos framed of Hofman’s Christ in the temple, Christ & the rich young man, two beautiful paintings for a birthday gift. I will give him also a set of Mabie’s works. This is his 27th birthday & he begins life anew today.”

⁶⁰⁷ Diary May 28, 1900.

⁶⁰⁸ Diary June 23, 1900.

sharing of beauty should not be confined to the private homes of the wealthy few but should be made available to all. Such a public arts advocacy would become one of the main objectives of Canadian cultural nationalists in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s as well.

Throughout his university studies, King had also pursued his physical development by regular gym exercise, taking part in what Jackson Lears called the “crusades for physical vigor [that] swept the educated bourgeoisie in both Europe and America” during the 1890s.⁶⁰⁹ While at Harvard he wrote in 1898, “I am trying to strengthen my back by heavy weight lifting etc.; feel very much better for it already. I will be a perfect man yet, so far as this frail humanity admits of perfection, through the exertion of human will & prayer & faith in divine strength.”⁶¹⁰ King’s journey to England and the continent increased his belief in the spiritual dimension of existence and more firmly incorporated the arts in the spiritual.

He had begun reading the literary critic Hamilton Wright Mabie’s *Essays on Nature and Culture*—with its closing summary “immortal growth is the prophecy which Nature makes for man”—while living in the home of the painter Anton Weber in Berlin. In his diary he recorded that “The book helped to bring me back to what is best & most real in life & to awaken in my memories sensations of years gone by, when to seek only Perfection seemed to hold sway above the trivial things of life.”⁶¹¹ After reading Mabie’s chapters on “The Discovery to the Imagination,” “The Poetic Interpretation” and “The Law of Harmony” to Weber’s daughter, he noted that “The thought in them was so beautiful and inspiring, so clear and accurate that I felt at the close of the evening as though I had seen into the unseen world. I cannot forget this night, for I felt as though my soul had discovered its world, as the truth had revealed itself. I believe implicitly that the spiritual is the real, the living, the eternal. I believe in the law of harmony as interpreted in this

⁶⁰⁹ Lears, 107. See also Dawson, 77.

⁶¹⁰ Diary November 7, 1898.

⁶¹¹ Hamilton Wright Mabie, *Essays on Nature and Culture* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1896), 326. Diary May 8, 1900.

book.”⁶¹² In addition to the spirituality of nature outlined by Mabie, King had also incorporated the spirituality of the arts into his world-view by the end of his European journey. After he visited Titian’s tomb with its “bas reliefs of his first & last paintings and of his masterpiece, the Assumption [of the Virgin],” King wrote that Titian “is one I have learned to love & to revere. Certainly this art has been a revelation to my soul & has given me a richness of thought which was unknown & unfelt before.”⁶¹³

It is possible to perceive a change in King’s aesthetic and social views upon his return to England after his European tour. When he first visited the Tate Gallery in February of 1900, he was delighted with 19th century British painters (John Constable, John Everett Millais, Edward John Poynter, John William Waterhouse, Frederic Leighton, Edwin Henry Landseer and George Frederic Watts.) On his return visit to the Tate in July after touring the finest art galleries on the continent, he remarked of its paintings, “I think many of them are exceedingly beautiful” and they “should long hold a foremost place” but realized that “they fall below the best of the old masters.”⁶¹⁴

In addition to expressing a new aesthetic and spiritual preference for the religious paintings of the European old masters, King made another revealing comment the same day when he visited the newly opened Wallace Gallery in London. Lady Wallace had donated her family’s art works, collected between 1760 and 1880, to the state in 1897. King described it as “a beautiful collection of paintings, old armour etc. presented to the nation, perhaps the richest individual bequest of the kind yet.” He singled out “some fine paintings” by Joshua Reynolds, “especially

⁶¹² Diary May 11, 1900. When he finished reading *Essays on Nature and Culture* to Miss Weber on May 27, he added that “It is one of the best books I have ever read.” King’s library at Laurier House contains Hamilton Wright Mabie’s *Essays on Nature and Culture* (1898), call number, FE.50.685.1; *My Study Fire* (1893, read by King February 16, 1901), FE.50.685.4; *Essays in Library Interpretation* (1893), FE.50.685.2; *Essays on Work and Culture* (1896), FE.50.685.3; *The Great Word* (1905), FE.50.685.5; *A Child of Nature* (1901), FE.50.234.1; *Works and Days* (1902), FE.50.234.3; two copies of *Parables of Life* (1902), FE.50.445.1 and 445.2; and *Nature and Culture* (1940), FE.50.234.2.

⁶¹³ Diary June 19, 1900.

⁶¹⁴ Diary July 8, 1900.

one of a lady, a mother I admired greatly,” (Reynolds’ *Mrs. Susanna Hoare and Child*), and other paintings by Van Dyke, Andrea Del Sarto and Rembrandt. In contrast with these painters at the Wallace, King then made the remarkable statement that “I thought the pictures of the French school gross & sensual.”⁶¹⁵ He had made a very similar assessment of contemporary painters five days previously in Paris after touring galleries at the Universal Exposition of 1900, straddling the Seine and the Eiffel Tower, which attracted over fifty million visitors. “I had only one thought in regard to them,” King recorded. “That our art today is either sensual or morbid, that we have fallen & are living in a sick age.” He added “This is of course a general view, there are some splendid exceptions, but compared with the works of the old masters & schools, the criticism is a fair one.”⁶¹⁶

King does not describe the artists or paintings he saw at the Universal Exhibition that gave rise to his sweeping condemnation of contemporary art.⁶¹⁷ In his *Paris 1900: The Great World’s Fair*, Richard Mandell writes that “All the great nations tried to offer the pick of their art and industry for the judgement of the millions of visitors” but noted the generally conservative nature of the

⁶¹⁵ Diary July 8, 1900.

⁶¹⁶ Diary July 3, 1900. King first attended the Universal Exhibition on March 12 and “thought the Canadian exhibit very creditable on the whole” on July 3. He spent all of July 4 at the Exhibition, concluding “There is no denying it is a wonderful affair. There is much to see & learn & study; it is a world in miniature but I have seen too much & and too much of the best of everything to appreciate it properly.”

⁶¹⁷ King’s view of the “gross & sensual” nature of the “French school” was not an extremist one. In “A Saturnalia of the Nude in Art,” a writer in *Saturday Night* criticized French painters and Auguste Rodin’s sculptures exhibited in his pavilion at the 1900 Universal Exhibition. “A large number of the pieces he showed there were of nude women, rolled and bent and twisted into ignoble postures, which could not be described, or even imagined, by people of sensibility, and of nude men and women amorously interlaced in poses which would certainly have surprised the Greeks, and which were, perhaps, never before exposed to the public.” The writer asserted that “The nude is absurd in an English community ... We have not the habit of nudity. Has anybody except equatorial savages and a clique of French painters, who live among the Phrynes [courtesans] of Montmartre?” See “A Saturnalia of the Nude in Art,” *Saturday Night*, December 14, 1901, p. 9. The *Saturday Night* music critic, announcing the repertoire of the Savage English Grand Opera Company in Toronto in 1905, anticipated that the dramatic symbolism of Wagner’s *The Valkyrie*, “based, as it is, upon an unnatural union and the infidelity of a wife, will meet with

art that was exhibited. “The admitting juries for painting were almost entirely composed of officials of the government school. Thus the canvases of the courageous, rebellious French painters of the era...were barred or placed in such a way that the colours (so important to the impressionists) were dimmed.”⁶¹⁸

We do not know for certain whether King viewed the retrospective of older French art at the Exhibition’s Petit Palais or what Mandell refers to as “the best modern painting and sculpture of all nations” shown at the Grand Palais where “the French (justifiably, they believed) had awarded themselves far more than half the space.”⁶¹⁹ King may have been offended by canvases by the French painter Georges Rochegrosse. In his history of the Paris Exhibition, Philippe Jullian writes that “In addition to history and social messages, Rochegrosse painted voluminous bottoms which delighted the men, and virile centurions who set the ladies’ hearts a-fluttering. The eroticism which had long been suggested in countless allegorical paintings now ran riot. Never had there been so many swooning postures, so much bared flesh and so many smouldering looks in paintings which, ostensibly, were meant to appeal to the mind, to sentiments of duty, rather than to the senses.” Jullian adds that “all countries had, like France ...their painters of nudes (with or without fig-leaves—men were usually shown from behind.”⁶²⁰

strong objections on the part of many patrons of the opera.” See *Saturday Night*, November 18, 1905, p. 11.

⁶¹⁸ Richard D. Mandell, *Paris 1900: The Great World’s Fair* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), xi, 70-71. Mandell cites André Mellerio’s attack on the conservative admitting juries for largely excluding the contemporary French independent painters, *L’Exposition de 1900 et l’Impressionisme* (Paris: H. Floury, 1900). “A few old landscapes of Monet, Pissarro and Sisley. Some portraits by Renoir, almost all (except for ‘La loge’ and the ‘Danseuses’) half length figures of women. Two paintings, three or four pastels of Dégas, a rare Cézanne or two, something by Berthe Morisot, a Guillemin, a Boudin here and there—and that’s all.” (153, fn. 26.)

⁶¹⁹ Mandell, 64.

⁶²⁰ Philippe Jullian, *The Triumph of Art Nouveau: Paris Exhibition 1900* (London: Phaidon, 1974), 126, 127. See also D. Croal Thomson, ed. *The Paris Exhibition 1900: An Illustrated Record of its Art, Architecture and Industries* (London: The Art Journal, 1900-1901). 2 vols.

But we do know what canvases Mackenzie King viewed at the Wallace Gallery since its collection can be seen online.⁶²¹ The grossness and sensuality of the “French school” King condemned in 1900 at the Wallace Gallery referred not to contemporary painting but to 18th century French artists, particularly François Boucher (1703-1770) and Jacques Charlier (1706-1790) who, together, are represented by over three dozen paintings. Boucher had received commissions to paint the Queen’s apartments at Versailles in 1735 and painted for Madame de Pompadour in the 1750s. Charlier, who copied many of Boucher’s paintings, was also patronized by Mme. de Pompadour and was known for his erotic genre scenes. Canvases by Boucher at the Wallace whose nudity and eroticism must have reminded King of his objections to Rubens include his *Mars and Venus Surprised by Vulcan*, in which Mars and Venus do appear as if they were interrupted while having sex, *Daphne and Chloe*, *Venus and Vulcan*, *Cupid a Captive*, *The Judgment of Paris*, *The Rape of Europa* and *The Setting Sun*.

Canvases by other French painters of the same period collected by Lady Wallace’s male ancestors such as Jean-Baptiste Pater’s *The Dance* and *The Boudoir*, Nicolat Lancret’s *Pastoral Revels*, Louis-Léopold Boilly’s *The Sorrows of Love* and Antoine Watteau’s *Voulez-vous triompher des Belles?* show fully clothed figures but the body language and physical familiarity of male and female characters strongly imply sexual themes.

It is important to analyze King’s censorious moral gaze because it not only determined the artists he would deem legitimate and commission when he became prime minister but also because his moral outlook affected his relationship with the public at large. What he found gross and sensual in the content of paintings he equally objected to in public behaviour. That King expected idealized depictions of life in his art rather than the sordidness of life itself is also evident from his reactions to sexual displays and “loose living” he observed during his first visit to Paris in March of 1900. He was impressed by the sophisticated and “civilized” combination of art and sexuality at the Folies Bergère music hall, describing the performance as “a first class variety

⁶²¹ See

<http://wallacelive.wallacecollection.org/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=room>

one, acrobatic feats, juggling, fancy dancing, with lights etc. The audience largely composed of fast women most of them beautifully dressed. Between acts the 'jardin' behind, which is set out with tables for drinking, was filled with men & women; they sat at tables or promenaded about. Probably some hundreds of prostitutes, yet behaving in an orderly & quiet way."⁶²²

But when he took in another of the "Parisian sights," the Moulin Rouge music hall in the red light district with its much more aggressive sexuality and can-can dancing, the twenty-five year old King was repulsed. "I was much disgusted with myself after for having been there. There was nothing about the performance of interest, mostly singing of suggestive songs in French, by very poor singers. At 10 there was a dance in the hall & here some prostitutes displayed their undergarments profusely. The place became a promenade & drinking garden for fast women. They were an ugly set & nothing attractive about any. The oriental dancing is the worst feature in the place, but it is too vulgar to be attractive. I would not go across the street to see that whole performance again."⁶²³

When he then toured art schools and artists' studios in the Latin Quarter, King came to conclude that these looser moral and artistic standards at the beginning of the century were becoming a larger part of Parisian life and that, as an international arts centre, these values were also being transmitted to other countries. At one academy, he found fifteen men painting a 25-year old woman standing nude on a round block in the centre of the room surrounded by the students at their easels. He found the apprentice painters carelessly dressed and "feigning the typical artist in appearance." In a mixed class in another room, he observed a 45-year old dressed model painted by about thirty men and women, including "some English girls." At another school where "there were about 10 girls and as many or more men," the model, "a little girl of 12 was running about in a chemise with a cat in her arms...Soon time was called, the little girl stripped off her chemise,

⁶²² Diary March 12, 1900.

⁶²³ Diary March 15, 1900.

jumped on a stand and posed naked before men & girls alike. She has been a model for three years. The girls were mostly English, one or two Scotch & might be from 20 to 35 in years.”⁶²⁴

He met and was invited to the rooms of one of the students, the son of a noted Episcopal preacher in London, who studied at Cambridge for four years before coming to Paris. “I have never seen Bohemian quarters like this. He has sought to make them so & his appearance has been a careful study to him. He looks like an Italian, dresses like a Bohemian, velvet hat etc. etc. The room was situated in a sort of a barn, reached through a long cave, behind buildings on a side street...I did not care much for the talk we had as I felt everything he said or did was for effect & but a reflection of a strange vanity, which often seeks to display itself in oddity. He had a banjo made out of a coconut, spoons the imitation of lizards etc. etc.” What most disturbed King was his conclusion that “There are hundreds of students who live thus in Paris. From what I could gather their life is a very loose one, they seem to desire no moral centre & create an idea of art which alone they make the standard of all.”⁶²⁵

King could not live with such an erratic moral and artistic compass. His bedrock was his Christian faith with its assurance that even sinners can attain redemption. This moral certainty is also what he looked for in art where even nudity and eroticism could become acceptable provided they were presented in historical, classical or religious frames and did not promote licentiousness.⁶²⁶ The day after his tour of the Latin Quarter, he attended the Paris Opera where, in Wagner’s *Tannhäuser*, he saw in a different artistic form all the eroticism and sexuality he had encountered at the Folies Bergère and the Moulin Rouge. Yet he enthused in his diary that “I have never listened to such music, nor seen more beautiful staging and singing...there was grace & beauty in it all.”⁶²⁷

⁶²⁴ Diary March 13, 1900.

⁶²⁵ Ibid.

⁶²⁶ At the Wallace Gallery, for example, King had not objected to Titian’s “Perseus and Andromeda” with its chained, nude Andromeda or to Ary Scheffer’s 1835 “Francesca da Rimini” in which, in a scene from Dante’s *Inferno*, Dante and Virgil, with sorrowfully bowed heads, view the realistically painted nude murdered lovers entangled in a bed sheet.

⁶²⁷ March 14, 1900.

Mackenzie King's Cultural Turn at the Close of the 19th Century

As discussed in the previous chapter, ten days before King left for his European journey in 1899 he described “character”—what he conceived as the visible and invisible manifestation of a person’s *habitus*—as “a growth [that] tends toward fixity.”⁶²⁸ This overall “fixity” of King’s spiritual and sexual *habitus*, though always subject to subsequent restructurings, accounts for King’s world-view and actions that did not conform to cultural changes historians have ascribed to the year 1900.

S.E.D. Shortt had suggested in his *The Search for an Ideal* that by 1900 idealism was a dying system of belief yet King adhered to idealism until his death in 1950. Edward Shorter, in *Written in the Flesh: A History of Desire*, posited that “By the turn of the twentieth century, an entire moral order was slipping away. The former hindrances to pleasure now lay in ruins, and in their stead rose a newly assertive sensuality.” He noted “the surge towards pleasure that takes place after 1900” for both heterosexuals and homosexuals. “After 1900, the drive towards sensuality becomes unilinear, continuous, and irreversible.”⁶²⁹ Yet King never lost his moral gaze and until his death could never convince himself that sex outside of marriage was not sinful or that the sex drive and masturbation were natural.

For the cultural critic Walter Benjamin, the year 1900 also marked a major line of demarcation in the development of Western culture. In his essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” first published 1936, he posited that new technologies for the production and dissemination of art were affecting a major transformation in the relationship between artists,

⁶²⁸ Diary September 10, 1899. On King’s belief that church rituals came “between the individual conscience and its responsibility to God,” see also Diary September 17, 1899.

⁶²⁹ Edward Shorter, *Written in the Flesh: A History of Desire*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 110, 19, 6. Shorter observes that “By 1900, gays and lesbians had begun the same sexual breakout from a single restricted focus that straights experienced as they left the missionary position behind...Like heteros, homosexuals were casting loose the ties to small-town life and piety in search of physical pleasure.” (148)

their works of art, and their viewers. Pointing to the development of lithography, photography and film during the nineteenth century, Benjamin suggests that “*around 1900 technological reproduction had reached a standard at which it had not merely begun to take the totality of traditional artworks as its province, imposing the most profound changes on the impact of such works; it had even gained a place for itself among artistic modes of procedure.*”⁶³⁰ Instead of a single, original art work created for and purchased by one owner or for a limited viewing audience, lithography enabled the mass circulation of prints, a process repeated by the mass reproduction of photographs in newspapers and magazines and by the projection of films for national and international audiences. The medium of radio similarly brought the performance of music and theatre and the reading of literature, poetry and the news to mass audiences.

Benjamin posited that as a result of this mechanical reproduction, works of art were losing their genuine authenticity, cultic value and what Benjamin called their “aura,” their unique singularity. He believed that their uniqueness was embedded in the context of tradition and cultic worship. “The oldest works of art, as we know, came into being in the service of some ritual—magical at first, then religious. Now it is of crucial importance that this auric mode of being of the work of art never becomes completely separated from its ritual function. To put it another way: *The ‘one-of-a-kind’ value of the ‘genuine’ work of art has its underpinnings in the ritual in which it had its original, initial utility value.*” Benjamin suggested that the mechanical reproduction of works of art freed them from their ritualistic and cultic origins and projected them into the realm of public display and politics. “The ‘displayability’ of a portrait bust, which is capable of being dispatched hither and thither, exceeds that of a god statue, whose fixed place is inside the temple.”⁶³¹

Benjamin attributed the loss of “aura” of images primarily to their reproduction via photography. Yet he perceived that even early portrait photography, with its focus on the human face, retained auric elements. “In the cult of recalling absent or dead loved ones, the cultic value of the image finds its last refuge. In the transient expression of a human countenance in early photographs, we

⁶³⁰ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (London: Penguin, 2008), 5. Italics in the original.

catch one final glimpse of aura. It is this that gives them their melancholic, matchless beauty.” Benjamin suggested that one of the qualities of “aura” was that it transcended distances in space and time, “‘*Getting closer to things’ in both spatial and human terms.*”⁶³² King described such a cultic use of photographs and their auric quality when the English painter Frank O. Salisbury created a portrait of Isabel King in 1944, twenty-seven years after her death. One of the photographic images King had sent the painter “was taken when mother was much younger but at a time when she had a photograph taken because she believed that she was going to die, and wished to leave it to her children as a remembrance... it seems strange that I should get reproduction now that her bodily presence is removed. The whole effect is exceedingly beautiful.”⁶³³

I am arguing in this dissertation that the art works Mackenzie King commissioned for his private use were primarily of cultic rather than aesthetic display value and that these cultic objects were like a family totem evoking members of his tribe as well as his own greatness. I suggest further that what Benjamin called “aura” King conceived as character and soul, and that King believed that these cultic works of art not only transcend time but—via his occult spiritualism after World War I in which he communicated “beyond the veil” with those individuals depicted in these works of art—also space.⁶³⁴

In yet another paradox, we find that King turned from photography *to* painting in order to maintain and increase cultic values and that this turn occurred precisely “around 1900” but in the opposite direction than Benjamin suggested in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. We can see the qualities of his mother King wanted to enshrine permanently in a work of art through his reactions to her photographs in 1898 and 1899. In February of 1898 he

⁶³¹ Ibid., 10-11, 13. Italics in the original.

⁶³² Ibid., 14, 9.

⁶³³ Diary September 21, 1944.

⁶³⁴ King gives another example of cultic objects transcending space when he recorded in his diary of June 21, 1937 visiting Mrs. John Buchan, the widow of former Governor General Lord Tweedsmuir, in Scotland and observed that “On her mantelpiece, she had framed the little Eventide picture of mother [by J.W.L. Forster].”

sent Isabel King two dollars for her birthday “with explicit directions that it is to go towards having a photograph taken of you *without your hat on*. You must show just as much of your face as you possibly can and let the beautiful curls cluster about it, that future generations may know that there was given to you on earth the crown of glory which is but the divine assurance of the happiness which is to be hereafter.”⁶³⁵

In March of 1899 he “received proofs of mother’s picture but was greatly disappointed in them, seemed to see that she was getting older; some of the photos were in low neck. I did not care of them at all, at first, did not want that sort of a photo of mother.” He promptly sent her a dollar for another sitting.⁶³⁶ A month before his departure for Europe, King accompanied his mother to the studio of the Toronto portrait photographer Frederick William Lyonde for yet another sitting. When he received the photos, he thought they were very good. “I like the little erect one best; it shows the abundance of character, in her face. She has a finer face I think than that of any woman I have ever seen. It is full of character, love & beauty...I will carry them with me wherever I go.”⁶³⁷

King wanted to preserve his mother’s youthful beauty but also diminish her sexuality by having her wear a high neck blouse that concealed her bosom, and project character and love through her facial expression. According to Joy Esberey, King was creating an image of a “false ideal, rather than one that showed her as a human being.”⁶³⁸ But this is exactly the image King commissioned from Prof. Anton Weber, in whose home near the Berlin zoo King was boarding (at 134 Marks a month) during his stay in Berlin in the spring of 1900. According to his biographer, Reginald Hardy (with the information undoubtedly provided by King himself), “Weber was an artist of

⁶³⁵ Diary February 4, 1898. King to his mother, February 4, 1898 cited in Dawson, 26.

⁶³⁶ Diary March 3 and 5, 1899.

⁶³⁷ Diary August 8 and 25, 1899.

⁶³⁸ Joy E. Esberey, *Knight of the Holy Spirit: A Study of William Lyon Mackenzie King* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 17.

some standing who had painted the portraits of many members of the old German nobility, including those of Kaiser Wilhelm, other members of the royal family, and Hindenburg.”⁶³⁹

Because, as discussed in chapter I, historians such as Bruce Hutchison, J.L. Granatstein and Douglas Ord suggested that King was a philistine who “never displayed any marked interest in things artistic,”⁶⁴⁰ it is worth recording King’s first direct experience with artistic creation. Partly because he was still only twenty-five, King’s relationship with Anton Weber was one of the most amicable among the over two dozen artists he commissioned or posed for during his lifetime. King showed Weber photographs of his parents and siblings on March 28, Weber showed King some more of his paintings on April 1, “He has done some beautiful work,” and on April 12 King asked Weber what the cost of a commission would be. “It would, because of our friendship, be very reasonable. I have decided if the price he names is at all within bounds & leaves me enough to get home on + a little, I will have it done.”⁶⁴¹ The two came to an agreement for Weber to paint a portrait from one of Isabel King’s photographs on April 15. “It is to be half life size & done on wood. The old gentleman has been exceedingly kind in the terms he has granted me & I feel the chance such a good one that I have taken it & will trust to fortune finding me some more funds to continue my trip to the south. If not I will have the painting & can go South another time. I am perfectly delighted with the thought of having this to take home with me.”⁶⁴²

King first saw the portrait in progress on May 5, thought that “the head is very good,” corrected the colour of his mother’s eyes and asked Weber to remove “too much red on the face.” “He changed this in a minute or two. The transformation was wonderful.”⁶⁴³ King showed the painting to Rev. James Francis Dickie, the family friend who had assisted at Isabel and John King’s

⁶³⁹ H. Reginald Hardy, *Mackenzie King of Canada* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), 270.

⁶⁴⁰ Douglas Ord, *The National Gallery of Canada: Ideas, Art, Architecture* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 103 and J.L. Granatstein, *Mackenzie King: His Life and World* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1977), 115.

⁶⁴¹ Diary March 28, April 1 and April 12, 1900.

⁶⁴² Diary April 15, 1900.

⁶⁴³ Diary May 5, 1900.

wedding, and his wife on May 20. “They each thought it needed something & I do myself but I cannot tell what it is. Prof. Weber has produced the photo exactly... but there is something which must be changed. I am going to have him deepen the lines a little.”⁶⁴⁴

Anton Weber completed Isabel King’s portrait on May 26 and King “paid him for mother’s picture & the frame of father’s & gave him a little more than we finally agreed though not quite what he first suggested.” King had also spoken to Weber about commissioning a portrait of his father and “brought him the photo which I like the best. He thought he could make a good one of father from it, and I think he will be able to, for he can bring out everything that is in the photos & this one is clearer & better than the one of mother. He said he would make it for me at the same price as mother’s so I thought this would be the best present I could make, and the opportunity exceptional, so I told him to make it & left the photo in his hands.” King recorded that Weber “is to send the picture to me in London in a month’s time. I am delighted with the decision for I can think of no more welcome gift, to father himself & for us all. I am sure he will make a splendid picture.” But though he wrote to Rev. Dickie on June 5 “telling him of my trip thus far and asking him to take a look at father’s painting,”⁶⁴⁵ there are no further references in the King diaries to a Weber portrait of John King.

When Mackenzie King left Berlin on May 27, his stay with the Webers and the commissioning of his parents’ portraits remained his fondest memory of all his experiences in Germany. “They are a family with deep & sincere affections, and gifted with what is best in life, an understanding of the beautiful & true in life.” He had not found Berlin beautiful and had not greatly improved his knowledge of German or made much progress studying German industrial relations. But he had won yet another insight into and a greater appreciation of the creative process. “What there has been of most worth in my stay has been a better understanding of Art & the artistic

⁶⁴⁴ Diary May 20, 1900. Dickie at the time was the pastor of the American Church in Berlin. He had attended the Passion Play at Oberammergau and had just published his translation, *The Passion Play of Oberammergau: The Complete Text* (Berlin: H. Steinitz, Dresden: C. Tittmann, 1900).

⁶⁴⁵ Diary May 26, May 23 and June 5, 1900.

temperament, gained partly unconsciously by the atmosphere, partly through the example & talks with the professor & watching his work etc. Whether in intellect I have gained much may be doubtful; in soul, at least, I have become richer.”⁶⁴⁶



Anton Weber's 1900 portrait of Isabel King.

Though copied from a photograph, Anton Weber's 1900 portrait of Isabel King is a remarkable painting that conveys the cultic values Mackenzie King wanted to preserve in her image. She appears beautiful, loving and at least twenty years younger than the portrait J.W.L. Forster painted of the 58-year old Isabel in Toronto in 1901. Her hair has not yet turned white and instead of the anxious, almost fearful expression that emerges in Forster's portrait there is a smile playing about her lips that suggests her moments of playfulness and laughter. Unlike her stiff formal pose sitting in a chair in Forster's painting, Weber presents her against a light-green background without any realistic features. This background, the medium close-up of her upper body that omits her hands, and her black dress with white lace blouse and high neck collar focus

⁶⁴⁶ Diary May 27, 1900.

the viewer's gaze upon her face and create a sympathetic immediacy. The serious penetrating blue eyes that gaze back at the viewer nevertheless convey past suffering and give weight to her personality. Forster's portrait is clearly a painting. Anton Weber's painting retains the immediacy of photography and conveys the appearance of life itself.

Weber's portrait achieves what King sought in paintings and sculpture he commissioned of family members and himself: the work of art incarnates the person represented not only for posterity but also for the present and, as Walter Benjamin suggested, thus transcended time and space. For King the cultic value of these family objects lay not only in projecting their character and soul and in inspiring him to attain their idealized characters but also to regulate his behaviour and control his sexual drive. When he was in London in January of 1900 and still struggling to refrain from consorting with prostitutes, he had, as he wrote his mother, "no less than five photographs of you in my room, three on the mantle over the grate, one hanging in a frame, and one in the cedar of Lebanon frame. One I often take down & put on my table as I have it now, and when I read Margaret Ogilvie [J.M. Barrie's *Margaret Ogilvy: By Her Son*] I had it in my hand most of the time. But these pictures are less often before me than the image of you I have constantly in my mind."⁶⁴⁷

Family photographs and works of art for King thus also serve the purpose of functioning like a self-created variation of Jeremy Bentham's and Michel Foucault's *panopticon*, leading him to internalize their scrutinizing moral disciplinary gaze. As he wrote on the anniversary of his mother's birthday seven years after her death, "Oh that she were with me, to share my life and inspire it. I do believe she is not far off, 'behind the veil' and is watching over me."⁶⁴⁸ When Dr. Adolf Meyer treated King for neurasthenia in 1916, King noted of his need for an outside source of authority and power to maintain his self control that Meyer had "wondered if I could keep from reacting in the old way, if away from a strong character in whom I had faith to correct wrong impressions." According to Paul Roazen, King kept permanently in touch with Dr.

⁶⁴⁷ Mackenzie King to Isabel King, January 26, 1900. Cited by Dawson, 82-83.

⁶⁴⁸ Diary February 6, 1923.

Lewellys Barker, the Canadian neurologist at John Hopkins who had referred him to Dr. Meyer, and kept Barker's photo in his study at Laurier House.⁶⁴⁹

While King's family photographs, paintings and sculpture busts, with their moral authority and censorious moral gaze, function like Benjamin's god statue inside a temple, their primary purpose was uplifting and inspirational. James Mavor, in his address on "The Art of Seeing and the Seeing of Art," had attributed one of the subjective sources of pleasure in viewing art to "the associational, which laid stress on the element of association."⁶⁵⁰ King formed two such important inspirational "associations" while in Paris. His first exposure to Wagner at the Paris Opera—where Wagner himself had conducted the Paris version of *Tannhäuser* in 1861—led King to adopt Wolfram's poignant aria to Elisabeth before her death, "O douce étoile" ("O Du, Mein Holder Abendstern"/"O Thou, My Gracious Evening Star"), as an inspirational motive. King strongly identified with the conflict between sacred and profane love in *Tannhäuser* and its theme of divine forgiveness. At the conclusion of the opera, he "walked home after, as far as the Arc de Triomphe beneath which I stood a while in the moonlight. This has been one of the happiest nights of my life. There have been moments in it of great spiritual joy & grand resolve."⁶⁵¹

That night King apparently sang Wolfram's "Evening Star" aria underneath the dome of the Arc de Triomphe which he also adopted as an associational imaginative symbolic monument. After he viewed the "sensual or morbid" contemporary art at the 1900 Paris Exhibition in July, he "went once more beneath the Arc de triomphe where I bared my head & cried out for nobler action in life & conduct. It is one of the most inspiring spots in the world, an arch of triumph. One seldom known or placed."⁶⁵² Thirty-four years later he still affirmed that "Truly the Arc de Triomphe is a symbol, and the song sung to l'Etoile as a boy years ago has not been in vain—its

⁶⁴⁹ Paul Roazen, *Canada's King: An Essay in Political Psychology* (Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic Press, 1998), 103, x(d).

⁶⁵⁰ "The Problem of Beauty," *Toronto Globe*, April 2, 1896, p. 8.

⁶⁵¹ Diary March 14, 1900.

⁶⁵² Diary July 3, 1900.

light has guided & will continue to guide me all the way.”⁶⁵³ He would revisit the Arc de Triomphe during all his subsequent stays in Paris, writing in 1934 that “I had last night been singing ‘Oh thou sublime evening star’ and left the Arc de Triomphe with the star beneath the arch as a symbol of my guardian angel.”⁶⁵⁴

We know who the guardian angel was that King associated with the “Evening Star” and the Arc de Triomphe from his account of reading Guy de Pourtales’ *Richard Wagner: The Story of an Artist* in 1939 before what he thought would be an imminent federal election. He recalled “going with dear Mother to see Parsifal” in Toronto and “how like her white head that of one of the characters in the play. – She is guiding me, I know, like Elizabeth in Tannhauser, like the highest & noblest influence in Parsifal.” The importance of such symbolic associations to King’s private and public life is revealed by his continuing recognition of the conflict between profane and sacred love in Wagner’s opera that mirrors his own. “I found in the chapter on Tannhauser—the conflict that has been mine all along the way—but which with God’s help must be ended if possible from now on—that the note may be forever clear—while living & before death comes—that mankind may be helped—to prepare for the campaign of 1939 in this spirit & with this purpose in from now on my express aim.”⁶⁵⁵ King’s tendency to embody concretely such “associations” through physical objects is demonstrated by his purchasing “the little frame for the Arc de Triomphe picture at Kingsmere” in 1936 and speaking of “how beautiful was the painting in my office, the one entitled the ‘Arc de Triomphe’” as he is about to vacate his Parliamentary office and hand in his resignation as Prime Minister to the Governor General in 1948.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵³ Diary November 1, 1934.

⁶⁵⁴ Diary November 2, 1934.

⁶⁵⁵ Diary June 23, 1939. King gives Toronto as the location of the *Parsifal* production he attended with his mother in his diary of July 23, 1939 but gives no date, only “years ago.” The Savage English Grand Opera Company gave the first performance of *Parsifal* in Canada in 1905. See “Opera Performance” in Helmut Kallmann, Gilles Potvin, Kenneth Winters, eds. *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 696.

⁶⁵⁶ Diary October 15, 1936 and November 12, 1948.

Contrary to J.L. Granatstein's and Douglas Ord's characterization of King as a philistine, the beginning and end of King's political career can be seen as literally being framed by art. The day before he received the telegram from Postmaster General William Mulock offering him the editorship of the *Labour Gazette* in Ottawa, he viewed the classical ruins on the Capitoline Hill in Rome and marveled at "the bronze statue of Marcus Aurelius taking us back to the days of the philosopher king, and the square with its historic associations." In order to preserve his own "association" of the visit, he confessed that he "could not desist from pocketing a piece of marble column as a trophy from Rome" and concluded that "This has been one of the best days abroad, a day lived in the midst of the ruins of the past, a day which reminds man that Art is long though time is fleeting—a day to recall history & to evoke inspiration."⁶⁵⁷

By the time King arrived in Ottawa on July 24, 1900, he had been transformed by his European journey and terminated his life as a student. At Harvard he had introduced himself to the union organizer and socialist Eugene Debs in 1898 but was greatly disappointed when he heard him speak. "He said nothing in explanation of principles of his party, indulged in generalities about rights of man, etc. spoke much of rich & poor, God's free air, the sun etc. I think his heart right, his desire good, but this sort of thing is terrible." King despaired "How the world needs men in the movement, trained minds" and prayed, "Oh God fit me for this work, to see & know the problem & how to direct people."⁶⁵⁸ When he received the offer from Postmaster General William Mulock, he consulted with his family, friends and former professors. Jane Addams, whom he met in Paris, was one of the many persons who advised him to accept the government position. "She spoke of danger of University men feeling interested in study for study's sake, away from their fellow men & the working classes."⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵⁷ Diary June 25, 1900. King found the Coliseum "the greatest wonder of all." "It appealed to me as a monument to an age... One could feel the past sweep before one, and the thoughts came to me often, what a waste is human life if man is not immortal, how full of folly & passion, how short & how absurd... That an age greater than our own existed two thousand years ago is recorded there."

⁶⁵⁸ Diary October 27, 1898.

⁶⁵⁹ Diary July 2, 1900.

On July 10, King decided on his life plan and accepted Mulock's offer to work for him at an initial salary of \$1,500 in what would soon become a Department of Labour. "The new experience in the centre of political thought & activity will help to draw me out of myself to rid me of a sort of morbidness which the solitary habits of academic life is apt to foster & make me more of a man suited to speak with authority on the problems of life & the active world." He believed he could "size up the political field more accurately now & enter it more readily, or I can return with grace to the academic life, knowing the rewards & opportunities as well."⁶⁶⁰

Though Mackenzie King in 1900 was still uncertain whether to pursue an academic or political career, this chapter suggests that his cultural and religious/ spiritual *habiti* were largely established by the turn of the century. As Rodney Fowler posited in his dissertation "The Image of Canada: National identity in the capital's landscape," King "was a Canadian whose spirituality, cultural sensibilities, aesthetic tastes and moral beliefs, were all shaped by the High Victorian Romantic idealism of Christian Naturalism."

King's first exposure to the ideas of the English Victorian Romantic writers and their aesthetics occurred at Harvard University between 1897 and 1899. This cultural and aesthetic formation was completed with his trip to Europe from 1899 to 1900 where he actually saw the art and architecture of which he had only previously read...the cultural exposure to Romanticism he had acquired at Harvard and the exposure to the metaphors and symbolism of the Gothic, neo-classical and Northern Gothic that he had acquired in Europe by 1900, along with the spiritual formation of his Christian Naturalism, had shaped his aesthetic taste and moral commitment for the remainder of his life.⁶⁶¹

I will examine Mackenzie King's active contestations in political and cultural fields in chapter VI, "The Field of Cultural Production and Mackenzie King's Cultural Authority 1900-1930."

⁶⁶⁰ Diary July 10, 1900.

⁶⁶¹ Fowler, 150, 188.

Chapter V:

The First Fruits of *Habitus*: The Harper Monument and *The Secret of Heroism*

In this chapter, I will analyze Mackenzie King's pivotal role in the creation of the Bert Harper memorial on Parliament Hill and his writing of *The Secret of Heroism*. These two art projects not only provided him with his first experience in commissioning public art but also began endowing him with the cultural capital and cultural authority with which he so successfully resisted the demands of Canadian artists for government support when he became Prime Minister of Canada. Closely analyzing King's participation in the erection of the Harper monument is important because the experience established a template for him for the commissioning of future public works of art, how these could be paid for, how he could work with and control artists, whether public commissions should be restricted to Canadian artists, and how King could use public monuments to inspire Canadians and their nation.

The chapter also reveals that the public and critical reception of *The Secret of Heroism* was much more substantial and laudatory in Canada and England than King's biographers have acknowledged to date and that most commentators also failed to realize that the ideals projected in the purported memoir were not, in fact, Bert Harper's but King's own. The real significance of *The Secret of Heroism* thus lies not in its literary qualities or in serving King as a means of transitioning from the civil service to Parliamentary politics as H.S. Ferns and Bernard Ostry suggested.⁶⁶² Its importance lies rather in serving as a manifesto of King's religious, cultural and political *habiti*, which illuminate his subsequent involvements and activities in arts and culture. I conclude the chapter by describing how Harper and the ideals King associated with him developed into such a powerful psychic construct that he became one of King's spirit guides who appeared in his dream visions, spoke to him from the beyond, and inspired him until his death.

⁶⁶² H.S. Ferns and Bernard Ostry, *The Age of Mackenzie King: The Rise of the Leader* (London: William Heineman and Toronto: British Book Service Canada, 1955), 92.



Mackenzie King, October 1905.

Seven weeks after Mackenzie King began editing the *Labour Gazette*, Postmaster General William Mulock also appointed him Deputy Minister of Labour in September of 1900 with an increase in salary to \$2,250.⁶⁶³ King in turn hired his University of Toronto classmate Bert Harper, then working in Ottawa for the *Montreal Herald*, as the associate editor of the *Gazette*. Harper, who had also graduated with a degree in political science in 1895, functioned as acting Deputy Minister when King was away on official business as a labour conciliator. Both Presbyterians, they had recognized one another as kindred souls, sharing similar beliefs about immortality, the inner life, social and economic justice, service to mankind, and the arts. In addition to their daily work in the Department of Labour, the two developed their intellect and character by reading aloud to one another in their shared living quarters from books on literature, philosophy, history and religion. In his homage to Harper, *The Secret of Heroism*, King described their shared intellectual and spiritual exploration as “the best that this world has to offer, the soul communion of friend with friend.”⁶⁶⁴ They were bound together by their spiritual convictions which helped them to surmount worldly obstacles. When King was anxious about his appointment as a Commissioner under the 1900 Conciliation Act to settle a miners’ strike in

⁶⁶³ In 1901 his salary was increased to \$3,200. See R. MacGregor Dawson, *William Lyon Mackenzie King: A Political Biography 1874-1923* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958), 104.

⁶⁶⁴ W.L. Mackenzie King, *The Secret of Heroism: A Memoir of Henry Albert Harper* (New York, Chicago, Toronto, London and Edinburgh: Fleming H. Revell, 1906), 68-69.

Rossland, B.C., he “read a few lines from Emerson’s ‘Over Soul’—the power which will triumph is there.”⁶⁶⁵

“What Else Can I do?”: Bert Harper Killed by His Own *Habitus*



Bert Harper circa 1900.

King was returning by train from his labour mediation mission in British Columbia when he read in a newspaper that the twenty-eight year old Harper had drowned on December 6 while trying to save the life of the nineteen-year old Bessie Blair, the daughter of the Minister of Railways and Canals.⁶⁶⁶ She and a companion had fallen through the ice while skating on the Ottawa River at dusk following a skating party organized by the Governor General and his wife, Lord and Lady Minto.⁶⁶⁷ Blair and her companion had urged Harper not to attempt the rescue but, as King

⁶⁶⁵ Diary October 31, 1901.

⁶⁶⁶ According to Reginald Hardy and Bruce Hutchison, King had bought a newspaper in Barrie and, just after passing Harper’s old home on the train, read the account of his drowning in Ottawa. Hardy also writes that King collapsed on the train platform after arriving in Toronto where he was met by his father. See H. Reginald Hardy, *Mackenzie King of Canada* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), 52 and Bruce Hutchison, *The Incredible Canadian: A Candid Portrait of Mackenzie King: His Works, His Times, and His Nation* (Toronto: Longmans, 1952), 25.

⁶⁶⁷ In *The Private Capital*, Sandra Gwyn suggests that recklessness on the part of Lord Minto and his aides was in part responsible for Harper’s and Bessie Blair’s deaths and that “Only a well-orchestrated conspiracy of silence saved the governor-generalcy itself from being implicated.”

described the event in *The Secret of Heroism*, “he exclaimed, ‘What else can I do!’ and plunged boldly into the icy current in the direction of Miss Blair. They perished together.”⁶⁶⁸ Their bodies were found the next morning within a few feet of each other under the ice. Minto recorded in his diary that he “stayed with the bodies until they were taken away. Neither of them showed any signs of struggle, and their faces were full of colour.”⁶⁶⁹ The *Toronto Globe* reported on its front page that “Miss Blair was found with both arms and hands extended. Her features were calm and composed. Mr. Harper’s body was in its shirt sleeves, showing that he had divested himself of both coats when he made his gallant leap to the rescue.”⁶⁷⁰

One major reason Harper’s and Bessie Blair’s deaths caused such a sensation in Ottawa was that an eye-witness to the accident vividly described their desperate last moments in the daily press. Blair’s skating partner had been Alex Creelman, a teller at the Imperial Bank, who was pulling her along with his walking stick when their skates went through the ice and they pitched forward into open water. Creelman grasped the edge of the ice with one hand and tried to hold Bessie Blair above water with the other. They attempted to swim back to the spot where they had broken through, Blair assuring him, “Oh, don’t mind me, I can swim; look.” Harper and his skating partner, Jeannie Snowball, the daughter of the New Brunswick Senator, arrived at the scene of the accident. Creelman shouted to Harper not to attempt a rescue. But while Snowball skated off to Gatineau Point seeking help, Harper threw off his overcoat and undercoat and jumped into the river to assist Bessie Blair. “The struggle in the icy water was not of long duration and in a few minutes Miss Blair and Mr. Harper went down in the chilly depths.”⁶⁷¹ Creelman was also swept underneath the ice but managed to punch a hole through and hold his head above water. After hovering near death, he was eventually pulled into a boat by two rescuers and survived to document the accident.

See Sandra Gwyn, *The Private Capital: Ambition and Love in the Age of Macdonald and Laurier* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1984), 320.

⁶⁶⁸ *The Secret of Heroism*, 11.

⁶⁶⁹ Gwyn, 324-5.

⁶⁷⁰ “The River’s Victims,” *Toronto Globe*, December 9, 1901, p. 1.

⁶⁷¹ “Miss Blair Drowned—In Bravely Attempting to Rescue Her H.A. Harper Perishes,” *Ottawa Citizen*, December 7, 1901, p. 1. “The River’s Victims”; Gwyn, 322-25.

From the vantage point of today, it is astonishing how the death of a minor civil servant sacrificing his life in the attempt to save the life of the beautiful young daughter of a senior minister in Wilfrid Laurier's government galvanized the elite and general population in Ottawa. The *Globe*, in the special dispatch King also read in Toronto, had reported that news of Harper's and Bessie Blair's death "spread with the rapidity of wildfire" and "caused a profound sensation in the capital to-night."⁶⁷² A printed letter later sent to sculptors inviting them to submit models for the Harper monument competition informed them that "probably no event ever cast a greater gloom over the Capital of Canada, or more profoundly stirred the feelings of all classes in the city. Among the young people of Ottawa there were few, if any, who were more generally esteemed, respected and loved, both because of their splendid characters and fine personalities, than Miss Blair and Mr. Harper."⁶⁷³



Andrew G. Blair, his wife, daughters and other relations with Sydney Fisher, Minister of Agriculture. Bessie Blair on left.

Yet the personal tragedy of the deaths of these two young people became immediately submerged in an effort to create a monument to Victorian ideals of chivalry, Christian duty, self-sacrifice and

⁶⁷² "Drowned in the Ottawa," *Toronto Globe*, December 7, 1901, p. 5.

⁶⁷³ January 4, 1903 circular letter, LAC MG26, reel C1956, page C4677.

manhood⁶⁷⁴ that was executed with the military precision of a state funeral. In “The Capital in Mourning,” the *Globe* reported that Bessie Blair’s funeral procession to Beechwood cemetery, witnessed by thousands, “brought together one of the largest processions ever seen in Ottawa. Representatives of the Governor-General, the Premier [Sir Wilfrid Laurier] and his cabinet, leading citizens of all professions, and almost the entire civil service walked behind the hearse to the outskirts of the city.” On what would have been Harper’s 28th birthday, Laurier and his Cabinet, as well as “many of the leaders in the professional and mercantile life of the capital,” also attended Harper’s service before his body was taken by train to Cookstown for burial next to his parents in the family plot at Wilson’s Hill cemetery.⁶⁷⁵ King was one of the pallbearers at his funeral service in Ottawa and also attended his funeral in Cookstown, along with his father and brother.

The same night after the two services in Ottawa, a public meeting in the City Hall resolved to erect a monument symbolical of heroism and nobility in Harper’s memory. At the “largely attended” mass meeting presided by Ottawa Mayor Davidson, William Mulock called Harper’s action “a deed of rare heroism, of sublime self-sacrifice, and as such it should be commemorated.” He moved “that the public be invited to join in the erection of a monument in the City of Ottawa, in memory of Henry Albert Harper, who lost his life by drowning in the Ottawa River on Friday evening, December 6, 1901, in the gallant attempt to save the life of another.” E.R. Cameron, registrar of the Supreme Court and president of the Ottawa branch of the University of Toronto Alumni Association, of which Harper had been the secretary-treasurer, seconded the motion. He affirmed that “the Canadian people could have no more glorious

⁶⁷⁴ After the \$3,000 commission for the proposed Harper monument had been raised, the circular letter sent to potential sculptors on January 24, 1903 specified that, while the design sub-committee did not desire “to limit sculptors in their choice...in the matter of form and design,” the committee “has expressed a preference for some figure symbolical of heroism and nobility of character, and has, for this reason, and because of its association with the art and poetry of the Reign of Victoria, made special mention of the painting of Sir Galahad, by Sir Frederick Watts, R.A., the figure of Sir Galahad alone being the subject which it is desired to specially designate.” LAC MG26, reel C1956, page C4678.

⁶⁷⁵ “The Capital in Mourning—Harper’s Bravery: A Public Monument Proposed to the Young Man,” *Toronto Globe*, December 10, 1901, p. 2.

heritage than the noble deed of heroism, of duty nobly done, handed down from generation to generation.”⁶⁷⁶

At the December 9 public meeting, Mackenzie King was appointed one of the members of the Harper Memorial Fund Committee established to supervise the project. Other members of the Committee included notable politicians and citizens such as Mayor Davidson, William Mulock, Justice George Wheelock Burbidge, his son, the lawyer Henry A. Burbidge (a friend of King’s and Harper’s at the University of Toronto, who became secretary of the monument committee), aldermen, a Member of Parliament, clergymen, businessmen, military officers and Harry S. Southam, future editor of the *Ottawa Citizen*.⁶⁷⁷

The Harper memorial is a unique case among the many public art projects Mackenzie King helped to commission because politicians, clergymen and leading citizens of the Ottawa community had already attempted to define its meaning before the memorial was even commissioned. In essence they sought to enshrine and reify Harper’s *habitus* and sought to define its characteristics. One element which gave added pathos to Harper’s and Bessie Blair’s death was that of chivalry. Harper was an athlete who had been a championship rower with the Ottawa Rowing Club in the spring of 1900.⁶⁷⁸ Mackenzie King described him in a tribute in the *Citizen* as “a manly man, of noble characteristics...He was a companion a man felt proud of and cherished.”⁶⁷⁹ In his diary he had recorded a year previously that Harper “bought a picture of a lone wolf standing on a hill of snow, in the moonlight, a picture of desolation and loneliness in which he is inclined to find a comparison to his life.”⁶⁸⁰ Yet King had also recorded that Harper liked female companionship and had his own struggle with “restlessness.” “Harper has gone out

⁶⁷⁶ *Idem*.

⁶⁷⁷ Minutes of the December 9, 1900 general meeting. LAC reel C1956, page C4624.

⁶⁷⁸ “Miss Blair Drowned,” *Ottawa Citizen*, Dec. 7, 1901, p. 12.

⁶⁷⁹ “World Wide Sympathy: Messages of Condolence From the Prince of Wales,” *Ottawa Citizen*, Dec. 9, 1901, p. 10. King had participated in such manly pursuits as climbing to the top of King’s Mountain and skinny-dipping with Harper in Pink Lake at Kingsmere two months before his death. Diary August 11, 1901.

⁶⁸⁰ Diary October 20, 1900.

tonight. He has been restless all day. Hope he will keep up the fight for noble Christian manhood. I must do all I can to have it so for us both.”⁶⁸¹

A virile young man sacrificing his life for a beautiful young woman thus evoked both romantic and Christian ideals. Rev. Salem Bland, preaching about Harper’s death at the Eastern Methodist Church, declared that “Chivalrousness is one of the flowers of Christianity.”⁶⁸² The *Ottawa Journal*, in a long 1943 retrospective, “Sir Galahad Memorial Enshrines Self-Sacrifice of Henry Harper,” based on *Journal* articles of the 1901 deaths, still spoke of a “Sir Galahad Instinct.” “Alone, before the dark patch of ice water, Harper made his split-second decision even as the two warned him not to jump in. ‘What else can I do,’ he shouted, and dived for Miss Blair, even as she was being swept under the ice. It was the chivalric instinct of Sir Galahad in the Holy Grail: ‘If I lose myself, I save myself;’ and to the accompaniment of the monotone of the night wind, Harper died under the ice trying to rescue a girl of 19, who, too, had everything to live for.”⁶⁸³ Harper’s own *habitus* and convictions of Christian service and the Victorian chivalric ideals he had developed through his reading of Tennyson and other authors with Mackenzie King gave him no choice but to attempt to rescue Bessie Blair. He was thus killed by the very *habitus* he had himself nurtured.

Harper’s and Bessie Blair’s drowning had such an impact on Ottawa’s residents because their deaths evoked an archetypal Canadian fear, what Northrop Frye referred to as “the unconscious horror of nature” and Margaret Atwood as “Nature the Monster.”⁶⁸⁴ This fear of nature is reflected in several of the newspaper articles describing the two deaths: “The River’s Victims,” “Mr. Harper’s Sacrifice,” and “Ottawa Is Richer For the Splendid Sacrifice Offered in the Ottawa

⁶⁸¹ Diary October 24, 1900.

⁶⁸² “Mr. Harper’s Sacrifice—Methodist Ministers Pay Eloquent Tribute,” *Ottawa Citizen*, December 16, 1901, p. 2.

⁶⁸³ Harry J. Walker, “Sir Galahad Memorial Enshrines Self-Sacrifice of Henry Harper,” *Ottawa Journal*, December 4, 1943. King noted in his diary on December 4 that the article “brought Harper very close to me” and pasted it in his diary on December 31, 1943, pages 4-5.

River.” Newspapers also reported that half-a-dozen other skaters, including members of the Vice-Regal party from Government House, had fallen through the ice near Kettle Island where the deaths occurred but managed to escape. The pseudonymous “Amaryllis” referred to this fear of a hostile nature that had seemingly transformed the Ottawa River into a shimmering skating rink. “Old residents shook their heads, and hinted at treachery lurking beneath that broad expanse of ice that looked so fair and firm,” she wrote in *Saturday Night*. “No one heeded these wise people.”⁶⁸⁵

In *Survival*, Margaret Atwood posited that “every country or culture has a single unifying and informing symbol at its core” and that this central symbol for Canada “is undoubtedly *Survival, la Survivance*.” Atwood suggested, as had been Harper’s and Alex Creelman’s experience, that “Our stories are likely to be tales not of those who made it but of those who made it back, from the awful experience—the North, the snowstorm, the sinking ship—that killed everyone else. The survivor has no triumph or victory but the fact of his survival; he has little after his ordeal that he did not have before, except gratitude for having escaped with his life.”⁶⁸⁶

In *The Bush Garden*, Northrop Frye identified this indifference of nature to human values as “the central Canadian tragic theme.” “The environment, in nineteenth-century Canada, is terrifyingly cold, empty and vast, where the obvious and immediate sense of nature is the late Romantic one, increasingly affected by Darwinism, of nature red in tooth and claw...Human suffering, in such an environment, is a by-product of a massive indifference which, whatever else it may be, is not morally explicable.”⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁸⁴ Northrop Frye, “Canada and Its Poetry” in his *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination* (Toronto: Anansi, 1971), 141; Margaret Atwood, “Nature the Monster” in her *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (Toronto: Anansi, 1972), 45-67.

⁶⁸⁵ Amaryllis, “Notes from the Capital,” *Saturday Night*, December 14, 1901, p. 8. Sandra Gwyn identified “Amaryllis” as the journalist Agnes Scott, the niece of the Hon. R.W. Scott, the Secretary of State. See Gwyn, 476.

⁶⁸⁶ Atwood, 31, 32, 33.

⁶⁸⁷ Frye, 171, 243.

It was precisely this inexplicableness of Harper's and Bessie Blair's deaths that politicians, leading citizens and clergymen attempted to endow with meaning and to justify God's way with mankind. In a memorial service at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Rev. Herridge preached his sermon on "Life's Surprise" and acknowledged the "awful shock" resulting from "the extinction of two of the brightest and most promising young lives among us." Their deaths seemed "wholly inexplicable." "We cannot pretend to understand why a useful career should be cut short in its noontide, or why ardent, young aspirations should be suddenly extinguished in life's bright morning." Yet he reasoned, "Sad indeed was the exit, but I am sure that through the gateway of the dark waters they have entered into a realm of peace which passeth all understanding."⁶⁸⁸

Rev. Rose, in his sermon at the Dominion Methodist Church, offered yet another explanation. "As Christ had told his disciples that it was expedient that His life should terminate in order that the larger blessings should follow, so it is often that the larger good to result is dependent upon a closing of a life on earth."⁶⁸⁹ Rev. Salem Bland repeatedly identified Harper as a Christ figure. He preached about "the Christlikeness of the act which caused Mr. Harper's death...The noble act was an 'outflashing of divine truth, a revelation of the heart of Christ'...the sublime act which closed his earthly life showed that he had the spirit of Christ. The self-sacrifice bore the stamp of Christ...A man who dies for men has the spirit of Christ."⁶⁹⁰

Politicians and government officials sought to enshrine civic rather than religious virtues in commemorating Harper. At the first meeting that established the Harper Memorial Fund Committee, William Mulock said, "all were proud that there were such young men in our country. Mr. Harper's action would bring men closer together. The dark cloud would have a bright lining if it proved an incentive to young men to live for others, yea, to die for others if need be." For E.R. Cameron, there was "no higher or more glorious benefit any people enjoy than

⁶⁸⁸ "In St. Andrew's—Rev. Dr. Herridge Makes Affecting Reference to the Recent Providential Dispensations," *Ottawa Citizen*, Dec. 9, 1901, p. 10.

⁶⁸⁹ "Ottawa Is Richer For the Splendid Sacrifice Offered in the Ottawa River," *Ottawa Citizen*, December 16, 1901, p. 2.

to have the story handed down to the children of succeeding generations of some feat of heroism, some deed of duty nobly done...Cut off in his prime, Mr. Harper's death, if fittingly commemorated, can do more for his country than anything he might have done even if he had reached the highest goal of ambition."⁶⁹¹ John King, in a long *Toronto Globe* editorial, urged public support for the Harper monument from all parts of Canada. Harper's death shall not have been in vain, he reasoned, "if it teach the duty of self sacrifice, however great, whenever the occasion calls for it...It is gratifying to know that young Harper's noble action, and all the manly virtues expressed and implied in it, shall not die with him, but that it shall serve as a manifold inspiration to the youth of Canada for many years to come."⁶⁹²

With such strong community, political and newspaper support, \$2,709 of the Harper Memorial Fund Committee's \$3,000 fundraising goal was raised as early as February 4, 1902. Frequent newspaper notices listed the names of donors and amounts contributed⁶⁹³ and personal solicitations were made in government departments, railway offices, banks and other businesses. Subscriptions were sent to George Burn, the Treasurer of the Memorial Fund, at the Bank of Ottawa. Rev. Bland had expressed the hope that the Harper memorial "would be a tribute from the people and not left to the rich, who give their hundred and their fifty dollars, but that those

⁶⁹⁰ "Mr. Harper's Sacrifice—Methodist Ministers Pay Eloquent Tribute," *Ottawa Citizen*, December 16, 1901, p. 2.

⁶⁹¹ "The Harper Memorial—Project Approved by Meeting of Citizens," *Ottawa Citizen*, December 10, 1901, p. 5.

⁶⁹² [John King], "What Else Can I do?" *Toronto Globe*, December 31, 1902, p. 6. Mackenzie King identified his father as the writer of the "splendid editorial" in his diary of January 2, 1902. He nevertheless expressed a reservation about his privacy that would grow over the years into his outer political and second inner mask discussed in Chapter I. "I like it all exceedingly except the reference to myself; the quotation is well enough but I regret that there is mention of it having been made to me. I am sensitive on personal mentions of this kind and I dislike them."

⁶⁹³ See for example "Memorial Fund Opened—Handsome Subscriptions Already Reported," *Ottawa Citizen*, December 11, 1901, p. 2 which indicated over \$600 were subscribed the first day; "The Memorial Fund" and "Harper Memorial" December 12 and 14, 1901, pages 6 and 5. Donors and the amounts of contributions were also listed in the Harper Memorial Fund Committee Minutes, LAC reel C1956, page C4652-65.

who can give \$5, or \$2 or \$1, or less, would subscribe so that the children of succeeding generations may feel the stimulus of the noble act.”⁶⁹⁴

Heeding Rev. Bland’s advice, the Memorial Fund Committee accepted contributions as small as 50 cents. The largest donation was from the Hon. Andrew G. Blair, Bessie’s father, who contributed \$200. Postmaster General William Mulock donated \$100 as did the businessman Warren Y. Soper of Ahearn & Soper Ltd. Governor General Lord Minto and the Hon. Sydney Fisher, Minister of Agriculture, each donated \$50; Sir Sanford Fleming and George Burn gave \$25; Rev. W.T. Herridge, minister of St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church where Harper and Bessie Blair worshipped, \$20; Mrs. C.A.E. Harris, the wealthy socialite and wife of the British-born conductor and composer Charles Harris, \$20; the *Ottawa Journal* and *Citizen*, \$20; Harry S. Southam, \$10; Rev. Salem Bland, following what he preached, contributed \$3. Mackenzie King donated \$50.

With financing largely in place, King was appointed a member of a sub-committee to advise what kind of memorial should be erected. It moved on October 3, 1902 that “the Memorial should take the form of a figure symbolical of heroism and nobility of character, such for example as is suggested by the figure of Sir Galahad in the painting of that name by Sir Frederick Watt” and that “the choice of a model should be made as a result of public competition, unrestricted in any way.” The Citizens’ General Committee adopted these recommendations on December 11 and appointed King, Harry Burbidge and Warren Y. Soper to a sub-committee “to arrange for a competition to secure designs or models for the monument, to issue a circular letters to Sculptors for that purpose and to report to the General Committee.”⁶⁹⁵

Mackenzie King was the moving force behind the proposal that the Harper monument take the form of a Galahad figure. He had reported on E. Wyly Grier’s lecture on George Frederick Watts in the *Toronto Globe* in 1896 and visited Watts’ studio and saw his *Sir Galahad* painting at

⁶⁹⁴ “Mr. Harper’s Sacrifice—Methodist Ministers Pay Eloquent Tribute,” *Ottawa Citizen*, December 16, 1901, p. 2.

Eaton College in the winter of 1899.⁶⁹⁶ He had read Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* that had inspired Watts' painting aloud to his mother and sisters earlier that year and read "Lancelot and Elaine" and "The Holy Grail" aloud to Harper on January 5 and 6, 1901. He and Harper had moved to new shared living quarters in a house at 331 Somerset Street, hanging "what few pictures we have," on September 11, 1901. King would have been the only one to know, as he wrote of his roommate in *The Secret of Heroism*, that "Hanging on the wall above the desk in his study, and immediately before him whenever he sat down to work, was a carbon reproduction of Watts' painting. He had placed it there himself, and often, in speaking of it to others, had remarked, 'There is my ideal knight!'"⁶⁹⁷



George Frederick Watts' *Sir Galahad*.

Mackenzie King also already saw himself as a Galahad figure at the beginning of the 20th century. After reading chapters of Hamilton Wright Mabie's *Essays on Nature and Culture* and Carlyle's *Hero Worship*, he and Harper "had a beautiful talk together on devoting our lives to the work before us, taking holy orders upon ourselves to do this task as God's work."⁶⁹⁸ Following another discussion with Harper about their future work in the Department of Labour, he wrote in his diary, "I am seeking to make my life one of service to the cause of labour & my country,

⁶⁹⁵ October 3 and December 11, 1902 minutes. LAC reel C1956, pages C4636 and C4638.

⁶⁹⁶ Four decades later while passing Watts' monument in London, King recalled "my having visited Watts' studio in 1900 and of having written Watts about a monument to Harper shortly after his death. The present monument is the outcome of that communication, of the competition which followed in an endeavour to have the Sir Galahad type of monument reproduced."

⁶⁹⁷ *The Secret of Heroism*, 12.

⁶⁹⁸ Diary October 20, 1900.

believing in the former & having faith in the future of the latter. I feel that God is with the man who seeks only the right & I want to be fighting His cause of justice here below. Justice is the eternal law of the Universe & progress can only come as we come in accord with it.”⁶⁹⁹

King’s edition of the *Poetical Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, which he received as a birthday gift from his parents on December 17, 1900, is heavily marked, including the lines in “The Holy Grail:” “Galahad, when he heard of Merlin’s doom, / Cried, ‘If I lose myself, I save myself!’”⁷⁰⁰

The “Rules and Regulations Governing the Harper Memorial Competition and Award” circulated to potential sculptors in January of 1903 specified that “a suitable quotation from Tennyson’s Idylls, preferably Sir Galahad’s words, ‘If I lose myself, I save myself’: or other like addition, by way of improving the educational effect of the monument, would constitute a feature which the committee would specially welcome.”⁷⁰¹

King had already won the support of the Hon. Sydney Fisher, the Minister of Agriculture who also had responsibility for the federal archives and several other cultural matters, for his conception of the Harper monument. “He thought the suggestion of the ‘Sir Galahad’ as a statue or relief a good one and was inclined to favour it.”⁷⁰² Of the artists King commissioned or posed for from 1900 to 1950, 50% were non-Canadian. Rather than soliciting designs just from Canadian sculptors, the Harper monument design sub-committee decided on October 3, 1902 that

⁶⁹⁹ Diary January 6, 1901.

⁷⁰⁰ Alfred Lord Tennyson, *Poetical Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson* (London, New York: Macmillan, 1899), 421. Laurier House library call number FE.50.1098.1.

⁷⁰¹ “Rules and Regulations Governing the Harper Memorial Competition and Award.” LAC reel C1956, page C4684. The inscription engraved on the granite boulder that serves as the pedestal for the Galahad monument still visible today reads: “Galahad cried, ‘If I lose myself, I save myself!’ Tennyson, The Holy Grail.”

⁷⁰² Diary January 7, 1902. Fisher had supervised the exhibits of the Canadian pavilion at the 1900 Universal Exhibition in Paris and would continue to do so for subsequent exhibitions. He secured a new building for the federal archives in 1906. As acting minister of public works, he established the Advisory Arts Council in 1907 to advise the government regarding purchases for the National Gallery and other art matters. See Anne Drummond, “Fisher, Sydney Arthur,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=8134

the design for the memorial should be made through an unrestricted open public competition. According to Terry Guernsey, “King and the committee compiled extensive lists of both Canadian and American sculptors” but because they had only raised \$3,000 for the commission, just nine models were received in the public competition.⁷⁰³ On April 17, 1903, the design sub-committee unanimously accepted the model submitted by Ernest Wise Keyser (1876-1959), the American sculptor from Baltimore then working in his studio in Paris.”⁷⁰⁴

The commissioning contract and King’s dealings with Keyser anticipated how strictly King imposed his own artistic vision upon the artists he would work with in the future. In addition to mandating the Sir Galahad figure, the contract stipulated that Keyser was to create the Harper monument in United States standard bronze, ninety parts copper, seven parts zinc, and three parts tin, that it would be seven or more feet in height and that it rest “on a massive granite boulder about four feet in height.” A bronze plaque had to be provided on which the circumstances of Harper’s and Blair’s deaths could be inscribed. The July 10, 1903 contract indicated that the inscription on the granite pedestal should be the words “What else can I do?” or such other words as the Committee would determine. Keyser was required to execute the monument according to the winning model he submitted in the competition. In return, the sculptor would be paid \$3,000 in three \$1,000 installments: upon signing the contract; when the statue was finished in plaster and when the statue was in place in Ottawa. Keyser was responsible for all costs of erecting the monument, with a completion deadline of October 1, 1904, and had to provide a completion bond of \$3,000 guaranteeing that the work would be carried out.⁷⁰⁵

⁷⁰³ Terry G. Guernsey, *Statues of Parliament Hill: An Illustrated History* (Ottawa: National Capital Commission, 1986), 53. In its January 24, 1903 letter to sculptors, the design sub-committee conceded that “the fund at its disposal is not as large as the committee might desire to offer.” But it contended that the winning memorial “will be given one of the best available sites; and Ottawa being the Capital of the Dominion, the work of any sculptor is likely to receive a greater recognition during the present and future years, if exhibited here, than at almost any other city in Canada.”

⁷⁰⁴ Committee minutes, April 17, 1903. LAC reel C1956, page C4641.

⁷⁰⁵ July 10, 1903 contract with Ernest Wise Keyser, LAC reel C1956, pages C4679-83.



Keyser's winning 1903 model.

King had been appointed on April 24, 1903 to yet another sub-committee charged with suggesting a site for the memorial, securing the execution of the monument and paying the sculptor. His cultural *habitus* sprang into action when Ernest Wise Keyser, after intensely studying antique armour (perhaps in an attempt to create a more virile knight than his slightly fey original conception), tried to substitute a much larger, bulkier knight in place of his original winning design based on Watts' youthful *Sir Galahad* painting. King rejected this newer conception and "explained in a letter to the sculptor, the 'whole mythical conception' had been lost: instead of the figure of a 'lithe and graceful' young man, bearing only light armour (his 'real armour being his own pure character'), Galahad now appeared 'simply as an exhibition of so much armour,' with a conspicuous and heavy sword. The figure, King lamented, had come to suggest 'the warrior, rather than the knight.' In addition, the face had changed: from that of a calm and fearless youth to that of a man, which 'particularly about the forehead seems to convey a conception of agonized terror.'"⁷⁰⁶

King and the sub-committee insisted that Keyser maintain his original design and apparently threatened to cancel his commission. He subsequently moved the resolution, forwarded to the

sculptor, “That the Committee appointed to carry out the execution of the Harper Memorial have read with pleasure the letter of Mr. Ernest Wise Keyser of the 24th ult. in which Mr. Keyser states that he has decided to begin re-modelling the Harper Statue, with the view of complying with the wishes of the Committee in every particular.” While granting him a six month extension to complete his work, the committee also informed the artist that it reaffirmed “its decision to finally accept only such figure as complies in every particular with that agreed upon in its original contract with Mr. Keyser.”⁷⁰⁷



Keyser’s revised 1904 model.

After finishing the statue in plaster, the sculptor received his second \$1000 payment on July 18, 1905. King’s leading role in the creation of the Harper monument is again indicated by the site selected for the memorial. He opposed placing the statue in an isolated location such as Rockcliffe or Major’s Hill Park and unsuccessfully attempted to win government approval to place the monument on Parliament Hill itself as “a graceful recognition of the entire Civil Service.”⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰⁶ Guernsey, 53. Guernsey’s photo of this revised awkward model amply justifies King’s reaction.

⁷⁰⁷ Undated committee minutes, LAC reel C1956, page C4669.

⁷⁰⁸ Guernsey, 54.

After meeting in Mackenzie King's office on August 10, 1905, King and the committee secured the support of Mr. Ewart, the Chief Architect of the Department of Public Works, for a site for the monument on Wellington Street at the head of Metcalf Street, right at the entrance to Parliament Hill.⁷⁰⁹

King perceived the function of sculpture to be to immortalize great leaders and to inspire their people and nation. He had been in London in 1899 on the anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar, one of the major military engagements of the Napoleonic Wars, during which the French navy was destroyed and Admiral Nelson killed on October 21, 1805. He was moved by how Nelson's monument had been beautifully decorated, writing in his diary that "I went to look at it & as I walked out reading the different trophies etc. I could with difficulty suppress the feelings of emotion I experienced. . . One feels in England that there is a real national life in which all seem to share."⁷¹⁰

King hoped that Harper's monument would exalt similar heroism and inspire devotion in Canadians to public life. When Keyser's sculpture was unboxed in Ottawa in November of 1905, King's mind was "relieved beyond measure when I saw the figure—a wonderful piece of work—splendidly executed—a Sir Galahad every inch of it. For the first time since his death I felt that something had come which might keep dear old Bert's life and its purpose at work in other lives." After all his "endeavours to secure the head of Metcalfe St. as a site, and the opposition which has been encountered I was fearful lest it might not be all that we could wish and desire."⁷¹¹

Almost four years had passed from the time the Harper Memorial Fund Committee was established to the official unveiling of his monument on November 18, 1905. While the *Toronto Globe* announced the unveiling in a mere 17 lines and then summarized the whole presentation

⁷⁰⁹ Committee minutes, August 10, 1905, LAC reel C1956, page C4648.

⁷¹⁰ Diary October 21, 1899.

⁷¹¹ Diary November 4, 1905.

ceremony in another 43 lines,⁷¹² little public interest or community involvement in the dedication of the memorial had been lost in Ottawa in the interim. The *Citizen* republished Wilfred Campbell's tribute in eight stanzas, "Henry Albert Harper (Written at the time of his death)." In an accompanying editorial, the paper declared that "Campbell wrought in stately verse a noble tribute to the life sacrifice of the young Canadian hero. The poem, which is probably unsurpassed in grandeur by anything which even Campbell himself has since written, appeared originally in the *Citizen* and is reproduced as an appropriate contribution to the memorial offerings of the day."⁷¹³

For Campbell, Harper's sacrifice was all the more godlike because it was "so human in its simple worth." The last stanza of his poem published in the *Citizen* reads:

But he hath taught us by this splendid deed,
That under all this brutish mask of life,
And dulled intention of ignoble ends,
Man's soul is not all sordid; that behind
This tragedy of ills and hates that seem,
There lurks a godlike impulse in the world,
And men are greater than they idly dream.

When Campbell first sent the poem to King in January of 1902, he found his verse "most splendid" and approved of his depiction of Harper as a Christ figure.

It has given me infinite pleasure; Campbell has understood him and his action and the significance of it and has spoken of both in the language of the soul. There is great poetic genius in the poem and it bears all the impress of inspiration...

'And when Fate flung her challenge in his face
He took his whole spirit in his blinded eyes
And showed in action why God made the world.'

⁷¹² See "The Harper Monument" and "The H.A. Harper Monument Unveiled," *Toronto Globe*, November 18 and 20, 1905, p. 1 and p. 9.

⁷¹³ Untitled editorial accompanying Wilfred Campbell's poem "Henry Albert Harper," *Ottawa Citizen*, November 18, 1905.

This was Bert. It was what he longed to have an opportunity of doing and what he was sure to do when the opportunity came.⁷¹⁴



King second from left, Keyser fourth from left, Campbell sixth from left with Harper relatives, November 1905.

In the public's eyes, King had been closely identified with Harper since his death. The December 7, 1901 *Toronto Globe* had reported that he "has always been on the closest terms of intimacy with him. Mr. King is almost broken hearted at the tragic demise of his associate and friend."⁷¹⁵ King's leading role in the Harper memorial committee over the past four years was indicated by the *Ottawa Citizen* which reported on the day of the unveiling in 1905 that "Mr. Mackenzie King, as secretary of the committee, and the most intimate friend of the late Mr. Harper, will then formally present the monument, on behalf of the committee, to the government." The paper confidently predicted, "it is probable that the gathering ...will be one of the largest and most representative the city has known."⁷¹⁶

⁷¹⁴ Diary January 3, 1902. King recorded in his diary on February 3, 1902 that he paid "\$5 to Wilfrid [sic] Campbell, poet," in order to "cover cost of printing off poem about Bert." The two-page broadside was entitled "H.A. Harper."

⁷¹⁵ "Drowned in the Ottawa," *Toronto Globe*, December 7, 1901, p. 5.

⁷¹⁶ "The Unveiling—Ceremony in Connection With Harper Memorial—Will Be Impressive," *Ottawa Citizen*, Nov. 18, 1905.

At the unveiling, speakers recapitulated the various meanings—of racial superiority, divine intervention, Christian character and civic duty—that had been generated by Harper’s death four years previously. For P.D. Ross, chairman of the memorial committee, “Every fellow-Canadian of Henry Harper was honored by his death, and every man of the English-speaking race to which he belonged. It was an assurance that in this country is present the old manly virtue, the true steel of our forefathers. And far more than that it was one argument more that our human nature has in it inspiration and strength from a higher than earthly source.” Ross called on Mackenzie King, whom he identified as “one of the most self-sacrificing and valuable members of our committee and who was the closest friend Mr. Harper had,” to convey the monument to the charge of Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier and the Canadian government.⁷¹⁷

For King, Harper’s sacrifice “was a sublime expression of the hidden beauty of his own character. Galahad cried, ‘If I lose myself, I save myself!’ In the same spirit and with the same insight into truth, Harper sought to keep unbroken the vision of immortality which was his: to be faithful to an ideal of duty, which, by a seeming loss, he has made incarnate in our midst.”⁷¹⁸ King presented the Harper monument to Prime Minister Laurier on behalf of the memorial committee before a gathering of three thousand. Laurier declared that “the government of Canada looks upon its acceptance as an honour, and will consider it a labour of love to take care of it.” He lauded Harper’s “noble act of self-sacrifice,” affirmed that his “act of heroism will be an example and a lesson to us all,” and accepted the statue on behalf of the government as “a national monument in every sense of the word.” “Strangers visiting the city would inquire why the statue had been erected,” Laurier predicted, “and would be inspired by the recital of the heroic deeds of him whose memory it was designed to perpetuate while citizens would feel proud of their country which could produce such a hero and could so fittingly commemorate his noble deed.”⁷¹⁹

⁷¹⁷ “Statue Unveiled—Ceremony Performed by His Excellency and Monument Accepted by Premier,” *Ottawa Citizen*, November 20, 1905. *The Secret of Heroism*, 14-15.

⁷¹⁸ *Idem*.

⁷¹⁹ *Idem*. *The Secret of Heroism*, 15-16.

While P.D. Ross, King and Laurier declared that the Harper memorial signified ideals of civic duty and love of country and of one's fellow men and women, the new Governor General of Canada succeeding Lord Minto, Earl Grey, suggested the monument celebrated the heroic willingness of Canadians to sacrifice their life for the greater glory of the British Empire. Lord Grey had been a friend of the British imperialist and African mining magnate Cecil Rhodes and became a member of the board of directors of Rhodes' British South Africa Company. In 1896 he led troops to suppress the revolt of the indigenous Matabele people against the British South Africa Company. Thousands of Africans were mowed down in the First and Second Matabele War through the British use of the Maxim machine gun in what was then called Rhodesia (named after Rhodes). In 1899, Grey published a memoir of a relative, Hubert Hervey, who was killed in the Second Matabele War, *Hubert Hervey, Student and Imperialist*, (London: Arnold). At the unveiling of the Harper memorial in Ottawa, Grey lauded Harper as another exemplary combatant for the British Empire.

A few years ago I stood by the grave side of another young civil servant of the crown in the Matoppos of Rhodesia who, as he was carried to his last resting place mortally wounded said, 'Well it is a grand thing to die for the expansion of the empire,' that empire which in his mind as in that of Harper, was synonymous with the cause of righteousness. Harper and Hervey, had they known each other, would have been bosom friends—they both believed in their ideal. If they had lived they both would have done great things. They have both died, and how could they have died better, for their ideas will not die, no, neither in the Matoppos of Rhodesia, nor on the banks of the Ottawa, nor in any other portion of the British empire so long as we are loyal to their traditions and follow their example.⁷²⁰

⁷²⁰ "Statue Unveiled," *Ottawa Citizen*, Nov. 20, 1905. *The Secret of Heroism*, 17-18. Earl Grey's comparison between Harper and Hubert Hervey is not completely far-fetched. Six months before his death, Harper wrote a friend who had volunteered to fight in the Second Anglo-Boer War in South Africa. "The campaign on which you are now engaged is, perhaps, not receiving so much attention in the newspapers, as the startling announcements at the beginning of the war," Harper wrote, "but the service is none the less extremely valuable. The fireworks have been pretty well exhausted, and you are now paving the way for Anglo-Saxon civilization and the march of Empire in that quarter of the world. I am afraid that, as in India, it will be a tedious job, but the object is a worthy one, and opportunities for good fellows to show their worth will not be lacking." Harper to Sergt. Maj. Lionel L. Moore, S.A. Constabulary, Modderfontein, Transvaal, South Africa, July 9, 1901. Henry Albert Harper fonds, LAC, MG 30 A28, correspondence, vol. 1. In *The Secret of Heroism*, King cites Harper stating that the British Empire was "the great civilizing and evangelizing power of the world." "Kipling was a great imperialist, that of those



Dedication of the Harper monument, November 18, 1905.

The regimental band of the Governor General's Foot Guards played "The Maple Leaf" as he unveiled the monument. King mentioned that the sun came out at that moment, surely also a sign that God was smiling His approval on the proceedings. The playing of the national anthem concluded the ceremony.

Amid these different interpretations of Harper's *habitus* and the symbolism of his memorial, there were only a few published comments about the artistic quality of Keyser's monument. In his diary, King recorded inviting Marjorie Herridge, the wife of Rev. Herridge, with whom Harper and King had enjoyed a close friendship, to watch the placing of the bronze Galahad

who were urging forward the British Empire, he was one of the most enlightened, one of the most clear seeing; that his anxiety for the Empire's future was as much cosmopolitan as British, having faith in the Anglo-Saxon ideal." (70,71) In *The Private Capital*, Sandra Gwyn described Postmaster General William Mulock as "the most combative" member of Wilfrid Laurier's cabinet pressing Laurier to send Canadian troops to aid Britain in South Africa. See Gwyn, 331. Though he admired Earl Grey and was grateful for his assistance, King also had reservations about the Governor General. "The truth is that one of Earl Grey's purposes is to work up the Empire business for all it is worth," he recorded in his diary on December 19, 1904. "We Canadians must be on our guard. I fear there will be trouble over the matter yet. England's purpose to my mind is a purely selfish one and we will be fools unless we watch carefully our own interests. A nation like a man has to look out for itself."

figure onto its granite pedestal. “She was quite overcome with the beauty of the work & all it recalled. Wrote Keyser a long letter, congratulating & thanking him, also sent him a telegram.”⁷²¹ At the public unveiling, King stated that the sculptor had succeeded in incarnating Harper’s ideal of duty. “The committee believes that the sculptor, Mr. Keyser, has created a work of art, which in conception, does justice to this ideal, and which in execution, is worthy of the fine site it now occupies in the capital of this Dominion.”⁷²²



Harper as the ideal of public service.

Governor General Earl Grey also congratulated Keyser “on the skill with which this statue of Sir Galahad indicates those qualities of energy, fearlessness and service of which young Harper was the incarnation; and I hope this statue may be only the first of a set of noble companions which in the course of time will make this street the *Via Sacra* of the Capital.”⁷²³

The Secret of Heroism

⁷²¹ Diary November 4, 1905.

⁷²² “Statue Unveiled,” *Ottawa Citizen*, Nov. 20, 1905.

⁷²³ *Idem. The Secret of Heroism*, 17.

Because he was as yet only an unelected young civil servant, Mackenzie King at the beginning of the nineteenth hundreds still lacked the cultural and political authority to define exclusively the symbolism of the Harper monument. But he could impose his interpretation of Harper's sacrifice by publishing *The Secret of Heroism: A Memoir of Henry Albert Harper* in 1906. His publisher, Fleming H. Revell, released the slim 161-page book in New York, Chicago, Toronto, London and Edinburgh, ensuring extensive newspaper coverage in Canada, the U.S. and in Britain.

King's aim in writing his memoir was to reveal the generative origin of Harper's exemplary heroism so that it could create "sacred traditions" of Christian service for Canadians. Harper's secret was that he constantly maintained a spiritual ideal which gradually infused the activities of his daily life so that he was ready to sacrifice all when he received the ultimate call. Like the Sir Galahad sculpture, *The Secret of Heroism* was part of King's strategy to propagate his own ideals and to regulate the behaviour of Canadians by making Harper's self-sacrifice part of the Canadian national psyche. This was also Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier's appeal in a major address at a banquet of the University of Toronto Literary and Scientific Society on February 19, 1906. "The name of Albert Harper and the fame of Albert Harper will live in bronze forever," Laurier told the students, educators and government leaders at the end of his long speech, "but I believe they will more endure in the hearts of the Canadian people. (Cheers.)...in the life and death of Albert Harper...you have an example worthy of ambition by the pupils of Toronto University."⁷²⁴

In October 1904, King had read excerpts from his memoir to William Wilfred Campbell who "spoke very highly of it and offered to write an introduction."⁷²⁵ When he had first read Campbell's poem about Harper in 1902, King recorded in his diary that "Ottawa has reason to be

⁷²⁴ "Union Over the Whole Empire With Autonomy for Colonies—Sir Wilfrid Laurier's Loyal Words on Canada and Empire," *Toronto Globe*, February 20, 1906, p. 4. William Mulock had suggested to King that he present a copy of *The Secret of Heroism* to Laurier and to Laurier that he mention Harper during his speech at the University of Toronto. King recorded that "If Sir Wilfrid really wishes to have me in public life he will take a chance like this to shew his friendship." Diary February 5, 1906.

⁷²⁵ Diary October 30, 1904.

proud of such a poet in its midst. Some day the world will honour him as one of the great; meeting him in the daily round we are apt to overlook the genius in the man.”⁷²⁶ In view of the high esteem in which he held Campbell, the fact that King declined his offer to write the introduction to *The Secret of Heroism* is in itself significant. He did not want anyone, not even Campbell, to dilute his cultural authority in interpreting Harper’s sacrifice and the ideals evoked by his death.

Mackenzie King’s biographers, because they ignored his involvement in the arts and culture, have overlooked the significance of *The Secret of Heroism*. MacGregor Dawson, in his “political biography,” devoted a mere paragraph to the memoir, though he noted that “it displayed King’s literary talent at its best.”⁷²⁷ The ever critical C.P. Stacey countered that “this is probably true, though it is not saying a very great deal.” What Stacey and other biographers primarily objected to was that the memoir’s “worst feature is the fact that in printing Bert’s final letters King could not bring himself to omit passages praising William Lyon Mackenzie King.”⁷²⁸ H.S. Ferns and Bernard Ostry correctly observed that “There are two characters in *The Secret of Heroism*, the subject of the memoir and the author... King is identified with all that Harper said, thought and did; but always Mackenzie King is the leader of the two.”⁷²⁹

King’s memoir of Harper can in fact be read as an act of ventriloquism in which he espoused his own ideals and world vision generated by his *habitus* but expressed these through carefully selected excerpts from Harper’s diaries and correspondence. Stacey credited King for not publishing his own speech given at the unveiling of the Harper monument. But he failed to observe the other, often awkward, devices he employed to disguise his own personae in *The Secret of Heroism*. King referred to himself in the third person as in “Harper and his friend had lodgings in common;” “Harper and his friend, the deputy minister of the department;” “The

⁷²⁶ Diary January 3, 1902.

⁷²⁷ Dawson, 131.

⁷²⁸ C.P. Stacey, *A Very Double Life: The Private World of Mackenzie King* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1976), 83, 83-84. Allan Levine, *King: William Lyon Mackenzie King—A Life Guided by the Hand of Destiny* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2011), 62.

following extracts from letters to the one with whom he was associated;” and “his last letters to his closest friend...the one to whom they were written was in British Columbia.”⁷³⁰

In another masking device, he referenced Harper’s avowals of love for King but was silent about his feelings for Harper. In his own diary, King had recorded his first dream of Bert a month after he drowned, his “impulsiveness in his affection & love for me.”⁷³¹ He concluded *The Secret of Heroism* with extracts from two letters written by Harper to “My Dear Rex” a month before his death. Harper freely acknowledged that “I...miss you more than I care to confess...I miss you very much in the office, but still more out of it. Indeed when you are away, I realize how much we are together.” He closed his November 10 and 13, 1901 letters to King “With best wishes and much love, Affectionately yours, Bert,” not the conventional salutation from a Canadian Acting Deputy Minister to his superior.⁷³² C.P. Stacey inferred, “Would King have published this letter if the relationship had been anything but ‘innocent’?”⁷³³ King could not speak freely about his personal feelings for Harper even in his diaries and correspondence. When he replied to Harper’s letters from British Columbia on November 18, 1901, he could only affirm that “Your long personal letter, which I read last night after returning from Nelson, was a great joy to me, and I can assure you that all the feelings expressed therein are but the counterpart of my own, which are very real to me.”⁷³⁴ If Harper is indeed the ventriloquist’s dummy to King’s puppet master in *The Secret of Heroism*, Harper’s avowals of love could also be read here as King’s own unspoken pained confession, “I love you, too, Bert.”⁷³⁵

⁷²⁹ H.S. Ferns and Bernard Ostry, 92, 93.

⁷³⁰ *The Secret of Heroism*, 68, 49, 121, 150.

⁷³¹ Diary January 11, 1902.

⁷³² *The Secret of Heroism*, 152, 154, 155, 160.

⁷³³ Stacey, 81.

⁷³⁴ Correspondence, Henry Albert Harper fonds, LAC, MG 30 A28, Vol. 1. When he began editing Harper’s diary for publication in 1902, King remarked that “The dear boy has many words of love in [it] for me. May I deserve them, I do not now.” Diary March 4, 1902.

⁷³⁵ The ventriloquism is most apparent in King ascribing to Harper the reading of Carlyle, Arnold, Tennyson and other authors remarked upon by English reviewers of *The Secret of Heroism*. At the time of its publication, he recorded without comment his conversation with Mr. Brierly of the *Montreal Herald*, for which Harper had been the Ottawa correspondent, that “Bert Harper had not been a success as an editor; he was not well enough read & informed. He spoke

Bruce Hutchison perceived Henry Albert Harper as King's "alter ego."⁷³⁶ In his November 10 letter, Harper himself acknowledged King's preponderant influence in his life. "Rex, I need not assure you that I am constantly with you in thought. Your life has grown into mine to such an extent that your hopes and aspirations are mine as well."⁷³⁷ King's sleight of hand, his act of ventriloquism, consisted in ascribing the cultural influences that had shaped him and his own ideals onto Harper and endowing them with heroic stature through Harper's tragic death.⁷³⁸ As King himself wrote to B.K. Sandwell, founding editor of the *Canadian Bookman*, just after he had been elected leader of the Liberal Party in 1919, his motive in writing *The Secret of Heroism* had been to serve as an inspiration to younger men. "It is perhaps as much an expression of my own convictions on some of the fundamental things of life as it is of Harper's character and aims."⁷³⁹

in the highest terms of his personality, purpose and abilities otherwise." Diary January 9, 1906. For a discussion of King's and Harper's reading, see Margaret Elizabeth Bedore, "The Reading of Mackenzie King." Ph.D. thesis, Queen's University, 2008.

⁷³⁶ Hutchison, 23.

⁷³⁷ *The Secret of Heroism*, 154.

⁷³⁸ For his sleight of hand, King may have recalled "one of the best variety shows I have ever seen, good conjuring," at the Egyptian Hall in London in 1900. "The 'box' trick is the most wonderful trick I have ever seen; people put into a box & disappear, though all sides of box can be seen, & one box put into another with persons inside & he appears outside of both." Diary January 22, 1900.

⁷³⁹ King to B.K. Sandwell, August 22, 1919, cited in George F. Henderson, *W. L. Mackenzie King: A Bibliography and Research Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 8. King had republished *The Secret of Heroism* with the Ontario Pub. Co. in Toronto, probably in time for the 1919 Liberal Party leadership race. He not only appropriated Harper's voice but also his copyright on the extracts from his letters and diaries published in the memoir. In his December 6, 1905 contract with Fleming H. Revell, he guaranteed that "he is the sole author and proprietor of said work" and further guaranteed that "the said work is in no way whatever a violation of any copyright belonging to any other party." The contract provided King with a sales royalty of 10% of the \$1 sales price of the memoir, provided that sales exceeded three thousand copies. "Memorandum of Agreement," LAC reel C1979, page C34008A. Revell published a second edition in 1906 and returned the electrotypes for the memoir to King only in 1917 when it proved that, as per the original contract, "the demand for such work should not...be sufficient to render its publication profitable."

The characteristics of King's religious and cultural *habiti* which he elevated to the level of the ideal have been discussed in previous chapters so need only to be reviewed briefly here: the persistent search for Arnoldian perfection; familiarization "with the best thought of the strongest minds" of authors such as Carlyle, Arnold, Emerson, Tennyson and Hamilton Wright Mabie; duty to and reverence of one's parents; control of one's passions; "cleanliness" ("it behooves every man who would be of lasting service to his country to see that he, too, is clean"); and, citing Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God ."⁷⁴⁰

The bedrock of King's life philosophy and world-view he propounded in *The Secret of Heroism* was provided by his Christian convictions: there is "a divine order and purpose in the universe;" a moral order also existed in this world ("Harmony with this order meant happiness, want of harmony, whether by the individual or the state, unhappiness.") We can be reunited with our departed loved ones with God and find the "greatest happiness" in the Kingdom of Heaven. Man's "sonship under God" consisted in following "the perfect life of Christ."

Harper came soon to believe the words:

'Ego sum via, veritas, vita,

Sine via non itur, sine veritate non

Cognoscitur, sine vita non vivitur'

['I am the way, the truth, and the life:

no man cometh unto the Father,

but by me' (John 14:6)]

They came to be the controlling power in his life."⁷⁴¹

This unshakeable "controlling power" was also King's religious *habitus*, which he sought to propagate in public works of art. When he received his first two author's copies of *The Secret of Heroism* and walked past the Harper monument, "with the sun shining on it," in January of 1906, "a wave of mingled sadness & joy, each intense and inseparably blended, swept over me and I

⁷⁴⁰ *The Secret of Heroism*, 67, 159, 93.

⁷⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 79, 107, 27-29, 121, 144.

seemed to have one real word with dear old Bert. It was all intended, I cannot get away from that. It was so destined, and the Will of God is evident in it all—our two lives.”⁷⁴²

The Public Reception of *The Secret of Heroism*

Mackenzie King’s archival papers contain publication notices and brief excerpts from reviews of his memoir published in fourteen Canadian, nine American and five British papers. In 1906, Fleming H. Revell published these excerpts, the quote from Prime Minister Laurier’s address to students at the University of Toronto, as well as an appreciation by the Rev. Charles W. Gordon (the novelist Ralph Connor) in a 15-page pamphlet entitled *Some Appreciative Reviews of ‘The Secret of Heroism,’ A Memoir of Henry Albert Harper by Mr. W.L. Mackenzie King, C.M.G.* These contemporary reviews were uniformly positive, refuting Louise Reynolds’ negative assumption that “the book’s public reception at that time was probably similar to opinions expressed by writers at a later date.”⁷⁴³

The reception by American publications largely followed along the lines of the January 9, 1906 Revell press release which stated that King’s memoir was intended as “an inspiration to young manhood everywhere.”⁷⁴⁴ While five out of nine American reviews and notices appeared in

⁷⁴² Diary January 17, 1906. I am not sure how to interpret the concluding words of King’s entry for the day—in the absence of a previous reference to invitations or other social engagements—“Was much tempted to go out tonight.”

⁷⁴³ Louise Reynolds, *Mackenzie King: Friends & Lovers* (Victoria: Trafford Publishing, 2005), 44. See Fleming H. Revell Company, *Some Appreciative Reviews of ‘The Secret of Heroism,’ A Memoir of Henry Albert Harper by Mr. W.L. Mackenzie King, C.M.G.* (New York, Toronto: F. H. Revell, [1906?]). According to Margaret Elizabeth Bedore, Fleming H. Revell was “the most significant publisher of evangelical books in North America.” It had published several of Ralph Connor’s novels. See Bedore, 15.

⁷⁴⁴ January 9, 1906 “Special Advance Information From Publishing Dept. of Fleming H. Revell Company.” LAC reel C1979, page C34094. American publications included the April 6 *Baptist Commonwealth* (Philadelphia), April 11 *Herald and Presbyter* (Cincinnati), the April 14 *Boston Herald*, the April 11 *Christian Observer* (Louisville), the April 20 *United Presbyterian* (Pittsburgh), the May 1906 *Record of Christian Work*, the March 31 *Literary Digest* (New York), the March 30 *Minneapolis Journal*, and the March 25 *San Francisco Chronicle*, LAC reel

religious publications, twelve out of fourteen Canadian reviews appeared in the secular press, attesting to the greater political, cultural and literary relevance and appeal of *The Secret of Heroism* in Canada.

Ralph Connor praised the “admirable reserve” with which King had written Harper’s memoir. “This book will make any man better for reading it, and Mr. Mackenzie King has done all young Canadians a good service in contributing this book to our Canadian literature.” Connor found the account of the death of Harper’s father and mother “one of singular pathos and beauty.”⁷⁴⁵ The reviewer for the *Ottawa Journal* agreed that “Mr. King, whose friendship with Mr. Harper was life-long, and if we are to judge from this work, of a rare and beautiful intimacy, develops a literary finish in writing which adds a charm to the book.”⁷⁴⁶

As in the U.S., the preponderant emphasis of the Canadian reviews concentrated on the inspirational intent of *The Secret of Heroism* and its focus on the development of individual character. The *Hamilton Times* praised King for his “real character etching.” “It would be well for all students to peruse Mr. King’s story with its perfect ideas of the proper uses of literature and life...Mr. King’s work will live while nobility of soul appeals to those who read.”⁷⁴⁷ The *Toronto Mail and Empire* lauded Harper for his “endless preparation for something greater to come, and underneath all this struggle for attainment he realised that the foundation lay in greatness of character.”⁷⁴⁸ The *Toronto Globe* was certain that “the youth of Canada should find in this fragmentary representation of Harper’s thoughts and ideals the inspiration to lofty performance and high achievement.”⁷⁴⁹

C1979, pages C4028-34 and C34057-59. Dates of publication are omitted in *Some Appreciative Reviews*.

⁷⁴⁵ “Rev. Charles W. Gordon, D.D. (Ralph Connor)” in *Some Appreciative Reviews*, p. 3. LAC reel C1979, page C34041.

⁷⁴⁶ *Ottawa Journal*, February 26, 1906, reel C1979, page C34048.

⁷⁴⁷ *Hamilton Times*, April 30, 1906, reel C1979, page C34042.

⁷⁴⁸ *Toronto Mail and Empire*, March 17, 1906, reel C1979, page C34043.

⁷⁴⁹ *Toronto Globe*, March 10, 1906, reel C1979, page C34056.

Several reviewers made the point that the aim of *The Secret of Heroism* was not only to inspire but also to change Canadians. According to the *Montreal Witness*, “The biography is one which should be placed in the hands of every young Canadian...In innumerable cases it might well be a startling antidote to the sordid and flippant views which too greatly prevail in all of our communities.”⁷⁵⁰ The ever acerbic Goldwin Smith perceived the value of King’s memoir as an antidote to the political corruption of the day. “Heaven send us more Sir Galahads!” he wrote in the *Weekly Sun*. “In this era of party machines, salary grabs and plumbing combines, we sorely need them.”⁷⁵¹

The *Toronto Star* was one of the few papers which emphasized that the ideals and values King was propagating were not only Harper’s but also his own. “In paying this tribute to the dead Mr. King has gathered quite unconsciously some laurels for himself as an earnest teacher of great truths,” the *Star* reviewer stated. “Mr. King has edited Mr. Harper’s diary with rare discretion, and has given us such passages as indicate the character and life purposes of its writer. The biographer’s moral reflections are quite as valuable as any which appear in the diary.”⁷⁵²

In his contract with Revell, King agreed to waive royalties on the first one hundred copies of the memoir exported to Great Britain, “sharing to this extent the expensive and oftentimes unsuccessful effort to introduce an American book into a foreign market.”⁷⁵³ What neither King nor Revell anticipated was the intervention of Governor General Lord Grey who once again used his social capital on behalf of King with astonishing effectiveness. King had received an “exceptionally gracious letter” from the Governor General congratulating him on the publication of *The Secret of Heroism* on February 5. Later the same day “Earl Grey spoke of my book & said he would

⁷⁵⁰ *Montreal Witness*, March 31, 1906, reel C1979, page C34050.

⁷⁵¹ “Goldwin Smith, in the *Weekly Sun*” in *Some Appreciative Reviews*, p. 10. LAC reel C1979, page C34011.

⁷⁵² *Toronto Star*, March 3, 1906, reel C1979, page C34072. Other Canadian publications included the March 3 *Toronto News*, the April 25 *Toronto World*, the February 17 *Ottawa Free Press*, the March 17 *Montreal Herald*, the March 16 *Westminster* (Toronto), the March *Ontario Churchman* (Kingston), and the March 5 *Saturday Night*, reel C1979, pages C34044-45, C34049, and C34051- 54.

send copies with letters for favourable reviews to London Times, Spectator, Outlook & one to Carnegie, asking him to get out an edition for his libraries.”⁷⁵⁴

Revell had released *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Campbell* the same week as King’s memoir and boasted about the former that “The present volume has appealed so much to Andrew Carnegie, that he has purchased a special edition for distribution to hundreds of libraries that he has established.”⁷⁵⁵ Carnegie responded to Earl Grey on February 16, 1906: “I shall read Mr. King’s book with interest. It seems to be just the kind needed. You know my Hero Fund is for those who serve or save, not kill or maim their fellows, and applies to Canada as well as this country.” After having read *The Secret of Heroism*, he wrote Grey again on February 21: “Harper was my type of hero, not one who maimed or killed his fellows, but served or saved them. I will confer with you in regard to circulating the life, and quite agree with you as to its value.”⁷⁵⁶

Earl Grey had forwarded review copies of Campbell’s *Collected Poems* and *The Secret of Heroism* to John Alfred Spender, the editor of the *Westminster Gazette*, the influential Liberal evening newspaper in London. Spender wrote Grey on February 26, stating of King’s memoir that “it will be a pleasure to notice it in the Westminster Gazette. I am particularly struck by the freshness and simplicity of it. One sees in looking at the young man’s reading how good literature to which the people at home have got rather blasé renews its life and influence in a new country.”⁷⁵⁷ The subsequent *Westminster Gazette* review struck the tone that would be followed by other publications at the centre of the British Empire. “Apart from the deed which it commemorates this little volume is of great interest to some of us in the Old Country,” the

⁷⁵³ December 6, 1905 “Memorandum of Agreement,” LAC reel C1979, page [C34008B].

⁷⁵⁴ Diary February 5, 1906.

⁷⁵⁵ January 9, 1906 “Special Advance Information From Publishing Dept. of Fleming H. Revell Company.” Surprisingly, the Revell press release also announced that “Mr. Campbell’s poetical tragedies and dramas will appear in a companion volume to be published later.” Campbell’s *Poetical Tragedies* was published in Toronto by Briggs in 1908.

⁷⁵⁶ “Extracts from letters of Andrew Carnegie to Earl Grey.” LAC reel C1979, page C34020.

⁷⁵⁷ “Extract from letter of Mr. J.H. Spender, editor of the Westminster Gazette, to Earl Grey, dated Feb. 26, 1906.” LAC reel C1979, page C34016.

reviewer stated. “We may look with confidence to young men of this stamp to show the Empire an example of public service and disinterested citizenship.”⁷⁵⁸

John St. Loe Strachey, the editor, proprietor and literary critic of the equally influential London *Spectator*, wrote the Governor General on February 23. Strachey “was delighted to get the Memoir and your recommendation of it because I am always on the look out for any striking books written in the Colonies...The Memoir shall certainly have a short review, and if I can manage it, a long one. I have already placed it in the hands of one of my best reviewers who is thoroughly sympathetic.”⁷⁵⁹ According to this *Spectator* reviewer, “Our ideals are apt to become mere toys of the intellect or imagination with no real bearing upon character...but in the younger nations where life is simpler and horizons are wider it may be that they have more of their ancient power. If Canada has many young men of the stamp of the subject of this memoir, then indeed is the greatness of her destiny assured.”⁷⁶⁰

The London *Times* similarly suggested that “If it is true that the idealism of the time when Carlyle preached his gospel of work finds little echo among the younger generation of to-day, if it be true that its interests are frivolous and its aims material, there can be no better corrective than the call of this stirring serious voice from the new world.”⁷⁶¹ The London *Standard* reviewer wanted to see *The Secret of Heroism* “placed within the reach of every lad and young man in England, and in the library of every school in the Empire.” Harper’s sacrifice demonstrated “to the world that the Dominion is producing a fine race of men as well as a record of wonderful material development.”⁷⁶²

The most perceptive of the British reviews was written by Violet Markham who reviewed both Campbell’s *Collected Poems* and *The Secret of Heroism* in the London *Outlook* under the title,

⁷⁵⁸ *Westminster Gazette*, March 3, 1906, LAC reel C1979, pages C34085-87.

⁷⁵⁹ “Extract from letter of J. St. Ive [sic] Strachey of The *Spectator*...to Lord Grey, dated February 23, 1906.” LAC reel C1979, page C34019.

⁷⁶⁰ *The Spectator*, March 31, 1906, LAC reel C1979, pages C34035-36.

⁷⁶¹ *London Times*, March 9, 1906, LAC reel C1979, page C34039.

“Two Canadian Idealists.” According to Markham, the two works “reveal the existence of a deep and healthy idealism animating the thoughtful side of Canadian life and character.” Like Goldwin Smith, she suggested that “So long as Canada can number such knights among her sons, the devastating dragons of ‘boodle’ and ‘graft’ will hardly lay waste her lands unchecked and uncombated [sic].” And like the other English reviewers, she saw a role for the colonies in holding up for Great Britain her original ideals. “That England herself may remain true to the vision she inspires among her sons overseas is the ultimate reflection which springs from the study of these two Canadian volumes.”

What makes Markham’s long review more profound is her analysis of the political implications of King’s preponderant emphasis on individual ideals and character. She noted that, “Throughout Mr. Mackenzie King’s book we are frequently reminded of Lord Milner’s biography of Arnold Toynbee [Viscount Alfred Milner, *Arnold Toynbee: A Reminiscence* (London: Edward Arnold, 1901)]. The points of comparison between the two men were in many respects striking. Their outlook, sociological and spiritual, was practically identical. To Harper, as to Toynbee, in Lord Milner’s words, ‘the end of all social organization, of all material development, was the higher life of the individual.’”⁷⁶³

King had been greatly influenced by the English economist, social reformer and champion of the poor and working class during his university studies. He had taken courses on economics with Professor William James Ashley, a disciple of Toynbee’s, as a freshman at the University of Toronto in 1891-92 and as a graduate student at Harvard in 1897-99.⁷⁶⁴ King studied Toynbee’s *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution of the 18th Century in England* in 1894 and recorded in his diary that he “was simply enraptured by his writings and believe I have at last found a model for

⁷⁶² London *Standard*, February 27, 1906, LAC reel C1979, page C34017.

⁷⁶³ Violet R. Markham, “Two Canadian Idealists,” London *Outlook* 17:426 (March 31, 1906), 450. LAC reel C1979, page C34023.

⁷⁶⁴ Paul Craven, *‘An Impartial Umpire’: Industrial Relations and the Canadian State, 1900 - 1911* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 39. Dawson, 45-47.

my future work in life.”⁷⁶⁵ Forty-five years later, he still recalled “how, when I had read his Industrial Revolution, I was so overcome with emotion at finding my ideal of a man and the purpose of life in the kind of work which he had set for himself, that I recall kneeling down and praying very earnestly that I might be like him.”⁷⁶⁶

Mackenzie King and Harper read Toynbee out loud in 1895, King read F.C. Montague’s *Arnold Toynbee* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1889) the following year and in 1898 King resolved to write a biography of Toynbee and wrote Harper that he intended to dedicate the book to him.⁷⁶⁷ Toynbee died from overwork at the age of 30 in 1883 so it was left to his followers and admirers to implement his proposal to have upper and middle class students live among the poor to provide education and social aid. Toynbee Hall, founded in Whitechapel in the East End of London in 1884, inspired Jane Addams’ Hull House where King resided in the autumn of 1896 while attending the University of Chicago and the Passmore Edwards Settlement where he resided in London during his Harvard travelling scholarship in the winter of 1899.

R. MacGregor Dawson noted that in 1896 “over 2,000 were being helped weekly by Hull House through its creche, kindergarten, library, studio, lectures, clubs for all ages and groups, and many other forms of social service.”⁷⁶⁸ Significantly, King saw for himself and wrote about the many art education activities he witnessed at Hull House in his detailed January 1897 *Toronto Globe* article, “In Chicago Slums.” He referred to Hull House’s free reading room and library, its lecture hall, art gallery and studio and art exhibitions, a playground for “songs and May dances in the open space,” dramatic entertainments, gymnastic exhibitions, and art and music studios in its children’s wing.

The most popular and continuous courses have been in literature, languages, music, art, history, mathematics and drawing....From the first the residents were of the belief that any compromise in the matter of excellence in art was a mistake. They hung their own walls

⁷⁶⁵ Diary April 26 and July 11, 1894.

⁷⁶⁶ Diary December 2, 1939.

⁷⁶⁷ Diary September 7, 1895, December 2, 1896 and May 6, 8 and 15, 1898.

⁷⁶⁸ Dawson, 55.

only with such pictures as they felt were helpful to the mind and soul, and as a result it is believed that much of the influence of the house has been due to the message these pictures have silently brought...The nursery is like others in most respects, differing chiefly perhaps in the attention paid to the matter of pictures and casts. The Madonnas of Raphael, in the best and largest photographs, are hung low that the children may see them, as well as casts from Donatello and Della Robbia. The children talk in a familiar way to the babies on the wall and sometimes climb upon the chairs to kiss them...

In addition to the inspirational influence of paintings and sculptures on children and adults, King also highlighted the beneficial effects of music and singing on ordinary Chicago labourers. “The training of a chorus of 500 working people was undertaken by the director of the World’s Fair choruses, and it is doubtful whether anywhere will be found better material in the way of talent. The work has been continued from the conviction that working people especially need the musical form of expression...On Sunday afternoons a free concert is given in the gymnasium. The program is composed entirely of selections from the great masters of music, a striking contrast to the cheap order of Sunday concerts and theatres in different parts of the city.”

King concluded his signed *Globe* article by stating that “What Hull House has really done towards assisting in the movement for a fuller enjoyment of life among the less fortunate classes would be difficult to estimate...by a noble example it has afforded a stimulus for higher citizenship and a more sacred regard for public and private duties.”⁷⁶⁹ Settlement houses were usually financed through donations from wealthy upper class donors. Half a century later—though he clearly had valued the art education activities at Hull House—King would reject the proposal by Canadian artists in the early 1940s for a series of similar government-subsidized arts and community centres across Canada.

While King quickly realized in Chicago and London that he did not want to devote the rest of his life to onerous social work, he never abandoned his admiration for Toynbee or his educational ideals. In 1906 he developed a friendship with Toynbee’s sister Gertrude who gave him one of

⁷⁶⁹ W.L. Mackenzie King, “In Chicago Slums. The Work of Hull House Among the Poor—Much Educational Work Being Done—Art Exhibitions and Musical Entertainments,” *Toronto Globe*, January 16, 1897, p. 9.

her paintings and with whom, after purchasing “some camera films,” he visited Toynbee’s grave, the Parish Church and various residences of the Toynbee family in Wimbledon.⁷⁷⁰

In her 1956 memoir *Friendship’s Harvest*, Violet Markham recalled that what drew her and King together after they were introduced by Governor General Lord Grey at Government House in October of 1905 was that “Rex and I were both radicals, filled with dreams for the regeneration of mankind. We saw in the new British government a powerful influence in the field of social reform which might turn some of these dreams into reality.”⁷⁷¹ But in her March 1906 review of *The Secret of Heroism*, Markham pointed out that—speaking through Harper—King’s emphasis on individual ideals and character development militated against government intervention to regulate or improve the lives of individuals.

Utterly indifferent to form and dogma, but moved at the bases of the soul by profound religious conviction, in Harper and Toynbee alike the service of God found expression in the service and love of man. Hence their mutual preoccupation with the problems presented by modern industrial conditions. Each rejected as shallow the petty panaceas which seek social amelioration by political systems rather than by the development of individual character, and this without any disparagement as regards the influence and usefulness of the State.

The State is bound to remedy obvious injustice, to protect the weak, insure fair play, and ‘to get after the mean man.’ But in the spread of a true ideal of citizenship and the sense of individual responsibility lay the real solutions of social problems to Harper and Toynbee alike. Life as a divine trust, the universe as a moral order, was their ultimate philosophy of existence.⁷⁷²

Mackenzie King’s rejection of the demands by Canadian artists for government support of arts and culture must therefore be seen as part of his wider ideological conviction that the state should only intervene in society when absolutely necessary. H.S. Ferns and Bernard Ostry came to the same conclusion in their analysis of King’s *Industry and Humanity*, which, like *The Secret of Heroism*, also served as a credo and manifesto of his beliefs. That 1918 publication, Ferns and Ostry wrote, “reveals very clearly why Mackenzie King was never a reformer of institutions.

⁷⁷⁰ Diary September 29 and October 20, 1906.

⁷⁷¹ Violet Markham, *Friendship’s Harvest* (London: Max Reinhardt, 1956), 152.

⁷⁷² Violet R. Markham, “Two Canadian Idealists,” 450-51. LAC reel C1979, pages C34023-24.

Although he held power longer than any previous parliamentary Prime Minister, and in spite of a reputation as a man interested in and capable of social and industrial reform, his record is nearly barren of significant institutional changes.” The two authors suggested that “Mackenzie King’s policies could have been accurately predicted by a careful reader of *Industry and Humanity*; for he revealed there that he shared none of the traditional beliefs of liberals and socialists in the efficiency of institutional change to secure human well-being.”⁷⁷³

Bert Harper as a *Daemon*

King’s biographers have not fully appreciated the importance Bert Harper played in King’s life for half a century after his premature death. Because of his belief that life was indestructible and in the continuity of personality with God in the afterlife, King initially did not grieve after Harper’s drowning. “Though it may seem strange to other ears, I feel the loss but little, so much do I feel the gain,” he wrote his parents on December 15, 1901. “There is truly unspeakable joy in my heart, and only when it springs from a selfish thought or impulse, a tinge of pain.”⁷⁷⁴ One can almost hear a note of envy in a diary entry two weeks later that Harper—unlike King—could so quickly attain his ideals and life purpose and be united with God. “I am left because God has not yet had from me the fulfillment of purpose for which I was created. God’s purpose was plain in his life, it was wrought out and achieved. It was his to do in an act, what has been left to me for a life—to sacrifice all for the life of my fellowmen.”⁷⁷⁵

For King, Harper was a constant reminder of high shared ideals, ideals difficult to achieve in the impure world of politics. Before giving his maiden speech in Parliament on December 6, 1909, he placed ten white roses on the base of the Harper monument. “It was beautiful to leave it there

⁷⁷³ *The Age of Mackenzie King: The Rise of the Leader*, 253.

⁷⁷⁴ Cited in Dawson, 130. When he visited Mrs. Blair and Bessie’s sisters to comfort them, he read them Harper’s last two letters to King. “I could feel that they shared in part my joy that two such pure and beautiful souls should wing their flight together unto God.” He also noted that “Mr. Blair has gone away for his health. It is a want of full belief in God and His purpose which helps to destroy us at such times as these.” Diary January 5, 1902.

⁷⁷⁵ Diary January 1, 1902.

to look at when I came out. It was in thinking before the debate that I was alone—no single soul to really share a discussion sympathetically with, or to share a supreme hour of one’s life with—that I was suddenly reminded it was the anniversary of Bert’s death, and I knew that the loss was irreparable.”⁷⁷⁶

The Secret of Heroism kept Harper’s and King’s credo alive as a reminder of his ideals and ideal self. He felt wounded in 1911 when Miss Fowler, a possible marriage prospect in New York, failed to read his memoir which he had presented to her.⁷⁷⁷ When he began working as a labour consultant for the Rockefeller Foundation in 1914, he sent John D. Rockefeller Jr. a copy of *The Secret of Heroism*, suggesting he could collaborate with Rockefeller as Harper had collaborated with him. He emphasized “what it means to have the consciousness of another life sharing a like ideal and cooperating towards the realization of it. The letters printed there were written thirteen years ago. Harper and I were beginning then our work for this Dominion. There is so much of similarity in certain aspects of this larger work we have entered upon...that it all seems like a new beginning of one vast endeavour.”⁷⁷⁸

MacGregor Dawson suggested that after the first publication of the memoir in 1906, “King undoubtedly did much in subsequent years to cultivate what may be called the Harper legend.”⁷⁷⁹ He arranged for the publication of two editions of *The Secret of Heroism* as late as 1919, one by the Ontario Publishing Company probably before his election as Leader of the Liberal Party, and the Thomas Allen edition afterwards. Following lunch with Allen at the Rideau Club he recorded, “I am sure the book will have a good sale at the present time. My position as Liberal Leader will cause it to attract attention & it will do good at this juncture in helping to mould the ideals of our young men.”⁷⁸⁰ King’s credo as expressed in *The Secret of Heroism* had not altered

⁷⁷⁶ Diary December 6, 1909.

⁷⁷⁷ Diary February 4, 1911. C.P. Stacey conjectured that she was a daughter of Thomas Powell Fowler, a railroad president. See Stacey, 106-8.

⁷⁷⁸ Cited in Reynolds, 144.

⁷⁷⁹ Dawson, 130.

⁷⁸⁰ Diary October 9, 1919. King suggested a sales price of \$1.25. Allen promised a sales royalty of 10% and sold copies at \$2.50. Thomas Allen had already published King’s *Industry and*

during the thirteen years since the first edition. In his October 20, 1919 introduction, he stated that the book had been republished “without change in any particular.” “It is a pleasure, however, to add that intervening years have served to strengthen belief in the views expressed, and to reveal the enduring worth of cherished ideals.”⁷⁸¹ He again evoked Sir Galahad’s lines from Tennyson’s “The Holy Grail” in his Diamond Jubilee of Confederation Celebration address on Parliament Hill, July 1, 1927. “A nation, like an individual, to find itself must lose itself in the service of others.”⁷⁸²

Paul Craven in turn suggested that “King had a rather Galahad-like conception of the role of the reformer...drawn out particularly in his association with that Galahad *aere perennius* [more lasting than bronze], Albert Harper.”⁷⁸³ But Harper was much more than a legend or bronze monument for King. He became such a powerful mental, emotional and psychic construct that he became one of several of King’s *daemones*.⁷⁸⁴ King became conscious of Bert Harper’s continued existence as a guide within weeks of his death. After supper at the Blairs during which he read from Harper’s journal and “left them all in tears,” he noted in his diary that “Bert’s

Humanity in Canada the year before. King reported that “3,000 copies have already been sold in Canada & over 2,000 in the U.S.”

⁷⁸¹ W.L. Mackenzie King, *The Secret of Heroism: A Memoir of Henry Albert Harper* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1919), 8.

⁷⁸² W.L. Mackenzie King, “Canada” in his *The Message of the Carillon and Other Addresses* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1927), 23.

⁷⁸³ Craven, 63.

⁷⁸⁴ I am borrowing the term *daemon*, a spirit or divine power, from classical mythology. In Plato’s *Symposium*, Socrates explains the term during the drinking feast in honour of Dionysus celebrating the victory of the tragic poet Agathon in the dramatic festival of 416 BC. The seer Diotima, Socrates informs Agathon, taught him that a *daemon* is a spirit who interprets between gods and men, “conveying and taking across to the gods the prayers and sacrifices of men, and to men the commands and replies of the gods; he is the mediator who spans the chasm which divides them, and therefore in him all is bound together, and through him the arts of the prophet and the priest, their sacrifices and mysteries and charms, and all prophecy and incantation, find their way.” See *The Symposium of Plato*. Suzy Q. Groden, trans. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1970), 82. The discussion about the *daemon* occurs at line 202e of Plato’s text. See also Plato, *The Symposium and The Phaedrus*, William S. Cobb, trans. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 41 and Plato, *The Symposium*, M.C. Howatson, trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 39.

writings continue to reveal a more & more beautiful soul. His influence continues to be ever more helpful to me.”⁷⁸⁵ In her history *Garden of Dreams: Kingsmere and Mackenzie King*, Edwinna von Baeyer detected signs of his “imaginative eccentricities...highly personal symbolisms and associations he enjoyed finding or creating at Kingsmere” as early as 1904. “The first hint of King’s ‘extra dimensional’ thinking was his design and installation, in his rather non-descript cottage, of a model of the large fireplace at Shakespeare’s Stratford-on-Avon home.” In an inauguration ceremony, King dedicated the fireplace to Harper’s memory after Marjorie Herridge had read from Matthew Arnold.⁷⁸⁶

He prefaced *The Secret of Heroism* with a stanza from one of his favourite poems, “Rugby Chapel,” which Arnold had written in homage to his dead father, Thomas Arnold.

O strong soul, by what shore
Tarriest thou now? For that force,
Surely, has not been left vain!
Somewhere, surely, afar,
In the sounding labour-house vast
Of being, is practiced that strength,
Zealous, beneficent, firm!
—Matthew Arnold, “Rugby Chapel.”⁷⁸⁷

Arnold’s belief in the continued existence of exceptional souls, of a kind of elemental force for which I am using the term *daemon*, emerges clearly in the very next lines of the poem: “Yes, in some far-shining sphere, / Conscious or not of the past, / Still thou performest the word / Of the Spirit in whom thou dost live, / Prompt, unwearied, as here!” Also compared to an angel, that force lifts up the fallen and weary to continue “our march...On, to the City of God.”⁷⁸⁸

⁷⁸⁵ Diary January 19, 1902.

⁷⁸⁶ Edwinna von Baeyer, *Garden of Dreams: Kingsmere and Mackenzie King* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1990), 50.

⁷⁸⁷ *The Secret of Heroism*, 6.

⁷⁸⁸ “Rugby Chapel” in *The Works of Matthew Arnold* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1995), 423, 427.

Harper began emerging more clearly as a *daemon* following the death of King's sister Bella, his father and his mother in 1915, 1916 and 1917 when he turned increasingly to spiritualism. After he triumphed at the 1919 Liberal Leadership convention to replace Sir Wilfrid Laurier, he wrote that his achievement "has come from God. The dear loved ones know and are about, they are alive and with me in this great everlasting Now and Here. It is His work I am called, and to it I dedicate my life."⁷⁸⁹ When within a few weeks, in his first speech as Liberal Party Leader, he was asked by Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden to reply to the toast to Canada by the Prince of Wales (the future King Edward VIII) at a government reception at the Chateau Laurier, he based his remarks on the "Sir Galahad parallel, which came to me like an inspiration." "The Citizen yesterday had a poem with the Sir Galahad thought in it. I felt this was the line & with the association I had with the Harper monument that the chance was exceptional. I believe that it was only the spiritual guidance for which I prayed that enabled me to frame my thoughts & words as I did. In deed, but for the belief I have in God, in the guiding influence of the dearly loved ones gone before and of His purpose in my life, I could do nothing. With this belief I feel nothing impossible that must & should be done."⁷⁹⁰

In 1932, when he was again Leader of the Opposition and delving heavily into psychic activities, King had several séances with Etta Wriedt, the direct voice medium from Detroit. Harper was one of the spirits that spoke to King. On the anniversary of his death on December 6, as he was driving home he "crossed the bridge & looked at the cold dark waters of the Ottawa flowing past the Parliament Buildings and thought of them as the stream that had carried him to the other

⁷⁸⁹ Cited in Levine, 110.

⁷⁹⁰ Diary August 29, 1919. King noted that "I did not quite find my bent for speaking till I reached the Sir Galahad part. The Prince shook hands cordially & we exchanged congratulations." King stated, referencing the symbolical Sir Galahad figure in front of the Parliament Buildings, "May I say that the Canadian people have recognized in your Royal Highness the Sir Galahad of the Royal Household, the young Knight, our future King, whose joy is in the service of others? And as Sir Galahad, through his pure life and noble deeds, was rewarded by the vision of the Holy Grail, so, too, we pray and believe, that in the time appointed, yours it will be to win the radiance of a people's love and devotion which makes a lasting glory around the Throne." See "Advises Prince to Marry Soon," *Toronto Globe*, April 30, 1919, page 2.

shore. How remarkable that this year I should have talked with him of his own drowning, there was no mistaking his identity.”⁷⁹¹ “It was the spirits of the departed. There is no other way on earth of accounting for what we have all experienced this week,” he wrote after one of Wriedt’s sessions at Kingsmere.⁷⁹²

With the advent of World War II, King projected Galahad’s virtues and ideals onto all of Canada. Directly following Parliament’s declaration of war against Germany on September 9, 1939, he perceived Canada “as a nation among the nations of the world—a young nation with a bright light in her eyes and the spirit of idealistic youth. A Sir Galahad among other nations.” He marvelled “How all this links up with my association with Harper, and the little monument which stands in front of the Parliament Buildings, and which I was responsible for having placed in the position which it holds.”⁷⁹³ When the German historian Emil Ludwig interviewed him for what would become his 1944 *Mackenzie King: A Portrait Sketch* and copied part of Harper’s writings, King had no doubt that what Ludwig had in mind was “delineating my character as being along the lines that Harper had aimed at, which however far short may have fallen of the ideal is nevertheless true.”⁷⁹⁴ A few days before another anniversary of Harper’s death, “while partly awake and partly asleep, Harper kept coming to me. Visions kept passing before my mind which seemed to evidence the very real presence of Harper and seemed to be more in the spirit than in the body. I do not think I got very much sleep during the night.”⁷⁹⁵

King had another dream vision of Harper in March of 1944 at a time his government had introduced a program of social legislation, including a bill to establish a Department of Reconstruction, and just three months before fifteen national arts organizations presented their artists’ *Brief* to the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-

⁷⁹¹ Diary December 6, 1932.

⁷⁹² Diary June 30, 1932.

⁷⁹³ Diary September 9, 1939. A government recruitment poster would later reflect this symbolism, showing a soldier rearing skyward on his motorcycle with a knight in armour rearing on a stallion in the background and the inscription “Canada’s New Army *Needs* Men Like You.”

⁷⁹⁴ Diary November 26, 1943.

⁷⁹⁵ Diary December 4, 1943.

establishment.⁷⁹⁶ He had received another letter from the English medium, Mrs. Gladys Osborne Leonard, who “seldom writes that she does not send me some message from my friend Bert Harper.”⁷⁹⁷ What impressed King in his vision of Harper, appropriate for a *daemon*, “was his size and strength.” “He seemed to have develop[ed] to strong proportions...The room seemed to be a sort of workshop and we were planning together some constructive work of social service importance. It was clear he was helping me and that I had a poem to work out which it seemed to me had to do with social problems and I felt quite elated at the thought that Harper and I were together and had a mission there which would give us a great chance to help the working classes.” King had conferred that day with MP Gray Turgeon, chair of the House of Commons Reconstruction and Re-establishment Committee, and Brooke Claxton, Minister of National Health and Welfare who was a supporter of the arts and would be appointed the first chairman of the Canada Council in 1957. For King, “All of this makes pretty clear that Harper is making not only his existence known to me but his co-operation and zeal with respect to our social legislation programme. All this coming together in the way it has is to my mind convincing evidence of Harper’s continued existence and his inspiration and co-operation and the work to which we consecrated our lives in our early youth.”⁷⁹⁸

In retrospect, one additional tragic element of Harper’s early death was that his longer collaboration and friendship with Mackenzie King could have made King much more appreciative of artists and artistic creation. In *The Secret of Heroism*, he recalled that “Harper’s was a nature quick to respond to the beautiful and true wherever found, whether in prose or

⁷⁹⁶ Session 1944 House of Commons. Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment. *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence No. 10*. June 21, 1944. (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1944).

⁷⁹⁷ Mrs. Leonard had been writing King about Harper since December 1940. “I know your friend Bert is helping you. He tells me that his naturally idealistic and spiritual nature has been greatly re-enforced since his passing...I can feel his spiritual strength very much.” See Bedore, 282.

⁷⁹⁸ Diary March 23, 1944. In his diary entry, King wrote out the stanza from Arnold’s “Rugby Chapel” he had used as a preface to *The Secret of Heroism* and commented, “Now that was exactly the kind of picture I had of Harper, in my vision, a man of great strength, ‘Zealous, beneficent, firm!’” He also noted of the stanza, “That is the passage that is marked in his copy of

verse, in music or painting, or in the actions of daily life. He was, moreover, intensely sympathetic, and what he read or saw always impressed, and sometimes affected, him deeply.” He cited Harper’s belief in Keats’ “great truth:” “‘Beauty is truth, truth beauty,’—that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.’”

King also quoted Harper’s description of their visit to New York whose highlights were “the visit to the *Art Museum*,” and the December 24, 1900 Metropolitan Opera concert performance of Rossini’s *Stabat Mater*, starring the great American operatic soprano Lillian Nordica.

That was a glorious day, for it showed how men in the rush and flurry of business life have at hand the means of soul purifying and refreshment in art and music, two great agencies which bring men’s minds back from semblances to truth. Will you ever forget the music we heard? The singing of Rossini’s *Stabat Mater* was to me like wandering through a sea of dreams, beautiful yet sad. Greatest of all, I thought, was Nordica’s *Inflammatus*, a soul-stirring song, splendidly set off by the orchestra and chorus, and which stirred the vast audience to its depths. How strong must be the satisfaction of the possession of so magnificent a voice, both in the capacity to interpret such beautiful music, and in the ability to thrill and purge the human soul.”⁷⁹⁹

One fatal flaw in the cultural lobbying of Canadian artists in the 1940s was that they had not found a trusted intermediary who could convey their aspirations to Mackenzie King. Bert Harper could have been such a sympathetic interlocutor on their behalf, acting either in this world or—as a *daemon*—from the beyond.

Matthew Arnold.” King’s last commemoration of Harper’s death occurs in his diary on December 6, 1948, “This is the anniversary of Harper’s drowning.”

⁷⁹⁹ *The Secret of Heroism*, 73, 74, 101. The Keats citation is from the final lines of his “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” published in 1820.

Chapter VI:

The Field of Cultural Production and Mackenzie King's Cultural Authority 1900-1930

In the summer of 1900—as outlined in Chapter IV—Mackenzie King had to determine his “life plan” and chose between Postmaster General William Mulock’s offer to edit the *Labour Gazette* in Ottawa and a possible academic appointment at Harvard University. His decision to join the Canadian civil service and “size up the political field” in order to become “more of a man suited to speak with authority on the problems of life & the active world”⁸⁰⁰ segues aptly into a discussion of Pierre Bourdieu’s key concept of “fields” in which social agents struggle for position, power and the accumulation of different forms of capital. Historians and King’s biographers to date have focused almost exclusively on his activities in the political field. This chapter will analyze King’s actions in the cultural field in order to provide the context for his competition with Canadian artists and cultural nationalists over the accumulation of cultural capital and cultural authority, which will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

I am drawing on Bourdieu’s definition of “field” from his essay “Field of Power, Literary Field and Habitus.” His concept of “field” of course applies not only to literature but to all major social spheres such as politics, economics, religion and the family as well as other artistic disciplines such as theatre, painting, sculpture, music and architecture. “The literary field (one may also speak of the artistic field, the philosophical field, etc.),” Bourdieu writes, “is an independent social universe with its own laws of functioning, its specific relations of force, its dominants and its dominated...literary works are produced in a particular social universe endowed with particular institutions and obeying specific laws.”⁸⁰¹

Bourdieu indicated that a field is more than a common social background or *milieu artistique* but is “a veritable social universe where, in accordance with its particular laws, there accumulates a

⁸⁰⁰ Diary July 10, 1900.

particular form of capital and where relations of force of a particular type are exerted. This universe is the place of entirely specific struggles, notably concerning the question of knowing who is part of the universe, who is a real writer and who is not.” He asserted that in order to understand an artist it is necessary to understand the customs and the positions of artists competing in that particular field and how that field “is defined in relation to the field of power and, in particular, in relation to the fundamental law of this universe, which is that of economy and power.” Bourdieu argued that the artistic field was strongly differentiated from the economic field in which social agents struggled out of self-interest for financial capital.

The literary field is the economic world reversed; that is, the fundamental law of this specific universe, that of disinterestedness, which establishes a negative correlation between temporal (notably financial) success and properly artistic value, is the inverse of the law of economic exchange. The artistic field is a *universe of belief*. Cultural production distinguishes itself from the production of the most common objects in that it must produce not only the object in its materiality, but also the value of this object, that is, the recognition of artistic legitimacy. This is inseparable from the production of the artist or the writer as artist or writer, in other words, as a creator of value.⁸⁰²

In Bourdieu’s “fields,” social agents compete with one another for higher positions within their particular field in order to obtain higher esteem for themselves and greater markets for their products. They participate in processes of domination within their particular field and within the overall field of power.

Canadian artists from the beginning of the nineteenth century could accumulate social and cultural capital and prestige through the art works they created but found it very difficult to create sufficient economic value for their art. In the relations of force of the Canadian cultural field and its laws of economy and power, I am identifying Mackenzie King and his sphere of political and cultural power as the primary obstacle in the struggle of Canadian artists and cultural nationalists for government support of arts and culture. As Leader of the Liberal Party, Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and as Prime Minister, King was able to use his political and economic

⁸⁰¹ Pierre Bourdieu, “Field of Power, Literary Field and Habitus” in Simon During, ed. *The Cultural Studies Reader*. Third edition. (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 90.

⁸⁰² Idem.

power in the political field over three decades (1919-1948) to define who was a real artist and who was not, what constituted artistic legitimacy and what was the artistic and economic value of Canadian cultural production.

I will discuss the organizing by Canadian artists to achieve their cultural and economic objectives in chapters VII and IX. In this chapter I will first outline Mackenzie King's accumulation of cultural capital and cultural authority which led him to the conviction that he was better able to define and shape Canadian culture and society than artists themselves.

Mackenzie King's Cultural Authority 1900-1921

When Mackenzie King became part of Ottawa's society in the summer of 1900, there was no one in government or the civil service who had his breadth of exposure to and involvement in the arts. After a little more than three years as Deputy Minister of Labour, he lamented in his diary about "the barbarities, the crudities & incivilities of even many of our most prominent men. We lack culture as a people & ideals and one feels it most as one meets the men of refinement from other parts."⁸⁰³ To compensate for this lack of a cultured environment, King joined cultural organizations and formed his own social circle. Its most prominent members included William Wilfred Campbell and Marjorie Herridge, the wife of Rev. Dr. William Thomas Herridge, with whom he could read and talk about poetry and literature, and the amateur musicians Dr. King and Miss Elliot with whom he discussed the need for developing "a more earnest life in Ottawa, a purer love for intellectual as against purely social things, a cultivated taste for literature & music & greater sincerity between people."⁸⁰⁴ Miss Elliot and particularly Dr. King were accomplished pianists. Mackenzie King recorded in 1905 that Dr. King played Schuman's prelude, Wagner's "The Evening Star," the "Junge Nonne" by Schubert and "something from Liszt, all fine."⁸⁰⁵

⁸⁰³ Diary January 15, 1904.

⁸⁰⁴ Diary September 17, 1904.

⁸⁰⁵ Diary November 5, 1905. See also diary January 11, 1904, December 14 and 17, 1911, January 1, 1912, October 27 and November 17, 1914, January 3, 1915, October 15 and 22, 1916 and January 1, 1917.

In November of 1914, “supper and delightful music at Dr. Gibson’s” included playing by Tivadar Nachéz, the Hungarian violinist and composer.⁸⁰⁶ A week later, King gave his own dinner party for eleven guests, “one of the most enjoyable affairs I have ever had a share in,” that revealed the extent of the social and cultural capital he had accumulated. “All the guests were persons of individual character and attainments: Mr. Nachez, a famous Hungarian violinist & his wife; Dr. Harriss, musician & Mrs. Harriss, Ottawa’s leading hostess; Wilfred Campbell, Canada’s poet; Col. Foster, the U.S. Consul General & Mrs. Foster; Dr. Gibson, Physician, Musician & Christian gentleman & Mrs. Gibson; Miss Gauthier, Singer, Canada’s young artist, a protégé of Lady Laurier; Miss Edith Macpherson, May Queen (of May Court).” After dinner, King explained his work as a labour consultant for the Rockefeller Foundation and showed “some of my art & literary treasures & antiquities.” The party then shifted to the Fosters’ apartment “where we had a little music, Dr. Gibson, Nachez & Mr. Harriss playing, Miss Gauthier singing. Campbell read aloud two or three of his poems, ‘Glen Echo,’ ‘Pompeii’—a very beautiful poem—and ‘Lines on a Skeleton.’ I read aloud his ‘Lyre degenerate’... The night was a genuine inspiration and roused my soul to a realization of happiness seldom enjoyed.”⁸⁰⁷

King particularly valued his friendship with Wilfred Campbell that was initiated with his heroic poem about Bert Harper’s death in 1901. In 1906 he and his brother Max had dinner at Campbell’s home. “After dinner the three of us went to Campbell’s library where we spent a most inspiring hour or two reading aloud some of his poems. He read us one he had just written, ‘Captivity,’ which is, I think, one of the finest bits of verse in the language. The thought is profound & the truth great. The infinite & the finite the theme. I admire greatly his poem on Truth & Soul; a highland Ballad, Glen Eilke is also charming.” King estimated that Campbell was “certainly one of the greatest poets this continent has produced. He is a mystic, a seer, a man

⁸⁰⁶ Diary November 8, 1914.

⁸⁰⁷ Diary November 14, 1914.

of great force. Misunderstood by most persons, unknown by many of his friends, but a man whom the country will be proud to honour.”⁸⁰⁸

As with many other artists King would work with in the future, he was able to develop a close friendship with the poet because of their near identical religious and spiritual world-view. In 1906 he had another “interesting talk” with Campbell at his home, “Our main point being need of insisting on the moral order & presence of God in the Universe, eternal laws, etc.”⁸⁰⁹ Campbell had offered to write the introduction to King’s *The Secret of Heroism*. King in turn suggested that they collaborate on a biography of William Lyon Mackenzie. “I suggested to him our writing together a Life of my Grandfather & the rebellion, with the struggle for responsible government. I believe together we might produce a most valuable volume, treating the whole subject from the point of view of psychological forces, inner vision, belief, etc.”⁸¹⁰

To increase his involvement with culture and the arts, King took out memberships in social and cultural organizations during his first five years in Ottawa. He paid his “Literary Society fee \$2” and membership in the Ottawa Rowing Club in 1900 and, in February 1901, \$5 for “Hon. Membership in Ottawa Choral Society.”⁸¹¹ In 1902 he was offered but declined the chairmanship of the Ottawa Choral Society Committee.⁸¹² In 1903 he was a charter member of the Minto Skating Club, named after its patron, Governor General Lord Minto. He was also one of the founders and first Vice-President of the Ottawa Canadian Club in 1903 and accepted the presidency of the Club in 1904. “Wilfred Campbell made a vigorous speech about purity & uprightness in public life. My theme was that the creation of a nation was the bequest to us from

⁸⁰⁸ Diary January 11, 1906.

⁸⁰⁹ Diary January 22, 1906.

⁸¹⁰ Diary January 12, 1906.

⁸¹¹ LAC reel C1902, pages 1917-18. Diary December 31, 1900 and, February cash account, Diary December 31, 1901. In the same cash account, he recorded paying 75 cents for “3 pr. socks” and 85 cents for “ticket to Concert Orchestral Society.”

⁸¹² Diary October 1, 1902.

the past, the development of a true national greatness was our work for the future.”⁸¹³ In his diary, King noted that the presidency of the Canadian Club “is an important office, especially this year, & may prove a valuable asset & testing one’s fitness for public life & aiding towards an entrance.” Already competing for social status and cultural and political capital he added, “I think one owes it to one’s self not to be too hesitant & backward in allowing men of coarser grain & less lofty ideals to seize the reins of power, no matter where they are exercised.”⁸¹⁴

Earlier in the year, he had suggested that the Canadian Club invite Johnston Forbes-Robertson to address the Club and that the Club rent a box at the Russell Theatre to see his production of George Fleming’s adaptation of Rudyard Kipling’s *The Light That Failed*. At the end of the play, King “went behind the scenes” and congratulated the actor in his dressing room. “He told us it was his aim to put on a good moral play and seemed to be very much in earnest. I was inclined to feel him a man of fine ideals & heroic purpose in his profession and one who if spared will continue to gain a well merited fame.”⁸¹⁵

Following the publication of his memoir *The Secret of Heroism* in 1906, King was nominated for and accepted membership in the Canadian Society of Authors.⁸¹⁶ That King was already being recognized as an authority on Canadian culture is suggested by an inquiry in 1906 from Ginn & Company, a publisher of school and college textbooks in Boston. Ginn had secured Agnes C. Laut to write what would become her *Canada, the Empire of the North*, published by Ginn in

⁸¹³ Diary October 7, 1903. R. MacGregor Dawson, *William Lyon Mackenzie King: A Political Biography 1874-1923* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958), 171. Diary October 18, 1904.

⁸¹⁴ Diary October 12, 1904.

⁸¹⁵ Diary February 9, 1904. King recorded that the Canadian Club members attending the production included the Deputy Postmaster General, the Deputy Minister of Inland Revenue, the President of the Board of Trade, a leading manufacturer, and Wilfred Campbell whom he had invited as a guest. “The play was splendid; having just finished the story [by Kipling], it was like a dream realizing itself in action. The Company was an excellent one; F. Robertson himself could not have been better. The house was a splendid one and the sight as one beheld it from the box most inspiring.”

⁸¹⁶ Pelhan Edgar to King, May 1906. John A. Cooper to King, June 19, 1906. LAC reel C1905, pages 4478-79.

1909, and anticipated sales from forty to one hundred thousand copies. King recommended to the publisher that the book cover not only the economic, political and constitutional development of Canada and its natural features. “Some emphasis should be given,” he advised, “to the evidences of culture which are so rapidly increasing in our midst. Enough work has been done by Canadian poets, writers, artists and others to demand some special recognition.” He noted that “Rudyard Kipling’s ‘Our Lady of the Snows,’ giving the idea that Canada is a northern uninhabitable clime, and Sarah Bernhardt’s remark that there are no evidences of culture in Canada have between the two of them helped to convey to many a false impression of the country.” He suggested, “Special care should therefore, I think, be given to remove both impressions to the extent to which this may be possible.”⁸¹⁷

In addition to his work on the Harper Memorial Fund Committee, King was beginning to attain what Pierre Bourdieu called “distinction.” Analyzed in his best-known work, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, “distinction” is one of Bourdieu’s key concepts demonstrating how individuals use stratifying mechanisms to distinguish their “taste” and differentiate themselves as belonging to a higher social position. Painted portraits—as opposed to the more common and cheaper art form of photography—already served as a marker in the King family beginning in 1895 when John King was presented with an oil portrait by the Canadian Press Association in the Ontario government buildings. After his father hung the portrait in his library King wrote, “I would rather own it than anything he possesses.”⁸¹⁸

As mentioned in a previous chapter, John King’s paintings (“including a couple of Homer Watsons) that the Kings had bought over the years,” which he had mortgaged along with the

⁸¹⁷ George H. Locke to King, August 6 and 24, 1906. King to Locke, August 21, 1906. LAC reel C1905, pages 5070-76.

⁸¹⁸ Diary January 31 and July 4, 1895. In regard to the more prestigious art form of painted portraits, King recorded in 1902 that he paid J.W.L. Forster \$71 for “Mother’s portrait & frame” but had only paid “\$4.75 to Alexander Co. for mother’s pictures.” See Diary December 31 and February 3, 1902.

family furniture, were nearly seized for payment of debt in February of 1900.⁸¹⁹ Once Mackenzie King began earning his civil service salary and was able to help his family financially, more than half-a-dozen portraits by J.W.L. Forster quickly followed: Christiana MacDougall (John King's mother who died in 1900), Isabel Mackenzie King in 1901, John King and Mackenzie King's own portrait in 1902, a portrait of his sister Bella, Isabel Mackenzie King painted at Kingsmere in 1905 and William Lyon Mackenzie in 1907.⁸²⁰

Painted portraits were also public indicators of the family's social position and esteem. King was delighted to hear the "very good news" while travelling in Europe in 1900 that the Toronto city council had voted \$250 for an oil portrait of his grandfather, Toronto's first mayor, to be hung in the new city hall.⁸²¹ Forster's large painting of William Lyon Mackenzie was prominently featured on the front page of the December 22, 1900 *Globe* announcing its installation. The highly laudatory two-page long article also aimed at rehabilitating the reputation of the leader of the 1837 Rebellion.⁸²²

Four months later Forster's portrait of Isabel King was exhibited at the Royal Canadian Academy exposition in Toronto "in a fine place, and was the subject of a great deal of remark and attention." The *Globe* mentioned it very favourably. Mr. and Mrs. King and Bella went to the opening in full dress and basked in the congratulations which descended on them. What a perfect instrument to achieve the recognition which the Kings were continually seeking!"⁸²³ For Mackenzie King, the *Globe*'s reference to his mother's portrait was "just the sort I expected and has pleased me greatly. That issue of the *Globe* is a rather significant one for our family. It is the

⁸¹⁹ See Charlotte Gray, *Mrs. King: The Life and Times of Isabel Mackenzie King* (Toronto: Viking, 1997), 206-208. Dawson, 82.

⁸²⁰ Forster painted John King's portrait as a gift, presumably to foster commissions of additional family portraits.

⁸²¹ Diary April 24, 1900.

⁸²² "Toronto's First Mayor. W.L. Mackenzie's Portrait on Walls of New City Hall. Reminiscences. Scenes Recalled by the Picture. Mackenzie's Career," *Toronto Globe*, December 22, 1900, 1, 5, 6.

⁸²³ John King to Mackenzie King, April 24, 1901 and Dawson, 125. Diary April 2, 1901.

first time that Mother has appeared with the rest of us as a distinguished public personage in print.”⁸²⁴

In 1902, King was once more greatly pleased to read in the *Globe* that Forster’s replica of his William Lyon Mackenzie painting had been hung on New Year’s Day near the Legislative Chamber in the Ontario Legislative Buildings. “This is a great honour,” he again recorded in his diary. “It is history’s pronouncement of the worth of his life & services. The *Globe* too had a good editorial on the event. I am most happy.”⁸²⁵ A month later he received a photograph of Forster’s portrait of his mother he had ordered at the request of Henry James Morgan for inclusion in a projected second volume of his *Types of Canadian Women and Women Who Are or Have Been Connected With Canada*. “It is a beautiful picture. I am much in love with the face.”⁸²⁶ He was still preoccupied with the public recognition of his mother in 1918 when he corresponded with John Ross Robertson, the historian and publisher of the *Toronto Telegram*, who donated his huge collection of paintings and pictorial materials illustrating the history of Canada to the Toronto Public Library. Robertson, King wrote, “is having a painting of dear mother placed in his collection at the Toronto Public Library. How proud she would have been to be beside her mother there, yet with what humility she would have regarded this recognition.”⁸²⁷

There are several passages in Bourdieu’s *Distinction* which closely correlate with Mackenzie King’s largely unquestioned great belief in his own cultural authority. He was certain that he knew what good art was and believed he was more knowledgeable than most artists themselves. For Bourdieu, tastes function as a marker of “class.” “Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed.” The aesthetic sense

⁸²⁴ King to his parents, April 28, 1901. Cited in Dawson, 125.

⁸²⁵ Diary January 3, 1902.

⁸²⁶ Diary February 3, 1902. Henry James Morgan, *Types of Canadian Women and Women Who Are or Have Been Connected With Canada* (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1903). Mrs. John King is announced for inclusion in a projected Volume 2, never published, on page 357.

unites and separates. “It unites all those who are the product of similar conditions while distinguishing them from all others.”⁸²⁸

King won further social and cultural distinction in 1904 when he acquired what he believed to be a genuine canvas of Christ by the Italian Baroque painter Guercino (1591-1666). In an unusual practice of art restoration he recorded, “After having breakfast I began washing the painting of Guercino’s [sic] with warm water and taking the dent off the frame.” His landlord, Mr. Cope, “rubbed it over with olive oil for me. The improvement was extraordinary. Except for some of the dent which is now almost part of the picture, it is as clean looking and as fresh as if new, though about 300 years old. The colors have not lost a ray of their brilliancy.”⁸²⁹ King invited his artistic circle and others to view the painting in his quarters. Wilfred Campbell “was much delighted” with the Guercino. Dr. Gibson, accompanied by his wife, “spoke very highly of it. They all liked it very much.” So did the Rev. and Marjorie Herridge and two teachers from the Presbyterian Ladies College.⁸³⁰

With the King family’s considerable investment in J.W.L. Forster’s portraits and artistic reputation, King made efforts to increase the recognition of his artistic legitimacy and the value of the portraits he created. In 1905, he advanced Forster’s social position in the artistic field—helping to determine what Bourdieu called establishing who is a real artist and who is not—by showing Prime Minister Laurier photographs of Forster’s paintings and urging him to have his portrait painted by Forster.⁸³¹ The following year he obtained permission from C.S. Hyman, the

⁸²⁷ Diary February 1, 1918.

⁸²⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Richard Nice, trans. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 6.

⁸²⁹ Diary October 23, 1904. When he visited the National Gallery in London in 1906, King was “particularly interested in a small Guercino, Christ & Angels weeping, which I examined closely. Though much smaller, there are resemblances quite sufficient to make me feel sure enough of mine as original. The body of Christ in each was much the same in form & colour, the beard & type the same, the colors used for the most part identical, especially the maroon red. Then there was the similarity of color & of finish.” Diary September 30, 1906.

⁸³⁰ Diary October 30 and November 20 and 26, 1904.

⁸³¹ Diary November 4 and 6, 1905.

Minister of Public Works, for Forster to exhibit two large historical paintings in the Parliamentary committee room of the House of Commons.⁸³² In 1915 Sir Sandford Fleming showed King Forster's portrait of Fleming's mother and King reciprocated by showing him a photo of Forster's painting of Isabel King. Fleming expressed his delight at the photograph, asked to see the actual portrait, and "spoke especially of its youthful appearance."⁸³³ In 1932 King convinced Mary Fulford, the widow of the multi-millionaire and Liberal Senator, George Taylor Fulford, to have her portrait painted by Forster⁸³⁴ and commissioned the artist to paint portraits of himself and Joan Patteson. The following year he acquired Forster's painting of Lady Laurier and, in 1944, his portrait of Sir Wilfrid Laurier.⁸³⁵

While King's "taste" united him with those who were the product of a similar class and social and cultural conditions, it also differentiated him from others of a different class or from the "tastes" of others he found unnatural. As Bourdieu states in *Distinction*, "Tastes, (i.e., manifested preferences) are the practical affirmation of an inevitable difference. It is no accident that, when they have to be justified, they are asserted purely negatively, by the refusal of other tastes." Bourdieu suggests that "tastes are perhaps first and foremost distastes, disgust provoked by horror or visceral intolerance ('sick-making') of the tastes of others...each taste feels itself to be natural—and so it almost is, being a habitus—which amounts to rejecting others as unnatural and therefore vicious."⁸³⁶ As discussed in chapter IV, King had solidified his aesthetic and spiritual preferences for the religious paintings of European old masters during his 1899-1900 Harvard travelling scholarship whereas he found "the pictures of the French school gross & sensual" and "morbid."⁸³⁷ He very much liked dancing at social events with members of his own social class but had also been "much disgusted" by the dancing in Paris at the Moulin Rouge music hall which he found "ugly" and "vulgar."⁸³⁸

⁸³² Diary March 1, 1906.

⁸³³ Diary January 3, 1915. Forster had also painted a portrait of Sir Sandford Fleming.

⁸³⁴ Diary February 21, 1932.

⁸³⁵ Diary January 9, 1933 and April 5, 1944.

⁸³⁶ *Distinction*, 56.

⁸³⁷ Diary July 8 and July 3, 1900.

⁸³⁸ Diary March 15, 1900.

Even as a twenty-five year old, King was already so confident of his own identity and social status as a result of the cultural capital he had accumulated during his university studies that he did not hesitate to differentiate himself from several famous men at the turn of the century. In 1899 he went with Margaret Anglin to the Tremont Theatre in Boston to hear the British Jewish writer and playwright Israel Zangwill speak about “The Children of the Ghetto.” Zangwill’s novel *Children of the Ghetto: A Study of a Peculiar People* had been published in England and the U.S. in 1892 and in several subsequent editions. His dramatization of the novel opened at the Herald Square Theatre on Broadway on October 16, 1899. But for King, Zangwill “seemed to me a very ordinary Jew who had a fair amount of knowledge, but not an educated man. His talk was rather tiresome.”⁸³⁹

King’s occasional outbursts of anti-Semitism and his competitiveness for cultural capital are illustrated by his encounter with the British economist and reformer David Frederick Schloss in London later in the year. His *Methods of Industrial Remuneration* had been republished in a revised and enlarged edition by Williams and Norgate in London in 1898. Its conclusions on the subcontracting “sweating” system of long hours, low wages and excessive work in clothing manufacturing were similar to King’s findings as described in his newspaper exposés and 1899 *Report to the Honourable the Postmaster General of the Methods Adopted in Canada in the Carrying out of Government Clothing Contracts*. King spent much of October and November 1899 reading and taking excerpts from Schloss’s book as well as examining the extensive collection of newspaper files and other documentation Schloss generously made available to him in his office for King’s intended Harvard Ph.D. thesis. But when Schloss was asked for an article on the “sweating” system for the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and wanted to “‘pick my brains’...the essence in fact of all my work!” King concluded that “the Jew came out in him...There is something in a Jew’s nature which is detestable. The sucking of blood. I cannot abide another

⁸³⁹ Diary February 12, 1899. Zangwill’s *The Melting Pot* (which popularized the term) would open at the Comedy Theatre in New York in 1909.

man trying to ‘use’ me. I will not be ‘used.’” While he provided Schloss with information from his own research, King was “unwilling to be ‘bled.’”⁸⁴⁰

He had received a letter of introduction from Postmaster General William Mulock to the novelist and playwright Gilbert Parker in 1899 but when he called on him at his residence in London “No one came to the door.”⁸⁴¹ He was received for dinner at Parker’s when he returned to London as Deputy Minister of Labour in 1906 and the novelist and playwright “said we ought to have met before.” King wrote of the visit that “Lady Parker eyed me up & down as though I were a show horse or something of the kind, a deliberate sizing up which I thought most vulgar. She seems to me a woman of wealth & fashion, a person who would be hard to live with on account of temper & whims; is conscious of her looks, has not much to say.” Sir John & Lady Rogers were also dinner guests, “the latter with a large breast, mostly exposed, looking fat & like a woman of the street.” King “thought Sir Gilbert a handsome man but conceited & talking as though the country depended on him.”⁸⁴²

He made a similar assessment, based on outward appearance and “character” when, in Ottawa in 1902, he met Guglielmo Marconi “in town arranging details of his ocean telegraph.” (Marconi

⁸⁴⁰ Diary February 2, 3 and 21, 1900. For King’s encounter with Schloss, see also Diary entries for October 13, 16-20; November 3, 20-24, 28, 30; December 1, 5 and 6, 1899; and January 18 and March 31, 1900. King’s anti-Semitism and tendency to separate himself physically from “others” again came to the fore in 1927 when he bought additional property adjoining his Kingsmere estate “to prevent Jews or other undesirable people getting in...To get away from undesirables of the upper & lower strata is important in my position...the greatest danger & menace is a sale to Jews who have a desire to get in at Kingsmere & who would ruin the whole place.” “The alternative lay between controlling and developing the situation and having the joys of the entire property imperilled by the presence of undesirable neighbours, Jews of a low order & others & the whole place being badly cut up into lots, with numerous neighbours, forests cut down, etc. etc.” See Diary April 3, 2 and 10 and May 15, 1927. In his December 22, 1935 diary, King recorded writing Mathilde Barchet (née Mathilde Grossert), his former St. Luke’s nurse with whom he had fallen deeply in love in 1898 and with whom he maintained a life-long friendship, “thanking her for a copy of Dr. Alexis Carrel’s book *Man the Unknown*” by the French eugenicist. King noted that Carrel’s book, which advocated the gassing of criminals and the mentally diseased, “seems to bring me much of what I want most to know.”

⁸⁴¹ Diary December 27, 1899.

would achieve the first radio telegraph message to reach across the Atlantic from Glace Bay, Nova Scotia, on December 17, 1902 and won the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1909.) King's rivalry for social position with the youthful twenty-eight year old Marconi (they were both born in 1874) is apparent in King's account of his meeting. He described the inventor of wireless telegraphy as "a 'rubbery' sort of fellow in his manner, shook hands in a flimsy way & had a habit of looking about & shambling about, seemed like one who was meeting people continually & anxious to be done with them." Marconi "said to me that I was a very young man to be a Deputy Minister to which I replied he was a very young man to be so great & told him I was pleased to have met him as a young man. He offered to return my call but I told him I would not expect it...his manner is not attractive."⁸⁴³

King's self-assurance and belief in his own good "taste" and the cultural capital he had accumulated from his university studies and wide involvement with the arts provided him with a growing sense of his cultural authority. In a 1906 diary entry he recorded spending "most of tonight with Forster, criticizing his historic paintings, Sir Wilfrid, Mr. Sutherland [Robert Franklin Sutherland, the Speaker of the House of Commons] & others." He continued criticizing Forster's work for the next three decades.⁸⁴⁴ In 1907 he "spoke of Art" while visiting Lady Laurier in her home and "came out with an invitation to Lady L. & Mrs. Sheriff to go to the theatre on Monday next, or Bennett's tonight."⁸⁴⁵

King received his Ph.D. from Harvard in 1909 and, as a Canadian MP and Deputy Minister of Labour, was selected to be the Commencement speaker on behalf of the graduates. In his address entitled "100 Years of Peace," he proposed that the United States and Canada erect an

⁸⁴² Diary October 20, 1906.

⁸⁴³ Diary January 2 and 8, 1902. According to Bernard Ostry, "Marconi's experiments with radio-telegraphy in Canada were helped forward by a subsidy of \$80,000 from the federal treasury." See his *The Cultural Connection: An Essay on Culture and Government Policy in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), 43.

⁸⁴⁴ Diary April 4, 1906. For example when in 1911 Forster was working on a painting of Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Psalm Sunday, "I suggested to him making brighter the face of the Saviour which he agreed was a good suggestion." Diary December 28, 1911.

international monument in Niagara to commemorate the centennial of the end of the War of 1812-14 “and give symbolic expression to international good-will.”⁸⁴⁶ The Liberal Party’s and his own defeat in the 1911 federal election did not significantly diminish his cultural authority. Wilfrid Laurier consented that King write his biography. “There was no one whom he would rather have do it. He knows I would be sympathetic and I had the literary ability.”⁸⁴⁷

His continued high social position in Ottawa society is also suggested when he attended a performance of Gounod’s *Faust* by the Montreal Opera Company the following year as the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Reginald Scott. King recorded that “There was an exceptionally fine house, every seat being taken. The Duchess of Connaught & Princess Patricia were in the Royal box. We had the upstairs box opposite.”⁸⁴⁸ He had the opportunity of meeting “some of those who are leading in Grand Opera – The Montreal Opera Company” at a tea given the following day by the wife of Supreme Court Justice Francis Alexander Anglin, Margaret Anglin’s older brother. A long talk with the Canadian artist Béatrice La Palme, who had sung Marguerite, informed him at first-hand about the difficulties Canadian singers faced in establishing professional careers without sustained private or public support. “It was a new experience talking with an opera singer, a prima donna, who was Canadian born,” King noted, and “hear her tell in her simple natural way of being born at St. Hilaire, going at 2 years of age to Montreal, winning a Strathcona scholarship [awarded by the philanthropist Lord Strathcona] & then going to England.

⁸⁴⁵ Diary August 28, 1907.

⁸⁴⁶ See W.L. Mackenzie King, “100 Years of Peace. I” and “100 Years of Peace. II” in his *The Message of the Carillon and Other Addresses* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1927), 171. King became Minister of Labour when Parliament resumed sitting in November of 1909. His proposal at the Harvard Commencement led to the establishment of Centenary of Peace Celebration committees in Canada, the U.S. and Great Britain. See Diary March 12, 1912 and February 11, 1913.

⁸⁴⁷ Diary September 25, 1911. King abandoned the Laurier biography in 1913. See “Biography of Sir Wilfrid Laurier” in George F. Henderson, *W. L. Mackenzie King: A Bibliography and Research Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 319-321.

⁸⁴⁸ Diary February 29, 1912.

She said, if I had not won that then I might have been nothing – going 2 years to Paris & commencing concert first, then last year opera.”⁸⁴⁹

King continued to promote his proposal for an international monument to commemorate the centennial of the end of the War of 1812. At a 1914 luncheon of Harvard graduates at the Rideau Club, he “suggested that the Secretary communicate with [John] Stewart of the Peace Committee in New York, expressing our appreciation as Harvard men resident in Ottawa of the proposed gift of a monument to Francis Parkman by the Committee.”⁸⁵⁰ Eight months later he met with the American sculptor Gutzon Borglum in his studio in New York to view his model of the monument and to discuss with him what historical figures should be represented on it.⁸⁵¹ With the outbreak of World War I, and as a member of the national executive of the Canadian Patriotic Fund, he was one of five speakers who launched the Ottawa campaign of the Fund at the Russell Theatre on September 28, 1914. The other speakers were the Governor General, the Duke of Connaught, Prime Minister Robert Borden, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and Sir George Foster, the Minister of Trade and Commerce.⁸⁵²

⁸⁴⁹ Diary March 1, 1912. Despite a subsidy of over \$100,000 [over \$2 million in 2014 dollars] from one of its founders, the businessman and arts patron Frank Stephen Meighen, the Montreal Opera Company went bankrupt in 1913 after incurring deficits of \$22,000, \$50,000 and \$65,000 in its first three seasons. It had presented nearly 300 performances in Montreal, other Canadian cities and in the US. See Helmut Kallmann, Gilles Potvin, Kenneth Winters, eds. *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 612, 637.

⁸⁵⁰ Diary May 6, 1914.

⁸⁵¹ Diary December 9, 1914. Borglum would later gain international fame sculpting the monumental American presidents’ heads at Mount Rushmore, South Dakota. King again was not impressed with Borglum’s personality. “He was rougher & coarser in manner than I had expected of one who has done so much for the fine arts and he seemed to me essentially a toady, a man who was looking for contracts and thought he might secure them by touching up the vanities of those he deals with. He is too obvious in what he says in this direction.” The onset of World War I led to the eventual abandonment of the proposal for an international peace celebration. See Diary August 19, 1914.

⁸⁵² Diary December 31, 1914, page 60. In his November 11, 1914 diary entry, King described a meeting of the executive of the Canadian Patriotic Fund, presided by the Governor General, as consisting of “some of the most influential businessmen of Canada.”

King's work for the Rockefeller Foundation in New York from December 1914 to 1918 introduced him to the highest social circles in the United States and allowed him to experience how the wealthiest American elites consumed arts and culture and distinguished and unified themselves through the consumption of high art. Julia Gilbert, wife of the prominent architect Cass Gilbert, designer of the world's tallest sky scraper, the Woolworth Building in New York, invited him to dinner at the Cosmopolitan Club followed by "an exceptionally enjoyable night" and a "spectacular and really charming" show at the Hippodrome.⁸⁵³ The day after he accepted the offer from John D. Rockefeller Jr. to work for the Rockefellers as a labour consultant, King attended the Metropolitan Opera and heard Caruso in *Pagliacci* and Emmy Destinn in *Cavalleria Rusticana* at the invitation of Candace Hewitt, the daughter of Mary Ashley Hewitt and the inventor and industrialist Edward Ringwood Hewitt.⁸⁵⁴ In 1915 he lunched with Robert Livingston Gerry, whom, along with his brother Peter, he had tutored at Harvard in 1898 and 1899, and "went during the afternoon with Mrs. Gerry to the opera [*Fidelio*] to join a party in Mrs. [E.H.] Harriman's box."⁸⁵⁵

Robert Gerry had married Cornelia Averell Harriman, the daughter of railroad baron E.H. Harriman, in 1908. When Harriman died the following year, he left his wife an estate valued from \$70 to \$100 million. King recorded that Mrs. E.H. Harriman reminded "me much in appearance of Mother, particularly the upper parts of her face and the eyes. They express a

⁸⁵³ Diary December 2, 1914.

⁸⁵⁴ Diary December 5, 1914. For their daughter's 1913 debut, the Hewitt's built a Greek open air theatre on their country estate in the Ramapo Mountains for a professional production of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. See "Greek Theatre Set for Miss Hewitt," *New York Times*, September 27, 1913, p. 13. King developed a decades-long friendship with the Hewitts. He was their guest in a box party at the Metropolitan Opera to hear *Tannhäuser* in 1915 and took Mrs. Hewitt to hear Walter Damrosch and the New York Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall in 1918 and to *Parsifal* in 1921. See Diary January 13, 1915, February 23, 1918 and March 25, 1921.

⁸⁵⁵ Diary December 31, 1914, page 204. In his extended summary of his involvement with the Rockefeller Foundation, King's typewritten diary for 1914-15 totals 776 pages (all dated December 31, 1914). The first 74 pages cover June 1 to December 31, 1914. The diary concludes on November 21, 1915 (see transcription annotations for January 1, 1915 and diary January 4-6, 1915). Peter Gerry had been elected to the House of Representatives in 1913 and would be elected to the Senate in 1916.

singularly pure and transparent purpose” and that she “invited me to come to the opera tomorrow afternoon with the Japanese Ambassador Chinda and his wife.”⁸⁵⁶ King carefully nurtured the social capital he had created through his high society connections. During a visit three years later, Mrs. Harriman “took from a vase of white carnations a very lovely one and placed it in my button hole, telling me to come & see her whenever I came to New York. She said to feel at home in her home and was equally kind in other remarks.”⁸⁵⁷

One of the obstacles King faced in 1915 in helping the Rockefellers overcome the public relations disaster following the Ludlow Massacre in Colorado was dealing with J.F. Welborn, president of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company. Welborn did not want to implement King’s reform proposals for industrial representation until the United Mine Workers strikers had completely caved in.⁸⁵⁸ King’s familiarity with and enjoyment of the arts helped him to befriend the Welborns. According to F.A. McGregor, King’s secretary, “Mrs. Welborn was a gifted woman with a wide range of interests in the world of art and music, as well as in poetry and religion.”⁸⁵⁹ In 1917 King dined with the Welborns and “went with them to the theatre after to see George Arliss in Alexander Hamilton [*Hamilton* by Mary Hamlin and George Arliss].” The following day, he and Mrs. Welborn visited the Metropolitan Museum.⁸⁶⁰

In his investigation of the poor working and living conditions of miners in the company camps in Colorado for the Rockefellers, King had observed that “so far as the social needs of the miners are concerned, there is practically nothing to minister to any of these in the different camps.” He noted that “except the club building going up at Sopris, there is no proper club house, library, lecture hall, entertainment hall in existence. The saloons have served such social purposes as these buildings might be turned to. There is nothing being done to foster a development of art or

⁸⁵⁶ Diary December 31, 1914, pages 240 and 241.

⁸⁵⁷ Diary February 20, 1918.

⁸⁵⁸ F.A. McGregor, *The Fall & Rise of Mackenzie King: 1911-1919* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1962), 148, 175.

⁸⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 161. Dawson, 240.

⁸⁶⁰ Diary October 29 and 30, 1917.

of music among the children.”⁸⁶¹ King had written approvingly of Jane Addams’ work in art education for poor immigrant children he had witnessed at Hull House in Chicago. But I have found no indication that he proposed similar initiatives for the miners’ camps in Colorado.

What does emerge clearly from King’s diaries is his association of high art with the wealthy class, an association that would be reinforced by his visits to the family estates of aristocrats and the homes of prominent men and women in England, Europe and the United States during his subsequent travels as Prime Minister. With the Rockefellers’ this meant not only dinner at seven at their house followed by engagements such as attending a show at the Hippodrome, hearing the evangelist Billy Sunday and a choir at Carnegie Hall or “a party at the Grand Opera” (*The Tales of Hoffman* by the Chicago Opera Association)⁸⁶² but also being shown the art treasures collected by John D. Rockefeller Jr. After lunch with Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller in 1922, four months after he had become Prime Minister, he was shown new rooms “which have some magnificent tapestries on exhibition—a Buddhist room & a gothic room, most interesting & sumptuous. Mr. R. presented me with a Japanese ivory carving, quite beautifully executed.”⁸⁶³ He visited the Rockefellers again after his re-election as Prime Minister in 1926 following a “magnificent” production of *Faust* at the Metropolitan, with the Canadian Edward Johnson in the title role. King noted that he “had a very pleasant hour’s talk with them. I quite liked a painting of Mr. R. I saw. They were both most kind & affable.”⁸⁶⁴ In 1938, Rockefeller showed King his new residence on 740 Park Avenue. “The apartment was filled with the most lovely Chinese porcelain, a few exquisite rugs and tapestries and fine paintings including an exceptionally good one of Mr. Rockefeller, Sr., by Sargent.”⁸⁶⁵

⁸⁶¹ Diary December 31, 1914, pages 563-564.

⁸⁶² Diary March 7, 1917, February 18 and 20, 1918 and February 1, 1919. King also attended an unnamed opera matinee with John D. Rockefeller Jr. on March 1, 1919, either Galli-Curci in *Lucia di Lammermoor* for the final matinee performance of the Chicago Opera Association at the Lexington or Geraldine Farrar in *La Reine Fiamette* at the Metropolitan. King heard Galli-Curci at Loews in Ottawa in 1922 and “after called on her & her husband in the theatre dressing room. They were both very pleasant.” Diary November 15, 1922.

⁸⁶³ Diary April 16, 1922.

⁸⁶⁴ Diary March 5, 1927.

⁸⁶⁵ Diary October 9, 1938.

King had made a concerted effort “to open the door to [such] a new home” in 1917 when he met Margaret Carnegie, the only daughter of the philanthropist and former steel magnate Andrew Carnegie, at one time the richest person in the world after John D. Rockefeller Sr., and believed she could become his wife. He sought his mother’s permission and blessing to court Margaret and “told mother of my visit to the Carnegie’s and how I felt about the family and the ideals of democracy and life as I saw them.”

I told her of my purpose to get to know that home and avail myself of the chances to know the inner life & thought of Miss Carnegie. She told me to do so. How wonderfully beautiful and as the very gift of God Himself it would be, if we should find in each other that which we have each sought in our heart of hearts. What service to the world would not be possible ‘yoked in all exercise of noble ends’ with such opportunities. I feel that a way is opening, but scarcely dare to hope, but I feel that I have seen a glimpse of soul life and reverence for the true things of life in that house which is an inspiration to go on, and go on I shall to do what is the will of God. It has ever been my prayer that my mother & my love for her should give me the woman I am to love as my own.”⁸⁶⁶

Margaret Carnegie was not interested in marrying King. But the values and beliefs generated by King’s *habiti*—a Christian and spiritual world view, devotion to a family loved one, and a love of art—fostered a life-long friendship with Mrs. Carnegie. When he visited her at her residence at 2 East 91st Street in 1918, he “was shown into the art gallery. Mrs. Carnegie came in a few minutes later & we talked for an hour and a half. I told her about mother’s illness and of our happiness together & she spoke of her care of Mr. Carnegie...I shewed her the picture of mother (copy of large painting) & also one of father’s paintings & little photo of mother at Kingsmere. She spoke particularly of it; the light, sort of halo over the head; also remarked what a fine looking man father was. We talked of the war & she referred to it as a conflict between materialistic & spiritual forces.”⁸⁶⁷ On a visit a quarter century later, Mrs. Carnegie again led King “into the Art Gallery to see the revolving Christmas tree with its lights and music box. I was interested most of all in the beautiful paintings in the room. There was one of Mrs. Carnegie’s mother near the

⁸⁶⁶ Diary March 10, 1917. Stacey, 111-112. The citation is from Tennyson’s poem “Princess.”

⁸⁶⁷ Diary February 16, 1918.

painting of Mr. Carnegie. The picture of Mrs. Carnegie's mother makes me think often of your mother, she said to me. I mentioned the silhouette was the same."⁸⁶⁸

But for King the arts had another function besides entertainment, memorializing deceased family members, and establishing status, distinction and common class values. He frequently saw—particularly in theatre and opera performances and literature—similar revelations and guidance as he obtained from his daily Bible reading. When he went to see George Arliss in *Hamilton* with the Welborn's in New York in 1917, for example, the play about the American Revolutionary leader and politician "made me feel more than ever that politics was my right field—the only real one for full & true expression."⁸⁶⁹ And after he saw the morality play *Experience* in Ottawa the same year, he wrote that it was "true to life, but not so good as 'Every Woman,'" which he had seen on October 15. "More & more I feel the strength of underlying moral laws & the national need of the country's policies being in accord with them."⁸⁷⁰

King's Cultural Authority as Leader of the Opposition

In August of 1919, King gained additional political capital—and commensurate increased cultural authority—through his election as Leader of the Liberal Party and thereby also as Leader of the Opposition in Parliament. By the time Arthur Meighen replaced Sir Robert Borden as Prime Minister and Leader of the Conservative and Unionist Party in July of 1920, the days of the Unionist Government that had ruled Canada since December 1917 were clearly numbered.

Only two months after he became Party Leader, King wrote the Canadian sculptor Robert Tait McKenzie "suggesting a monument to Wilfrid [sic] Campbell."⁸⁷¹ John Andrew Pearson, architect with Jean-Omer Marchand of the Centre Block of the new Parliament Buildings, consulted King about mural decorations for the Office of the Leader of the Opposition. King

⁸⁶⁸ Diary December 15, 1943.

⁸⁶⁹ Diary October 29, 1917.

⁸⁷⁰ Diary October 31 and 15, 1917.

⁸⁷¹ Diary December 12, 1919.

“suggested Isaiah – What doth the Lord require of thee...[but to do justly, and to love] mercy...[and to walk] humbly with thy God [Micah 5:8] – then shall thy light etc. [Isaiah 58] – as suitable & something from the New Testament. I think he will act on the suggestion—if so little Bell [his deceased sister] will have left this imprint on the House of Commons. I came back much thrilled with the idea, and deeply moved by it, a real vision of my own work.”⁸⁷² When he subsequently invited the architect to dinner, he “got Pearson to tell of features of Parliament buildings. What he is seeking to convey of Canada’s greatness, her vitality, strength & position etc. as a nation.”⁸⁷³

King saw Sir John and Lady Martin-Harvey for the first time in 1921 in *David Garrick* and during their later tours to Ottawa formed a friendship with both actors.⁸⁷⁴ But he was much more profoundly moved by seeing *Parsifal* and *Maria Stuart* in New York two months later. He had again been troubled by sleepless nights and sexual and spiritual conflicts in March, writing in his diary that “When I woke this a.m. shortly after 8 I thought it would be wise to go to New York for Easter & hear Parsifal on Good Friday.” He left on the train for New York for three days the same afternoon, “hardly knowing why I was going away” but provided a clue as to the motivation for his abrupt journey. “Had remarkable evidences of forces of certain powers as I left.”⁸⁷⁵

Accompanied by Mary Ashley Hewitt, he attended the “wonderful production” of *Parsifal* at the Metropolitan on March 25 and “saw the meaning of Good & Evil in love as never before. The reality of it. This is something we are only beginning to comprehend. The subconscious self & its powers & influence. To believe in the reality of good & of evil is the beginning of wisdom...The play of dual personality is very real in this great production.”⁸⁷⁶ King was presumably referring to Kundry who appears as a repulsive crone who helps the Knights of the Holy Grail but is transformed into an irresistibly beautiful maiden in the magic garden of the sorcerer Klingsor.

⁸⁷² Diary December 30, 1919.

⁸⁷³ Diary February 24, 1920.

⁸⁷⁴ Diary January 10, 1921: King thought Martin-Harvey “remarkably good, Lady Harvey too old for the part. Support good.”

⁸⁷⁵ Diary March 23, 1921.

Under his spell, she seduced the Grail King Amfortas so that he put aside the holy spear that had pierced Christ on the cross and was himself struck with it by Klingsor, who inflicted a wound that will not heal. Kundry also attempts unsuccessfully to seduce Parsifal in Klingsor's magic realm. King read the entire libretto of *Parsifal* before going to sleep the night after the performance and recorded in his diary that "It was like seeing into the spiritual world. World of good & evil forces which control our actions through our emotions."

His diary reveals that—as for Amfortas—it was again physical sensations for which he had been treated by Dr. Barker at John Hopkins in 1916—and his fear of "being influenced electrically by others"—that had brought him to New York to see *Parsifal*. "I was wakened about 6 with feelings akin to those experienced in Ottawa. Though an occasion of distress, it was a source of mental relief, as I was able to assure myself, they rose from within myself & were not directly attributable to power possessed by one which is not possessed by another. I knew Mrs. H. [Hewitt] would exert no occult influence—was able therefore to feel that what I have been experiencing is largely due to my own thought & subconscious life." Despite his mental relief, he was still "the worse for the feelings through the day as they work out into expression too frequently and plague me."⁸⁷⁷

The next day, almost as a corrective, King went to see John Drinkwater's *Mary Stuart* at the Ritz, with Clare Eames as the Queen of the Scots. In contrast with the seductress Kundry praying upon men's sexual weaknesses, he perceived Eames in the title role as the kind of woman who would provide stability and inspiration in his life. "It was a quite wonderful production by Drinkwater, illustrating the hunger of a woman for a love that can control her life & the power of love to make for a realization of self & greatness. It was an amazing revelation of a truth I feel in my own nature. The need for a love great enough to enable me to do my best... It too dwelt on what we inherit – of capacity & possible tendency to love."⁸⁷⁸

⁸⁷⁶ Diary March 25, 1921.

⁸⁷⁷ Diary March 26, 1921.

⁸⁷⁸ Idem. Clare Eames emphasized the regal and downplayed the seductive aspects of Mary's character. According to Alexander Woolcott, "her famous coquetry seems rather prim and

In another attempt to modify his sexual *habitus*, King purchased a copy of Harvey Jerrold O'Higgins' *The Secret Springs* "which Mr. Rockefeller had recommended as helping to solve problems in my thought."⁸⁷⁹ He read its first two chapters on board the train from Montreal on his return to Ottawa. In his second chapter, "In Love and Marriage," O'Higgins vividly described patients whose Freudian parental fixations and transferences to their partners caused difficulties in their marriage and physical health. King "Found this book the most satisfying of anything I have read in years. It was like a revelation of truth from Heaven...The chapter on Love & Marriage explains what has troubled me most."

In this chapter O'Higgins writes, "We find that the subconscious mind even preserves a picture of events that occurred in infancy before the child had developed any reasoning intelligence whatever."

And among those pictures we find the 'mother image,' the indelible but unconscious picture of the person upon whom our first instinctive love was centered...But the curious thing is that the image is not an ideal of character and qualities and attributes. It is merely an image. It has merely physical characteristics of height and features, hands and eyes, this sort of nose and that color of hair. And just as, in the child, the sight of his mother started up the whole emotion of instinctive love, so, in later years, the sight of any physical characteristic of the mother may have the same effect on him.⁸⁸⁰

King constantly saw physical aspects of his mother reflected in other women and in works of art. In a major insight into his own life he realized, "I see that Mother's love, my love for Mother controls me absolutely, that whatever disappoints or wounds or runs counter to that love provokes the most violent reaction. I see what has caused me to feel as I do. Now I must seek to react in a true way & gain a true power."⁸⁸¹

unbeguiling, and in the tumultuous scene of passion with the somewhat bovine Bothwell...the tryst seems as hot and swift and terrific as the meeting of two glaciers." See his "Second Thoughts on First Nights," *New York Times*, April 3, 1921, p. 86.

⁸⁷⁹ Diary March 26, 1921.

⁸⁸⁰ Jerrold O'Higgins' *The Secret Springs* (New York: Harper, 1920), 20-21.

⁸⁸¹ Diary March 27, 1921.

While he continued to struggle for mastery over himself by seeking to have his will control his emotions and sexual instinct, King quickly achieved political power and status. The Conservative Government asked him to be one of the speakers at “the presentation of Rodin’s bust ‘France Victorious’ by the French mission to the Government of Canada” the end of June. He noted that the presentation made in the Parliamentary Committee Room by Marshall Foyelle “was a distinguished one and the occasion a real event.”⁸⁸²

Five months later, after campaigning across Canada, King returned to his apartment in the Roxborough in Ottawa and voted in the December 6 federal election. He “Came to my rooms, oh so glad to see them again, all so peaceful & quiet; there knelt in prayer before dear Mother’s picture and thanked God for his protecting providence through all. Looked lovingly at pictures of father & little Bell and Max & of the Christ in my painting [*The Crown of Thorns*]; all had their messages for me... I believe I shall see fulfilled what dear Mother and I saw together in the page of Gladstone’s Life open on her lap in the [1905 Forster] painting of her – ‘The Prime Minister’ – but it is all as God wills.”

After awaiting positive election results from across the country for six hours in the House of Commons with Joan and Godfroy Patteson, King once again “came right to my room from the House & knelt in prayer before dear Mother’s picture—asked Almighty God to make me worthy of her and father & Bell & Grandfather, at whose pictures I also looked and above all of the Christ before the painting of whom in ‘The Crown of Thorns’ I bowed in deepest reverence. I gave all to His keeping, surrendered all to His will which alone I shall seek to serve.”⁸⁸³

This was Mackenzie King’s mindset and world-view—shaped by his various *habiti*—when he became Prime Minister. The arts were an integral part of his thinking and feeling, even when he tried to understand and control his sexual *habitus* and emotional conflicts. For King, works of art were often physical objects that conveyed private or public symbolic meanings, were instruments

⁸⁸² Diary June 29, 1921.

⁸⁸³ Diary December 6, 1921.

in ritualistic actions, and transmitted messages to and from deceased family members, his political idols and God. This private and public perception of the arts guided King in the field of cultural production as Prime Minister. His activities in the field of culture blended with and became part of his activities in the field of political power, which conveyed him his highest cultural authority. The election of December 1921 placed the Liberals just one seat short of a majority in the House of Commons. King became not only Prime Minister but also secured the next two most powerful positions in his Cabinet—President of the Privy Council and Secretary of State for External Affairs.⁸⁸⁴

Mackenzie King's Cultural Authority as Prime Minister 1921-1930

King had become acquainted with the complexities and, often unintentional, consequences of government policies affecting culture already six months before he was first elected to Parliament in October of 1908. E.H. Laschinger, the former secretary of Sir William Mulock, brought to his attention that “one of the effects of the so-called ‘intellectual preference’ excluding American publications of a certain sort had been to let in a lot of trash from England & not greatly to increase the really valuable publication from England while it excluded many of the better from the U.S. He thought matters were getting into a hopeless muddle.” King, referring to Governor General Earl Grey, “could not help remarking how in a way His Excellency’s enthusiasm along Imperial lines had carried away some of the Ministers & resulted in difficulties.”⁸⁸⁵

He would face a similar complex issue of ensuring unfettered public access to cultural products with his Cabinet in 1927. “At 5 we met at a conference on need for amending Copyright legislation,” he recorded, “to prevent a combine on part of ‘performing rights’ group that is seeking to monopolize right of theatres, churches, exhibitions, radios, hotels from playing any composition without first taking out a license entitling them to play any one of a million or two

⁸⁸⁴ Dawson, 343, 356, 360.

⁸⁸⁵ Diary April 29, 1908.

controlled numbers.” King thought this was “the worst thing I have heard of in the way of a combine. We had an interesting hour. Rinfret [Fernand Rinfret from Quebec, the Secretary of State] was a little strong in his opposition on behalf of the authors & composers, not quite getting the point.”⁸⁸⁶

The only major federal government policy with wide-ranging cultural implications that King established during his twenty-one years as Prime Minister also eventually addressed the need for public access to cultural products through public ownership of the air waves. Again the complexity of circumscribing private with public ownership of radio stations and the length of time required to implement this policy may have contributed to King’s reluctance to introduce other government policies affecting culture.

Radio broadcasting began in Canada in December of 1919 over the Canadian Marconi Company of Montreal’s station XWA (now CFCF). Mackenzie King heard one of its broadcasts (an orchestra and soloist Dorothy Lutton) May 20, 1920.⁸⁸⁷ King’s speeches began being transmitted on radio on December 6, 1923, two years after the Liberals returned to power. He quickly recognized the political and technological impact of the new medium, writing in his diary after one of his speeches was broadcast to all parts of British Columbia, “What a marvel this radio is and the premium it puts on clear and effective thinking & speaking. How little by little the truth of the scriptures is working out, the voice going to all quarters of the globe, and the man of clear brain & spiritual power being the one who will control multitudes.”⁸⁸⁸ After receiving letters from listeners in western Canada and the United States praising the clearness and distinctness of his voice on radio he noted, “When one thinks we are but at the threshold of all this may lead to, one cannot but feel that we are in an epoch of transition greater than that of the days of the Renaissance or industrial revolution.”⁸⁸⁹

⁸⁸⁶ Diary March 17, 1927.

⁸⁸⁷ E. Austin Weir. *The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965), 1.

⁸⁸⁸ Diary October 22, 1924.

⁸⁸⁹ Diary November 28, 1924.

In his *Strange Bedfellows: The State and the Arts in Canada*, George Woodcock pointed out that “In none of the early documents relating to establishing a national broadcasting system was there much reference to radio as an instrument for cultural development or...as an agency that in some way might foster the arts.” Woodcock noted that “The first aims under consideration seemed to be patriotism—how to build up and sustain the image of a nation—and power—how to apportion control over a medium of unparalleled efficacy in the dissemination of information.”⁸⁹⁰

This was also Mackenzie King’s perception and use of the new medium. In 1926 he “went to the C.N.R. rooms & read a paper over the radio on ‘Save the Forest’ which had been well prepared by Cameron of the Department.”⁸⁹¹ As part of Canada’s Diamond Jubilee of Confederation celebrations July 1-3, 1927, his Confederation speech on Parliament Hill was heard on radio from Halifax to Victoria and as far as England and Brazil. “Never before was the human voice heard at one & the same time over such an extent of the world’s surface & by so many people,” he recorded. “It was the beginning of Canada’s place in the world, as a world power.”⁸⁹² After the Jubilee ceremonies, during which the bells in the Peace Tower were played for the first time and broadcast in the first twenty-three station national hook-up, he marveled at “the accounts that keep coming in of the radio broadcasting of the carillon and the speeches. It has been a real unifying force in our Dominion.”⁸⁹³

A year later King and his Cabinet discussed radio broadcasting policy. “I proposed following the British system & have Government take over control of all. Cardin [Arthur Cardin from Quebec,

⁸⁹⁰ George Woodcock. *Strange Bedfellows: The State and the Arts in Canada* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1985), 37. In order to prevent Canadian radio stations from falling under U.S. control, “federal legislation in 1923 stipulated that only British subjects could apply for broadcasting licenses.” See Jonathan F. Vance. *A History of Canadian Culture* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2009), 352. In 1927 the Radio Telegraph Act “began the first tentative regulation of broadcasting in Canada through the establishment of the Federal Radio Commission.” Woodcock, 35, 36.

⁸⁹¹ Diary April 21, 1926.

⁸⁹² Diary July 1, 1927.

⁸⁹³ Diary July 12, 1927.

Minister of the Department of Marine] was of same view; it was agreed he should bring in program to Council.”⁸⁹⁴ On December 6, 1928, King established the Royal Commission on Broadcasting, chaired by Sir John Aird, President of the Canadian Bank of Commerce, “to make recommendations to the government as to the future administration, management, control, and financing thereof.”⁸⁹⁵ Later known as the Aird Commission, its September 1929 Report recognized radio’s great educational potential and recommended the establishment of a nationalized radio system, patterned on the British Broadcasting Corporation, which would be capable of “fostering a national spirit and interpreting national citizenship.”⁸⁹⁶

But it took years for King to incorporate radio listening into his own life. When he first heard himself on radio (a gramophone record of a speech during the 1925 federal election, which reduced him to a minority government, broadcast in Montreal), he did not recognize his own voice. “Whether there was the substitution at some subsequent stage of some other person or not, I cannot say. The voice does not sound to me like my own.”⁸⁹⁷ Early in 1927, after he dined Sir Henry Thornton, President of the publicly-owned Canadian National Railways who had begun installing a radio service on CNR trains in 1923 to entertain passengers, “Sir Henry promised to put in a radio set at Laurier House.”⁸⁹⁸

In December of 1928, King sent his sister Jennie \$60 to buy a radio for her family in Barrie for Christmas.⁸⁹⁹ However, he does not appear to have received his own radio sets for Laurier House and his Kingsmere cottage until September of 1929, a decade after the beginning of radio broadcasting in Canada. These were installed by Thomas Ahearn, the prominent Liberal businessman, whom King had appointed as first president of the Ottawa Federal District

⁸⁹⁴ Diary March 21, 1928.

⁸⁹⁵ Weir, 103, 107. Diary November 30, 1928.

⁸⁹⁶ Vance, 355; Weir 108-110;

⁸⁹⁷ Diary November 17, 1925.

⁸⁹⁸ Diary February 27, 1927. Weir, 6-7.

⁸⁹⁹ Diary December 23 and 24, 1928.

Commission and as a member of the Privy Council in 1927.⁹⁰⁰ When he first turned on his “very fine radio” at Laurier House, he was appalled by the popular music he heard. “It seemed a sort of sacrilege to have that kind of music in my rooms.” He did enjoy “a little radio music, a truly wonderful reception in these parts” at Kingsmere two weeks later and revealed his taste for classical and religious music when he listened to the memorial service for Rev. Herridge at St. Andrews Church two months later. “The music was quite wonderful through the radio—‘a choir invisible.’”⁹⁰¹

But the great majority of comments in King’s diary regarding radio broadcasting were of a political rather than an artistic nature. “When one stops to think of the responsibility of speaking not only to a single audience but to an entire nation or part of a nation over the radio at the same time, one is almost aghast lest some lapse of memory, cold, fatigue or other misfortune should place a handicap in one’s way,” he recorded. Yet he concluded that he was still “persuaded that the radio is going to be a benefit to Liberalism in the end. It will prevent the local appeal which is where our opponents score.”⁹⁰² Public speaking was always a cause for great anxiety—even terror—for him. He noted losing 4½ pounds preparing his speech welcoming British Prime Minister Ramsey MacDonald to a state dinner in the reading room of the House of Commons. But the cross-Canada CNR and U.S. radio link-up of the event reached an estimated audience of three million.⁹⁰³

King almost always hated seeing himself on film in newsreels, writing shortly after the outbreak of World War II that “The film is becoming a sort of nightmare with me. I loathe my own appearance on the screen and the thought of having it reproduced destroys every natural feeling

⁹⁰⁰ Ahearn had already promised King in 1928 that he would bring electricity poles to Kingsmere and provide several electric fixtures for his summer cottage. See diary July 23 and 25, 1928. The radio itself was a gift from Paul J. Myler, the president of Canadian Westinghouse, “at Mr. Ahearn’s instance.” See diary September 20 and 29, 1929.

⁹⁰¹ Diary September 12 and 26 and November 24, 1929.

⁹⁰² Diary October 10, 1929.

⁹⁰³ Diary October 17, 18 and 19, 1929.

of joy in preparing anything. I become filled with a sort of fatal dismay.”⁹⁰⁴ Yet after speaking over the radio for two hours and twenty minutes from the Toronto Opera House in December of 1929, he was “sure the radio is going to prove to be a great unifying force throughout the country and the world.” “I believe it is going to help Liberal causes because of their appeal to the heart & sense of justice & freedom—equal rights & good-will. I believe personally, if I can keep in good condition the radio is going to help me very much for my voice apparently carries well, is clear & well modulated. I believe the most effective campaign work will be to speak to the country over the radio.”⁹⁰⁵ At the end of December, he proposed to his Cabinet combining radio with railways and civil aviation and “making it a department of Communications.”⁹⁰⁶

King did not act to implement the Aird Report’s recommendations for public ownership of radio because of the economic uncertainty caused by the stock market crash in October of 1929 and because of the forthcoming federal election in the summer of 1930. The question of who should own and control mass media did emerge during the 1930 federal campaign when the Famous Players Lasky Corporation in the U.S. sought to purchase the Famous Players Canadian Corporation, the largest chain of movie houses in the country. In 1928 Famous Players owned or controlled 153 motion picture, vaudeville and other theatres from Montreal to Victoria with a total seating capacity of 165,000, 25 million admissions and gross receipts of \$12.1 million [\$162 million in 2014 dollars].⁹⁰⁷ Ray Lewis, editor of the *Canadian Moving Pictures Digest* in Toronto, cabled King on May 8 protesting that such a sale would be “transferring to the United States domination of Canadian moving picture theatres. This will be the greatest obstacle in the introduction of Empire films into Canada. The loss of one of the most powerful mediums of propaganda into foreign control is a national and Empire menace.” Lewis commended King for “your policy Canada for Canadians” and asked whether Parliament could legislate in this matter.

⁹⁰⁴ Diary January 17, 1940.

⁹⁰⁵ Diary December 5, 1929.

⁹⁰⁶ Diary December 30, 1929.

⁹⁰⁷ By 1930 the company controlled 196 theatres with a seating capacity of over 215,000 and a yearly attendance in excess of 30 million. See “Famous Players Canadian Corporation Limited” and “Directors Promised Canadian Control,” *Canadian Moving Pictures Digest* 21:52 (April 26, 1930), 9, 10.

“As editor and publisher of *Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, I have been working for the past fifteen years to build up a Canadian film industry and as a Canadian I oppose its destruction.”⁹⁰⁸

One of the Famous Players Canadian Corporation directors whom Lewis attacked for selling his shares to the Famous Players Lasky Corporation in the U.S. was Izaak Walton Killam of Montreal, president of the Royal Securities Corporation, formerly owned by his friend Max Aitken. \$50 million [\$443 million in 2014 dollars] in inheritance taxes following Killam’s death in 1955 provided the initial funding for the Canada Council, together with a similar amount from the estate of Sir James H. Dunn.

Because Canadian artists unsuccessfully lobbied the Canadian government to support arts and culture over a period of seven years from 1941 to 1948, it is instructive to follow how Lewis lobbied King over a two-month period, what arguments he presented, and how the Prime Minister and his staff responded to these lobbying efforts. Lewis’ telegram of May 8 was acknowledged by King’s secretary, Harry Baldwin, the following day. Lewis followed up with a two-page letter to King on May 13. He pointed out that “every nation, regardless of its international importance, is now making a very concerted, and shall I say desperate, effort through legislation, to retain control of its screens for its own country.” He pointed out that the British film industry was greatly dependent on free access to Canada for its marketing efforts in the United States. “It is through the ‘Open Sesame’ policy which Canada has adopted toward British film product, that British producers have been enabled to establish the market here which they now enjoy, and to command some recognition in the United States markets.” Should their access to Canadian movie houses be lost, damage to the British film industry would be “inestimable.” Unlike American film studios which controlled both the production and distribution of their films and thereby sought to eliminate competition, Canada provided access “for the film product of the world” including “the best of the British products.” Canadian movie houses attracted thirty million viewers “from all classes and all ages” every year for an annual

⁹⁰⁸ Ray Lewis to Mackenzie King, May 8, 1930. LAC reel C2319, pages 150373-74. For coverage in the *Canadian Moving Pictures Digest* of the controversy about the sale of Famous Players Canadian Corporation, see its issues of April 26, May 3, 10, 17, 24, 31, June 17, 14 and 28, and July 12, 1930.

box office of \$2 million [\$27 million in 2014 dollars]. He informed King about the establishment of a Protective Association for Minority Shareholders which “unanimously voted against the control of Famous Players passing to the American company.” And he concluded his letter by pointing to the assistance given by the American government “to one of its most powerful industries, an industry which is forever reaching out for World Film Control.”⁹⁰⁹

Harry Baldwin again acknowledged receipt of Lewis’ letter, “as directed by the Prime Minister,” on May 16. “The unusually heavy pressure of Parliamentary work at this time makes it impossible for Mr. King to have the pleasure of writing to you personally.” He added that King “had, however, asked that your letter be brought to the immediate attention of the Minister of Trade and Commerce, and to ensure you that your representations will receive every consideration.”⁹¹⁰ Baldwin also acknowledged “receipt of detailed copies of written information concerning the proposed merger of the Famous Players Canadian Corporation and the Famous Players Lasky Corporation” from Arthur Roebuck, the prominent Bay Street labour lawyer and later Minister of Labour and Attorney General for Ontario in Mitchell Hepburn’s Liberal provincial government. After speaking with Roebuck on the telephone, Baldwin contacted the Minister of Trade and Commerce “regarding your proposed visit” and wrote Roebuck that “the matter was also brought to the attention of the Prime Minister, so you may rest assured that your representations, both verbal and written, will receive every consideration.”⁹¹¹

Lewis cabled King again on May 15 informing him that, “About seven hundred shareholders Famous Players Canadian Corporation have sent proxies voting unanimously against sale Canada’s screens to foreign control. These shareholders are among leading financiers and industrialists of Dominion. Aside from financial unfairness of proposed sale they stress national menace to Canadian Empire trade and that we are giving away to a foreign country greatest medium of propaganda service which we own.” Lewis informed King that there was a meeting

⁹⁰⁹ Lewis to King, May 14, 1930. LAC reel C2319, pages 150375-76. The letter is annotated by King’s staff, “Copy sent to Secretary of State 28-5-30.”

⁹¹⁰ Harry Baldwin to Ray Lewis, May 16, 1930. LAC reel C2319, page 150377.

⁹¹¹ Baldwin to Arthur Roebuck, May 20, 1930. LAC reel C2322, page 153854.

that night at the King Edward Hotel in Toronto of a newly formed protective association of minority shareholders of Famous Players to protest the proposed sale and asked King to send a message to the meeting.⁹¹²

The Prime Minister was focusing all his efforts to get government legislation through Parliament by the end of May so that an election could be called before August and a government was in place in time for the Imperial Conference scheduled for London in September of 1930. When he did not respond, Lewis sent another telegram on May 17 informing King that eight hundred shareholders of the Famous Players Canadian Corporation holding approximately 100,000 shares unanimously voted against the sale of the company to American interests. The meeting at the King Edward Hotel “appeals to the Governments at both Ottawa and Toronto to pass soon legislation as will ensure the control of the Canadian moving picture screen in the hands of British citizens.”⁹¹³

Another telegram from Lewis on May 20, now signed in his capacity as secretary of the Famous Players Shareholders Protective Association, sought to increase the political pressure by informing King that “numerous inquiries have reached me through the mail and by telegram inquiring as to what action the Government is taking in this matter.” He again asked “Can a medium of propaganda which talks to thirty million people yearly in our Dominion be allowed to pass to American control” and thanked King for “the courtesy of your personal consideration.”⁹¹⁴

On May 29, the day before Parliament was prorogued, Lewis cabled King and marshalled every political and economic argument he could muster for government intervention. He asserted that “the film question is one which interests every women’s organization in the Dominion having child welfare or national interest committees.” He acknowledged that his minority shareholders were aware that “the government cannot act on a matter which involves a mere sale or exchange of shares of any company.” Yet he argued that “the passing of Famous Players Canadian Theatres

⁹¹² Lewis to King, May 15, 1930. LAC reel C2319, pages 150378-79.

⁹¹³ Lewis to King, May 17, 1930. LAC reel C2319, pages 150380-81.

to American control is not an ordinary business manipulation but has a national complication and significance. It means that Canada is giving away a national educational and trade asset the value of which cannot be computed in dollars and the effect of which will be felt not only in the film industry throughout the Empire but in Canada's general trade and commerce."

He asked rhetorically, "If the United States marine powers offered Canadian shareholders their shares in exchange for control of Canada's harbours or waterways or [if] the United States railroads wished to absorb the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific railroads of Canada, would the Government look upon such an exchange of shares as a mere business transaction or would be moved to preserve our national power and assets within our own Dominion?" He concluded by asserting that "there is a general outcry in every country against the world film monopoly program of Paramount Famous Lasky" and again asked King to "bring this matter to the attention of the House."⁹¹⁵ In the May 31 *Canadian Moving Pictures Digest*, Lewis reported that "No other than the Opposition Leader, the Hon. R.B. Bennett, proposed to the Government that some action should be taken, stressing the present National angle. *The Premier of Canada, the Right Hon. Mackenzie King, read a letter from the Secretary of State, dealing with the Government's position in relationship to the matter. The Minister of Labour reported that Famous Players Canadian was now under investigation by the Government under the Combines Act, and the Opposition Leader stated that the Paramount was under Government observation in the U.S.*"⁹¹⁶

King was also being lobbied to intervene to prevent the sale of Famous Players by Wilfred Hanbury, who would be elected as a Liberal in the July 28 election in the riding of Vancouver-Burrard. Hanbury cabled King on June 8: "Recognizing the value that moving pictures could be in developing a Canadian national spirit and believing it is not in the national interests that this industry should not [sic] be under foreign control, also that preference should be given to British

⁹¹⁴ Lewis to King, May 20, 1930. LAC reel C2319, pages 150382-83.

⁹¹⁵ Lewis to King, May 29, 1930. LAC reel C2319, pages 150384-88.

⁹¹⁶ Ray Lewis, "Ray Presents," *Canadian Moving Pictures Digest* 22:5 (May 31, 1930), 4. Italics in the original.

pictures and encouragement given to the development of this industry within Canada resulting in the employment of many of our people, I would suggest your immediate announcement that a commission is to be appointed to make a full investigation.”⁹¹⁷

Hanbury’s telegram resulted in a Privy Council memorandum for a scheduled June 14 meeting of the Privy Council. Its subject was “Development of moving picture industry in Canada and preference to British pictures.” Yet the sections of the extant memorandum, “Action taken by Council:” and “Further action necessary:” are blank.⁹¹⁸ King’s diary for June 14 reveals that, due to the forthcoming election, only three other ministers besides King were still in Ottawa and suggests that the question of control over Canadian movie screens did not come up for discussion. Despite Ray Lewis’ persistent lobbying, Arthur Roebuck’s intervention, and Wilfred Hanbury’s proposal for the appointment of a government commission, King does not even refer to the Famous Players Canadian Corporation controversy in his diaries. He was therefore probably not aware that at the end of May “Ray Lewis” revealed herself to be “Miss Ray Lewis,” (and subsequently as Mrs. Joshua Smith) and that she declared her intention to seek the Conservative nomination in West Centre, Toronto, where the offices of the *Canadian Moving Pictures Digest* were located. The publication endorsed R.B. Bennett and the Conservatives in its June 28 issue. Another endorsement on July 12 noted that Bennett had expressed his viewpoint on motion pictures “no less than three times in the House of Commons” and that “Mr. Bennett’s opinion is that the Screens of Canada are a national asset to the country!”⁹¹⁹

After the Governor General dissolved Parliament on May 30, 1930, a very tired King returned to Laurier House with “thoughts of dear Father & Mother, Bell & Max, Grandfather, Sir Wilfrid &

⁹¹⁷ W.F. Hanbury to King, June 8, 1930. LAC reel C2318, pages 148682-83.

⁹¹⁸ June 14, 1930 Privy Council Memorandum. LAC reel C2318, page 148684.

⁹¹⁹ See “Making Canada ‘Healthy, Wealthy and Wise’ Is Ray Lewis Political Platform,” *Canadian Moving Pictures Digest* 22:5 (May 31, 1930), 6; Mrs. Joshua Smith, “Have Women a Political Conscience?” 22:11 (July 12, 1930), 14; Ray Lewis, “Blasting for Good Business,” 22:7 (June 28, 1930), 3; and Ray Lewis, “A National Asset,” 22:11 (July 12, 1930), 3. Mrs. Smith withdrew her nomination for the Toronto West Centre riding in favour of “Tommy” Church who lost to the Liberal candidate.

Mr. Larkin...much in my mind. When I came home I kissed the lips of the marble bust of dear Mother, looked at the picture of the Crown of Thorns & looked at the portraits in the dining-room.”⁹²⁰ As in 1921, he concluded his cross-Canada electoral campaign two months later by again engaging in a family spiritual ritual with art objects. He “kissed lips of dear mother’s marble statue as I came into room.” Having previously “grasped the little photo of mother reading Gladstone’s Life & pressing it to my lips, said ‘Well sweetheart & we have done our part.’ I am sure dear mother has been with me throughout.” Two days before the election, he then prepared for a final nationwide radio broadcast from the dining room at Laurier House with its many familiar portraits. “There were the loved ones around me. I sat immediately opposite the painting of Sir Wilfrid, Grandfather looking at me over the shoulders on the right, dear father & mother side by side on the opposite side, Mr. Larkin looking down from the mantel & beyond grandmother (father’s mother). It was as if all those most dearly loved & to whom I owed most were about me in that memorable & sacred spot.”⁹²¹

But it was Prime Minister R.B. Bennett, immediately after winning the 1930 federal election, who appointed Peter White “to investigate more than 100 complaints against American film interests operating in Canada. White’s report concluded that FPCC was a combine ‘detrimental to the Public Interest.’”⁹²² Ironically, White’s investigation was carried out under the authority of the Combines Investigation Act which King had introduced as Minister of Labour in 1910 and revised, with much heavier penalties, as Prime Minister in 1923.⁹²³ It was also R.B. Bennett who appointed the Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting in March of 1932 and who, on the basis of its cross-Canada public hearings and recommendations, passed the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Act in May of 1932 that established a Canadian broadcasting system. As Bennett informed the House, which passed the Act with all-party support, “this country must be assured

⁹²⁰ Diary May 30, 1930.

⁹²¹ Diary July 26, 1930.

⁹²² Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and B.C. were subsequently unsuccessful in suing the Famous Players Canadian Corporation and the Canadian Motion Picture Distributors Association in court in Ontario for “conspiracy and combination.” See “The Canadian Film Industry” in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, accessed on-line March 6, 2013.

⁹²³ Dawson, 204-206.

of complete Canadian control of broadcasting from Canadian sources, free from foreign interference or influence. Without such control radio broadcasting...can never be the agency by which national consciousness may be featured and sustained and national unity still further strengthened.” Bennett was certain that “no other scheme than that of public ownership can ensure to the people of this country, without regard to class or place, equal enjoyment of the benefits and pleasures of radio broadcasting.”⁹²⁴

Mackenzie King as Canada’s First De Facto Minister of Culture

Until the advent of television, how to control mass media in Canada and finance the distribution of radio signals and programming across the vast North American landmass was the most difficult cultural challenge faced by the Canadian government. Yet there were numerous other instances in which issues involving culture and the arts emerged on a regular basis that required decision-making by someone knowledgeable in government. King had the most direct and extensive personal experience with the arts and the greatest cultural and political authority. He was either contacted directly by members of the public on cultural questions or had cultural matters requiring decision making referred to him by other members of his administration. The preliminary examination of the archival evidence that follows suggests that, in addition to serving as Prime Minister and Minister for External Affairs, Mackenzie King also assumed the functions and responsibilities of Canada’s first de facto minister of culture in the 1920s, as the following examples clearly show:

1921: Even before he became Prime Minister, Fred. W. Rose of Hunter Rose printers and bookbinders in Toronto forwarded King the pamphlet “The Copyright Question” on behalf of the Canadian Copyright Association and asked him to support Bill No. 12 before Parliament designed to protect authors’ copyright and “to insure the Canadian market for Canadian

⁹²⁴ House of Commons, Debates, May 18, 1932. Walter Leslie Whittaker, “The Canada Council for the Encouragement of the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences: Its Origins, Formation, Operation, and Influence Upon Theater in Canada.” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1965, 51-53. Vance, 408.

workmen.” King assured Rose “we shall take fully into account the considerations raised.”⁹²⁵ As Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, King declared that Canadian authors “have a hard enough struggle as it is to make anything out of their writings...and in an enactment of this kind, we should aim primarily at protecting them.”⁹²⁶

1922: After attending a meeting of Council to examine financial estimates in March, King recorded in his diary that he “was responsible for cutting 1 million off on drydock at Victoria, 20,000 off of paintings, 210 thousand further off Militia.” In August, the Office of the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs sent the Prime Minister a memorandum asking for guidance “regarding the proposed creation of a Standing Committee in London to consider the question of participation in International Exhibitions.”⁹²⁷ On a more immediate matter on June 18, Mrs. Clare Fitz-Gibbon wrote King from Toronto that she wished to donate to the House a portrait, then located in Wyly Grier’s studio, of her stepfather Dalton McCarthy who had been a Conservative MP from 1876 to his death in 1898. King cabled on June 20, “deeply regret impossible for Government to accept your generous gift at present. Have discussed matter with colleagues on Parliament Building Memorials Committee. They are of opinion no steps should be taken until some rule of general application formally adopted.” Fitz-Gibbon wrote again on November 17 to inquire whether the Committee had come to a decision regarding the acceptance of the McCarthy portrait. “It has been a cherished dream of mine to see my step-father’s portrait hang in some part of the House of Parliament...The portrait is very good and I do hope that it will find the niche it deserves.”

King responded with a three-page long letter on November 25, relating to Fitz-Gibbon “the outcome of a conference held some time ago by a Committee of the Cabinet appointed to pass on certain art matters connected with the interior of the Parliament Buildings...It appears that there

⁹²⁵ Fred W. Rose to King, April 21, 1921. King to Rose, April 23, 1921. LAC reel C1951, pages 57137-46.

⁹²⁶ Hansard, May 25, 1921. Cited in Lyn Harrington, *Syllables of Recorded Time: The Story of the Canadian Authors Association 1921-1981* (Toronto: Simon & Pierre, 1981), 34.

have been two or three offers of a like character, and that the Speakers of the Senate and House of Commons have, as regards the acceptance of them, thus far resolutely declined to depart from the established precedents which have been more or less of long duration.” King reported that both Speakers were out of the province and that therefore no decision could be made in their absence. But he informed Fitz-Gibbon that “Such members of the Committee as are members of the Cabinet, favoured the commencement of a National Portrait Gallery as a part of the National Art Gallery, for purposes of commemorating the public services of distinguished Parliamentarians. It was thought that we would be justified in giving a place in the National Gallery to portraits which the Committee were willing to accept, and to designate their donors where the portraits were presented to the nation. ” King advised Fitz-Gibbon that the chances of having the Dalton McCarthy portrait hung in one of the Houses of Parliament would be significantly increased if the painting were first donated to the nation and placed in the National Gallery, which also had much better exhibition facilities than the “very ill-adapted” halls of Parliament.⁹²⁸

King’s great cultural authority and influence over other individuals and government bodies dealing with arts and culture such as the Cabinet Committee on Art, the National Gallery, the Art Advisory Committee, and Sir Edmund Walker, chair of the National Gallery’s board of trustees, is graphically revealed by an October 1922 diary entry, written less than ten months after he became Prime Minister:

During afternoon had a meeting in Council chamber of Art committee of Cabinet; discussed House of Commons’ seating, erection of Laurier & McGee & King Edward monuments, portrait of Sir Wilfrid, purchase of Carl Ahrens’ paintings, Wickenden’s portrait of King Edward VII. We walked over grounds & I pointed out site I thought for Sir Wilfrid and Sir John on either side of main walk to H. of C. The Committee agreed at once to this. If Tories object we will give Sir Wilfrid site overlooking Piazza & put King Edward on Hill. McGee monument goes by library or in grove near Canal. I got Committee to authorize purchase of Carl Ahrens’ work. If Sir Edmund Walker doesn’t

⁹²⁷ Diary March 11, 1922. August 26, 1922 memorandum to King. LAC reel C2719, pages 91778-81.

⁹²⁸ Clare Fitz-Gibbon to Mackenzie King, June 18, 1922. King to Fitz-Gibbon, June 20, 1922. Fitz-Gibbon to King, November 17, 1922. King to Fitz-Gibbon, November 25, 1922. LAC reel C2244, pages 62097-102.

fall in line we will ask his resignation as chairman of Art Advisory Committee. We must follow plan of encouraging Canadian art. I got the Committee to agree to open to competition memorial for Law ex-M.P. & proposed the location in H. of C. for it and Baker monument at entrance to H. of C. Lobby at head of stairs. Also suggested location for 'France Triumphant' sculpture in main cross corridor of H. of C. Will next secure appropriation for monuments to soldiers on Plaza square. A column that will surmount an appropriate centre the several buildings on the square—a sort of Trafalgar Square effect.

King concluded this diary entry by noting with satisfaction, "This was a good afternoon's work for art."⁹²⁹

1923: In order to exert greater influence over the National Gallery and to compel it to purchase one of Carl Ahrens's paintings, King appointed three new Gallery trustees in January. Two were personal friends, the Toronto art critic and collector Newton MacTavish, long-time editor of the *Canadian Magazine*, and the Ottawa businessman and collector Warren Soper, whom King had known since their involvement in the Bert Harper Memorial Fund Committee in 1901.

MacTavish knew another traditional painter, Homer Watson, from his involvement with the Canadian Art Club, founded in Toronto in 1907, and encouraged him to send his *The Flood Gate*

⁹²⁹ Diary October 20, 1922. King unveiled Tait McKenzie's bronze statue in honour of Lt. Col. George Harold Baker, the only M.P. killed fighting in World War I, in the House of Commons on February 29, 1924. On McKenzie, see Diary February 24, 1924 and chapter VIII. King unveiled the bronze Bowman Brown Law Memorial Tablet, by Roland Chalmers, in the House of Commons Lobby on April 24, 1924. Law was the M.P. for Yarmouth, N.S., killed in the fire that destroyed the Parliaments Buildings February 3, 1916. See Diary April 23 and 24, 1924. The *France Triumphant* sculpture presented by the French mission to the Government of Canada refers to Rodin's bronze bust—cast in 1921 and now known as *La France* still on display in the Centre Block of Parliament—which King helped to unveil in the Parliamentary Committee Room along with Marshall Foyelle on June 29, 1921. In his May 11, 1923 diary, King recorded that following the presentation of the budget in the House of Commons and discussion on estimates of public works, "I made a strong plea for a national monument in the Capital of Canada to the men who fell overseas in the Great War. Woodsworth (labor) & Irvine were inclined to oppose it & to make it a glorification of militarism. I took the line it was recognition of service, sacrifice & heroism & patriotism. I am glad to have had to do with originating & getting through this memorial." The 1925 design competition to commemorate Canadians who died in World War I, open to all British-born subjects, was won by the British sculptor Vernon March. The National War Memorial was unveiled by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on May 21, 1939.

to the National Gallery, which bought the painting in 1925. Soper was a collector of Ahrens's paintings. The artist, a fierce long-time critic of the Group of Seven, was a King family friend.⁹³⁰

Hector Charlesworth, after visiting the National Gallery in the fall of 1922, had charged that—while the Group of Seven were over represented—the Gallery's neglect of Carl Ahrens “approximates to the nature of a public scandal.” King recorded a visit to the artist's studio in November of 1922 when the painter was ill from his tuberculosis. “Ahrens himself would make a fine subject for a portrait; he looked very weak & worn & old, hair white.” He observed that Ahrens's second wife Madonna (Martha Niles), twenty-two years younger than her husband, “looks like the Mona Lisa, her face very much the same, was wearing the same style of dress; her devotion to him was most beautiful to see.” King noted that the painter and his wife “are in debt & suffering for want of funds; their gratitude was most marked... The two pictures ‘Moon Light’ & ‘October’ which he had sent to the [Royal Canadian Academy] Art exhibit Montreal were the best he had done; he had been holding them trusting the nation would buy them. I have made up my mind we will.” The National Gallery acceded to King's lobbying and purchased Ahrens's *The Road* for \$1,500 [\$20,000 in 2014 dollars] a few months later.⁹³¹

⁹³⁰When he received a letter from the artist in June of 1934, King “thought of course of dear father & of how he had helped Ahrens—of how wrong Mercer [Malcolm S. Mercer, Ahrens's one-time patron] had been in taking his paintings as security and not giving him their value, how I had helped to ‘restore’ this wrong by getting the National Gallery to purchase one or two & appointing McTavish [sic] to that end.” Diary June 24, 1934.

⁹³¹Charles C. Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1995), 135, 139. Hector Charlesworth, “The National Gallery a National Reproach,” *Saturday Night* 38-6 (December 9, 1922), 3. Ross King, *Defiant Spirits: The Modernist Revolution of the Group of Seven* (Vancouver: Douglas McIntyre, 2010), 388-89. Diary November 10, 1922. On Ahrens and “the so-called new art,” see Hill, 58-59, 67-68, 307 and Ross King, 193-96. In 1934, when King was again pressuring the National Gallery to purchase paintings by Homer Watson, Norman Mackenzie, another Gallery trustee appointed by King, wrote him that “A limited number of the old school of painters, as you know, are again raising objections as to the number of pictures purchased from what is known as ‘The School of Seven.’ This matter first arose when you were Prime Minister, was taken into consideration by us, and any question of preference was eliminated by us.” Norman Mackenzie to King, January 9, 1934. LAC reel C3677, pages 172084-85.

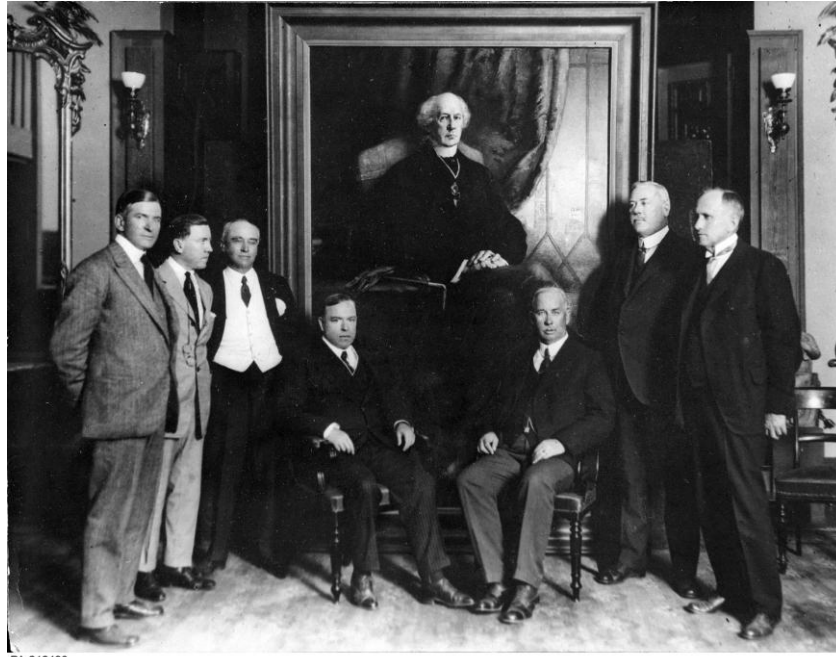
On another matter requiring King's attention, Peter Larkin, King's benefactor whom he had appointed Canadian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, informed him from London that on July 12 Sir Charles Townshend would be offering for sale at Christie's a full-length portrait of the First Marquess Townshend painted by Joshua Reynolds in 1759. According to information from Sir Charles' agent forwarded by Larkin, General Townshend "served under Wolfe at Quebec and on Wolfe's death succeeded to the command and received the surrender of the city. Sir Charles Townshend thought that this portrait might be of interest to the Canadian Government and has asked me to bring it to your attention and to send you the following description of it." Larkin estimated that the painting "will probably fetch £3,000 or more." King cabled Larkin on July 12 that his letter had only been received that day and that "Time insufficient to give matter necessary consideration." But in 1929 the Prime Minister's Office forwarded to Arthur Doughty, the Dominion Archivist, a letter and catalogue from Sotheby's in London once again announcing the sale of the portrait of the First Marquis Townshend on May 15 and informed Sotheby's that Doughty "will, no doubt, communicate with you direct if necessary."⁹³²

1924: According to Charles Hill, curator of Canadian art at the National Gallery of Canada, "At the insistence of Mackenzie King, MacTavish also pushed through the purchase in 1924 of a portrait for the House of Commons—of Sir Wilfrid Laurier by John Russell for \$5000 [\$68,000 in 2014 dollars]—the very form of political interference the Advisory Arts Council had been established in 1907 to prevent."⁹³³ King had recorded in his diary in December of 1923 that he "suggested to McTavish [sic] to have Art Committee purchase Russell's painting of Sir Wilfrid & leave it where it is." At the same time that the government was making this substantial art purchase from the painter, Rodolphe Lemieux, the Speaker of the House of Commons, "promised to let me have for Laurier House the portrait of Sir Wilfrid by Russell provided I secured it." Ten days later, King "had McTavish of Canadian Magazine & John Russell to dinner

⁹³² Peter Larkin to King, June 30, 1923. Captain Lawrence Timpson to Larkin, June 29, 1923. King to Larkin, July 12, 1923. Harry Baldwin to Arthur Doughty, May 6, 1929. LAC reel C2254, pages 75227-230. Reel C2314, page 143869.

⁹³³ Hill, 139.

tonight—the latter will make a [charcoal] crayon sketch of me tomorrow.” After he had completed King’s sketch at Laurier House, “Russell told me the painting of Sir Wilfrid down stairs was to be mine as long as I lived or wanted it, it was then to revert to him...It was painted for Sir Wilfrid but never paid for, intended to be given to him for presentation to Speaker’s apartment. Russell said he preferred to have it at ‘Laurier House.’”⁹³⁴



Private viewing of John Wentworth Russell’s 1924 Laurier portrait at Jenkins Art Galleries in Toronto. Russell and Newton MacTavish at left, King centre.

Nine months after returning from the 1923 Imperial Conference in London and consulting with “the Premier of Nova Scotia and with some of the leading citizens of Halifax,” King wrote the Marquis Curzon of Kedleston regarding “the possible purchase for the province or the city of the portrait of Lord Halifax which you have in your possession, and of which you spoke to me just before I left England.” King reported to Lord Curzon that there was little interest in the city in Lord Halifax since he was not the founder of the city, had never been in Canada, and “had no

⁹³⁴ Diary December 28, 1923, March 8, 19 and 20, 1924. See also Diary January 16, 1926 and February 7, 1932. John Wentworth Russell painted a number of portraits of Laurier. The one obtained by King is still on display in the first floor dining room at Laurier House.

discoverable connection with the place.” He had discussed the matter with Sir Robert Borden who “doubted if any popular subscription could be raised with the city and provincial authorities indifferent.” King was “sorry for this, as I feel that any work of art which serves to associate our own with the old land is helpful in expressing an historic background which is apt to be lost to view in a new country.”⁹³⁵ Martha King recorded that on June 13 and 23, 1924, “Prime Minister Mackenzie King, never a great fan of the arts, spoke in the House of Commons in support of the Wembley exhibition, and argued for an enhanced budget for the Gallery.”⁹³⁶

1925: R.C. Wright, the chief architect of the Department of Public Works, at the request of his Minister, forwarded to King’s private secretary Fred A. MacGregor, the letter from Frederick C. Mayer, the eminent New York carillonneur and architect for the Carillon at the Parliament Buildings, regarding the budget and pending contract for Mayer’s work. Re the inscription on the bells of the Carillon, Mayer advised that this “delicate and important matter be submitted to your literary authorities in Canada...This inscription will be copied in all newspapers and movies throughout Canada and other countries, and must reflect the broadest sentiment of your country.” He also advised that the musical theme for the Carillon not follow the usual Westminster chimes and quarters which he thought “commonplace, musically and sentimentally, lacking both dignity and wearing qualities...they are of a cheap, inartistic sentiment and effect.” Mayer proposed that “the Bell Motiv of the Temple of the Holy Grail, from the opera ‘Parsifal,’ by Wagner” be used instead. “The ideal plan would be for you to persuade the Honorable Mackenzie King, your Premier, to give me a brief note of introduction to Sir Edward Elgar, your greatest English composer (who also outranks any that we have), in England, and permit me to lay this matter before him.” He suggested that this was also “a point for your finest musicians to confer upon.”⁹³⁷

⁹³⁵ King to the Marquis Curzon of Kedleston, July 31, 1924. LAC reel C2264, pages 83916-17.

⁹³⁶ Martha J. King, “The National Gallery of Canada at Arm’s Length from the Government of Canada: A Precarious Balancing Act.” MA Thesis, Carleton University, 1966, 20.

⁹³⁷ R.C. Wright to Fred A. MacGregor, April 18, 1925. Frederick C. Mayer to Wright, April 14, 1925. LAC reel C2277, pages 99068-71.

King did not refer the question of the inscription on the Carillon bell or the musical themes for its chimes to Canada's literary or finest musical authorities as Mayer suggested. He decided these matters himself and, as was always the case with him, political objectives of national unity trumped his own artistic preferences. Despite his love of Wagner and *Parsifal*, "an effort was made to reproduce, as accurately as sound would permit, the notes of Big Ben and the Westminster Chimes." In his Canada-wide radio address during the Diamond Jubilee celebration on Parliament Hill on July 1, 1927, he declared listeners to the chimes "shall be reminded of the heritage of freedom which has come to us through the establishment in Canada of British parliamentary institutions...the surest bond of union between the community of free nations which comprise the British Commonwealth."⁹³⁸

1926: The institutional and personal complexities that could result from an offer of a painting to the Government of Canada—and Mackenzie King's central role in resolving the matter—is best illustrated when Viscount Dillon wrote Peter Larkin on June 16, 1925 that he wished to offer the National Gallery in Ottawa, on behalf of his late Canadian-born wife, a copy by Sir Peter Lely of one of Vandyke's portraits of Charles I from Dillon's art collection at Ditchley. The original Vandyke was burned at Whitehall in 1679. Larkin hastened to respond to Lord Dillon on June 19, expressing his gratitude and that of his fellow Canadians for the portrait and informing Dillon that he was asking Eric Brown, Director of the National Gallery, "to make all the necessary arrangements for its shipment to Canada." Larkin's secretary wrote Brown, then at the second British Empire Exhibition in Wembley, to arrange for the shipment to Ottawa. Brown responded to Lucien Pacaud on July 3 upon his return to Canada, thanking Larkin for receiving the picture from Lord Dillon on behalf of the trustees of the National Gallery and reporting that the picture had been shipped and would arrive soon in Ottawa.

But on January 27, 1926, Brown reported to Lord Dillon that the portrait of Charles I had been cleaned and restored and that he and the trustees of the National Gallery doubted its authenticity.

⁹³⁸ W.L. Mackenzie King, "The Message of the Carillon" in his *The Message of the Carillon and Other Addresses*, 9, 12.

“The clumsiness of the lace painting, the indecision and brownness of the flesh, the poor handling of the draperies and the complete difference of manner from the Dresden picture, do not seem to suggest Lely at any stage of his career and a few people who know the period well and who saw the picture before it left England were quite emphatic that it could not have been the work either of Lely or any other of Van Dyck’s better known pupils.” He therefore asked Lord Dillon “if there is any direct evidence of Lely’s hand on the picture.”

Dillon responded with a three-page letter on March 19, 1926. He stated that the portrait had been in the family estate at Ditchley for over two hundred years and that its authenticity had never been questioned. “Your criticism as to the ‘clumsiness of the lace painting’ and ‘poor handling of the draperies’ are only matters of opinion, and do not seem to have occurred to you when you accepted the picture...you may remember that the portrait was submitted to you in London for inspection and approved before being formally offered to the High Commissioner for Canada.” He therefore asked that the portrait be returned to him, offered to pay for its cleaning, restoration and shipping costs, and sent a copy of Brown’s letter to Peter Larkin.

Larkin wrote Dillon on March 26, apologized for Eric Brown’s communication and indicated he would be “sending a copy of the whole correspondence out to my Prime Minister, Mr. McKenzie [sic] King, with the request that he should give the matter his personal attention.” Raoul Dandurand, Leader of the Government in the Senate and Minister without Portfolio in King’s Cabinet, happened to be at the High Commission office in London and “shares with me the view that the matter should be taken up with the Prime Minister, whom he proposes to see about it as soon as he reaches Ottawa.”⁹³⁹

⁹³⁹ Lord Dillon to Larkin, June 16, 1925. Larkin to Lord Dillon, June 19, 1925. Lucien Pacaud to Eric Brown, June 17, 1925. Brown to Pacaud, July 3, 1925. Brown to Lord Dillon, January 27, 1926. Dillon to Brown, March 19, 1926. Dillon to Larkin, March 19, 1926. Larkin to Dillon, March 26, 1926. Larkin to Dandurand, March 30, 1926. LAC reel C2290, pages 113403, 113405, 113404, 113406, 113408-09, 113410-12, 113407, 113413, 113415.

Larkin forwarded the Eric Brown correspondence to O.D. Skelton, Under Secretary of State for External Affairs, on March 26, writing that “I do not like to add to the Prime Minister’s burdens but I feel that if an opportunity presents itself he should see the enclosed correspondence, which explains itself.” He could not understand why Brown accepted the portrait in London, had it cleaned and restored in Canada, and then questioned its authenticity. Even if he was convinced the painting was not genuine, could he not have found a corner for it in the National Gallery? “The Gallery as it is is to my mind filled with much rubbish and this picture, if only a copy of a copy of a great master’s work, would be much more interesting than a lot of the stuff that is in it now. It is this kind of action on the part of a Canadian government official that makes people in Europe think we are living in the back woods.” In a handwritten postscript Larkin added, “If this Mr. Brown is not better equipped to judge works of art than he is to write letters to a gentleman, then I think his occupation should be changed.”⁹⁴⁰

Brown was apparently prepared to return the Charles I portrait to Lord Dillon for King’s private secretary, L.C. Moyer, wrote the Prime Minister a memorandum on April 17 stating that he had spoken to Harry O. McCurry, Brown’s assistant at the National Gallery, who reported that “the painting has not yet been shipped, and that in compliance with your directions he will hold it here until instructed otherwise.” O.D. Skelton wrote King a memorandum on April 24 reporting that Arthur Doughty, head of the Dominion Archives, had informed him that King wished the Charles I portrait transferred to the Archives and suggested that “an intimation should be conveyed to the Minister of Public Works.” King wrote the Minister, James H. King, on May 4 asking him to “kindly give the necessary instructions for transferring the portrait to the Dominion Archives Building on Sussex Street.” The Minister wrote King on May 6 that “I shall be glad to see that instructions are given immediately for the transfer of this portrait to the Dominion Archives.” King then wrote Viscount Dillon, with copies to Peter Larkin and Arthur Doughty, on May 12, 1926 informing him that he had “given instructions for Sir Peter Lely’s copy of the picture of Charles I to be transferred to the Public Archives of Canada, to which arrangement Dr. Doughty assured me he obtained your permission...The Archives is certainly a most suitable place for an

⁹⁴⁰ Larkin to O.D. Skelton, March 26, 1926. LAC reel C2290, pages 113401-02 .

historical picture of that importance.” He thanked Dillon for his “valuable gift to Canada” and expressed his “deep regret” at Eric Brown’s “very discourteous communication.” He assured Dillon that “No member of the Government was aware of the letter and it is most unfortunate that it should have been sent. I might add that I doubt if the President and Board of Trustees of the Gallery had any knowledge of the communication sent. I am at the moment in communication with them.”

Lord Dillon thanked King and Arthur Doughty and also wrote Peter Larkin, who forwarded a copy of his letter to King’s secretary, that he was delighted that the portrait should find a home in the Archives under the care of Doughty, “evidently a more suitable resting place than a gallery of modern art.”⁹⁴¹

King commented on Eric Brown’s undiplomatic *faux pas* in his diary on April 14. That day he attended “a luncheon given by Vincent Massey of Art Gallery trustees, who were pressing for erection of Art Gallery on Major Hill Park & preparatory plans for same. I told them of plans to ‘open up’ Ottawa, and possible expropriations & rather left impression it might be difficult to go ahead at once.” Brown’s arrogance offended King and undermined the National Gallery trustees in their lobbying efforts to secure a new Gallery building. “Eric Brown in charge of Art Gallery is a conceited ass, a bit of a fool as well,” King recorded. “I was greatly annoyed by a fyle of correspondence I saw sent by Larkin in which Sir Dillon of National Portrait Gallery was virtually insulted by this man returning a picture sent to Gallery.”⁹⁴²

⁹⁴¹ LCM to King, April 17, 1926. O.D. Skelton to King, April 24, 1926. King to J.H. King, May 4, 1926. J.H. King to Mackenzie King, May 6, 1926. King to Dillon, May 12, 1926. L.C. Moyer to Larkin, May 13, 1926. Dillon to King, May 20, 1926. Dillon to Doughty, May 26, 1926. Dillon to Larkin, May 26, 1926. Larkin to Dillon, May 28, 1926. Larkin’s private secretary to L.C. Moyer, May 28, 1926. LAC reel C2290, page 113417. Reel C2289, pages 113023, 113021-22, 113024. Reel C2288, pages 110943-44. Reel C2290, page 113468. Reel 2280, pages 110945, 110946. Reel C2290, pages 113482, 113483, 113481.

⁹⁴² Diary April 14, 1926.

1927: King was the principal organizer of the Diamond Jubilee of Confederation. According to H. Blair Neatby, “For weeks Mackenzie King concentrated on the details of the celebration. He supervised the invitation list, the order of precedence, the dress, and even selected the music for the ceremonies on Parliament Hill; no detail escaped his attention.”⁹⁴³ In addition to speeches by King, the Governor General and the Leader of the Opposition, music included Lord Willingdon’s *Suite* played by the Chateau Laurier Orchestra; French-Canadian folk songs, arranged by Ernest MacMillan and Leo Smith, played by the Hart House String Quartet; Eva Gauthier and the Hiawatha Quartet singing French-Canadian airs; and Percival Price, the Dominion carillonneur, inaugurating the fifty-three bells of the Parliament carillon by playing “O Canada,” “The Maple Leaf” and “God Save the King.” King’s friend, the actress Margaret Anglin, read Bliss Carman’s poem, “Dominion Day, 1927.”⁹⁴⁴ The Governor General, Viscount Willingdon, laid the corner stone of the Confederation Block. Referring to the nation-wide radio hook-up that carried the event to Canadians across the country, King suggested that “It is doubtful if ever before, the thoughts of so many of the citizens of any country were concentrated, at one and the same moment, upon what was taking place at its capital, or those in authority brought into such immediate and sympathetic personal touch with those from whom their authority was derived.” He was certain that “On the morning, afternoon, and evening of July the first, all Canada became, for the time being, a single assemblage, swayed by a common emotion, within the sound of a single voice.”⁹⁴⁵ For Bruce Hutchison, King’s speeches “on the Diamond Jubilee of Confederation and at the dedication of the new carillon in the Victory Tower showed him at once as a scholar of Canadian history, a proud burgher of Ottawa, and a suppressed poet.”⁹⁴⁶

⁹⁴³ H. Blair Neatby. *William Lyon Mackenzie King: Volume II The Lonely Heights, 1924 -1932* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), 228 .

⁹⁴⁴ Maria Tippett, *Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts before the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 77. John Le Vay, *Margaret Anglin: A Stage Life* (Toronto: Simon & Pierre, 1989), 244-45.

⁹⁴⁵ W.L. Mackenzie King, *The Message of the Carillon and Other Addresses* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1927), 78, 79.

⁹⁴⁶ Bruce Hutchison, *The Incredible Canadian: A Candid Portrait of Mackenzie King: His Works, His Times, and His Nation* (Toronto: Longmans, 1952), 153.

1928: On February 25 Cléophas Soucy, the Dominion Sculptor, wrote King reporting that visitors to the Memorial Chamber in the Parliament Buildings, particularly Senators and MPs, were asking on a daily basis why the completion of the work at the main entrance and main hall was not being carried out. Soucy suggested that if the work were completed, “you would certainly be pleasing the public in general, as it would improve the appearance of the Building considerably.”⁹⁴⁷ On June 5, O.D. Skelton sent the Prime Minister a memorandum regarding Canadian representation at the International Congress of Popular Art in Prague in October which would focus on folk art and handicrafts. The Department of Mines, which had the government’s ethnology work under its jurisdiction, had considered Marius Barbeau but finally decided not to send a representative. Skelton, however, had heard from Joseph Georges Bouchard, Liberal M.P. for Kamouraska, that he had discussed the Congress with King and was himself interested in attending. Whom did King wish to send and how would the Canadian representative’s expenses be covered? “The Congress would undoubtedly be of much cultural interest, and the revival of handicraft products in Quebec and the Maritime Provinces, as well as the wide interest shown in recent folk song developments in the Province of Quebec, indicate that it has a profitable commercial side as well.”⁹⁴⁸

1929: On April 4 King wrote Peter Larkin that had given the folksinger Juliette Gauthier (the sister of Eva Gauthier) letters of introduction to Larkin and to Philippe Roy, the Canadian representative to France, for her concert tour to London and Paris “interpreting the songs of the Eskimos and Indians, and some of the French-Canadian chansons.” He gave Larkin “my authority...as far as our Government is concerned” to recommend Gauthier to the British Exhibition Commissioner at the Department of Trade and Commerce which “might go quite a long way towards securing her some work under the Exhibition Branch of that Department.” He

⁹⁴⁷ Cléophas Soucy to King, February 25, 1928. LAC reel C2307, page 134609.

⁹⁴⁸ O.D. Skelton memorandum to King, June 5, 1928. LAC reel C2478, page C45312. As will be seen in chapter X, Bouchard referenced his participation in the International Congress when he appeared before the 1944 House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment. See Session 1944 House of Commons. Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment. *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence No. 7*. May 12, 1944. (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1944), 230-31.

left it to Larkin's discretion whether to notify Lord Beaverbrook that Gauthier was anxious to meet him adding, "She really deserves great credit for her skill in a field of artistic interpretation which is quite new, and which has both a historic and scientific value."⁹⁴⁹

1930: On March 9 Henriette Lewis Hind wrote King from London informing him that she had a portrait belonging to Lord Durham of the first Earl of Durham, the Governor General of Canada 1838-39 and author of the famous *Report on the Affairs of British North America*. Durham had investigated the conditions that had led to the 1837 Rebellion, led in English-Canada by William Lyon Mackenzie, and recommended a form of responsible government and the union of Upper and Lower Canada and the Maritime Provinces. Hind asked if King knew anyone in Canada who could purchase the portrait and present it to the government or whether "perhaps the Government might buy it."

King replied on March 31 that "A portrait of the first Earl of Durham by [Thomas] Lawrence is something which should be in the possession of our country. If it is to be obtained, the purchase would have to be made through the Trustees of the National Art Gallery, as the Board amongst other reasons, was created for this express purpose." He informed Hind that he had spoken to the Governor General, Lord Willingdon, who was the Honorary President of the National Gallery, and that Willingdon, "like I, feels that the picture, provided it can be obtained on satisfactory terms, is one which should be purchased." He also said he would speak with Harry S. Southam, the President of the board of trustees, and Vincent Massey, also a trustee, and suggested she contact them, as well as Eric Brown, about the purchase. On May 3 he wrote again to Hind saying how pleased he was that the portrait had been purchased "on the advice of the Archives Office at Ottawa."⁹⁵⁰

King, Laurier and the Sculptor mile Brunet

⁹⁴⁹ King to Larkin, April 4, 1929. LAC reel C2310, pages 138949-51.

The greatest proof that King's cultural authority enabled him to act as a de facto minister of culture is provided by arts projects—such as the creation of the Laurier monument on Parliament Hill—that extended over a multi-year long period. Examining King's role in the creation of mile Brunet's Laurier monument also reveals that his close involvement in public art projects served a larger political purpose.

King had already conceived of a monument to his political idol while Laurier was still alive. In June of 1927, just as Brunet's statue was being lowered into its current position on Parliament Hill, he well recalled "walking in the gate & passing the spot where the monument now is and saying to Sir Wilfrid that one day his statue would be there, that that was the place for it."⁹⁵¹ Following Laurier's death in 1919, there were several former members of his Cabinet besides King who vied for his mantle, political capital and leadership of the Liberal Party. One of these was Sydney Fisher, his former Minister of Agriculture who had also been prominent in cultural matters. In his account of the August National Liberal Convention that elected King Leader of the Party, he noted that "Fisher too is Chairman of the Laurier Memorial Committee." He soon became active on the Committee and was one of the judges that selected the five top submissions for the Laurier memorial in Notre Dame Cemetery in Ottawa. However, he strongly disliked Alfred Laliberté's memorial once it had been put in place in December of 1922. "I was greatly disappointed when I saw it, though not surprised. It is what I had said to the Committee would be the case," he recorded in his diary. "The symbolical figures are crude, the casket which is part of the symbolism is hideous, and the whole effect is anything but pleasing, anything but what is wanted for Laurier...It was plain most of those present were disappointed."⁹⁵²

To prevent a similar disappointment with the Laurier monument for Parliament Hill, King insisted that the competition for its design be open to artists world wide and closely supervised

⁹⁵⁰ Henriette Lewis Hind to King, March 9, 1930. King to Hind, March 31 and May 3, 1930. LAC reel C2319, pages 150334-39.

⁹⁵¹ Diary June 29, 1927.

⁹⁵² Diary August 5 to August 9, 1919, April 27, 28 and November 27, 1920, January 19, 1921 and December 21, 1922.

the monument's creation from its design to its inauguration. Launched in the fall of 1923, the competition received forty model submissions from Canadian, English, French, American and Italian sculptors. They included Sydney March, who would complete the design of the National War Memorial in Ottawa won by his brother Vernon in the 1925 world wide design competition, the Italian sculptor Antonio Sciortino who won second prize and \$1,000, and the Canadian sculptors mile Brunet, Alfred Laliberté, Emanuel Hahn and Lionel Fosbery. The jury consisted of members of the Cabinet Committee on Art and the Art Advisory Committee, with John Andrew Pearson and Hermon A. MacNeil as advisors representing the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada and the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. The winning model for the \$25,000 project [\$341,000 in 2014 dollars] was submitted by the thirty-year old French-Canadian sculptor mile Brunet who was then still at the beginning of his career and studying in Paris.⁹⁵³ J.B. Hunter, the Deputy Minister of the Department of Public Works, R.C. Wright, the Department's Chief Architect, Dr. J.H. King, the Minister of Public Works, and Peter Larkin, the Canadian High Commissioner in London, all submitted correspondence from and to Brunet about the monument to King "for your consideration."⁹⁵⁴

⁹⁵³ Terry G. Guernsey, *Statues of Parliament Hill: An Illustrated History* (Ottawa: National Capital Commission, 1986), 89-99. Serge Coulombe, *mile Brunet: Un bâtisseur de patrimoine* (Comusée de l'au-delà, 2006), 18-21, 123, 124, fns. 58, 59. *General Conditions of Competition for Portrait Statue of the late Sir Wilfrid Laurier* (Department of Public Works, Ottawa, 1923), 4. 1924 "Certified Copy of a Minute of a Meeting of the Committee of the Privy Council Approved by His Excellency the Governor General." LAC reel C2710, pages 82185-89. The Minister of Public Works recommended that Brunet be given the Laurier monument commission provided he submit both a quarter and subsequent full-size model of the monument for approval.

⁹⁵⁴ J.B. Hunter to King, December 10, 1924. mile Brunet to R.C. Wright, November 23, 1924. J.H. King to King, May 6, 1925. Wright to Brunet, May 6, 1925. Brunet to Wright, April 19, 1925. J.H. King to King, July 2, 1925. Wright to Brunet, July 2, 1925. Brunet to Wright, June 15, 1925.

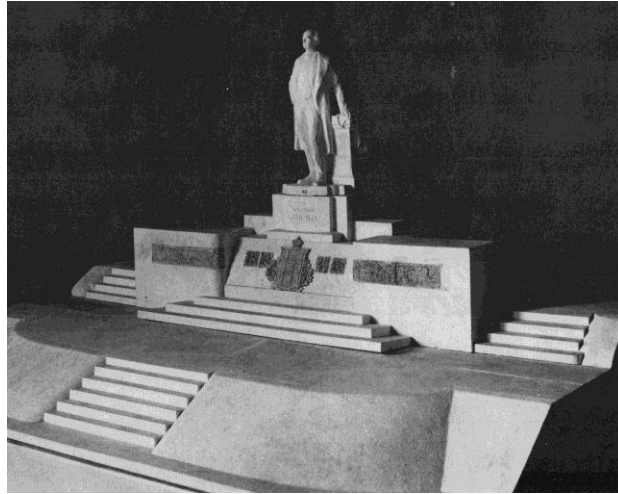
Brunet to Mr. Rankin, May 5, 1927. Peter Larkin to King, March 26, 1926. Brunet to Larkin, March 20, 1926. LAC reel C2265, pages 85972-74. Reel C2277, pages 99072-75, and 99089-99091. Reel C2295, pages 120394-96. Reel C2290, pages 113376-80. Brunet, in his April 19, 1925 letter to Wright, informed him that he had obtained a suit and overcoat from Laurier's tailor in London to prepare his study of the Laurier monument.

King viewed Brunet's small model of the Laurier statue in July of 1925 but "was disappointed in it, especially body & pose, head fairly good." He began corresponding with Brunet directly in January of 1926, expressing the hope "you will allow me to keep in touch with the work you are doing on the Laurier Memorial, and that you will feel that I am most anxious to co-operate with you in every way possible." Writing before the 1926 federal election, he informed the artist that "one reason that makes me most anxious at the moment to see that whatever changes you are making, both as to pedestal and figure, are along the right lines is that with the political situation what it is, there is no telling what Government may be in office by the time your work is completed." He reasoned that "If by any chance an excuse could be found, either on the score of the size, shape or location of the pedestal, which would justify another Administration in not giving to the Memorial the site selected, I should not be at all surprised to see recourse taken to preventing what we all have so much in view. I think, too, the utmost care should be taken with respect to the words to appear on the pedestal, and also the decoration."⁹⁵⁵

Brunet responded that he was delighted with King's co-operation, that he had started a big, nine feet-high model of Laurier and that "the pose of Laurier will be more energetic than the one indicated in the small size statue, which was submitted to you last summer. The left leg will be straighter, this was your main remark." He also indicated his intention to have both the words "Unity, Justice, Patriotism" and "Laurier, Prime Minister 1896-1911" inscribed on the monument. King recommended that the sculptor dispense with the vast multi-level terraced pedestal featuring bas-reliefs symbolical of Laurier's achievements as he had originally envisaged and that the monument's inscription read only "Laurier." He had written Peter Larkin, the Canadian High Commissioner in London, whom he characterized as "a great personal friend of Sir Wilfrid," to look at the inscriptions on monuments in Great Britain and France. Larkin reported that he and Sir Lomer Gouin (the Premier of Quebec 1905-20 and King's former Justice Minister) and Senator Dandurand had visited Brunet in his Paris studio, that they all felt "assured that we shall have a Monument worthy of the Chief," and sent King the text of inscriptions and

⁹⁵⁵ Diary July 27, 1925. King to Brunet, January 6, 1926. LAC reel C2286, pages 109430-31.

six sketches of monuments to various British Prime Ministers in London.⁹⁵⁶ Finalizing the height of the pedestal and the landscaping and inscription for the Laurier monument stretched out for another year.⁹⁵⁷



mile Brunet's 1924 winning model for the Laurier monument on Parliament Hill.

King was enthusiastic when the Laurier statue was placed on its pedestal on Parliament Hill on June 29, 1927. "My first impressions were very favourable & the more I saw of the statue, the better I liked it. It has not the finish I like about the body & legs but there is a rugged strength which I think Sir Wilfrid would have liked. The head is excellent. The site splendid." He recorded in his diary that he "felt greatly relieved and just as soon as the statue was in place I went & shook Brunet the young sculptor by the hand and congratulated him heartily, saying I was greatly pleased & that I thought it was splendid which it is."⁹⁵⁸

⁹⁵⁶ Brunet to King, January 29, 1926. King to Brunet, March 31, 1926. Larkin to King, March 26, 1926. LAC reel C2286, pages 109432-35. Reel C2290, pages 113376-89.

⁹⁵⁷ Brunet to Mr. Rankin, May 5, 1927. Brunet to King, December 6, 1927. King to Brunet, January 7, 1928. LAC reel C2295, pages 120394-120401. J.O. Lapointe, J. Brunet Ltd., Montreal, to T.W. Fuller, Assistant Chief Architect, Department of Public Works, May 1, 13, 17 and May 25, 1927. Reel C2297, pages 122801-04. Diary June 3 and 14, 1927.

⁹⁵⁸ Diary June 29, 1927.

Mackenzie King had hoped to unveil the Laurier monument as part of the July 1, 1927 Diamond Jubilee celebrations but the Prince of Wales and British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin were unavailable until the beginning of August. King was anxious about his ten-minute speech for the unveiling as well as the arrival ceremonies for the Prince of Wales and Baldwin, dinners, and the dedication of the Memorial Chamber, with its Books of Remembrance of Canadians who had died in war, in the Peace Tower. “The country will expect much from me on this occasion and I pray I may be equal to it.” King’s diaries reveal his political objectives for the commemoration ceremonies he was orchestrating. “It is the right moment to bring Sir Wilfrid into his own. Having the Prince of Wales unveil & the Conservative ex Premier of Canada [Sir Robert Borden] & Conservative P.M. of England speak should help to remove prejudice from his name on the part of the younger generation.”⁹⁵⁹

The Prince of Wales (the future King Edward VIII), accompanied by his younger brother, Prince George, brought paintings of King George V and Queen Mary and of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra as Diamond Jubilee gifts to Parliament. But, as King noted in his diary, “The Laurier tradition means but little to them.” He had failed to provide loud speakers and a canopy for shade in the hot summer sun for the Laurier monument unveiling. “This made our distinguished guests very restive & restless.” The Prince of Wales was in an unpleasant mood, talked with Prince George through most of the ceremony, laughed and behaved “really badly in the presence of the large throng which was gathered on Wellington Street & in the stand erected on the opposite side.” King was physically exhausted, he realized his speech was too long, his voice could not be heard in the open air and “no one was paying real attention.” He was usually very deferential to British royalty but on this occasion nevertheless decided to read his entire speech. “I was thinking not of them but of Laurier & the country & was prepared therefore to go ahead.”

The main thing was having the monument unveiled by His Royal Highness, the future King of England—speech by the Prime Minister of England—& Sir Robert Borden, the former Conservative P.M., the Governor General [Viscount Willingdon] presiding. It was a great triumph for the memory of one whom the Tory Party has done its utmost to

⁹⁵⁹ Diary June 12 and July 15, 1927. See also July 22.

destroy. To have the monument where it is, unveiled as it has been, is a vindication of Laurier's name & memory for all time. How marvelous that I should be the one as Prime Minister to give the oration and to be his successor in office.⁹⁶⁰



Unveiling of mile Brunet's Laurier monument on Parliament Hill, August 3, 1927. Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin centre left, the Prince of Wales and King right front.

Through the monument and unveiling ceremony, King bestowed great symbolic capital on Laurier, restored his prestige and at the same time assumed his political mantle as his successor in office. The monument, unveiled in the presence of the artist, permanently sanctified his political idol. Its significance lay—as he stated at the conclusion of his address—in “what future generations will see, when we who knew him shall have passed away, and others gather where we to-day are assembled. It is the old man, with his bare head and his white hair, standing alone, fighting for the right as God gave him to see the right.” King published his speech in *The Message of the Carillon And Other Addresses*, recording in his diary that the book “is a real gift to the Nation and will prove of incalculable value to myself, in my political life.” He closed the year by praying to God for guidance and expressing his conviction that “To be in my 7th year as Prime Minister of this country, is to have been spared for some great purpose.” “Above all I

⁹⁶⁰ Diary August 3, 1927.

desire to give my heart and life and thought to His service in the service of my fellow men. I shall seek to make the coming year a great public year, a great year in parliament and in the country on the work of the country, and the furtherance of ideals of righteousness and goodness in national affairs. Now may God bless & guide & keep me.”⁹⁶¹

Summary

This initial survey of Mackenzie King and the field of cultural production shows King competing for cultural capital, distinction and social status—as Pierre Bourdieu hypothesized—from the beginning of the 1900s. Within the King family, we can observe how paintings became markers as the family rose in social prominence. King’s diaries reveal as well his close identification with the artistic consumption and display of upper-class families such as the Rockefellers and Carnegies. We can also perceive King’s ever-increasing cultural authority from 1900 to 1921 so that when he became prime minister he was also able to function as Canada’s first de facto minister of culture.

Even this very preliminary examination of the archival record reveals that there were a number of government institutions, organizations and individuals that had degrees of oversight and influence on cultural matters in the 1920s: the Parliament Building Memorial Committee; the Speakers of the Senate and House of Commons; John Andrew Pearson, architect of the new Parliament Building; Cléophas Soucy, the Dominion Sculptor; the Cabinet Committee on Art; the National Gallery and Eric Brown, Harry S. Southam and Vincent Massey; the Public Archives and Arthur Doughty; the Canadian High Commission to the United Kingdom and Peter Larkin; O.D. Skelton, Under Secretary of State for External Affairs; the Department of Public Works and the Department of Mines; the Governor General and Senator Raoul Dandurand. Yet all of these deferred to King on cultural matters and recognized the Prime Minister as having not only the greatest political but also the greatest cultural authority. The speed with which these various

⁹⁶¹ W.L. Mackenzie King, “Laurier” in his *The Message of the Carillon and Other Addresses*, 59-60. Diary December 31, 1927.

individuals and apparently diffuse organizations communicated, even in the intractable case of Lord Dillon's portrait of Charles I, reveal well-established, recognized and functioning lines of responsibility and authority.

In Parliament, the Liberal Party caucus accepted—as in the case of public ownership and control of radio—that Party policy would be determined by the Party Leader and his Cabinet. King's diary entry regarding the Dillon portrait also begins to suggest how his personal ambivalence towards the National Gallery, his own interest in a national portrait gallery, and his overriding interest in “opening up” Ottawa through urban development—particularly for the creation of a war memorial near the Parliament Buildings—would contribute to his failure to establish either a national portrait gallery or a new building for the National Gallery when he was returned to power as Prime Minister in 1935. The preponderant influence of King's religious *habitus* is also apparent—his repeated avowals “to do what is the will of God” and his deep belief in “the national need of the country's policies being in accord” with moral laws.⁹⁶²

This preliminary archival examination of Mackenzie King's central role in cultural decision making in the 1920s also points out that of the cultural matters and cultural products requiring his attention and intervention, about half were international in nature. His conviction that art knew no boundaries received critical support from his National Gallery trustee appointee, Newton MacTavish. Writing in the *Canadian Magazine* and in his book-length study *The Fine Arts in Canada*, MacTavish dissented from the critical acclaim that had been showered on the Group of Seven painters at the 1924 Wembley exhibition in London. “It is not correct to say that critics have discovered something different or unique or national or indigenous in the art that has been sent from Canada. Because art produced in Canada is not different from other art except as to goodness or badness,” he asserted. “Art is universal, and it seems to be one of the few things that cannot suffer the limitations of a boundary.” He had entitled his study *The Fine Arts in Canada* rather than *Canadian Fine Arts* “for the reason that the writer is not convinced that there

⁹⁶² Diary March 10 and October 15, 1917.

is anywhere any art that is peculiarly Canadian.”⁹⁶³ While Canadian artists competed and organized almost exclusively within the Canadian field of cultural production, King—beginning in 1900—commissioned, purchased and obtained cultural products from both the Canadian and international field of cultural production. This interplay between King’s private and public use of art and his relationship with both Canadian and foreign artists will be examined in chapter VIII, “Mackenzie King in the Fields of National and International Cultural Production.”

⁹⁶³ Newton MacTavish, “Fine Arts from Canada,” *Canadian Magazine* 63:3 (July 1924), 133 and *The Fine Arts in Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1925), v. Cited in Hill, 159. King read and sent copies of MacTavish’s book to friends for Christmas, including Senator Hardy and Senator Haydon. Diary December 24 and 25, 1925. He also commented positively on MacTavish’s *Ars Longa* (Toronto: Ontario Publishing, 1938). Diary April 24 and May 1, 1938.

Chapter VII:

Prophets and Priests: Canadian Artists and the Struggle for Cultural Democracy

While Mackenzie King steadily increased his cultural capital and cultural authority in the first three decades of the twentieth century—and functioned as Canada’s first de facto Minister of Culture from 1922 to 1930—Canadian artists also began to organize, increase their social and cultural capital, and voice their cultural concerns and aspirations. By the Second World War, they began to demand that the federal government make major investments in the arts so that all Canadians could have access to a wide variety of indigenous cultural products. Pierre Bourdieu’s sociological theories and concepts illuminate this struggle between Canadian artists and Mackenzie King for cultural and political capital and cultural authority.

Bourdieu expanded Max Weber’s model of religious change presented in Weber’s *The Sociology of Religion*—in which “priests” with conservation strategies and charismatic “prophets” with subversion strategies compete among the “laity” for consumers of their respective symbolic goods—to encompass all phases of cultural and social life.⁹⁶⁴ In his essay “Some Properties of Fields,” Bourdieu posited such conflict between conservative, established agents and institutions and new subversive cultural agents that closely corresponds to the conflicting power relationship between Mackenzie King and Canadian artists: “Those who, in a determinate state of power relations, more or less completely monopolize the specific capital, the basis of the specific power or authority characteristic of a field,” Bourdieu wrote, “are inclined to conservation strategies—

⁹⁶⁴ David Swartz, “Bridging the Study of Culture and Religion: Pierre Bourdieu’s Political Economy of Symbolic Power,” *Sociology of Religion* 57:1 (Spring 1996), 73-74, 80. Scott Lash, “Pierre Bourdieu: Cultural Economy and Social Change” in Craig Calhoun, Edward LiPuma, Moishe Postone, eds. *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 195. Weber’s *The Sociology of Religion* appears as chapter VI in the first volume of Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* [*Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie*]. Guenther Roth, Claus Wittich, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 399-634. This text was also published as a separate volume, Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*. Ephraim Fischhoff, trans. Boston: Beacon Press, 1964.

those which, in the fields of production of cultural goods, tend to defend *orthodoxy*—whereas those least endowed with capital (who are often also the newcomers, and therefore generally the youngest) are inclined towards subversion strategies, the strategy of *heresy*.”⁹⁶⁵

In this chapter, I will contrast fundamental differences in the way many cultural leaders (the charismatic “prophets”) perceived the purpose of art and the arts themselves and what actions they took to impose their cultural beliefs. Despite King’s great interaction with artists and various artistic disciplines over half a century, these profound differences made it virtually impossible for these cultural leaders to lobby the Prime Minister (the “priestly” accumulator and monopolizer of cultural capital) with any hope of success or for their cultural and social capital to overcome his aesthetic sensibility and cultural beliefs generated by his ingrained *habiti*.

As discussed in Chapter III, King’s religious family up-bringing and life-long feelings of guilt resulting from the conflict between his religious and sexual *habiti* led him to espouse a conception of art whose primary function was to project Christian character and ideals. In his private and public life, he surrounded himself with paintings and sculptures depicting himself, members of his family, and public figures whose service to the nation he felt that Canadians should emulate. By placing Ernest Wise Keyser’s 1905 *Harper Memorial*, George William Hill’s 1926 *Nurses’ Memorial*, mile Brunet’s 1927 Sir Wilfrid Laurier monument, Tait McKenzie’s 1932 *Confederation Memorial*, the 1940 McKenzie-Emanuel Hahn monument of Sir Arthur Doughty, and his own 1945 portrait by the British portrait painter Frank O. Salisbury inside or near Parliament, King sought to inscribe his own aesthetic and spiritual ideals on the soul and psyche of the nation.

Besides academia and politics, Mackenzie King had contemplated entering the ministry as a possible career while still in his university studies. Even as a Deputy Minister of Labour, he pledged his loyalty to Christ and expressed his “desire to follow Him, a solemn covenant to seek

⁹⁶⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, “Some Properties of Fields” in Pierre Bourdieu. *Sociology in Question*. Richard Nice, trans. (London: Sage Publications, 1993), 73.

to live His life.”⁹⁶⁶ Throughout his life he never came to doubt his core Christian beliefs. In 1917, two years before he succeeded Wilfrid Laurier as head of the Liberal Party, he confided in his diary that “It is this lack of faith in the spiritual nature of the universe & in the existence of God that causes Sir Wilfrid to just miss being a very great man. To my mind lack of faith is intellectual infirmity not intellectual greatness.”⁹⁶⁷ He was overjoyed a year later, when “dreaming very vividly,” he saw Laurier “in Bishop’s robes, high in a pulpit, speaking as the Prime Minister of the country.” “A flood of tears rushed to my eyes in joy, at beholding the very apocalypse of my aspirations so embodied. A political leader who will be a true servant of God, helping to make the Kingdom of Heaven prevail on earth. That is what I love politics for, the opportunity it offers in that direction.”⁹⁶⁸

Four years later he moved into Laurier House as Prime Minister and made Guiseppe Guastalla’s portrait bust of Isabel King and his painting *The Crown of Thorns* “the central feature of my home,” vowing “Surely it is mine to help to put a soul into the people, to reassert in our country Christian ideals.”⁹⁶⁹ He was determined to achieve what Pierre Bourdieu perceived as the crux of the struggle for religious power between “priests” and “prophets: “What is at stake is the *monopoly of the legitimate exercise of the power to modify, in a deep and lasting fashion, the practice and world-view of lay people*, by imposing on and inculcating in them a particular *religious habitus*.” Bourdieu defined the religious *habitus* as “a lasting, generalized and transposable disposition to act and think in conformity with the principles of a (quasi-) systematic view of the world and human existence.”⁹⁷⁰

⁹⁶⁶ Diary December 17, 1904.

⁹⁶⁷ Diary March 19, 1917.

⁹⁶⁸ Diary November 23, 1918.

⁹⁶⁹ Diary January 20 and 21, 1923.

⁹⁷⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, “Legitimation and Structured Interests in Weber’s Sociology of Religion” in *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity*, Scott Lash, Sam Whimster, eds. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 126. Italics in the original. Bourdieu’s essay first appeared in a slightly modified version as “Une interprétation de la théorie de la religion selon Max Weber,” *European Journal of Sociology* 12:1 (1971), 3-21.

Already in his first years as Prime Minister, King literally laid the groundwork for one of the greatest and most spiritual monuments by a Canadian, Walter Allwards' Canadian National Vimy Memorial with its twenty symbolical sculptural figures, erected to honour the 66,000 Canadians who perished in World War I.⁹⁷¹ Echoing Lord Grey's address at the unveiling of the Harper monument, Governor General Lord Byng, who had led the Canadian troops at Vimy, considered the planned memorial in 1922 as "a tribute for ever [sic] to the thousands of gallant men from Canada who gave their lives for King, country and civilization—when the call came from overseas."⁹⁷² But for Mackenzie King the Vimy Memorial had a greater spiritual significance than a mere political homage to Empire. He had already suggested to the Conservative Government "the immediate acquisition of the Ridge as a permanent memorial" after touring Vimy in the spring of 1919. Once he became Prime Minister, he used all the resources of his government to secure the Vimy Ridge site for Canada.⁹⁷³ After attending a luncheon in April of 1922 given by Rodolphe Lemieux, the Speaker of the House of Commons and chairman of the Canadian Battlefields Memorial Commission, the Prime Minister wrote in his diary that "I made a strong plea for conserving a tract of one or two square miles of Vimy ridge as consecrated, hallowed ground, around Allward memorial to be erected. The real memorial being the ridge itself, one of the world's altars on which Canadians sacrificed for cause

⁹⁷¹ Colonel H.C. Osborne, Honorary Secretary of the Canadian Battlefields Memorial Commission, described the Vimy Memorial to the Prime Minister a month before its unveiling by King Edward VIII on July 26, 1936: "I cannot but feel that this monument, the conception of a Canadian artist, enriched as it is by magnificent sculpture, will strike a very special note for our country and raise it definitely in the estimation of the people of Europe. It is a creation purely aesthetic in character and makes its appeal on that ground. It will, one may hope, suggest that Canada has a contribution to make to the world in that sphere as well as others." Osborne to King, June 19, 1936. LAC reel C3692, pages 192973-75. One of the founders of the Ottawa Drama League, Osborne was also one of the organizers of the Dominion Drama Festival in Ottawa.

⁹⁷² W.F. Sladen to King, December 15, 1922. LAC Reel 2729, page 104840.

⁹⁷³ Senator G.P. Graham to Peter Larkin, May 4, 1922. King to Larkin, May 27, 1922. Graham to Larkin, May 31, 1922. Brig. General H.T. Hughes to Larkin, June 1, 1922. Larkin to King, June 9, June 23, July 4 and 18, 1922. King to Larkin, July 22, 1922. Larkin to King, August 9, 1922. King to Larkin, August 21, 1922. King to Philippe Roy, July 22, 1922. LAC Reel 2729, pages 104847-76. See also Jacqueline Hucker, "'After the Agony in Stony Places': The Meaning and

of humanity.” The memorial would become “Like Temple of Heaven in China—open disk with sky overhead. This is Canada’s altar on European soil.”⁹⁷⁴ In July of 1922, he similarly wrote Peter Larkin, the Canadian High Commissioner in London who represented the government on the Canadian Battlefields Memorial Commission, that he conceived of the site as “this tract of consecrated ground in the heart of Europe.” “It will become a place of pilgrimage for European travellers and an enduring monument in Europe to our country’s valour.”⁹⁷⁵ In the House of Commons, the Prime Minister referred to Vimy not only as “consecrated and hallowed ground” but also as “one of the world’s great altars.”⁹⁷⁶



Walter Allward’s winning plaster maquette in the 1921 Canadian Battlefields Memorial Commission design competition for the Vimy Memorial.

Significance of the Vimy Monument” in Geoffrey Hayes, Andrew Iarocci, Mike Bechthold, eds. *Vimy Ridge: A Canadian Reassessment* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007).

⁹⁷⁴ Diary April 26, 1922.

⁹⁷⁵ King to Larkin, July 22, 1922. LAC Reel 2729, pages 104849-51.

⁹⁷⁶ Dennis Duffy, “Complexity and Contradiction in Canadian Public Sculpture: The Case of Walter Allward,” *American Review of Canadian Studies*, 38:2 (Summer 2008), 203, fn. 15. Duffy suggests regarding Allward’s allegorical sculptural figures that “Like the chorus in a Greek drama, the statues’ function is to offer spiritual consolation amid the agonies of the material world.” (196).



Vimy Pilgrims gather in front of the Memorial after the 1936 unveiling.

King authorized Rodolphe Lemieux to negotiate an accord with the French government in December of 1922 in which France donated 250 acres on the Vimy Ridge to Canada for Allward's memorial.⁹⁷⁷ In July of 1938, King forwarded to Allward the unanimous resolutions passed by the House and Senate thanking the members of the CBMC for their work and particularly praising the designer and architect of the completed Vimy Memorial. Allward, the resolution moved by King himself in the House stated, "has given to the world a work of art of outstanding beauty and character. Through years to come the Vimy Memorial will remain the symbol of Canada's efforts in the war, and its tribute to those who, on the field of battle, sought to preserve the free institutions of mankind."⁹⁷⁸ The Memorial had already become a "place of

⁹⁷⁷ Rodolphe Lemieux to King, December 5 and 6, 1922. King to President Poincare, December 5, 1922. LAC Reel 2729, pages 104841-45.

⁹⁷⁸ King to Allward, July 1, 1938. Allward to King, July 6, 1938. E. A. Pickering to Senator Dandurand, June 29, 1938. LAC reel C3731, pages 209965-67, 209973-74 and 212160-61. There are no typewritten entries in King's diary from July 13 to December 31, 1919 so we are missing his diary description of his first visit to Vimy. He was unable to attend the official unveiling ceremony of the Memorial on July 26, 1936 because he hosted President Roosevelt on his visit to Quebec City on July 31. King does record his visits to Vimy in his diary of October 5, 1928 and October 11, 1936. For other King references to Vimy, see diary entries December 5 and 6, 1922, February 9, 1923, February 6, 1935, January 16, May 7, June 30, July 5, 7, 24, 25, 26,

pilgrimage” at its unveiling by King Edward VIII on July 26, 1936. Among the 50,000 spectators were several thousand Canadians who had made a “Canadian Legion Pilgrimage” to Vimy via specially chartered steamers sailing from Montreal and London. By the time of its completion, the cost of the Canadian National Vimy Memorial, with its maze of restored battlefield trenches, had risen, even during the Depression, to \$1.5 million [\$25 million in 2014 dollars].

Prophets and Charismatic Figures

Before examining in my last chapter how Mackenzie King fulfilled the priestly role Weber and Bourdieu assigned to those defending cultural, religious and political orthodoxy, I will discuss a number of the artist prophets and charismatic figures who organized against King as he sought to dominate artists both in the field of cultural production and in the political field. While King already held a powerful government position as Deputy Minister of Labour at the beginning of the century, Canadian artists held limited cultural and social capital which they sought to augment through the inspiring leadership of leading cultural figures in virtually all artistic disciplines. Paradoxically, many of these shared King’s spiritual idealism⁹⁷⁹ yet differed profoundly in their religious and spiritual beliefs. As subversive “prophets,” they searched for a new “godhood” to replace the orthodox Christianity undermined by Darwin and scientific materialism.

Ramsay Cook, in *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada*, documented the growing conviction on the part of liberal religious leaders and social reformers at the turn of the 20th century that the kingdom of God had to be created through social salvation and a reconstructed Christianized social order on earth. Cook noted “the supreme irony” of the regenerators, however, that “the new birth to which they contributed was not, as they had hoped,

August 12, 18, 19 and 27, September 2 and October 27, 1936, June 25 and July 2 and 10, 1937 and June 4, 1940.

⁹⁷⁹ Bertram Brooker, for example, also selected a photograph of Walter Allward’s spiritually evocative Vimy Memorial, with its allegorical sculptural figures, for the title page of his *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1936*. Bertram Brooker, ed. (Toronto: Macmillan, 1936).

the city of God on earth but rather the secular city...the traditional Christian emphasis on man's relationship with God shifted to a focus on man's relationship with man."⁹⁸⁰ Yet despite his genuine sympathy for the plight of working men and women and the labour movement, Mackenzie King never lost his belief that social regeneration could only be engendered through individual regeneration. Even as Prime Minister, the orthodox "priest" with conservation strategies never wavered in his Christian beliefs and saw himself as an instrument of God. Cook suggested that when he won the Leadership of the Liberal Party in August of 1919, "King was doubtless in a minority in believing that the New Jerusalem was at hand. But at least those who had taken the trouble to thumb through *Industry and Humanity* should have realized that the party was now in the hands of a Christian sociologist."⁹⁸¹

Yet even as Mackenzie King ascended to the highest social standing in the fields of politics and culture through his accumulation of cultural and political capital, a group of charismatic cultural leaders began challenging his Christian world-view by elevating art and the Canadian natural environment to the level of the spiritual. These "prophets" included the theatre director Roy Mitchell, the Group of Seven painters Lawren Harris and Arthur Lismer, the writer and editor F.B. Housser, the painter, novelist and playwright Bertram Brooker, the literary nationalist William Arthur Deacon, the experimental theatre director and playwright Herman Voaden, the cellist and community arts activist Marcus Adeney, the sculptor Elizabeth Wyn Wood and the Irish-Canadian playwright John Coulter. Each of them had excelled and established reputations in their own disciplines and collaborated with others to advance the cause of all Canadian artists, their public and a nascent national culture. Like the leaders of the Canadian social gospel movement they sought—with the exception of the mystic Bertram Brooker—to create a more perfect world on earth.

⁹⁸⁰ Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 4. Cook analyzes King's early Christian beliefs in "The Modernist Pilgrim's Progress," pp. 196-213.

⁹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 213.

Lawren Harris, founder of the Group of Seven in 1920 and first president of the Canadian Group of Painters in 1933, became president of the Federation of Canadian Artists, the first grass-roots national arts organization lobbying the federal government in the 1940s. A past-president of the Sculptors' Society of Canada and a former director of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, Elizabeth Wyn Wood became a catalyst in the founding of the Canadian Arts Council and served as its vice-president 1945-48. John Coulter organized at the Arts and Letters Club in Toronto and read and tabled the artists' *Brief* before the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment in Ottawa in 1944. Herman Voaden was also a leading cultural activist at the Arts and Letters Club and was elected the founding president of the Canadian Arts Council in 1945, serving as president until 1948. These artists and cultural nationalists in turn attracted the support of other important cultural figures such as the art critic and editor Walter Abell, the CBC radio culture critic Arthur Phelps and the Ottawa culture lobbyist Walter Herbert.

In his analysis of *The Sociology of Religion*, Pierre Bourdieu noted that Weber defined "prophets" as "the bearers of metaphysical or religious-ethical revelation." He posited that "The prophet's charismatic action basically achieves its effects by way of the prophetic word"⁹⁸² and defined their charisma as "*the symbolic power that confers on them the ability to believe in their own symbolic power...it supports the faith of the prophet in his own mission.*"⁹⁸³

This description of the "prophet" as a charismatic speaker and bearer of religious-ethical revelation is precisely how Roy Mitchell was perceived by his contemporaries: dynamic, physically imposing, possessing a magnetic personality, penetrating black eyes, and an encyclopaedic knowledge of religions, philosophy, art, theatre and literature.⁹⁸⁴ The arts and theatre critic Augustus Bridle, in his history of the Arts and Letters Club, recalled "Roy

⁹⁸² Bourdieu, "Legitimation," 120, 127.

⁹⁸³ Pierre Bourdieu, "Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field," *Comparative Social Research* 13 (1991), 20. Italics in the original.

⁹⁸⁴ For biographical information on Mitchell, see A.E.S.S. [Albert E. S. Smythe], "Newspaper Pals," *Canadian Theosophist* 25:5 (July 15, 1944), 166; "Mr. Mitchell," *Canadian Theosophist* 1:2 (April 15, 1920), 27 and Renate Usmiani, "Roy Mitchell: Prophet in Our Past," *Theatre History in Canada* 8:2 (Fall 1987).

Mitchell's Buddhistic monologues" uttered by the "black-haired maestro of drama" and singled out Mitchell's 1911 production of Maeterlinck's symbolist drama *Interior* as "a masterpiece of tragic atmosphere."⁹⁸⁵

Roy Mitchell was such a charismatic speaker because the metaphysical, religious-ethical revelations he brought to his audiences not only appealed to their spiritual aspirations but also incorporated the arts into their spirituality. For Mitchell, theatre had its source in the highest of mysteries and was "our Gateway to the Divine," a representation not of physical reality but a miraculous, revelatory, sacramental communal ritual that initiated its devotees into a metaphysical "fourth world."⁹⁸⁶

The "symbolic goods" Mitchell presented to his "laity" as a substitute for orthodox Christianity were the tenets of theosophy. "The Theosophical Movement of our time arises primarily out of the reaction from the materialism of the last century, when both religion and science had reached the outermost points of their swing from idealism," he wrote in a series of lectures entitled "Theosophy In Action" published in the *Canadian Theosophist*. "It was into this deadlock of opinion that the Theosophical Society came, the herald of a movement, to proclaim the immortality of the souls of all created things, to restate the law of the cyclic return of souls and of the effects of the deeds of souls, to enunciate the doctrine that all religions, philosophy and science at their highest emanated from a body of custodians of the wisdom of the race, and to

⁹⁸⁵ Augustus Bridle, *The Story of the Club* (Toronto: Arts and Letters Club, 1945), 9, 7, 5. Bridle was president of the Club in 1913-14. For descriptions of Mitchell's directing at the Arts and Letters Club, see R. H., "'Interior'—An Appreciation," *The Lamps*, 1:1 (October 1911), 6; "Yeats' Shadowy Waters." Unidentified clipping in the Arts and Letters Club file, Toronto Public Library; [Merrill Denison], "Taking the Curse Off Amateur Acting," *Canadian Bookman* 2 (December 1920), 81; and Usmani. Mavor Moore—himself a pioneer of the post-World War II Canadian theatre—also recalled Mitchell as Canada's first great theatre prophet. See Mavor Moore, "Canada's Great Theatre Prophet: Roy Who?" *Canadian Theatre Review* 1 (Winter 1974). See also "Roy Mitchell Speaks on Creative Theatre," *Curtain Call* 9:5 (February 1938).

⁹⁸⁶ Roy Mitchell, *Creative Theatre* (New York: John Day, 1929). Facsimile edition (Westwood, New Jersey: Kindle Press, 1969), 124, 12, 7.

offer a common meeting ground for religion and science.”⁹⁸⁷ To theosophists, all of existence was divine. “If Theosophy means anything,” Mitchell summarized, “it means that the God manifests Himself in man and that every man is potential God.”⁹⁸⁸

After his directing at the Arts and Letters Club, Mitchell went to New York in 1916 to study stage design, worked as a stage manager on Broadway, and became technical director of the Greenwich Village Theatre in 1917. He returned to Canada to work as Director of Motion Pictures for the Department of Information in Ottawa in 1918. Vincent Massey, also an Arts and Letters Club member, selected Mitchell to assist with the technical design and to become the first artistic director of Hart House Theatre at the University of Toronto for its first two 1919-21 seasons. Containing one of the finest art theatres on the continent, particularly in its technical equipment for lighting, Hart House had been built with funds from the Massey Foundation under the close supervision of Vincent Massey. Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Arthur Lismer and J.E.H. MacDonald contributed set designs for Mitchell’s productions.⁹⁸⁹

Mitchell continued to influence Canadian theatre in the late 1920s and 1930s through his *Creative Theatre*, published in 1929. It attacked the crass commercialism of the American stage

⁹⁸⁷ Roy Mitchell, “Theosophy In Action. I. Origins,” *Canadian Theosophist*, 4:3 (May 15, 1923), 33.

⁹⁸⁸ Roy Mitchell, “Theosophy In Action. VI. Speakers,” *Canadian Theosophist* 4:8 (October 15, 1923), 113. The aims of the Theosophical Society, founded in the United States in 1875, were to encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy, and science; investigate “the powers latent in man” and “form a nucleus for the universal brotherhood of mankind without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.” See Roy Mitchell, “Theosophy In Action. II. Method,” *Canadian Theosophist* 4:4 (June 15, 1923), 49.

⁹⁸⁹ See Merrill Denison, “Hart House Theatre,” *Canadian Bookman* 5 (March 1923). Mitchell’s influence can be seen in Herman Voaden’s experimental playwriting and directing of the 1930s and 1940s. He also profoundly affected the student actress Elizabeth Sterling Haynes whom he cast as Hecuba in his 1920 Hart House production of Euripides’ *The Trojan Women*. Haynes went on to make a significant contribution as a director and drama educator in Alberta as the first artistic director of the Edmonton Little Theatre (1929-1932), as a founding member of the Alberta Drama League in 1929, the first Extension drama specialist for Alberta (1932-1937) and as a co-founder of the Banff School of Fine Arts in 1933. See

(“the theatre of a barrel-organ and a monkey”) and envisioned an ideal “servitor” theatre that functioned both as a spiritual temple and as a practical arts centre with a theatre school, library, concert space for lectures and recitals, exhibition spaces for art and sculpture, and possibly a studio, children’s and puppet theatre. He called the director of the “miraculous theatre” he was advocating a *Hierophant*, “a revealer of sacred elements in life.”⁹⁹⁰

When Robert Ayre reviewed *Creative Theatre* in the *Canadian Forum* in 1930, he suggested that “its great value lies in its outspoken revaluation of the Theatre, its penetration, its vision and its power to kindle...if there ever was a prophet who should be honoured in his own country and that country Canada, it is Roy Mitchell.” With the great decline in American professional touring productions because of the Depression and an increase in local amateur theatre production, Ayre was convinced that “more than any other country, Canada needs a prophet of the Theatre and in Roy Mitchell she has one of her own.”⁹⁹¹

Building Social and Cultural Capital Through Community

But Pierre Bourdieu posited that even the charismatic “prophet” could not succeed in the competition with “priests” without first building a community of followers. “Prophecy cannot completely fulfill the claim that it necessarily implies, of being able to modify the lives and world-views of the laity in a deep and lasting fashion,” he observed, “unless it succeeds in founding a ‘community’. This is in turn able to perpetuate itself in an institution capable of carrying on a lasting and continuous activity of winning acceptance for and inculcating the doctrine.” He concluded that “The prophet’s power rests upon the force of the group he can mobilize.”⁹⁹²

Moira Jean Day, “Elizabeth Sterling Haynes and the Development of the Alberta Theatre” (PHD diss., University of Toronto, 1987), vi, 19, 22-23.

⁹⁹⁰ Mitchell, *Creative Theatre*, 256, 125-26.

⁹⁹¹ Robert Ayre, “The Hierophant,” *Canadian Forum* 10 (September 1930), 466, 465. Mitchell became Professor of Dramatic Art at New York University in 1930. He died in 1944.

The Theosophical Society in Canada had only limited success in recruiting “laity” to its symbolic spiritual goods. By the 1930s, it had over twenty lodges but only about one thousand members.⁹⁹³ Artists in Protestant, commercially-driven Toronto, however, were able to take a major step forward towards their goal of accumulating greater social and cultural capital with the formation of the Arts and Letters Club in 1908. According to Dennis Reid, the Club, with its association of lay members and professional artists, became “the centre of living culture in Toronto.”⁹⁹⁴ J.E.H. MacDonald attested to the cultural importance of the Club at the end of his two-year presidency in October of 1930. “The club has been a church, a home, and a studio for me,” he stated in a farewell speech. “It has called on me for service, it has developed my power to serve. It has often given inspiration and ideals. It has enlarged our Canada for me. It has made a blessed centre for me in this grey town.”⁹⁹⁵

Most of the cultural nationalists discussed in this chapter were members of the Arts and Letters Club. The principal instigator for its founding and “Fellow Member Number One” was the thirty-nine year old Augustus Bridle. He became a major critical supporter in the *Canadian Courier* from 1911 to 1920 of the painters who formed the Group of Seven and of painters and artists in other disciplines as critic for the *Toronto Daily Star* from 1921 until the 1940s. Another founding member of the Arts and Letters Club was the twenty-three year old Lawren Harris who, along with Arthur Lismer, participated in Roy Mitchell’s experimental and symbolist productions. Other Club members included the remaining future Group of Seven painters J.E.H. MacDonald, A.Y. Jackson, Fred Varley, Frank Johnston and Frank Carmichael (as well as their critical nemesis, *Saturday Night*’s Hector Charlesworth), sculptors Walter Allward and Emanuel Hahn, former Montreal *Herald* theatre critic and in 1920 founding editor of the *Canadian Bookman*,

⁹⁹² Bourdieu, “Legitimation,” 127, 129.

⁹⁹³ Michele Lacombe, “Theosophy and the Canadian Idealist Tradition: A Preliminary Exploration,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 17:2 (Summer 1982), 102. See for example the addresses of twenty lodges listed in “The Canadian Lodges,” *Canadian Theosophist* 8:1 (March 15, 1927), 20.

⁹⁹⁴ Dennis Reid, *The Group of Seven* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1970), 28.

⁹⁹⁵ Margaret McBurney, *The Great Adventure: 100 Years at the Arts & Letters Club* (Toronto: Arts and Letters Club, 2007), 65.

B.K. Sandwell, playwright Merrill Denison, the literary critic William Arthur Deacon, Vincent Massey (the Club's president 1920-22), the art critic Fred Housser, and the multi-disciplinary artist Bertram Brooker. Playwrights John Coulter and Herman Voaden became members in the 1930s and the cellist Marcus Adeney, composer Godfrey Ridout and the arts activist Horace Garnard Kettle at the beginning of the 1940s. We will see shortly how these artists organized to promote the arts.⁹⁹⁶

In addition to increasing the social and cultural capital of its members through in-house exhibitions, discussions and performances, the Arts and Letters Club also initiated the collective assessment of cultural conditions in Canada and advocacy *for* culture by artists for the general public. The Club's *Year Book of Canadian Art 1913* covered the disciplines of literature, architecture, music, painting and sculpture. In its introduction, the *Book's* Publication Committee asserted that "art in all its diversified forms is becoming more and more an integral part of the life of the Canadian people."⁹⁹⁷ The *Year Book's* articles were written by leading critics and educators across the country. Prominent contributors included James Mavor writing on Walter Allward, Eric Brown on the National Gallery of Canada, Andrew Macphail on Stephen Leacock, and Hector Charlesworth on "The Present Status of Grand Opera in Canada." Three other *Year*

⁹⁹⁶ In addition to the sculptors Walter Allward and Emanuel Hahn, Mackenzie King interacted with several other Arts and Letters Club members. These include his early family friend and political patron, Sir William Mulock; the arts patron Sir Edmund Walker, chairman of the National Gallery board of trustees 1913-24; the art critic Newton MacTavish, editor of the *Canadian Magazine*, whom King appointed a trustee of the National Gallery in 1923; Hugh Eayrs, president of Macmillan Canada which published his *The Message of the Carillon* in 1927 and an abridged edition of *Industry and Humanity* in 1935; Hector Charlesworth, first chair of the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission 1932-36, and B.K. Sandwell, whom he urged to accept an appointment as librarian of Parliament in 1939 and the chairmanship of the CBC board in 1944. I have found only one reference in King's diaries regarding actually having attended the Club. On March 14, 1919, "At noon I had lunch with Lindsay Crawford [of the *Globe*] at the Arts & Letters Club & met several professors who dined together there. Talked of federal politics."

⁹⁹⁷ *The Year Book of Canadian Art 1913*. Compiled by the Arts & Letters Club of Toronto. (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1913), vi. Charles Hill suggests that the publication of the *Year Book* "marked a milestone in Canadian cultural history." See Charles Hill, general ed. *Artists, Architects & Artisans: Canadian Art 1890-1918* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2013), 16.

Book contributors would again write for Bertram Brooker's 1928-29 *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada*: Lawren Harris on the Canadian Art Club, Arthur Lismer on graphic art and Augustus Bridle on the choral conductor and founder of the Mendelssohn Choir, Augustus Vogt, orchestral music in Ontario and chamber music in Toronto. *The Year Book of Canadian Art 1913* also included 56 photographs of artists, works of art, arts organizations and architecture. Brooker would retain this prominent visual component for his 1928-29 *Yearbook* and the *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1936*.

Lawren Harris, Mystic Prophet of the North

If there is one single individual who can be considered the prime mover of arts organizing beginning before the First World War and again in the 1940s, it is Lawren Harris. He was born in 1885 in Brantford, Ontario, where his father Thomas Harris was the youngest son and secretary of the A. Harris, Son and Co. Ltd. farm machinery manufacturing company founded by Alanson Harris. In 1891 the family business merged with Massey Manufacturing to form Massey-Harris Co. Ltd., the largest farm machinery manufacturing company in the British Empire. This family wealth would later enable Lawren Harris to pursue his life as a painter without, like virtually all other artists at the time, having to earn an income from another profession. His inherited wealth also enabled him to finance the construction of the Studio Building on Severn Street in Toronto in 1913 where Tom Thomson and painters who would later form the Group of Seven, Harris, MacDonald, Lismer, Carmichael and Jackson, gathered to work, often after painting expeditions financed by Harris.

Harris had met the painter, poet and philosopher Paul Thiem, who may first have introduced Harris to theosophy, during his last year of art studies in Germany in 1907, where he avidly read Ralph Waldo Emerson and William James. According to J. Russell Harper, his religious beliefs were "shaken into unorthodoxy" after Thiem's "philosophical speculations opened many new

doors.”⁹⁹⁸ For Peter Larisey, “Thiem marked a step in Harris’s intellectual journey through Emerson, Plato, the Upanishads and other writers towards the theosophy that gradually came to dominate his thinking...The importance of this reading during his student years should not be underestimated. It proved a helpful introduction to the studies of Plato and the Upanishads that, shortly after his return to Canada, Harris undertook with the guidance of the dramatist Roy Mitchell.”⁹⁹⁹

Roy Mitchell’s return to Toronto to become artistic director of Hart House Theatre in 1919 re-established Harris’s contact with one of the most knowledgeable proponents of theosophy. A.Y. Jackson recalls that during their painting expeditions in the Agawa Canyon in the fall of 1919 with MacDonald and Frank Johnston, “discussions and arguments would last until late in the night, ranging from Plato to Picasso to Madame Blavatsky.”¹⁰⁰⁰ Jeremy Adamson notes that in the sketching expedition in the Agawa Canyon in 1919, “Harris, apparently, instigated many of the philosophic discussions and metaphysical arguments. He was then exploring the writings of a number of mystics, seeking a higher spiritual truth and a deeper meaning to the question of existence.”¹⁰⁰¹ In *Light for a Cold Land*, Peter Larisey writes that “Harris’s response to the mountains was deeply emotional” and cites his friend, the painter B.C. Binning, who accompanied him on mountain-climbing expeditions. “After one long and arduous climb, Harris was deeply moved when he finally reached the peak; in a trancelike state, he experienced glossolalia, and began an ecstatic unintelligible chanting.”¹⁰⁰²

Harris had been a member of the International Theosophical Society for a number of years before the greater spiritual certainty resulting from his painting in the Canadian North led him to

⁹⁹⁸ J. Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 269.

⁹⁹⁹ Peter Larisey, *Light for a Cold Land: Lawren Harris’s Work and Life—An Interpretation*, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1993), 10, 7.

¹⁰⁰⁰ A.Y. Jackson, *A Painter’s Country: The Autobiography of A.Y. Jackson* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1958), 46.

¹⁰⁰¹ Adamson, 83.

¹⁰⁰² Larisey, 100.

become involved with the Theosophical Society in Toronto. Along with Roy Mitchell and Arthur Lismer, he joined its Decoration Committee in February of 1922 and formally became a member of the Society in March of 1923. Of all the Canadian artists who were theosophists, Harris had the most clearly developed and explicitly stated understanding of how his spiritual beliefs related to and shaped his art and wrote about his spiritual beliefs in the *Canadian Theosophist* until he moved to the United States in 1934.¹⁰⁰³

For Harris, art could only become a creative force when a people and their artists became aware of, drew sustenance from, and artistically and imaginatively interpreted their environment. Harris called this “winning a Canadian background,” his title in the *Canadian Bookman* for his laudatory review of Merrill Denison’s 1923 play anthology *The Unheroic North*. “We are about the business of becoming a nation,” Harris declared, “and must ourselves create our own background.”¹⁰⁰⁴

In English-Canadian cultural history, Roy Mitchell’s achievement was to propagate theosophical thought among a small circle of artists and to connect its adherents to an international movement and philosophy. Lawren Harris’s contribution—in addition to his remarkable achievements as a painter—was to highlight artistic creation as one of the eternal laws in spiritual growth and evolution and to show how these applied to Canada and Canadians. This was Harris’s spiritual ethos that in 1944 would lead him, as president of the cross-Canada Federation of Canadian Artists, to call on the federal government to build 575 cultural centres across the country which would connect Canadians to the creative spirit, stimulate their artistic creation, and make them conscious of their spiritual and imaginative background. Seventy-five of these centres would be in Canada’s largest cities and would have an even greater multi-disciplinary scope than envisioned by Roy Mitchell in his *Creative Theatre*.

¹⁰⁰³ See for example Lawren Harris, “Theosophy and the Modern World: War and Europe,” *Canadian Theosophist* 14:9 (November 15, 1933), 286, 285.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Lawren Harris, “Winning a Canadian Background,” *Canadian Bookman* 5 (February 1923), 37. See also his “Revelation of Art in Canada,” *Canadian Theosophist* 7:5 (July 15, 1926).

F.B. Housser: Mythologizer of the Group of Seven

Bringing about such a cultural transformation and cultural community as envisioned by Lawren Harris could only be achieved by first transforming Canadian public opinion about arts and culture. Yet creative life, as Harris wrote in Bertram Brooker's 1928-29 *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada*, begins to stir almost unconsciously in a people and initially finds a clearer expression only in a few spiritually aware individuals "capable of concentrating the diffuse spiritual force into new works."¹⁰⁰⁵ Though he did not name them, such spiritual and cultural prophets in Canada included Bertram Brooker himself, Group of Seven painter Arthur Lismer, literary critic William Arthur Deacon, and the editor and writer F.B. Housser. Deacon converted to theosophy in 1917 and fostered Canadian writing and literature as literary editor of *Saturday Night* (1922-28), the *Toronto Mail and Empire* (1928-36) and the *Globe and Mail* (1936-60). Lismer, appointed vice-president of the Ontario College of Art and Design in 1919, also contributed to the *Canadian Theosophist*, writing in an essay on Canadian art in 1925 that "the art of a nation...speaks the longing to understand the divine purpose," and that art was a consciousness of harmony in the universe, "the perception of the divine order running through all existence."¹⁰⁰⁶

Like Bertram Brooker and W. A. Deacon, Frederick Broughton Housser combined a high profile professional career with his pursuit of the spiritual. He was born in Winnipeg on June 2, 1889 where his father John H. Housser was secretary of the Manitoba branch of the A. Harris and Son farm machinery manufacturing company. After its merger in 1891 with Massey Manufacturing, John Housser moved to Toronto in 1895 where he continued as secretary and a director of Massey-Harris. Fred Housser married Bess Larkin in 1914. She began to paint in the early 1920s and had her portrait by Lawren Harris included in the first exhibition by the Group of Seven in 1920. Housser joined the Arts and Letters Club and, with Bess Housser, the Toronto Lodge of the Theosophical Society, in 1922 and was appointed the financial editor of the *Toronto Daily Star* the following year. He began to write on a regular basis for the *Canadian Theosophist*, left the

¹⁰⁰⁵ Harris, "Creative Art and Canada," *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-1929* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1929), 179.

Star in 1928 to found what would become the mining and financial consulting F.B. Housser Company and was elected the same year to the general executive of the Theosophical Society of Canada. In 1934 he was reappointed as financial editor of the *Star*. His brother Harry became president of the Toronto Stock Exchange in 1936. Fred Housser died on December 28 the same year of a heart attack at the age of forty-seven. As he lay dying, his second wife, the painter Yvonne McKague Housser, read him sections from the Bhagavad-Gita, the sacred Hindu scripture.¹⁰⁰⁷ A collection of Housser's popular progressive *Star* columns, *Views and Reviews of Finance and Economics*, was published by Macmillan in 1937.

Housser's great contribution in English-Canadian cultural history, with his 1926 *A Canadian Art Movement: The Story of the Group of Seven*, was to posit the artistic struggles and achievements of a small number of painters as an exemplary Canadian national art movement. He mythologized the Group and its idealistic national consciousness and predicted that their art movement would stimulate artists in other disciplines. By valorizing the creation of an indigenous national school of painting independent of established European art models, he helped to reduce the public bias against Canadian artists and undermined the authority of those Canadian critics who "beat us over the head with their opinions that in the arts we amounted to less than nothing."¹⁰⁰⁸ Like a documentary film, his popular history provided an insider's sympathetic portrait of Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven as they battled against hostile critics and indifferent collectors and art establishments until they won international critical recognition and increased Canadian public support as a result of the British Empire Exhibitions at Wembley in 1924 and 1925.

Reaching a much wider general public than the tiny readership of the *Canadian Theosophist*, Housser's *A Canadian Art Movement* informed Canadians that the Group of Seven was engaged in a cultural revolution for the whole country's artistic and spiritual well-being. "They were a

¹⁰⁰⁶ Arthur Lismer, "Canadian Art," *Canadian Theosophist* 5:12 (February 15, 1925), 178-79.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Alicia Boutilier, *An Intimate Circle: The F.B. Housser Memorial Collection* (London, Ontario: Museum London, 2005), 4, 17, 8, 22.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Merrill Denison, "The Group of Seven," *Willison's Monthly* 2:8 (January 1927), 293.

rebellious crew; rebellious toward all that was considered ‘the thing.’ Harris, perhaps the greatest rebel of the lot, was lit up with the conviction that Canadian painters had something worthwhile to say if they would only be themselves.” The painters had no ulterior motive “than a wish to make Canada’s spiritual life richer.” “There was naught to be gained either of fame or money by going to the backwoods and painting in a manner which they knew would be disliked by those who judged their work,” Housser wrote, “nor by launching into an adventure in which they have had to this day persisted through ridicule and even slander. They set their conviction against the entire press of the country and the opinion of those whose word was accepted as authoritative in Canada on questions of art.”¹⁰⁰⁹

A Canadian Art Movement abounds with theosophic convictions and infused them within a wider public Canadian cultural nationalism. One of these basic beliefs was that Canadians were being shaped into spiritually higher human beings by their environment. “The land is beginning to talk... Something is being born. The tang of the north is colouring souls as it colours the leaves in autumn,” he wrote.¹⁰¹⁰ Housser’s second basic theosophic belief was that “there is an inexorable law which says ‘Create or be a slave.’” Canadian artists not only had to create new techniques to express their unique environment. Far more than mere craftsmanship, “what was required more than technique was a deep-rooted love of the country’s natural environment. We do not know what mood we shall create which will be called ‘Canadian,’ but it can come only through a love of our own landscape, soil and air.”¹⁰¹¹

For Housser, this creative spirituality was the Group’s great contribution to Canadians. “They have lit a fuse along which the spark will travel to the creative repository of the nation’s life.

¹⁰⁰⁹ F.B. Housser, *A Canadian Art Movement: The Story of the Group of Seven* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1926 and Toronto: Macmillan facsimile edition, 1974), 41, 146.

¹⁰¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 13, 14, 49. Housser was convinced that “at any point on the ribbon of civilization known as Canada, blows the replenishing spirit of the North,—that ancient imperishable land spoken of by Madame Blavatsky in the Secret Doctrine. For myself, I have become convinced that the occult influence of the North is Canada’s greatest spiritual heritage.” See F.B. Housser, “Thoughts On a Trip West,” *Canadian Theosophist* 9:8 (October 15, 1928), 226.

¹⁰¹¹ Housser, *A Canadian Art Movement*, 16, 17.

Their movement is to-day about the only activity in Canada providing encouragement to those who desire to see our people liberated from the hypnotic trance of a purely industrial and commercial ideal.” He predicted that the Group’s paintings would create a mythic cultural background for all Canadians and stimulate artists in other disciplines, particularly in literature.¹⁰¹²

In the conclusion of *A Canadian Art Movement*, Housser called on Canadians to embrace their artists so that together they could create a new national culture free of its past colonial European heritage. “A nation will advance to meet its artists. This parable of the Group of Seven movement shows that when the soul of man and the soul of his people and environment meet, the creative genius of a race bursts into flame. But that is only a beginning of a road without an end.” Theosophy for Housser led to cultural nationalism, the creation of a Canadian character and identity, and the belief in Canada’s future greatness. “When the genius of other lands is drawn to us for inspiration instead of ours being drawn to the old well-mellowed cultures of Europe, then will the fetters of the past be struck off, and we shall know that ‘the sweetest songs yet remain to be sung.’”¹⁰¹³

Canadians responded warmly to the cultural nationalism of Housser’s *A Canadian Art Movement*. The book was reprinted in less than a year and in January of 1929 Bertram Brooker reported in his syndicated “The Seven Arts” column that 2,700 copies had been sold.¹⁰¹⁴ Along with the positive English reviews of the 1924 and 1925 British Empire Exhibitions, *A Canadian Art Movement* became “the most-quoted source in the defence of the Group of Seven.”¹⁰¹⁵ According to Peter Larisey, Housser’s “enthusiastic appraisal established the Group firmly in Canadian history.”¹⁰¹⁶ When Brooker spoke at Housser’s funeral in 1936, he reminded his

¹⁰¹² Ibid., 156, 155.

¹⁰¹³ Housser, *A Canadian Art Movement*, 215-16. The Whitman citation is from the conclusion of his *A Backward Glance o’er Travel’d Roads*.

¹⁰¹⁴ Bertram Brooker, “The Seven Arts,” *Ottawa Citizen*, January 19, 1929.

¹⁰¹⁵ Charles C. Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1995), 171.

¹⁰¹⁶ Larisey, 45.

listeners that Housser had championed the Group of Seven “at a time when genuine enthusiasm was most needed for their encouragement and for the enlightenment of the public” and that his study mirrored revolutionary aspects of the Group.¹⁰¹⁷

For Housser cultural nationalism was a spiritual love for one’s country and people that transcended orthodox religions and nationalisms and art an initiator to such spiritual realizations. “This feeling for one’s own country which Canadian art is able to give is not any cheap and shallow nationalism which desires to possess and conquer and stand on its own rights,” Housser stated in a 1927 address, “Art, The Initiator,” given to the Toronto Theosophical Lodge. “The only way in which I can describe it is to say it is a religious experience which waters the whole nature as a summer shower waters the dry hard ground and makes things grow where before the soil was a barren spot.” He was convinced that such a spiritual love of country “will give you a mystical conception of your own people. It will help you to love them and desire to devote yourself to them. It will initiate in you a creative attitude which gives you a vision of yourself and your people as a master instead of a slave.”¹⁰¹⁸

Bertram Brooker: “The Destroyer”

Like Roy Mitchell, Lawren Harris and F. B. Housser, Bertram Brooker was another leading cultural figure who fulfilled the social role ascribed by Pierre Bourdieu to charismatic prophets seeking to subvert orthodox beliefs. In his study of the artist, Gregory Betts posited that “Brooker wanted mysticism and evolutionary spiritualism normalised, authenticated, and absorbed into mainstream ideology and practice...If, to paraphrase Nietzsche’s madman, the conventional,

¹⁰¹⁷ “A Tribute delivered by Bertram Brooker, Representing the Canadian Group of Painters, at the Funeral of Frederick B. Housser, December 30, 1936,” *Canadian Theosophist* 17:11 (January 15, 1937), 347.

¹⁰¹⁸ F.B. Housser, “Art, The Initiator,” *Canadian Theosophist* 8:2 (April 15, 1927), 23-24.

institutional God was indeed dead, occultists aimed to sustain spiritual values and spiritualism despite His absence. They would become themselves Zarathustrian prophets.”¹⁰¹⁹

Betts entitled his dissertation “The Destroyer” after one of Brooker’s poems describing a prophet heralding a new spiritual age.¹⁰²⁰ Betts established that “Brooker’s writing, from poetry to fiction to non-fiction, makes routine use of references to figures predicting or attempting to launch similar dramatic shifts—or, indeed, revolutions—in human thought and being.” He suggests that “The idea of an imminent spiritual revolution was a foundational principle of his mystical thought...The spiritual revolution...would entail a total reformation of Western culture: in fact, it would necessitate the destruction of the world as we know it through the emergence of a profoundly advanced—mystical—consciousness.”¹⁰²¹

Brooker loudly reaffirmed F.B. Housser’s idealistic proclamation of the birth of a creative Canadian national cultural consciousness in *A Canadian Art Movement* in his own *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-1929*. He was himself an astounding multi-disciplinary artist, Canada’s first abstract painter and a novelist, poet, playwright and critic. Brooker was born in Croydon, England, in 1888 into very humble beginnings. His father was a train dispatcher and when he immigrated with his family to Canada in 1905, settling in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, both father and son worked as railway labourers. After six years with the Grand Trunk Pacific railway, Brooker began the first of several multi-disciplinary creative periods in his life in the four years before he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Engineers in 1915. But the profound divergence between what he called the world of feeling and the world of thought, which Brooker first perceived in his youth in England, was again evident in Canada in the contrast between his active participation in forms of popular public culture and his attempts to create much more significant

¹⁰¹⁹ Gregory Betts, ““The Destroyer”: Modernism and Mystical Revolution in Bertram Brooker,” (PHD diss., York University, 2005), 50, 53.

¹⁰²⁰ Bertram Brooker, “The Destroyer” in Birk Sproxtton, ed. *Sounds Assembling: The Poetry of Bertram Brooker* (Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1980), 30-32.

¹⁰²¹ Betts, 4-5. See also 293-94.

intellectual and spiritual works of art through novels, paintings and what he termed “psychodrama.”¹⁰²²

Brooker became the editor of the *Portage Review* in 1914 and after the First World War worked as drama editor and music critic for the *Winnipeg Free Press*. He moved to Toronto in 1921 to work for *Marketing Magazine*, which he purchased in 1924 and edited until 1927. He then joined the A. McKim Advertising agency and two years later the J.J. Gibbons Advertising Agency where he worked as copy and art director. McGraw-Hill in New York published his *Layout Technique in Advertising* and *Copy Technique in Advertising* under the pseudonym Richard Surrey in 1929 and 1930. From 1936 on, Brooker worked at the MacLaren Advertising Company and became its vice-president. He won the first Governor General’s Award for Fiction for his mystical novel *Think of the Earth* in 1936. The same year he published *The Tangled Miracle: A Mortimer Hood Mystery* in London under the pseudonym Huxley Herne and edited his second *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1936*.

The *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-29*

Brooker’s multi-disciplinary *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-29*, which he both edited and designed, was a tour de force of critical analysis and persuasion. Its comprehensive examination of the state and challenges facing the arts would not be repeated until his 1936 *Yearbook* and the Massey’s Commission’s 1951 *Royal Commission Studies*.¹⁰²³ A total of thirteen essays assessed the challenges facing artists in the disciplines of literature, theatre, painting, sculpture,

¹⁰²² See Joyce Zemans, “First Fruits: The World and Spirit Paintings” and Anton Wagner, “‘God Crucified Upside Down’: The Search for Dramatic Form and Meaning” in *Bertram Brooker and Emergent Modernism, Provincial Essays 7* (1989), 17-37, 38-51. See also Victoria Evans, “Bertram Brooker’s Theory of Art as Evinced in His ‘The Seven Arts’ Columns and Early Abstractions,” *Journal of Canadian Art History* 9:1 (1986).

¹⁰²³ *Royal Commission Studies: A Selection of Essays Prepared for the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1951.)

architecture and music.¹⁰²⁴ Arthur Lismer, in his essay “Art Appreciation,” anticipated the community arts centre movement of the 1940s by observing that “fortunately the art gallery is becoming a community idea in Canada, serving the public as a library, or a hospital, serves. There will come a time when we have outgrown our agrarian origins, when we shall see that the art gallery is more than a show place. It is a breathing place for the spirit, as sustaining to the receptive and expansive nature as a church, and just as beneficial.” Yet he lamented that Canadian artists still could not make a living from their talent. He noted the absurd paradox that “this country imports millions of dollars worth of dealer’s art” while “there are artists young and eager who are looking at mountains and northern lakes, wandering around cities and rural districts, looking for subjects, making sketches they will never sell, unable to afford canvas and material to paint, or to study.”¹⁰²⁵

Augustus Bridle, in “Composers Among Us,” catalogued the challenges facing Canadian composers in the creation and distribution of original music that would be presented once again to the Massey Commission by the Canadian Music Council two decades later. “What most of our composers lack is opportunity. We have no salon. The music hall is too large and costs too much. No impresario would dare a programme of Canadian works in any but a small hall. Nobody is supposed to want to hear Canadian works, because most people think they must be dull, amateur, or uninspired,” Bridle wrote. “Theatre managements have very little faith in the purely Canadian product. They are dominated by Tin Pan Alley and the Hollywood theme song.” Bridle proposed that “A chain of theatres and one big radio ‘hook-up’ could do more to realize Canadian composers than all the conservatories. And all the while the vast romance of Canada’s background waits to be translated into music!” Like the Massey Commission’s *Report two*

¹⁰²⁴ See for example William Arthur Deacon, “Literature in Canada—In Its Centenary Year,” and F.B. Housser, “The Amateur Movement In Canadian Painting.” Carroll Aikins in “The Amateur Theatre in Canada” noted that “In the field of organization, H.A. Voaden, of Toronto, has launched a project to unite our producing groups in a single society, somewhat similar to the British Drama League, for their mutual advancement and protection. One of its aims (possibly the most important) is to help the smaller groups in the selection and staging of good plays.” *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-1929*, 45-46.

decades later, he warned that the preponderant influence of American popular culture was stifling the emergence of an original Canadian indigenous culture. “The theme-song on the amplified automatic orchestra in Hollywood has the public ear. We have no national spirit in music.”¹⁰²⁶

In addition to the thirteen essays in the *Yearbook*'s “Review Section,” Lawren Harris’s essay “Creative Art and Canada” and Roy Mitchell’s “Motion and the Actor” introduced the metaphysical realm of artistic creation and the relationship between the artist and his or her society. As he would do again in the 1940s, Harris affirmed the central role of the artist in Canadian life. “The creative individual and his people are as necessary to each other for their respective illumination as the negative and positive forces of electricity.” His “Creative Art and Canada” essay greatly clarified his belief in the relationship between cultural nationalism and spirituality by addressing the apparent contradiction in the beliefs that “there is no such thing as a national art” and that “all manifestations in art are of time, place and people.”

Harris emphasized the crucial role of the spiritual and the immediate environment in artistic creation. “Creative life commences to stir because of the stimulus of the total environment, physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. This evokes the creative faculty into activity in the exact degree of the individual’s capacity of awareness and vision. The creative faculty being spiritual, or rather, being the active channel for the infiltration of the light of the spiritual realm into the darkness of earth life, is universal and without Time. We have thus the seeming paradox that it needs the stimulus of earth resonance and of a particular place, people and time to evoke into activity a faculty that is universal and timeless.”¹⁰²⁷

¹⁰²⁵ Arthur Lismer, “Art Appreciation,” *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-1929*, 61, 62, 65-66, 70.

¹⁰²⁶ Augustus Bridle, “Composers Among Us,” *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-1929*, 139.

¹⁰²⁷ Lawren Harris, “Creative Art and Canada,” *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-1929*, 179. Harris’s essay charts his own progression from the early realism in his landscape painting beginning in 1908 towards a greater degree of abstraction and the creation of a “fourth dimension” in his northern landscape paintings two decades later. He suggested that “This is

Roy Mitchell, in “Motion and the Actor,” also discussed the outer appearance of the actor in motion in contrast to “invisible motion” and metaphysical “motions of the soul.” Mastering this metaphysical fourth type of motion, Mitchell believed, would lead to a new level of artistic and spiritual creation. “We may get a theatre of suggestion, of implication, of noble persuasion, of indices to inner forces. We might achieve even initiation. We might learn to think of our figures in a play as souls driving down into manifestation of the powers of souls, vortices which with ever so little knowledge we might make do undreamed of things. It might require at the last that we see the play itself as a vortex of vortices. Here are fertile implications. They might change the relations of our actors, the form of our plays, perhaps even the shape of our playhouses.”¹⁰²⁸

“When We Awake!”, Brooker’s general introduction to the *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-1929*, was the pinnacle of his analytical pyramid, his attempt to unify the essays on the individual arts disciplines that follow and to provide “a composite picture of the background against which all artists in Canada work.” Brooker’s aim for the *Yearbook* was nearly identical to that of the Massey Commission two decades later. “Perhaps it has not occurred to many people that the artist in Canada is more difficultly placed than artists have ever been before in any country,” he stated at the outset. “My original conception, in planning this book, was that it should deal as much with the handicaps and complications which beset artists in Canada as it does with their achievements. As editor I have attempted to provide contributions that discuss what might be called the soil of our art, as well as others which chronicle its blossoming.”

Brooker examined all the elements of this total cultural environment but had primarily a spiritual conception of the artist and art. He defined the artist as “a person whose experiences crystallize

indeed the very unfolding of the soul itself through the effect of Time, Place and People.” (185-186).

¹⁰²⁸ Roy Mitchell, “Motion and the Actor,” *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-1929*, 190, 194. Mitchell’s essay, reprinted from *Theatre Arts Monthly* 14:4 (March 1929), is condensed from chapter 12, “Motion Germinal,” of his *Creative Theatre* published at the same time as the *Yearbook*. Brooker described Mitchell as the “director of Hart House Theatre during its most promising creative period” who “ranks with the most progressive theatrical designers in

into unified wholes that can be embodied in some medium, as contrasted with persons whose experiences seem fragmentary, unrelated and chaotic.” And he found that the efficacy of art—its power to produce effects— “consists in the concentration of experience into deeper and simpler and more universal unifications, always approaching the total unity of life and conveying intimations of that eternal unity which has probably never been completely revealed to any single individual.” For Brooker, “To recognize this *unity of being* is obviously akin to the experiences which in the past have always been called religious. And perhaps the simplest way of describing the highest faculty of the artist is to say that it is essentially a religious sense—a sense of the mystery of the whole of life.”¹⁰²⁹

Though not a theosophist because of his distrust of organized religion, Brooker closely echoed the theosophic beliefs of Lawren Harris, Arthur Lismer, F.B. Housser and Roy Mitchell in his general introduction. He sharply attacked the rising materialist philosophy brought about by scientific thought, “this newest destruction of idealism,” and asserted that natural phenomena “bear the secrets of ultimate unity in their forms, rhythms and relationships” and that “the only reality is inside of us.” Brooker realized, however, that the increasing urbanization, mechanization and materialism of Canadian society made this strongly spiritual conception of art and the artist increasingly problematic. “Consider the difficulties of producing a unified art or literature, arising from individual unifications by artists attuned to our soil and conditions, when the background against which our artists must work is split up into the following incongruous and disassociated elements,” he stated:

- a country that is not unified geographically.
- a people that is not unified racially.
- a history that centres about a few picturesque personalities and events, failing to unify for us our past as a people.
- a population too small to provide an adequate audience for artists.

America.” He added that Mitchell’s essay “alone would stamp him as one of the most dynamic forces in the modern theatre.”

¹⁰²⁹ Bertram Brooker, “When We Awake!” in *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-1929*, 3, 4, 16.

- a general conception of art that lacks any hint of national consciousness, but clings instead to old notions of connoisseurship borrowed from feudal times and countries.
- a disruption of the settling process, which might in time have unified some aspects of Canadian life, by the mechanization of civilisation all over the world.
- a destruction of ethical-philosophic-religious stability by the encroaching scepticism of a science-ridden age.¹⁰³⁰

Though Brooker lamented the fact that “We are *not yet* a people!” he concluded his essay with the same optimistic idealism of Harris, Lismer and Housser that a great national cultural destiny awaited Canada if it elevated the arts and the Canadian environment to the level of the spiritual. Inquiring, “Is there, in Canada, any of this consciousness of unity to counteract the distracting influences from without and the many divisions within?” Brooker concluded: “Perhaps there is a little. But we are not really awake. We are not sensible of national unity and we are not sensible of universal unity. Yet there are signs that both may perhaps soon blossom into being. These signs, so far, are deducible only from the occasional work of isolated individuals. But the opportunities to build an art here and an audience that may be stirred by it are as great as have ever existed in any nation, if not greater.”

Brooker concluded his introduction to the 1928-29 *Yearbook* with an ecstatic paragraph Herman Voaden would quote a year later at the beginning of his *Six Canadian Plays* anthology and cite as his motto for over half a century: “There is a spirit here, a response to the new, the natural, the open, the massive—as contrasted with the old, artificial, enclosed littleness of Europe—that should eventually, when we rely on it less timidly, become actively creative. And this creativeness, recognized as our own, and proceeding from the awakened consciousness of a new people with a new future, will itself become a quickening power, jogging laggards out of their dose in the bosom of dying orthodoxies, or counteracting the narcotic effects of scepticism, so

¹⁰³⁰ Ibid., 5.

that religion—and hence art— becomes vital and fresh; an hourly response to life’s exultations!”¹⁰³¹

Herman Voaden and the Religion of Beauty

Bertram Brooker’s first *Yearbook* admirably justified his assertion, stated in its preface, that artists were the most knowledgeable to comment on their own disciplines and to suggest remedies for the weaknesses and challenges facing them. The Canadian Arts Council would make the same claim in the 1940s. Brooker’s fifty photographs and reproductions of paintings (including Harris’s iconic 1929 *North Shore, Lake Superior*), design, architecture, sculpture (including Tait McKenzie’s nude *Athlete*, purchased by the Toronto Art Gallery in 1928) and music scores demonstrated the wide variety of beauty created by Canada’s talented artists. His conviction that the nation, with the right spiritual guidance, was on the threshold of an artistic flowering appeared even more justifiable than the hopes expressed in F.B. Housser’s *A Canadian Art Movement*.

When W.A. Deacon reviewed the *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada* in the *Toronto Mail and Empire*, he suggested that Brooker “throws such light into the dark corners of our national thinking on artistic matters as we may not see again for years.” He enthused that whereas the multi-disciplinary Brooker heretofore “fiddled in more than one of the arts,” “Now he formulates his artistic creed, and names his gods. And I, for one, will subscribe to that creed, and serve those gods.”¹⁰³²

Herman Voaden was another cultural critic, teacher, editor, director and playwright who followed in Roy Mitchell’s, Lawren Harris’s, F.B. Housser’s and Bertram Brooker’s footsteps until he

¹⁰³¹ Ibid., 17 and in Herman Voaden, ed. *Six Canadian Plays* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1930), v. Voaden changed Brooker’s text “jogging laggards out of their dose in the bosom of dying orthodoxies” to “jogging laggards out of their doze...”

¹⁰³² W.A. Deacon, “Canadian Music, Sculpture, Art, Find Focus in Yearbook,” *Toronto Mail and Empire*, November 30, 1929. Cited in Betts, 121.

emerged, in the 1930s and 1940s, as a charismatic “prophet” in his own right. He had been propelled on a similar spiritual journey by the same crisis of orthodox Christian belief that steered Mitchell, Harris and Housser to theosophy and Brooker to mysticism. Voaden began to doubt conventional Christian dogma about the Creation, communion and the Resurrection at the age of fourteen, a youthful crisis in 1917 that nearly drove him to suicide and which he dramatized in his 1942 *Ascend As the Sun*. He had a vast spiritual orientation but, like Brooker, had not adopted the dogma of theosophy that satisfied Mitchell’s, Harris’s and Housser’s mystic yearnings.

Voaden was exceptionally well qualified to provide cultural leadership. Born in London, Ontario, in 1903, he obtained his B.A. and M.A. from Queen’s University, completing his dissertation on Eugene O’Neill in 1926. In 1930-31 he studied at the Yale Graduate School of Drama, taking playwriting classes with George Pierce Baker who had also taught O’Neill. Because there were no positions for theatre and drama professors at Canadian universities until after World War II, Voaden earned his living as head of the departments of English at high schools and collegiates in Windsor, Sarnia and, from 1928 to 1964, at the Central High School of Commerce in Toronto. These school and community environments provided him with free stages, production facilities, stage crews, actors and audiences to engage in any kind of live theatre and playwriting he desired.

Like Roy Mitchell, Voaden believed the theatre could return to the intimacy and oneness between religion and theatre as in ancient Greece so that theatre and the arts could once again become ritual and worship and a potent means of connecting to the divine. Theatre could become a new religion. As he told a play production group in 1931, “I would hold up the theatre to you as a place of immortal visions and enthusiasms. I would condemn those who exploit it for mercenary and selfish motives.” Echoing both Mitchell and Bertram Brooker, he stated that he sensed “a new religion trembling near the hearts of men...a religion in which imagination is, as it was with Blake, ‘the body of God,’ in which, as with Blake, poetry, music and art are the powerful instruments of God, the mounting steps to the white radiance of his throne. Of this new religion I

envision the theatre the heart, the church, the celebrant. To create in beauty and strength will be to worship.”¹⁰³³

In September of 1928, Voaden became head of English at the Central High School of Commerce in Toronto, teaching English and theatre by day and directing an adult play production course at night. He came into direct contact with the Group of Seven when he met Arthur Lismer through Lismer’s work in art training for the young at the Ontario College of Art. Through Lismer, he met other members of the Group of Seven and Fred Housser whose *A Canadian Art Movement* he studied with great enthusiasm. When he published his article “A National Drama League” in the *Canadian Forum* in December of 1928, he called for the formation of provincial drama leagues to be followed by a single national drama league and placed great emphasis on the important role the Canadian little theatre movement could play in the development of a distinct Canadian national identity by following the example of the Group of Seven.¹⁰³⁴ He had himself already begun “to call in the artist” to the theatre through his collaboration with the painter and stage designer Lowrie Warrener who had exhibited with the Group of Seven in 1926 and 1928.¹⁰³⁵

In the fall of 1930, Copp Clark published *Six Canadian Plays* edited by Voaden with stylized nature drawings by Warrener. The anthology contained the best of forty-nine scripts submitted to a playwriting competition organized by Voaden, production photographs from two of the plays staged earlier in the year (one with serrated mountain forms designed by Warrener) and reproductions of Lismer’s *September Gale*, Harris’s *Above Lake Superior* and MacDonald’s

¹⁰³³ Undated address to the Beaches Library Drama League cited in Anton Wagner, “Herman Voaden’s ‘New Religion,’” *Theatre History in Canada* 6:2 (Fall 1985), 190.

¹⁰³⁴ Herman Voaden, “A National Drama League,” *Canadian Forum* 9 (December 1928), 106. Voaden studied Housser’s *A Canadian Art Movement* in great detail and based his *Northern Song*, written in January of 1930, on painting exhibitions by the Group of Seven in the Lake Superior area described by Housser.

¹⁰³⁵ In June of 1929 they embarked on “the journey that Whitman made” via a cross-continent automobile trek through the United States to California and in the summer of 1930 crossed Canada courtesy of the Canadian Pacific Railway while collaborating on their expressionist “painter’s ballet,” *Symphony: A Drama of Motion and Light For a New Theatre*.

Solemn Land. The most remarkable component of the anthology was Voaden's introduction in which he called for the creation of a distinct "Canadian 'Art of the Theatre.'" In his introduction and preface, he acknowledged his debt to F.B. Housser and his *A Canadian Art Movement* and cited Lawren Harris's "Creative Art and Canada" essay and Brooker's introduction from the *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-1929*.

The experimental and spiritual multi-disciplinary "Canadian 'Art of the Theatre'" Voaden advocated in his introduction called for "a tradition in the staging of plays that will be an expression of the atmosphere and character of our land as definite as our native-born painting and sculpture. To mention only three instances, the canvases of Lawren Harris and Arthur Lismer, and the natural sculpture of Elizabeth Wood, are indicative of the possible nature of such a national theatre art—and should encourage us to proceed in this direction."¹⁰³⁶ Within two years after Voaden called for the creation of his distinct "Canadian 'Art of the Theatre,'" Bertram Brooker informed the Toronto Women's Press Club just prior to Voaden's multi-disciplinary "symphonic expressionist" production of *Earth Song* in December of 1932, that Voaden was "doing in drama what the Group of Seven are doing in painting."¹⁰³⁷

What most audiences and critics (with the exception of Augustus Bridle and Lawrence Mason in the *Toronto Globe*) did not clearly perceive was that symphonic expressionism, with its aim to "open wide the doors of beauty and imagination" and to provide "glimpses of perfection," "intuitive illumination," "lyrical intensity," "spiritual release," "uplifting vision" and "flashing revelation,"¹⁰³⁸ was, like Roy Mitchell's *paradosis*, itself a fundamentally religious aesthetic ritual. In addition to the aesthetic pleasure gained from Voaden's "intense, slow and lovely

¹⁰³⁶ Herman Voaden, ed. *Six Canadian Plays*, xxi.

¹⁰³⁷ Mona Kenny Cannon to Herman Voaden, December 14, 1932. Brooker was sufficiently impressed with Voaden's playwriting and directing to entrust him with the production of two of his symbolical and mystical dramas, *Within: A Drama of Mind in Revolt* and *The Dragon: A Parable of Illusion and Disillusion*, in 1935 and 1936.

¹⁰³⁸ Herman Voaden, "The Symphonic Theatre." Program note for *Hill-Land*. The Play Workshop, Central High School of Commerce, December 13 and 14, 1934. Reprinted as "Toward a New Theatre," *Toronto Globe*, December 8, 1934, 19.

picturization,” the new multi-media language of symphonic expressionism was, like Lawren Harris’s use of light in his spiritual paintings, a means of attaining the greater spiritual reality of the beyond. In *Ascend As the Sun*, begun in 1937 and produced at Hart House Theatre with music by Godfrey Ridout in 1942, Voaden reaffirmed his utopian vision of Canada in which the creation of “the perfect city,” heaven on earth, could be realized. Augustus Bridle perceived in his *Toronto Star* review that a “mystic religious conception animates the entire production which is the author’s supreme expression of his belief in the miracle of life, and in Man as its ultimate ideal.”¹⁰³⁹

After seeing Lawren Harris paint in his studio in Toronto, Emily Carr had written in her journal on December 13, 1927, “his religion, whatever it is, and his painting are one and the same.”¹⁰⁴⁰ Herman Voaden similarly was more successful than Roy Mitchell and Bertram Brooker in actually transforming his multi-disciplinary productions into a theatre and spirituality of beauty that functioned as a new religion subverting orthodox Christianity. The “laity” he won for his symbolic goods were not only his live audiences but also readers of his manifestos and other publications,¹⁰⁴¹ the students and adults he taught in his classes and play workshops, and the general public who heard his many addresses on arts and culture.

But Voaden himself realized that his idealistic dramas were no longer tenable amidst the death and destruction of World War II. “We were not, in Whitman’s words, a prelude to better players.”¹⁰⁴² He had heard J.S. Woodsworth lecture when he was a student at Queen’s University in the early 1920s and “was deeply moved by his saint-like mystical vision of a better Canada.” He joined the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation in 1943 and unsuccessfully contested the

¹⁰³⁹ Augustus Bridle, “Voaden’s New Drama Stage-Born Monday,” *Toronto Star*, April 4, 1942, 28.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Emily Carr, *Hundreds and Thousands: The Journals of Emily Carr* (Toronto/Vancouver: Clarke, Irwin, 1978), 17.

¹⁰⁴¹ See “Selected Bibliography—Manifestos, Essays, Articles, Reviews” in Anton Wagner ed. *A Vision of Canada: Herman Voaden’s Dramatic Works 1928-1945* (Toronto: Simon & Pierre, 1993), 417-21.

Toronto riding of Trinity for the CCF in three federal elections and a by-election from 1945 to 1954. “I hoped to make *cultural* democracy as important as political and social democracy in the party platform.”¹⁰⁴³ By largely curtailing his playwriting and directing and focusing on cultural organizing, Voaden became a key figure from 1943 on in shifting the struggle of Canadian artists for state support of arts and culture from the field of cultural production to the political field. Their chief antagonist remained Prime Minister Mackenzie King, the “priestly” accumulator and monopolizer of both cultural and political capital. By transferring their “subversion strategies” to the field of politics, cultural leaders attempted to achieve greater success in competing among the “laity”—the Canadian public—for consumers of their symbolic goods.

The Artists’ Political Turn

Canadian artists began making a political turn in the 1930s. The stock market crash in October of 1929 and the onset of the Depression forced most Canadians to focus on harsh political and economic realities rather than on spiritual considerations. For Bertram Brooker, this shift from the spiritual to the political here and now and the efforts of other “prophets” such as Lawren Harris and F.B. Housser to create a national rather than a universal spiritual consciousness was deeply problematical. In 1933 Harris became the first president of the nationwide Canadian Group of Painters, with Fred Housser as secretary, which superceded the Group of Seven. But as Joyce Zemans noted, “For Brooker, art was ‘above nationality’...In 1933, he wrote LeMoine FitzGerald of his fear that the newly formed Canadian Group of Painters was displaying the same nationalistic bias that had dominated the Group of Seven.”¹⁰⁴⁴

With his business background as financial editor of the *Toronto Daily Star*, F.B. Housser attempted to make theosophy relevant to Canadians during the Depression. While other

¹⁰⁴² *Stage Voices: Twelve Canadian Playwrights Talk About Their Lives and Work*. Ed. Geraldine Anthony (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1978), 46.

¹⁰⁴³ Herman Voaden interviewed by Don Rubin, Ontario Historical Studies Series oral history interview, March 15, 1976, p. 116.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Zemans, 22.

prominent Canadian theosophists such as Albert Smythe, Roy Mitchell and Lawren Harris perceived theosophy primarily as a system for revealing lost ancient wisdom, as an ethical system and as a stimulus to creating non-realistic, metaphysical works of art, Housser also saw theosophy as a means of bringing about political change. He called the kind of society he was advocating “Theosophic Socialism” but clearly differentiated his ideas from communist practices in Russia. He affirmed that “a system which seeks to eliminate a large portion of the population by violence has desecrated the law of unity and invoked a terrible Karma. Under Theosophical Economics the capitalist, as we know him now, would disappear but his executive and organizing abilities will make a useful and necessary contribution to the creation of the new state.”¹⁰⁴⁵

Bertram Brooker’s *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1936*

But just as Housser was urging theosophists to divert their gaze from the cosmic to economic and political realities around them and to create a “Theosophic Socialism,” Bertram Brooker, in his introduction to the *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1936*, urged artists to recognize and reflect in their art the perfection in all of creation already existing around them. In his introductory essay, “Art and Society,” he maintained that “Art is not—and should not be—*useful* to society, *in any sense whatever!*” In Brooker’s view, artists should be constantly changing themselves, expanding their knowledge and deepening their emotions, but should not be measuring or trying to change society. Brooker was essentially asserting that all artists should share his particular mystic, non-Christian conception of cosmic consciousness. “The universe is not *good*. It is perfect, but it is not *good*,” he argued. “We are born in corruption and can see only the corruptible; but the seer, the prophet, the poet, the artist—they are the ones who have seen some sort of vision of the incorruptible; who *know*—if knowing means anything at all—that perfection exists.” He

¹⁰⁴⁵ F.B. Housser, “Social Economics and Theosophy,” *Canadian Theosophist* 12:5 (July 15, 1931), 31. When Canada converted to a war economy during World War II, it would indeed be these capitalists and managers who continued to operate all war industries to ensure the survival of the nation. See also Housser’s “Walt Whitman and North American Idealism,” *Canadian*

contended that “The ‘beauty of holiness’ is the concern of religion; and—to sum up everything we have said—art is not less rightly concerned with the holiness of beauty.”¹⁰⁴⁶

But Canadian artists in the 1930s *did* become increasingly concerned with how their societies were organized in order to end the isolation of the artist and to make arts and culture a more central part of Canadian life. Sir Ernest MacMillan, in his essay “Problems of Music in Canada,” focussed precisely on what could be done to improve the creation and enjoyment of music in Canada through government and private support and the encouragement of indigenous composers. He concluded that under existing conditions, “genuine talent often goes to waste or seeks assistance abroad.”¹⁰⁴⁷

William Arthur Deacon, in “The Canadian Novel Turns the Corner,” criticized Canadian writers for the lack of urban fiction and for their indifference “to those dynamic mass-movements that are making this the century of change.” He expressed his concern about writers’ “apparent and probably real blindness to great forces that even now are making for sweeping changes throughout the world.” Without explicitly calling for government intervention, Deacon pointed out that the lack of public support for Canadian writers left the consumption of literature in Canada completely dominated by American and English publishers. “Centuries of colonialism have induced self-inferiority as a habit of mind. So, while nations sure of themselves, like Britain and the United States, consume 80% of their own books (since readers normally enjoy familiar

Theosophist 11:5 (July 15, 1930) and “Theosophy and the World Crisis,” *Canadian Theosophist* 12:8 (October 15, 1931).

¹⁰⁴⁶ Bertram Brooker, “Art and Society” in *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1936*, xv, xxiv, xxviii. Brooker reflected the considerable growth in the arts by expanding the visual section of the 1936 *Yearbook* with reproductions of the works by eighty painters, ten sculptors, seven photographers and sixteen illustrations of architecture. He also included works by 23 poets and eight short story writers. Instead of commissioning essays on the arts as in the 1928-29 *Yearbook*, he reprinted articles on topics such as music, poetry, the novel, playwriting, art, architecture and Canadian speech. For a discussion of the artists and paintings included in the 1936 *Yearbook*, see Anna Victoria Hudson, “Art and Social Progress: The Toronto Community of Painters, 1933-1950,” (PHD diss., University of Toronto, 1997), 95-103.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Ernest MacMillan, “Problems of Music in Canada” in *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1936*, 185-87, 190-91.

scenes and idioms and points of view), Canada goes on importing something like 98% of books read here—apart from such compulsory reading as school texts, which are Canadian printed but often predominantly foreign in content.”¹⁰⁴⁸

The art critic for *Saturday Night*, Graham Campbell McInnes, in “Thoughts on Canadian Art,” similarly suggested that “the Graphic Arts, though they have the devotion of a number of fine artists, will remain in their present unsatisfactory position as long as the production of fine books remains an activity into which Canadian publishers refuse to venture.” McInnes nevertheless expressed tremendous faith in the future development of Canadian artists, particularly those “experimenting with portraiture, still life, formal design, street scenes and figure painting.” In sculpture he praised Elizabeth Wyn Wood who “stands almost alone in her ability to combine truth to material with imaginative vision.”¹⁰⁴⁹

Barker Fairley in “The American Mind,” analyzed what was becoming an increasing concern since Brooker in the 1928-29 *Yearbook*, and Herman Voaden in the *Toronto Globe* in 1929, had warned of “the mechanization of civilisation all over the world” and “the Americanization of the Canadian mind.” Fairley, too, stated, “we are all American in the Continental sense.” Yet he asserted that the American “levelling and equating, this sandpapering of the human spirit, this mechanical democracy,” rather than being a useful political expedient calculated to unify a nation, “To my mind ... is a philosophical disease, calculated to destroy one. If there is anything in Americanism to resist at all costs it is this and this only.”¹⁰⁵⁰ Such an examination of the influence of the American way of thought on Canadian culture would become one of the primary concerns of the 1949 Massey Commission.

¹⁰⁴⁸ William Arthur Deacon, “The Canadian Novel Turns the Corner” in *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1936*, 214, 216, 217, 208.

¹⁰⁴⁹ G. Campbell McInnes, “Thoughts on Canadian Art” in *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1936*, 223, 226, 225, 227.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Barker Fairley, “The American Mind” in *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1936*, 243, 242. Herman Voaden, “Government Owned Theatres?” *Toronto Globe*, November 30, 1929, 12.

When Frank Underhill reviewed the *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada* in the *Canadian Forum*, he strongly criticized Brooker and Canadian artists in general for their lack of political consciousness and social engagement. Comparing the 1936 edition with Brooker's first 1929 *Yearbook*, Underhill wondered "what effect seven years of a world depression have had upon the tone and outlook of Canadian artists." He suggested that "the depression has made us conscious that we face not merely an economic but a spiritual crisis in our civilization...European artists have been compelled to rethink the whole question of the relation of the artist to society ...What has been the impact of these world-shaking events upon Canadian artists? I cannot find any evidence in this volume."¹⁰⁵¹

The Russian-born and trained Paraskeva Clark, a member of the Canadian Group of Painters, similarly challenged non-politically engaged Canadian artists regarding the function and responsibility of the artist in the April 1937 leftist periodical *New Frontier*, a monthly magazine of literature and social criticism. At a time when Dr. Norman Bethune and hundreds of other Canadian volunteers were fighting Franco's fascist forces in the Spanish Civil War, Clark called on Canadian artists to abandon what she perceived as an escape into the spirituality and metaphysics of nature and to become fully engaged in society and in the social and political movements around them. "It is better to work out the destiny of your human nature, than to expect a divine one," she asserted. "It is to enable you to lie on a rock that castles are tumbling in Spain."¹⁰⁵²

¹⁰⁵¹ Frank Underhill, "The Season's New Books: The Canadian as Artist," *Canadian Forum* 16:191 (December 1936), 27-28. Underhill was a professor of history at the University of Toronto, first president of the League for Social Reconstruction and the principal author of the CCF's 1933 Regina Manifesto. Elizabeth Wyn Wood sprang to the defence of Canadian artists in her essay "Art and the Pre-Cambrian Shield" published in the February 1937 *Canadian Forum*. She echoed Lawren Harris's and F.B. Housser's spiritual credo that Canada was following its own distinct cultural destiny. But in addition to the artistic and spiritual inspiration found in nature, Wood was also receptive to the kind of massive state support of the arts begun in 1933 in the United States to alleviate unemployment. She could envisage a new social order emerging in which government support of the artist and culture restored the public function of the artist and made him and her once again a central part of the community.

¹⁰⁵² Paraskeva Clarke [sic] (as told to G. Campell McInnes), "Come Out from Behind the Canadian Shield," *New Frontier* 1:12 (1937), 16, 17. Clark lived through the Russian Revolution

Graham McInnes perceived just such a new social awareness as Paraskeva Clark was advocating in the 1937 exhibitions of the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Color and the Canadian Society of Graphic Art at the Art Gallery of Toronto. “The Dominant feature of these exhibitions was an interest in people rather than things, and, secondarily, the development of a social consciousness among our artists,” McInnes noted. “I think one is justified in saying that this new movement, though still in embryo, has definitely begun to gather way, and to influence contemporary Canadian art.”¹⁰⁵³

The Allied Arts Council

Building on their collective assessments of the achievements and challenges facing artists in the 1913, 1928-29 and 1936 *Yearbooks of the Arts in Canada*, Canadian artists began developing a more collective, multi-disciplinary public cultural and social identity by the end of the 1930s that extended far beyond previous socializing at the Arts and Letters Club, a private men’s club that excluded women from membership.

In Toronto the Allied Arts Council, founded in the spring of 1938 with the leadership of Horace Garnard Kettle, director of arts and crafts at Upper Canada College, aimed to bring all the art disciplines together and to provide national arts leadership. Its constitution and aims and objects stated that the AAC was constituted as “a council of representatives of the arts coordinating the work of organizations seeking solutions to the problems facing the arts in Canada,” that these serious challenges were “common to all phases of the creative arts” and that these obstacles were “definitely retarding the growth of our Canadian culture.” The Council therefore sought “the participation of all organizations interested in the development of Canadian culture, to work

of 1917, was a friend of Norman Bethune and was involved with the Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy. In 1937 she painted one of her best-known works, *Petroushka*, exhibited in the November Canadian Group of Painters exhibition, in reaction to the killing of five steelworkers by police during the Republic Steel Corporation strike in Chicago.

together on a basis of mutual agreement and understanding and a common program of activity.”¹⁰⁵⁴

Though the honorary AAC chairman was the painter and University of Toronto professor Barker Fairley, co-founder of the *Canadian Forum* who had been a strong supporter of the Group of Seven, the Allied Arts Council marked a transition in cultural leadership from single charismatic “prophets” like Lawren Harris to collectives composed of less famous artists and activists. Besides Kettle as chairman, the vice-chairman was concert pianist and Toronto Conservatory of Music teacher Norman Wilkes and the treasurer the Toronto Symphony Orchestra cellist and community organizer Marcus Adeney. Of the eleven-member executive elected in April of 1939, six were women including the dancer, director and dance teacher Alison Sutcliffe.

In its statement of purpose, the AAC made several assessments and proposals which would be elaborated on by the artists’ *Brief* presented to the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment in June of 1944. “The Council recognizes,” the AAC stated, “the existence of large numbers of talented Canadians unable to make a livelihood by practicing the arts for which they have been trained; and at the same time a Canadian public increasingly desirous of enjoying the services of those with talent and training.” Like the subsequent lobbying by the Federation of Canadian Artists, the AAC asserted that only the intervention by the federal government could solve the obstacles faced in the creation and distribution of Canadian cultural products. “The Council believes our government should lend more active encouragement to the arts by way of special projects and other forms of assistance. It will be one of the duties of the Council to take leadership in seeking to bring this about.”

¹⁰⁵³ G. Campbell McInnes, “New Horizons In Canadian Art,” *New Frontier* 2:2 (June 1937), 19, 20. See also his “Art and Propaganda,” *New Frontier* 2:3 (July-August 1937), 17-18.

¹⁰⁵⁴ “Allied Arts Council Constitution,” “The Allied Arts Council in Toronto, Its Purpose and Programme,” and “Proposed Aims and Objects of the Allied Arts Council.” Dance Collection Danse Archives, Alison Sutcliffe Portfolio, 2010.1-24 and 2010.1-1-23. I am grateful to Amy Bowring, the DCD Director of Collections and Research, for providing me with copies of these and other Sutcliffe archival materials. See also Amy Bowring, Alison Sutcliffe Exhibition

Even before World War II, the Allied Arts Council had already articulated two political objectives that would be central to the government lobbying by the Federation of Canadian Artists in the early 1940s: “To seek legislation designed to assist those engaged in the arts and those talented artists who are without employment in the arts for which they have been trained” and “To seek the establishment of community cultural centres in cities and rural areas, making use of equipment already available in schools, libraries and other public buildings.” To build public support, the AAC also aimed “to keep the public advised of the problems and progress of the arts in Canada by press and radio publicity.”¹⁰⁵⁵

For its first public event, the Allied Arts Council organized a “Panel Discussion of the Arts” on January 26, 1939 in the library auditorium of the Toronto Public Library at the corner of College and St. George Streets.¹⁰⁵⁶ Publicizing the event in his *Saturday Night* column, Graham McInnes reported that the Allied Arts Council aimed at serving as “a central body to co-ordinate the activities and aspirations of all the isolated creative groups throughout the Dominion, to give them a common policy in their relations with the public, to promote practical creative projects, and to secure government assistance.” He called the first public meeting of the AAC “something of a landmark in the contemporary Canadian world of art. For at this meeting considerably more than a hundred artists, musicians, writers, actors and their friends listened to and participated in a

Curator, “Alison Sutcliffe: Terpsichorean Adventurer,”

<http://www.dcd.ca/exhibitions/sutcliffe/index.html>

¹⁰⁵⁵ Idem.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Leo Smith, the composer, principal cellist of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and Toronto Philharmonic Orchestra, and a professor in the faculty of music at the University of Toronto, spoke for music; Mrs. Terrence Sheard for theatre; *Saturday Night*'s art critic Graham McInnes for painting; Henry Noyes for literature and Alison Sutcliffe for dance. Sutcliffe's presentation typified the AAC's practical, economic orientation. “School groups, churches and Women's Clubs etc. should take on more responsibility and sponsor our professional artists,” she suggested. “With a little co-operation from the general public & the help of the above institutions, we could have a place on the market and do such things as a real Canadian Pageant at the Grand Stand during the CNE, have employment with the Canadian Concert Bureau, work with the symphony programmes & exchange engagements with other cities.” See Alison Sutcliffe Portfolio, 2010.1-24 and Bowring, “Alison Sutcliffe: Terpsichorean Adventurer.”

panel discussion on the basic problem that confronts all those engaged in creative work in the Dominion.”

Briefly stated, the problem was this: much good creative work is being produced in the Dominion; Canada has eleven million people; how can the artist and his public be brought together in such a way that the artist may support himself and the public secure the cultural amenities to which it is entitled? A large problem, you’ll admit. Its breadth came out in the discussion, which ranged from patronage to publishing, from government assistance to the need for better teachers, from the vagaries of commercial art to the emigration of Canadians to the States. Many were the questions raised: here are some of them. Is the 49th parallel a dividing line in literature? Why do young authors (basely) write for the American market? Why can the number of artists who support themselves by their work be counted on the fingers of one hand? Why is there no Canadian drama? Why is it so hard for young musicians to get their work published?”

McInnes urged the Allied Arts Council to promote “joint undertakings of a practical nature to show the public, patrons and government that their designs are worth supporting.” He reported with satisfaction that the Council was “proceeding apace with a thoroughly desirable plan. The executive of the Canadian National Exhibition has been approached with the broad outlines of a plan to organize a comprehensive exhibition and display of work by the various creative groups with a view to interesting the public and providing a bargaining point when seeking government assistance.” What was significant about the AAC’s objectives was that the “symbolic goods” it was offering to the public “laity” were not primarily spiritual in nature but were concrete cultural products. McInnes closed his *Saturday Night* article by reporting, “As one delegate was heard to remark after the meeting, ‘All you’ve got on your hands is a straight merchandising problem. You’ve got goods to sell; you have to convince the public they need them.’”¹⁰⁵⁷

One of the AAC’s aims in its “Program for the Balance of the Year” was “To assist in the setting up of Allied Arts Councils similarly constituted in other cities and towns throughout Canada with a view to establishing a national movement.”¹⁰⁵⁸ The outbreak of the Second World War in September of 1939 prevented the Allied Arts Council from entrenching itself organizationally and politically across the country. The Council was nevertheless significant for bringing Toronto

¹⁰⁵⁷ Graham McInnes, “The Allied Arts Council,” *Saturday Night* 54:16 (February 18, 1939), 24.

¹⁰⁵⁸ “Allied Arts Council Constitution.” Alison Sutcliffe Portfolio, 2010.1-24.

artists from different disciplines together to address common obstacles to their development and to consider collective actions.

The 1941 Kingston Conference of Canadian Artists

Lawren Harris pursued his abstract painting in the United States from 1934 until 1940 when he moved to Vancouver. Following F.B. Housser's death in December of 1936, theosophists in Canada were left without a prominent public spokesman. But the diminished cultural leadership created by their absence was quickly filled by artists from various disciplines in cities and town across the country working towards both the professionalization of the arts in Canada and creating a primarily new secular—rather than a spiritually-based—artistic order. The “new religion” of these cultural advocates became cultural democracy. In 1934, for example, a grant from the Carnegie Corporation enabled Walter Abell, professor of art at Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, to conduct a survey of art activities in the Maritime Provinces that led to the founding of the Maritime Art Association, with Abell as president, in 1935. The Association organized touring exhibitions and art lectures, founded libraries and began publishing the journal *Maritime Art*, with Abell as editor, in 1940.¹⁰⁵⁹

Born in Philadelphia in 1897, Abell taught applied ethics at Antioch University 1925-27 and, with funding from the Carnegie Corporation, established Canada's first department of fine arts at Acadia University in 1928. Abell was one of the most prominent leaders in the new movement to establish cultural democracy throughout Canada. Already in his first editorial, “To Be Creative,” published in the inaugural October 1940 issue of *Maritime Art*, he stated his intention to edit a publication that would be both local and national in scope and of service to artists and their aspirations.¹⁰⁶⁰ He quickly endorsed a February 24, 1941 editorial in the *Ottawa Evening Citizen* urging the government, as in World War I, to engage Canadian artists to depict and interpret the

¹⁰⁵⁹ See “A Tribute to Walter Abell,” *Canadian Art* 2:1 (October-November 1944), 14.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Walter Abell, “To Be Creative,” *Maritime Art* 1:1 (October 1940), 3, 4.

country at war and called on the government to “again give the artist his place in her war effort.”¹⁰⁶¹

The great advantage of artists speaking nationally with a united voice began to be realized when one hundred fifty painters, graphic artists, museum directors, art historians and interested laymen met at the Conference of Canadian Artists in Kingston from June 26 to 28, and at the National Gallery in Ottawa on June 29, 1941. The Conference was organized by the Swiss-born painter André Biéler, head of the fine arts department at Queen’s University, with the support of the Carnegie Corporation, the National Gallery and Queen’s University. After painting and teaching in Quebec from 1927 to 1936, Biéler was appointed resident artist and first professor of art at Queen’s University and held that position until 1963. He became more aware of the social role and function of the artist because in addition to teaching a one-credit art course at the university, his appointment required him to give studio classes to students, children, high-school students and adults as well as arrange exhibitions in Kingston and to give public talks and radio broadcasts on art. After teaching painting at the Banff Summer School in 1940 and travelling to Vancouver, Biéler “found a complete lack of communication and understanding between western and eastern Canadian artists. They had little opportunity even to meet each other in a time of depression and war.”¹⁰⁶² When F.P. Keppel, president of the Carnegie Corporation, visited Queen’s University in October of 1940, Biéler and Dr. R.C. Wallace, principal of Queen’s, presented him with the proposal for a national conference of Canadian artists.

A member of the Canadian Group of Painters, Biéler asked what would be repeated by many other arts activists in the years ahead: what was—or should be—the social position and function of the artist in Canadian society? In a conference announcement published in the April 1941 *Maritime Art* he queried, “Is it the fault of the artist; is it Art for Art’s sake; or is it the changing condition of the world; materialistic and mechanical? At any rate the position of the artist in the course of the last century has been considerably altered.” He suggested that “The artist no longer

¹⁰⁶¹ “Elsewhere in Canada,” *Maritime Art* 1:4 (April 1941), 19.

belongs to the community; he has gradually been shoved aside; his position, in relation to society, is remote, his influence practically nil. Yet in a country like ours, new and growing, what greater need than the creative mind of the artist?" In examining this question, many Canadian artists, and even cultural institutions like the National Gallery, looked to the extensive experience of the American government in supporting its artists and in bringing art to wider sectors of the American public during the mid and late 1930s.

In *Saturday Night*, Graham McInnes highlighted the political role of the Conference in examining the social relationship between the Canadian artist, his and her public, and the government. "The Conference's final object concerns the place of the artist in society," McInnes wrote. "South of the line, the Federal Art Project has created, even in the smallest communities, an absorbing new interest in art on the part of the public. Every Grover's Corners now has its post office or civic hall decorated with murals or frescoes. Already the U.S. has produced better posters—and better war posters—than we have. Across the line the position of the artist as the misfit in the garret has been reversed; and once more we find him approaching the position he held in the days of the Renaissance as a useful producing member of society. The conference aims to find out why the same thing cannot be done here."¹⁰⁶³

A grant of \$3,000 [\$45,000 in 2014 dollars] from the Carnegie Corporation enabled the Conference to provide four traveling fellowships for Canadian artists from each province as well as invite American conference presenters. "Nearly every Canadian artist of any importance, then and for the next two decades, was in attendance," from Victoria to Charlottetown.¹⁰⁶⁴ As in the 1939 Allied Arts Council gathering in Toronto, the first national meeting of visual artists in

¹⁰⁶² Frances K. Smith, *André Biéler: An Artist's Life and Times* (Toronto: Merritt Publishing, 1980), 89, 82, 84.

¹⁰⁶³ Cited in *Maritime Art* 1:5 (June 1941), 22.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Michael Bell, "The Welfare of Art in Canada" in *The Kingston Conference Proceedings* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, 1991), iii. Subsequent citations will be given parenthetically. *The Kingston Conference Proceedings* reprints André Biéler and Elizabeth Harrison, eds. *Conference of Canadian Artists: Proceedings* (Kingston: Ontario, 1941)

Kingston two years later quickly identified the many problems facing Canadian artists: the isolation of western artists cut off from the major exhibitions and art criticism in central Canada; the lack of sufficient art education throughout the country on the high school and university level that would enable Canadians to recognize works of artistic merit and elevate public taste; and the question of how Canadian artists could contribute to the war effort. (The United States would not declare war for another five months until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.) Frances Loring, president of the Women's Art Association of Canada in 1939, urged the conference "to counteract the feeling, which is rather general, that it is a disgrace to in any way patronize art until the war is over...we have been crushed, and we are ourselves perhaps feeling that there is no place for us. But there is a definite place, and the public needs to be told that there is such a place." (18, 41, 73, 35)

Yvonne McKague Housser drew the attention of conference participants to the extensive government support of the arts in Great Britain as part of its war effort. "I have some very interesting literature as to what England is doing during the war, and it seems that the work of the artist there is most vital, and is recognized by the British Government as being absolutely necessary, not only in connection with paintings but also in connection with the theatre and music," she reported. "They are sending out small exhibitions of art, even to bomb shelters. They are sending large exhibitions where soldiers are quartered, and they have seven or eight thousand soldiers visiting each exhibition each week. In the beginning the Pilgrim's Association financed these exhibitions, but now the government has taken them up and this seems to be considered a very important matter throughout both England and Wales. So I do not see why in Canada something of that sort should not be started." (35-36) When artists and arts associations later lobbied Parliament for government support of arts and culture in 1944, they pointed to the Council for the Encouragement of Music and Arts in Great Britain as a model and precedent for similar government support in Canada.

with Bell's introduction and a listing and biographical notes on those attending by Frances K. Smith.

There were two major Canadian addresses at the Kingston Conference that sought to analyze this contemporary social dislocation of the artist and to suggest how his and her past public function could be restored. John Alford from the University of Toronto surveyed the cultural function of the artist until the beginning of the nineteenth century when the industrial revolution created an industrial plutocracy in which the poor could not afford to purchase original works of art and the wealthiest members of society patronized artists for their own private edification and social status. Alford perceived two public functions, which the artist fulfilled historically. The first was to create functionally satisfactory and aesthetically pleasing environments “from the design of small articles right up to houses, town planning and so on” that satisfied human needs. This function was broken by new mechanical methods of production during the industrial revolution at the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, which replaced the old order of the handicrafts. But the artist had fulfilled an even more important public function in human civilization, “the crystallization of common ideas and common attitudes towards the general affairs of life.” This was particularly evident in religious art and its Christian cosmology and world-view from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance in which “the pictorial arts did not expound in a systematic way, but they did give form, visible and intellectual form, and form in sentiment, to an idea of how life should be conducted.” (75, 77)

Alford cited John Ruskin on this public function of the artist from Ruskin’s 1851 essay on pre-Raphaelism. “For a long time this function remained a religious one: it was to impress upon the popular mind the reality of the objects of faith, and the truth of the histories of Scripture, by giving visible form to both. That function has now passed away, and none has as yet taken its place. The painter has no profession, no purpose. He is an idler on the earth, chasing the shadows of his own fancies.” Alford perceived the vast American government programs to employ artists during the Depression to create public works of art extolling the values of democracy and the American way of life as “an American Renaissance.” He urged that Canadian artists organize to bring about a similar restoration of the public function of the artist in Canada. “In my own estimation it is primarily out of that disorientation of the artist from his society, and the lack of realization particularly, I would say, on the part of public bodies, of the necessary role which art

does play in any healthy culture, that the necessity of a new national organization arises.” He endorsed the general opinion expressed by artists at the Kingston Conference “that such a national society was an absolute essential.” (76, 75)

Walter Abell began his keynote address “Art and Democracy,” delivered at the Conference of Canadian Artists on June 27, by defining art as “the application of skill and taste to production according to aesthetic principles” and democracy as “the power of the people themselves by which they grant rights and privileges to those whom they see fit.” For Abell, the democratic usage of art “would be to use taste and skill...in order to make things which would serve the life of the people as a whole; no particular class, no particular individual, but the whole of society served in the fullest, richest possible way, in order to bring about the greatest enjoyment of life and the greatest dignity of living through the services of the artist to the community.” (23)

In the revised text of his address published in *Maritime Art* in October, Abell declared that “the underlying social pattern of art for the enrichment of community living—which we may take to be the democratic concept of art—is as old as humanity itself” and traced such a relationship to the Inuit and to tribal and folk societies around the world. By contrast, in the first two civilizations of the western world, Egypt and Mesopotamia, monarchical and priest ruling classes controlled art and life. For Abell, history was “an interweaving, a counter-striving, of these two motifs: the democratic and the autocratic.” “But the democratic came first. It is perpetually being overcome by the autocratic one, and it perpetually rises again. It rose again in ancient Greece. Think of the Acropolis in a Greek city. The whole city could take pride in its temples and the finest sculpture and painting and other arts of the Greeks.” He asserted that “Greek art was not something which any king possessed and put in a palace away from the people. It was displayed in public monuments; it was shown on the walls of the temples. It could be seen in the market squares. It was diffused all through Greek life. Art was a part of the normal daily life of the people. The public saw the artist at his work, and the artist was stimulated by the public.”

Abell asked why modern democracies such as Canada had failed to achieve a democratic diffusion of art among Canadians and pointed to the impact of the industrial revolution and social maladjustments resulting from the extreme concentration of wealth as the cause. He cited statistics on the great divide between the rich and poor from Dorise Nielsen, who would soon provide a sympathetic ear to artists as a member of the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment: "Dorise Nielsen, M.P., has reported in the House of Commons that in a typical year (1934), two thirds of the people of Canada earned incomes less than \$1,000. Two thirds of the industrial workers of the country earned average wages of only \$360 for the year, and the average income of the farmers of the country was \$475. Under such conditions millions of people must accept slums or cheap reproductions and other sub-art levels of experience because economic necessity compels them to do so."

Abell nevertheless felt that "Today we seem to stand at the transition between two cultural epochs: a disrupted and autocratic one receding, an integrated and democratic one rising to replace it." This transition had been made evident by the great economic and cultural intervention by the American government in the life of the nation. Abell was born in the United States, had studied at Swarthmore College near Philadelphia, and was a contributor to the *Magazine of Art*, the organ of the American Federation of Artists, and was thus intimately familiar with the impact of American government policies on American culture. "If anything further were needed to complete our vision of the new cultural order, it emerges triumphantly in the recent development of government patronage in the United States," he declared in Kingston. He pointed out that:

It took a depression to bring such a patronage to active life. Only when our economic system lay stricken of its recurrent fever, with industry and people alike calling to the government for help, was the plutocratic mould so far broken as to permit the emergence of cultural forces hitherto repressed. In a decade of economic breakdown, working chiefly with limited relief budgets, government agencies such as the Federal Art Project and the Section of Fine Arts of the Public Buildings Administration, have done more to break the ground for a genuine culture of democracy than 'normal' agencies had done in the preceding century...

The result was a veritable uprush of cultural democracy. Now came America's first real effort at slum clearance and decent low-cost housing. Now, within the short space of six years, from workers of the Federal Art Project alone, came fifteen hundred murals for

public buildings across the country, forty-two hundred works of sculpture and ceramic decoration, fifty-two thousand original oils and watercolors to be loaned to schools and other community institutions. Now came eighty-six community art centres in which eight million Americans have participated in artistic activities. Now came a score of other interesting developments the visible result of which may be increasingly observed throughout the country. And what has been the public good has also been the artist's gain. Without considering material assistance, many an artist has received from federal activities his first real chance to be a part of something bigger than himself. Here for the first time he has felt society behind him.

Abell concluded that "In the light of all these recent developments, the dream of a modern democratic culture, which at one time had seemed a lost hope, lives again... The cultural task, and the cultural opportunity, of this generation in Canada is to join the world effort toward cultural democracy and to see that such forward movements as have recently happened in the United States are made to happen here."¹⁰⁶⁵

Walter Abell was among the first to suggest in print in 1941 that Canadian artists had to unite in order to present a coherent vision and demand for government support of the arts as part of post-war reconstruction planning. "When the war is over," he proposed in his address, "there will be a great opportunity for cultural reconstruction. Unless we prepare for it in advance, we cannot hope to play a vital part in it. If we have a significant program ready when the time comes, we shall be able to help guide the cultural evolution of the nation when guidance is needed. We feel very inadequate for such a task, yet if we, as the creative workers of the country cannot accomplish it, who can?" Abell concluded that "Somehow we have to get the vision of the thing, and then we have to get the power of the thing. The people depend upon us. Perhaps if we put ourselves in line with the great democratic forces of our time, they may lift us up and give us the power required to do the job ahead." In order to achieve cultural democracy in Canada Abell suggested, "I do not think we shall get very far unless we develop some sort of group power through organization." Drawing upon his experience with the American Federation of Artists, he

¹⁰⁶⁵ Walter Abell, "Art and Democracy," *Maritime Art* 2:1 (October-November 1941), 8, 9, 10.

expressed his hope that “out of this conference will arise a permanent federation of the artists and other creative workers of Canada.”¹⁰⁶⁶

Lawren Harris had been unable to attend the Kingston Conference because of the illness of his mother, who died the following year. Anticipating a desire for national arts organizing, he sent a letter on June 14 from his home on Belmont Avenue in Vancouver to André Biéler, read by Jack Shadbolt at a discussion meeting on Conference resolutions the afternoon of June 28, recommending that a national body be established to serve the interests of Canadian artists. He wrote that he had been “thinking a good deal about the Conference of Canadian Artists and it seems to me that it offers an opportunity to initiate certain nation-wide activities which would have been impossible ten or more years ago—impossible because of the intolerance which then and previous to that time fought every new manifestation in painting in Canada.” Harris, too, now felt that the “symbolic goods” that should be offered to the Canadian public no longer were to be spiritual in nature but should aim to fulfill the ideals of cultural democracy. “Certainly the time has come when the artists of the country should contribute consciously and designedly to the growth of a more highly socialized democracy. This could best be done, it seems to me, by forming a nation-wide and inclusive organization and by working through that organization to serve the cultural needs of the Canadian people.” (69)

The principal motion that was presented to the conference, and which was deemed to incorporate in part the thrust of Harris’s proposal, was “That this conference select from its membership a committee to investigate ways and means of organizing a federation of Canadian art societies; and that this committee be authorized by the conference to contact the various art societies in Canada, with a view to enlisting their cooperation; and that this committee be instructed to publish a statement of their conclusions, and a plan for organization at some future date.” This motion was again presented in the final Saturday evening session in Kingston on June 28 beginning at 11 pm, chaired by Jack Shadbolt, and passed. (70, 98, 107) The members elected to

¹⁰⁶⁶ Ibid., 10.

this Continuation Committee were André Biéler as chairman and Walter Abell, A.Y. Jackson, Arthur Lismer and Frances Loring.

Loring's resolution regarding lobbying for the establishment of a body similar to the Council for the Encouragement of Music and Arts in Great Britain was referred to the Continuation Committee. It read, "In view of the prevailing feeling amongst governing bodies and the general public that art should not be encouraged in war time, it is moved—that a committee be appointed to combat this tendency and to spread the point of view that art should mean more now in the life of the community than at any other time. The activities of the committee might be—(a) To organize a publicity campaign (newspaper, radio, and so on). (b) To investigate the advisability of establishing some such organization as that in England—C.E.M.A. (Council for the encouragement of music and the arts in war time). (c) To coordinate the activities of different art bodies in meeting the needs directly resultant from the war." (69)

Generating publicity for arts lobbying during wartime was difficult, particularly during German military victories in the first three years of World War II. Yet the Kingston Conference did stimulate discussion in the press about the role of the artist in Canadian society.¹⁰⁶⁷ The Conference was of historic importance for several reasons. Despite the absence of francophone representation from Quebec, artists from across the country warmly welcomed the proposal that a national body speak for all Canadian artists when advocating their cause to federal and provincial governments, organizations like the National Gallery, educational institutions, media and the

¹⁰⁶⁷ See Pearl McCarthy, "Canadian Artists Urged To Be True Democrats," and "Sees Canada Judged By Progress in Arts," *Globe and Mail*, June 27, 1941, 8 and June 28, 1941, 2. Sir Wyly Grier, president of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts 1929-39, ridiculed the suggestion that Canadian visual artists could collectively improve Canadian culture in "Sociability In Art," *Saturday Night* 56:46 (July 26, 1941). Northrop Frye demolished Grier's arguments in "Art Does Need Sociability," *Saturday Night* 56:49 (August 16, 1941). Donald Buchanan emphasized the need for subsidies in a country as large as Canada in his "Artists From All Canada" *Saturday Night* 56:47 (August 2, 1941).

public. “It was the first time,” Jack Shadbolt recalled later, “that Canadian artists right across the country achieved any sense of social identity, that is, community among themselves.”¹⁰⁶⁸

The Kingston Conference thus was another major visible line of demarcation in which the stimulus to artistic creation and Canadian culture shifted from the mystical and metaphysical world-views of a few leading artists such as Roy Mitchell, Lawren Harris, Emily Carr and Bertram Brooker to an ideal of cultural democracy adhered to by artists in general. Jack Shadbolt had travelled to Kingston from Vancouver with other B.C. delegates and recalled a violent discussion with Jock Macdonald about artists, political action and social reform. Like Bertram Brooker, Macdonald saw communism “as an unmitigated evil, he put it all on a metaphysical religious basis, the argument, and I was very much torn...but I was arguing as a kind of devil’s advocate for the fact that some kind of social reform was needed, I wasn’t sure in my own mind exactly what it was—but we parted company on this, that’s how tense things were.”¹⁰⁶⁹

After Walter Abell’s “Art and Democracy” presentation in Kingston, Edward Rowan asked Abell to discuss the “pressure impulse” to artistic creation under the cultures in the democracies he outlined. “It seems to me that if we are to develop a programme in a democracy, it is essential that the artists determine what that impulse shall be,” Rowan suggested. “I do not believe it can any longer be religion, at least in the United States; we find that the religious impulse is not strong enough to encourage our artists to be creative, as they have been under the same impulse in the past.” Abell replied that “As far as I can see the religions of the world have been projections of human experience, symbolized in certain things that men felt.” In Canada as well, “We have lost our faith, to a certain extent, in those symbols; but the things that are felt are just as real as ever, and they themselves are the sources of religion. So I take it that the making of human lives happy on this continent is a religion which is enough to inspire our artists to make the sort of effort we want them to make, to produce the kind of paintings they can produce, and everything else pertaining to art.” (33-34)

¹⁰⁶⁸ Frances K. Smith, 93.

¹⁰⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 94.

Like the social gospel for religious reformers, creating heaven on earth with the assistance of the artist, artistic self-expression and cultural democracy became a new credo for Canadian artists. As Abell concluded, “If in the end democracy is to survive, it must justify itself by the integrity of its social and cultural manifestations. Man does not live by the right to cast a ballot. Neither does he live by the right to see the remnants of other men’s cultural triumphs. He lives by the right fully to enjoy, in his own day and generation, the enduring satisfactions of life. Only when art and the other benefits of culture flow freely through his individual and social life can he be said to profit, in any real sense, by the ‘inalienable rights of man.’” The NFB’s Hazen Sise could still define art as “a way of doing things which will express the soul and culture of the people” but that “soul” was now a secular, rather than a metaphysical, manifestation.¹⁰⁷⁰ This new social consciousness by Canadian artists was spurred by the concrete examples of vast government programs to bring art and artists to the people in the United States and, through the Council for the Encouragement of Music and Arts, in Great Britain.

In my penultimate chapter, “The Prophets’ ‘March on Ottawa,’” I will analyze how artists—the charismatic “prophets” with subversion strategies—organized to generate cross-Canada cultural and political support and presented their demands to the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment in June of 1944. My conclusion to this dissertation will discuss how Prime Minister Mackenzie King—the “priest” defending orthodoxy—obstructed the artists’ demands for state support of the arts and for cultural democracy and instead sought to impose his own vision of Canada’s capital as the City of God.

¹⁰⁷⁰ *The Kingston Conference Proceedings*, 33, 34, 33, 35.

Chapter VIII:

Mackenzie King in the Fields of National and International Cultural Production

In this chapter, I place Mackenzie King in the fields of Canadian and international cultural production and examine whether King looked at all artists as “service providers” who supplied him with the cultural commodities he required, whether for his private use or for public works of art. King used artists to inscribe realistic representations of family members and of himself in works of art that aimed to project the inner spirituality of their subjects. He commissioned and purchased paintings, portrait busts, plaques, reliefs and medallions primarily for his own edification and to be inspired by their spirituality and other associations. Artists created cultural commodities for King’s private use and to his exacting specifications and—as in the case of the miniature portrait painter Louise “Louie” Burrell—were not paid for their “commodities” when they failed to meet his requirements.¹⁰⁷¹

King and Canadian and Non-Canadian Artists

¹⁰⁷¹ Another such artist was John Wesley Cotton (1868-1931), represented in the National Gallery by over a dozen etchings and aquatints, whom King commissioned in 1928 and 1929 to make Christmas cards. The Prime Minister described him as “a very charming, quiet sort of man, a most pleasing, modest character. I have the highest admiration for men of his type.” “I find him a most delightful simple & natural type of man with real feelings for the beautiful things of life.” King invited him to lunch at Laurier House and “went with him to look at the views from Laurier Ave Bridge of Confederation Park and Parliament Hill.” But he recorded that “the price he suggests of \$150 [\$2,000 in 2014 dollars] for plate & 100 signed cards makes the figure seem a little too high. I do not feel justified in paying out that much.” Four days later King had “a few words with Cotton the artist re paintings of Kingsmere & etching of driveway. The latter I am planning for a Xmas card. It is more expensive than I should contemplate—will average 50 cents [\$6.85 in 2014 dollars] a card. Diary October 13, 14, 18, 1929. On November 25, 1929 King recorded that “The greatest disappointment perhaps were the Christmas cards, the etchings, which are harsh & crude, not the fine work I had hoped for. Instead of the buildings being in shade, they are in bold relief & Post Office & East Block are too much in evidence, also the railway station & cars.” This may be the LAC J.W. Cotton item “Confederation Park & Parliament Hill,” MIKAN no. 2928386.

Beginning with his first commission of his mother's portrait from the German painter Anton Weber in Berlin in 1900, Mackenzie King regularly purchased or received as gifts works of art from non-Canadian artists. His profession as a civil servant in the Department of Labour and his family's friendship with John Wycliffe Lowes Forster confined his commissions to the well-known Toronto portrait painter in the first decade of the twentieth century. But when he became an MP and travelled on government business and subsequently very significantly increased his income working as a labour consultant for the Rockefellers, he had a much greater opportunity of encountering artists and works of art that were non-Canadian but resonated with his aesthetic and spiritual inclinations.

In this interplay between national and international fields of cultural production, King's diaries completely contradict the common public perception after his death that he had no interest in the arts or contact with artists. In fact from 1899 to 1949, he posed for portraits, purchased or commissioned works of art from over two dozen painters, sculptors and photographers. In addition to J.W.L. Forster, the Canadian artists included the painters Homer Watson, John Wentworth Russell, Stanley Gordon Moyer, John Wesley Cotton and Carl Ahrens, the sculptors Robert Tait McKenzie, George William Hill, mile Brunet, Walter Allward, Emanuel Hahn, and the portrait sculptress Pearle Thurston, as well as the portrait photographers Frederick William Lyonde and Yousuf Karsh. Besides Anton Weber, the foreign artists included the English "Louie" Burrell and Arthur Guthrie, the Irish portrait painter Sir William Orpen, the British portrait painter Frank O. Salisbury and Kathleen Shackleton, the American caricaturist Oscar Berger, the English sculptor Frederick Lessore, the Italian sculptor Giuseppe Guastalla, the French sculptor Pierre-Charles Lenoir, the Austrian sculptor Felix Weihs de Weldon and the American sculptor Avarad Fairbanks.

Of these fourteen Canadian and twelve non-Canadian artists, Walter Allward, Robert Tait McKenzie (famous for his sculptures of athletes) and Frank O. Salisbury, Felix Weihs de Weldon and Yousuf Karsh (for their portraits and sculpture busts of British royalty, American presidents

and other statesmen) already enjoyed or came to achieve international reputations. King's social connections helped launch the international careers of Weihs de Weldon and Yousuf Karsh.

An examination of King's experiences and relationships with these artists—several extending over decades—reveals both the shaping and the effect of his artistic *habitus* that accounts for his failure to provide government support to Canadian artists and to Canadian culture in the 1930s and 1940s. I will examine how he found and establish friendships with these artists, what he asked of them and how he criticized their work, how he determined in his own mind who was a real artist and who was not, and how he established the financial and symbolic value of the works created by these artists.

Pierre-Charles Lenoir

King's many travels to London on government business made it convenient for him also to visit the continent afterwards. (His trips to Europe occurred in 1906, 1908, 1910, 1912, 1919, 1923, 1928, 1934, 1936, 1937, 1941, 1944, 1945, 1946, 1947, and 1948.) This is how he first encountered the work of the French sculptor and medallist Pierre-Charles Lenoir (1879-1953), probably in 1910 while attending an international conference on unemployment in Paris.¹⁰⁷²

King purchased a plaque by Lenoir for his mother entitled *L'Infini*. It depicts two young lovers in classical garb on a rock promontory gazing over turbulent ocean waves that extend to the horizon. Lenoir contrasts their sensuality and the physicality of their material bodies here and now with the spirituality of nature and the eternal, with the work's title, "The Infinite," suggesting its intended meaning. When he was recuperating in Naples after spending a week with

¹⁰⁷² King incorrectly surmised 1907 when he attended the International Exposition in Paris in 1937 and, in the Musée du Luxembourg, saw in one of the cases "the little plaque 'L'Infini' which won my heart on the occasion of my first [governmental] visit to Paris in 1907 (I think), and which was the means of my becoming to know Lenoir." In 1945 he gave another medaillion by the artist, symbolical of marriage, to the barber of the Chateau Laurier as a wedding anniversary present and "told him of having had this little medallion some 35 years myself." Diary June 25, 1937 and February 6, 1945.

the Italian sculptor Guisepppe Guastalla in Rome in 1934, he remarked that “the peace here is god-like & the softness of the salt air wonderful. Here one comes close in both to L’Infini.”¹⁰⁷³

The enduring spiritual impact of the plaque on King is revealed in a 1937 diary entry, entitled “L’Infini,” written after he walked along the ocean at Virginia Beach, “listening to the waves.” He “had knelt a moment before asking God to accept my heart” and “named over all the family—many loved ones in the beyond who are guardian angels I know, praying for their guidance and help...I remembered others in my prayers especially did I think of dear Mother—of Arnold Toynbee—and Lenoir.” He repeated the refrain by the English playwright and songwriter Joseph Edwards Carpenter from his “What Are the Wild Waves Saying?”: “No it is something greater, that speaks to the heart alone, ‘Tis the voice of the Great Creator that dwells in that mighty tone.” And he recalled “for the first time that the little Lenoir relief ‘L’Infini’ which I brought to Mother from Paris had on it the lines I have quoted above.” The song was among those “I used to hear dear Mother sing & play at the piano.” In 1938 King added, “Bringing that little plaque to my mother years ago was symbolical of the voice of the great Creator.”¹⁰⁷⁴

¹⁰⁷³ Diary November 11, 1934.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Diary March 17, 1937, November 6, 1936 and March 4, 1938. Carpenter’s verse was put to music by Stephen Glover in 1850. King also refers to a plaque by Lenoir “with the figure with the Phrygian cap” in his diary of July 12, 1933. On July 1, 1945 at Kingsmere, he showed Crown Prince Abdul Ilah of Iraq “a little plaque by Lenoir of Arabs sitting on the top of the mountain looking into the distance.” This is probably the “little plaque by Lenoir of Prophets on Mountain” King placed on the mantle of his “The Meadows” cottage at Kingsmere on December 20, 1936.



Pierre-Charles Lenoir's *L'Infini*.

King sent Mrs. Osborne in Ottawa a silver plaque of *L'Infini* for Christmas in 1927 and visited the sculptor in his Paris studio after attending the Assembly of the League of Nations in Geneva in 1928. Lenoir showed him a letter King had written him from the Stafford Hotel in London on July 10, 1919 indicating they had been in contact in previous years. Before he left the artist's studio, the sculptor gave him as a gift "a medallion which I had picked out from a collection he has. He is doing very fine work." A month later, King purchased one of the bronze editions of *L'Infini* for \$35 (\$468 in 2014 dollars). He showed Lenoir a photo of Forster's 1905 portrait of his mother and ordered a relief portrait of her for \$25 (\$335 in 2014 dollars) "or thereabouts," the same size as *L'Infini*.

The powerful influence of King's religious *habitus*—and Lenoir's ability to trigger strong emotional and spiritual feelings within King—was already demonstrated during King's drive to the artist's studio. "I began singing aloud in the car from sheer joy; sang 'The Light of the Lonely Pilgrim's Heart;' thought much of dear mother, whose presence was very real to me, in a spiritual joy in my breast—a peace of God which passeth all understanding. I have felt nothing so pure, so divine, so sublime, as this feeling in my heart. It convinces me absolutely of a spiritual reality beyond anything our mortal natures can know." At Lenoir's studio, he and the sculptor discussed what the portrait should be called, "the spiritual qualities it should possess, of what it signified,

of how I had bought the little plaque [*L'Infini*] years ago & had always hoped to have this one made. It was a delightful experience and I shall never forget Lenoire's face, the joy of its expression, the beauty of his eyes. He is the man for that work. He will do it to perfection—for pure in heart—also sees God.”¹⁰⁷⁵

King received Lenoir's “plaque of dear mother's portrait by Forster” the following May and was overjoyed by his work. “It is truly marvellous how well he has succeeded.” Lenoir sent him a plaster cast of the relief in July with a request for King's comments and criticism. “This I gave to the best of my ability—mentioning a number of points on which I thought something might be altered a little to make the likeness more lifelike. It is quite remarkable what he has done.” Two years before his death, King described the plaque as “a combination of Kingsmere lake and the birch trees there. Forster's picture of mother sitting by the fireside,” and its title, “Light at Eventide.”¹⁰⁷⁶



Pierre-Charles Lenoir's 1929 plaque *Light at Eventide*.

King visited Lenoir at his studio again in 1934, bought two more bronzes of *L'Infini*, and told the sculptor that “between *L'Infini* & the portrait of dear mother he had given me more real happiness than almost anyone.” Lenoir asked whether King had a photo of his side profile since he would like to present him with a relief portrait in bronze. He pursued this suggestion of a medallion portrait of King during his visit in 1936 and suggested a studio nearby for taking

¹⁰⁷⁵ Diary December 24, 1927, August 25, 1928, October 4, 1928. Edward Denny's 1842 verse was put to music by James Walch in 1860.

photographs. “He would not hear of my making any payment for this saying what he was doing was for old friendship sake.” King in turn commissioned Lenoir to make a medallion of his mother. “I felt certain it was mother making her presence known & giving me her blessing.” Lenoir sent King “the plaster relief of my side face” at Christmas 1936. “It is splendidly done and is a great tribute of affection and regard, a man for whose soul I have profound admiration.” He received his own larger portrait medal from Lenoir during the 1937 Paris Exhibition and thought it “remarkably good, considering he had only photographs to work from; photographs moreover taken at the time of fatigue, and the portrait itself, a profile.” Lenoir also presented him with a relief of the portrait medal, inscribed above his name with “En haute considération et grande amitié,” as a gift. King marveled how “Out of that little purchase of Lenoir’s relief [*L’Infini*] of a young man has come this great personal friendship expressed for all time in bronze by one of the greatest French artists.” Lenoir opened a bottle of champagne and he and his wife and daughter celebrated the occasion with King who paid the sculptor an affectionate farewell. “I told Lenoir that his gift would be greatly treasured by myself throughout my lifetime and would become a national possession after I was gone. How wonderfully it links up my different visits to Paris!”¹⁰⁷⁷



Lenoire’s 1937 portrait medal.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Diary May 24, 1929, July 20, 1929, July 10, 1948.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Diary October 29, 1934, October 15, 1936, December 31, 1936 and June 24 and 25, 1937. Lenoir’s portrait medal of King is on exhibit at Laurier House. The Isabel King plaque and medallion, “Light at Eventide,” are part of the William Lyon Mackenzie King collection in the Library and Archives Canada.

To recapitulate, Mackenzie King's religious *habitus* made him susceptible to the spirituality he perceived in certain works by Pierre-Charles Lenoir and he therefore maintained contact and a friendship with the French artist from 1910 to 1948. As discussed in the previous chapter, Pierre Bourdieu posited that "The artistic field is a *universe of belief*. Cultural production distinguishes itself from the production of the most common objects in that it must produce not only the object in its materiality, but also the value of this object, that is, the recognition of artistic legitimacy."¹⁰⁷⁸ Bourdieu suggests, as was the experience of the Group of Seven painters, that artists not only had to struggle for their own position in the field of cultural production but also had to struggle to create demand, esteem and financial value for their individual works.

King determined the value of works of art by first establishing the legitimacy and esteem of artists themselves as measured by their spiritual beliefs. When he saw Lenoir working in his studio in his artist's clothes in 1928, "He looked like a Christ so pure & refined, beautiful blue eyes, earnest." When he said farewell to the sculptor in 1934, "I kissed him good-by, by each cheek. It was as if some celestial force compelled the doing of this—a deep pure love for a beautiful soul." And at another farewell in 1946, after Lenoir thanked him "for the little things we had purchased of his art to take back to Canada," King was again touched by his appearance. "I thought what a fine representation he would make in a pageantry of the character of Christ. He has the eyes of a great seer. A beautiful soul—one to whom I owe much in my life."¹⁰⁷⁹

King's artistic and spiritual esteem of Lenoir led him to promote the artist's work in the Canadian field of cultural production. The sculptor wrote King in 1925 inquiring whether the Prime Minister's plan for a war memorial on Parliament Hill "will be entrusted to a Canadian architect, or whether a competition will be held to which foreign artists will be admitted; if the latter is the case I will be glad to compete."¹⁰⁸⁰ In 1927, while considering the design of the

¹⁰⁷⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, "Field of Power, Literary Field and Habitus" in Simon During, ed. *The Cultural Studies Reader*. Third edition. (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 90.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Diary August 25, 1928, October 29, 1934 and August 24, 1946.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Lenoir to King, February 9, 1925, LAC reel C2278, pages 100083-85.

Confederation medal, King sent the Confederation committee “the specimens of Lenoir’s work, which they liked immensely” so that “it was decided to have Lenoir & other French sculptors compete.”¹⁰⁸¹ In 1930 Lenoir sent King a plaque of Jacques Cartier which he had made for the Bureau of the Mint and Medals of Paris. King promised to bring the plaque to the attention of the Canadian committee organizing the 400th anniversary of Cartier’s landing in 1534.¹⁰⁸² In 1937 he suggested to Philippe Roy, the Canadian Minister to France, that he contact the authorities at the Paris Exhibition about putting on display a copy of Lenoir’s portrait of King “in some appropriate place in the Canadian Building” and that “a life-size copy of the portrait in bronze might appropriately find a place in the Canadian Legation in Paris.”¹⁰⁸³ In 1945 he thanked General George Vanier, Canada’s first ambassador to France, who had purchased a plaque from Lenoir along with Norman Robertson, the Undersecretary of State for External Affairs. King was embarrassed when he saw the Lenoirs in 1948 in their studio surrounded by “exquisite works of art in different cases” but reduced to poverty. “Lenoir spoke of there being no work for artists these days.” He had brought the family a basket of fruit given him by the CNR instead of fulfilling their “last hope that some small order might be placed which unfortunately cannot be arranged this time.” Two weeks later, after a sumptuous luncheon in his honour at the Quai d’Orsay given by Robert Schuman, the French Foreign Minister, and Prime Minister Henri Queuille, King chided himself that while thanking Schuman “I meant to speak of Pierre Lenoire. I should have” but did not.¹⁰⁸⁴

Pierre-Charles Lenoir can also be seen as a producer of commodities even when his art works were spiritual in nature. When Lenoir met with George Vanier in Paris in May of 1945 in an attempt to have the Prime Minister purchase more of his work, he showed Vanier not only King’s letters but also “the bronze medallion which he did of you in 1936, I believe, and which is excellent.” King had Vanier purchase seven plaques and medals for \$132 [\$1,800 in 2014 dollars] he had already purchased from Lenoir in 1910 and in subsequent years: four plaques of

¹⁰⁸¹ Diary September 6, 1927.

¹⁰⁸² King to Lenoir, May 12, 1930. LAC reel C2319, pages (in English and French) 150319-25.

¹⁰⁸³ King to Philippe Roy, January 7, 1937. LAC reel C3729, pages 207286-87.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Diary October 28, 1945, September 22, 1948 and October 5, 1948.

L'Infini, a plaque of *Arabes au désert* and the medallions *Au Crépuscule* and *Athéna*. In his letter to Vanier, King indicated that “The L’Infini bronzes were the only ones I was specially interested in. I have had for sometime past the three other bronzes. Of these, however, I am glad to have duplicates.” He also mentioned that “It may be that a little later on I will wish to get additional copies of the plaquettes L’Infini.”¹⁰⁸⁵

Frederick Lessore and Louise “Louie” Burrell

Mackenzie King did not even have to travel to London or the continent to establish contact with foreign artists. He met the English sculptor Frederick Lessore (1879-1951) and the miniature portrait painter Louise “Louie” Burrell (1873-1971) in 1914 in Ottawa where they were seeking clients for their work. His encounter with Lessore and Burrell, who sculpted a bas-relief portrait and a miniature portrait of Isabel King the end of April and early May, was brief but nevertheless revealing.

In the making of Lessore’s artistic representation of his mother, King manifested the strictures of his aesthetic *habitus* that the representation must be exactly true to life and yet reveal the inner spirituality of the subject. The effect of King’s religious and spiritual *habitus* can be seen in his belief that the quality of an artist’s character was a measure of his artistic worth. In contrast with Charles-Pierre Lenoir, King detected nothing spiritual or Christ-like in Lessore’s character. “He has a good conceit of himself, has a sympathetic manner, but is hardly a gentleman bred. He works quickly, and looks the part, but there is a certain amount of bluffing which I don’t quite like.”¹⁰⁸⁶ King also expressed his self-awareness of his own relative lack of financial and cultural capital and social status—compared with the wealthy Sidney Fisher, the former Minister of Agriculture—prior to his long association with the Rockefellers and other industrialists. His annual salary at the time as head of the federal Liberal Information Office and editor of the

¹⁰⁸⁵ Vanier to King, May 30, 1945. Lenoir to Vanier, October 29, 1945. Vanier to King, November 30, 1945. King to Vanier, January 24, 1946. Vanier to King, February 8, 1946. LAC reel C9886, pages 358653, 358838-42 and reel C9180, pages 379033-36.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Diary April 21, 1914.

Canadian Liberal Monthly was \$2,500 [\$51,230 in 2014 dollars].¹⁰⁸⁷ This relative lack of capital and social status gave him less cultural authority in dealing with the British artist.

Lessore had exhibited his sculptures (including busts of Lord Strathcona and Sir William Van Horne which endowed him with a degree of social status) in the galleries of the Art Association of Montreal from October 15 to November 15, 1913 and in the art gallery of the Toronto Public Library in January of 1914. King and his mother made an appointment to meet Lessore on April 20 in the top room of the Carnegie Library where he had set up a studio and saw a few of his reliefs. King had to resolve his life-long conflict between his desire to enshrine himself and members of his family in works of art and actually paying an artist for such work. "I simply could not resist the idea which I have been contemplating right along of having a relief of mother made," he confided in his diary. "I know it is an extravagance, an unwarranted one with all the demands present and prospective, but it all depends on how we measure values in this world; to have a bronze relief of mother through the years to come will be the truest and best of inspirations." He concluded that "The chance may never come again; it and she and the artist are here now, so I decided to give \$250.00 [\$5,129 in 2014 dollars] for a relief in bronze, he to pay the duty on it coming into Canada and to give me copies in bronze for 100 each [\$2,051 in 2014 dollars]; also he is to suitably frame it."¹⁰⁸⁸

When Isabel King began posing for Lessore the following day, disagreements arose between King and the artist. "He made a head a little larger than life size. I thought it too large, so did mother & too sharp a profile; he did not like making a smaller one but yielded gracefully at last...I was a little disappointed at the bronze relief in fearing L. was not going to get the gentle expression; the massiveness of it alarmed me too but I think the $\frac{3}{4}$ size on which we have decided will be better."¹⁰⁸⁹

¹⁰⁸⁷ R. MacGregor Dawson, *William Lyon Mackenzie King: A Political Biography 1874-1923* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958), 226.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Diary April 20, 1914.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Diary April 21, 1914.



Frederick Lessore sculpting a relief of Isabel King, photographed by Mackenzie King, April 30, 1914.

Watching the sculptor at work was a tense, emotional experience for King—he even took photographs of a modeling session—and he was greatly relieved when his mother’s portrait was completed. “I find as the work proceeds on the relief that watching it becomes intensely interesting. At times I feel quite elated as I see features coming out in true form, and not less depressed when fears overcome me lest it should not be all I desire.” He noted that “Mr. Lessore is very patient, works constantly and with closest attention, and is cheerful in his conversation. With mother animation and expression is everything. It is the spirit that makes her what she is.”¹⁰⁹⁰

The next day Sidney Fisher, the Liberal member of Parliament from 1882 to 1911 and for fifteen years Minister of Agriculture in Laurier’s government, called on Isabel King to invite her to dinner and offered his opinions on her relief. “He gave some valuable suggestions regarding the portrait; features that I had mentioned to Lessore but he was not so keen on taking from me he accepted at once from Fisher. He looks on Fisher as a great man, art critic etc.” King’s difficulty working with artists who did not immediately create to his exact specifications surfaced with

¹⁰⁹⁰ Diary April 27, 1914.

Lessore. “Like many Englishmen who come out to this country his own knowledge is the important thing, then he is a bit of a toady,” he recorded in his diary. “It is position that counts & wealth. I suppose being dependent on both for most of the patronage received breeds that kind of sycophancy.”¹⁰⁹¹

King’s effort to find a suitable inscription on the base of Lessore’s relief reveals that for him the paintings and sculptures of members of his family were totemic figures intended to be worshipped. He had thought of the line from Proverbs, “Her children rise up and call her blessed,” but “while it expressed a truth, it hardly suited this particular piece of art.” He and his mother had seen Johnston Forbes-Robertson and Lady Forbes-Robertson (Gertrude Elliott) in *Hamlet* and in Madeleine Lucette Ryley’s *Mice and Men* on April 23 and 24.¹⁰⁹² When he sat next to Elliott at a luncheon for the couple at the Country Club, she suggested the variation, “We know what we are, we know not what we may be,” he had heard her deliver as Ophelia on stage. At a tea with the Kings the next day, she suggested “A woman fair and sweet / Made for honor, for worship” for the inscription. King thought the lines “very beautiful, if not in the last word just too much for the purpose; one might say that of another, and believe, though not say it of one’s own own [sic] mother. Forbes-Robertson agreed that it was doubtful—the appropriateness.”¹⁰⁹³ After reading Charles Eliot Norton’s translation of Dante’s *Vita Nuova* he selected, with his mother’s approval, “Benignly vested with humility” as most meaningful for the inscription on Lessore’s relief. “Certainly Humility is an outstanding virtue in her lovely character, and to me it is the highest of the virtues, attained as the crown of all the rest.”¹⁰⁹⁴

¹⁰⁹¹ Diary April 28, 1914.

¹⁰⁹² King thought *Hamlet* “was a wonderful production and Lady Forbes-Robertson made a fine Ophelia—her eyes are quite wonderful. Forbes-Robertson is hardly to be surpassed as Hamlet. But I must say I liked Benson quite as much if not more. I think I liked his company better.” He also recorded that he “had a long and very pleasant talk with Forbes-Robertson. He is a radical in politics—a home ruler and against centralization in imperial affairs. I was shocked at his wasted appearance & aged look.” King found *Mice and Men* “a very sweet little play, splendidly put on.”
Diary April 23 and 24, 1914.

¹⁰⁹³ Idem.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Diary April 29, 1914.



Frederic Lessore's 1914 relief of Isabel King.

When King saw his mother's relief completed in clay, he was delighted and "almost entirely satisfied." "The forehead, eye and nose are perfect, the lips not quite what I think they should be, but I could not suggest a change; the head is well modelled & altogether in the light of the studio it is all I could wish for. Yesterday I feared it would not be, but the expression was naturally reserved for the last touches. Considering how tired mother has been much of the time it is quite a remarkable achievement." Lessore did the plaster casting himself and King was even more pleased with the result. "It was exciting work, seeing the plaster removed from the clay, and the mould cleaned up. The plaster relief was the next step; it was even more exciting. In certain lights the relief & the mould were as like mother as they could be. Mr. Lessore cast a second relief which he gave to me. It was left in the plaster over night." He recorded that "Lessore himself is delighted. He has taken infinite pains. Altogether he has worked 16 to 20 hours upon it...It was a great relief when the relief was finished; the tension towards the end was very great." By the time King wrote a letter of introduction for the sculptor to the 100 Years of Peace Committee in New York and saw him off at the train station, he had become "quite attached" to Lessore. He no longer perceived his obsequiousness and took at face value the artist's statement that "next to his own mother, he thought more of mother than any woman he knew & asked if he might send her his love."¹⁰⁹⁵

King nevertheless developed second thoughts about Lessore's relief the day of the sculptor's departure. "I am pleased with the plaster cast though the lips, especially the upper lip, seems to me to be hardly right in some light. Having the mouth open was a mistake for which Mr. Fisher & I were in the main responsible. The difficulty has been in trying to combine a smile and the natural attitude of face in repose. When mother is tired her face becomes too rigid & the lines of the neck especially deepen. But I imagine the bronze will be satisfactory, if rightly placed." In February of 1915, he "sent Mr. Lessore £48 for bronze relief of mother."¹⁰⁹⁶

Lessore had captured the physical appearance of the seventy-one year old Isabel King three years before her death (even though she appears older in his relief than in King's photograph of her) but not, despite the inscription from Dante, her spiritual qualities. Mackenzie King could not have anticipated that Lessore's relief could be of an aging, cross-dressing King wearing a wig. In his future purchases and commissions from Pierre-Charles Lenoir, Giuseppe Guastalla and the Austrian sculptor Felix Weihs de Weldon, it is the spiritual qualities of his mother, father and of himself that he will seek to emphasize.

While he was sculpting Isabel King, Lessore also made a chalk and crayon drawing of King as well as a sketch of Isabel King as a gift for his mother. Not anticipating his repeated future sittings for painters and sculptors, King assured himself that "If there is one thing I have no conceit about, it is my looks; I have no desire to be drawn or painted, but as Mr. Lessore proposed this as a gift from himself to mother, there was no alternative." He displayed his life-long aversion to images of himself, noting that "The sketch is fairly good, though I think the face as it stands is too fat; that, perhaps, can be changed. Lessore thinks it very good; he has a habit of praising his own work, which is a flaw in a character that has much sweetness and simplicity." When the artist finished the crayon drawing at a second sitting, King observed that "he improved it today, but I do not care very much for it; it lacks strength which I think should be there and has

¹⁰⁹⁵ Diary May 1 and 2, 1914

¹⁰⁹⁶ Diary May 2, 1914 and February 18, 1915.

too much neck & cheek; still it is like me from the angle at which taken & as I am at times. I never had anything to boast of in features of looks.”¹⁰⁹⁷

Louise “Louie” Burrell

There is perhaps no better example of an artist struggling to compete in both the national and international field of cultural production than Louise “Louie” Burrell. She was born into a lower-class family of artists in London in 1873 but had to fight to become a painter herself against the wishes of her parents who needed her to support the family. Saving money from her work as a teacher, she entered Hubert von Herkomer’s art school in Bushey, Hertfordshire, in 1900 where she also participated in his theatrical productions. In her autobiography, Burrell’s daughter Philippa recalled of her mother’s painting at the turn of the century that “Miniatures were still a popular art form and, needing little paraphernalia, were easily carried about and it was here that she painted the first of the hundreds of little gems which, for the next 30 years, she scattered about the world. Quick, cheap and transfiguring, they were always sure money-makers everywhere.”¹⁰⁹⁸ Her miniatures began to be accepted at the Royal Academy and led to a commission from Lord North whose patronage launched her as a portraitist in London’s high society. She left London for Cape Town in 1904 where she painted miniatures for wealthy South Africans and married her husband, Philip Burrell. In 1907 she returned to London to give birth to her daughter Philippa and, after the sudden death of her husband, supported herself and Philippa over the next five years painting miniature portraits on ivory of many prominent individuals, including Prince Louis of Battenburg, Princess Alice, Prince George and Princess Marie-Louise of Schleswig-Holstein. A 1912 *Financial Times* review of one of her exhibitions noted of her eleven consecutive years exhibiting at the Royal Academy that “her innate gift of reproducing the

¹⁰⁹⁷ Diary April 26 and 30, 1914.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Philippa Burrell, *The Golden Thread: An Autobiography* (London: Skilton & Shaw, 1979), 20-21.

most individual characteristics of her subjects makes her portraits the source of yet more intimate pleasure to their possessors.”¹⁰⁹⁹

When her health broke from the strain of supporting herself, her daughter and a nurse, Burrell left for a six month visit to Canada in 1912. Martin Burrell, a distant cousin elected as a Conservative MP in 1908, was the Minister of Agriculture in Prime Minister Robert Borden’s government and provided an entrée to Ottawa’s wealthy and high society. Philippa Burrell recalled that Martin Burrell had an apartment in the Roxborough, a building that “housed most of the governing talent of the Dominion. In small, compressed apartments, members of the Cabinet and shadow Cabinet were tightly packed together inside its walls. And soon we were packed in too, with Martin and his wife on one side and Mr. Mackenzie King on the other.”

Louie Burrell’s sitters included Mrs. Martin Burrell, Mrs. Robert Borden, the Governor General, the Duke of Connaught, and his daughter, Princess Patricia. According to Philippa, once the Governor General commissioned her mother to paint his and Princess Patricia’s portraits, “parties at Rideau Hall then followed for us both.” But the beautiful widowed Burrell “rejected all her millionaire suitors, even her neighbour and future Prime Minister, Mr. Mackenzie King (whom she disliked).”¹¹⁰⁰ The outbreak of World War I prevented her return to England and left her stranded in Victoria where, without a patron to introduce her to high society, she was reduced

¹⁰⁹⁹ Arwen Tapping, “Louie Burrell: A Portrait in Miniature,” *Paragon Review*, Issue 7 (1998), accessed April 8, 2013 at <http://www.hull.ac.uk/oldlib/archives/paragon/1998/burrell.html> Philippa Burrell made substantial donations of her mother’s paintings and miniatures to art galleries in Britain and internationally, including a water colour of Mrs. Martin Burrell and a “Canadian Woman (Lady Borden)” painted in Ottawa 1912-1914, currently located in the Library and Archives Canada. LAC lists the latter as “Head and shoulders of a woman with brown hair and a black ribbon around her neck,” ca. 1912-1916. Burrell donated her mother’s archival materials to the Brynmor Jones Library. See “Louie (Luker) Burrell: A Lost Woman Painter” <http://www.louieburrell.com/index.html>

¹¹⁰⁰ Burrell, 26, 27, 28. In his diaries, King does not refer to socializing with Louie Burrell. Martin Burrell served as a Conservative MP until 1920 when he resigned to become the Parliamentary Librarian until his death in 1938.

to converting a cowshed near a military camp into a studio and selling water colour sketches to soldiers for twenty five cents [\$5 in 2014 dollars].¹¹⁰¹



A Burrell watercolour ca. 1914 in Library and Archives Canada.

Burrell's life-long existence thus paradoxically consisted of being allowed entry into the centre of high society as a result of the social and cultural capital of a powerful patron but nevertheless being economically marginalized. This was Louie Burrell's social position in the field of cultural production when Mackenzie King encountered her in Ottawa in 1914 and "Mrs. Louis [sic] Burrell whom I am having make a miniature of mother came in to talk over dress, position, size etc."¹¹⁰² King does not mention a fee for Burrell's work in his diaries and it is probable that she usually was only paid when a portrait was completed and accepted by its sitter. The artist was saving funds for her planned return to England and therefore was trying to paint as many portraits as she could. King was not pleased by her first sketch of his mother. "It was disappointing; first of all the proportions were bad, the head much too large for the body, and there was very little

¹¹⁰¹ Arwen Tapping, opt. cit. Tapping summarizes how Burrell's attempts to support herself from her painting continued after she moved to Hollywood in 1916. In 1952 she received an annual grant from the artists' general benevolent fund which allowed her to continue painting almost until her death, at the age of 98, in 1971.

¹¹⁰² Diary April 21, 1914.

done, only the foundation.” He suspected Burrell had been “too busy with the Kermess and social engagements incident thereto and is trying to take on more work than she can complete before she leaves.”¹¹⁰³

Two days later, he discussed the miniature with the artist. “I shewed her wherein the proportions were not right, and she agreed; also she agreed to make another sketch, and a much smaller picture.” Burrell made a second fresh sketch that King liked “in some particulars but it was not quite all that I wished, a little too heavy. The truth [is] she is not in shape for good work just now, has had far too much excitement lately and is tired out preparing to go away & completing other orders.”¹¹⁰⁴ King’s brief encounter with Burrell reveals his life-long tendency to expect artists to subordinate their individual styles and creativity to his exacting specifications.

In 1914, the English Lessore and Burrell were competing for King’s and Ottawa’s financial capital in the Canadian field of cultural production. The sculptor’s greater social and cultural capital conveyed greater power to him, which he was able to use to his advantage. Burrell, on the contrary, had even less social and cultural capital once she left Ottawa, leaving her essentially at King’s mercy. She had sent him Isabel King’s framed and boxed miniature portrait from Victoria in October of 1914, congratulated him “on your appointment”—presumably a reference to King’s appointment with the Rockefeller Foundation, made on August 13—and asked for his criticism of the miniature. He responded that “it is like my mother here and there, but in detail and in general effect differs so from her that the effect upon me is not a pleasing or satisfying one.” He admonished the painter for leaving Ottawa before the portrait was finished and completing it from memory and Burrell’s preliminary sketches. King was prepared to hold on to the miniature

¹¹⁰³ Diary May 5, 1914. King described the performance of the Kermess on behalf of the Victorian Order of Nurses he saw at the Russell Theatre that day as “one of the most enjoyable productions I have ever seen. The variety of costumes, the beauty of the young girls, the charm of the children, the grace of the dances and the swing of the music combined to make it a wonderfully delightful entertainment. There were several hundred on the stage at the same time, and the effect of the grouping and movement was very fine. What was especially noticeable was the beauty of feature, beneath the make up in the several foreign representations and the genuinely poetic motion which pervaded the dancing throughout.”

if the painter were to agree to come East and “complete a portrait which would be pleasing to my mother while she is still here to enjoy it, and the greatest of possessions to her children after she is gone. You can do it but you will require the subject before you.” On November 2 he returned the miniature to Burrell by registered mail and offered to pay for its frame the following day.¹¹⁰⁵

Burrell responded to King’s first letter on November 4, assuring him that she had largely completed the portrait while still in Ottawa and that—with the care she had taken painting Isabel King’s dress and background—thought the miniature “one of my best.” “I had tried to convey the dainty & fragile look of Mrs. King & am really disappointed that you think I have failed.” She suggested King show the work to the art collector Warren Y. Soper who “used to help me quite a lot in my work. I found his criticism most useful.” Upon receipt of the returned portrait, the depressed painter informed King that she was “in actual want & was counting on the \$100 for this miniature [\$2,050 in 2014 dollars] to defray the expenses of this month. I truly cannot possibly afford to take it back & have nothing for all the time & labour spent on it.” She was willing to retain un-approved work when her income was sufficient to live on, “though no other portrait painter that I have ever known would paint on such conditions.” But with the outbreak of World War I, her income was reduced to \$25 a month from which she was paying \$12 monthly for her “cottage” on Foul Bay Road in Victoria. “Soon I shall be forced to leave it & then I cannot imagine what I shall do.”¹¹⁰⁶

King responded to Burrell’s embarrassing plea for help by insisting that she had broken their verbal contract and had failed to deliver the agreed upon cultural commodity. “The distressed circumstances of which you speak may be a reason for assisting you in meeting them,” he wrote the painter, “but they cannot affect in any particular the agreement I had with you as to the miniature you have painted. It was ordered on the understanding, repeatedly given by yourself,

¹¹⁰⁴ Diary May 7 and 8, 1914.

¹¹⁰⁵ Burrell to King, October 24, 1914. King to Burrell, October 27, November 2 and 3, 1914. LAC reel C1919, pages 20078-85. On the Rockefeller Foundation appointment, see R. MacGregor Dawson, 230.

¹¹⁰⁶ Burrell to King, November 4 and 12, 1914. LAC reel C1919, pages 20086-88.

that you would not accept or ask acceptance of a picture that was not wholly pleasing and satisfactory, and though it may not have been expressly so stated it was certainly understood when I spoke to you of my mother's visit, that you would do the work while she was here in Ottawa and that it would be completed before she left." He asserted, "That you were unable to finish the work, while she was here, and felt it necessary to leave for the West before it was completed, was neither my mother's fault nor my own." King informed the painter that "I have had many opportunities of having miniatures from photographs, but have declined to entertain them, not having a photograph of my mother which conveys what I think an artist must see in her expression."

King enclosed a cheque for \$14 for the leather case Burrell had purchased and asked her to forward the frame to him even while refusing to accept her miniature itself. "The only real point is that unless the work can be delivered as agreed, I cannot recognize any obligation concerning it. Were I to accept the miniature you have painted, it would only be for the purpose of making sure that it was destroyed. The defects as I saw them the moment I looked at the miniature were so apparent as to have left the most unpleasant recollection in my memory." He concluded his letter by stating that "on a matter which was strictly one of business, it is not less necessary than just to see that in matters of agreement a due regard is had for all its phases." When King returned to Ottawa from a meeting with John D. Rockefeller Jr. in New York in December and seeing Caruso in *Pagliacci* and Emmy Destinn in *Cavalleria Rusticana* at the Metropolitan Opera, he found a registered parcel from Burrell containing the miniature and its leather frame. He retained the frame but returned his mother's portrait to the artist for the second time since he was "unable to recognize any obligations with respect to the miniature, until the work has been completed as agreed upon when undertaken."¹¹⁰⁷

King's ruthless legalistic treatment of Louie Burrell—just as he was beginning to earn a tremendous salary from the Rockefeller Foundation—raises the question why he was largely

¹¹⁰⁷ King to Burrell, November 23 and December 12, 1914. LAC reel C1919, pages 20089-93. Diary December 5, 1914.

deferential to Frederick Lessore. Certainly the English sculptor's portrait of Isabel King was more life-like and pleased King. But Lessore was also a more established artist with better social connections and therefore had greater social and cultural capital that King had to respect. Nine days before he commissioned his mother's bronze relief from the sculptor in April of 1914, Lessore had met with Robert Rogers, the Minister of Public Works, regarding his suggestion that the Conservative government commission a large portrait statue of Sir Charles Tupper, one of the Fathers of Confederation and Canada's sixth Prime Minister. Prime Minister Borden had also been sympathetic to the proposal for a memorial statue to his Conservative predecessor when the sculptor showed him a photo of Tupper's bust in London in the summer of 1914. Through the intervention of Sir William Van Horne and Sir Hugh Graham, Tupper had agreed to pose for Lessore so that he "should have the information that I required to make the Statue truthful to life and characteristic of Sir Charles' personality." He estimated the cost of the nine to ten feet high statue, with pedestal, at \$14,000 [\$287,000 in 2014 dollars]. But in view of the ongoing World War and promised subscriptions from private sources, the artist was prepared to start on the work at once if the Dominion Government would guarantee half the amount. In December of 1915, Prime Minister Borden informed Lessore, however, that while "undoubtedly a statue must eventually be erected to Sir Charles Tupper...it is doubtful whether we shall undertake any work of the kind in view of the financial urgency and stress with which the entire Empire is concerned under present conditions."¹¹⁰⁸

Giuseppe Guastalla

In the first week of November 1915, while Louie Burrell was selling water colour sketches to soldiers in her converted cowshed in Victoria, Mackenzie King toured the Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco with former Governor General Lord Aberdeen and Lady Aberdeen. As with Pierre-Charles Lenoir, King's adoration of his mother and the first sight of a work of art evoking spirituality by an Italian artist engendered his two decades-long contact

¹¹⁰⁸ Lessore to Robert Rogers and to Sir Robert Borden, November 22, 1915. Borden to Lessore, December 4, 1915. Rogers to Borden, December 9, 1915. Borden to Rogers, December 10, 1915.

with the sculptor Giuseppe Guastalla (1867-1952). In his diary he recorded, “I stayed at the Exposition throughout the evening, spending almost the entire time in the Art Gallery where I came upon the silver bronze head of a woman, which seemed to me the most beautiful face that, without exception (save possibly my own mother’s) I have ever looked upon.” Checking the Exposition catalogue, he saw that the bronze head was entitled *Visions* sculpted by Guastalla. “I could not see too much of this face,” King recalled, “and returned to it time and time again during the evening. There was not a single angle from which it did not appear perfect, every feature helping to give the expression of the noblest type of womanhood.”¹¹⁰⁹

King decided to purchase *Visions* that very evening and thought that its sales price of 2,000 lire or \$400 [\$8,000 in 2014 dollars] was not unreasonable—particularly in view of his salary of \$12,000 [\$242,000 in 2014 dollars] from the Rockefeller Foundation. But he was on his way to make a birthday visit to his brother Max who was seeking to cure his tuberculosis in Denver, Colorado, and the amount was more than he felt he could spend. He decided to offer \$150 [\$3,000 in 2014 dollars] “though I knew it would be impossible to secure it at that price.” Returning repeatedly to view the sculpture, he finally decided to purchase it even at its full cost and, as with his commission of Frederick Lessoré the previous year when he had to determine “how we measure values in this world,” converted financial into symbolic spiritual capital. “By looking at it a new significance seemed to be added to the words ‘What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?’ This face seemed to me to embody my very soul. The effect upon my nature was as real and strong an influence as I have ever felt in life.” He concluded that “To have this influence as a daily companion seemed to me to be worth anything that within reason might be asked. It was paying for an ideal, but in the belief that ideals when cherished and sustained are the most enduring of realities.”

LAC reel C4211, pages 9990-9995.

¹¹⁰⁹ 1914-15 diary dated December 31, 1914, page 768.



Giuseppe Guastalla's bronze *Visions*.

The head of the fine arts department of the Exhibition gallery suggested King make an offer to the sculptor and that “with the war on at present artists were doubtless being hard pressed.” He offered \$300 for *Visions* and made a down payment of \$50. Guastalla accepted this offer and King subsequently received a letter from John D. Rockefeller, Jr. mentioning that in gratitude for King’s work in helping to resolve his labour difficulties in Colorado, “it was his wish that I should accept this head as a gift from him.”¹¹¹⁰ In December of 1916, he “took my ‘Visions’ to Topley’s to be photographed” and sent a dozen photos of the sculpture, along with Christmas cards, to members of his family, high society connections (Rockefeller, Mrs. Hewitt, Mrs. Welborn) and artistic circle (W.W. Campbell and Dr. Gibson).¹¹¹¹

¹¹¹⁰ Ibid. pages 769-770, 798.

¹¹¹¹ Diary December 5, 18 and 21, 1916. This may be the only photo extant of *Visions*, located in the Library and Archives Canada, a negative on a glass plate, MIKAN no. 3842662. Guastalla’s bronze is unlocated. King had visited the young and beautiful Miss Florence Lynch “who read me a little verse she had written on the bronze ‘Visions’ I have” on October 17, 1916. When King invited Margot Asquith, the wife of the former British Prime Minister, to supper in his apartment at the Roxborough following her lecture at the Russell Theatre on March 1, 1922, “she liked the silver bronze head, its Greek lines & fine brow.” After King spoke at the Prince Albert Exhibition on August 3, 1933, he observed of Miss Olive of Sherbrooke, “another beautiful young girl adding a note of real joy to the occasion,” that “her head was very like my ‘Visions.’”

Though financially secure, King would be parsimonious for the rest of his life. In December 1916 he left with “Toller, broker, a list of stocks to sell, amounting to \$20,000” [\$385,000 in 2014 dollars].¹¹¹² His commissions from Guastalla of portrait busts of his mother, his father and finally of himself were the major exceptions to this rule. King again justified these financial expenditures on account of the higher spiritual capital they conveyed. He had received a letter from the sculptor in October of 1916, “suggesting a bust of mother in marble. I fear I cannot resist it. After all she & father are more to me than all else, why should I not preserve as far as I may be [able] all the inspiration of their lives.”¹¹¹³ He consulted with his mother in Toronto about commissioning her portrait bust and whether it was possible to photograph her for this purpose. Isabel King replied at the end of October and provided another insight into their personal relationship. “About the marble bust—I do not know what to say—maybe when I am in Ottawa sometime I could have my picture taken unless time will improve my appearance. You know Billie you look at me with lover’s eyes. May you always do so is the prayer of your mother.”¹¹¹⁴

King wrote Guastalla in November “saying I would probably get marble bust of mother made, and asking for other particulars.” The sculptor sent King a sketch of his mother’s bust in February of 1917, ten months before Isabel King’s death. He found the outline design “so much like mother in spirit—though only pencilled roughly, that I felt I must go on with this even if the expense be considerable, on top of all this illness.” He recorded that his mother “seemed pleased about her bust, yet asked me what I wanted it for, and said ‘You want me to live till you are prime minister’—this in a whisper so no one could hear it.” King answered this question in his comment about Guastalla’s sketch and letter: “Oddly the sculptor spoke of what I had also had in

And when he met with Giuseppe Guastalla in his studio in Rome on November 4, 1934, he “spied my little Visions in white marble—more spiritual & lovely than ever. I really love that bit of marble & later saw it also in silver bronze, quite remarkable.”

¹¹¹² Diary December 4, 1916.

¹¹¹³ Diary October 16, 1916.

¹¹¹⁴ Cited in Paul Roazen, *Canada’s King: An Essay in Political Psychology* (Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic Press, 1998), 123.

mind, namely a bust of father as well. It may seem a great extravagance but these are the things of the spirit and are a part of one's life." King's subsequent remark that the portrait busts of his parents "are part too of the faith in the future, 'the last of life for which the first was made,'" reveals his perception of the totemic nature of these family portraits which he idealized and worshipped and whose associated character and spirituality he sought to emulate. In 1919 he "spent 3 hours writing Guastalla the sculptor in Italy giving particulars of dear mother's features. I need the inspiration of thought of her and felt the Sunday morning could not be spent in a more sacred & restful manner. Dear, dear mother, how wonderfully great and beautiful she was."¹¹¹⁵

Guastalla sent photos of Isabel King's bust in January of 1921, three years after her death. As the art work came into being, King began to struggle with issues of verisimilitude, artistic representation and the expression of human character. "When I looked at the photos first I experienced some disappointment. Nothing can give dear Mother's life or expression. No artist could express it. As I have continued to look at the pictures, however, I begin to see how really skilful the artist has been and what a remarkable portrait he has executed. I shall have to see the marble first before I can experience the delight I shall wish to feel." He received additional photos of the bust in May and was "much impressed by changes that have been made. Will cable to have work go on with in marble." J.W.L. Forster also made suggestions regarding the bust portrait and King again cabled the sculptor to await these recommendations. He wrote the artist in November of 1922, eleven months after he became Prime Minister, "sending him cheque for \$700.00 which with the \$250.00 makes total payment of 1,200 [\$16,000 in 2014 dollars] for the statue and pedestal plus about 100 for transportation & customs dues still to be paid. It is of Mother and preserves some of her features and expressions. How is its value to be expressed in dollars!" In January of 1923, he placed his mother's bust in the downstairs morning room of Laurier House.¹¹¹⁶

¹¹¹⁵ Diary November 29, 1916, February 24 and 25, 1917 and August 24, 1919.

¹¹¹⁶ Diary January 19 and May 14 and 27, 1921, November 27, 1922 and January 20, 1923. In 1933 King recalled "offering to the sculptor Guastalla anything to get that 'Heaven light' into dear mother's cheeks." Diary June 14, 1933.



Guastalla's 1922 marble portrait bust of Isabel King.

In addition to his considerable fee, King was also assisting the Italian artist's attempts to find commissions in the Canadian field of cultural production. In September of 1922, he wrote Guastalla "of a monument of Justice which Sir William has in mind erecting in North York," noting in January that Mulock "intends having the Soldiers' monument statue made in Italy, to be placed near Aurora." When in March of 1923 Sir Clifford Sifton, the millionaire and former Minister of the Interior in Laurier's government, came to lunch at Laurier House, he "was very friendly, took a keen interest in Mother's bust, spoke of getting one of his father & mother and asked me to give Guastalla's address."¹¹¹⁷ In his letter to Sifton, King had "no hesitation in saying that if you have good portraits of your father and mother, I am sure that he would execute the work entirely to your satisfaction. I know were this done, you would derive a pleasure from the result which it would be impossible to express in words."¹¹¹⁸

¹¹¹⁷ Diary September 29, 1922, January 29 and March 10, 1923. Lord Byng, the Governor General, and Lady Byng admired Guastalla's bust of Isabel King, as well as King's Guercino, March 11. Sir William Mulock had "dropped in on the way just to look at mother's bust" on February 2, 1923.

¹¹¹⁸ King to Sir Clifford Sifton, April 7, 1923. Sifton to King, April 16, 1923. LACreel C2259, pages 80286-87 and 80290.

King clearly stated his belief that works of art should not be restricted by considerations of nationality when he wrote Guastalla in July of 1923, alerting him that the Canadian government was about to decide whether the commissions for a planned national war memorial and a statue of Sir Wilfrid Laurier on Parliament Hill would be confined to residents of the British Empire or not. He informed the artists that Parliament had appropriated \$25,000 [\$341,000 in 2014 dollars] for the open-air life-size Laurier statue and estimated that the cost of the war memorial, “a column suitably mounted with symbolical figures,” would be “\$100,000 [\$1,338,000 in 2014 dollars] or thereabouts.” “My own inclinations in works of art of the kind,” King wrote the sculptor, “is to have the competitions open to all; there may, however, be reasons of policy, in the expenditure of public moneys, why regard should be had for the susceptibilities of the tax-payers. Should these competitions be open in the manner described, I shall certainly see that you are supplied with copies of the terms and specifications of the competitions.”¹¹¹⁹

Mackenzie King in Rome

For thirteen years, King had been communicating with Guastalla by letter and the occasional telegram and photographs. In September of 1928, after heading the Canadian delegation and addressing the Assembly of the League of Nations in Geneva, King spent a day in Rome and met first with Guastalla and then Mussolini.¹¹²⁰ He thought the day a propitious one since it fell on

¹¹¹⁹ “Extract of Letter Dated July 23, 1923, From Rt. Hon. W.L. Mackenzie King to Giuseppe Guastalla.” LAC reel C2253, pages 73724-25. When King met with the sculptor in his studio in Rome on November 5, 1934, Guastalla showed King “his design for the war memorial at Ottawa & he had shown me letters re [Sir William] Mulock & spoke of a Canadian Senator I had written of, I think Dandurand perhaps.”

¹¹²⁰ King initially had not planned to meet with Mussolini “but I have become enthused at the manner in which this country has been brought together & is going ahead, the order of it all, the fine discipline, the evident regard for authority & for M. himself. It is government by a young man & young men. As we approached the offices we were held up by police, not allowed to make headway anywhere till full explanations given. I saw what government by a dictatorship meant; but when one hears how he came with his blackshirts to the King, offered his services to clean up the government & House of Representatives filled with communists, banished them all to an island, cleaned the streets of beggars & the houses of harlots, one becomes filled with admiration. It is something I have never seen before and one feels it, in one’s bones.” At the

the second anniversary of his resuming office as Prime Minister, Secretary of State for External Affairs and President of the Privy Council following the 1926 election. He also recalled after visiting the Roman Forum, Palatine Hill and the Coliseum, “it was on the Palatine Hill that 28 years ago I debated going to Ottawa & from here I turned my steps homeward—to Ottawa—to the Premiership of Canada.”

King was greatly impressed by his visit to Guastalla’s studio in the new part of Rome, “a beautiful new building studio in the most perfect order, filled with his own work, magnificent portraits and symbolical figures.” “On a shelf high up beside other portraits was that of dear Mother—to see my own mother’s head in Rome—on this day—this anniversary—How wonderful & mystical. I can only believe given enough faith everything can be achieved beyond one’s dreams.” King also felt that his father was very near to him, expressed his great debt to both his father and mother, “What I owe to my parents. We are only what they have made us,” and decided to commission Guastalla to sculpt a portrait bust of his father as well. “All day I have thought of father, of his love for Roman history, of how he taught us as children to love the Tiber, of Horatius, of the Forum & to reverence the past. I shall have his bust made here, as a souvenir of this day. What I am that is worthy he & Mother have made me.”

Idolizing his mother and father, King was greatly gratified that the sculptor not only believed that he physically resembled his parents but that he also could reveal and exteriorize King’s own inner spirituality. “I was over-joyed to hear Guastalla say I was like Mother, also like father. He finds the basic features the same, was ready to make a sketch of me if I could have remained over; for once in my life I was tempted to wait for I believe that man understands my soul & could bring it out. I felt a strong emotion as we parted as I know he also did.”¹¹²¹

conclusion of his meeting with Mussolini the next day, “I told him of Guastalla having made my mother’s portrait-bust & of having seen it at his studio the day before, also of my visit to the Palatine Hill 28 years ago & consideration there of return to Canada to start work with the Government to organize a department of Labour. I wished him well & the necessary strength to carry on his work...I would not have missed this conference for anything.” Diary September 25 and 26, 1928.

¹¹²¹ Diary September 25, 1928.



Kathleen Shackleton's 1927 King portrait.

King's readiness to meet Guastalla's high commission fees is all the more remarkable in view of his experience the previous year with Kathleen Shackleton, the sister of the polar explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton, who made a crayon sketch of King for her portrait exhibition in London. After he served her dinner and Shackleton completed the portrait at Laurier House about 1.30 a.m., "she said she did not like to ask but felt she should ask \$100.00 [\$1,338 in 2014 dollars] for the portrait, that Symington her solicitor had said not to ask me but she felt she had a very good portrait & should." Unlike his encounter with Louie Burrell in 1914, King concluded "There was nothing to do but acquiesce, though I confess I felt the procedure a sort of highway robbery."¹²² Upon Joan Patteson's suggestion, King decided to substitute Shackleton's sketch instead of a photograph selected for his *The Message of the Carillon and Other Addresses* about to be published by Macmillan. "As I own the sketch & it cost me \$100.00 I have decided it will be well to try & secure it instead of the photo. I am tired seeing poor photos of myself in print." Hugh Eayrs of Macmillan's was also "greatly pleased with her sketch; he advised not altering it, to keep the dress suit; he thought it an excellent portrait & much preferable to the photograph." King as well was

momentarily “greatly relieved, and in fact delighted, for I never liked the photo—the expression; the crayon sketch is more suitable for the book.” But when he saw the final proofs of the first few pages of *The Message of the Carillon* while attending a reception by President Calvin Coolidge at the White House, King apparently perceived that the portrait’s penetrating eyes and fleshy puckered mouth created an unfavourable impression. He “was disappointed in the crayon sketch, too heavy & not like me; telegraphed to cut it out” and substituted a much more sympathetic photograph instead.¹¹²³



The 1927 *Message of the Carillon* photo.

King communicated with Giuseppe Guastalla again in December of 1930 after the artist had sent him photos of his latest work and King’s Liberals had been defeated by R.B. Bennett’s Conservatives in the election in August. Freed from his responsibilities as Prime Minister, he delved heavily into spiritualism and psychic research while he was out of office and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament until 1935. When he toured Europe again in 1934, he phoned the sculptor and arranged a meeting at his studio knowing “(that means regardless of the cost) that dear father’s bust will be made in marble as a companion to that of mother. Whether I have one of myself made as well will depend on how matters shape themselves & what Guastalla suggests &

¹¹²² Diary November 7, 8, 9, 1927.

¹¹²³ Diary November 13, 15 and 22, 1927.

offers in the way of price.” King wanted to capture his inner essence for posterity and believed Guastalla could reveal his spirituality through sculpture. “I feel that this is a quite exceptional chance, and that it is perhaps best to have the best & right thing done now—rather than to have to chance in the future some serious mistake. The photos of myself are poor, the paintings not satisfactory. Here is a chance to have a true portrait by a great artist from the seat of sculpture & the arts in Europe—I feel it should not be missed.”¹¹²⁴

Mackenzie King’s eight days in Rome from November 3 to November 11 brought to the forefront his life-long contradictions in his character and the conflict between his religious and sexual *habiti*. He was “restless” the night before meeting Guastalla and had “thoughts that were not free from desire.” “It seemed impossible to avoid the latter last night; they were overwhelming, a magnetic current due to proximity I imagine of someone equally so—however I regretted it this morning & prayed to be delivered from this sensual note.” He later wondered whether his overwhelming “desire for union with the other sex” was also stimulated by the fact that “beauty itself creates passion and passion demands some satisfaction.” His inspirational “little books” admonished him, however, that “The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” and referred to “souls that would their Father’s image bear.”¹¹²⁵ His inability to subdue his sexual instinct meant that he was violating not only Christian commandments but also the teachings of his parents, sullyng his character in his own eyes and in the eyes of his loved ones he was certain were watching him from the beyond.

¹¹²⁴ Diary December 4, 1930 and November 3, 1934. King had photos taken in London on October 26, 1934 but “felt I could not get an agreeable expression. Too tired and weary from last night. My hope but not my expectation is that the new position or rather lighting may produce a surprise & that we may get one good picture.” On November 4, 1934, the day before he met with Guastalla, he had a “Vision of bust” which he interpreted to refer to “the disappearance re politics—men soon forget, forget what a man looks like etc.; best to secure while living & get something enduring. My thought tells me father & I are connected in this and that it is well to have a portrait of each of us made at the same time. I want to honour my father & mother & let the nation see that if I am prime minister again, it is owing, as it was before, to them, to my father & mother & what I inherit through them from grandfather & others—and owe to the sacrifices they have made for me.”

When he entered the sculptor's studio, "filled with noble works of art—portrait busts etc. etc.," on November 5, 1934, Isabel King's bust stood covered in the centre of the room. "Suddenly Guastalla withdrew the covering & mother was looking at me in a way that made my heart leap for joy. It was amazingly like her." King also saw the female head *Visions*, that "celestial thing" which to him symbolized an ideal of spiritual rather than sensual physical beauty. The marble face "continues to dwell in my mind—she looked so much younger—so divinely pure & innocent." Guastalla offered him *Visions* for \$400 and he purchased the marble for \$250 [\$4,275 in 2014 dollars]. Before they had discussed prices, the sculptor had presented King with a plaster bust of Isabel King. He commissioned the artist to sculpt a bust of John King and of himself, with pedestals, for a total of \$2,300 [\$39,000 in 2014 dollars].

King recorded in his diary that "certainly Italy is the home of the arts, of colour, of sculpture & painting." In the midst of the Depression, the country was rich in cultural capital but suffered from unemployment while King had social status and sufficient financial capital. When he subsequently also purchased gold silk curtains, red cut velvet and brocade, tea sets and other items for Laurier House totaling another \$900 [\$15,000 in 2014 dollars], he felt compelled to justify these uncharacteristically extravagant expenditures. "I begin to wonder if I have been all wrong buying silks & brocades etc. & marble busts when so many are needy," he queried in his diary. His justification was that "it provides work & the position I have may warrant these extravagances—but they are extravagances though part of the vibrations that influence one's daily life & as such may be justified." Because King concealed his strong interest in the arts behind his public mask and felt vulnerable giving such large commissions to a foreign artist, he explained to the sculptor that in regard to his own portrait bust, "I would have to hide it away for a while at least & would wish it kept secret."¹¹²⁶

Guastalla began both John and Mackenzie King's portrait busts on November 7. "I soon found myself seated between the two, with dear mother's quite near to me, at moments so startling a

¹¹²⁵ Diary November 5, 13 and 6, 1934.

¹¹²⁶ Diary November 5, 9 and 10, 1934.

surprise that I almost spoke to her.” The sculptor had only one photograph of King’s father to work from until the arrival the next day of a package sent by King’s secretary in Ottawa via the British Embassy containing photos of his father and of J.W.L. Forster’s 1902 portraits of John and Mackenzie King. A photographer took photos of King from all four sides so that Guastalla could complete his portrait after his departure from Rome. As he would remark on November 11, “I cannot yet see myself as others see me.” “I am surprised at my own appearance—my face at one moment has seemed a little like Mr. Dickie [Rev. Dickie who baptized King], at another like [Canadian] General Garnet Hughes. I have seen no resemblance to father or mother or grandfather. Mr. Guastalla remarked that I had suffered considerably since I was here last, also that my face had lost its ruddy complexion of that time.” Yet the artist “got a good result. I think he is pleased & I can see he has done wonders, given a portrait I am not ashamed of.” When he left Rome on November 11, King was certain the sculptor “has produced a wonder portrait.” “He thinks my head has been a good one for modelling, likes the lines of strength & indications of suffering & has secured well the play of features.”¹¹²⁷

Since his previous visit to Rome in 1928, King had come to identify the arts even more closely with spirituality, the psychic and the divine. He recorded in his diary that Guastalla said his letters to him about his mother “had made himself put myself into himself & produce what I saw, that he had never had that experience before. (It was a sort of mediumship.)” When the artist showed King his Leonardo da Vinci in the courtyard of his residence, he described the sculpture as “a beautiful thing, a noble head—almost a vision—a materialization of a human soul.” He also noted that the sculptor thought Michelangelo was “greatest of all; he alone could take marble & make what he wanted out of it—that fact Guastalla said made him believe in divinity. By his hands he indicated how Angelo could take the marble & make it do his will.”¹¹²⁸

¹¹²⁷ Diary Nov. 7, 8, 11, 9, 1934.

¹¹²⁸ Diary November 9 and 10, 1934. King had visited several psychics and engaged in automatic writing while in London in October of 1934. Before arriving in Rome, he was interested to read what he had written in Paris the week before, “automatic writing—about coming on to Rome—It is all true—excepting part re Mussolini which, I imagine, cannot come to pass. I feel it will hardly do to seek an interview with him this time.” Diary November 5, 1934. He had also had a dream vision of deceased family members the night of November 8. “It was

As in his association with other artists, King equated the quality of Guastalla's work with the nature of his personal character. The sculptor had at one time been a member of the Council of Rome but had lost his position at the Academy for refusing to become a fascist. He had also been imprisoned and exiled to an island with thirty others. King therefore easily identified Guastalla as belonging—like his grandfather William Lyon Mackenzie—to “the ‘martyr’ band.” The artist “held to his principles—of the old method of government—freedom for thought & its expression & was prepared to suffer martyrdom rather than give it up...He would rather die than violate his beliefs.” The Italian thus was “a true patriot & a noble soul. I am more pleased than ever at having secured his friendship & authorship of the portrait.”¹¹²⁹

After paying Guastalla for *Visions* and half the commission for his father's and his own portrait, King took his leave from the artist on November 11. “I felt a deep feeling of gratitude & affection for him & expressed it by kissing him on both cheeks as he did me before the other men who were present. He has been a true, true friend & I am indeed fortunate to have come into the relationship with him I have.” He was very happy that “the week in Rome had been all I could have wished to be & quite the best of the entire trip.” The portrait busts he had commissioned “will be pleasing so long as I live & of enduring value to others & to Canada after I have gone. I have helped to secure father & mother in their own, in the nation's economy...It was the end of a real & blessed pilgrimage.”¹¹³⁰

clear to me this was evidence that the loved ones were near & with me—that those ‘above’ were here...& gave this assurance of their presence.”

¹¹²⁹ Diary November 7 and 11, 1934. King had expressed his admiration of Mussolini in his diary on November 5. “We went to see the Mussolini Forum—here I was immensely surprised and impressed with what has been done to inspire youth with love of athletics. There is a gymnasium etc. I am told Mussolini's face melts into sweetness as he views the youth of the land—that he has sought to have places to fill the leisure hours of the workers, men & women alike, libraries etc. to keep them away from vice & drinking, also that his compulsory drill for children is to get over the need for conscription. I find myself admiring him increasingly—a man of ideals for the people—with labour on his side—giving it dignity & much of its own rights. I feel he has helped to inspire me to noble effort & given me what I need in going back to take up reform of *Industry and Humanity!*”

¹¹³⁰ Diary November 11, 1934.

Guastalla's Portrait Busts of John and Mackenzie King

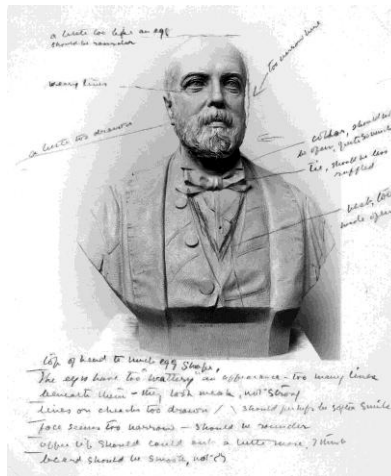
Despite his week in Giuseppe Guastalla's studio and the additional photographs sent from Canada, King's struggle to have the sculptor create exact physical representations of himself and his father that would also reveal their spiritual essence through their facial expressions was far from over. Already in Rome, he had suggested to the artist when he began sculpting John King's bust that "father's face seemed a little too narrow." Guastalla "sat in the chair quite overcome for a moment. I think it was the critical word, at the end of the time he had done his best, seeing the limitations & not the achievement...I was sorry I spoke." Two months later King again recalled how the sculptor "collapsed at a critical word—when he had done his utmost with my bust & the word had reference to father's. The artistic temperament always suffers so when it is at high pitch."¹¹³¹

Back in Ottawa, he sent further photos of John King to Guastalla as well as his lawyer's K.C. gown and in January, after hearing from the artist that he had shipped him the marble *Visions*, "sent off a cable to Guastalla to proceed with father's bust as well as my own, without waiting to send any photographs."¹¹³² But when the sculptor did send him photos of his father's portrait in February, King "was much disappointed when I saw them. He has not got the shape of the head accurate enough, nor are the eyes good; the face is too drawn and weary in appearance; father had a very happy expression always and beautiful bright eyes. It is going to be difficult to explain what it is necessary to change—but I am glad he has waited to receive such suggestions as I may be able to send."¹¹³³

¹¹³¹ Ibid and Diary January 20, 1935.

¹¹³² Diary December 11, 1934 and January 24 and 25, 1935.

¹¹³³ Diary February 25, 1935.



Mackenzie King's 1935 corrections to Guastalla's portrait bust of John King.

King's annotations on the photograph of his father's bust that he returned to Guastalla informed the sculptor that the top of his father's head has too much of an egg shape; that the face is too narrow on one side and should be rounder; the eyes are too watery and have too many lines; they look weak, not strong; the lines on the cheeks are too drawn; the collar should not be open quite so much; the tie should be less ruffled; the vest is open too wide; the beard should be smooth; and the upper lip should come out a little more. What he expected from the Italian sculptor was that he would permanently enshrine the souls of his parents and his own while projecting, like a hologram, an exact replica of their and his physical and spiritual being.

King sent Guastalla another photograph of his father in April as well as an inscription for the foot of the bust that referenced William Lyon Mackenzie, "He bequeathed unto his children The legacy of an honest name."¹¹³⁴ The sculptor wrote King in June that his father's bust was nearly completed and in September that he had shipped the bust with pedestal, gown & photographs to Canada. When the bust arrived in Ottawa in October, King "was delighted beyond words."

There was father—in his purity of nature—his truly benign look—the side face expression—on each side is as like him as it could possibly be. The marble is like

¹¹³⁴ Diary April 18 and April 7, 1935. King paraphrased the citation from John King's *The Other Side of the "Story," Being Some Reviews of Mr. J.C. Dent's First Volume "The Story of the Upper Canadian Rebellion," and the Letters in the Mackenzie-Rolph Controversy* (Toronto: James Murray, 1886).

alabaster, so pure; as I looked at it, it almost seemed as if I could see through it. There was the inscription ‘He bequeathed to his children the legacy of an honest name’—linking his life with grandfather, these being his own words in reference to Mackenzie.

I simply cannot begin to express my delight. The front face is not quite father. It is too thin—too narrow above the upper part, near the temples & below; a look of fatigue which should not be there—this is all I have to criticise—but the side face—is perfect—on each side—the expression of the mouth, the dimples on each side—Oh, I am so happy to possess this and to hand it on to Canada for all time to come.

King “cabled at once to Guastalla to Italy expressing my delight.” When he placed the portrait bust in Laurier House the next day, he thought “the bust looks beautiful beyond words. I felt dear father’s presence anew, could feel his soul as I looked into a work of art so marvellously perfect. Surely Michael Angelo let Guastalla a hand.”¹¹³⁵



Guastalla’s portrait busts of John and Isabel King at Laurier House.

King, however, did not have the same opportunity of having Guastalla make changes on his own portrait bust. He had received a photograph on April 6 as well as notice from the sculptor that he had shipped the bust to Ottawa on March 11. He was “really terribly disappointed with the photograph of my own bust. It seemed to have lost all the charm and character of what I saw in the clay model, and that he had reverted back to the photographs taken in his studio where I

¹¹³⁵ Diary June 24, September 21, October 11 and 12, 1935.

looked very weary & haggard. The eyes turned up & not looking out straight at one were a great disappointment; also it seemed to me the lower lip was too heavy. To add to the rest of the grief, my name was spelt wrongly, MacHenzie for MacKenzie—this mistake was unpardonable. Guastalla will feel very badly about it.” Already in Italy, King had identified his lower lip with his uncontrollable sensuous sexual self, noting that “as I reflect on the face Guastalla has made—the lower nature is strongly evident in the lower part [his lips]—while the higher is evident in the brow & eyes.” King’s conclusion that the lower lip of his portrait “was too heavy” thus defeated his very intent of having his portrait express his idealized spiritual essence. He held off sending his criticism to the sculptor, however, “knowing he would be sensitive and thinking it best to hold the letter till I have seen the bust itself.”¹¹³⁶



Guastalla’s 1935 portrait bust of Mackenzie King at Laurier House.

King received word in mid-March that “the plaster bust of mother and the marble ‘Visions’ had arrived in Ottawa and passed the Customs by Nicol [John Nicol, his personal valet] & would be delivered later in the day.” His own portrait bust arrived sometime in April or before mid-May

¹¹³⁶ Diary April 6, 1935, November 13, 1934 and April 8, 1935.

when he wrote the sculptor “re my own bust & father’s” and ordered “a stand for my own portrait bust—of oak & a circular column for the marble ‘Visions’” to be made in Ottawa.¹¹³⁷

When King received his father’s bust on October 11, 1935, he referred in his diary to “what I read in the Citizen this morning... ‘Italy warns Naval blockade means war.’” Mussolini had invaded Ethiopia on October 3 and the League of Nations declared Italy the aggressor on October 7 and started to impose sanctions. He noted that “It is remarkable that the bust arrived yesterday & passed the customs this morning. Today the League of Nations sanctions, prevents further ‘importations’ from Italy. How sad & tragic the whole business is of Italy’s position—the dictator Mussolini—bringing his people into war, destroying his nation. They will turn upon & destroy him eventually.” He marveled at the arrival of his father’s bust just before the imposition of the League of Nations sanctions. “I have received nothing in life more precious than this gift.”¹¹³⁸

Three days later, King and the Liberals won the largest electoral victory in Canadian history: 178 out of 245 seats in Parliament. Hearing of the Liberal sweep at Laurier House, he knelt in prayer to thank God and communed with his family via photographs, art works and other sacred objects. He placed William Lyon Mackenzie’s bible on his “altar” before Forster’s 1905 painting of Isabel King with its family photographs “& the gold case with her hair & wedding ring. I kissed the photos of all the loved ones there.” Earlier in the evening, he had “touched on the shoulder the busts of dear father & mother and said I was so happy they were with me. It is their victory, it

¹¹³⁷ Diary March 20 and May 17, 1935. In his March 20 diary entry, King recorded that the plaster bust of his mother had been inadvertently placed by his Laurier House staff in front of the picture of Sir Wilfrid Laurier & Peter Larkin instead of the marble *Visions*. He moved *Visions*, “an exquisite thing so pure & beautiful,” into his bedroom. “On Thursday I had it brought & placed on the pedestal in the sun room—where the bronze [*Visions*] was and the bronze taken to the hall—since I have replaced it where it was fearing the weight of the marble would be too heavy on the stand. I have had the bust of mother temporarily placed beside that of grandfather in my room.”

¹¹³⁸ Diary October 11, 1935.

is grandfather's—to their training, their sacrifices I owe all there is of victory and triumph tonight.”¹¹³⁹



King's shrine to his mother at Laurier House.

King had already answered a letter from Guastalla on May 17 “re his desire to be assisted.” The sculptor had written him again in September of 1936, acknowledging receipt of King's payment of the balance of his account with the artist. He also inquired whether the Prime Minister was still interested in a replica of his father's bust and whether there was any possibility of a commission from the Canadian government or private individuals. King responded on September 23 from Geneva, where he was again heading the Canadian delegation to the League of Nations, six days before he addressed the League and announced that Canada rejected the League's principle of collective security and sanctions against either Italy for its invasion of Ethiopia or against Germany for its reoccupation of the Rhineland. “I wish very much I could send you some assurance in the matter of future commissions,” he wrote Guastalla. “I am afraid that for a while at least, the embarrassing situation occasioned by the recent war would make it difficult for the Government or public bodies in Canada to have work done in Italy, even work of the highest artistical [sic] class. That may and I hope will change with time but certainly time will be

¹¹³⁹ Diary October 14, 1935.

required if criticism is to be avoided.” Since his return from Italy, King had shown Guastalla’s sculptures “to friends whom I sought to interest in your work. The war, however, made thought of anything of an immediate character impossible.”¹¹⁴⁰ While Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia and then World War II cut off King’s contact with the Italian sculptor, he was still using his social capital to promote Guastalla less than a year before his death in 1950. In October of 1949 he spoke to Jean Désy, the first Canadian minister to Italy, about his experiences with the Italian artist. He showed Désy “two heads I had of his Vision. Also bust of father and mother. He admired them all. He said he would call on Guastalla when he returned.”¹¹⁴¹

Robert Tait McKenzie



McKenzie’s 1906 medallion *Wilfred Campbell*
also used for the 1923 Campbell memorial.

When Tait McKenzie wrote King in August of 1919 to congratulate him on winning the Leadership of the Liberal Party following the death of Wilfrid Laurier, the two had already known each other for many years. In his reply, King recalled with delight the days he and Mr. and Mrs. McKenzie spent together “at the vice-regal lodge in Dublin” and wrote of “our late mutual friend,” Wilfred Campbell. “We have both lost a good and great friend in Wilfrid [sic] Campbell,” he noted. “Campbell spoke very often to me of his friendship for you and, of course,

¹¹⁴⁰ Diary May 17, 1935. Dawson, 170-176. Guastalla to King, September 20, 1936. King to Guastalla, September 23, 1936. LAC reel C3688, pages 187420-25.

¹¹⁴¹ Diary October 21, 1949.

the relief of him which you made is the most valued of Mrs. Campbell's present possession[s].” In his diary he recorded of correspondence that he had finally answered, “Among other notes of significance was one to Tait McKenzie, the sculptor, suggesting a monument to Wilfrid Campbell.”¹¹⁴²

“Surprised and greatly pleased” by King’s inquiry whether he would consider a commission for a Campbell memorial, McKenzie suggested and even made a little sketch in his letter of a stele of rough stone with a medallion set in it which he compared to the memorial for John Ruskin near Keswick. The sculptor also described a sketch he had just seen for “a very beautiful memorial suggested for Theodore Roosevelt.” He informed King that he would soon be coming to Ottawa to meet with John Andrew Pearson, the architect of the new Parliament Building, regarding the erection of a memorial statue inside the lobby of the House of Commons to honour Lt. Col. George Harold Baker, the only MP killed during World War I. Commander of the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles, Baker and most of his men were killed in 1916 at the Battle of Sanctuary Wood. At the instigation of Senator George Green Foster from Quebec, both the Senate and House had agreed unanimously to commemorate the fallen MP, “emphasizing the awakening nationhood of Canada and the new feeling of responsibility toward imperial affairs.”¹¹⁴³

McKenzie was invited to prepare sketches and to present these to Pearson and the Senate committee art jury for the monument. He suggested that he meet with King at the same time to discuss the Campbell memorial. “I have been so loaded up with work,” he wrote of other commissions, “that it is difficult for me to get at these sketches, but as it is the first olive branch extended to me from Canada, I feel like seizing it. It is curious how one yearns for recognition among one’s own people.” In 1918, McKenzie had made a model for a projected Canadian national war memorial in Ottawa but the worldwide competition for the monument would not be

¹¹⁴² R. Tait McKenzie to King, August 29, 1919 and King to McKenzie, December 12, 1919. LAC reel C1937, pages 41304-07. Diary December 12, 1919. A copy of McKenzie’s 1906 medallion of Wilfred Campbell is located at Library and Archives Canada, MIKAN no. 3640625.

organized until 1925. Following the death of Sir Wilfrid Laurier in 1919, Samuel William Jacobs, the Laurier Liberal MP for Cartier, contacted the sculptor to suggest that he compete for the commission for a memorial to the Liberal leader. But McKenzie did not approve of art competitions and thought the contract should be awarded to a French-Canadian. King was therefore gratified when in 1920 he “Received from Tait Mackenzie a letter indicating he is likely to take up Campbell monument—that is splendid and as Campbell would have loved.”¹¹⁴⁴

King could not help but be familiar with McKenzie’s sculptures and reputation as an artist. In his August 1919 letter, the sculptor mentioned that “there has been a long procession of figures in clay passing through my studio since you last looked in on my work.” King, too, well remembered “the morning spent in your studio, high up in the tower of one of the college buildings,” Weightman Hall, at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. “I am following with the utmost sympathy and interest your splendid career and should like to congratulate you upon many noble contributions you are making to the art of this continent,” he wrote the sculptor. “Were I free to choose a profession other than the one I am following, it is your art which would enlist my sympathies.”¹¹⁴⁵

In his correspondence with the sculptor about a Wilfred Campbell memorial, King did not invite McKenzie to use his artistic imagination and creativity to develop a design but—as with the Bert Harper monument—had already himself conceived “a memorial clearly defined in advance.” He and his benefactor Violet Markham had purchased “the most beautiful located site in Beechwood Cemetery as a plot for his grave.”

¹¹⁴³ Christopher Hussey, *Tait McKenzie: A Sculptor of Youth* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1930), 62. See also Jean McGill, *The Joy of Effort: A Biography of R. Tait McKenzie* (Bewdley, Ontario: Clay Publishing, 1980), 101-02.

¹¹⁴⁴ McKenzie to King, January 3, 1920. LAC reel C1937, pages 47524-25. Hussey, 57-58, shows three photographs of the model for the war memorial. The commission for the Laurier monument, unveiled in 1927, was awarded to Emile Brunet. McGill, 100. King diary January 8, 1920.

¹¹⁴⁵ McKenzie to King, August 29, 1919 and King to McKenzie, December 12, 1919. LAC reel C1937, pages 41304-07. Andrew J. Kozar, *R. Tait McKenzie: The Sculptor of Athletes* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1975), 10.

I chose it with reference to erecting later some suitable memorial. At the time I had in mind something in the nature of a long seat of stone, which could be placed at the upper end of the grave, and which would permit persons resting there to look across the grave itself, which is on the brow of a hill, to the distant blue of the Laurentians, in the beyond. My thought was that such a seat might carry a suitable inscription, and possibly have cut in panels, either at the back or sides, one or two suitable stanzas from Campbell's poems, and across the top of the seat the words 'Beyond the Hills of Dream' which is, as you know, the name of one of his books.¹¹⁴⁶

Repeating his experience with the Harper monument, King assured McKenzie that he could raise the funds for the Campbell memorial from the poet's friends and that he had already organized a committee for this purpose. On April 12, 1920 he arranged a luncheon for the sculptor in Ottawa and invited Warren Y. Soper, the businessman and art collector who had been a member of the Harper Memorial Fund Committee, Frederick A. Acland, the former assistant editor of the Toronto *Globe* who replaced Bert Harper after his death in 1901 and became Deputy Minister of Labour, his musician friend Dr. Thomas Gibson, Dr. Arthur Doughty, the Dominion Archivist, the writer and poet James Ernest Caldwell and the Rev. W.T. Herridge. King, Herridge, Gibson, Caldwell and Acland had been honorary pallbearers at Campbell's interment which had, as King wrote the poet's son Basil serving in France, "all the attributes of a state funeral."¹¹⁴⁷

At the luncheon for McKenzie, the sculptor showed photos of some of his art and King was interested to discover "that Soper had the original of his first bit of public work." He secured the assistance of John Andrew Pearson, the architect of the new Centre Block on Parliament, "by letting us have the best stone cutter for that part of the work. He was most willing, in offering to help in any way." The next day, King, McKenzie and Pearson visited Campbell's grave where King "described what I had in mind concerning a stone memorial seat & both Pearson & McKenzie enthused over the idea and we discussed together its form, lettering etc." On the way back from Beechwood Cemetery, they "recited bits of Campbell's verse." Recalling his organizing for the Harper monument, King recorded that "It was an hour or two of true

¹¹⁴⁶ King to McKenzie, December 12, 1919. LAC reel C1937, pages 41305-07.

inspirational delight. I can see now that this work will be done by the best man in the best way, and another monument to those things of spiritual significance & to a friend erected. It was more like the old days with the fullness of their hopes & ideals & purposes than anything I have known for some time.” McKenzie, too, was enthusiastic, writing King that he looked forward to designing the Campbell memorial “which we can make a distinguished thing among us.”¹¹⁴⁸

McKenzie quickly finished a small model of the memorial bench for King’s consideration on May 6, shipped it to Ottawa on May 29, and estimated its cost as no more than one thousand dollars [\$11,600 in 2014 dollars]. King wrote the sculptor on June 5, 1920 that he was delighted with the model. His fundraising commitment for the Campbell memorial was not unduly onerous since, as the sculptor indicated, “The main expense of the bench will be in the stone-cutting, in the setting in of the medallion, and in the lettering... The expense of my part of the work should be comparatively light, as I do not think, under the circumstances, I could charge more than the expenses of modeling [the medallion of Campbell’s profile] and working out the inscriptions and casting.” A year later an April 20, 1921 fundraising circular written by King also assured that “Through the co-operation of Dr. McKenzie and Mr. Pearson the undersigned are in a position to say that the work will be executed virtually at cost. On this basis it is estimated that at least fifteen hundred dollars [\$17,000 in 2014 dollars], exclusive of the amount which has already been subscribed and paid for the plot itself, will be required to give the memorial the permanency and artistic value it should possess.”

Surprisingly—despite Campbell’s literary reputation—King and his fundraising committee anticipated much more limited public support than had been the case for the Harper monument.

¹¹⁴⁷ Klinck, 245. According to Klinck, Campbell had developed influenza after walking three miles to his residence in bitter cold following a lecture by Acland at the University Club and had been ministered by Dr. Gibson as he was dying of pneumonia (244).

¹¹⁴⁸ Diary April 12 and 13, 1920. McKenzie to King, April 16, 1920. King to Pearson, July 16, 1920. Pearson to King, July 20, 1920. LAC reel C1942, pages 47537-38 and reel C1943, pages 48115-17. King wrote McKenzie May 1, 1920 informing him that Mrs. Campbell had sent him quotations from her husband’s poetry which he would forward to the sculptor. LAC reel C1942, page 47539.

The fundraising circular, “Proposed Memorial to the Memory of the Late Wilfred Campbell, LL.D.,” appealed primarily to “the friends and admirers of the late poet.” “It is obviously desirable that the memorial should be regarded as a public one but it is hardly to be expected that more than a limited number of Campbell’s friends and admirers will volunteer subscriptions.” In addition to Mackenzie King, the circular bore the names of Acland, Caldwell, Doughty, Gibson, Herridge, James H. Coyne, the president of the Royal Society William D. Lighthall, and W.J. Sykes, Campbell’s literary executor and the librarian of the Carnegie Public Library to who all communications were to be addressed. A note to the fundraising committee reported that Sir Joseph Flavelle was among the first to promise a subscription of fifty dollars [\$580 in 2014 dollars].¹¹⁴⁹

Yet McKenzie was still corresponding with King, now Prime Minister, a year later when he reported receiving a pencil drawing of the memorial bench from Basil Campbell rather than John Andrew Pearson and asked “to have this carefully studied and drawings to scale circulated so that we may be sure of having something which will stand the most rigid criticism.” “Campbell’s place in Canadian literature is such an important one,” he wrote, “that we would all deeply regret anything being put up which was not in every way the best that can be done.” He was departing for London the end of May for the unveiling by the Duke of York (the future King George VI) of his war memorial *The Home-coming*, dedicated to the men of Cambridge who had served in W.W. I. He planned to be in Ottawa in August to finalize the Baker memorial and could assist with the Campbell memorial “if wanted.”¹¹⁵⁰

In his Campbell biography, Carl F. Klinck suggested that “The memorial placed upon his grave by admirers in Canada and England is unique.”

¹¹⁴⁹ McKenzie to King, May 6 and 29, 1920. King to McKenzie, June 5, 1920. LAC reel C1942, pages 47540-43. “Proposed Memorial to the Memory of the Late Wilfred Campbell, LL.D.” LAC reel C1953, pages C 801-03.

¹¹⁵⁰ McKenzie to King, April 6, 1922. LAC reel C2247, page 65486. For *The Home-coming*, see Hussey, 64-67.

It is a seat of grey granite, suggesting ruggedness, utility, service to mankind. Dr. R. Tait McKenzie's bronze medallion of the poet's head is fixed upon the back. An inscription records: THIS MEMORIAL TO WILLIAM WILFRED CAMPBELL HAS BEEN ERECTED BY HIS FRIENDS TO COMMEMORATE THE CONTRIBUTION OF HIS POETIC GENIUS TO CANADIAN LETTERS AND AS AN EXPRESSION OF AFFECTIONATE REGARD FOR HIS LOFTY CHARACTER AND GENEROUS SPIRIT.

Mrs. Campbell chose a line from 'Poetry' to be set across the stone:
THOSE FLOWERS OF DREAM WILL SPRING, ETERNAL,
SWEET, SPEAKING FOR GOD AND MAN.¹¹⁵¹

Yet the few Google images of Campbell's grave available on the internet—with McKenzie's bronze medallion of the poet's profile stolen by grave robbers long ago—hardly suggest the monument of "spiritual significance" and "distinguished thing" done "by the best man in the best way" King and McKenzie had hoped the memorial would become. It is also significant—in contrast with the Bert Harper memorial—that King as Prime Minister chose not to dedicate the Campbell memorial and the cultural ideals it reified through a large-scale public ceremony involving all levels of the community and government. Despite his idolizing of British Prime Minister William Gladstone, King at the beginning of his career as Prime Minister chose not to identify himself publicly with arts and culture despite his close friendship with the artist.



The Wilfred Campbell Memorial, Beechwood Cemetery, Ottawa.

¹¹⁵¹ Klinck, 245-46.

In 1927, Tait McKenzie and King met again in Ottawa to discuss the creation of a Confederation memorial for the Hall of Fame in Parliament that developed into one of the sculptor's most frustrating artistic projects of his career. Their collaboration—extending over four years and involving several personal consultations and at least twenty-eight letters and telegrams—is perhaps the best single illustration of King's dysfunctional relationship with artists and the harm caused by the absence of an independent government department responsible for cultural affairs. King expected others to pay for the production costs of the memorial but insisted on virtually total artistic control over its creation.

The idea for a Dominion memorial was planted by Vincent Massey, appointed Canada's first ambassador to Washington by Mackenzie King in 1926, at a dinner for Massey organized by the Canadian Club of New York in April of 1927. According to W.W. Colpitts, the director of several railroads through the firm of Coverdale & Colpitts, 52 Wall Street, New York, the president of the Canadian Club of New York and chairman of the memorial fundraising committee, "When Mr. Massey made the suggestion at the meeting of the Canadian Club it was his idea that something in the nature of a monument to cost about \$10,000 [\$134,000 in 2014 dollars] would be appropriate. It was our purpose to pay a tribute to Canada on part of Canadians in the United States at the time of the celebration of the 60th anniversary of Confederation and we undertook it on that basis."¹¹⁵²

King convinced McKenzie that the proposed memorial should be in the form of a relief located in the Hall of Fame, the corridor running between the Library of Parliament and Confederation Hall in the Centre Block that later became known as the Hall of Honour. Its location would be directly opposite George William Hill's 1926 *Nurses' Memorial* marble relief erected by the nurses of Canada. King had also been responsible for the ideological and physical positioning of Hill's relief. The year before he had recorded in his diary, "At 2:30 went with the Committee of Cabinet & two Speakers to view the plaster relief of nurses memorial in Hall of Fame. It is a

¹¹⁵² "Unveils Memorial From Canadians Here," *New York Times*, February 7, 1932, p. 25. W.W. Colpitts to Tait McKenzie, July 30, 1929. LAC reel 2311, pages 139778-79.

quite beautiful piece of work and with a very few changes will be most suitable for the important position it will have. The conception was my own—the services of the French Sisters given to the native Indians 300 years ago, the services of our Nursing Sisters to soldiers on fields of France 300 years later. Humanity rising above considerations of race, creed, etc. I feel greatly pleased it has turned out so well.”



George William Hill's completed 1926 *Nurses' Memorial*.

Two weeks later he went to the House of Commons “to shew the relief in plaster to her Excellency [Lady Byng] & her guests, Lady Burghclere & Lady Margaret Boscawen. They were all much taken with it, except the Indian too stocky & bare. Other suggestions helpful in character were made.” And in March of 1925 he invited the sculptor to dinner at Laurier House and noted that “Hill has much improved the relief and Dr. King [James Horace King, the Minister of Public Works] & I gave assurance of it being accepted.”¹¹⁵³ In May of 1926 he entered the inscription for the relief in his diary that is nearly identical with its final wording: “Erected by the nurses of Canada in remembrance of their sisters who gave their lives in the Great War, nineteen fourteen – eighteen, and to perpetuate a noble tradition in the relations of the

Old World and the New.” He added, “that is the idea underlying the memorial which I suggested when it was decided to give the memorial a place in our hall of Fame.” In September he noted, “I was glad to see the Nurses Memorial in the Parliament Buildings; the relief is splendid & the inscription reads well. That is something I have helped to give Canada of her history & a right ideal.”¹¹⁵⁴

Of his meeting with Tait McKenzie in Ottawa in 1927, King recorded that he “suggested he consider another panel for the hall of fame (the gift of Canadians in New York commemorative of Confederation). He has agreed to recommend this—it carries out the idea of a series of historical reliefs.” McKenzie afterwards wrote King from Philadelphia, “I am reporting to the Committee in New York and recommending that they apply for the site we agreed upon in the Hall of Fame.” He added—what he probably came to regret later—“I will keep you informed of anything that takes place because I am going to rely on your assistance greatly in working out the central idea for the Memorial.”¹¹⁵⁵

As with the Harper, Campbell and Hill’s *Nurses’ Memorial*, King already had a clear thematic political and visual conception of what he wanted the *Confederation Memorial* to be. He seized on McKenzie’s “kindness in intimating that I might be of assistance in working out the central idea for the Memorial” and did just that in a four-page typed letter written in December of 1927. “As the Memorial must in some way be related to the Confederation of the Provinces of the Dominion,” he informed the sculptor, “I have wondered if something symbolic of Unity might not be appropriate in your panel, seeing that the central figure of the panel opposite is Humanity.” He wondered “whether something might not be conceived which would serve to

¹¹⁵³ Diary January 22, February 2 and March 12, 1925. George William Hill had designed the statues of George Brown and D’Arcy McGee erected on Parliament Hill in 1913 and 1922.

¹¹⁵⁴ The final inscription, which sounds as if it were also written by King continues, “Led by the spirit of humanity across the seas woman by her tender ministrations to those in need has given to the world the example of an heroic service embracing three centuries of Canadian history.” Diary May 24 and September 6, 1926.

¹¹⁵⁵ Diary May 25, 1927. McKenzie to King, May 27, 1927. LAC reel 2298, page 123660.

suggest the bringing together of different parts of our Dominion in the one united country under the inspiration of a desire for national unity.” King sent McKenzie a copy of his *The Message of the Carillon* just published by Macmillan. “It has occurred to me that if you have time to read through the portion of the book which relates primarily to Confederation, you may find in its pages some ideas which will be helpful.”

For example, in the address on Canada, I refer to Canada herself as ‘Daughter of the Woods and Mother of the Fields.’ It seems to me that this conception might lend itself to artistic treatment in a manner which would serve to bring out the whole economic development and industrial life of the country. The basic industries of lumbering, agriculture, mining, fishing, and power, lie at the foundation of our development. Then come the changes of transportation and communication and the secondary industries of manufacturing, public service, utilities, etc., which serve to further the development of commerce, trade, and finance. If around the central figure symbolic of Canada and at the same time of Unity, there might be figures symbolic of the basic industries, I believe they might be so related to serve also to indicate the several Provinces which go to make up the Dominion...

Whether it would be possible to have the unity of the Canada of today in some way associated with the art of government, is a further thought which I would like to put forward. It seems to me that the story of our development has been, as indicated in one of my speeches, the story of the two-fold task of settlement and government; an evolution from a group of huts to a group of colonies; and from a colony to a nation among the nations of the world.

If I had a further thought with respect to Canada that I would like to see portrayed, it would be that somewhere there should be introduced the note of peace and good will which, it seems to me, is the one which our young country has most at heart.

King concluded his letter by asking McKenzie, “as your work develops, please do not fail to keep me in touch.” In a postscript he added, “‘From sea to sea’ is another feature which might with advantage find expression in any representations symbolical of the growth of Canada’s present national unity.”¹¹⁵⁶

King’s design conception would have been impossible to carry out in a single relief within the limited space available in the series of Gothic alcoves in the Hall of Fame, even with unlimited

¹¹⁵⁶ King to McKenzie, December 15, 1927. LAC reel 2298, pages 123661-64.

funding. But the fundraising for the project in the United States had encountered difficulties from the very beginning of the project. W.W. Colpitts was scheduled to conclude the first day of the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations in Ottawa on July 1, 1927 by unveiling a tablet in the Hall of Fame commemorating the gift of Canadians in the United States to the people of Canada. The unveiling was scheduled at 9:30 pm after an official dinner and prior to the 10:30 nationwide radio broadcast by the Governor General, King and other notables that had occurred earlier in the afternoon. Apparently the schedule went awry because of the large number of activities taking place, including a historical pageant that wound through Ottawa. McKenzie wrote the Prime Minister that “the fiasco of the presentation of the tablet left an unfortunate impression on [Colpitts’] mind and that of the others who were there, making them think, quite unjustly I am sure, that the gift they proposed to make was not considered to be of much consequence.”¹¹⁵⁷

When Colpitts returned to New York from South America after a prolonged absence, he found that fundraising for what had become a \$50,000 project [\$669,000 in 2014 dollars] had become moribund. Canadian Clubs in cities such as Boston, Washington, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland and Philadelphia had not generated contributions and even the Canadian Club of New York had only raised \$1,800 at a cost of \$800. Colpitts was therefore forced to solicit funding from his own friends but could only raise \$25,000. He also protested that “When we visited the Prime Minister in Ottawa I gathered the impression that it was his view, and that of the Cabinet, that we were undertaking to memorialize Confederation itself. That has not been our purpose from the beginning...it was merely our desire to pay a tribute to Canada on the Anniversary of Confederation.”¹¹⁵⁸

McKenzie saw no other solution than to cut expenses in half by greatly simplifying King’s elaborate design conception for the *Confederation Memorial*. He proposed that it consist of a central bronze figure of Canada, characterized as “a youthful, girlish, draped figure holding in her

¹¹⁵⁷ “Canada Prepares for Her Jubilee: Sixtieth Anniversary of the Confederation to Be Observed With Great Ceremony. Will Take Up Three Days,” *New York Times*, June 26, 1927, page E1. McKenzie to King, May 20, 1929. LAC reel 2311, pages 139754-55.

¹¹⁵⁸ Colpitts to McKenzie, July 30, 1929. LAC reel 2311, pages 139778-79.

right hand a spear of wheat, her left hand resting on the shield bearing the Canadian coat of arms and her head encircled by a chaplet of maple leaves.” This figure of Canada would be flanked by two male figures “representing the conquest of Nature and the Arts of Civilization.” On the right would be “a bearded figure of a pioneer, hunter, trapper, explorer or prospector.” On the left a balancing figure would show “a powerful youth with an upraised hammer in his right hand. In his left is the hilt of a sword which is one of a number of such weapons that he is beating into plowshares on an anvil.”

To show that he was incorporating several of the themes King had suggested in his design, McKenzie explained that “This group of three represents the conquest of wild nature, the application of industry, the turning of industry from war to peace and the gift that Canada brings to the world, shown in the spear of wheat which has always been symbolic of abundance.” He had reviewed this design concept with Vincent Massey at the Canadian legation in Washington, “going over the scheme in detail, and he is greatly pleased with it, liking it in some ways better than the original plan.” On May 20, 1929, he sent King a two-page typed description of the memorial, from which I have quoted above, along with a sketch model for what he anticipated as a 18-foot high relief immediately opposite the *Nurses’ Memorial* and asked for approval of this design concept before fundraising could continue.”¹¹⁵⁹

King brought McKenzie’s letter and design description to the Privy Council on June 1, 1929 and telegraphed its rejection by his Cabinet the same day. Repeating his refusal of Ernest Wise Keyser’s revision of the model for the Harper monument in 1904 and cloaking himself in the decision-making of his Ministers he wrote, “I am sorry to have to advise you Cabinet is of opinion that revised plan for the memorial referred to your letter May Twentieth would not be suitable for erection in the Hall of Fame in our Parliament Buildings as representative of Confederation, the most important event in Canada’s history.” He asserted that “The Cabinet was much pleased with conception of original memorial and would have been prepared to give it the

¹¹⁵⁹ McKenzie to King, May 8, 1929. Colpitts to McKenzie, July 30, 1929. McKenzie to King, May 20, 1929. LAC reel C2311, pages 139750-52, 139778-79 and 139754-58.

place indicated... We much hope that Committee in Charge may still find it possible to arrange for adherence to original design.”¹¹⁶⁰

In order to save the project, McKenzie proposed to make a cast of both the original and revised sketch of the Confederation memorial and to bring these to King and his Cabinet for discussion. Vincent Massey concurred with this plan and suggested W.W. Colpitts accompany the sculptor to Ottawa. King agreed to the proposal, sending another telegram stating that it was “most important other members of Cabinet on Art should be present as well as myself.” Their meeting was cordial, with King recording in his diary about a luncheon at Laurier House with McKenzie, Colpitts and even Vincent Massey that he spent the afternoon “gradually coming to like the model & making suggestions to bring in touch of Modern Canada, as well as [historical] beginnings.” The sculptor wrote King on June 24 from Philadelphia that “I cannot tell you how much Mr. Colpitts appreciated your cordiality and consideration. The visit has changed him from a rather disgruntled spectator of Canadian affairs into your enthusiastic admirer and supporter.”

In his letter, he included a new “description of the model as it is rather than with the suggestions which you made while we were talking about it on the delightful drive you gave us in the afternoon. I thought it better that you should explain this to the members of the Cabinet in your own words.” Of King’s still further design suggestions, McKenzie claimed to be “especially struck with the appropriateness of introducing an aeroplane on the background behind the panel and also of indicating by a silhouette, or in some other way, the idea of Education and Government in addition to Industry.”¹¹⁶¹

¹¹⁶⁰ June 1, 1929 Privy Council Memo. King to McKenzie, June 1, 1929. LAC reel 2311, pages 139759-60.

¹¹⁶¹ McKenzie to King, June 10, 1929. King to McKenzie, June 12, 1929. McKenzie to King, June 24, 1929. LAC reel 2311, pages 139761-63, 139766. Diary June 22, 1929.



McKenzie's revised May 1929 sketch model for the *Confederation Memorial*.

McKenzie's June 24 design concept, for which he asked general Cabinet approval, was very similar to his May conception of the Dominion Memorial with a few noted exceptions. "The central figure is Canada, young and vigorous, with up-raised arm, an ear of wheat in her right hand, the offering of Canada to the world... Her upraised head is encircled by a chaplet of maple leaves, her left hand rests on a shield charged with the Canadian coat of arms. This girlish standing figure is flanked by two crouching, powerful men." As in the sculptor's May concept, "On her right is the bearded pioneer, explorer, frontiersman, hunter, fisherman, trapper, his left hand resting on a bale of furs. From the prow of the canoe, bearing the initials of the Hudson Bay Company, he is removing the cargo scattered on the ground."

But in this description, the hunter/trapper figure is much more clearly identified as a member of the First Nations, even though the cultural anthropological accuracy of McKenzie's depiction is dubious. "At his belt is an axe. He is nude, except for the fringed leggings and his head dress is the horned mask of the Wood Caribou, characteristic of the North Canadian Woods and frequently used by hunters in the pursuit of game. He signifies the conquest of wild nature and the extension of civilization in Canada during the last sixty years, following the thought of W.W. Campbell's lines, 'This is the Land of the rugged North, fit home / alone for the indomitable and nobly born.'"

The balancing figure on the left evokes the influence of McKenzie's neoclassically inspired nude sculptures. He is "Vulcan, the artisan, beating a bundle of swords into a plowshare, turning from War to the peaceful development and the manufacture of the great mineral resources that are so bound up in Canada's recent development. He is Herculean in build, stripped to the waist, girded with a leather apron. In his right hand is the hammer with which he strikes the partly formed plowshare on an anvil. On the ground are several plowshares already formed typifying the great industrial development of Canada since Confederation." McKenzie suggested a tentative motto beneath, "taken from George Frederick [sic] Scott, the Canadian Poet. '[Lord,...] Thine Ageless forces do not cease to mold us as of yore, / The chiselling of the arts of peace, the anvil strokes of War.'" ¹¹⁶²

King accepted this design description and the sculptor's model for the *Confederation Memorial*. In his diary he recorded, "I had the ministers come to see the Tait McKenzie Memorial & all seemed gratified & pleased with it & authorized its acceptance. I wired McKenzie telling him of this. Thus is gained another Memorial for our hall of fame, with the development of which I have had not a little to do... Tonight I took Sir William [Mulock] to see the Tait McKenzie model." In his telegram he informed the artist that he was "very pleased to advise you Government is prepared to accept memorial design submitted by you and to accord it position in Parliament Buildings Hall of Fame on condition memorial is made of marble and that the suggestions mentioned in your letter June twenty fourth are brought into the design." He added that "this communication may be taken as approving the general scheme but colleagues and myself should like to have privilege of further conference with yourself and final approval of certain details as, for example, certain features of the design itself, such as the heraldic lion, H.B. [Hudson's Bay] initial, proposed quotations, and one or two other minor features." He conveyed "his personal

¹¹⁶² "Memorial to Celebrate Sixty Years of the Confederation of the Provinces Into the Dominion of Canada." LAC reel 2311, pages 139767-68. The Campbell citation is taken from the first stanza of "To the Canadian Patriot" published in his *Sagas of Vaster Britain: Poems of the Race, the Empire and the Divinity of Man* (Toronto: Musson, 1914). The Frederick George Scott

delight in having another memorial by you in our Houses of Parliament” and asked McKenzie to send a copy of King’s message to W.W. Colpitts “expressing anew my deep appreciation of his personal visit with yourself to Ottawa last week.”¹¹⁶³

King thought he had secured another memorial for Parliament—at no cost to his government—by Canada’s internationally most successful sculptor. But his insistence that the *Confederation Memorial*, like George William Hill’s *Nurses Memorial* and, indeed, like the entire Hall of Fame, had to be in marble instead of bronze nearly scuttled Tait McKenzie’s project by raising its cost to the prohibitive \$50,000 level. The artist informed King that “this involves the re-designing of the figures to make them suitable for this medium. It also involves the treatment of the background of the whole panel at an additional cost of about \$15,000 [\$201,000 in 2014 dollars]. This, of course, I can not attempt to meet myself.” McKenzie made the point that “I can not do the work and in addition pay for the privilege of doing it also.” He was “determined that if this fine plan is to be carried out at all it must be the very best thing of which I am capable and I want to spare no time or effort to make it a worthy Memorial to such an inspiring occasion and for such a dignified and beautiful site.”¹¹⁶⁴

When informed of the new requirement, W.W. Colpitts wrote McKenzie that he had exhausted his sources of subscriptions, was not about to assume the additional \$15,000 cost for the project out of his own funds, and that “I can see nothing for it but to abandon it altogether.” King advised the artist to have Colpitts check whether there were any funds left from the 100 Years of Peace Committee that had intended to present a memorial to Francis Parkman to the government of Canada before WW I. “I have already become so enthusiastic over the little bronze model which still holds its place in the Hall of Fame, and have made so many speeches extolling its merits as well as your own, and the generosity of Mr. Colpitts and his friends, that I shall be as broken-hearted as the rest if this splendid project is not realized in accordance with the dreams

citation is from his “A Hymn of Empire” published in *A Hymn of Empire and Other Poems* (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1906).

¹¹⁶³ Diary June 26, 1929. King to McKenzie June 27, 1929. LAC reel C2311, page 139769.

¹¹⁶⁴ McKenzie to King, July 27, 1929. LAC reel C2311, pages 139770-71.

we have cherished concerning it.” He also sent the sculptor silhouettes which he had prepared showing the skyline of Parliament Hill as seen from the Quebec side of the Ottawa River with the towers of Parliament, spires of churches, the Chateau Laurier, and the Government Mint and Archives building, suggesting that McKenzie incorporate this skyline in the memorial. “It suggests at a glance the position of Canada’s cultural development at the time of the Diamond Jubilee.”¹¹⁶⁵

To raise the additional funding required to complete the memorial, King recommended approaching Cyrus Eaton, the Nova Scotia-born investment banker and philanthropist who maintained a summer residence in Nova Scotia. McKenzie, who had “already spent so much time, money and thought” on the memorial and had “passed through so many periods of elation and depression,” turned with relief to completing another sculpture in Philadelphia, *Oarsmen carrying their shell*, showing eight nude athletes holding their sleek craft high above their heads. King wrote in his diary on August 29, 1929 that he believed he had succeeded in securing the additional \$15,000 from Cyrus Eaton required to have the *Confederation Memorial* in marble.¹¹⁶⁶ But in January of 1931, the sculptor was still writing King that “the comedy or tragedy of the Canadian Memorial goes on from act to act.” The American stock market crashed at the end of October 1929 and King lost the July 1930 federal election to R.B. Bennett’s Conservatives. The sculptor informed King that “We have decided to abandon hope for the full amount and I am going up to Ottawa on the 27th to talk over a modification in our plans with the powers that be.” He asked to meet with King to get his advice on how to deal with the new Conservative government.

King advised the sculptor to keep their meeting secret. “The present Prime Minister is a man of curious prejudices and the very fact that you were known to be discussing matters with me might

¹¹⁶⁵ W.W. Colpitts to McKenzie, July 30, 1929. McKenzie to King, August 1, 1929. King to McKenzie, July 31, 1929. LAC reel 2311, pages 139772-79.

¹¹⁶⁶ King to McKenzie, August 9, 1929. McKenzie to King, August 12 and September 1, 1929. Harry Baldwin to McKenzie, September 5, 1929. McKenzie to King, September 20, 1929. Diary August 29, 1929. McKenzie to King, October 15, 1929. LAC reel C2311, pages 139780-93.

cause him to be resentful.” The end of January 1931 he noted in his diary, “Tait McKenzie’s revised relief was accepted by the cabinet today & will now go ahead. It was pleasing to have had a hand in that.” The sculptor informed King that he was telephoned “just after the Council meeting, stating that they had decided to take my advice on the memorial, so that I will be able to start work at once.” King still requested to be consulted on the inscriptions for the relief. “I am, naturally, most anxious, that the memorial should always have its relation to the sixtieth anniversary of Confederation and the ceremonies incidental to that occasion. They were a part of the work of the administration of the day in which I continue to share a pride as well as interest.”¹¹⁶⁷ McKenzie sent King a photostat copy of his “revised scheme” in February of 1931 which he claimed nevertheless retained “the essentials of the original.” John Andrew Pearson approved the sculptor’s new scheme the same month “so that the way seems clear at last.”¹¹⁶⁸

Over four years had passed since Mackenzie King’s suggestion of a Confederation memorial to Tait McKenzie in December of 1927 to its unveiling in the Hall of Fame by Prime Minister R.B. Bennett in February of 1932. Yet the extent to which King was still emotionally invested in the sculptor’s relief is suggested by his lengthy diary description of the unveiling ceremony and his complaint about his marginal placement in the proceedings and the lack of credit given to his role in the creation of the memorial. “A small platform was erected and I was given a seat at the side of some of the ministry in a corner in the back row.” Sir Robert Borden, the previous Conservative Prime Minister, was similarly placed on the other side. W.W. Colpitts presented the memorial. Hugh Alexander Stewart, the Minister of Public Works, handed the cord to His Excellency, Lord Bessborough, who unveiled the 14-foot high marble memorial. The Temple Choir performed the patriotic song, “Land of Hope and Glory,” music by Edward Elgar, lyrics by Arthur C. Benson, glorifying the expansion of the British Empire. King recorded that “Bennett accepted the memorial on behalf of the Government in his bumptious way. Considering it was

¹¹⁶⁷ McKenzie to King, January 6, 1931. King to McKenzie, January 9, 1931. McKenzie to King, January 12 and February 1, 1931. King to McKenzie, February 4, 1931. LAC reel C2326, pages 159398-159404.

¹¹⁶⁸ McKenzie to King, February 9, 1931. King to McKenzie, February 13, 1931. McKenzie to King, February 17, 1931. LAC reel C2326, pages 159405-09.

our Government that secured the memorial etc., he might have brought me into the show—which ought to have been non-partisan, but it is not in the Tory nature to share.” He thought that “the memorial is disappointing—far too small; had it taken the entire panel as planned it would have been very good.” He also expressed his ambivalent feelings about the sculptor, which only increased as the decade progressed. “Tait McKenzie was there but I did not seek him out; he is a snob—ran off to the powers that be and away from those who did everything for him once a change of Government took place.”¹¹⁶⁹

Years later, the sculptor agreed with King that the final form of the memorial had been “emasculated.” He had maintained on top of the right and left pillars framing the gothic panel a beaver, “signifying Industry,” and an owl representing wisdom, “the two qualities that have gone to build up the Dominion.” But he had not been able to implement King’s suggestions to represent “the art of government,” Canada stretching “from sea to sea” or to include an airplane and the skyline of Parliament Hill in the background of the panel. Also absent is King’s major proposal to symbolize the desire for national unity. From an aesthetic point of view, the major failing of the memorial is a lack of *visual* unity. The panel has too many of King’s “figures symbolic of the basic industries.” A fisherman carrying a sail and a large cod in the centre of the panel leads a circular march of figures that includes a pioneering lumberman carrying an axe and a mechanic carrying one of his tools. He is no longer “Vulcan, the artisan, beating a bundle of swords into a plowshare” but is still “Herculean in build, stripped to the waist.” In the foreground another stripped “Herculean” figure pushes a nude boy or girl carrying a huge bundle of wheat (increased in size from the sketch model to cover most of the nudity) in the direction of Canada. A crouching female figure right front displays agricultural produce in front of her while her right hand lifts what looks like the barrel of a gun to the second “Herculean” figure.

Most puzzling is the representation of Canada. She no longer is “youthful, girlish” but instead wears the headdress of the horned mask of the Wood Caribou originally worn by the nude First

¹¹⁶⁹ Diary February 6, 1932.

Nations hunter/trapper figure in the sculptor's original design concept. The artist perhaps intended her to represent the "Daughter of the Woods and Mother of the Fields" Mackenzie King had cited from his *Message of the Carillon*, signifying "the conquest of wild nature and the extension of civilization in Canada during the last sixty years." This historical evolution is also suggested by the figures in the upper rear portion of the relief: a First Nations warrior on the right looking to the horizon from behind trees, a missionary standing in the centre top next to a kneeling figure and a cross, and a doctor with a mother and her infant on the left. In view of the partisan nature of the unveiling of the memorial, King and Vincent Massey may have taken some satisfaction from its inscription which closely followed Massey's suggested wording the sculptor had cited to King in his letter of February 9, 1931: "To Commemorate the Sixtieth Year of Confederation, Canadians in the United States Gave This in Token of Their Devotion to the Country of Their Birth and as a Proud Tribute to the Achievement of Its Founders."¹¹⁷⁰



McKenzie's 1932 *Confederation Memorial*.

The Arthur Doughty Monument

¹¹⁷⁰ McKenzie to King, January 11, 1938. May 20, 1929 "Memorial to Be Erected by Canadians and Their Friends in the United States to Commemorate the Golden Jubilee of Confederation of the Provinces into the Dominion of Canada." June 24, 1929 "Memorial to Celebrate Sixty Years of the Confederation of the Provinces Into the Dominion of Canada." McKenzie to King,

While Mackenzie King was critical of Tait McKenzie for wanting to compete in both the Canadian and international fields of cultural production, he was forced to turn to the sculptor again following the death of Sir Arthur Doughty, the Dominion Archivist, on December 1, 1936. He had met Doughty three decades previously and thought him “the most interesting man I have met in Ottawa, a great enthusiast in his work & a scholar. He took me to see some prints he had collected...also shewed me over the Archives.”¹¹⁷¹

Doughty emigrated at the age of twenty-six from England to Montreal in 1886 where he worked as a drama critic for the *Montreal Gazette*. He was appointed Dominion Archivist, responsible to Sidney Fisher, the Minister of Agriculture, in 1904. Already that year, he noted “a steady growth of national feeling.” In 1905, when the House of Commons approved funding for a new Archives building on Sussex Street and raised its budget from \$12,000 to \$20,000, he suggested that “For many years past the main affiliation of this department has been agricultural. The time has come to render it cultural in a broad and national sense.” Two years later the House increased the Archives budget to \$50,000 [in 1914, the amount would be equivalent to \$1,025,000 in 2014 dollars]. Doughty succeeded in convincing Prime Minister Laurier and his successor Robert Borden that the Archives played a crucial role in fostering a Canadian historical consciousness. Borden cited Lord Durham in the House of Commons in 1921 to the effect that “a country without a history is not a nation.” “Crops and manufactures,” he declared, “do not make up the whole life of a nation. The development of the intellectual and spiritual qualities of the people, is surely not of less importance.” Under Prime Minister R.B. Bennett, the Archives’ budget increased to \$139,000 in 1931-32 [\$2,194,000 in 2014 dollars].¹¹⁷²

February 9, 1931. LAC reel C3735, page 216270, reel C231, pages 1139757 and 1139767-68, reel C2327, page 159405.

¹¹⁷¹ Diary January 3, 1906.

¹¹⁷² Ian E. Wilson, “Shortt and Doughty: The Cultural Role of the Public Archives of Canada, 1904-1935.” MA Thesis, Queen’s University, 1973. 24, 36, 47, 48, 165, 246.

According to Ian Wilson, who would himself be appointed National Archivist of Canada in 1999 and served as chief Librarian and Archivist 2004-09, by 1935 when Arthur Doughty retired,

The physical nature of the Archives, its contents, its exhibits, and its blend of manuscripts, pictures, maps, books, works of art, and artifacts had become largely an extension of Doughty, the drama critic, the artist, the publicist, the expatriot [sic] Englishman, the antiquarian glorifying the 1759 campaign, the historian who sought to synthesize all forms of historical evidence into one artistically inspired whole...

The whole of the ground floor of the new Archives wing opened in 1926 was devoted to the exhibition of these treasures, making the Archives one of the 'showplaces' of the capital. W.L. Mackenzie King and successive governors-general delighted in showing it to official visitors and used the Archives for numerous receptions.¹¹⁷³

When he heard of Doughty's death in 1936, King felt badly that the intense pressure of government business had prevented him from seeing his ailing friend after attending a League of Nations conference in Geneva. Like King, Doughty was a spiritualist who had introduced the Prime Minister to "table rapping," communicating with departed spirits in "the beyond," at a dinner party at Laurier House in November 1933. King recorded the event in his diary as "The first time I have seen table rapping & having messages come through to me from father, mother, Max & Bella. There can be no shadow of doubt as to their genuineness." He consoled himself for not having seen Doughty before his death with the thought, "I feel that he knows and understands all now, but I shall ever greatly regret not having had a last word of farewell to one of the closest and truest friends I have ever had."¹¹⁷⁴

The next day in Council, King "spoke of Doughty's death, and of the great work he had done for Canada. I said I did not know of another man in the Public Service who had made so important a contribution to our national life. That I felt there should be immediate recognition of this, and that provision ought to be placed in this year's estimates for a statue of Doughty to be erected in the grounds of the Archives." King pointed out that "we erect statues of royalty, soldiers, statesmen, etc., but that the men who were doing the real work of public service were often overlooked. I thought this was a chance to honour the Public Service, and at the same time an

¹¹⁷³ Ibid. 174, 211.

outstanding public servant who had given his entire life to the country's work, and had left a store of Canadiana of priceless value." King was delighted to find that "all the Ministers accepted the suggestion with obvious appreciation and pleasure. I pointed out that I felt sure Borden would strongly commend the idea, and I thought Bennett also would. It is well to have the statue erected while these men were here."¹¹⁷⁵

After he viewed Doughty's body and paid his respect to his family, King wrote in his diary that "he looked very peaceful in death—a fine noble countenance. I know of no man who seemed to be more a true knight in pursuit of an ideal, or who had done more to leave to his country relics and records which will serve to keep the idealistic side of the nation's life to the fore." He commented that "I seemed to be Doughty's closest friend, that apart from myself there seemed to be no one else with whom he had been really intimate in the last few years." King served as one of the pallbearers at Doughty's internment the next day and added in his diary, "In some respects, Doughty is one of the greatest men in Canadian history. Certainly, he will be remembered and honoured for generations after practically all those who are alive in Canada today have been dead, and are forgotten."¹¹⁷⁶

The Prime Minister met with the Quebec sculptor Émile Brunet, whom he had chosen to design the Canadian Pavilion at the 1937 Paris International Exhibition, and discussed the cost of a memorial to Arthur Doughty. "He thought that \$15,000 [\$243,000 in 2014 dollars] should cover the cost of the monument, provided there was no competition, and the commission was given to an individual sculptor. As Brunet knew Doughty and had worked with him in connection with many archives matters, I intend to see that he gets the commission to do this work."¹¹⁷⁷

But when King attended the opening of the Canadian Pavilion at the Paris International Exposition in June of 1937, he found Brunet in hospital, struck with tuberculosis. The Prime

¹¹⁷⁴ Diary November 13, 1933 and December 1, 1936.

¹¹⁷⁵ Diary December 2, 1936.

¹¹⁷⁶ Diary December 3 and 4, 1936.

¹¹⁷⁷ Diary December 12, 1936.

Minister had lost his own brother Max, a physician, to the disease and therefore felt a deep compassion for the artist who had a little model of the Canadian pavilion with him and had been giving instructions from his hospital bed. He wrote in his diary that “Naturally my thoughts were full of Max’s long illness, and of what an illness of the kind means. I debated very much about referring to the Doughty Monument and perhaps should not have done so but I felt it necessary to indicate that it might be necessary to retain [Tait] Mackenzie for the work if Brunet was not strong enough.” The Quebec sculptor “took the matter very well, indicating clearly that what was most in his thought was the quality of Mackenzie’s work and his desire to see good work created. There was no thought of himself. I still hope he may recover sufficiently to go on with his work but at this time, to have had the severe blow to the extent of having lost his voice entirely for a while, the outlook is far from too hopeful.”¹¹⁷⁸

In January of 1938, King forwarded Department of Public Works estimates to Tait McKenzie indicating that Parliament had appropriated \$15,000 for a statue of Sir Arthur Doughty and asked the sculptor if he would be interested in designing the monument intended to confer “recognition, both to Doughty’s life and work and to the Civil Service, which I hoped it might afford.” He informed McKenzie that “the idea of the Statue was my own. I felt recognition of the kind was due Doughty for his work in virtually creating and developing the Archives as an important Department of the Government.” In honouring Doughty, King was essentially re-memorializing the ideal of government service associated with another friend and civil servant, Bert Harper, three decades previously. Instead of monuments to sovereigns, statesmen and soldiers, King felt “very strongly that emphasis must, more and more, be placed on service to the State rendered in less conspicuous ways than those hitherto generally recognized, where it relates to a life of disinterested public work, however inconspicuous it may be carried on.”

As with the Harper monument, King had already determined the design and location of the Doughty memorial. He had expressed his wish to his colleagues in the Cabinet that the statue “take the form of a portrait in bronze or stone of himself, in a seated posture, similar to the

¹¹⁷⁸ Diary June 25, 1937.

Memorial to John Harvard which finds its place in the little plot of ground at one end of Memorial Hall, Cambridge.” He informed McKenzie that “My colleagues are in agreement with me that a Memorial of that character, placed in the square grass plot immediately in front of the Archives Building, on Sussex Street, would be wholly appropriate, and we would like to have the Memorial take the form described, and given its permanent place in the location mentioned.”

King controlled every aspect of the Doughty memorial commission. Interestingly—in reference to the “masking” of his interest in arts and culture discussed in previous chapters—he again wanted to be the invisible hand guiding the Doughty commission. “I am anxious that the Department of Public Works, which has to do with these matters, should alone have to do with the actual awarding of the Commission, and all matters related thereto. The most I would wish to have to do with the matter is to suggest your name to the Department, if you would be interested, and ask the Department to communicate direct with you. There are many reasons why this procedure should be followed.” Since mile Brunet had not recovered his health and Parliament was reassembling in a few weeks and its appropriation had to be renewed, King urged McKenzie to commit to the project. In his flattering letter he wrote, “It would, I am sure, give pleasure to Canadians generally, were it known that you had found it possible to lend your art to what Parliament has sought to do by way of honouring a truly worthy public servant.”¹¹⁷⁹

Tait McKenzie was “greatly surprised and pleased” by King’s communication, “both on account of the very friendly way in which it was written and also because it suggests an opportunity to commemorate the personality and services of Sir Arthur George Doughty, whom I knew quite well.” He was also glad to accept the commission in order to “have a chance to rectify my artistic standing after the headaches and heartaches that accompanied the Confederation Memorial, which I had to place in such an important site in its emasculated final form, and I hope that if this commission is given to me I may be able to justify your confidence fully.” He informed King that if the Minister of Public Works accepted his recommendation, he would come to Ottawa, make

¹¹⁷⁹ King to McKenzie, January 7, 1938. LAC reel C3735, pages 216267-69.

preliminary sketches, and start on the working model for the monument at his studio in Almonte, Ontario.¹¹⁸⁰

Mackenzie King's complete control over the machinery of government regarding cultural matters in which he took an interest is indicated by his memorandum to his private secretary, E.A. Pickering, asking him to forward his January 7 letter, and the sculptor's reply, to Arthur Cardin and J.B. Hunter, the Minister and Deputy Minister of the Department of Public Works. In the memo he indicated, "I would like the Dept. of Public Works to write and say to him to go ahead with the work at once." McKenzie informed King that he had made an appointment to see Hunter on February 28th and would see him the same day "to report progress to you."¹¹⁸¹

When they met, McKenzie "evinced embarrassment" about his *Confederation Memorial* and its unveiling. "I think he realizes that I have not forgotten the quick turn he made to side with the Tories when there was a change in Government, ignoring my part in the project altogether. He admitted the Memorial was a mistake and unworthy of him." In contrast to his flattering letter urging McKenzie to accept the Arthur Doughty commission, King could not refrain from demonstrating that he had the greater amount of symbolic capital and higher social status. "I did not invite him to Laurier House to dinner, though it was clear he was expecting this invitation, or an invitation to dine at Government House. I felt, however, that as he had not accepted other invitations to see me in the country, and having other matters pressing today, that I should not give up the evening to him." King even confessed that he "felt a little sorry" about his treatment of the artist. "He is now 70 years of age—when he spoke of planning only two more years of work."¹¹⁸²

The Department of Public Works signed a contract with McKenzie for the Doughty memorial on March 2, 1938. Yet only eight weeks later, and just a day after King returned from the funeral of

¹¹⁸⁰ McKenzie to King, January 11, 1938. LAC reel C3735, pages 216270-71.

¹¹⁸¹ King to Pickering, January 12, 1938. McKenzie to King, February 21, 1938. LAC reel C3735, pages 216272-73.

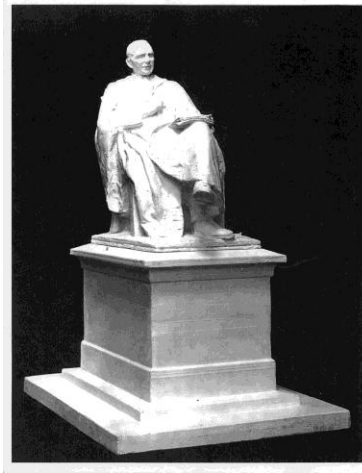
¹¹⁸² Diary February 28, 1938.

the painter J.W.L. Forster in Toronto for whom he had also been one of the honorary pallbearers, the Prime Minister received a telephone call from Mrs. McKenzie in Philadelphia “to say that Mackenzie had passed away suddenly today, from heart failure. Had completed his model on Doughty, and was counting on coming to Ottawa next week.” King phoned Lady Doughty about McKenzie’s death, prepared a statement for the press, and wrote in his diary, “Tait Mackenzie is a great loss to the art world. I am particularly sorry that he had not completed his statue, and would like to have seen him.” A week later, he “spoke with Cardin about making provision, in the Estimates, for the offices of the Privy Council, Prime Minister, and External Affairs, and also to arrange for Brunet, the sculptor, replacing Tait Mackenzie, getting back his original commission to execute Doughty’s statue.”¹¹⁸³

Samuel Scoville, one of McKenzie’s best friends and executor of his estate, wrote King to inform him that the artist had “worked night and day during the two months previous to his death” and had finished the preliminary model and pedestal of the memorial. He had also completed the head for the life-sized model in clay. “I know that Dr. McKenzie felt that this was perhaps his last and one of his greatest masterpieces.” The artist’s contract with the Department of Public Works provided that in case of his death the Minister of the Department would retain the models and select another sculptor to complete the memorial. Scoville wrote King that “Owing to the depression it is of great importance to the Estate to make the best financial arrangements that can be obtained in connection with all of his unfinished work.” McKenzie had laboured on the Doughty memorial without payment from the Canadian government until his death. King replied to Scoville that “Like you I deeply cherished Dr. Tait McKenzie’s friendship. His passing is a great loss to me personally, as it is to the world of art” and advised the sculptor’s executor to take the matter up with the Deputy Minister of Public Works.¹¹⁸⁴

¹¹⁸³ Diary April 28 and May 6, 1938.

¹¹⁸⁴ Samuel Scoville to King, May 11, 1938. King to Scoville, May 14, 1938. LAC reel C3738, pages 220176-78.



McKenzie's 1938 model for the Sir Arthur Doughty monument.

King could not carry out his plan to reassign the Arthur Doughty memorial commission to mile Brunet, however, because the Quebec sculptor had not yet recovered from his tuberculosis and was unable to resume working. He therefore arranged to have the monument completed by Emanuel Hahn who had created the bas relief sculptures of William Lyon Mackenzie and other participants in the 1837 Rebellion featured on the Pioneer Memorial Arch unveiled by King in June of 1938 in Niagara Falls.

Hahn had recently personally appealed to the Prime Minister when his initials were removed from his design for the 1939 Canadian silver dollar, commissioned by the government to commemorate the Royal Visit of King George VI. In his letter to Mackenzie King, he pointed out that all British coins for which models were made by a sculptor bore the initials of the artist. His design for the 1935 Canadian silver dollar (commemorating King George V's Silver Jubilee and featuring a white fur-trapper and First Nations guide paddling past a rock promontory with a wind-swept pine and descending rays of Northern Lights) and the 1937 issues of his twenty-five cent piece (featuring the Nova Scotia schooner *Bluenose*) and ten cent piece (featuring a caribou's head) all bore his initials, "E.H." He protested that "These insignificant initials are almost the only recognition accorded an artist preparing these designs, and I do feel I should have been consulted before any change was made in my model." King, however, approved a response

drafted by his principal secretary, A.D.P. Heeney, affirming that “Mr. King has asked me to say that very careful consideration was given to this question by the Cabinet, who came to the conclusion that, in future, the initial or initials of the artist should not appear upon coins or medallions which are struck under the authority of the Government of Canada.”¹¹⁸⁵



Emanuel Hahn's 1935 silver dollar.

The removal of Emanuel Hahn's initials from coins and medallions commissioned by the government is symptomatic of a wider philosophic and cultural divide between Canadian artists and Mackenzie King and the federal government. King wanted cultural commodities that conveyed ideals of nationhood and service to the state. Canadian artists privileged artistic self-expression and the full development of their artistic talents. In his May 1938 letter to Mackenzie King, Samuel Scoville had suggested regarding Tait McKenzie's model of the Arthur Doughty memorial that “if the preliminary model is accepted, the most important part of the work will have been done. The completion of the memorial is a mechanical matter which can be carried out by any good sculptor.”¹¹⁸⁶ Emanuel Hahn was now the third sculptor engaged to carry out the

¹¹⁸⁵ Emanuel Hahn to King, February 7, 1939. A.D.P. Heeney to Hahn, February 15, 1939. Heeney to King, February 15, 1939. LAC reel C3743, pages 227707-09. Heeney's memorandum to King re Hahn's letter stated that “Presumably he will make the same complaint regarding the medallion from which it has also been decided to remove his initial.”

¹¹⁸⁶ Scoville to King, May 11, 1938. LAC reel C3738, pages 220176-77. Scoville wrote J.B. Hunter on August 12, 1938 reporting that he had conferred with Emanuel Hahn in Philadelphia

Doughty memorial design conceived by King and was subject to the closest supervision by the Prime Minister and other government officials in finalizing the project.

King saw Hahn in Ottawa to look at his model of the Doughty statue in August of 1939 and, as with all other paintings and sculptures he commissioned, provided numerous criticisms. “I was disappointed in the face which he had made much too serious and drawn and weary, instead of smiling as Doughty was. Forehead, too broad; chin too drawn in; back of head, not back far enough. Was able to give him a few pointers... suggestions which I hope will be helpful.”¹¹⁸⁷

Despite the imminent outbreak of World War II, King continued to supervise virtually all aspects of the completion of the Doughty memorial. He first wrote the Department of Public Works that the English inscription on the right side of its pedestal—“Of All National Assets, Archives Are The Most Precious: They Are The Gift Of One Generation To Another And The Extent Of Our Care For Them Marks The Extent Of Our Civilization”—be inscribed in French on the left side of the pedestal.¹¹⁸⁸

N. Desjardins, the Acting Deputy Minister of the Department of Public Works, wrote the Prime Minister on September 5, 1939 about “the final inspection” of the clay model for the monument. But before final approval was given by King, Desjardins first submitted a memorandum by H.O. McCurry, the Acting Director of the National Gallery, about his visit to Hahn’s studio in Toronto

and that “We have come to a satisfactory arrangement in regard to the Memorial to Sir Andrew Doughty and he advises me that he will execute a formal contract on his return from a short vacation on or about September 1st.” LAC reel C3738, page 220179.

¹¹⁸⁷ Diary August 9, 1939.

¹¹⁸⁸ N. Desjardins to King, August 29, 1939. Hahn to Desjardins, August 30 and September 1 and 6, 1939. Desjardins to Hahn, August 29 [sic] and September 2 and 6, 1939. LAC reel C3742, pages 226071-74 and LAC reel C3743, pages 22710-12. The citation on the memorial was by Arthur Doughty from his *The Canadian Archives and Its Activities* (Ottawa: F.A. Acland, King’s Printer, 1924), 5. In his August letter Desjardins informed Hahn, in response to his inquiry of August 30 re the first payment on acceptance of the working model, that “With reference to the question of the \$2,000 payment, \$1500 to yourself and \$500 to the McKenzie Estate, instructions have been given to have the cheques issued.” The equivalent figures are \$24,000 and \$8,000 in 2014 dollars. Hahn received his cheque from the Treasury Department on September 11, 1939, the day after King and his Cabinet drafted the Order in Council declaring war on Germany.

where he inspected the full-size clay model on September 6. Echoing King's reaction of the previous month, McCurry reported, "I consider that the design and modelling of the figure are satisfactory. I did not believe, however, that the head was a sufficiently accurate likeness of the subject. I pointed out to Mr. Hahn what I felt was lacking and worked with him for some time, studying all available photographs. I understand that Mr. Hahn has since completed the remodelling of the head and would like to know, if it meets with the approval of Lady Doughty, whether it might then be regarded as accepted by the Government."¹¹⁸⁹

Lady Doughty arranged to visit Hahn's studio on 32 Adelaide Street East in Toronto on September 13. H.O. McCurry sent a memorandum to the Department of Public Works a week later, citing correspondence from Emanuel Hahn about her visit. "Lady Doughty has been in for three days...and gave me wonderful help and left feeling satisfied. She was very understanding of the whole matter and wonderfully explicit in her hints." Hahn also informed McCurry, "I shall be ready for you nearly any time later in the week if you are deputed to come again."¹¹⁹⁰ On October 2, the Prime Minister's principal secretary informed the Acting Deputy Minister of Public Works that King had agreed that Lady's Doughty's approval of her husband's statue would also constitute its acceptance by the government and asked Desjardins to "take whatever further steps may be necessary to signify the approval of the Government through your Department." Four days later, J.B. Hunter, the Deputy Minister, informed Hahn that "with the concurrence of the Right Honourable the Prime Minister, I am directed to advise you that approval is hereby given by the Minister of Public Works of the completed model which you

¹¹⁸⁹ Desjardins to King, September 5 and 15, 1939. H.O. McCurry, "Memorandum for the Deputy Minister, Department of Public Works," September 14, 1939. Heeney to Desjardins, September 19, 1939. LAC reel C3742, pages 226075-78.

¹¹⁹⁰ Desjardins to Hahn, September 7 and 9, 1939. Desjardins to Lady Doughty, September 7, 1939. Hahn to Desjardins, September 11, 1939. Desjardins to Heeney, September 21, 1939. H.O. McCurry, "Memorandum Department of Public Works," September 21, 1939. LAC reels C3742, pages 226079-82 and C3743, page 227713, and C3745, page 229578.

have made of the memorial to Sir Arthur Doughty. It is, therefore, quite in order for you to start making the plaster cast.”¹¹⁹¹



The completed McKenzie-Hahn *Doughty Memorial*.

When King attended the unveiling of the Doughty monument on December 21, 1940, he noted in his diary that—despite his own suggestions and those of H.O. McCurry and Lady Doughty regarding the physical resemblance of the Dominion Archivist—“the monument frankly is a disappointment to me. The sculptor has not caught Doughty’s spiritual expression. The nose and the chin are much too heavy, and the head is not the correct shape. It was longer than it appears to be. Only from either side of the face does one catch certain expressions which remind one of Doughty. The posture, drappings, etc. are excellent. The figure, however, with the inscription upon it gives his name something of the fame to which it is wholly entitled.”¹¹⁹² In his contract with

¹¹⁹¹ Heeney to Desjardins, October 2, 1939. LAC reel C3742, page 226083. Hunter to Hahn, October 6, 1939, page 227714. After his protest about the removal of his initials from the 1939 Canadian silver dollar, Hahn ensured that his signature would appear on the completed Doughty monument. King agreed that Hahn’s signature could follow Tait McKenzie’s. Desjardins to Heeney, November 2 and 4, 1939. Heeney to Desjardins, November 10, 1939. LAC reel C3742, pages 226084-87. King was also asked, and gave his approval, that the setting for the statue “be finished at its perimeter with a concrete curb 4" high above the roadway, and the base of the pedestal 2" higher than the curb, the intervening space between the base and the curb to be finished with sodding. Mr. Hahn is being advised accordingly.” Heeney to Desjardins, November 20, 1939. Desjardins to Heeney, November 21, 1939. LAC reel, C3743, pages 226088-89.

¹¹⁹² Diary December 21, 1940.

the Department of Public Works, Tait McKenzie had inserted a clause that \$5,000 of the \$15,000 commission would be withheld until the unveiling of the monument. In fact by the end of 1940, \$7,675 was still payable to Emanuel Hahn and \$500 to the McKenzie estate [\$121,000 and \$7,890 in 2014 dollars]. On January 6, 1941—four years after he had first discussed the Arthur Doughty memorial with mile Brunet—H.R.L. Henry, King’s private secretary, informed the Deputy Minister of Public Works that “Mr. King wishes me to let you know that he concurs in the suggestion contained in your letter that full payment of the accounts in question be made.”¹¹⁹³

Summary

This examination of Mackenzie King’s interactions and relationships with Pierre-Charles Lenoir, Frederick Lessore, Louie Burrell, Giuseppe Guastalla, mile Brunet, Emanuel Hahn and Tait McKenzie generates inferences why the Prime Minister failed to provide government support to Canadian artists and to Canadian culture in the 1930s and 1940s. Unlike cultural nationalists, he did not privilege Canadian artists on account of their nationality but looked to a global rather than to a primarily Canadian field of cultural production. King therefore also believed that government art commissions should be open internationally to all artists and only restricted to Canadians when required by strong public opinion. Consequently he promoted the artistic work of Guastalla and Lenoir to government leaders not only within their own countries but in the Canadian field of cultural production as well.

We can observe that King’s encounters with the six French, English, Italian and Canadian sculptors and with Louie Burrell examined in this chapter were the result of largely accidental occurrences rather than as a consequence of wishing to participate in the self-expression and development of artists in the community around him. His patronage of these artists was completely self-centered and was not based on exclusively aesthetic grounds but on whether the art objects being produced satisfied his very personal spiritual aspirations. His life-long conflict

¹¹⁹³ Hunter to Henry, December 30, 1940. Henry to Hunter, January 6, 1941. LAC reel C4570, pages 244552-54.

between his sexual and religious *habiti* led him to make substantial purchases from Guastalla, approximately \$60,000 in 2014 dollars from the Italian sculptor alone. He was aware of the extraordinary nature of these high expenditures during the Depression and sought to keep the commission of his own portrait bust a secret. Many of the art works he commissioned depicting members of his family were totemic objects intended for worship that incarnated ideal qualities King sought to emulate and inscribe within himself. His insistence on exact realistic verisimilitude in the depiction of family members and of himself—while at the same time requiring the projection of an inner spirituality—made him hostile to modernism and degrees of abstraction in the arts. He also evaluated works of art and artists themselves according to the spiritual beliefs and “soul” of the creating artists. The personal relationships he had with Tait McKenzie, Lenoir, Guastalla and other artists —many extending over decades—created the impression in his mind that he was heavily involved with arts and culture and that he therefore did not have to heed the cultural aspirations of artistic communities within Canada. His admiration of Mussolini can also be seen as a reflection of King’s own autocratic tendencies.

Examining Mackenzie King’s interactions with the five artists examined in this chapter once again completely refutes the assertion by J.L. Granatstein and Douglas Ord that “King never displayed any marked interest in things artistic” and that he did not have “much interest at all in art.”¹¹⁹⁴ On the contrary, King was intimately acquainted with three of these artists and was involved to the most minute detail in the creation of public works of art whose location, form and symbolism he had himself determined. King’s two-decade long relationship with Wilfred Campbell and Tait McKenzie made him familiar with the great cultural and economic challenges faced by artists. In 1892, Archibald Lampman had urged the federal government to allocate “a hundred thousand dollars or double that amount” annually “for the purpose of buying good pictures.” Forty years later the government allocated \$139,000 to the Dominion Archives while

¹¹⁹⁴ J.L. Granatstein, *Mackenzie King: His Life and World* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1977), 115; Douglas Ord, *The National Gallery of Canada: Ideas, Art, Architecture* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 103.

the budget of the National Gallery decreased from \$135,000 in 1928-29 to \$25,000 in 1934-35,¹¹⁹⁵ with only a fraction of that amount spent on the purchase of paintings.

In the case of Tait McKenzie, the artist's work with the Canadian government reveals several different players and decision-makers in the Canadian field of cultural production: John Andrew Pearson, the architect of the new Centre Block on Parliament, for the Campbell and *Confederation* memorials; the Senate Art Committee for the *Baker* monument; members of King's Cabinet Committee on Art for the *Confederation Memorial*; and the Department of Public Works for the *Doughty* monument. Yet as Prime Minister King held near total control over the machinery of government in cultural matters and acted as Canada's first de facto Minister of Culture while he was in office.

McKenzie, on the other hand, had to rely on six different funding models to finance the production of his monuments and memorials: wealthy family donors for the portrait statue of Captain Guy Drummond in 1919;¹¹⁹⁶ a small local fundraising committee for the Campbell memorial in Ottawa; a legacy in a will for the financing of *The Volunteer* monument in Almonte in 1923;¹¹⁹⁷ dormant funds collected in Canada around 1910 for a monument to Major General James Wolfe, the hero of the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, unveiled in London in 1930;¹¹⁹⁸ an unsuccessful nation-wide subscription drive in the U.S. for the 1932 *Confederation Memorial* that was only rescued in part by wealthy individual donors; and complete Canadian government financing for the 1923 *Baker* and 1940 *Doughty* memorials. Of these six funding models, only

¹¹⁹⁵ National Gallery of Canada website <http://www.gallery.ca/en/about/1930s.php> accessed July 30, 2013.

¹¹⁹⁶ For the commission from Lady Julia Drummond, the wife of one of the wealthiest men in Canada, the industrialist, financier and Senator Sir George Alexander Drummond, see Hussey, 61.

¹¹⁹⁷ For *The Volunteer*, see McGill, 108-110 and Frank Cosentino, *Almonte's Brothers of the Wind: R. Tait McKenzie and James Naismith* (Burnstown, Ontario: General Store Publishing, 1996), 128-29.

¹¹⁹⁸ For the *General James Wolfe* monument, see Hussey, 77-80. McGill, 120-23. Cosentino, 134.

the Parliamentary appropriation was able to overcome major obstacles such as the death of the sculptor himself.

Mackenzie King's political and ideological perception of public art—strongly reflecting his religious and cultural *habiti*—is revealed by his diary entries and correspondence. The Wilfred Campbell memorial, honouring Campbell's service to Canada and "British ideals" was, like the Harper *Sir Galahad* statue, yet "another monument to those things of spiritual significance." King's aim with George Hill's *Nurses Memorial* had been to give Canada "her history & 'right ideal'" as had his idealization of Confederation, national unity, the art of government and public service through McKenzie's *Confederation Memorial* and the Arthur Doughty memorial. His main criticism of Louie Burrell's miniature of Isabel King and Tait McKenzie's and Emanuel Hahn's Doughty portrait statue was that they had failed to capture their subjects' inner "spiritual expression." His micromanaging control over Tait McKenzie creative imagination in the design of the *Confederation Memorial* resulted in a relief that both King and the sculptor considered an artistic failure.

When he heard of McKenzie's death in 1938 King recorded in his diary, "I find myself amazed at my own lack of feeling with regard to Tait McKenzie's passing. I see all his good qualities but when I read in the Press, prepared articles as to interviews with Sovereigns, recognition, etc., I become disgusted with the false values and vanities of a man who had so much else that was worth while to commend him and his work to the world." He noted that "To me, the saddest thing in life is to see genius prostrate itself to so-called influence or recognition. Perhaps it cannot be helped, and it may be part of the system which has developed, encouraging privileges as it does."¹¹⁹⁹ King failed to consider that it may have been the very "system" functioning in the Canadian field of cultural production that forced artists to use their symbolic capital to advance their artistic careers. In my penultimate chapter, "The Prophets' 'March on Ottawa,'" I will analyze how Canadian artists united to agitate for different cultural values and a completely different "system" of government support for arts and culture.

¹¹⁹⁹ Diary April 29, 1938.

Chapter IX: The Prophets' "March on Ottawa"

Artists played a major role after World War II in convincing Canadians and their political leaders that the artist and his and her artistic self-expression had to be an integral part of society. They called for cultural democracy, arguing that the enjoyment of the arts should not be limited to a few wealthy patrons and a small social elite but had to be accessible to all Canadians. As discussed in chapter VII, prominent journalists, painters, writers, musicians, sculptors, critics, playwrights and theatre directors provided vital individual cultural leadership from the beginning of the 20th century. When the Second World War again significantly curtailed opportunities for artistic creativity, artists began to organize, first within their own art forms and then with artists from other disciplines, to participate in the planning for the new society that would emerge from the mass killing and devastation of the World War.

This persistent advocacy by Canadian artists for a vibrant indigenous democratic culture has not been sufficiently acknowledged by cultural historians. In her study "The Nationalist Network: English Canada's Intellectuals and Artists in the 1920s," Mary Vipond examined nationalist voluntary and cultural organizations and concluded that they "were led by or substantially composed of members of the English Canadian artistic and intellectual élite." She asserted that these organizations, which included groups directly dealing with the creation or distribution of cultural products such as the Arts and Letters Club, the Canadian Authors Association and the Canadian Radio League, not only were led by an élite but were essentially elitist. "Insofar as the intellectuals led anyone, they led other leaders," Vipond concluded. "Only very indirectly was their influence to filter down to the rank-and-file."¹²⁰⁰

¹²⁰⁰ Mary Vipond, "The Nationalist Network: English Canada's Intellectuals and Artists in the 1920s," *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* 7:1 (Spring 1980), 33, 46.

Paul Litt, in his *The Muses, the Masses, and the Massey Commission*, not only failed to acknowledge the more democratic, grassroots cultural organizing by groups such as the Allied Arts Council in the late 1930s and by the Federation of Canadian Artists and the Canadian Arts Council in the 1940s but denied artists *any* significant role in the development of government cultural policies. He asserted that “the arts community was one of the last cultural constituencies to emerge as an effective lobby group on the national scene” and that as a result, “The artists do not deserve the position they often occupy at the front and centre of accounts of the Massey Commission’s origins.”¹²⁰¹ Echoing Mary Vipond’s assessment of the cultural and intellectual elitism of the 1920s, Litt posited that the Canadian government established the Massey Commission—and subsequently transformed Canada’s cultural scene by creating the Canada Council for the Arts—as a result of public organizing and lobbying by a “cultural elite” composed of leading figures in universities, national voluntary associations and in government itself. “This cultural elite created the commission to protect its interests in public broadcasting and federal cultural institutions, then prodded the commissioners, who were drawn from its ranks, towards recommending funding for the universities, cultural organizations, and research of its members.”¹²⁰²

This dissertation seeks to establish that artists not only played a significant role in persuading Canadians of the importance of the arts but also that they pursued their ideal of cultural democracy via democratic, non-elitist means.

Canada-wide Organizing for Cultural Democracy

When the Continuation Committee elected at the Conference of Canadian Artists in Kingston met in July of 1941, it prepared a draft of a constitution for a national arts association and mailed it to those who had attended the Kingston Conference. The Committee established a membership fee structure (five dollars annually [\$75 in 2014 dollars] for artist members, three dollars for

¹²⁰¹ Paul Litt, *The Muses, the Masses, and the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 22, 23.

interested laymen) and set up representatives as “rallying centers” for five geographic regions: West Coast (Lawren Harris); Western, with sections in Alberta (Gordon Sinclair), Saskatchewan (Ernest Lindner), Manitoba (the sculptor Byllee Lang); Ontario (A.Y. Jackson); Maritimes (Walter Abell).¹²⁰³ The Federation of Canadian Artists was founded a few months later, with André Biéler as its first president. Its principal stated objective was “To unite all Canadian artists, critics, and related professional workers for fellowship, for mutual effort in promoting common aims, and for the expression of the artist's point of view as a creative factor in the national life of Canada.”¹²⁰⁴ With continued support from the Carnegie Corporation for secretarial and travelling costs (\$1,750 in 1941-42 and \$1,500 in 1943 [\$24,500 and \$21,000 in 2014 dollars]), Biéler hired H.G. Kettle, one of the founders of the Allied Arts Council, as the Federation’s part-time national secretary. “It was through Kettle’s assiduous correspondence and reports in *Maritime Art* and *Canadian Art* that the Federation managed to hold together in the first years.”¹²⁰⁵

The first annual meeting of the Federation of Canadian Artists was held in Charles Comfort’s studio in the Studio Building on Severn Street in Toronto May 1-2, 1942, with André Biéler presiding. Lawren Harris “chaired the ‘Painting Working Section,’ presented the report for British Columbia, became chairman of the British Columbia Region and was appointed to the executive council.”¹²⁰⁶ The main speaker at the annual meeting was one of the founders of the socialist movement in Canada, the poet Frank Scott. Husband of the painter Marian Scott, a lay member of the FCA in Montreal, and elected national chairman of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation in 1942, Scott shared his “vision of the whole commonwealth that places a great deal of responsibility on the artist.”¹²⁰⁷ In an address given at the evening dinner at

¹²⁰² *Ibid.*, 4.

¹²⁰³ Frances K. Smith, *André Biéler: An Artist’s Life and Times* (Toronto: Merritt Publishing, 1980), 168, fns. 13, 16.

¹²⁰⁴ 1942 FCA *Art Bulletin* cited in Anna Victoria Hudson, “Art and Social Progress: The Toronto Community of Painters, 1933-1950,” (PHD diss., University of Toronto, 1997), 214.

¹²⁰⁵ Michael Bell, “The Welfare of Art in Canada” in *The Kingston Conference Proceedings* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen’s University, 1991), xxv, fn. 39.

¹²⁰⁶ Peter Larisey, *Light for a Cold Land: Lawren Harris’s Work and Life—An Interpretation* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1993), 155.

¹²⁰⁷ Michael Bell, “The Welfare of Art in Canada,” xii.

the Arts and Letters Club about the national importance of the FCA, Scott affirmed that “the artist’s influence is democratic.” He suggested that “The state is now the source of income, and in this new system of groupings, the community achieves its social objectives in which the rich man’s influence as patron of art declines. We no longer build to glorify the pharaohs; now we need a new relationship between artist and public.” Scott warned that “Without this awakening, the willingness to cooperate among people, the future of Canada might not hold together...Our task is to make a society in which the creative individual can live.”¹²⁰⁸

Upon his return from the first annual meeting of the FCA in Toronto, Lawren Harris organized a meeting at the Vancouver Art Gallery to explain the aims of the Federation to B.C. artists. He reiterated Frank Scott’s call for a cultural revolution that would establish a cultural democracy in Canada. “Lacking creative activity in the arts,” he suggested, “a people will be lost in mere material striving. For the arts constitute a go-between, an interplay and inter-communication between the world of our everyday concerns and the world of the imagination, of the mind and spirit in man.” Harris proposed that “now, during the war, is the time to organize and plan in terms of the country as a whole and its needs.” The Federation of Canadian Artists, he emphasized, “will be a strong, going concern and a living factor in the new and growing cultural life which, according to our vision, we envisage and project for Canada when the war ends.”¹²⁰⁹

War Artists

One national initiative that emerged from the May 1942 FCA annual meeting was The Artists in the War Effort Petition. The FCA lobbied Mackenzie King to meet with a delegation of artists for twenty minutes to officially receive the Petition, which sought to incorporate artists in the war effort. Walter Abell had supported the lobby for Canadian war artists with his editorial “Canada at War” in the February-March 1942 *Maritime Art*. He also reprinted a section of the annual

¹²⁰⁸ Frances K. Smith, 95.

¹²⁰⁹ Lawren Harris, “The Federation of Canadian Artists,” Vancouver Art Gallery *Bulletin* 9 (June 1942), n.p. Cited in Dennis Reid, *Atma Buddhi Manas: The Later Work of Lawren S. Harris* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1985), 40.

report of the National Gallery board of trustees for the fiscal year 1940-41 that, in “National Gallery Urges Action,” criticized the government for its failure to employ Canadian artists in the production of war records as recommended by the Gallery.

The National Gallery’s Annual Report referenced Lord Beaverbrook’s employment of British and Canadian war artists during World War I and the establishment of a similar program in September of 1939 under the direction of Sir Kenneth Clark, director of the National Gallery in London. “He is assisted by a committee including three artist members and representatives of the Admiralty, Air Ministry, War Office, Home Office and Ministry of Information.” The Annual Report stated that “It is the opinion of the Trustees that the Canadian Government should immediately set up a similar committee which would include representatives of the Army, Navy and Air Force to record the activities of the fighting forces in Canada and overseas and also other phases of Canada’s war activities.” Every other Dominion had followed the British example “and is employing its best artists in recording the history-making deeds of its fighting forces.” According to the Report, “Plans submitted to the Government involve no large expenditure but if carried out would ensure the development and preservation of accurate records by artists which would be of inestimable value in the future.” Canadian artists, the Gallery argued, were “eager to use their talents in the service of their country and only await the official signal to go ahead.” *Maritime Art* followed with an extensive cross-Canada “Symposium on Art in War Time,” directly presenting the diverse opinions on the subject by Charles Comfort, Fred Taylor, Charles Scott, André Biéler, Rowley Murphy, A.Y. Jackson and Arthur Lismer.¹²¹⁰

The FCA’s Artists in the War Effort Petition urged the government to engage both civilians and artists serving in the military to record Canada’s war effort. It called for the organization of the artists’ participation to “be decided by a conference of Government nominees, and including representatives of the Federation.” The petition initiative was chaired in the Montreal FCA

¹²¹⁰ See Walter Abell, “Canada at War,” “National Gallery Urges Action” and “Canada at War: A Symposium on Art in War Time,” *Maritime Art* 2:3 (February-March 1942), 75-76, 83-84 and 84-91. See also “R.S. Lambert, “Art in Wartime,” *Maritime Art* 3:1 (October-November 1942), an excerpt from an April 26, 1942 CFRB radio broadcast.

chapter by Frederick B. Taylor, an avowed socialist and communist and the younger brother of the millionaire industrialist E.P. Taylor. Because of his family connections, Taylor had considerable social capital. In 1940 C.D. Howe, the Minister of Munitions and Supply, had appointed E.P. Taylor to the executive committee of his department. Taylor also served as Howe's deputy on the Anglo-American-Canadian Combined Production and Resources Board. So when Fred Taylor first wrote Arnold Heeney, the Clerk of the Privy Council, in July of 1942 to inquire how the Artists in the War Effort Petition could be presented "to the Government through the Prime Minister," he addressed his letter to "Dear Arnold." Heeney replied the next day to "Dear Fred" and mentioned that "I have had the pleasure of meeting your father and mother once or twice, recently. They seem to be in good health and spirits."¹²¹¹

In his communication to Heeney, Taylor indicated that approximately nine hundred artists ("painters, sculptors, architects, designers, printmakers, commercial artists, draughtsmen and art teachers of the whole of Canada") had endorsed the FCA's appeal and that "the Petition constitutes the strongest and in every way by far the most important united expression of opinion and action the professional artists of Canada have ever undertaken." He also advised Heeney that the FCA intended to ask Brooke Claxton, the Montreal Liberal MP for St. Lawrence-St. George, to introduce the FCA delegation to the Prime Minister "and to advise the Ministers of National Defence, National Services and Public Works and H.O. McCurry [director of the National Gallery] of the event so that they and other ministers and high officials whose departments are concerned, may arrange to be present." Heeney in turn informed Taylor that he was forwarding his letter to Mackenzie King's principal secretary, Walter Turnbull, but that the P.M.'s heavy

¹²¹¹ Frederick B. Taylor to Arnold D.P. Heeney, July 5, 1942. Heeney to Taylor, July 6, 1942. LAC reel C6814, pages 287839-41. When King offered Heeney the position of Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister in July of 1938, he defined the position as corresponding "in a way to that of a Deputy Head of a Government Department...in immediate touch with the Prime Minister, and [who] would act as a liaison with other Ministers of the Crown and exercise a general supervision of the work of the Prime Minister's Office." Heeney recorded that when he was appointed secretary to the cabinet early in 1940, "my duties demanded constant attendance on cabinet ministers, especially when critical decisions were being taken." See Arnold Heeney, *The Things That Are Caesar's: Memoirs of a Canadian Public Servant* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 42, 54.

duties in Parliament and Government might well prevent a personal meeting. He advised Taylor to submit the petition in advance of any meeting “so that it could be circulated to other members of the government, particularly concerned.”¹²¹²

Taylor again wrote Mackenzie King on July 23, informing him that the National War Effort Petition now had been signed by nearly one thousand artists (“thus constituting an important united expression of the views of Canadian artists in regard to their potential role in the war effort”) and requesting that he meet with a delegation of FCA executive members representative of the whole country in the House of Commons before the end of the Parliamentary session to receive the petition. Taylor also requested that J.T. Thorson, the Minister of National War Services, be present at the meeting and informed King that the petition committee had consulted with Brooke Claxton and that Claxton had discussed the petition with Walter Turnbull. Turnbull in turn sent a memorandum to the Prime Minister informing him that he had spoken with Claxton and that Claxton had attempted to persuade the FCA that a meeting with Minister Thorson would be sufficient but that the FCA “claim to have had generally unsatisfactory results in previous representations made to the Department of War Services.” Turnbull offered to contact Thorson to set up such a meeting if the Prime Minister so desired. King sent Turnbull a memo stating he was unable to meet with a FCA delegation while Parliament was in session. If the artists would send their representation in writing, he would “endeavour to see they receive every consideration.”¹²¹³

Taylor met with Walter Turnbull in his office in Ottawa to discuss the artists’ petition on July 30. King’s principal secretary later wrote him about their meeting that “I pointed out the un wisdom of seeking an interview with the Prime Minister in advance of having your plans definitely formulated. I felt, and so stated to you, that it was unfair to ask the Prime Minister to sit in on a general discussion which appeared to be heading for nothing better than the suggestion that the

¹²¹² Idem. Heeney Office of the Clerk of the Privy Council Memorandum to Walter Turnbull, July 6, 1942. Taylor to Heeney, July 8, 1942. LAC reel C6814, pages 287842-43.

¹²¹³ Taylor to King, July 23, 1942. Turnbull to King, July 24, 1942. King memo to Turnbull, July 25, 1942. Taylor to Turnbull, July 28, 1942. LAC reel C6814, pages 287844-47.

Federation of Canadian Artists were willing to help in the war effort.”¹²¹⁴ Taylor wrote Arthur Lismer on July 30 after his meeting that “From their point of view, we’re still miles up in the sky fluffing about in a deplorably impractical manner. We’re a bunch of well meaning nuts who thus far have evidenced no tangible reason why we should be seriously considered.”¹²¹⁵

After six additional fruitless exchanges with Turnbull that stretched into the end of October, Taylor again wrote the Prime Minister on December 31, 1942 protesting that after five months “members across the country voice their disappointment and astonishment that the expression of a desire to serve their country by so large a section of the practising artists of Canada should not be considered worth a hearing.” He warned ominously that “We have so far refrained from any comment in the national or provincial press about the treatment of our petition and we hope, that as we wish, we may be granted the privilege of a short interview to present it. If, however, this is not to be conceded, we shall feel free to publish the views of our members through the various channels that are open to us.”¹²¹⁶

King did not react to this threat but, as Turnbull informed Taylor in January of 1943, “his opinion is that with the demands on his time it would be preferable to have this delegation received by the Ministers of Defence and the Minister of National War Services. These Ministers would be the ones directly concerned with any use to be made of the talents of the artists of Canada.” Taylor and the petition committee accepted the Prime Minister’s proposal but requested that Charles Vining, Chairman of the Wartime Information Board, also attend.

Turnbull attempted to arrange a meeting with the four Ministers concerned and the FCA delegation but was unable to do so because of scheduling difficulties. On February 16, 1943, the dispirited Taylor was forced to submit the National War Effort Petition—which also called for

¹²¹⁴ Turnbull to Taylor, October 27, 1942. LAC reel C6814, pages 287852-53.

¹²¹⁵ Michael Bell, “The Welfare of Art in Canada,” x, xi.

¹²¹⁶ Undated telegram from Taylor to Turnbull. Taylor to Turnbull, October 14, 1942. Turnbull to Taylor, October 21, 1942. Taylor to Turnbull, October 24, 1942. Turnbull to Taylor, October 27,

the establishment of an arts council that would embrace “writers of all kinds, poets, playwrights, radio-dramatists”¹²¹⁷ as well as artists—to the Prime Minister by mail. Arnold Heeney acknowledged its receipt on February 22, informing Taylor that “Mr. King has asked me to let you know that its representations have been carefully noted, and that the detailed statement dealing with the general ideas expressed in the petition are being brought to the attention of the General Manager of the Wartime Information Board, for consideration by the Board.”¹²¹⁸

King’s refusal to grant a twenty-minute meeting to the Federation of Canadian Artists delegation was ominous for future artists’ lobbying of the federal government. It indicated that—unlike Gladstone’s public support of the theatre in the 1880s and 1890s—King did not wish to be publicly identified as a champion of the arts. By refusing to accept the Petition—intended to be presented “to the Government through the Prime Minister”—in person, King was in effect stating that he *was* the Government, *l’état, c’est moi*. Perceiving himself as Canada’s supreme cultural authority and its de facto Minister of Culture, King was not about to permit artists to dictate government cultural policy nor to let the artists’ participation in Canada’s war effort “be decided by a conference of Government nominees, and including representatives of the Federation.” The FCA had wisely involved MP Brooke Claxton in their 1942 lobbying. But King would not appoint Claxton as his parliamentary assistant until May of 1943 and to his Cabinet as Minister of National Health and Welfare until October of 1944.¹²¹⁹ Claxton therefore still lacked adequate political capital to effectively lobby the Prime Minister on cultural matters directly. In 1942 the

1942. Taylor to Turnbull, October 28, 1942. Taylor to King, December 31, 1942. LAC reel C6814, pages 287848-56.

¹²¹⁷ Maria Tippett, *Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts before the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 166.

¹²¹⁸ Turnbull to Taylor, January 9, 1943. Taylor to Turnbull, January 14, 1943. Turnbull to Taylor, January 26, 1943. Taylor to Turnbull, January 28, 1943. Taylor and Dorothy Macpherson to King, 16 February, 1943. Heeney to Taylor, February 22, 1943. LAC reel C7046, pages 306041-46. Maria Tippett records that King also “sent the petition to John Grierson of the War Information Board, who then asked Walter Abell to prepare a memorandum on war artists and social concerns. The result, ‘Art in Relation to War Effort,’ 4 Mar. 1943, was enclosed in Abell to Grierson, 6 Mar. 1943.” Tippett, 230, fn. 36.

¹²¹⁹ See David Jay Bercuson, *True Patriot: The Life of Brooke Claxton, 1898-1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 119, 129.

artists themselves also lacked sufficient social, cultural and political capital on their own for their demands to be “seriously considered.”

When the government did begin to put a plan in place for war artists in November of 1942, its impetus can be traced to Vincent Massey, the Canadian High Commissioner in London. Endowed with substantial cultural and political capital, Massey was not only a trustee of the Tate Gallery but also of the National Gallery in London, which appointed him chair of its board in April of 1943. The National Gallery’s director was the renowned art historian Kenneth Clark. Through Clark, Massey was familiar with the War Artists’ Advisory Committee set up in 1939 to employ artists to record WW II. Clark was its chair and also the curator of the large exhibition *Britain at War*, which opened at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in May of 1941. After touring the U.S., the exhibition toured Canada while the Federation of Canadian Artists was lobbying Mackenzie King.

Massey had also maintained his position as a trustee of the National Gallery in Ottawa and already in 1940 corresponded with its new director, H.O. McCurry, about the Gallery organizing a war artists program. The National Gallery had lost its art acquisition budget with the outbreak of World War II and saw it in its institutional self-interest to become a leading player organizing Canadian war artists. McCurry began approaching Mackenzie King in June of 1940 about a war posters program that would involve the Gallery and professional Canadian artists. He contacted the Prime Minister again in November of 1941 after receiving a request from the United Kingdom to arrange for a section of Canadian war art for a forthcoming Dominion War Artists Exhibition in London. “I have been compelled to tell the British Government that Canada at present has nothing to send,” he reported to King. “Knowing your keen interest in questions relating to the cultural development of our Dominion, I have thought that you should be made aware of our failure in this regard.” He recalled the Canadian government’s involvement in the Canadian War Records program organized by Lord Beaverbrook during World War I and suggested that many of the nearly one thousand works produced “have become part of the cultural heritage of Canada,

and have continued through the years to exercise an heroic influence upon the imagination of our citizens.”

McCurry suggested that an expenditure of \$15,000 [\$228,000 in 2014 dollars] would enable the initiation of a program “to some extent along the lines of the Federal Art Project in the United States.” “Qualified professional artists in all sections of Canada would be given the opportunity...to record war activities and to submit sketches or designs for mural decorations to be commissioned eventually at a later date and placed in federal buildings, not only in Ottawa, but more especially throughout the Dominion as the Government may determine.” He also argued that “Not only would this record be important for the future, and useful in building up public morale at present, but its effect on the services themselves would be helpful. Army, Navy and Air Force would be stimulated to know that their work was being adequately recorded.”¹²²⁰

McCurry had written A.Y. Jackson in September of 1941 that he was “planning the ‘Britain at War’ exhibition in such a way as to explode a bomb under the Government on the question of war records. Maybe it will work.”¹²²¹ Martin Baldwin, curator at the Art Gallery of Toronto where the “Britain at War” exhibition was on view following its Ottawa showing, also wrote the Prime Minister in November of 1941. “It seems to me a great pity that, to my knowledge, no use is being made of Canadian artists for compiling similar records of Canada at war.” Baldwin

¹²²⁰ McCurry to J.W. Pickersgill, June 26, 1940. Pickersgill to McCurry, July 27, 1940. McCurry to W.B. Herbert, Assistant to the Director of Public Information, December 6, 1940. McCurry to King, November 3, 1941 with August 3, 1940 enclosure, “Memorandum The Department of National Defence Re Canadian War Records By Artists.” LAC reel C4570, pages 245503-11, and reel C4865, pages 260974-78. McCurry had already brought an exhibition of mural designs executed for the American Federal Works Agency’s Section of Fine Arts to the National Gallery in April of 1940. The exhibit subsequently toured to the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Art Association of Montreal, the Winnipeg and Vancouver Art Galleries, and to the Maritimes. See Jeffrey D. Brison, “The Kingston Conference, the Carnegie Corp and a new deal for the arts in Canada,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 23:4 (Winter 1993).

¹²²¹ H.O. McCurry to A.Y. Jackson, September 16, 1941. Cited in Karen Finlay, *The Force of Culture: Vincent Massey and Canadian Sovereignty* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 177. The *Britain at War* exhibition ran at the National Gallery from October 10 to November 2, 1941.

suggested that “If a selection of fifteen to twenty young and vital artists were appointed to work under one head they could be distributed among the Air Force, the Navy and the Army and the civilian production front, not only in Canada, but also in England and elsewhere, and moved from place to place as required.” H.R.L. Henry, the PM’s private secretary, advised Baldwin that “Mr. King wishes me to let you know that your suggestion is being referred to the Minister of National War Services for consideration by the Cabinet at an early opportunity.”¹²²²

T.C. Davis, Associate Deputy Minister of the Department of National War Services, wrote Walter Turnbull in December of 1941 that H.O. McCurry had been urging him for over a year that “a certain sum of money be set aside for the retention of the services of well-known Canadian artists, who would be commissioned to paint pictures to preserve features of Canada’s activity in connection with the present war.” Davis informed Turnbull that at a recent meeting of the Inter-departmental Publicity Committee “it was disclosed that each of the three branches of the Armed Forces had enlisted within the branches a number of well-known and capable Canadian artists. It became apparent that each branch was going to utilize the services of these artists to do the very thing that Mr. McCurry had urged.” Because he believed that “possibly the Prime Minister has a personal interest in this matter,” Davis inquired if Turnbull thought it advisable that he “ask someone from all three branches of the Armed Forces to consult with Mr. McCurry and see if any practical scheme could be evolved for speeding up the work of these artists in the Armed Forces under the direction of Mr. McCurry.”¹²²³

But according to Karen Finlay, “Not until November 1942 was a Canadian plan for war art finally in place. Two committees were formed, composed of artists and representatives of the armed forces—one under McCurry in Ottawa, the other under Massey in London.”¹²²⁴ Massey’s biographer, Claude Bissell, recorded a slightly different chronology. “In the spring of 1943, the authorization came through and soon all three services had their war artists. As founder and

¹²²² Martin Baldwin to King, November 25, 1941. H.R.L. Henry to Baldwin, December 6, 1941. LAC reel C4860, pages 254186-87.

¹²²³ T.C. Davis to Walter J. Turnbull, December 12, 1941. LAC reel C4862, pages 256636-38.

¹²²⁴ *Idem.*

patron, Massey now presided over the whole program.”¹²²⁵ The Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, the repository of the war art collections from the First and Second World War, provides still a third account of how the thirty-one Canadian W.W. II artists were eventually commissioned. “Late in 1942, the indefatigable Massey again tried to organize an official war art program. His request made it through the bureaucracy to the desk of Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, who finally approved it. It was formally set up in January 1943, and a committee consisting of H.O. McCurry and senior military personnel from the three services ran the program from Canada. In Britain, Massey was the guiding light; officers in the services handled the mechanics of the program.”¹²²⁶

Mackenzie King’s refusal to meet with the Federation of Canadian Artists delegation to discuss the nature and scope of a war artists program—even as plans for such a program were winding their way through the government bureaucracy—constitutes what Pierre Bourdieu termed an act of symbolic violence, “action from a distance, without physical contact...Symbolic violence is the violence which extorts submission.”¹²²⁷ Richard Jenkins further clarifies that “The mainstay of the exercise of symbolic violence is ‘pedagogic action’...Pedagogic action involves the exclusion of ideas as unthinkable...Exclusion or censorship may in fact be the most effective mode of pedagogic action.”¹²²⁸

Mackenzie King had already committed perhaps the ultimate act of symbolic violence when he rose in the House of Commons on March 24, 1942—two months before the Federation of Canadian Artists annual meeting—to clarify how his government planned to implement its new policy of national selective service and compulsory total mobilization of man and woman power

¹²²⁵ Claude Bissell, *The Imperial Canadian: Vincent Massey in Office* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 148.

¹²²⁶ Laura Brandon, “Canada’s War Art. Dispatches: Backgrounders in Canadian Military History.” Canadian War Museum website <http://www.warmuseum.ca/education/online-educational-resources/dispatches/canadas-war-art/> accessed November 1, 2013.

¹²²⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, “The Economy of Symbolic Goods” in his *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 102, 103.

for the war effort. Just as artists were organizing to assume a greater role in Canadian society and contribute to the war effort, King's government officially virtually restricted the profession of artists in order to direct "the available men and women into the most useful form of war service."

As King informed the House—and published his address in his *Canada and the Fight for Freedom*—"In order to increase the numbers of men available for service in the armed forces, in war industry, or in other essential occupations, regulations have been made which prohibit the entry into employment in a wide variety of occupations of men who are of military age and physically fit. These occupations will be known in future as restricted occupations." They included

any occupation in, or directly associated with, entertainment, recreational or personal service, including but not restricted to theatres; film agencies; motion picture companies... Any occupation in the manufacture or production of... photography; printing, publishing and engraving; radios ... pottery and china... musical instruments; ... any occupation in the repair of... musical instruments. It is provided that, on and after March 23, 1942, no male person shall accept employment, and no employer shall engage any male person in any of these restricted occupations.¹²²⁹

Yet as Pierre Bourdieu wrote in *Sociology in Question*, "The efficacy of symbolic violence is proportionate to the misrecognition of the conditions and instruments of its exercise."¹²³⁰ David Swartz elaborates that "'Misrecognition' is a key concept for Bourdieu; akin to the idea of 'false consciousness' in the Marxist tradition, misrecognition denotes 'denial' of the economic and political interests present in a set of practices... according to Bourdieu, actors by and large 'misrecognize' how cultural resources, processes, and institutions lock individuals and groups into

¹²²⁸ Richard Jenkins. *Pierre Bourdieu*. Revised edition. (London and New York: Routledge: 2002), 105.

¹²²⁹ W.L. Mackenzie King, "National Selective Service" in his *Canada and the Fight for Freedom* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1944), 107, 118, 119.

¹²³⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *Sociology in Question* (London: Sage Publications, 1993), 41.

reproducing patterns of domination.”¹²³¹ For Jeff Browitt, misrecognition “guarantees the cooperation of agents in their domination.”¹²³²

Canadian artists, by calling for government support of arts and culture, cultural democracy, the integration of the artist as a vital member of society and for a much greater national public distribution of cultural products, refused to accept their marginalization as a historical and social law. They thus refused to accept the symbolic violence inflicted upon them by the state and society and to “misrecognize” their social marginalization as the normal order of things.

The Canadian Review of Music and Other Arts

While wartime and Canada’s great distances precluded further large national gatherings such as the June 1941 Conference of Canadian Artists in Kingston, artists soon had another journal in addition to *Maritime Art* through which they could communicate and accumulate social and cultural capital on a multi-disciplinary, cross-Canada basis. In February of 1942 two musicians from the Toronto Conservatory of Music, Christopher Wood and the 24-year old teacher and composer Godfrey Ridout, launched the *Canadian Review of Music and Other Arts*. Another example of non-elitist cultural organizing, the *Review*’s editorial board consisted of the cellist, teacher and community arts centre activist Marcus Adeney who served as poetry editor, the choreographer Bettina Byers, playwright John Coulter, the graphic artist Nicholas Hornyansky, and the conductor Ettore Mazzoleni.

Such a national forum during the height of World War II was particularly important because many artists from all disciplines felt they had been relegated to the sidelines in the struggle for the country’s survival. The *Canadian Review* asserted, on the contrary, that artists and culture

¹²³¹ David Swartz, *Culture & Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1997), 89, 9-10.

¹²³² Jeff Browitt, “Pierre Bourdieu: Homo Sociologicus” in Jeff Browitt and Brian Nelson, eds. *Practising Theory: Pierre Bourdieu and the Field of Cultural Production* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 2.

were central in the fight to preserve democracy. From its inception, the journal endorsed “the conclusion already arrived at—and acted upon—by the British Government, namely that the dissemination of all forms of art to all people is fundamentally necessary in war-time.” The *Review* proposed that “In Canada, where, at present, the violence of war has hardly more than brushed us, it will be wise to carefully consider the English experience and to act in a similar manner, in so far as that may prove possible, by overlooking no opportunity of making all the arts available to every citizen of the Dominion and encouraging in every way our own native growth while there is yet time.”¹²³³

In its May 1942 issue, *Canadian Review* editorial board member John Coulter wrote on behalf of government support of the arts from his own experience as a playwright struggling to support and express himself during wartime. In 1942 the CBC broadcast Healey Willan’s opera *Transit Through Fire*, for which Coulter had written the libretto, about the utter disillusionment of young Canadians who could find no present or future in the Depression of the futile 1930s. In his preface to the libretto, written in the darkest hours of World War II, Coulter warned that a new society had to be created in all countries of the world to sever the cycle of economic depression and war.¹²³⁴

In 1942 the CBC also broadcast Coulter’s radio dramas *The Trial of Joseph Howe*, about the struggle for freedom, and *The Great Experiment*, about how the failure to confront the early military aggression by Italy, Japan and Germany led to the tragic demise of the League of Nations. But Coulter had also written a documentary drama, *Mr. Churchill of England*, in 1941 about Churchill’s warnings about the rise of fascism in Europe and his inspirational defense of Britain during the darkest hours of World War II, for which he could not find a stage producer. He had been inspired to use the documentary playwriting form after seeing the “living newspaper” technique in a New York W.P.A. production, *One Third of a Nation*, about intolerable housing conditions. Under President Roosevelt, the Works Progress Administration’s

¹²³³ “Editorial,” *Canadian Review of Music and Other Arts* 1:1 (February 1942), 3.

¹²³⁴ John Coulter, *Transit Through Fire* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1942), n.p.

Four Arts Project, established in 1935, channeled \$27 million to art, theatre, writing and music projects to provide employment for American artists until the U.S. entered the Second World War. In 1941 Coulter approached the Canadian Ministry of Information and Colonel Henry Osborne, the president of the Dominion Drama Festival (which had suspended operations with the outbreak of the War) to request financial assistance to produce *Mr. Churchill of England* and tour it across the country. He was turned down by the Ministry of Information and the DDF as well as by J.G. McConnell, publisher of the *Montreal Standard*, and R.Y. Eaton of the T. Eaton Company in Toronto. Again it would only be the government-subsidized CBC that broadcast the drama in four parts in February of 1943.

Never one to mince his words, Coulter entitled his May 1942 *Canadian Review* article “Why Sabotage the Theatre?” He asserted that to provide only light entertainment for soldiers and civilian audiences for the duration of the war was “a form of artistic malingering amounting to sabotage, since it is to neglect the power of the theatre not only to take people ‘out of themselves,’ but to send them back with hearts uplifted and spirits quickened. And that is what can happen when the confusion and chaos of actual life are transformed, on the stage, into the ordered and comprehensible reality of art.” The playwright suggested that “if ever this gift of creative vision were needed, it is when, as now, the very meaning of life and the validity of all its standards are obscured in the debris of collapsing civilization.” He charged that “To take any other view is the beginning of sabotage against the theatre as a vital art intent on exhibiting the spirit of man at grips with the tremendous issues of our time.”¹²³⁵

While the disillusioned John Coulter lamented the lack of meaningful Canadian theatre production, Nicholas Hornyansky, in the same May 1942 *Canadian Review*, hailed the founding of the Federation of Canadian Artists as a new door in Canadian art history “through which the brightness of another chapter broke into the gloom.” For Hornyansky, in “Another Dawn in Art,” the founding of the Federation was a cultural turning point because “the artists affiliated with this

¹²³⁵ John Coulter, “Why Sabotage the Theatre?” *Canadian Review of Music and Other Arts* 1:4 (May 1942), 5, 6, 18.

movement decided to leave their centuries old ivory tower of individualistic retirement and, with resolutions and an ambitious working programme, became part of organized society.” The Federation, he believed, “extends towards the isolated, off-centre fellow artist a hand of mutual assistance and, on the other hand, discovering the new patronage of the State, from which increasingly all sources of production and revenue depend, it organizes its services to submit them to national aims and for cultural benefits.” He concluded that “All the four freedoms for which we fight, lead to a fifth: the freedom to create, to conceive freely everything that gives happiness to man and here, on his own vocational territory, the artist shall assume the full duty of leadership.”¹²³⁶

In its 20-page illustrated issues, the *Canadian Review of Music and Other Arts* covered not only such established disciplines as music, poetry, theatre, visual arts, printmaking and sculpture but also emerging art forms such as photography, radio production, bookbinding, batik, pottery, and furniture, jewelry, fabric and costume design. All arts and crafts activity was perceived as valuable and worthy of support.¹²³⁷

Commenting on the great variety of artistic activity documented in its pages, the November 1942 *Canadian Review* editorialized on “The Need for Direction.” It asserted that Canadian talents “are largely dissipated through lack of co-ordination and direction” and called for the creation of a Ministry of Fine Arts as part of post-war planning and reconstruction. “Not the least important part of this planning must be the organization of the seething artistic activities in every part of the country which are un-coordinated even for the vital needs of the present time. The obviously inefficient use which is at present being made of our artists is almost criminally wasteful: to

¹²³⁶ Nicholas Hornyanski, “Another Dawn in Art,” *Canadian Review of Music and Other Arts* 1:4 (May 1942), 9.

¹²³⁷ See for example Cameron Paulin, “Pottery,” *Canadian Review of Music and Other Arts* 1:6 (October 1942), 4. For Godfrey Ridout on Canadian composers, see G. R., “Editorial: The Need for Direction,” 1:7 (November 1942), 4. On the exemplary Perrin Williams Memorial Public Library, Art Gallery and Museum in London, Ontario, which heralded what would soon become a significant national community arts centre movement, see Clare Bice, “A New Art Centre,” 1:7

continue this gross prodigality of so vital a natural product after the war would hint at social insanity.”

In its editorial, the *Review* made a comprehensive assessment of Canada’s cultural needs that would be repeated by the 1944 artists’ *Brief* and the 1949 Massey Commission: “We have two national institutions both of which are a potential force in the art life of the country:—The National Gallery and the C.B.C. Why not also a national library such as the Library of Congress? A national orchestra such as that of the B.B.C. under Sir Adrian Boult? national architectural planning as in Holland? the clever use of public concerts for broadcasting as in Australia? why not a national opera? a national theatre? a national school of music?” the *Review* queried. It asserted that “There is no reason why our architecture, the design of our furniture and innumerable smaller objects, our china, our silver, should not become the envy of other peoples—a position which they can hardly be said to hold at present.” And it concluded that “It is not our intention here to enlarge on the value and possible methods of national artistic direction. That such direction is needful seems to us a self-evident proposition; the one satisfactory method of accomplishing it at all is the formation of a Ministry of Fine Arts.”¹²³⁸

Christopher Wood and Godfrey Ridout left the *Canadian Review* at the beginning of its second volume in February of 1943 and were replaced by Louis de B. Corriveau, who had been the journal’s advertising manager, as managing editor. Corriveau shifted the *Review* into a still more overtly political direction, writing in his first editorial that the purpose of the publication was “to show Canadians the need for the arts in every day life. It is designed with the purpose also of bringing to the attention of legislators and leaders the vital importance of competent direction of the work of the artist and craftsman to our domestic economy.”¹²³⁹

(November 1942), 8, 9, 19. On coverage of Quebec government support for the arts, see Louis de B. Corriveau, “Wilfred Pelletier” and “Quebec Endows Talent,” 2:1 (February 1943), 3 and 9.
¹²³⁸ “Editorial: The Need for Direction,” *Canadian Review of Music and Other Arts* 1:7 (November 1942), 4.

Corriveau had no hesitation outlining the possible methods of national artistic direction government intervention in the arts should take. His article “A Canadian Ministry of Cultural Affairs,” published in February 1943 and as “Un Ministère Canadien des Beaux-Arts” in the August-September 1943 issue, pointed out that “Legislators and economists even now are concerned with post war problems. Plans are being laid for wide social reforms, for the re-establishment of men and women in civilian life, for the turning over of war industries to the production of civilian goods, and for the reconstruction of ravaged cities and countries.” Like the 1944 artists’ *Brief* to Parliament, Corriveau was certain that “Artists and craftsmen will play a vital role in making possible ‘the bright new world’ when peace comes.”

On them will fall much of the design and execution of these plans. If these plans for peace are to be carried out, and if Canadian economy is to be placed on a foundation as solid in peacetime as it has been in war, it is vitally important that artistic activities be given purpose and direction now. Canada has no lack of skilled craftsmen and artists, but there never has been any centralized direction of their work...

The work of the artist, if properly directed, can revolutionize the living standards of thousands of Canadians...But all this depends on the establishment of a centralized direction of artistic endeavour, a *Ministry of Cultural Affairs*.

To illustrate the effect of lack of direction of artistic affairs, let us consider the exact position of art in Canada today. How many artists are there in Canada today who make a living from and depend on art alone? There are hardly two score. All the rest, including many of the best, have to teach or resort to commercial art, or to depend on professions utterly foreign to art.¹²⁴⁰

In addition to specialized journals such as *Maritime Art*, the *Canadian Review* and later *Canadian Art*, daily newspapers also contributed to the discussion of whether government assistance could stimulate the arts in Canada. On May 29, 1943 the *Globe and Mail* Music and Drama section published the article, “First State Theatre to Open in Bristol, England, Soon,” describing the work of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and Arts, established in

¹²³⁹ “Editorial: Our First Anniversary,” *Canadian Review of Music and Other Arts* 2:1 (February 1943), 5. French version, p. 4.

¹²⁴⁰ [L. de B. Corriveau], “A Canadian Ministry of Cultural Affairs” and “Un Ministère Canadien des Beaux-Arts,” *Canadian Review of Music and Other Arts* 2:1 (February 1943), 6, 7 and 2:7-8 (August-September 1943). The English version was unsigned, the French version signed.

Great Britain in 1939. The Canadian Press staff writer William Stewart reported that a production of Oliver Goldsmith's classic comedy *She Stoops to Conquer* in Bristol's eighteenth century Theatre Royal will be "Britain's first venture in State Theatre." "If the experiment is successful, the council's lease on the old Bristol playhouse will be renewed. Its renewal may be followed by similar long-term leases of theatres elsewhere in the country, and eventually, perhaps, the building here, there and everywhere in Britain of what have been named people's playhouses by council enthusiasts."

Stewart reported that CEMA had been formed at the beginning of World War II primarily to bring music to war workers. "But its success, particularly among workers and in the days of the blitz among crowds in air-raid shelters, who welcomed the entertainment of singers and violinists, earned Government attention. Last year the Board of Education spent £100,000 on the council, and in the coming year will spend £100,000 more. About £26,000 will go for concerts all over the country. This month the council is sponsoring 139 concerts. The presentation of 'She Stoops to Conquer' by a distinguished cast, including Dame Sybil Thorndike, will be the first time the Government entertains in a theatre of its own."¹²⁴¹

In his memoirs *In My Day*, John Coulter described how, after reading the *Globe* article, he rushed to the Arts and Letters Club to enlist the support of other members for the creation of a similar government body in Canada. Much to Coulter's surprise, his attempt to convince the Arts and Letters Club to issue a public call for the establishment of a national body in Canada similar to CEMA met with considerable opposition. Some members, whom he referred to only as the "Old Guard," wanted to maintain the Club's privacy and opposed public political lobbying and the use

¹²⁴¹ William Stewart, "First State Theatre to Open in Bristol, England, Soon," *Globe and Mail*, May 29, 1943, 9. For a discussion of British government assistance to the arts, see Janet Minihan, *The Nationalization of Culture: The Development of State Subsidies to the Arts in Great Britain* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1977).

of public funds to “spoon-feed” artists. “Let them stand on their own legs or stay in the gutter,” he recalled one reaction.¹²⁴²

Coulter was taken aback by this opposition, perhaps also in part because the same issue of the *Globe and Mail* carried two articles about extensive government assistance in post-war reconstruction. The first, “Mayors Call for a Better Social Order,” cited a resolution passed unanimously at the sixth annual conference of the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities in Ottawa. This call for a new social order followed the adoption of resolutions favoring a plan of social security. The article also cited Dr. Cyril James, principal of McGill University and chairman of the government’s advisory committee on reconstruction, stating that he hoped “a statement will be made soon by the Federal Government on a public investment program for the post-war period. Such a program, involving construction of public works, roads, bridges, buildings, canals, reforestation, land reclamation and beautification, would be necessary to assure stability of employment and national income in peacetime.”¹²⁴³

The second May 29 *Globe* article, “Propose National Plan for Postwar Housing,” described the brief presented by the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities to the House of Commons Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment. “The plan is comprehensive in scope, based on the assumption that a vast program of public works may be required during the transition period from war to peace. It is urged that municipalities have a postwar public works program ready to go into immediate effect during the first period and that they should be empowered to set up reserve funds for this purpose.”¹²⁴⁴

¹²⁴² John Coulter, *In My Day: Memoirs* (Toronto: Hounslow Press, 1980). See Chapter 13, “Artists’ Brief and Canada Council,” pp. 201, 202.

¹²⁴³ “Mayors Call for a Better Social Order,” *Globe and Mail*, May 29, 1943, 3. The *Globe* also reported that “The conference endorsed a brief for presentation to the House of Commons Reconstruction Committee outlining suggestions for adjustment of taxation and fiscal policies affecting municipalities and terms of which Governmental financial aid for municipal works programs could be extended.”

¹²⁴⁴ “Propose National Plan for Postwar Housing,” *Globe and Mail*, May 29, 1943, 22.

Despite opposition by some members, the Executive Committee of the Arts and Letters Club nevertheless established an Advisory Council in June of 1943 to investigate how the Club could aid the arts in Canada. Committee members included such prominent artists as Bertram Brooker, Sir Ernest MacMillan, composer, conductor of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, and Dean of the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto; playwright and director Raymond Card; cellist and teacher Marcus Adeney; theatre director Earle Grey; and graphic artist Nicholas Hornyansky, President of the Society of Canadian Painter-Etchers and Engravers. Brooker soon resigned from the Advisory Council because of work commitments.

In the introduction to their October 25, 1943 interim Report to the Arts and Letters Club Executive Committee, the Advisory Council observed, “many plans are being made by the Federal Government to grapple with the problems which will arise in the New Civilisation which is expected to follow the cessation of hostilities. But for the most part these plans deal with political, industrial and social matters. No provision is being made for cultural affairs, nor any attention given to the economic interests of those professionally engaged in the Arts.”

Marcus Adeney, Chairman of the Advisory Council, had just founded the Beaches Community Cultural Centre in St. Aden’s Library in Scarborough. Besides art exhibitions and a drama group, it featured a chamber music society and a symphony orchestra that gave subsidized concerts. Adeney and many others believed such a plan of community centres stretching from coast to coast would not only bring artists and audiences together to enrich the cultural lives of their communities. Such a plan was also more likely to win support from Members of Parliament than a call for the establishment of a national arts board similar to the British Council and the Council for Encouragement of Music and the Arts.

Swayed by Adeney’s enthusiasm, the main recommendation of the Advisory Committee was “that COMMUNITY HOUSES be erected,” particularly in rural districts where there was little cultural activity. Such cultural centres could be located in existing school houses or libraries and ideally would serve 2,000 families in urban areas and 500 families in rural areas. The Advisory

Committee recommended that new cultural centres should be built by federal and provincial governments equally sharing the cost out of post-war reconstruction funds. The national chain of community art centres would cost ten million dollars [\$140 million in 2014 dollars]. The centres would feature “a hall suitable for public meetings, concerts and social gatherings, etc.; a properly designed stage for plays; a projection room for films; provision for library books, workshops for Arts & Crafts.” Operating expenses would initially be covered by the provincial government and subsequently by each community itself. Once the cultural centres were established, “Dramas, Orchestras, Picture Exhibitions, etc. could be sent on extended tours to the various communities, thus maintaining good standards in the Arts.” The Arts and Letters Club Report concluded that “In the final analysis the makers of Literature, Music, Drama and kindred Arts must by their own organised efforts create, foster and develop a market for their products.”¹²⁴⁵

A National Program for the Arts in Canada

In October of 1943, *Maritime Art* metamorphosed into the national publication *Canadian Art*, which provided a higher profile forum for visual artists across the country. Its editorial board, with Walter Abell as editor, consisted of representatives from the Federation of Canadian Artists, the National Gallery of Canada, the Art Association of Montreal, the Vancouver Art Gallery, and the Maritime Art Association. Like the Arts and Letters Club Advisory Council, *Canadian Art* expressed the central belief that artists from all disciplines had to organize themselves on a national level to lobby the federal government for government assistance. Its third issue, February-March 1944, featured the cover “A National Plan for the Arts” and two articles strongly making the case for government intervention in support of arts and culture.

In “Art Goes to the People in the United States,” Holger Cahill, former national director of the American W.P.A. Federal Art Project from 1935 to 1943, described several government

¹²⁴⁵ “Report of the Advisory Council” presented at the Arts and Letters Club Executive Committee meeting, October 25, 1943. Herman Voaden fonds, York University Archives and Special Collections, call no. 1982-019/004 (10).

initiatives to ease unemployment of artists during the Depression and to bring the arts to a wider public. The first was the Public Works of Art Project from December 1933 to May 1934 under which “3,749 artists were given employment in easel painting, sculpture, mural painting, and print making. The greatest accomplishments of the project, aside from the encouragement to artists, were in the field of mural painting and in the stimulus given to the depiction of the American scene.” The PWAP was supervised under the Department of the Treasury with funds from the Civil Works Administration. The head of the project was the painter Edward Bruce, Secretary to the Advisory Committee to the Treasury on Fine Arts, who supervised sixteen regional committees throughout the country appointed from the capital. In the summer of 1935, Bruce organized the Section of Fine Arts under the Procurement Division of the Department of Treasury and subsequently the Public Buildings Administration. It allocated one percent of construction costs for murals or sculptures of federal buildings such as post offices and court houses.

But the most extensive and far-reaching national government program was the Federal Art Project established in August of 1935 by Harry L. Hopkins, administrator of the Works Projects Administration. Its primary objective was to give employment to artists on relief. According to Holger Cahill, its greatest achievement was how the work of these artists was distributed to the public in a manner soon advocated by Canadian arts advocates, through a national chain of community arts centres. “The primary orientation of the Project was toward the public, or rather toward providing channels for the creative artist to work directly for and with the public,” Cahill wrote. “This was the thesis of the Community Art Center Program which organized 103 centers throughout the country as co-operative enterprises in which municipalities and citizens’ committees share with the government the responsibilities for program and plan and the costs of operation. These centers provided the public with workshops for art participation, schools and lecture halls for study, and exhibition galleries which were supplied with the work of contemporary artists by a central exhibition section.” Cahill reported that during 1935-43, the Community Art Centre Program circulated some thirty thousand original works of art in more than six hundred exhibitions, each with a minimum of twenty showings, for a total audience of

six million. By February of 1936, 5,300 artists were employed by the Federal Art Project in forty-four states. Local sponsors such as municipal governments, boards of education, colleges, schools and other public institutions were responsible for covering all non-labour costs such as the rent for studios and galleries, utilities and cost of materials. Cahill called the Federal Art Project “the largest government art program in American history” and suggested that “After the war is won, it is to be hoped that the British experience, especially of such organizations as CEMA (Council for the Encouragement of Music and Art) will help us all to new ideas and new developments.”¹²⁴⁶

Four months after the publication of Cahill’s article, sixteen Canadian national arts organizations urged the federal government to intervene in a similarly extensive manner as the United States in the production and distribution of Canadian art. Elizabeth Wyn Wood, in “A National Program for the Arts in Canada,” published in the same February-March 1944 *Canadian Art* issue, provided the arguments for large-scale intervention by the government in support of artists and Canadian culture. Wood’s proposal carried weight because she was a nationally known artist. A prominent sculptor and past-president of the Sculptors’ Society of Canada, she had received major public commissions such as the Welland-Crowland War Memorial (1934-39) and fountains and panels in the Rainbow Bridge Gardens (1940-41) in Niagara. She had also been a director of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, was a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, and was represented in the National Gallery and in the Winnipeg and Vancouver Art Galleries. Herman Voaden had already singled out her sculptures in his 1930 introduction to *Six Canadian Plays*. He profiled her in *Maritime Art* in 1942, describing Wood as “a Canadian sculptor, modelling the northern forms which are associated with our ‘national’ painting.”¹²⁴⁷

In her “A National Program for the Arts in Canada,” Wood pointed to the function of art to embody the spiritual life of a nation, project its identity and prestige abroad, and like Louis de B. Corriveau in *Canadian Art*, stressed its importance to the national economy. She argued that

¹²⁴⁶ Holger Cahill, “Art Goes to the People in the United States,” *Canadian Art* 1:3 (February-March 1944), 129.

Canadian artists and craftspeople possessed cultural capital that was not satisfactorily engaged in the economic and cultural life of the nation. Calling for the establishment of a Ministry of Fine Arts or Cultural Affairs, Wood suggested, “Canada is heavy with a great body of highly trained, creative artists, out of all proportion to the opportunities it has been able to offer them. We need machinery through which these artists may operate...there are things which artists cannot do alone. They need a partner in the whole nation...There should be a national plan put into operation with inspiration, with foresight and with courage.” She argued that “We have done little to take culture into the hinterland whence sprang so much of its inspiration, and seldom have we used our art on the foreign field in an ambassadorial way. Artists and others of vision should act together to make our Government understand that a nation’s culture is an essential asset on its home front, before the world and before history.”¹²⁴⁸

Wood pointed out that in the Canadian political arena “the poignant appeal of Dorise Nielsen, M.P. North Battleford, has echoed three years in the House of Commons unanswered.” The Saskatchewan M.P. had spoken in the House about the lack of music, books and other contact with culture in isolated Western rural areas. “This is not hunger for food but hunger of the mind,” Nielsen had stated. “Frustration is everywhere...I would say most emphatically that the time to consider the life of the people is not when the war is finished but *now*. In this time of crisis, even though mine is the only voice raised—and I sincerely hope it may not be—yet I must raise it in defence of and for the protection of life, because the people of Canada must have life and they must have it more abundantly.”¹²⁴⁹

Woods’ proposal for a Ministry of Culture, much more expansive and visionary than Corriveau’s February 1943 conception in the *Canadian Review of Music and Other Arts*, provided a substantial framework for national arts societies looking for government action to solve the needs

¹²⁴⁷ Herman Voaden, “Elizabeth Wyn Wood,” *Maritime Art* 2:5 (June-July 1942), 145.

¹²⁴⁸ Elizabeth Wyn Wood, “A National Program for the Arts in Canada,” *Canadian Art* 1:3 (February-March 1944), 93-94.

¹²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 94.

of their own members and those of artists and crafts-people in other disciplines. “To explain what might be done on a national scale I submit the following skeleton program,” Wood wrote, “which seems to me to crystallize the thinking of most artists:”

1. The establishment of a Ministry of the Fine Arts or Cultural Affairs for the supervision of art, in all its branches, within the body of the nation; as a gate of approach for cultural institutions and artists’ organizations; and, generally, as a focal and radiating point for matters of creative consequence. This department should have a permanent, non-political deputy, as do many existing government departments.
2. A foreign policy which includes the promotion of international understanding by the sending abroad of the best examples of our culture by special exhibitions and concerts, by special publicity and by other methods as they occur. This needs the active co-operation of the Department of External Affairs. Such a policy is, even in wartime, being used with conspicuous success by the British Foreign Office, the State Department of the United States, and by the Soviet Union.
3. The appointment of a section or office, within a larger export board, whose duties will have to do with the exploration of foreign markets for surplus works of art and the sale of these works by dignified publicity. There are now Canadian Trade Commissions in some countries but their offices are limited.
4. The development of our educational theory towards the stimulation of *post-educational* achievement. This has not to do with machinery of education, which is properly the concern of the Provinces, but with a national attitude of mind. Our educational policy and habit of thought have tended to encourage learning rather than achievement, with the result that many of our best brains have become enmeshed in the vicious circle of learning and teaching, to the still-birth of both research and creative work. We have thousands of scholarships for learning. Perhaps we have not enough. But we have never sufficiently dignified achievement. Medals and titles do not compensate for a public apathy which could be cured by intelligent propaganda.
5. The inclusion in any post-war reconstruction plans of a program for public works for city, rural and frontier areas, which will include all the arts. This could begin with the building of cities, garden parks, rural halls, highways and utilities, to be scientifically planned *and artistically envisaged*. The planning should be state-supported, the fabrication financed by the ordinary methods of government and/or company loans to individuals and corporations. Athens, following the Persian wars, supported a plan of public works under the direction of artists, which has shed luster on her name through all the years. How strange that the western world has copied the *style* of these works for two and a half millennia, but never the *basic idea behind* the Greek phenomena! And only one of the advantages of this program was the fact that there was no unemployment such as modern wars bring in their wake!

6. The encouragement *now* of handicraft co-operatives for the marketing of home and studio crafts; and the establishment of rural training centres. These projects should be undertaken within a long-term policy planned for the gradual merging of fine handicraft into fine machine art. The practical purposes served should include (1) production for current civilian use; (2) the absorption of man and woman power released by industry at war's end; (3) handicrafts as an attraction for tourists; (4) skilled hands as a national asset; (5) the peace of mind of the craftsman.
7. The stimulation of original design in industry. This would include the passing of legislation preventing the pirating by manufacturers of designs from abroad. Where possible Canadian designers should be employed. When these are not available, foreign designers should be persuaded to settle in Canada. If we are to reach world markets, and still retain a high standard of living, we can only do so by offering production of *original design*. The habit of copying foreign designs leads, inevitably to cut-throat competition and low wages—of this Japan is the extreme example—and to high tariff walls.
8. The establishment of a state theatre for fine professional productions, having departments of master instruction in drama, stagecraft and the like. Facilities should be included for all manner of experimental productions. The long-term policy should include a chain of such theatres spread across Canada. These theatres would not compete seriously with commercial theatres and would have much to offer them. They would be an extension of the 'Little Theatre' movement begun in the twenties, now sadly in decline. They would require partial subsidizing.
9. The extension of the services of the King's Printer in Ottawa, or the setting up of an additional, non-profit making, national publishing service, in order that the hundreds of musical and literary compositions, now lying idle, may be cheaply published. These works should be circulated through broadcasting and sale and should have proper publicity.
10. The further dissemination of music, literature and all authorship through channels suited to each medium (the details to be worked out by specialists in these arts).¹²⁵⁰

Pointing to similar editorials and articles in the *Canadian Review of Music and Other Arts*, broadcasts by Arthur Phelps over the CBC national network, and the advocacy of William Arthur Deacon, literary editor of the *Globe and Mail*, Wood asserted that the creation of a national Ministry of Culture, rather than other agencies such as advisory councils or commissions, represented the wishes of a large number of artists. "A Ministry, with its powers of initiating action," she wrote, "is a clean-cut proposal understood by a number of related professions."

¹²⁵⁰ Ibid., 94-95, 127.

Wood was confident that her ambitious plan for a complete reinvention of how arts and crafts were produced and distributed in Canada and internationally was politically achievable despite the fact that only Dorise Nielsen and several CCF Members of Parliament publicly supported government assistance to the arts. “A program of this kind is politically and artistically possible under present conditions. It occurs to me, also, that it would be popular,” she wrote. “I have tried to think of it from the point of view of the professional, (*i.e.* the artist, architect, writer, etc.) the building trades, the citizen, the farmer, and the parent. It would be popular in Quebec where the arts have always been taken seriously. It would be popular with the English-speaking public who naturally seek the fine things of life. It would be a gracious kindness to our foreign-born population who have brought their native skills to this land only to find that their hands were wanted for nothing but the short season of the tractor.”

Wood was aware that her plan would require a great amount of government financial resources and political support to be implemented and that leadership and media support would also be necessary to convince a hesitant public of their necessity. “The worried taxpayer might suspect that the operation of such a program would involve expenditures beyond reason,” she conceded. But she expressed her conviction, “*I believe that it would cost nothing beyond the normal expenditure of government in peacetime.*” “It does, of course, imply imagination in high places. It does imply the placing of the right persons in positions of responsibility. It does imply co-operation and good will and sincerity on the part of technical persons and on the part of federal, provincial and municipal governments. And understanding interest on the part of newspapers. But there is nothing that could not be done with just a slight redistribution of energies and moneys now being expended without co-operative plan. Such things cannot be bought with taxes. The primary need is for greater vision and co-ordination.”¹²⁵¹

But how could support for such a far-reaching plan for the cultural reorganization of Canada be generated? Who actually spoke for Canadian artists and how could collective decision making be carried out? Visual artists were represented by many national and regional associations that often

¹²⁵¹ Ibid., 128.

were in conflict with each other. The most august of these was the Royal Canadian Academy but it had been subjected to severe criticism even by several of its own members such as Arthur Lismer. L.A.C. Panton outlined the dismal condition of painters and the cultural leadership of associations representing them in “The Academy and the Future of Art in Canada” published in the April-May 1944 *Canadian Art*. “The affliction which besets Canadian art is not that the Academy ignores its purposes or discriminates against those with whom it disagrees,” Panton observed, “but that art itself is ignored by people generally as a proper and necessary part of the social structure, and that the opportunities available to artists are wholly inadequate for raising their art to the high level required in a true national culture.” Himself a painter, art teacher and member of the R.C.A. as well as several other art groups, Panton concluded, “progress has been frustrated too long by the squabbling, about minor matters, of mutually exclusive groups; the time for boycotting and sniping at each other has gone. A new unity of purpose must animate artists, if substance is to be given to the vision of a Canadian art ‘of the people, for the people, and by the people.’”¹²⁵²

The Federation of Canadian Artists, led by its newly elected president Lawren Harris, sought to fill this vacuum of artistic leadership. Harris’s “Reconstruction Through the Arts” was published in the June-July 1944 *Canadian Art* even as the representatives of sixteen national arts organizations were making their presentation to the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment in Ottawa. As he stated in his article, Harris believed that “the greatest need in Canada is for a unity of spirit over and above the great diversity of its life.” The arts, he was convinced, could bridge the racial, religious, political, regional, economic and class differences existing in the country and the prejudices resulting from them. One way of diminishing the isolation of the artist from his and her community and society was to bring the artist and the layman together. The Federation of Canadian Artists was the only national arts

¹²⁵² L.A.C. Panton, “The Academy and the Future of Art in Canada,” *Canadian Art* 1:4 (April-May 1944), 140, 141, 175. Panton referred to Arthur Lismer, who “in a recent criticism of the Royal Canadian Academy, attempted on the whole fairly and with some success, to demolish any claim to leadership that it might make.”

organization that actively sought layman for its membership. “These two, the artist and as large a number of laymen as possible,” Harris wrote, “should be drawn into one functioning organization so that laymen participate in the creative life of the artist and take a part in the creative problems of the community. This is one of the functions of the Federation of Canadian Artists.” Without such an “enthusiastic, evocative audience,” Harris believed, “the arts cannot become part of the life of a people and make them aware that they themselves are an inseparable part of a creative culture, a dynamic identity.”

Harris was searching for “an active and unifying agent” right across Canada between artists and their art societies and the Canadian public so that there could be “a flow in the creative life.” Such an agent would not only have to bridge regional differences and differences in provincial educational systems but also the divide between a few art centres in Canada’s largest cities and culturally deprived regions and rural areas so that “the regions are quickened into new life and the art centres are nourished and mellowed by co-operation.” He believed he had found this “unifying agent” in the community arts centre concept, “a plan which would make the creative interplay of the arts and the life of our people widespread and fruitful. This plan, improved by further consideration, will be submitted to the Reconstruction Committee of the Federal Government by the national bodies in Canada concerned with all the arts.”

The “National Art Centre Plan” Harris outlined in *Canadian Art* was almost verbatim the brief submitted by the Federation of Canadian Artists to the House of Commons Reconstruction Committee. It urged “That 25 major cultural community centres be built in Canadian cities; 5 in the Maritime Provinces, 4 in the Province of Quebec, 7 in Ontario, 6 in the Prairie Provinces, 3 in British Columbia.”

Each building would include an auditorium with a seating capacity of 800 or more, its size to be determined by the size of the city. This auditorium to be designed and equipped for drama, ballet, orchestra and concerts of all kinds, films, lectures and meetings. In addition the centre would contain an art gallery for all kinds of exhibitions, including crafts, workshops for crafts, lithography, silk screen printing, mural painting, etc., rooms for art classes and children’s work, and space for storage, packing, assembly, and administrative purposes. There would also be a library, which would be the city library if practicable.

These centres would serve the cultural life of the community in all ways not already taken care of by its regular educational system. Each centre would be a distributing point for its region, extending its facilities to factories, clubs, schools, and outlying rural districts. The land for each centre to be given by the municipality, which will also assume responsibility for administration and maintenance of the centre. Each centre should be autonomous and would cost from \$250,000 [\$3.38 million in 2014 dollars] up. Total cost of the 25 major centres would be \$6,250,000 [\$84.5 million in 2014 dollars].

In addition to the major centres, there should be 50 minor ones offering similar facilities on a smaller scale. These minor centres to cost from \$50,000 to \$100,000 [\$676,000 to \$1.35 million in 2014 dollars] each, or a total of from \$2,000,000 to \$4,000,000 [\$27 million to \$54 million]. This means a total of \$10,000,000 [\$135 million in 2014 dollars] for both major and minor centres. There should be one supervising architect for all 75 buildings. He would work in collaboration with local architects.

National Services

There are at present three national services which should function through all of these cultural centres.

The National Gallery. A large extension of its services would be necessary to assemble hundreds of exhibitions of many kinds and to schedule these through all the centres. This will necessitate an increase in its staff, including field workers and lecturers, and a large increase in its yearly grant. Also a new National Gallery Building, with adequate storage, assembly and shipping space, repair workshop, offices and galleries, will be necessary to carry out such an enlarged program. The handicrafts will require central offices and space for storage, assembly, and shipping. This should be provided for in the new National Gallery Building.

The National Film Board. The Film Board would require a small room in each centre for equipment, repairs, etc. We understand that the Board as at present organized can take care of increased national service. In the distribution of films, co-ordination can be established between the National Film Board and the National Film Society.

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. The CBC would plan and schedule all kinds of concerts, lectures, etc. for tours to local centres. A special staff within the corporation would be essential for this purpose. It has been estimated that if there were 90 communities across Canada where concerts could be given rental free, it would be possible to cover other expenses by selling tickets at 25 cents each or less. It is recommended that the government provide a grant to carry out the necessary survey implied in the art centre plan. \$25,000 is suggested for this survey.¹²⁵³

¹²⁵³ Lawren Harris, "Reconstruction Through the Arts," *Canadian Art* 1:5 (June-July 1944), 186, 224.

Lawren Harris concluded his “Reconstruction Through the Arts” article by indicating that a proposal “for a government committee on cultural affairs” would also be submitted to the Reconstruction Committee as part of his plan. Through Corriveau’s *Canadian Review of Music and Other Arts* in 1943 and Elizabeth Wyn Wood’s and Lawren Harris’s proposals in *Canadian Art* in the spring of 1944, Canadian artists now had a clear publicly-stated plan for a Ministry of Culture and a national chain of community arts centres.

At the same time the Arts and Letters Club had developed a similar proposal in private with the intention of lobbying the federal government. In their October 25, 1943 interim Report to the Arts and Letters Club Executive Committee, the Advisory Council had recommended “That strong representation be made at once to the Federal Government urging the claims of those professionally engaged in the Arts.” On April 19, 1944 a deputation from the Arts and Letters Club consisting of Marcus Adeney, Herman Voaden, John Coulter and the Club’s President, George T. Pepall, interviewed one of the leading supporter of Canadian artists, Walter Herbert, Director of the Canada Foundation, in Ottawa. The purpose of the meeting, as stated in the Advisory Committee’s final April 1944 Report, was to explore “steps to be taken to obtain a hearing before the Turgeon Committee for the purpose of requesting: (a) A Rehabilitation grant or grants to be used for projects involving the employment of artists during the immediate post-war period of re-adjustment, and (b) The appointment of a Council or Commission, analogous to the British Council and/or Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts, to administer such grant or grants and to direct a long range programme for increased activity in the arts in Canada.” Herbert advised the Arts and Letters Club to co-ordinate its activities with other arts organizations lobbying the government and to make the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment, set up in the spring of 1942 under the Chairmanship of James Gray Turgeon, Liberal M.P. for Cariboo, B.C., the focus of its lobbying efforts.¹²⁵⁴

¹²⁵⁴ A former lawyer and public relations consultant, Herbert was familiar with government bureaucracy having been assistant director of publicity with the Canadian Wheat Pools in Winnipeg, secretary and publicity director for the National Liberal Federation of Canada and, before founding the un-incorporated Canadian Committee in 1942, assistant director for two

Later in April 1944, the Arts and Letters Club Advisory Committee submitted its final report, written by Voaden in consultation with Marcus Adeney, Nicholas Hornyansky, John Coulter and George T. Pepall. The three main points of the final report were as follows: “(1.) That an Arts Commission be set up; (2.) That the Commission undertake the employment of artists as an immediate post-war rehabilitation project. These artists should be employed in entertainment and cultural services designed to enrich the recreational life of the nation. (3.) That the above Commission initiate and promote a nation-wide movement to build and operate community centres.” Boldly, the Report also asked the federal government “to set aside the sum of \$10,000,000 from which any community, no matter what its size, would be entitled to grants-in-aid to assist in the building of such a centre, provided that the community and the province are prepared to contribute on a pro rate basis.”¹²⁵⁵

The Report proposed that the governmental Arts Commission be set up under the Department of Reconstruction and that the Commission be non-political in character and representative of all the arts. The following 15 members were suggested for the Arts Commission: one representative each from the National Film Board and the CBC; the Director of the National Gallery; one French and one English representative of the visual fine arts, of theatre groups (including the Dominion Drama Festival), of musical institutions and associations, and of literary and library interests; one architect; one representative of the Community Centre or Adult Education interests; one university representative; and “a representative of the Department of External Affairs, to co-operate with the Commission in sending abroad exhibitions, plays, musical organizations, books, and so forth.”

years with the Department of Public Information in Ottawa. He became the director of the Canada Foundation when it became incorporated in May of 1945. See L. de B. Corriveau, “Walter B. Herbert,” *Canadian Review* III:5-6 (June-July 1944), 30.

¹²⁵⁵ April 1944 “Report of the Advisory Council to the Executive Committee,” 1. Distributed to Arts and Letters Club members in a July 5, 1944 “Report on Action: Being the Executive Committee’s account of a most potent chapter in the history of the Club.” Herman Voaden fonds, York University Archives and Special Collections, call no. 1982-019/004 (24).

To justify the major government capital investment in Canadian arts and recreation called for, the Report pointed out that “in 1919 the Dominion Government set aside \$10,000,000 [\$129.5 million in 2014 dollars] for grants-in-aid to Vocational Education. The result was that Technical and Commercial Education suddenly flourished, with hundreds of new schools and a significant widening of the concept and influence of education. We ask the Select Committee on Reconstruction and Rehabilitation to recommend similar support now for the community centre movement; the results, we are sure, will be just as far-reaching. Such a programme, supported by all parties, and given priority in post-war construction programmes, would be the most concrete and valuable contribution the government could make toward a better post-war society in Canada.”¹²⁵⁶

Canadians had made great sacrifices in human lives and resources to make the world safe for democracy. Now artists, many of whom had felt isolated from within their communities, were asking for what kind of democracy was the world to be made safe? They felt that cultural democracy had to be part of the new society that would emerge after the end of World War II. The Arts and Letters Club Report argued that there was a real national need for the cultural programs being proposed. “The war has generated a restlessness, an expectancy, among our people. They are ready for something. They anticipate important changes in the post-war world,” the Report’s authors stated. “If this expectation is defeated, chaotic conditions will prevail. We shall have, as in the depression years, a widespread discontent, a drifting of the population from place to place, a steady deterioration in morale. Thousands of community centres in villages, towns and cities across Canada, well designed and built, provided with library, art, music, and entertainment services, and equipped for social, recreational and citizenship activities, will be in

¹²⁵⁶ Ibid., 9. Herman Voaden was personally very familiar with the effect and precedent of this \$10 million government allocation because his father, Dr. Arthur Voaden, had pioneered vocational training in St. Thomas, Ontario. For an historical overview of education in St. Thomas since 1847 and Dr. Arthur Voaden’s pioneering educational work, see “New Vocational School Opening: Tuesday Marks Beginning of New Era in Educational Progress in St. Thomas,” *St. Thomas Times Journal*, September 4, 1926, Second Section, pp. 13-19 and “Dr. Arthur Voaden Claimed By Death: Leading Ontario Educationist Pioneered Vocational Training,” *St. Thomas Times Journal*, November 10, 1931, pp. 1, 14.

earnest of a new order, a better society.” Community centres, the Report suggested, “affording as they do the physical basis for cultural programmes, are an indispensable part of the movement to establish the Arts as the core of Canadian Cultural Democracy. Without such Centres the proper distribution and co-ordination of music, pictures, dramas, literature, etc. cannot be fully achieved.” Such a chain of community centres across the country would also promote national unity and help to create a national culture.¹²⁵⁷

But it was Elizabeth Wyn Wood’s February 1944 call in *Canadian Art* for a Ministry of Culture—rather than the more limited Arts and Letters Club reconstruction proposal—that won wide support and soon galvanized the arts community. She had sent a copy of *Canadian Art* to the Labour Progressive M.P. Dorise W. Nielsen, a member of the House of Commons Reconstruction Committee, whose maiden speech in the House she had cited in her article. Nielsen encouraged Wood to organize a delegation of artists to present a program similar to her *Canadian Art* proposal to the Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment and to contact its chairman, Gray Turgeon, for an invitation to make such a presentation to his committee. “We are, of course, primarily concerned with finding employment in the post war years, but, yet, reconstruction must take into consideration many more things than just the finding of jobs.”¹²⁵⁸

The challenge Elizabeth Wyn Wood and other Canadian artists and arts activists now faced was how to transform her vision of how Canada’s cultural life should be organized into a political strategy that would find support from the Turgeon Committee. An indefatigable organizer, Wood sent a copy of Nielsen’s letter to Ernest Fosbery and A.J. Casson, President and Vice-President of the Royal Canadian Academy; to Florence Wyle, President, the Sculptors’ Society of Canada; to Lawren Harris, President, the Federation of Canadian Artists; to Cavin Atkins, President, the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour; to Nicholas Hornyansky, President, the Canadian

¹²⁵⁷ April 1944 ‘Report of the Advisory Council to the Executive Committee,’ 9, I.

¹²⁵⁸ Dorise W. Nielsen to Elizabeth Wyn Wood, March 30, 1944. Wood to Nielsen, April 19, 1944. Wood to Marcus Adeney, April 19, 1944. Herman Voaden fonds, York University Archives and Special Collections, call no. 1991-020/005 (05).

Society of Painter-Etchers and Engravers; to Isobel McLaughlin, President, the Canadian Group of Painters; to Laurence Hyde, President, the Canadian Society of Graphic Arts; to Mrs. Charles King, President, the Canadian Authors' Association; to Forsey Page, President, the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada; to Marcus Adeney, Chairman, Arts and Letters Club Reconstruction Committee; to Murray Gibbon, President, Canadian Handicrafts Guild; and to Sir Ernest MacMillan.

As Dorise Nielsen suggested, Wood contacted Gray Turgeon who, as Wood reported in "Art Goes to Parliament" published in the October-November 1944 *Canadian Art*, "gave assurance that he was anxious that the cultural aspects of reconstruction be recognised, and artists were accordingly urged to submit as varied and wide a program as they cared to offer."¹²⁵⁹ Wood again circulated this correspondence to the national arts associations.

Perhaps heeding L.A.C. Panton's advice that the failure of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts "to launch a crusade to fit art into the very foundations of the better Canada now being designed" would "well mark its final eclipse,"¹²⁶⁰ Ernest Fosbery, the RCA President, called a meeting of presidents and other delegates of national arts associations at the Art Gallery of Toronto on May 13, 1944 to prepare a submission to the Turgeon Committee. The May 13th meeting brought together fifteen professional art societies to discuss making a joint appeal for government assistance to the arts. In addition to the R.C.A., the societies included the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, the Sculptors' Society of Canada, the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour, the Canadian Society of Painter-Etchers and Engravers, the Canadian Group of Painters, the Canadian Society of Graphic Art, the Federation of Canadian Artists, the Canadian Authors' Association, the Music Committee (supported by the Canadian Performing Rights Society and the Federation of Canadian Music Teachers), the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects and Town Planners, the Dominion Drama Festival, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, the Canadian Guild of Potters and the Arts and Letters Club.

¹²⁵⁹ Elizabeth Wyn Wood, "Art Goes to Parliament," *Canadian Art* 2:1 (Oct.-Nov. 1944), 3.

¹²⁶⁰ L.A.C. Panton, "The Academy and the Future of Art in Canada," 141.

Lawren Harris travelled from Vancouver to attend the May 13 Toronto meeting in his capacity as national president of the Federation of Canadian Artists. The day before, he addressed the Ontario section of the FCA and outlined his plan for a chain of government-financed community art centres across the country. As Pearl McCarthy reported in the *Globe and Mail*, Harris was still speaking openly about spirituality from a theosophic perspective when advocating for community centres. “There are three things which rise above the differences among Canadians, to create unity of spirit above the diversity of Canadian life...These three things are: the scientific spirit; the religious spirit as distinct from any one religion; and the arts,” Harris stated at the meeting. “He pointed out that all creative activity was an interplay of complementaries on apparent opposites, and that it tended strongly, therefore, to produce unity of spirit.”¹²⁶¹

Wood described herself, in her by-line for her “Art Goes to Parliament” article, as “Secretary of the Meeting of Fifteen Artists’ Associations and Chairman of the Continuing Committee” and provided a detailed account of the Art Gallery of Toronto deliberations and the writing of the resulting artists’ briefs. “Various spokesmen outlined the ideas of their professions and their societies,” Wood reported. “Mr. Lawren Harris gave a very effective speech in support of his plan for Community Centre buildings, which he proposed to submit on behalf of the Federation of Canadian Artists.”

He said the he considered the best vehicle for the wide distribution of the arts was the Community Centre. Others maintained that the Community Centre alone was inadequate for the development of all the arts. The most conspicuous act of the meeting was a unanimous decision to pool the ideas of every organization and co-ordinate them into a workable national program, possible of a broad interpretation of the [Department of Reconstruction] Act. After some discussion, a motion was passed by a majority that the plan for Community Centres be a main feature of the program, this to be supplemented by such other items as would cover activities, information and legislation not necessarily arising out of community needs. It was decided that each association submit a brief stating its own opinions and that these be summarized into a co-ordinated statement for the Reconstruction Committee.¹²⁶²

¹²⁶¹ Pearl McCarthy, “Arts Program Is Surveyed,” *Globe and Mail*, May 13, 1944, 4.

¹²⁶² Elizabeth Wyn Wood, “Art Goes to Parliament,” 4.

The motion passed at the May 13 meeting, as recorded by Wood, provided “That the plan submitted by Lawren Harris incorporating Community Centres and requesting a construction plan of at least \$10,000,000 be the main feature of the brief—(amended by Mr. Kettle)—supplemented by such additions as may be necessary, in view of the executive committee, to include those activities not arising out of the Community Centre idea.”¹²⁶³ According to Michael Bell, “In effect Harris took an idea that the Arts and Letters Club in Toronto had been working on for some two years and let it be the centrepiece of a plan that subsumed the scheme he had already advocated to extend the National Gallery throughout the country.” Bell also cited disagreements between Harris and Wood. “He believed that ‘the ideas of Elizabeth Wood, as described in ‘Canadian Art’ were not suitable for reconstruction being too long term.” Wood, in turn, stated at the Art Gallery of Toronto meeting “that Harris’ plan did not ‘take thought of the promotion of the Arts of the Country as had been done in Sweden, France and Russia.”¹²⁶⁴

Because only a few weeks remained before the federal Reconstruction Committee would complete its hearings, a Continuing Committee was appointed to receive the societies’ individual briefs, write the joint summary brief, and form the delegation that would present the joint brief to the Parliamentarians in Ottawa. In addition to Wood as Chairman, the other committee members were Norman Wilks, principal of the Toronto Conservatory of Music, the architect W.L. Somerville, H. Garnard Kettle, national secretary of the Federation of Canadian Artists, and Herman Voaden, representing the Arts and Letters Club. Kettle, writing Fred Taylor in Montreal, described the difficult decision-making task of the Continuing Committee to blend the three main proposals, particularly since the FCA believed Elizabeth Wyn Wood’s plan for a Ministry of the Fine Arts or Cultural Affairs was too comprehensive and ambitious. On July 19, 1942, Arthur Lismer had written to André Biéler that “the idea that we, as a Federation, are after the establishment of a Ministry of Fine Arts is just grotesque at this time.”¹²⁶⁵ “While admirable in

¹²⁶³ Michael Bell, “The Welfare of Art in Canada” in *The Kingston Conference Proceedings* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen’s University, 1991), xvi. Bell incorrectly gives the date of the meeting at the Art Gallery of Toronto as March 13 instead of May 13.

¹²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, xxxi, fn. 92, xvi, xxxi, fn. 93.

¹²⁶⁵ *Ibid.* xxxiii, fn. 123.

many respects,' Kettle still wrote of Wood's proposal May 27, 1944, 'Harris, myself and Haworth [Peter Haworth, president of the Ontario FCA region] consider that this kind of brief is not likely to success [sic] immediately with Turgeon, terrific battle at every meeting. Have had lots of support from Voaden, the theatre expert who represents the Arts and Letters Club on the Committee, and as you know the Arts and Letters Club and the Federation see eye to eye on the Community Centre idea. As it stands, Voaden and I have succeeded in getting the plans set up in three main sections: governmental body (without specifying a commission or Ministry of the Fine Arts), the Community Centre Plan, [and] the other broader items that Betty [Elizabeth Wyn Wood] wants all grouped in this third section.'¹²⁶⁶

By the end of the first week the Continuing Committee had written the general preamble of the joint summary brief and had received the individual briefs from almost each of the fifteen societies in seventy mimeographed copies. Eight of these were only one printed page in length; the Federation of Canadian Artists one and a half printed pages; and the Arts and Letters Club brief nine printed pages. A detailed analysis of these individual briefs resulted in thirty-one separate items. Some proposals, such as pensions for aged authors and Dominion-wide uniformity of educational standards, were rejected for being outside the scope of the Reconstruction Committee. A proposal that monuments be prohibited as war memorials was vetoed by the Sculptors Society and the Royal Architectural Institute and another proposal for national medals for outstanding works of art and science by the Federation of Canadian Artists. Once the thirty-one distinct proposals had been identified, Wood reported, "we set about writing the summary." "The Governmental Body occupied the short Section I. In accordance with the motion passed at the original meeting that the Communities Centre plan form the major item, this occupied the whole of Section II. The Harris plan was incorporated completely, with the exception of ideas unacceptable to French-speaking opinion supplemented by a condensation of the Arts and Letters Club plan. The other twenty-nine items were condensed into Section III. The

¹²⁶⁶ Kettle to Fred Taylor, May 27, 1944, p. 2 cited in Anna Victoria Hudson, 254, fn. 68.

method of describing an item consisted, for the most part, of using the wording of that brief which seemed to give the clearest statement of the objective.”¹²⁶⁷

Forwarding the Arts and Letters Club and summary brief to Walter Herbert on May 29, Voaden shed further light on the dynamics out of which the final summary brief emerged. “The summary statement was prepared by the steering committee of five (Norman Wilks, Sommerville, the architect, H. G. Kettle, Elizabeth and myself,” he wrote Herbert. “In the summary brief the preamble was written by Elizabeth Wood. The first point, a governmental body, represents a compromise. Elizabeth insisted on a ministry, Kettle and I on a Commission. So neither was mentioned. The Community Centre section was worked out as a compromise between Lawren Harris’ scheme and ours. The social benefits were added as a second point to the introduction. Kettle agreed to our point that the community must want the centre, and be prepared to pay something toward it, the Federal Government making grants-in-aid. We changed the emphasis from being too much on the centre as an art gallery, giving library and theatre-music interests equal importance. Finally the smallest communities were added to the scheme at my suggestion.”¹²⁶⁸

When Kettle described the May 13, 1944 artists’ associations meeting at the Art Gallery of Toronto in the February 1946 F.C.A. *Bulletin*, he also listed the Société des Écrivains Canadiens as a participant and referred to “the meeting of the sixteen societies.” He also stated that “The separate briefs from all the sixteen societies are included” in the Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence No. 10* published by the King’s Printer.¹²⁶⁹ Yet while the list of endorsements of the joint artists’ *Brief* in the published

¹²⁶⁷ Elizabeth Wyn Wood, “Art Goes to Parliament,” 5.

¹²⁶⁸ Herman Voaden to Walter Herbert, May 29, 1944. Herman Voaden fonds, York University Archives and Special Collections, call no. 1982-019/004 (15).

¹²⁶⁹ “A Report on the Canadian Arts Council for the Information of Members of the Federation of Canadian Artists, Prepared by H.G. Kettle, National Secretary F.C.A.,” Federation of Canadian Artists *Bulletin*, February 1946, 1. Herman Voaden fonds, York University Archives and Special Collections, call no. 1982-019/001 (32).

See also Coulter, *In My Day*, 204-205 and Tippett, 171.

Minutes included that of Monseigneur Olivier Maurault, President of the Société des Écrivains canadiens, the House of Commons *Minutes* do not include a separate brief from the Société. Maurault, also Rector of the University of Montreal, was in fact the first to object when Jean Bruchesi, undersecretary of state for the province of Quebec, showed him the draft of the artists' *Brief* on May 29.

As Michael Bell has shown, "In Quebec the brief was seen as a threat to the provincial control of education." Wood wrote Fred Taylor in Montreal on June 10, 1944 that despite all their combined efforts to reach out to French-Canadian art associations, "she was overwhelmed by letters from French-speaking groups whose main idea 'is to poke sticks in the wheel.'" Taylor thought Wood was naive about the political and cultural situation in Quebec. Maurice Duplessis, leader of the conservative Union Nationale, was only two months away from defeating the Liberals on a nationalist provincial rights platform in the August 8 provincial election. When Olivier Maurault finally wrote Ernest Fosbery, president of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, he informed him that the Société des Écrivains Canadiens "would join the other associations in supporting the brief if 'no federal projects were proposed—only provincial projects—...he said they believe in unity, but only if this unity were in diversity.' Any centralizing movement would not be supported. After all the worry and effort, La Société des Écrivains Canadiens did not appear at the presentation of the brief to the Turgeon Committee."¹²⁷⁰ Lack of representation of French-Canadian artists in national arts lobbying efforts would be a problem for years to come.

Wood, in her "Art Goes to Parliament" article, nevertheless wrote that the meeting of the national arts associations at the Art Gallery of Toronto "has been called historic, and it was so in fact. Never had a group of its kind nor mood met together before in Canada." The art critic Blodwen Davies, in her May 1946 *Canadian Forum* piece, "Quickening of the Arts in Canada," similarly suggested that the May 1944 meeting "may some day pass into our folklore...It was then the miracle began to take shape." She noted that "never before in our history have all the arts found common ground on a national scale" and that as a result "representatives of sixteen

¹²⁷⁰ Michael Bell, "The Welfare of Art in Canada," xvii, xviii, xxxii, fn. 112.

nationally organized societies of creative workers arrived in Ottawa with a brief for the Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment; a brief that drew out the largest attendance of the Committee in three years and the comment of the chairman that it was unique in many ways and deserving of the highest commendation.”¹²⁷¹

The 1944 House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment

According to John Coulter, the artists’ presentation to the Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment was already being referred to as “the Artists March on Ottawa” in May of 1944, even though most of those attending the House of Commons Committee hearing the following month would arrive by bus from Toronto.¹²⁷² Rather than an actual protest march, the lobbying of the Turgeon Committee was the culmination of political organizing since the 1941 Kingston Conference.

The Committee met in Ottawa Wednesday, June 21, 1944 from 11 a.m. to 12:45 to hear the presentation from the Canadian artists’ societies. The artists’ delegation was headed by Ernest Fosbery, president of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. The other delegates were Sir Ernest MacMillan; H. Garnard Kettle, national secretary of the Federation of Canadian Artists; Forsey Page, president of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada; Herman Voaden, Marcus Adeney and John Coulter representing the Arts and Letters Club; Elizabeth Wyn Wood, chairman of the executive committee responsible for the summary brief; and the Montreal architect Ernest Cormier, the only delegate from outside of Toronto. Nineteen of the thirty five Committee members (25 Liberals, 6 Progressive Conservatives, 2 CCF, 1 Social Credit, and 1 Independent)

¹²⁷¹ Blodwen Davies, “Quickening of the Arts in Canada,” *Canadian Forum* 26 (May 1946), 34. Davies incorrectly gives the date of the artists’ meeting at the Art Gallery of Toronto as February, rather than May 13, 1944.

¹²⁷² Coulter, *In My Day*, 205. Bernard Ostry, *The Cultural Connection: An Essay on Culture and Government Policy in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), 54. In *Lawren Harris: An Introduction to His Life and Art* (Toronto: Firefly Books, 2003), 59, Joan Murray asserted incorrectly that following his election as national president of the Federation of Canadian Artists,

attended. Of these nineteen, twelve were Liberal, three Progressive Conservative, two CCF, one Social Credit and the one Independent, Dorise Nielsen, of the Labour Progressive Party. (The Communist Party of Canada had changed its name to the LPP at its national convention at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto in August of 1943 when Nielsen was also elected to the seventeen-member national executive of the LPP.)¹²⁷³

In his memoirs, John Coulter recalled that Ernest Fosbery “wilted at the prospect” of reading the artists’ summary brief to the Parliamentarians and that Elizabeth Wyn Wood “corralled” him to present the brief despite “the inappropriateness of this Canadian *cri de coeur* being voiced in an Ulster accent.”¹²⁷⁴ The opening summary of the artists’ *Brief* asserted that, rather than being a marginalized activity, “the creative arts stand in a key position in the economy of the whole nation” and that “the absorption of large numbers of men and women into fields related to the arts would help materially in securing full employment in the post-war period.” Regarding governmental promotion of culture, the artists stated that “In no country is less consideration given to artistic matters than in Canada.” They pointed to France, Sweden and Denmark whose governments had subsidized the arts for cultural and economic reasons and emphasized that even in war time the British Parliament “voted large sums for the encouragement of music and the arts with the intention of fulfilling the concept expressed in the new national slogan: ‘The best for the most.’” Quebec was already endowing her artistic talent. Canada, “with her vast natural resources, could achieve a proud culture as well as a unique world position in industrial development and export.”¹²⁷⁵

Harris “march[ed] in the company of other artists on Parliament Hill to demand government support for the arts in Canada.”

¹²⁷³ Faith Johnston, *A Great Restlessness: The Life and Politics of Dorise Nielsen* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2006), 157, 158.

¹²⁷⁴ Coulter, *In My Day*, 207.

¹²⁷⁵ Session 1944 House of Commons. Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment. *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence No. 10*. Wednesday, June 21, 1944. (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1944), 331, 332.

The artists' *Brief* argued that culture—"at present, accessible only to the few"—should be distributed widely throughout the whole nation and that "Millions of persons living in Canada have never seen an original work of art, nor attended a symphony concert or a professionally produced play. Millions have opportunities neither for realizing their own talents nor for achievement in post-educational fields." The government should not only honour its best talents at home but also promote them abroad in order for Canada to take its proper place in world affairs. In their major recommendation outlining their program for reconstruction and re-establishment, the artists advocated "The setting up of a governmental body for the supervision of all cultural activities."¹²⁷⁶

In the artists' proposal, cultural self-expression and distribution would be achieved through the building of twenty five major community centres in large urban areas, fifty centres in smaller cities and five hundred centres "in the smallest communities, costing approximately \$20,000 [\$270,500 in 2014 dollars] each, designed to meet the needs of the particular locality." As outlined in Lawren Harris's June-July 1944 "Reconstruction Through the Arts" *Canadian Art* article, the larger cultural centres would include an art gallery, production facilities, a library, and an auditorium suitable for theatre productions, concerts, ballet, films, lectures and meetings of all kinds. The cost of all the centres would be \$10 million of which "at least half would be borne by the federal government." Substantially increased funding to the National Gallery (including a new, much enlarged National Gallery building), the National Film Board, and the CBC would enable these organizations to circulate "hundreds of exhibitions," films, plays, and lectures to the community centres, similar to the work of CEMA in Great Britain. "Grants-in-aid would have to be made to assist in the maintenance and operation of community centres." The artists requested a grant of \$25,000 [\$345,000 in 2014 dollars] to survey further the needs of communities for community centres.¹²⁷⁷

¹²⁷⁶ Ibid., 332.

¹²⁷⁷ Ibid., 333-35.

In addition to proposals for national parklands, housing and town planning, and the promotion of industrial arts, the *Brief* also called for the establishment of new national cultural institutions such as a national library, a national orchestral training centre, an enlarged King's Printer for publications on art, music, ethnology, crafts and history, and the establishment of a state theatre for professional musical and dramatic productions. Such a state theatre "could be supplemented by a chain of regional theatres, financed by federal government assistance under arrangements with municipalities which would undertake to manage and maintain them."¹²⁷⁸

At the conclusion of the Special Committee for Reconstruction and Re-establishment hearing, D. A. McNiven, Liberal MP for Regina, thanked the artists' delegation on behalf of the Committee. "I think all members of our committee will agree that during the three years we have been in session this meeting of the committee is unique in several respects." "It is unique in that there has been a larger attendance to hear this delegation than to hear previous delegations, and I think by common consent we will agree that it is the most distinguished delegation we have had before us, comprising people who are distinguished in several spheres." He also noted that the artists' presentation "is unique in another aspect in that this delegation seeks the development of self-expression for the good of the community and never has the matter of profits or earnings or dollars or cents entered into the discussion. The discussion this morning has been stimulating and will engender a good deal of thought among the members of our committee."¹²⁷⁹

In his memoirs, John Coulter noted his own fascination with "the incredulous surprise of the politicians at what they found themselves faced with" in June of 1944. "Presumably they had anticipated a tiresome forenoon of being amiably tactful to a clutch of fluttery featherbrains; artists, impractical footlers whose life was a fussy tangle of misunderstood reality and cloudy unattainable dream. Instead they were confronted by a thoroughly informed team of citizens, constituents with votes to give or withhold, and with daunting mastery of proposals which had been thought out to the last detail of cost and effect, all of them with precisely calculated figures

¹²⁷⁸ Ibid., 335-38.

¹²⁷⁹ Ibid., 356.

at their fingertips. Bumbling artists! They were disciplined and formidable as a delegation of practiced actuaries.”¹²⁸⁰

As Coulter suggested, the artists’ summary brief succeeded brilliantly in asserting to the Parliamentarians that Canadian art was not the product of a few isolated individuals with a limited public following but was central to the economic and cultural well-being of the nation. Rather than confining themselves to the post-war integration of a few thousand Canadians serving in the armed forces who wished to pursue the arts as a profession, the authors of the summary brief called for nothing less than a complete revolution in the way Canadians thought about and fostered the arts in Canada. Many of the *Brief*’s proposals to stimulate and distribute Canadian self-expression and create a national culture with the assistance of a government ministry or body such as the Canada Council, the establishment of a national library, an enlarged National Film Board, National Gallery, Archives, a state theatre such as the National Arts Centre, a chain of regional theatres, government subsidies for individual artists and arts organizations, increased copyright protection, and projecting the arts as Canada’s face abroad in international diplomacy would take years and decades to come into effect.

“An astounding document,” Maria Tippett writes in *Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts Before the Massey Commission*, “the ‘Brief’ managed to diagnose both the strengths and the weaknesses of the country’s cultural life with a quite unprecedented force and accuracy...it initiated serious discussion of the idea that responsibility for cultural activity should be assumed by government. For that contribution alone, it takes a place among the key events in Canada’s recent cultural history.”¹²⁸¹

Subversive Prophets and the ‘Laity’

¹²⁸⁰ Coulter, *In My Day*, 207.

¹²⁸¹ Tippett, 172, 174.

The presentation of the artists' briefs to the House of Commons Special Committee for Reconstruction and Re-establishment had several immediate benefits. It generated wide public and media attention about the role of the arts in Canadian society, publicized the fact that there was a group of artists that had been accepted by the federal government as representing Canadian artists as a whole, and indicated that this grouping was providing national, as opposed to merely local or provincial leadership. The publication in July of the Committee's *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence No. 10* by the King's Printer, containing the summary brief, the 15 individual briefs by the participating artists' organizations and the subsequent discussion with the Parliamentarians, provided further legitimacy to the artists' cause. An inspiring document at ten cents a copy, it could be easily circulated.

The result of the aim by the "subversive prophets" to win over the Canadian public as consumers of their symbolic goods (the "laity" in Pierre Bourdieu's model of social and cultural change) can be traced in their own writings and publications, in the daily press and on CBC radio. Walter Herbert, in the June 29, 1944 *Ottawa Journal*, described the presentation of the artists' *Brief* in "An Acorn of Culture Is Planted on the Hill." He wrote that the artists' delegation "included some of Canada's most distinguished men and women, and it spoke with a degree of authority which most people considered impossible until they saw it happen." Herbert also noted the presence of other major cultural figures at the Committee hearings such as H.O. McCurry, director of the National Gallery of Canada, Arthur Phelps from CBC radio, and Louis de B. Corriveau, editor of the *Canadian Review of Music and Other Arts*. He suggested that "On a June day the acorn was well and truly planted on Parliament Hill. It remains to be seen if Canadians will demand the oak tree with branches reaching from our one coast to the other."

Three months later, *Canadian Art* summarized press reaction to the artists' *Brief* and the suggestion of government support for the arts in "An Acorn On Parliament Hill," published in the October-November 1944 issue. It cited an article by F.D.L. Smith published in the *Globe and Mail* already in May and reprinted in the *Ottawa Journal*, in which Smith called for the establishment of civic art centres in cities and towns across Canada as war memorials. *Canadian*

Art also cited a leading editorial, "For a Richer Life," possibly written by Harry Southam, in the *Ottawa Citizen*. It editorialized, "Some of the most imaginative, stimulating and intelligent proposals yet made to the Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment have been those of Canadian workers in the arts." The *Citizen* averred optimistically that "There does not seem to be much opposition to an ambitious and richly financed post-war plan to encourage the arts in Canada. The responsibility now rests with experienced public servants in these fields like H.O. McCurry, the director of the National Gallery, to make concrete plans and put their financial requirements in the estimates. They need fear no longer the obstruction of a crabbed Treasury Board or a hostile House of Commons."¹²⁸²

In addition to highly positive *Toronto Star* coverage, "A Noble Vision for Canada," and a long column by William Arthur Deacon in the *Globe and Mail*, *Canadian Art* also cited the *Winnipeg Free Press* article "Why Not Train Artists?" The only skeptical response cited by *Canadian Art* was an editorial by Robertson Davies in his *Peterborough Examiner*, also reprinted in the *Ottawa Journal*. "A capital which has neither a theatre nor an orchestra (as is the case of Ottawa) is pretty much a one-horse establishment. We doubt very much that a Canadian theatre would ever be granted any aid by a Canadian government," Davies editorialized. The *Canadian Art* article noted that "after outlining what was being done for the drama in England," the *Examiner* continued: "The British Government thinks that it is important to amuse people and to amuse them well. It will be many years, we think, before a Canadian government entertains any such extraordinary idea. Our political psychology is still of the frontier variety; Parliament can spare time to haggle over the price of strawberries, but has never a thought or a penny for the arts."

Cultural leaders themselves were not in complete agreement about the artists' submission to the Turgeon Committee. William Arthur Deacon, literary editor of the *Globe and Mail*, wrote in his June 24 column that "Wednesday, June 21, may be remembered as the beginning of co-ordinated artistic life in Canada because of the presentation to the Gray Turgeon Special Committee of the

¹²⁸² Walter Herbert, "An Acorn On Parliament Hill," *Canadian Art* 2:1 (October-November 1944), 15-18.

House of Commons on Reconstruction of a Brief Concerning the Cultural Aspects of Canadian Reconstruction.” In his article “The Arts in Canada Speak Out Before Parliamentary Committee,” Deacon called the *Brief* “a piece of pioneering without parallel in the cultural life of Canada and should so rouse public enthusiasm that the Government will see the wisdom of concurrence.”

Deacon had been a founding member of the Winnipeg Branch of the Canadian Authors’ Association in 1921 and as literary editor of *Saturday Night* (1922-28), the *Toronto Mail and Empire* (1928-1936) and the *Globe and Mail* (1936-) championed the cause of Canadian writers and other artists. Yet Deacon vociferously objected to the number one objective of the artists’ *Brief*—the creation of a national arts body to direct government assistance to artists and their audiences. Like Robertson Davies, he questioned the ability of politicians to direct and manage Canadian culture. “Supervision means control, and if there is to be any public control of artists and their work we shall have copied the worst single feature of the Nazi,” he wrote in his column. “Many things can be mass produced but never art. I believe some kinds of business are better under State control, but never those which depend as does art on individual skill and originality. If the price of Government help is enslavement of the arts, then let us scratch along as we are. We dare not pay that price, which is ultimately a matter of selling your soul’s integrity to curry favor with a Government that can help the artist to material success or make life impossible for him.”

Deacon nevertheless enthusiastically endorsed the artists’ proposal for the establishment of 575 community centres from coast to coast, “in places large and small, and so geographically spaced that the majority of people will be within reach of one of them.” Instead of a stifling centralized cultural state *dirigisme*, the community centres concept promised the furthering of individual creativity and cultural democracy. “Possibilities are infinite,” he ventured. “From this one item alone the cultural life of Canada can be stimulated out of recognition within a decade. These 575 places will be inevitable breeding spots for creative work of every imaginable kind.”

L. de B. Corriveau, in his "The Arts Stand Before Parliament," had also enthusiastically editorialized in the April-May 1944 *Canadian Review of Music and Other Arts* that "Wednesday, June 21, may have marked the dawn of a new era in the development of the arts in Canada. Certainly, it marked a long step forward because it saw the co-ordination of sixteen of the leading organizations interested in the arts on a plan for the recognition and encouragement of the arts and crafts in Canada." But while Corriveau acknowledged that the artists' *Brief* was "magnificent in its scope," he noted that "perhaps, in this very fact lies a weakness, as far as the government is concerned. The Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment is faced with a tremendous task in postwar adjustments. They might hesitate to implement the plan proposed because it does involve a great deal of detail and a great deal of work, whereas a more simple programme could have been effected without opposition."

Corriveau agreed with Walter Herbert's argument, published as "A Ministry of Cultural Affairs: A Contrary View" in the same issue of the *Canadian Review*, that it would have been easier for the government to accede to a request to set up an interim fine arts commission within an existing government ministry such as the Secretary of State rather than to set up a new distinct government department for the arts. He also believed the artists' *Brief* should have laid greater emphasis on the economic importance of the arts. "The role of the arts and crafts as the basis of design in industry, as an outlet for the use of raw materials, as a source of income for people in depressed income brackets, could have been given greater emphasis," he stated. "The brief might have had greater appeal for the parliamentary committee if it had been possible to show that the investment of \$10,000,000 in community centres would have brought not only unlimited cultural benefit but \$20,000,000 worth of material benefits."

Fred Taylor, Quebec president of the Federation of Canadian Artists, gave his assessment of the artists' *Brief* in the March 1945 *National Affairs Monthly*, the organ of the communist Labour-Progressive Party. He urged the labour movement to support the artists' demands and for artists and workers to join in the struggle to create a higher standard of life in Canada. "The potential of

the arts as a force for progress is enormous,” Taylor suggested. But he also warned that “the bare fact of the Government having received the artists’ expert advice does not mean that it is sure to act upon it, enact legislation and appropriate money to implement the proposals contained in the Brief.” Echoing Walter Herbert’s *Ottawa Journal* article “An Acorn of Culture Is Planted on the Hill,” Taylor warned that only strong public support would compel politicians to change the status quo. “The realization of the artists’ proposals depends upon the defeat of the same anti-progressive forces which obstruct all social progress... We of the labor movement know that the Government *follows* the people, and does only what large numbers of them say should be done.¹²⁸³

Besides rallying their own followers, cultural leaders also succeeded in winning the endorsement of newspapers across the country. Like the *Ottawa Citizen*, the *Toronto Star*, with its circulation of 294,000, entitled its July 13, 1944 editorial “A Noble Vision for Canada” and called the artists’ *Brief* to the Turgeon Committee “of unusual significance.” “It submitted that in their plans for post-war employment and improvements for this country, the dominion government cannot afford to leave out cultural services for the people... Human life would be arid indeed if there were no music, fine pictures, books, and beautiful design in materials, furnishings and things in daily use,” the *Star* stated. “This appeal by Canada’s creative artists should strike responsive chords in many hearts and minds,” the paper editorialized. “Canada has won prestige in the fields of medical science, trade and industry. It would help to complete the country’s development and bring happiness to the people, if the dominion government made a substantial effort to put into operation some of the plans submitted by the artists, architects, town-planners and allied groups.” The *Star* endorsed the major recommendation of the artists’ *Brief* that “Canada needs a well-planned, nationally co-ordinated program, which is democratically administered. That this can be done by a national government has been demonstrated in Great Britain where music, art exhibits, drama, etc., are being brought to the people by the government-sponsored Council for the Encouragement of Music and Art.”

¹²⁸³ Fred B. Taylor, “The Arts and Postwar Reconstruction,” *National Affairs Monthly* 2:3 (March 1945), 78, 80, 79, 81.

CBC Radio and a Country in Search of Itself

While *Maritime Art*, the *Canadian Review*, *Canadian Art* and daily newspapers were important forums for cultural communication between artists and their public, CBC Radio served as an even more influential public medium for advancing the idea of greatly increased government intervention in a planned economy. It reached over three-quarters of Canada's population of 11 million.

The most popular of the CBC's public affairs series was *Of Things to Come: Inquiry on the Post-War World*. It was produced by Rupert Lucas, national CBC supervisor of drama, and consisted of sixteen broadcasts from cities across Canada on the CBC national network. The central message of *Of Things to Come*, propounded in an almost too overtly propagandistic fashion, was the necessity of government planning and intervention in the transition from a wartime to a peacetime economy to avoid a severe economic recession. The series suggested Canada was heading towards social unrest and revolutionary upheavals if the (Liberal) government did not intervene to moderate the economic swings of unbridled capitalism. Its concluding sixteenth program, "Progress Report," broadcast from Toronto June 13, 1943, proposed, like its inaugural program, that the dreams of Canadians could be turned into reality by their (Liberal) government. *Of Things to Come*—with a new subtitle "A Citizen's Forum on Canada in the Post-War World"—returned to the airwaves for twenty three additional broadcasts beginning November 23, 1943 and concluding May 2, 1944. Although the writer Morley Callaghan acted as the popular "Counsel for the People" on each broadcast, a discussion of the function of art and the artist in society was not included in the first two years of the series.

Yet CBC Radio did broadcast other programs and series that examined Canada's cultural life and the conditions necessary for the creation of a Canadian cultural identity. The most important of these was *Canadian Pattern*, a fifteen-minute noontime series begun in June of 1943 by

Canada's leading broadcast journalist and cultural critic, Arthur Phelps. Phelps had published poetry and had been active with the Community Players of Winnipeg in the early 1920s. Chair of the English Department at Wesley College, University of Manitoba, he had also begun a broadcasting career in Winnipeg in the late 1920s with *University on the Air* debates on local radio. He subsequently worked with the CBC, which published a series of his broadcasts heard on the CBC national network, *This Canada* and *These United States* in 1940 and 1941. In 1945, Phelps became the General Supervisor of the CBC's International Service.¹²⁸⁴

What was remarkable about Phelps was the clarity and depth of his cultural analysis, the subjectivity and richness with which he expressed himself, and his persistent advocacy of solutions—primarily government support of the arts—that he believed would ameliorate the cultural deficiencies he had analyzed. Phelps was excited to be a cultural critic in an era in which Canada, as a result of the Second World War, was abandoning its semi-colonial status and in which Canadians were actively searching for and constructing their own identity. Yet he warned that this new Canadian nation in the process of becoming still had to place much greater emphasis on its cultural life to balance its political and economic growth.

Phelps concluded the first *Canadian Pattern* series on December 26, 1943 with “Problems and Convictions of a Canadian: Part II.” He suggested to his radio audience that the arts were particularly important to a people facing the horrors of war and that “we must attempt to store up some strength and beauty against chaos.” Phelps focused this broadcast on literature and the arts, which he called “the unrecognized and unorganized department of our national life. I should like for it both more recognition and more organization.” Six months before artists and national arts organizations presented their comprehensive proposals for government support and the setting up of a governmental body for the supervision of all cultural activities to the Turgeon Committee, Phelps made his own proposal for a national arts board. On his December 26, 1943 *The Canadian Pattern* broadcast, he declared that “the greatest need just now is strong money support

¹²⁸⁴ Phelps' radio scripts cited in this chapter are located in the Herman Voaden fonds, York University Archives and Special Collections, call nos. 1991-020/001 (03 and 04) and 1991-

administered by a national board. I come back to my N.A.B., my National Arts Board idea. Such a Board more widely based and more strongly supported than any group of solicitous and well intentioned private citizens could ever be, could do at once the following:

1. It could revive and reorganize the Drama Festivals; perhaps in cooperation with the CBC, associating poetry reading Festivals;
 2. It could encourage ballet in selected centres in Canada and not leave one or two concerned individuals in debt because they had faith in art in Canada;
 3. It could support for specified periods selected novelists, dramatists, artists, sculptors, poets, honouring their labours as being as worthy the national economy's hire as any other labour;
 4. It could offer a trained resident Director for art projects in selected communities and Universities and Colleges;
 5. It could further inter-regional exchanges of books, music and paintings; and perhaps as well of the persons of the writers, musicians and artists.
- My list, I know, is not complete. But I am convinced that over a period of years some such activities as these would integrate our national life, heal many of our divisions and reveal to us the virility and richness of our Canadian emergent society...

In this time of national jeopardy and dismay I believe the thing I talk of could be started with informed good will and merely a quarter of a million [\$3.497 million in 2014 dollars] of our Government's money. Your money and mine should be invested directly and continuously in the interpretation of Canada through her artists... We could give the appropriate necessary encouragement if we were spiritually minded enough to provide the money. I wonder what would happen if we all wrote the Government.

Phelps devoted most of his June 25, 1944 6:30 pm *Canadian Pattern* broadcast to the presentation of the artists' *Brief* before the Parliamentarians. He declared, "Last Wednesday was the longest day of the year; it may prove to have been the most important of the year in relation to the cultural life of our country." Describing the presentation of the artists' *Brief* in Room 429 in the Parliament buildings, he noted, "Somebody near us said, 'I wonder what will happen.' Somebody else said, 'Here begins the revolution.' A voice added, 'Yes, but not the bloody kind; a Canadian kind.'" According to Phelps, "In the end, as we who were observers sat listening, I think we were persuaded of at least two things:"

1. that in this Canada of ours is an accumulated force of creative energy of a really vast significance which no Parliament of Canada, acting as the expression of the people's will, dare ignore. I use Parliament, of course, to mean our elected representatives of all parties.
2. that the channeling of this energy into the creative forms and agencies of a cultural revolution may be the most immediate and wisest way to avoid destructive explosions and perhaps general national disorder...
Canada wants the decency and beauty of creative peace.

CBC Radio, in series such as the thirty-minute September 1944 *Art in Living* on the national CBC network, also focused public attention on Canadian artists, the conditions in which they worked, and whether the federal government should support the arts. Its first September 5 program on post-war town planning, slum removal, improved hygiene, etc. was produced by Archie MacCorkindale at CBC Vancouver in collaboration with the B.C. region of the Federation of Canadian Artists. The program, adapted for radio from the booklet *Planning With You* published by the *Architectural Forum*, was broadcast the same week as an exhibition with the same title at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

While CBC Radio strongly advocated government intervention in town planning to ensure a hygienic and aesthetic environment for Canadians, this advocacy was much weaker in other areas such as industrial design where free market forces appeared to satisfactorily regulate production and consumption. The September 12, 1944 *Art in Living* broadcast was a round table forum moderated by Arthur Phelps, "the second of five discussions on the place of the arts in Canadian life." The topic of discussion was the Graphic Arts, "the Art you look at." "That Art," Phelps stated, "can be in the form of a painting, a piece of sculpture, a bridge, a house, an advertising poster, or if you like, a design on wallpaper or a piece of dress fabric."

Reflecting the public and media impact made by the artists' June 1944 submissions to the Turgeon Committee, the question of the program was "Can the artist who created such forms make a good living in Canada? In other words, do we encourage or discourage our artists?" The program featured the designer and painter Henry Eveleigh from Montreal, Malcolm Miller, also of Montreal, who made his living in advertising, and the sculptor Elizabeth Wyn Wood, whom

Phelps introduced as “the efficient chairman in whose hands the Artists Brief was so ably presented before the Parliamentary Committee in Ottawa recently.”

The September 26th, 1944 *Art in Living* featured a round table forum with composer Sir Ernest MacMillan, Dean of the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto, violinist Alexander Brott and J. M. Beaudet, Supervisor of Music for the CBC. Chaired by Arthur Phelps, it focused on the need for better music education and on the need of bringing music and musicians to a wider public. In terms of public support for Canadian musicians and their ability to make a living from performing, MacMillan stated, “I doubt if there are more than half a dozen pianists making an adequate living through concert work in Canada today.” “I am sorry to say from experience,” Beaudet added, “the public simply will not attend concerts by Canadian artists.” Composers were also experiencing great difficulties in having their music scores published or distributed within and outside of Canada. MacMillan had personally seen how the U.S. government’s Works Projects Administration had helped to surmount this major obstacle for composers. “I wish that in Canada we could have such a scheme as I saw in operation under the W.P.A. in the Fleisher Library in Philadelphia. A whole battery of copyists was kept at work on scores and parts of orchestral works by American composers. These copies had been made available for performance throughout the country without any expense to the composer.”

MacMillan spoke out strongly in favour of direct Canadian government support of the arts as he had also seen first hand while conducting in Great Britain. “We need something on the lines of the British Council which has operated under the Foreign Office in London since 1934 for the purpose of spreading a knowledge of British culture, including British music, abroad,” he stated. “There’s no doubt a great deal of fine work is being produced in Canada which is not adequately recognized. We need first a central body with financial backing such as C.E.M.A. or a National Arts Board to organize concert going by Canadians in small as well as large centres.” Endorsing still another main plank of the artists’ submissions to the Turgeon Committee, he added, “We need also adequate concert auditoriums such as the Community Centre Plan calls for.” Phelps summarized the round table forum discussion on Canadian music for his listeners at the end of

the broadcast, once again lending his personal support to government support for the arts. “There is need for a new kind of Canadian consciousness confident in itself, proud of its creative work, and concerned through self discovery through the Arts... To encourage this potential there is urgent need for disinterested private and governmental support of music as one of the Arts; perhaps in a preliminary way under a National Arts Board.” He concluded the five-part *Art in Living* broadcasts October 3, 1944 from Winnipeg with a round table forum on Canadian literature in which he criticized the lack of public support for Canadian writers and suggested government support could provide a stimulus for indigenous literary creation.

In an October 15, 1944 *Canadian Pattern* broadcast, Phelps spoke about the widespread anxiety of Canadians whether their society could cope with what many feared would be economic and political instability following the end of the Second World War. He was concerned that Canadians were not prepared to interact with this new world order because they had not yet become conscious of who they were. “We Canadians have not realized and explored and taken responsibility for our own identity,” he stated. “And that brings me to the part the arts play in the articulation of a nation’s culture. I think in the main we have failed to realize ourselves as we should because the arts have not served us. It may be we have not permitted the arts to serve us. ...Canada has not produced her share of artists and artistic production; Canada has not pulled her weight in the modern world in recognizing and paying for artistic endeavor. This state of the nation relative to the arts is what I call our culture crisis of this decade.”

For Phelps the June 1944 artists’ *Brief* to the Turgeon Committee symbolized both the incipient Canadian cultural awakening and the means—state support—through which Canadians could realize their cultural identity and become full citizens of the world. “That Artists’ Brief... is a symbol and practical rallying point,” he declared in his October 15, 1944 broadcast. “It should be studied by every Service Club. It should be in every citizen’s hand. Ten thousand copies of it, asked for by Canadians, might refashion Canada.” “I think the Artists’ Brief may get practical Parliamentary recognition. It will, if you owners of tongues and pens and paper wish it so,” he stated to his listeners. “As we encourage our artists through our respect for the arts we shall learn

the deeper values and challenges of our own society. Our inner pattern will be revealed and we shall be readier for intimacy with world society. Indeed, our sudden self discovery in terms of material achievement demonstrated before the world but emphasizes the need for this deeper self discovery the arts provide. The Canadian time is ripe.”

Cumulatively, the arts advocacy by cultural leaders generated even greater extended support from the CBC than the daily press. On December 12, 1944 even *Of Things to Come* held a Citizen’s Forum entitled “Can Canada Support the Arts?” The broadcast, published in part in the *Canadian Review of Music and Other Arts*, featured a round table with Elizabeth Wyn Wood, John Coulter and Toronto businessman and Arts and Letters Club member W. Eason Humphreys. Morley Callaghan had some difficulty making this a stimulating and provocative broadcast since all the participants basically favoured government support for the arts. They perceived the arts, supported by state funding as in Britain, as the means of creating the new civilization they thought would emerge after World War II. Wood stated that “Our grandfathers came here and cleared the land to make a new world. They held a dream in the soul. All right, the land is cleared now, we possess the country, but the dream isn’t necessarily dead. The new frontiers are the new frontiers of art, of the spirit. We, the grandchildren of those pioneers, are trying to express in paint and stone and letters that adventurous, fearless, pioneer spirit which still burns in us.”

Coulter asserted that “the state will founder unless it can find a way of life acceptable to an awakening and forward-moving people. *At whatever cost we must find a sequel to war as exciting as war...* But look now. What in peace can be as exciting as war? I say—the making of a new country. That, surely, can be a great creative excitement, and the vision to create this new country can be generated through the arts. It is one way, and perhaps at first the only way, of creating this new life. Without vision the people perish. Subsidize the arts—or founder. What will it cost? It will cost us Canada if we don’t.” Humphreys pointed out that “Other countries like Great Britain, France, Mexico, Sweden, have all made their art known to the world through the action of the Government which is really the action of the people speaking out to the world. That

is as it should be. Why not a Canadian Council to speak for Canadian art as the British Council speaks for British art? Last year the British Government spent roughly a million dollars for this purpose. That is for foreign propaganda alone.”¹²⁸⁵

Of Things to Come broadcasts were facilitated by Citizen’s Forum discussion bulletins, prepared a week in advance of broadcasts by the Canadian Council for Education in Citizenship and published by the Canadian Association for Adult Education. Their aim was to stimulate discussions by study groups. The *Bulletin* for the December 12 broadcast referred to the great stimulus to the arts and Canadian culture resulting from government financed institutions such as the CBC, the National Film Board and the National Gallery and suggested that still “Further Encouragement Is Needed.” “Although these developments [the CBC, NFB and National Gallery] are all steps in the right direction,” the *Bulletin* noted, “too few people are affected and the help is too limited to be a total solution.” It largely endorsed the cultural vision and platform presented to the Turgeon Committee on June 21 and referenced the W.P.A. program in support of arts and culture in the United States, the artists’ *Brief* recommendation for the establishment of “a non-political Arts Commission, which would represent all the arts and supervise cultural activities,” and the *Brief*’s Canada-wide community centre proposal. “These centres would become the core of the communities’ recreational and cultural life. Artists, actors, musicians and orchestras could travel across the breadth of the country, using the small community centres to bring their arts to the people. The plan has the two-fold advantage of more nearly equalizing cultural opportunity throughout the country and of providing employment for the artist.”

The concluding *Bulletin* section, “Unity,” cited Lawren Harris’s “Reconstruction Through the Arts” article published in the June-July 1944 *Canadian Art*. It noted that the distinguished artist and President of the Federation of Canadian Artists “in these words gives us hope that the development of our arts and the spread of interest in them and knowledge of them through the

¹²⁸⁵ “*Of Things to Come: Can Canada Support the Arts?*” *Canadian Review of Music and Other Arts* 3:11-12 (December-January 1945), 15, 17, 18, 20.

country will help bring about the unity that is Canada's greatest need. The universal appeal of the arts can transcend our sectional prejudices, racial diversities and language barriers."¹²⁸⁶

One other indication of how extensively the cultural leaders' proposals to the Turgeon Committee penetrated to some circles within the Canadian government is suggested by a special theme issue on Canadian art in the December 1, 1944 *Canadian Affairs*, published for discussion groups in the Canadian Armed Forces by the Wartime Information Board in Ottawa. Its editorial, "Art in War—and After," asked servicemen and servicewomen to consider: "Why do the Nazis burn some books and call some paintings decadent? Can democracy afford to ignore art?...What have Canadian artists been doing, in peace and war? What do they offer us? What steps can be taken in our country on the artistic front to help make a better Canada after the war?"

The featured article in the *Canadian Affairs* issue, also made available to civilian educational groups at the request of the Canadian Council of Education for Citizenship, was Barker Fairley's twelve-page essay, "Art—Canadians, for the Use of." In "The Care and Feeding of Artists" section of his essay, the former honorary chairman of the Allied Arts Council in Toronto noted that it was difficult to determine why art flourished at certain periods, places and disciplines. "But we can see that it isn't just a matter of accident. It depends on conditions, geographical and social, which we can do something to improve. If we can't produce art at will, we can—within limits—produce conditions favorable to art and then take what we get." Fairley pointed to the

¹²⁸⁶ *Of Things to Come*. A Citizen's Forum. *Bulletin* No. 6, December 12, 1944. Canada as a Nation—Part 2. "Can Canada Support the Arts?: Our National Culture; Art for All Citizens; Community Centres." The *Bulletin* asked the following report questions for Citizen's Forums: "1. In what way do the arts contribute to your every day life? In your home? In your town or city? What facilities are there in your community for young people to take part in music, painting, drama, etc. if they so desire? 2. Should our writers, painters and musicians consciously stress Canadianism in their work? What can the arts (drama, movies, painting, music, etc.) do in promoting a sense of Canadianism? 3. Do you think there is a need for a community centre in your community, as a focal point for recreation, the arts and education? Do you think that your community would be interested in supporting and contributing to such a centre?" Herman Voaden fonds, York University Archives and Special Collections, call nos. 1982-019/001 (12) and 1982-019/002 (22).

important role of Mexican artists in the modernizing of their country after the Mexican Revolution and to the American Federal Art Project under the Works Progress Administration during the Depression. “Whatever the final verdict on this exciting venture,” he wrote of the Federal Art Project, “we can agree that it has furnished us with an object-lesson in social initiative from which we can learn something here and now.” In the concluding “Looking Ahead” section of his essay Barker Fairly wrote, “The future will have its problems. After we have made sure that our right to live is no longer endangered, we shall have to face the huge task of rebuilding what has been destroyed. But that is not enough. To justify the sacrifices that have been made, it must be a new world—brighter than it has ever been, with greater opportunities than the past has afforded most of us.” He concluded “This is a job which can be achieved only if all of us, like a fighting unit, act as a team. And to keep that clear in our minds, we will need the help of our artists.”¹²⁸⁷

The Cultural Turn

By the end of the Second World War, Canadian cultural leaders—Pierre Bourdieu’s “prophets” with subversion strategies—had succeeded in converting significant segments of the “laity” to prospective consumers of their symbolic goods despite Mackenzie King’s opposition to their efforts. Public opinion was receptive to their cultural message. A Gallup Poll released on Armistice Day, November 11, 1944, reported that only 10% of Canadians wanted war memorials in the form of monuments. Instead, 90% favoured memorials such as playgrounds, clubs, hospitals and schools.¹²⁸⁸ This overwhelming cross-Canada support for “living” war memorials

¹²⁸⁷ Barker Fairley, “Art—Canadians, for the Use of,” *Canadian Affairs* (Canadian edition) 1: (December 1, 1944), 12, 13, 14, 15. Fairley’s essay was followed by “What the Artists Think,” a summary of the main artists’ June 1944 recommendations to the Turgeon Committee.

¹²⁸⁸ Canadian Institute of Public Opinion, “Gallup Poll of Canada: Nine in 10 Canadians Ask Useful War Memorials,” *Toronto Star*, November 11, 1944. According to the *Star*, “the Institute found that there were no noteworthy sectional or group variations from this division of opinion. In other words, one province thinks just like another; men think like women, younger people divide just the same as older people.” The *Star* also reported a similar response from Norman Down, executive secretary of the Canadian Congress of Labor, in Ottawa. “It is unquestionably the view of the workers of Canada as represented by this congress that war memorials should

and the useful role they could play in reintegrating returning service men into Canadian society even won the support of some members of the government and federal bureaucracy. On February 18, 1945 the Canadian Press wire service reported from New York that Brooke Claxton, the Minister of National Health and Welfare, said “he hoped the idea of building community centres would spread into every Canadian city, town and village no matter how large or small.” Speaking during the intermission on the Metropolitan Opera’s radio program, Claxton declared that “many communities already were planning recreation centres, but many more were needed. ‘I think one of the ways in which we can gain a new sense of cultural and social purpose after the war is through community centres. They will provide in each city and town a meeting place where all citizens can make their contribution to our social life, to art, to music, drama and sport. Community centres may very well produce more fine arts, more composers and musicians, more dramatists and actors, more poets and writers.’”¹²⁸⁹

Alex Macdonald, the CCF Parliamentary Secretary, had already strongly endorsed the artists’ *Brief* and its call for a governmental arts ministry in the CCF’s November 9, 1944 *The New Commonwealth*. In an article entitled “Ministry of Fine Arts Would Encourage Canadian Culture” he pointed to the underutilized cultural capital of artists and advocated that their cultural products be made available to all Canadians. “Our artists, musicians and writers, our latent talents, are one of the greatest sources of national wealth we have...Democracy needs equality of opportunity, political, social, economic—and cultural.” In April of 1945, M.J. Coldwell, the CCF party leader, stated that several of the main recommendations of the 1944 artists’ *Brief* were now CCF party policy. As reported in the *London Free Press*, Coldwell declared that “Canada’s

take the form of community halls, libraries, recreational and other community centres rather than sculptured stone or bronze.” See also “The Community Centre Movement” and “What Makes a Community Centre?” *Toronto Star*, November 24, 1944 and January 12, 1945.

¹²⁸⁹ See “Community Centres Needed: Claxton,” *Globe and Mail*, February 18, 1945, “Claxton Presses Community Centre,” *Montreal Gazette*, February 19, 1945, and “Community Centres as New Source of Cultural and Social Purpose: Claxton,” *Toronto Weekly News*, March 1, 1945. See also Brooke Claxton, “Foreword,” to John P. Kidd, *Community Centres* (Ottawa: Canadian Council of Education for Citizenship, 1945), 3. Ian Eisenhardt, National Director of Physical Fitness, also endorsed the community centre movement. See Fred Lasserre and Gordon Lunan, “Community Centres,” *Canadian Affairs* (Canadian Edition) 2:17 (November 1945), 3, 4.

national war memorial should be on spacious cultural lines making for the development of distinctive Canadian culture in the associated fields of art, music and the theatre, in the interests of fostering real Canadian unity.” He also revived the proposal for a national arts centre in Ottawa that Mackenzie King had first proposed at the Dominion Drama Festival in 1934 when he was the Leader of the Opposition.

Making it plain at the outset that the Caucus of the 10 C.C.F. members in Parliament had already considered and approved his plan, Mr. Coldwell advocated appropriation of a minimum of \$10,000,000 for the plan, to be supported by annual statutory grants for subsidies and maintenance of the scheme which, he added, should be worked out in close co-operation with the nine provinces. Mr. Coldwell explained that his plan featured the establishment in Ottawa, as the capital of the Dominion, of a cultural centre embracing a new art gallery, commodious auditorium, and national opera, national dramatic company and national symphony orchestra, the latter all generously subsidized. The co-operation of the provinces should be sought also, Mr. Coldwell emphasized, to construct similar cultural centres in each province where provincial opera, dramatic and symphony orchestra organizations can be built up. There would then be arranged an interchange of the federal and provincial organizations and artists in the provincial fields would provide artists for the national organizations at Ottawa.¹²⁹⁰

In her original “A National Program for the Arts in Canada” essay that had galvanized cultural leaders into presenting their artists’ *Brief* to the Turgeon Committee, Elizabeth Wyn Wood had recognized that her proposal required not only an “understanding interest on the part of newspapers” but also “the placing of the right persons in positions of responsibility” and above all “greater vision.”¹²⁹¹ Despite his idolizing of British Prime Minister William Gladstone and Matthew Arnold, Mackenzie King steadfastly refused to play this pivotal role in initiating greater state support for arts and culture. In chapter X and the conclusion to this dissertation, I will discuss how King fulfilled Bourdieu’s role of a “priest” with conservation strategies who defended orthodoxy as he obstructed the artists’ demands for cultural democracy.

¹²⁹⁰ “Cultural Centre Urged As Canada’s War Shrine,” *London Free Press*, April 7, 1945.

¹²⁹¹ Elizabeth Wyn Wood, “A National Program for the Arts in Canada,” 128.

Chapter X: The “Priestly” Mackenzie King

Only a month after the outbreak of World War II, Mackenzie King received an inquiry regarding culture (“CULTURE MORE THAN EVER”) from the publisher and Member of Parliament James Samuel Taylor. Elected as one of the first Co-operative Commonwealth Federation MPs in 1935 but sitting as an Independent for the riding of Nanaimo since 1937, Taylor wrote King to draw his attention to “the extreme desirability of developing, with a real purpose, the cultural side of the character and achievements of our people.” He suggested that “Not alone here at home but among the soldiers in the field some care should be exacted that the greater and grander things of Life should LIVE though bodies may be maimed and die.”¹²⁹²

King wanted Taylor to join the Liberal Party and therefore was most cordial in thanking him for his communication, writing, “It is exactly the kind of letter I would expect from you.” He claimed to be “with you heart and soul as to the desirability of maintaining the cultural activities of our people in time of war. Just how this can be best affected is something with respect to which even in the press of the more immediate difficulties which beset us daily I shall require your help and that of many others.”

Paradoxically, King went on to reference Gresham’s Law—the economic principle that in a competition between two competing commodities such as precious metals, bad money will drive good money out of circulation. In his *Industry and Humanity*, he had renamed it the “Law of

¹²⁹² J.S. Taylor to Mackenzie King, October 20, 1939. LAC reel C3751, page 237543. King recorded “a little talk” with Taylor in his diary on March 9, 1939 about astrology and “two remarkable paintings on ‘Birds’ by a young lad from Vancouver Island whom he is trying to help.” On March 28, 1938 he had recorded meeting with Taylor who had indicated his readiness to join the Liberal Party. “As we talked, he began to tell me without any suggestion of mine that he had been interested in occult studies for many years. He spoke about the new forces which he thought were beginning to assert themselves among others, communication of minds without any

Competing Standards” and applied it to labour working conditions and national and international competition in the manufacturing of commodities. In his reply to Taylor, he wrote, “I am afraid that a sort of Gresham’s law—I call it the Law of Competing Standards—operates with respect to culture and morals not less than with respect to the precious metals. Where the two are in circulation the baser standards tends to drive the purer out of circulation.” He assured Taylor, “However, knowing this we have the harder to strive to prevent it. You may rely upon my colleagues and myself doing what we can towards that end.”¹²⁹³ King’s letter reveals his persona as a Bourdieusian priest with conservation strategies defending orthodoxy against the onslaught of younger artists promoting “baser standards.”

The following year, King sent a message read at the opening of the 1940 annual convention of the Canadian Authors Association. He declared, “It becomes increasingly clear that the struggle in which we are engaged is not only a military engagement, but a defence of the customs, culture and values of our people. Anything which the Canadian Authors Association can do to strengthen the regard for the literature and poetry of our nation is a great contribution to our defence and our victory.”¹²⁹⁴ Two years later he again wrote to the CAA claiming that “the significance of the present war, the growing strength of our national consciousness, and the part which we will be called upon to play in the remoulding of a better world, will need and receive the inspired interpretation of those among us who have the grace of words and the gift of song.”¹²⁹⁵

King ostensibly affirmed the importance of culture and the arts in these communications. Yet his letter to Taylor clearly reveals—in Pierre Bourdieu’s paradigm of social change—his persona as

spoken word.” King thought of “the talk I had had with Hitler, and of some of the things that have been in my mind since.”

¹²⁹³ King to Taylor, October 24, 1939. LAC reel C3751, page 237544. For King on the Law of Competing Standards, see W.L Mackenzie King, *Industry and Humanity: A Study in the Principles Underlying Industrial Reconstruction*. (Toronto: Thomas Allen, Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1918), 66-80, 126, 325, 350, 352, 353.

¹²⁹⁴ Lyn Harrington, *Syllables of Recorded Time: The Story of the Canadian Authors Association 1921-1981* (Toronto: Simon & Pierre, 1981), 201.

¹²⁹⁵ Maria Tippett, *Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts before the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 168.

a “priest” with conservation strategies expressing his conviction that new bad art drives existing good art out of circulation, that he had the cultural authority to determine what “good” and “bad” art were, and that he and his government had the political authority to prevent the circulation of “bad” cultural commodities. In this chapter, I will conclude my analysis of how King obstructed the organizing by artists and cultural nationalists—the “prophets” with subversion strategies—and even members of his own administration—particularly Vincent Massey—lobbying for government support of arts and culture.

In addition to their cross-Canada organizing and the “March on Ottawa” described in the previous chapter, cultural leaders persistently lobbied Mackenzie King and members of his Cabinet. In 1943 Blodwen Davies, the art critic and secretary of the Canadian Humanist Group, urged arts and crafts organizations and “the creative workers of Canada” to write Ian Mackenzie, the Minister of Pensions and National Health responsible for reconstruction, to ensure that artists in the service received the same treatment in discharge policies as all other vocations. “Now is the time not only to firmly establish the claims of the arts and crafts as integral parts of the national employment situation, but to press for the appointment of at least an under-secretary of cultural affairs.”¹²⁹⁶ Davies herself also wrote Mackenzie King, suggesting the establishment of a department of cultural affairs. Though he passed on her communication to the Department of External Affairs, Davies informed H.O. McCurry at the National Gallery that the Prime Minister’s reply was “as sympathetic a response as I could have hoped for.”¹²⁹⁷

¹²⁹⁶ Blodwen Davies, “Artists in Post-War Canada,” *Maritime Art* 3:3 (February-March 1943), 70.

¹²⁹⁷ Blodwen Davies to H.O. McCurry, July 23 and August 2, 1943. Cited in Tippet, 170. A week after the presentation of the artists’ *Brief* to the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment, Davies wrote the Prime Minister urging him to “put your heart into fostering this project and giving leadership in the correlation of the government and the culture of Canada.” She wrote King again in October of 1944, suggesting that Canada have cultural attaches at its embassies and consulates abroad. King replied that he had forwarded her letter “to the officers of the Department of External Affairs who have been following the organisation of cultural activities abroad. The extent to which these activities can be furthered through Canadian missions is, at the moment, receiving careful consideration in the Department.”

In November of 1943 Jean Atkinson proposed a similar resolution for endorsement by the Heliconian Club of Toronto for submission to the Prime Minister. “Inasmuch as the Armed Forces of Canada include actors, musicians, writers and artists, we the undersigned members of the Heliconian Club of Toronto, respectfully request that His Majesty’s Government of Canada give the same consideration to the citizens following these professions as given to citizens of other professions and trades,” the resolution stated. “We request that, in the proposed rehabilitation and employment of the armed services at the conclusion of the war, provision be made to ensure employment to citizens desiring to continue their work in these professions.” The resolution also asked for the appointment of a “Commission” to implement these provisions.¹²⁹⁸

In February of 1944, the Heliconian Club sent a delegation to meet with Ian Mackenzie in Ottawa and read him the resolution they had sent to the Prime Minister. Eight months later, Mackenzie indeed announced that “provision is now made under the Post-Discharge Order for the professional training of actors, artists, musicians, and writers under the same arrangements as applied to other students.” But he also affirmed that the establishment of a cultural commission—since it involved education and therefore fell under provincial jurisdiction—would require “the specific approval of all the Provincial Governments.”¹²⁹⁹ The poet Dorothy Livesay once again lobbied Mackenzie regarding the post-war rehabilitation of writers in January of 1945.¹³⁰⁰ In October of 1945, G.L. Brodersen, Secretary-Treasurer of the Western Canada Theatre Conference, forwarded the Prime Minister a resolution passed by

Davies to King, June 30, 1944. H.R.L. Henry to Davies, July 6, 1944. Davies to King, October 13, 1944. King to Davies, October 26, 1944. LAC reel C7049, pages 310156-62.

¹²⁹⁸ Atkinson sent a copy of her resolution to George Pepall, President of the Arts and Letters Club, and to Judge Frank Denton, also a Club member, on November 22, suggesting that the Arts and Letters Club send a similar resolution to the Prime Minister. “As you know, in ordinary times it would be impossible to get a money grant through Parliament for Music, Art, Literature or Drama, but at this time rehabilitation of the armed services is being planned and enormous sums of money will be passed.”

¹²⁹⁹ Tippett, 170, 171.

¹³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 170.

the Conference at its annual meeting in Banff. It called on the government to implement the recommendations of the June 1944 artists' *Brief* and urged the government "to include in their deliberations during the coming session the cultural needs and demands of Canada, particularly with regard to the building and equipping of community centres." In King's absence, his secretary forwarded Brodersen's communication to the Minister of Reconstruction and the Minister of National Health and Welfare.¹³⁰¹

Herman Voaden had already lobbied Mackenzie King and other government Ministers with an even more comprehensive proposal for government support of the arts that extended beyond the rehabilitation of artists serving in the military in December of 1943. "In discussing post-war problems, insufficient attention has been given to the place of the arts in Canada," he wrote the Prime Minister December 14, 1943. "The enclosed statement represents the strongly-held opinions of great numbers of Canadians who are interested in a better type of civilization for Canada. I should be pleased to have you give your personal support to the recommendation it contains, and to have you bring them to the attention of the Cabinet and the Committee on Reconstruction." H.R.L. Henry, Mackenzie King's private secretary, responded on December 17: "The Prime Minister has asked me to acknowledge your letter of the 14th of December, and the enclosed suggestions for increased government support of the arts in Canada in the post-war period. At Mr. King's direction, your memorandum on this subject is being brought to the attention of the Advisory Committee on Economic Policy."

Voaden's "SUGGESTIONS FOR INCREASED GOVERNMENT SUPPORT OF THE ARTS IN CANADA" urged that "In the program for rehabilitating returning service men a considerable sum should be set aside to give large numbers of them further training and future employment in the arts: drama, painting, music, literature, and the allied arts of radio and film. A committee, similar to the British Council for the Encouragement of music and the arts, should be set up to direct this program." But Voaden also argued that arts and culture should

¹³⁰¹ G.L. Brodersen to King, October 20, 1945. R.G. Robertson to Brodersen, October 23, 1945. LAC reel C9871, pages 329959-60.

be made available to all Canadians. “The time has come when Canada, which has attained a high standard of material prosperity, must ‘come of age’ in the arts. The pioneer period, in which our people had to give their attention entirely to wresting a living from the soil, is over. Our greatness as a nation demands that the character and aspirations of our people should find expression in the arts.” He contended that artists and their works could serve as “ambassadors of good will” in international relations and that “if we are to make democracy work...the radio, the film, the theatre, paintings and sculpture, literature and music, should be supported by the government so that all the people may take pleasure and gain profit from them.” Voaden pointed to existing government support of artists via CBC Radio, the National Film Board and the war artists program and noted that “the first gesture toward a national theatre has been made in the army, navy and air force shows. We must carry on and extend this activity.” Referring to the American government’s support of arts and culture through its Works Projects Administration and to the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts in Great Britain, he called on the Canadian government to “plan now to increase the support we extend to the Arts in Canada” and to initiate “a program which should lift the arts to the place of importance they deserve in a young but great nation.”¹³⁰²

¹³⁰² Herman Voaden, “SUGGESTIONS FOR INCREASED GOVERNMENT SUPPORT OF THE ARTS IN CANADA.” Undated two-page typescript, Herman Voaden fonds, York University Archives and Special Collections, call no. 1982-019/004 (05). In her thesis on Canadian military entertainers, Laure Halladay indicates that already by late 1940, ten military bands consisting of about twenty-seven musicians and one bandmaster each were active in the Navy, Army and Air Force. By December of 1942 *The Army Show*, a touring Broadway-type show also heard on radio, was created with the approval of the Minister of National Defence as a new medium for recruiting and to boost public and army morale. It initially consisted of nineteen male dancers and singers (including Frank Shuster and Johnny Wayne as writers and performers), twenty-four female dancers and singers, thirty-seven orchestra members and a stage crew of nineteen. *Meet the Navy* featured thirty-eight Wrens and forty-one male performers, dancers Allan Lund and Blanche Harris, twenty-seven musicians and a large stage crew. After its premiere in September of 1943, *Meet the Navy* toured Canada twice and over its three year run played to an audience of one and a half million service personnel and civilians. By October 1946 the show had made \$300,000 profit [\$4.7 million in 2014 dollars] from civilian audiences that were donated to the Canadian Naval Service Benevolent Fund. Prime Minister Mackenzie King acknowledged the public popularity of military entertainments by appearing backstage after an *Army Show* in early 1943. Yet as Halladay notes, the total number of performers in all Army, Navy and Air Force shows was still

On January 18, 1944, Voaden sent a copy of his memorandum to the Prime Minister to James L. Ralston, Minister of National Defence. He urged Ralston to “give your support to some program such as the one I have outlined. Material prosperity is not a sufficient goal for Canada. In a more humane and mature civilization the arts must play a larger part than they play at present.” Jas. A. MacKinnon, Minister of Trade and Commerce, wrote Voaden on January 25, thanking him “for your letter of Jan. 18 with which you enclosed a copy of your memorandum to the Prime Minister urging the Government to give returned men an opportunity to follow any arts in which they may be interested upon their return.” A similar acknowledgement was sent by J.L. Ilsley, Minister of Finance, on January 25. Ian Mackenzie, the Minister of Pensions and National Health responsible for reconstruction, thanked Voaden for his “suggestions regarding Government support of the arts in Canada” on January 26, 1944.

To show still greater public support for government action on arts and culture, Voaden forwarded resolutions passed at a meeting of the Toronto Branch of the Federation of Canadian Artists, the Writers’, Artists’, Broadcasters’ and Musicians’ Council, and other representative groups of the arts on January 27, 1944. The resolutions, passed at a meeting by 250 people at the Art Gallery of Toronto, called on the government to appoint “a Committee or Council of representative leaders in the Arts” in consultation with professional art organizations. Such a Council would work with the Department of Veterans’ Affairs “to make provision for further education and future employment of returning men and women who are interested in the arts.” It would also work with the Department of Reconstruction “to plan and

relatively small. “When combined, the performers of the three services numbered over 700 and with the additional staff of Auxiliary Services and other administrative and support systems, over 2,000 people were involved in creating these shows.” Providing government-financed employment opportunities for these returning service men and women would hardly have generated the cultural renaissance artists and arts activists were envisaging. See Laure Halladay, *Ladies and Gentlemen, Soldiers and Artists: Canadian Military Entertainers, 1939-1946*. M.A. Thesis, University of Calgary, 2000. National Library of Canada microfilm, ISBN 0612551474. pp. 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 71, and 123, fn. 21. Diary May 10, 1943.

direct a long-range program that would give the arts in Canada new vitality, and bring them close to the life of the people.” The resolution also recommended “That the Government by legislative action or Order-in-Council provide that at least one percent of the appropriation for all new government buildings must be spent on interior or exterior decorations: murals, sculpture and paintings. These moneys to be administered by the Council of the Arts” and that “immediate provision be made for the building and establishment of a National Library.”

J.A. Gibson, from the Office of the Prime Minister, wrote a personal note to his friend F.E. Coombs February 18, 1944 to inform him that “Mr. Voaden’s memorandum was, as you mention, referred to without delay to the Advisory Committee on Economic Policy. This is the top-flight planning body of the present governing organization, and I feel that in their hands the statement will receive the fullest consideration.” Gibson also suggested that Voaden send his memorandum to H.O. McCurry at the National Gallery and to Deane H. Russell, Secretary of the Interdepartmental Committee on Canadian Hand Arts and Crafts, which also worked out of the National Gallery. “I have given to Mr. Russell a copy of Mr. Voaden’s memorandum, which he will discuss at the next meeting of his Committee. He has mentioned to me if he had an idea of the number of people represented at the meeting on January 27, together with a statement of the interests which they represented, this information would be of considerable assistance to his Committee.”

Such lobbying through individual communications and public resolutions was not confined to Ontario. In order to increase political pressure on King’s government to implement the artists’ proposals, the B.C. region of the Federation of Canadian Artists in December of 1944 circulated a resolution to some three hundred organizations in Vancouver and elsewhere concerned with community well being, inviting them to contact their members of Parliament. The resolution asked these organizations to indicate that they were giving “full support and endorsement of the ‘Brief Concerning the Cultural Aspects of Canadian Reconstruction,’ as submitted to the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-

establishment, on June 21, 1944, by prominent representatives of 16 leading cultural societies of Canada.” It also requested “that a signed copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Hon. C.D. Howe, Minister of Reconstruction, and Mr. J.G. Turgeon, Chairman of said Committee, and to all British Columbia Members of Parliament, Ottawa, urging that every influence be employed by them for the early implementation of the perspectives set forth in the above mentioned Brief.”

The Founding of the Canadian Arts Council

Canadian arts activists and arts societies continued to collaborate to achieve the implementation of their recommendations for government support of arts and culture. On November 15, 1944 the presidents and delegates of the cultural societies that had met on May 13 met again in the library of the Art Gallery of Ontario. Since recommendations from the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment were not expected to be made until the new session of Parliament in February, F.E.D. McDowell of the Canadian Authors’ Association moved, seconded by W.A. Deacon, that a permanent liaison committee be established in order to be able to quickly mobilize joint action by the arts community. Ernest Fosbery, President of the Royal Canadian Academy, was asked to act as President of the new body, with Miss Elizabeth Wood as Secretary. The executive committee consisted of W.L. Somerville, Sir Ernest MacMillan, Herman Voaden, Garnard Kettle and Elizabeth Wyn Wood, who had previously worked together as the Artists Brief Executive Committee. When the committee met on December 2, 1944, it recommended that the new liaison body be called the Canadian Arts Liaison Committee.¹³⁰³

In addition to his teaching and administrative duties as Head of English at the Central High School of Commerce, Herman Voaden was also preoccupied with organizing his own federal candidacy for the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation in Trinity riding in Toronto. The

¹³⁰³ “Report of Meeting of Sixteen Artists’ Societies Nov. 15, 1944,” 2. “Report of a Meeting of Executive Committee of Sixteen Artists’ Societies, December 2, 1944,” 1, 2.

CCF's idealistic policies of social justice, full employment, a national social security system and greatly increased public housing appealed to his own utopian vision of creating "the perfect city" in Canada. He had joined the CCF, the forerunner of today's New Democratic Party, on September 21, 1943 in an attempt also to exert cultural leadership in the political sphere. Tommy Douglas' stunning sweep in the June 15, 1944 Saskatchewan provincial election, in which the CCF won 47 out of 52 seats with 53% of the popular vote, greatly boosted the hopes of the left. In the June 11, 1945 federal election, Voaden was running for public office in perhaps one of the most difficult ridings in all of Canada. With a predominantly labour constituency and progressive Polish, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Jewish and other immigrant communities, many suffering from abject living conditions, Trinity was the home base of Tim Buck, national leader of the Labour-Progressive Party and Canada's most famous Communist. While the CCF was able to win 15.6% of the national popular vote and elect 28 Members of Parliament, Voaden was not among them. The split in the progressive vote in Trinity riding resulted in a Conservative victory. Tim Buck won 7,488 votes for the LPP, Voaden 3,425 for the CCF, the Liberal Party 8,817 and Larry Skey, a returning war hero, 8,908 for the Conservatives. Dorise Nielsen, the Saskatchewan Labour-Progressive Party MP who had encouraged the cultural arts organizations to submit their artists' *Brief* to the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment, also went down to defeat. She came in third in her riding of North Battleford with 2,214 votes for the LPP, 4,420 for the Liberals and 5,049 for the CCF.

By the end of 1945 it was clear the federal government was not about to extend public subsidies to the arts as the sixteen national arts organizations had called for the year before. "Three generations ago Canadian statesmen subsidized our railroads. They flung them across a continent: bands of steel to bind together a country that was not a country, geographically. The principle has been accepted ever since—in all fields except the cultural," Voaden wrote bitterly in "Theatre Record, 1945" in the November 1945 *Canadian Forum*. He noted that "One of the younger cabinet ministers [Brooke Claxton, Minister of National Health and Welfare] spoke in

favor of community centres, but he was a voice crying in the wilderness.” Voaden nevertheless urged that the artists’ cause should not be regarded as lost. “If sufficient ‘pressure’ is brought to bear something may yet be accomplished. Readers are urged to see or write to their local members; to secure and forward resolutions to Cabinet Ministers and the Prime Minister from interested organizations supporting community centres. If this is the way things are accomplished in our imperfect democracy, let us employ these means to achieve our ideal ends.”¹³⁰⁴

Faced with this political impasse, the artists’ executive committee called another conclave of the sixteen national arts associations that had collaborated on the June 1944 artists’ briefs for December 5, 1945. At the Arts and Letters Club meeting, the representative of the Canadian Author’s Association, D. M. LeBourdais, moved that the sixteen associations form a national organization and “That the functions of this body be to correlate all information and to act in collaboration when desirable on matters affecting the common interests of the member societies.” This motion was carried.

But who would accept the presidency of this new organization, an unpaid position requiring great amounts of time and energy in a national effort that had few prospects of succeeding? Eleven persons were nominated at the meeting: Forsey Page of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada; John Coulter (Arts and Letters Club); Roderick Kennedy (Canadian Authors’ Association); Charles David (not present); Herman Voaden (Arts and Letters Club) nominated by Maurice Gagnon of the Société des Écrivains Canadiens; Fred Haines (Arts and Letters Club); Elizabeth Wyn Wood (Sculptors’ Society of Canada); D. M. LeBourdais (Canadian Authors Association); Isobel McLaughlin (Canadian Group of Painters); W. L. Somerville (Royal Architectural Institute of Canada); and A. J. Casson, (Royal Canadian Academy). Others present at the meeting but not nominated for President included Frances Loring, Jack Bush,

¹³⁰⁴ Herman Voaden, “Theatre Record, 1945,” *Canadian Forum* 25:298 (November 1945), 184. Republished in *Stage Door*, 4:3 (January 1946). See also Marcus Adeney, “Music in Post-War Canada,” *Canadian Forum*, May 1945.

Yvonne McKague Housser, Edgar Stone of the Dominion Drama Festival, and John Murray Gibbon of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild.

Among those present, only Herman Voaden had actual experience within the political field. All others nominated for president of the newly formed organization declined their nominations. Only Voaden accepted to stand for office and was elected by acclamation. H. Garnard Kettle of the Federation of Canadian Artists was elected chair of the Community Centres Committee along with Marcus Adeney, Lawren Harris and John Coulter as members. Elizabeth Wyn Wood proposed that the new name of the organization be the Canadian Arts Liaison Committee. Garnard Kettle suggested the name Canadian Council of the Arts. Roderick Kennedy proposed the shorter Canadian Arts Council and that name carried.¹³⁰⁵

In addition to Voaden as President, the following prominent arts activists were subsequently elected to the executive of the Canadian Arts Council: Arthur L. Phelps (Vice-President), the former professor of English at the University of Manitoba, broadcaster and supervisor of International Broadcasts for the C.B.C.; Claude E. Lewis (Secretary), an editor with Copp Clark and a member of the Canadian Authors' Association; Erma Lennox Sutcliffe (Treasurer), Vice-Principal of the Children's Art Centre of the Art Gallery of Toronto, an artist and community activist; Dr. John Murray Gibbon (Chairman, Copyrights Committee), former publicity manager for the Canadian Pacific Railways and organizer of its Canadian Folksong and Handicrafts festivals, a librettist, author, past honorary president of the Canadian Authors' Association and current president of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild; Elizabeth Wyn Wood (Chairman, Foreign Relations Committee), sculptor, former president of the Sculptors' Society of Canada, and former director of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild; D. M. LeBourdais (Chairman, Constitution Committee), a journalist and president of the Toronto branch of the Canadian Authors' Association; Paul Duval (Chairman, Promotion Committee), a painter, writer and critic and frequent contributor to *Saturday Night* and the *Globe and Mail*; H. G. Kettle (Chairman,

¹³⁰⁵ "Minutes of Arts Reconstruction Committee Meeting at which Canadian Arts Council was formed." Arts and Letters Club, Toronto, December 5, 1945.

Community Centres Committee), director of training for the Massey Harris Company, a member of the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour, the Canadian Society of Graphic Art, and the Arts and Letters Club. A former director of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, Kettle had been national secretary of the Federation of Canadian Artists for the past four years.

In the February 1946 *FCA Bulletin*, Kettle called the formation of the Canadian Arts Council “an event of very great significance in the cultural life of Canada... The Council represents, through the membership of its Member Societies, some seven thousand individuals.” He indicated that “the National Executive of the Federation of Canadian Artists have strongly supported the movement to set up a permanent body representative of all the arts, and it regards the formation of the Canadian Arts Council as one of the most significant developments in the history of the Arts in Canada. It confidently expects this body to play a very important role in the future cultural life of Canada.” Kettle concluded that “the formation of Canadian Arts Council is one step, and a very important one, in the direction of Section 1 of the [joint 1944 artists’] Brief” calling for a governmental body to supervise all cultural activities in Canada.¹³⁰⁶ Echoing William Arthur Deacon, Maria Tippett similarly referred to the founding of the Canadian Arts Council in 1945 as “The Beginning of a Co-ordinated Artistic Life.”¹³⁰⁷

The Priestly Mackenzie King Defending Orthodoxy

Directly controlling Canada’s economic and cultural life, however, was anathema to Mackenzie King’s Liberal political ideology of individual liberty and responsibility, representative government and free markets. He had already shown himself as a defender of economic and political orthodoxy in September of 1933 when he attended the week-long Port Hope conference

¹³⁰⁶ H. G. Kettle, Federation of Canadian Artists *Bulletin*, February 1946, 1, 2 and “A Report on the Canadian Arts Council for the Information of Members of the Federation of Canadian Artists, Prepared by H.G. Kettle, National Secretary F.C.A.,” 1, 3, 4. The December 8, 1945 *Toronto Telegram*, in “Aiding Community Culture Is Aim Of Arts Council,” reported the sixteen national organizations represented “more than 5,000 artists, writers, architects and musicians as well as those interested in the theatre, across Canada.”

¹³⁰⁷ Tippett, 156. Tippett used the title for the final chapter of her study, 156-185.

for young Liberals on international politics, economics, electoral reform and the role of government in society organized by Vincent Massey. King perceived Massey as supporting John Maynard Keynes and aligning himself with those advocating extensive government intervention in the economy to deal with the Depression. “Massey will be for planning—with young Liberals & University radicals,” King noted in his diary. “Massey told me the conference would develop into a contest between the two. I am all anti-planning—as understood generally.” In his own opening remarks, he emphasized the “aim of Liberalism being development of human personality etc. dealing in the end with divinity—the divine spark in every individual however humble.”¹³⁰⁸

One of the speakers at the conference was an old friend of King’s, the multi-millionaire businessman Averell Harriman, who was “exceedingly good” speaking on President Roosevelt’s just established National Recovery Act in the United States. To King the legislation, aimed at regulating business competition, stimulating employment, setting minimum wages and maximum work hours, abolishing child labour and other measures, “strikes me as an amazing experiment & most doubtful...I dread the thought of what may come out of the U.S. experiment. I am beginning to think Roosevelt is a little like Bennett in his outlook, methods etc.” He had a similar reaction when he subsequently heard Professor McDermott speak on the significance for Canada of the American “New Deal,” Roosevelt’s promise to the American people to provide relief for the poor and unemployed, reform the financial system and lead the United States out of the Great Depression. “I confess I thought less of the ‘new deal’ as I heard it explained. The mad desire to bring about State control & interference beyond all bounds makes one shudder.” When Raymond Moley, a prominent member of Roosevelt’s “Brain Trust” who subsequently broke with the President and became one of the harshest critics of the New Deal, gave his speech on the American national recovery legislation, it made King’s “blood run cold” and he again shuddered “to think of what may yet come about as a consequence of it all.”¹³⁰⁹

Sir John Martin-Harvey and a Canadian National Theatre

¹³⁰⁸ Diary September 3 and 4, 1933.

¹³⁰⁹ Diary September 4, 5 and 8, 1933.

King's aversion to ongoing state involvement in Canadian cultural production had emerged already in 1930 when his friends Sir John and Lady Martin-Harvey asked him to assist in the formation of a Canadian syndicate which would sponsor one of their tours in the United States—as King described it in his diary—“under Canadian patronage as a sort of Anglo-American entente.” In an eight-page typed letter, the Prime Minister explained “the obvious political grounds” that prevented him from backing the Martin-Harveys' proposal. One reason was that he did not wish controversy over cultural matters to create political difficulties for himself and the Liberals. His secretary had sent “a very innocent letter of thanks” to the Vancouver Board of Trade, which incorrectly suggested that King preferred one of two competing versions of “O Canada.” As a result of this misunderstanding, “There have been quite a few letters expressing surprise at my lack of political acumen in being drawn into a position which could revive one of the bitterest controversies between the Imperialists and the Native Sons of Canada.”

A still stronger political reason which prevented him from endorsing the Martin-Harveys' proposal was heightened anti-Americanism in Canada because of an anticipated increase in the American tariff against Canadian products. “Were it to be publicly known that I had been an advisor in an Anglo-American Entente sponsored by Canada, it would immediately be said that ‘This is another of Mackenzie King's efforts to please the Americans,’” the Prime Minister explained. More fundamentally, however, King realized that “it would be further said that in this regard I have done what I have all along felt I could not do for our Canadian artists, singers, musicians, and painters: namely, lend my name in the way of patronage, directly or indirectly, to their efforts, not only abroad but also in Canada.”¹³¹⁰

Martin-Harvey had already advocated a Canadian national theatre and state subsidies in the *University Magazine* three months before the outbreak of World War I in 1914.¹³¹¹ He raised the

¹³¹⁰ John Martin-Harvey, Hotel Palliser, Calgary, to King January 3, 1930. Diary January 8, 1930. King to Martin-Harvey, January 8, 1930. LAC reel C2320, pages 151643-657.

¹³¹¹ John Martin-Harvey, “Canadian Theatres,” *University Magazine* 13 (April 1914). For B.K. Sandwell's debate with Martin-Harvey regarding a state-subsidized Canadian national theatre,

subject again when the Martin-Harveys met King in Calgary in November of 1929 on their cross-Canada tour and the Prime Minister was in the city on a Western Canada speaking tour. Sir John referred to their discussion in a letter written from the Royal Alexandra Theatre in Toronto in January of 1930 in which he requested that one of King's secretaries "let me know how far the idea of the National Theatre in Canada has gone and what the prospects are." He explained that "we see so many of your Theatres being turned into 'talkies' that we are wondering where to give our plays on future visits; and I was rather surprised, when you referred to the subject of the National Theatre at Calgary, to find the idea had already taken such root."¹³¹²

King responded, "I wish I could give you an assurance respecting a national theatre for Canada." He equivocated whether he would support such a state-assisted national theatre, again citing political circumstances in view of an anticipated federal election. "What may, or may not, be possible in the way of promoting the idea, once we are over a General Election, will have to be seen at the time, but it would be perilous to make a suggestion of the kind, on the eve of an appeal to the people," he wrote Sir John. "Not that the people themselves might not respond to the idea generally, but our opponents would be certain wholly to misrepresent, as a personal rather than a national ambition, any project of the kind, unless the idea were launched sufficiently far in advance of an appeal, to have the aim realized before the election itself."¹³¹³ The same week he had rejected a similar request for state sponsorship from "the Canadian Prima Donna," Sarah Fischer-Carrick, "who came to talk about raising a fund to establish a national opera in Canada—the Government i.e. myself to give her letters to Thornton [Sir Henry Thornton, president of the Canadian National Railways] & others which would secure (1) free transportation & hotels, (2) a press to boost the project etc.—for her husband & herself, funds raised to go to a National Opera." King informed the artist that "I could not give her letters, nor

see Anton Wagner, "Saving the Nation's Aesthetic Soul: B.K. Sandwell at the *Montreal Herald*, 1900-1914, and *Saturday Night*, 1932-1951" in Anton Wagner, ed. *Establishing Our Boundaries: English-Canadian Theatre Criticism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 190-2. See also Patrick B. O'Neill, "The British Canadian Theatrical Organization Society and the Trans-Canada Theatre Society," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 15:1 (Spring 1980).

¹³¹² Martin-Harvey to King, January 20, 1930. LAC reel C2320, pages 151658-60.

¹³¹³ King to Martin-Harvey, January 29, 1930. LAC reel C2320, pages 151661-62.

could the Govt. let its name be used to raise funds for any purpose. That a National Theatre would have to be built by Govt. grant for purpose, or the Govt. presented with a building etc. outright.”¹³¹⁴

Sir John and Lady Martin-Harvey completed the last of their seven cross-Canada tours in 1932. Mackenzie King wrote the actor-manager—who cited the passage in his 1933 autobiography—“I really would like you to feel that Canada is conscious of her great debt to you, and that our people will long remember your different tours of the Dominion and what they have meant in the way of larger outlook and inspiration.”¹³¹⁵ Martin-Harvey sought King’s council regarding economic conditions and the advisability of another cross-Canada tour in 1935. Despite the great hardships caused by the Depression, particularly in Western Canada, King informed Sir John, “I have a feeling that the theatre means much to people in times of depression, as being one form of entertainment which brings hope, as well as relaxation, with it. Also, I believe the thirst for legitimate drama is becoming increasingly great, and, with your name what it is, there is certain to be a very real response.”¹³¹⁶

But even after his 1934 public challenge to R.B. Bennett at the Dominion Drama Festival (cited in chapter I) to build a national gallery and a national opera and theatre building as part of public works for unemployment relief—and crushing the Conservative Party (173 to 39) in the October 1935 election—King again rejected Martin-Harvey’s appeal in 1936 for a government guarantee against losses for what he anticipated would be his “farewell to Canada” tour. Sir John pointed out that the Martin-Harveys had never lost money in their seven cross-Canada tours “but the last tour in the midst of the depression, came very near to it.” If the Canadian government could provide a guarantee to cover steamship and railway transportation costs, “I could take the risk of at least paying the Company’s salaries etc.” He anticipated higher box office receipts during their

¹³¹⁴ Diary January 23, 1930.

¹³¹⁵ John Martin-Harvey, *The Autobiography of Sir John Martin-Harvey* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, 1933), 440.

¹³¹⁶ Martin-Harvey to King, April 20, 1935. King to Martin-Harvey, August 12, 1935. LAC reel C3682, pages 179741-46.

farewell tour so that “I might never have to touch the guarantee.” The actor-manager asked King to use his political and cultural capital to secure such a financial warranty for his company. “Is there any Department of the Government—such as one for ‘Cultural Relations,’ ‘Encouragement of the Arts’ or something similar, the Head of which you could advise would be justified in making us some sort of guarantee against the loss?”¹³¹⁷

King responded, “I wish indeed it were possible for me to indicate some source to which it might be possible for you to look for guarantee against loss in the event of bringing your company to Canada in the coming year. Unfortunately, there is not, in the federal field, or any of the provincial fields, any department or government which could be looked to to furnish a guarantee for such a purpose.” He assured Sir John, “I have long felt we should have, in Canada, a federal Department of Fine Arts. Someday we may succeed in securing from Parliament, an appropriation for something of the kind. This, however, is something which, I fear, will have to be indefinitely postponed, in view of the years of depression from which Canada has suffered.” As in 1935, King nevertheless encouraged Martin-Harvey to undertake still another Canadian tour without government assistance. “I know your friends in this country are so numerous that depression or no depression, they would be out in numbers to welcome you, should you find it possible to come.”¹³¹⁸

Homer Watson, Starving Artist

Mackenzie King was acutely aware of the hardships Canadian artists were suffering during the Depression. When he saw Homer Watson once more in Doon, Ontario, in 1933—half-a-century after first being introduced as a seven-year-old boy to the painter by his father in 1882—the artist had been bankrupt for two years and, according to an official at Waterloo Trust Ltd., “was literally starving to death.” He owed \$12,000 [\$207,000 in 2014 dollars] to the local finance

¹³¹⁷ Martin-Harvey to King, May 30, 1936. LAC reel C3691, pages 191224-25.

¹³¹⁸ King to Martin-Harvey, August 8, 1936. LAC reel C3691, pages 1991226-27.

company, which at his death in 1936 held 460 of his paintings as collateral.¹³¹⁹ Watson was in his late seventies recuperating from a heart attack, walked with a cane after falls, and, near-deaf, used a hose from a vacuum cleaner as a tube for hearing. He had just started to paint again after a year's hiatus. In his diary, King noted that Watson "is in penury, his pictures held by the Waterloo Trust which has advanced him money. It is a tragic condition."¹³²⁰



Homer Watson's 1880 *The Pioneer Mill*, Windsor Castle Royal Collection.

The artist's poverty must have appeared particularly tragic to King because he had once been among Canada's most famous painters. When only twenty-three, his *The Pioneer Mill* had been included in the first exhibition of the Royal Canadian Academy in Ottawa in 1880 and purchased for \$300 by the Governor General the Marquis of Lorne and Princess Louise for Queen Victoria's Windsor Castle collection. "The following year," his biographer noted, "the Queen ordered another," *The Last Day of the Drouth*. Lorne purchased Watson's *The Torrent* for

¹³¹⁹ Gerald Noonan, *Refining the real Canada: Homer Watson's spiritual landscape—A Biography* (Waterloo, Ontario: mlr editions Canada, 1997), 23, 176, 194. Four months before his death, the convalescing Watson wrote Eric Brown in January of 1936 that "pictures come to mind in troops, too much so, for impatience besets me to be up and doing. It seems rather ridiculous to want so much to get at painting again when there is not a living in it." (181).

¹³²⁰ Diary June 18, 1933. Watson asked King "If I remembered when we last met, a luncheon at Sidney Fisher's [Laurier's Minister of Agriculture]. I had not recalled till he spoke of it & then but faintly."

himself and Princess Louise.¹³²¹ Oscar Wilde saw his *Flitting Shadows* at the Ontario Society of Artists Spring Show on May 25, 1882 and acclaimed the painter as “the Canadian Constable.” “Where is the artist? I must know that man!” he cried out to his entourage. Kevin O’Brien, in his *Oscar Wilde in Canada: An Apostle for the Arts*, reported that “He then sat down and contemplated the painting, saying that it had ‘soul’ and ‘feeling’ and that the artist was ‘an exceedingly clever fellow.’ On hearing of Watson’s youth and that he had not studied in Paris, he was surprised and exclaimed: ‘He has the exact manner of the modern French artists.’” In his lecture on “The Decorative Arts” at the Grand Opera House in Toronto that evening, Wilde declared that Watson’s landscapes were “full of the highest art and beauty, and Canadians should be proud of such an artist.” He commissioned one of Watson’s rural landscapes, secured him two further commissions from friends in Boston and New York, and introduced the painter to Whistler at the London Chelsea Club by stating, “This is my find in America.” In 1888 he invited Watson to his home in Tite Street to see his painting hung next to one of Whistler’s canvases.¹³²² The National Gallery in Ottawa purchased his *The Flood Gate* in 1925 for \$3,000 [\$40,000 in 2014 dollars], the highest price the Gallery had paid for a work by a living Canadian artist since 1910. In addition to Watson’s international reputation, King was probably also aware that he had been among those who had sought to improve the social and economic position of painters by co-founding the Canadian Arts Club in Toronto in 1907, serving as its president until 1914, and serving as vice-president and president of the Royal Canadian Academy 1914-18 and 1918-21.

¹³²¹ Noonan, 5. Gary Michael Dault, “Homer Watson: The Canadian Constable,” *Canadian Art* website <http://www.canadianart.ca/reviews/2012/07/26/homer-watson/> accessed April 6, 2014. J. Russell Harper, *Homer Watson, R.C.A. 1855-1936: Paintings and Drawings* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1963), 14. Muriel Miller, *Homer Watson: The Man of Doon* (Toronto: Summerhill Press, 1988), 39. Watson and his wife saw *The Pioneer Mill* and *The Last Day of the Drouth* hanging in a reception room and in one of the bedrooms of Queen Victoria’s private apartments in Windsor Castle in 1887. See Frank E. Page, *Homer Watson: Artist and Man* (Kitchener: Commercial Printing Company, 1939), 129-30.

¹³²² “Tribute to a Canadian Artist,” *Toronto World*, May 26, 1882, p. 4. Kevin O’Brien, *Oscar Wilde in Canada: An Apostle for the Arts* (Toronto: Personal Library, 1982), 103. Noonan, 121, 122, 141. J. Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 206. Watson was not the only Canadian artist Wilde encouraged. After his lecture in Fredericton, New Brunswick, in October of 1882, Charles G.D. Roberts and Wilde read their

“In a high civilization,” the artist informed King in 1933, “beauty is as necessary as building power plants.”¹³²³

Mackenzie King’s personal contacts and interactions with painters and sculptors such as Homer Watson, Carl Ahrens, J.

his perceptions about art, Canadian artists and the role of the Canadian government—if any—in stimulating the development of Canadian culture. His encounter with Watson in 1933 and 1934 also revealingly illustrates what Pierre Bourdieu hypothesized about the possible transformation of symbolic into financial capital, and vice versa, through what Robert Moore referred to as “a wider anthropology of cultural exchanges and valuations” and therefore warrants a closer examination.¹³²⁴

King valued and immediately liked the realist landscape painter for several reasons: his father’s friendship with the artist, the style and content of his paintings, the fact that he was a fellow spiritualist, and that Watson reminded King of his mother. “Here I was with a man whose soul was as my very own, a man I could love & admire with all my heart. I never was happier talking with another,” he confided in his diary. When he first saw the artist in his studio in Doon, “I saw a face & an expression the like of which I have never seen before except on dear mother’s face—a nobility of feature, with soul shining through the eyes a liquid blue, kindling as I have never seen eyes do before, his cheeks slightly flushed, his hair a silvery whiteness like mother’s.”¹³²⁵

poetry to each other. Wilde later wrote Roberts that “there could be no height in song beyond his reach.” O’Brien, 118-19.

¹³²³ Noonan, 164, 101.

¹³²⁴ Robert Moore, “Capital” in Michael Grenfell, ed. *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts* (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008), 102. The morning after his meeting with Watson, for example, King endowed the artist’s works with additional social, cultural and political capital when he “called in at Waterloo Trust...to see Homer Watson’s paintings; one of a river in moonlight very fine & also one of cattle crossing a stream—trees particularly good.” Diary June 19, 1933. Nine days later he used his social capital with his wealthy friends Florence and Peter Harvey. “I think I have pretty well persuaded them to get a Homer Watson painting.” Diary June 28, 1933.

¹³²⁵ Diary June 18, 1933.

During his visit to Watson's house, King saw its walls "surrounded by beautiful paintings, some unfinished—some the modern school type" and asked the artist about the latter. "He spoke of [the National Gallery director] Eric Brown's taste, said the Art Gallery had gone in for that sort of thing. All our natures have a decadent side he said, those of this school have emphasized this side, have been governed by it—but it was decadent." Watson "spoke of trees and landscape & of an artist painting what he saw—he said of 100 people one or two saw something different & the rest much the same thing; the rest must be right—what they see must be true (the school of 7 were the minority few)." King cried out "why had he let himself even follow a line of it, then I thought of 'painting for a living' which even he had to do. It was tragic—Forster had caught a note or two as well."¹³²⁶

A week after his visit, King recorded receiving "a fine 3-page letter from Homer Watson which I will treasure always. It gives his views of modern art which I share wholeheartedly; also his views of reality, of religion etc."¹³²⁷ Four weeks later he received a communication from both Mrs. Tait McKenzie, which he dismissed as "typical—self conscious," and one from Watson whom he characterized as "the real artist, humble as ever" who sought "to realize the goal he has set for himself—to reveal God as he sees Him in Nature."¹³²⁸ After reading another of Watson's letters to Joan and Godfroy Patteson, King concluded that "He is a truly noble soul, and I scarcely know which I value most, his letters or his paintings. He has let me very much into the secret of the latter."¹³²⁹ Once among Canada's foremost artists, Watson thus provided King with the painter's own cultural capital and cultural authority, which reinforced King's rejection of the Group of Seven and the Canadian "modernism" the Group represented to him. In a probable reference to Lawren Harris's iconic 1922 *Above Lake Superior*, King wrote in 1934 following a stay overnight at Watson's home that "The modern art is a perversion. Mr. Watson was explaining to me how a master's stroke was changed into a formula—Nature robbed of her shades & moods and God's light made to cut around the edge of trees & ground etc., decayed

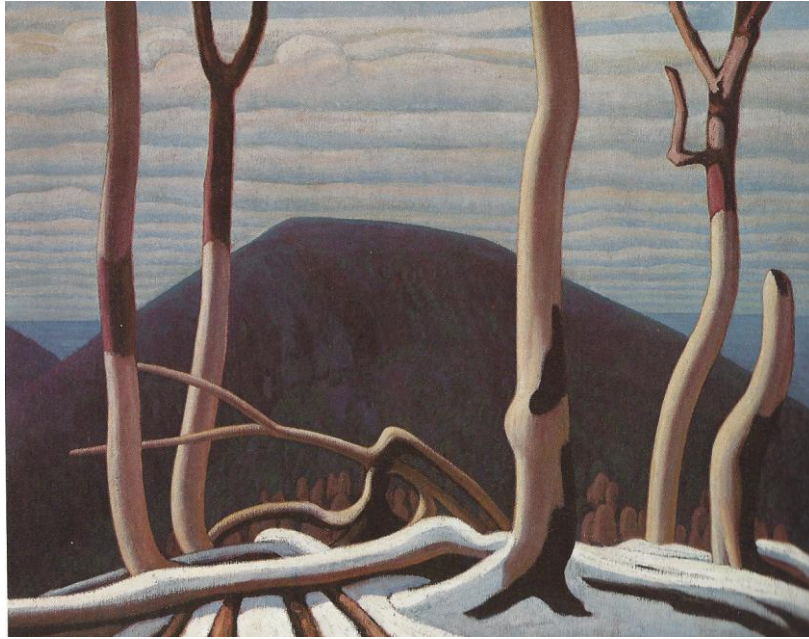
¹³²⁶ Idem.

¹³²⁷ Diary June 26, 1933.

¹³²⁸ Diary July 20, 1933.

¹³²⁹ Diary October 7, 1933.

trees made to do duty as works of Art—like painting a man suffering from leprosy—[word illegible] some of Thompson [Thomson’s] Harris’s work. (See *Canadian Landscape Painters* by [Albert H.] Robson (Ryerson Press [1932])).”¹³³⁰



Lawren Harris’s 1922 *Above Lake Superior*.

Watson in turn affirmed, “I have a high regard for Mr. Mackenzie King. He has a fine mind and a deep and appreciative understanding of art.”¹³³¹ That King perceived Watson as an exemplary prototype of what an artist should be is indicated by his letter to him of April 25, 1934. He had suggested to Newton MacTavish—who had praised the painter in his 1925 *The Fine Arts in Canada*—that he write Watson’s biography. “I wish with all my heart I had time sufficiently free to devote to a task of the kind,” he wrote Watson. “If I had, I could think of nothing I should more willingly undertake as a labour of love, notwithstanding my lack of qualifications for

¹³³⁰ Diary April 14, 1934. King also made another reference to Watson’s critique of “formula” painting, “robbing God’s sunlight of its sweet diffusion & making it eat away the beauty of shaded lines.” A colour photograph of Harris’s *Above Lake Superior* is reproduced on page 153 of Robson’s *Canadian Landscape Painters*.

¹³³¹ Page, 25.

anything of the kind. I do feel that the writing of the biography would be a means to acquiring a knowledge of art and of the principles which should guide and inspire the true artist.”¹³³²

Watson confirmed not only King’s aesthetic convictions but also his spiritualist beliefs. During their meeting, he informed King that he was a spiritualist “as if someone were urging him to do so,” that he had written down many messages from the beyond on slates and paper, and that spiritualism saved him from agnosticism and gave new meaning to numerous passages in the Bible. The artist recalled his three years in England in the late 1880s and his last talk with James McNeill Whistler in which Whistler had told him, “When I die they may throw my carcass out on to the street & give it to the dogs, but I will go on painting, I will then be able to paint.” Hearing this recollection, King thought of Rudyard Kipling’s poem “L’Envoi,” from his collection *The Seven Seas*, and of continued life and artistic creation in the beyond free of material constraints. “And only the Master shall praise us, and only the Master shall blame; / And no one shall work for money, and no one shall work for fame; / But each for the joy of working, and each, in his separate star, / Shall draw the Thing as he sees It for the God of Things as They Are!” He therefore did not disagree with Watson’s view that “an artist has to be prepared for sacrifice, he must live a life of denial of self, must be prepared to embrace poverty for his art.”¹³³³

The fact that King did not contemplate how the state might be able to assist artists to escape a life of poverty raises a legitimate speculation: did King’s belief in the continuity of personality after death—and the credence that artists also continued their artistic development in the beyond—make ongoing government assistance to artists less necessary in his mind? When he wrote Watson in December of 1933, he referred to the painter’s advanced age but concluded, “When one reaches the age of eighty, the years that remain, as the world counts time, cannot be very many. You and I, fortunately, have been able to gain a truer perspective and to realize that, so far

¹³³² Cited in Miller, 118-19.

¹³³³ Diary June 18, 1933. Muriel Miller gives the Whistler citation as “When I die, Watson, they may throw my carcass out on the street and give it to the dogs, I will go on painting. No matter where I am, I shall be able to paint.” (78) A few weeks before his death in May of 1936, Watson

as real existence is concerned, we are but at the beginning of life, at its earliest formative stage.”¹³³⁴ When he received the telegram informing him of Watson’s death in 1936, King confessed, “I felt a sense of gladness he was freed from all his suffering and further ‘lingering on’—and was now where he would be able to paint.” There was no need for sadness because of Watson’s passing. “It brought with it rather a sense of rejoicing or of an enlarged & fuller life for one of the noblest souls I have ever known.”¹³³⁵ When he had heard of the death of Carl Ahrens three months previously, he wrote the painter’s widow that “You may be sure that he lives now in a world where his genius will find its highest expression, and where he himself will be able to guard and protect you and others most dear to him in a way which has not been possible for some time past.”¹³³⁶

King’s correspondence and diaries reveal what financial and symbolic capital he provided Homer Watson in return for his cultural capital. He was so delighted by the painter during their meeting that he asked him for a photograph. The artist queried whether King wouldn’t prefer one of his sketches. King saw one “of a bright bright silvery moon, lighting the waters of the Grand River with its silvery whiteness. It seemed to speak to me of him & of mother, of that spiritual beauty & with its association with the Grand River.” He purchased the painting, “Moonlit Stream,” for \$100 [\$1,700 in 2014 dollars]. Watson’s sister and caretaker Phoebe expressed their gratitude since she and her brother were in such great need. King believed he “was led to go there for this purpose. It seemed the only thing I could do, the only thing I wanted most of all to do...It made me very happy—for I felt when I went away, I would have left something in that noble manly soul which would cheer it on its way.”¹³³⁷

As he embarked on a speaking tour to Western Canada, King’s correspondence and diaries track his lobbying efforts on behalf of the painter and further reveal his thoughts on the canvas he

told his sister Phoebe, “It may be as Whistler said that we painters will go on painting in the Happy Hunting Grounds.” (124)

¹³³⁴ King to Watson, December 28, 1933. LAC reel C3675, pages 169305-08.

¹³³⁵ Diary May 30, 1936.

¹³³⁶ King to Madonna Ahrens, February 26, 1936. LAC reel C3685, pages 183422-24.

purchased from the artist. His first letter a month after his visit imparted the signification he associated with "Moonlit Stream." "I cannot tell you with what pride and pleasure I am looking forward to having this permanent souvenir of one of the most memorable and delightful evenings of my life." He also informed Watson that after he returned to Ottawa, King spoke with Vincent Massey, whom he had appointed a trustee of the National Gallery in January of 1925, "about purchasing another of your paintings for the Gallery. He has taken the matter up with the other Trustees and the chances are that Mr. H.O. McCurry will come up to have a talk with you at Doon some day in the near future, to see what paintings may still be available. I have impressed on Mr. McCurry to try and see you personally before speaking to anyone else."¹³³⁸ While in Regina on his political tour, King contacted the art collector Norman Mackenzie, whom he had also appointed as a National Gallery trustee in 1925, and "put in a word for the Gallery to purchase one of Homer Watson's paintings. He will do what he can."¹³³⁹

In September of 1933, King wrote Watson that upon his return to Ottawa he expected "to have a chance to renew my overtures with members of the board of trustees of the National Gallery." These "overtures" came to consist of over half-a-dozen additional communications and meetings with Harry S. Southam, the president of the National Gallery's board of trustees, the Gallery's director Eric Brown, the assistant director H.O. McCurry, Vincent Massey and Norman Mackenzie.¹³⁴⁰ Mackenzie informed King in February of 1934 that the National Gallery Trustees unanimously agreed that the Gallery allocate \$1,500 for purchasing paintings from Homer Watson and that Vincent Massey or H.O. McCurry would travel to Doon to make the

¹³³⁷ Diary June 18, 1933.

¹³³⁸ King to Homer Watson, July 19, 1933. LAC reel C3675, pages 169293-94. Diary July 20, 1933.

¹³³⁹ Diary July 25, 1933. King to Watson, August 6, 1933. LAC reel C3675, page 169295. Mackenzie had purchased Watson's *The River Drivers* in 1914. See Harper, *Homer Watson*, 58-59.

¹³⁴⁰ King to Watson, September 20 and 26, 1933 and December 28, 1933. LAC reel C3675, pages 169296-99, 169307. H.O. McCurry to King, March 9, 1934. King to McCurry, March 16, 1934. LAC reel C3676, pages 171723-24. Norman Mackenzie to King, January 9, 1934. King to Mackenzie, January 12, 1934. LAC reel C3677, pages 172084-87.

selection.¹³⁴¹ In his correspondence with Watson, King identified Brown as “the one I have felt might be the real obstacle in any purchase of a painting of yours at this time” and took “the bull by the horns” by speaking to Brown when he ran into him in a shop in Ottawa. “I told Brown that I was most anxious to see this further slight recognition of your work go to you at this time, and gave him some of my reasons.” Brown must have realized that with R.B. Bennett’s inability to ameliorate the economic effects of the Depression, King would be returned as Prime Minister and that Southam, Massey and Mackenzie were also major Liberal Party supporters. Perhaps because of these practical considerations, King found the director of the National Gallery “quite kindly and sympathetic, and he promised that from now on he would lend his co-operation.”¹³⁴²

The National Gallery’s budget had been reduced from \$135,000 in 1928-29 [\$1.821 million in 2014 dollars] to \$25,000 in 1934-35. Brown was conscious of the fact that the Gallery had already exhausted its minuscule acquisition budget and tried to reduce the \$1,500 approved by the trustees for the purchase of Watson’s paintings to \$500. It would take another eight months of lobbying on King’s part before the National Gallery sent Watson his cheque for the agreed upon \$1,500 in September of 1934.¹³⁴³

¹³⁴¹ Mackenzie to King, January 15 and February 22, 1934. King to Mackenzie, February 26, 1934. LAC reel C3677, pages 172088-90.

¹³⁴² King to Watson, December 28, 1933. LAC reel C3675, page 169307. Mackenzie wrote King on July 23, 1934 that “indications rather point to a decided change of Government before the end of the year.” King had assured Watson on July 18, that “you may...rely upon my pursuing the matter to the last ditch, even if that means waiting until there is a change in government.” Vincent Massey, also President of the National Liberal Federation, wrote King on July 28 that the National Gallery had completed the purchase of Watson’s paintings and then went on for another four pages discussing strategy for the five federal by-elections called by R.B. Bennett for September. LAC reels C3677, pages 172094-95; C3678, pages 173755-58; and C3677, pages 172351.

¹³⁴³ Mackenzie to King, January 9, 1934. King to Mackenzie, January 12 and July 18, 1934. Mackenzie to King, July 23, 1934. King to Mackenzie, July 30, 1934. LAC reel C3677, pages 172084-87 and 172091-96. McCurry to King, March 9, 1934. King to McCurry, March 16, 1934. LAC reel C3676, pages 171723-24. King to Vincent Massey, July 18, 20 and 30, 1934. Massey to King, July 20 and 28, 1934. LAC reel C3677, pages 172345-61. King to Watson, April 28, July 7, 18, 20 and 31, 1934. LAC reel C3678, pages 173753-61. Noonan, 178. In his diary for June 24, 1934, King recorded that hearing of Homer Watson he “recalled that on Friday night, I had spoken to Massey about a letter I had received from him on Friday morning, telling me

According to Watson's biographer Gerald Noonan, "Brown was aware of two opposing forces: a shrinking, inadequate budget for acquiring new art for the gallery; and a growing pressure from King and the Trustees, who could not stand to see a grown artist suffer, to buy art as part of an ad hoc welfare program." In a June 1934 position paper he prepared for H.S. Southam for submission to Prime Minister Bennett, Brown suggested that the Watson acquisition—like other attempted purchases from indigent artists—was "an unsatisfactory and insufficient remedy" to rescue the painter from poverty. "The artist is usually already sufficiently represented at the National Gallery and the indigent condition naturally recurs very quickly."¹³⁴⁴

In his submission to R.B. Bennett, Southam congratulated the Prime Minister for recognizing the principle that the federal government had a responsibility for the welfare of outstanding artists. "Artists in a young country, whether they be literary or pictorial, are seldom affluent and the pioneer artists in Canada have very naturally had a hard struggle to carry on their work and old age often finds them in very difficult circumstances," Southam wrote. "I think it is a matter for much congratulation to your Government that the contributions of such artists to their country are being recognized by a most timely grant to one of our most outstanding writers, Dr. Charles G.D. Roberts."

The Bennett government had allocated \$2,500 [\$43,000 in 2014 dollars] for Roberts in the Supplementary Estimates for 1934-35. The grant was made through the Canadian Authors Association, which had elected Roberts its president 1927-28. Southam sought to build on this precedent for government support by informing Bennett that "Much the same conditions as obtain in this case come before the National Gallery from time to time and press very strongly for

money had not been sent for his picture which the Gallery had bought at my instance & pressure. When Joan & I were walking together later on the road we met McCurry of the Gallery & he told me of Massey having spoken to him in the morning and of his having telegraphed word to Watson—the value of the painting was only the paltry sum of \$500. However the one bought was the black & white—the bright stream through the dark banks—the one I liked & spoke of."

¹³⁴⁴ Noonan, 179.

consideration. The action usually desired of the National Gallery is the acquisition of pictures or other works.” Southam indicated to Bennett, however, that

The Trustees feel...that the responsibility is not the National Gallery’s any more than a parallel case of an indigent writer or historian would be one for the Dominion Archives to liquidate. The position the Trustees would like to establish is one of being permitted to recommend to you, Mr. Prime Minister, the names of those very occasional pictorial or sculptural artists who have rendered what the Trustees consider national service and contributed definitely and valuable [sic] to the country’s growth and position for inclusion in a pension list or for a modest financial annuity that would ease declining years and I think add a measure of self-respect to any Government interested in national welfare.

Southam presented the case of Homer Watson and requested that the government allocate the painter “a small grant not exceeding \$500.00 [\$8,600 in 2014 dollars] for the next few years...to bring peace and quietness to one whose contributions to Canada has been a notable one.” He informed Bennett that the National Gallery trustees, despite “a complete absence of any funds for acquisition purposes,” had allocated \$500 (rather than the \$1,500 actually approved) for purchases from the artist to temporarily relieve his plight. “More than this they do not feel able to do and have therefore desired me to approach you in the hope of placing the responsibility where it seems more properly to belong and if possible to obtain a more generous and permanent settlement of the matter than it is possible in any other way.”¹³⁴⁵

According to Gerald Noonan, Eric Brown sent a copy of Southam’s submission regarding an artist’s pension program to Vincent Massey with the suggestion that he forward a copy to Mackenzie King “since ‘it may possibly be placed before the House of Commons in the event of it receiving the Prime Minister’s approval.’”¹³⁴⁶ King did not comment on Southam’s proposal but after Roberts was knighted by King George V in 1935 and Bennett renewed his \$2,500 grant

¹³⁴⁵ Southam to R.B. Bennett, June 29, 1934. LAC reel C3675, pages 169694-95.

¹³⁴⁶ Noonan, 180. The copy of Southam’s submission to Bennett in the LAC King fonds probably did not come from Massey but rather from Southam directly. After King was returned as Prime Minister, he enclosed a copy in his communication of December 9, 1935, writing in a post-script, “I am enclosing herewith copy of a letter which I wrote your predecessor in office (which I hope you may be interested to read) in an endeavor to have his government help in the solution of the Homer Watson problem.” LAC reel C3684, pages 182331-32.

for 1935-36 via the Canadian Authors Foundation, King also continued the grant in the Main Estimates for 1936-37. The Canadian Authors Foundation had been launched at a meeting at the Arts and Letters Club in April 1931 by Dr. Pelham Edgar, professor of English at Victoria College. The Foundation's patron was Governor General Lord Bessborough who was convinced that the movement to provide financial assistance to distinguished writers in need was "very necessary to the literary life of Canada."¹³⁴⁷ Prime Minister Bennett, addressing the inaugural meeting of the Canadian Authors' Foundation at Convocation Hall in Toronto in October 1931, similarly declared that "This nation can only live, if it grips the eternal truths which are not based on money, wealth and material things."¹³⁴⁸

Pelham Edgar won backing from both Prime Minister Bennett and King as Leader of the Opposition in support of Roberts. King wrote Edgar in 1936 that his government would allocate \$2,500 to the Canadian Authors Foundation to commission "a report on cultural conditions in Canada" to be written by Roberts. A Treasury Board memo indicates that the allocation to the Foundation was "to provide for report on cultural conditions in Canada (literature, art, drama, education, etc.)."¹³⁴⁹ The annual Parliamentary grant was made to the Foundation until Roberts' death in 1943, even though the writer never wrote his report on cultural conditions. The 1944 artists' *Brief* to the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-

¹³⁴⁷ Harrington, 167. Roberts wrote Howard Angus Kennedy on September 14, 1934 that "Last spring Bennett promised me,—(pledged me, *with King's support*,—) a pension of \$2,500, which went through the supplementary estimates in due course, but without my name attached to it. This was a *specifically personal matter*, for my needs; & was negotiated by Pelham Edgar." He was surprised the cheque had been sent to the Canadian Authors' Association. See Laurel Boone, ed. *The Collected Letters of Charles G.D. Roberts* (Fredericton, NB: Goose Lane Editions, 1989), 473. Even after he had been receiving his annual government pension, Roberts wrote Edith Roberts in 1938 that "I *never* go to the Theatre, because I have to go to the best seats in order to see & I can't afford them." He could only attend when friends bought tickets for him and therefore was able to add, "Yes, Ethel Barrymore was splendid in *Whiteoaks*." Cited in Boone, 538.

¹³⁴⁸ Boone, 313-14.

¹³⁴⁹ King to Pelham Edgar, May 8, 1936. May 1, 1936 Treasury Board memo, "Payment to Sir Chas. G.D. Roberts." LAC reel C3687, pages 186294-95.

establishment would again request \$25,000 [\$345,000 in 2014 dollars] for a cross-Canada study of community centres and their cultural needs.

But King did not wish to establish a general cultural policy for government assistance to other artists in need such as Homer Watson. Eric Brown had been correct in anticipating that “the indigent condition naturally recurs very quickly.” Six months before his death, Phoebe Watson wrote King to congratulate him on his victory in the 1935 election and to report that her brother was in St. Mary’s Hospital in precarious health after a severe stroke and very anxious about his financial situation. She estimated that the Waterloo Trust held approximately \$30,000 worth of Watson’s paintings for which the Trust had extended him a loan of \$12,000. “We are afraid of a forced sale and a scattering of his life’s work for a mere fraction of its value.” The painter had sent another \$30,000 worth of paintings to an invited exhibition at the National Gallery. Could the Prime Minister approach the Gallery “to keep the twelve thousand dollars worth of pictures and make Homer a free man?” King responded that he would write at once to H.S. Southam, “letting him know of the representations of your letter and saying that I will more than appreciate any consideration it may be possible for the trustees of the National Gallery and himself to give.” He was not hopeful of such assistance since “The Trustees are necessarily restricted in their actions by the appropriation which Parliament makes. Unfortunately, like all else, that has been much restricted of late.” The Prime Minister also stated, “Unfortunately, I am not in a position to lend personal assistance, and my power in other directions is much more apparent than real.”¹³⁵⁰

¹³⁵⁰ Phoebe Watson to King, November 11 and 19, 1935. Watson to King, November 13, 1935. King to Watson, November 14, 1935. King to Phoebe Watson, November 25, 1935. LAC reel C3684, pages 182845-52. King also received a submission from the managing director of the Waterloo Trust and Savings Company pointing out that while—thanks to the Marquis of Lorne’s support in 1880—Watson’s paintings “hang in Windsor Castle, Buckingham Palace and several of the Galleries of the Old Country,” they were not to be found in Rideau Hall or Canada House in London. He asked if the new Governor General, Lord Tweedsmuir, could interest himself in Watson’s work. King acceded to H.S. Southam’s request that—as per recent tradition—he ask Tweedsmuir to become the honorary president of the National Gallery but would have been embarrassed to ask the new Governor General to buy one of Watson’s paintings for Rideau Hall. In his reply, he referred to his renewed request to Southam for support but wrote, “I must confess that I appreciate wherein it was very difficult indeed for the Trustees to do more than they have already done, having regard to the very limited appropriation at their disposal, and conditions

H.S. Southam replied to King that, were the National Gallery's budget increased, "we would purchase a sufficient number of Watson's pictures to render him solvent again." However, he pointed out that "Such a purchase would create a major sensation in the Canadian art world, especially as the Government has already purchased over \$18,000 worth of Watson's pictures and this is more than three times the average amount spent on other artists of similar standing." He informed the Prime Minister that "We must bear in mind, however, that Watson is by no means the only academician in straits at present and we should be prepared to meet similar requests (several of which have been made to us in the last year or two) on an impartial basis."

Enclosing a copy of his pension plan he had submitted to R.B. Bennett, Southam proposed that, were Parliament to increase the National Gallery's budget, the Gallery could purchase paintings from Watson (and "other aged, needy and deserving Canadian artists") once a year for five years for around \$1,000 [\$17,000 in 2014 dollars] and present or permanently lend these to the most deserving public galleries in Canada. "In this way we should avoid a direct grant and yet achieve the effect of a pension sufficient to relieve Watson's necessities." Anticipating by several years the strategy of Canadian artists lobbying for government support by pointing to American government financial assistance to artists as part of the New Deal, Southam concluded his proposal to King by stating, "You may not be aware that the United States government made an initial appropriation of \$1,000,000 for the support of unemployed artists and I feel that the Canadian Government would be fully justified in making a modest grant over a period of a few years, not exceeding \$10,000 [\$172,000 in 2014 dollars] or \$15,000 a year, to be devoted to a similar purpose."¹³⁵¹

I have not located the Prime Minister's response to H.S. Southam's pension proposal for Canadian artists. What is clear, however, is that Mackenzie King expended a great amount of

surrounding the purchase of paintings by the Government." P.V. Wilson to King, December 13, 1935. King to Wilson, January 4, 1936. LAC reel C3685, pages 183028-031.

¹³⁵¹ Southam to King, December 9, 1935. King to Southam, January 10, 1936. LAC reel C3684, pages 182331-34.

social, cultural and political capital on behalf of Homer Watson and even supported the annual government appropriation on behalf of C.G.D. Roberts. By contrast—with the exception of Giuseppe Guastalla's and Frank Salisbury's idealized portraits—he was extremely reluctant to spend his own money on paintings or sculpture. He became accustomed to his friends in the Liberal Party or the federal or provincial government paying for such works or the artists presenting

Laurier House in 1927 and 1928.¹³⁵² The March brothers and their sister, Elsie, executors of their late brother Vernon's designs for the National War Memorial in Ottawa, presented King with the sculpture *Sleeping Psyche* when he visited their studio in England in 1937. The 1938 Niagara Falls pioneers memorial arch, with its relief of William Lyon Mackenzie by Emmanuel Hahn, was paid for by the Ontario government. Walter Allward's Mackenzie monument, erected in Queen's Park, Toronto, in 1940, was paid for by leading figures in the Liberal Party who also commissioned portrait busts of King from the Austrian-born sculptor Felix Weihs de Weldon in 1938 and from the American sculptor Avard Fairbanks in 1944. Weldon gifted King a gold medallion and a silver medallion portrait of his mother in 1940 and 1943. As the Prime Minister noted in his diary, the sculptor had sent him "some remembrance in the nature of a reproduction of the relief of my mother and/or father every birthday" since 1940.¹³⁵³

As indicated in chapter II, by the time Mackenzie King found himself the Leader of the Opposition after the Liberals' loss in the August 1930 election, he estimated his wealth at nearly

¹³⁵² See diary July 30, 1927 and July 11, 1928. Brunet to Wright, June 15, 1925. LAC reel C2277, page 99091. Brunet to Larkin, March 20, 1926. Reel C2290, pages 113378-80. Brunet to King, December 6, 1927. King to Brunet, January 7, 1928. Reel C2295, pages 120398-401. In his letter to Larkin, Brunet reported that Philippe Roy, the Canadian Commissioner General to France, came to his studio and "thought that the bust I made of Sir Wilfrid was the best ever made of him."

King transferred the Laurier bust donated by Senator Wilson to his office in Parliament. "The stone of the head is a curious greenish gray and gives a most unpleasant effect, in contrast with the white stone of the body. We have tried it everywhere but nowhere is it suitable." See Diary November 6, 1928, February 10, 1930 and December 3, 1936.

¹³⁵³ Diary February 4, 1946.

half a million dollars (\$6.5 million in 2014 dollars) in stocks, bonds and cash.¹³⁵⁴ In his correspondence with the indigent Homer Watson, he acknowledged “the financial embarrassments, which, as you say, are so destructive of creative work.” Yet in dealing with the artist about the purchase of his paintings, he pleaded financial constraints as a result of extensive dental work for abscessed teeth, pressing obligations of public life and forthcoming outlays for the Christmas season.¹³⁵⁵

Watson had expanded his colour range from the 1920s on and sent King two paintings in September of 1933, having been unable to choose between the two. King was delighted with both, informing Watson by telegram that he was “overjoyed with their exquisite beauty.” He especially liked “the Landscape & trees. The mauve coloring of the sky puzzles me a little & seems out of deference to the ‘new’ school.” But he thought that “the water in both is wonderful.” Apparently forgetting his 1927 purchase of Kathleen Shackleton’s portrait (also for \$100), which he had characterized as “a sort of highway robbery,” King wrote Watson that “I have received from many authors, some of them quite distinguished, autographed copies of their books. I have never before received from an artist one of his own paintings.”¹³⁵⁶

¹³⁵⁴ Diary August 19, 1930. He had already recorded in his diary on December 31, 1927 that thanks to the funds raised for him by Peter Larkin, “He has secured me financially for the rest of my life. I have no longer reason to be anxious on that score; that means everything.” Following Watson’s death, in a reference to the several cottages on his Kingsmere estate, King queried in a June 8, 1936 diary entry, “whoever would have believed I would ever have had reason to regret—having too much!”

¹³⁵⁵ King to Watson, July 18, 1934 and December 11, 1933. LAC reels C3678, pages 173755-58 and C3675, pages 169301-04.

¹³⁵⁶ King to Watson, September 28 and December 28, 1933. LAC reel C3675, pages 169300 and 169305-08. Diary September 28, 1933. Miller, 112-16, 119-21.



Homer Watson's 1933 *Evening Moonrise* and *Moonlit Stream* at Laurier House.

He wanted to keep both canvases if the artist would let him have the second painting for less than the \$100 he agreed to for the first. The second painting was *Evening Moonrise* which, along with *Moonlit Stream*, hangs above King's bed in Laurier House. Watson brought King's embarrassing haggling to an end by giving him the painting as a gift.¹³⁵⁷ Near the end of his life, King was extremely grateful that old family friends and Liberal supporters in Kitchener committed to saving his family's home, Woodside, as a memorial and that "a nephew of Homer Watson is one of the Trustees."¹³⁵⁸ He had characterized the painter at his passing as "a man I really and truly loved, a great gentleman & a great artist" and a year later came to "regret not having been more of an immediate help to him." King's official tribute asserted, "In the death of Homer Watson, Canada has lost one whose name will ever be foremost in the realm of Canadian art. Homer Watson was recognized, not only as a great Canadian artist, but as one of the best of living landscape artists in any part of the British Empire."¹³⁵⁹ By January 1938, the painter had become one of the few artists who appeared to the Prime Minister in spiritualist séances, "Watson in the sitting last week...sent or brought by father."¹³⁶⁰

¹³⁵⁷ Diary December 25, 1933.

¹³⁵⁸ Diary September 9, 1947.

¹³⁵⁹ Page, 162-63

¹³⁶⁰ Diary May 30, 1936, September 5, 1937 and January 27, 1938.

Yet when friends of Watson's contacted him for assistance in an effort to preserve the artist's home and studio in Doon as an arts centre in his memory, King "had to write & say it was for the Waterloo [County] people to arrange." As with Watson, he again claimed "I am not financially so situated as to be able to contribute to many objects which are very near and dear to my heart." Furthermore, he did not want to set a precedent for government assistance. "I question, too, if the Dominion Government could be expected to do anything in the matter, as so to do would be to establish a precedent which would be exceedingly difficult to follow throughout Canada generally." King conceded to their mutual friend Florence Harvey that "Thus far our country's appreciation of its great men, and particularly its great artists, is far from being what it ought to be." He referred to his own efforts to persuade the National Gallery to purchase Watson's paintings but expressed his certainty that to attempt to convince the Gallery to assist in the purchase of the painter's home would be "wholly useless."¹³⁶¹

In his harshly critical assessment of King's financial dealings with Watson, his biographer Gerald Noonan remarked on "that immunity of his, the ability to insulate his private experiences—of art and money—from the national experience" and on King's "ability to compartmentalize the national life and his personal life." Despite being overjoyed at the "exquisite beauty" of Watson's two paintings, "King, it appears, was able to isolate his private feelings about a couple specific works of art from any general approbation of culture at large."¹³⁶²

My examination of King's interactions with over two dozen artists suggests, on the contrary, that King's private experiences shaped and were consistent with what he wanted the national experience to be. The analysis of King's various *habiti* in these chapters documents his propensity to think and act in a certain repeated and predictable manner in cultural matters. His expenditure of limited financial and much greater symbolical capital on behalf of Homer Watson closely parallels his actions on behalf of what Southam referred to as yet another "academician in

¹³⁶¹ Mrs. W.H. Becker to King, June 3, 1936. King to Becker, June 8, 1936. King to Florence Harvey, June 8, 1936. LAC reel C3685, pages 183831-35 and reel C3694, pages 196154-56. Diary June 8, 1936.

¹³⁶² Noonan, 277, 278.

straights,” the painter Carl Ahrens. King recorded in his diary in 1935 that both were “artists suffering from lack of appreciation & sale of their work.”¹³⁶³

Carl Ahrens, Starving Mad Artist

As indicated in chapter VI, King’s actions on behalf of Carl Ahrens began within a year of his becoming Prime Minister on December 29, 1921 and were propelled by similar motivations as his expenditures of symbolic capital on behalf of Homer Watson—his father’s friendship with and support of the artist and the painter’s realistic depictions of massive old-growth trees—what Oscar Wilde in his lectures in Canada referred to as “your Titan forests”—which nevertheless conveyed spiritual associations. Ahrens’s wife Madonna wrote King in March of 1935, “saying mortgage was being foreclosed, her husband has sold no paintings for a year or two, has tuberculosis—she is ready to sing over radio, go into Civil Service or anything; both are starving practically.” In his diary King does not mention that Madonna asked the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, “Do you not feel that my husband’s work entitles him to some return? Could not a pension be arranged that would care for him in the few years left?” King replied that he felt deeply for both Homer Watson and Carl Ahrens, “knowing what the present depression has brought with it of trial to artists generally, and to Mr. Watson and Mr. Ahrens in particular.” He informed Madonna that “Thus far, the Government has refused to entertain the idea of granting pensions as a form of aid or relief, and I doubt if it will change in any particular its present relief plans.” As Leader of the Opposition, “any suggestion from me would be more likely further to prejudice than to help the position of anyone on whose behalf it might be made.” King sent the painter \$50 [\$866 in 2014 dollars] “for a little sketch, but do not feel I can do more,” noting in his diary that “the tragedy of these artists is terrible; poor Watson as well as Ahrens, noble souls suffering great penury.” He wrote the couple about his father befriending Ahrens as a Waterloo County boy, “speaking of father’s regard for Carl Ahrens & of my being inspired to interest myself in his art & in Homer Watson’s because of father’s friendship for them—I am grateful to

¹³⁶³ Diary January 20, 1935.

be an instrument to carry on what I feel sure he is responsible for... To help and to heal, to guide and to guard, these must be my watch words through life.”¹³⁶⁴

As with Homer Watson whom he met only twice in 1935 and 1936, King expended a vast amount of time and symbolic capital assisting Carl and Madonna Ahrens but very little of his own financial capital and no official government assistance. The forty communications to and about Ahrens King sent and received before, during and after the 1935 federal election are all the more surprising in view of his statement to Dr. J.A. Faulkner, the Ontario Minister of Health, whom he asked to admit the artist to the Toronto Psychiatric Hospital. He had only met the painter and his wife once (in November of 1922), he wrote Faulkner, “the recollection of which has become so indistinct that, at the moment, I can scarcely recall it.”¹³⁶⁵

After one of his former students, Grant Macdonald, urged Ahrens to come and work in England, Madonna Ahrens wrote King in March of 1935 asking whether he could secure free transportation for the couple on the CPR so that Carl could escape the summer heat in Galt in July and August and earn money from his painting in England. She also informed him that her husband would send him a completed painting rather than “some little drawing” King had requested as a souvenir of their meeting. “To possess anything of the kind would be the greatest possible delight to me,” he replied to Madonna, “and I shall be grateful beyond words for so valuable a possession.” He had asked Joan and Godfroy Patteson’s son Jack, the General Agent for the CPR Steamship Passenger Department, to visit the Ahrens’s to see if he could help them. In May, Madonna sent King a large oil painting her husband had completed in 1934 and a sketch for Jack Patteson he had admired during his visit. The artist also offered to compensate the CPR with a larger painting in exchange for the couple’s transportation. King wrote Patteson to inform him that “Ahrens’s work is rated very highly and it would be difficult to make a better

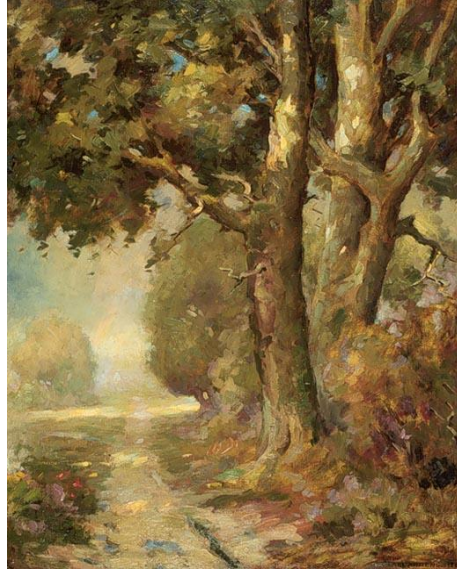
¹³⁶⁴ Diary March 15, 23 and 30, 1935. Madonna Ahrens to King, March 14 and 28, 1935. King to Madonna Ahrens, March 16 and 23, 1935. LAC reel C3678, pages 173931-42.

¹³⁶⁵ King to J.A. Faulkner, April 14, 1936. LAC reel C3687, pages 186529-30. King’s communications with and about Ahrens can be found on reels C3678, pages 173943-64; C3683, pages 180697-720; C3685, pages 183421-28; and C3687, pages 186518-31.

investment today than to purchase at a reasonable figure any first-class painting of his.” He suggested that were the CPR “desirous of having a picture for the office of its president or board of directors, or for placing in one of its hotels, I doubt if it could do better than secure one of Ahrens’s paintings.”¹³⁶⁶

King was more than delighted when he received Ahrens’s canvas. “To look at it fills me with joy. It is like a burst of sunshine coming through a window, with the blue sky beyond. Curiously enough, I had been thinking of something which would be rather somber and dark. When I opened the package, and unwrapped the picture, I had almost to start back, I was so taken by surprise at the burst of light which it seemed suddenly to send forth,” he wrote the ailing, invalid painter. “How you have preserved such radiance of soul, amid all your suffering both mental and physical, and been able to transfer so much to canvas, is the greatest of surprises to me.” Madonna Ahrens replied that King securing their transportation to England “has saved my husband’s life.” The painter “has really been almost at the breaking point...his nerves have almost collapsed; so much worry for such a long time has made this place seem a prison to him.”

¹³⁶⁶ Kim Bullock, “Rediscovering Carl Ahrens: The Painter,” *Waterloo Historical Society Annual* 94 (2006), 79. King to Madonna Ahrens, March 30, 1935. Madonna Ahrens to King, May 11, 1935. King to J.C. Patteson, May 1, 1935. LAC reel C3678, pages 173943-49, and reel C3683, pages 180697-98. Grant Macdonald became a war artist during World War II and chronicled the Stratford Festival for a decade after its opening in 1953.



Carl Ahrens 1922 *The Road*.

Jack Patteson, when he visited the Ahrens at their home, “Big Trees” in Galt, agreed that the painter, with his tubercular hip that made walking impossible, was likely to go crazy since “the farmhouse in which they have lived for the past twelve years is certainly a depressing spot, and miles from anyone on a back country road.” During his visit, Ahrens showed Patteson the 24" x 30" canvas he wanted to give to the CPR in return for transportation to England. He had sold a similar painting (*The Road* in 1923) to the National Gallery for \$1,500. The mortgage on the artist’s home of \$1,400, with an additional \$150 in back interest, had been foreclosed for non-payment, with inflation even less than the sole painting he had sold to the National Gallery in 1923.¹³⁶⁷ King wrote Patteson that “The suffering which many artists have been called upon to endure in these years of depression must be indescribable.” He hoped the CPR would accept one of the artist’s paintings since “as an investment, they are certain to bring very high returns, once poor Ahrens has quit this scene and the world itself is in better times. Apart from all this, a thing of beauty is a joy forever.” Patteson consulted with the CPR “though it is hardly the province of a transportation company to deal in acts of mercy.” But two weeks later he had to notify Ahrens

¹³⁶⁷ King to Madonna Ahrens, May 14, 1935. Madonna Ahrens to King, June 1 and 3, 1935. Patteson to King, May 11, 1935. LAC reel C3678, pages 173950-57 and C3683, pages 180700-01.

that the CPR could only provide transportation for the couple “on the understanding that you will agree to pay back this amount as and when it is possible.”¹³⁶⁸

Like W.W. Campbell, Homer Watson and Tait Mackenzie before him, Ahrens left Canada for England, hoping he could be more successful in the British than the Canadian field of cultural production. He and Madonna arrived in Southampton on July 15 and settled in Guildford, Surrey. King wrote the couple in the midst of his election campaign, “sure that the incentive of a new field, and the opportunities of a larger market which Britain presents, will soon bring an answer to the prayer which you both have had so much at heart for many years.” But just after winning the general election in October, King was surprised to hear from Jack Patteson and Madonna Ahrens that the couple was returning to Canada on the 19th. While the painter’s “work has never gone so well,” the English climate proved too much for him. “Carl was practically unconscious when we reached Toronto. He did not recognize our children at all or remember anything the next day...our having to come back was a bitter disappointment...he painted some most beautiful work while there.”¹³⁶⁹

In November Mackenzie King—now again Prime Minister—heard through Jack Patteson that “Carl Ahrens had a stroke which affected his mind and that Mrs. Ahrens was helpless in dealing with the situation. I sent \$50.00 towards lending a hand. I greatly fear that this may be the end of Ahrens’ life, and hope, for his sake, and his wife’s, that such may be the case, for he has little but suffering to live for now.” He observed that “Both he and Watson are two of Canada’s most distinguished artists. Each is dying practically in poverty and largely because of the strain which they have been called upon to endure during the past few years. The paintings of each will probably, some day, bring fabulous prices in our country.” As with Homer Watson, he asked W.D. Euler—whom he had just appointed Minister of Trade and Commerce—to interest himself

¹³⁶⁸ King to Patteson, May 14, 1935. Patteson to King, May 16, 1935. Patteson to Carl Ahrens, June 1, 1935. LAC reel C3683, pages 180702-05.

¹³⁶⁹ Madonna Ahrens to King, August 7, 1935. King to Madonna Ahrens, August 19, 1935. LAC reel C3678, pages 173958-61; reel C3683, page 180707; reel C3678, pages 173962-63. Madonna Ahrens to King, October 22, 1935. Cited in Bullock, 81.

and others in the Kitchener area in Ahrens's art. He also phoned the Ontario Minister of Health to ask that he admit the painter into the Toronto Psychiatric Hospital as a public patient, characterizing Ahrens to Dr. Faulkner as "one of Canada's greatest artists." Patteson up-dated King about the heartbroken Ahrens's mental and physical condition and inquired whether King could secure a federal or provincial clerical government position for Madonna Ahrens so she could support herself and her husband. King responded that he could not even secure a position for his own nephew Lyon (the son of his brother Max who died of tuberculosis) in the civil service.¹³⁷⁰

In December of 1935, King recorded receiving a letter from Ahrens's friend William Charles Baker, the painter and professor of art at Cornell University, "enclosing a communication to him from Carl Ahrens, asking him to write me about having him released from the mental hospital in which, at the moment, he is." In his letter to Baker, Ahrens stated that he "will go out of my mind if not helped back to a studio at once." Ahrens also began writing King directly from the Toronto Psychiatric Hospital in December of 1935. He congratulated King on winning the 1935 federal election and felt sure that his "little painting above your mantel brought you such a sweeping victory." As in his correspondence with Baker, he informed King that "I must get back to the easel or go out of my mind" and asked the Prime Minister, "Please give orders to have me released at once." King responded in January of 1936 and asserted that "Unfortunately, I have not means of my own which enable me to give financial assistance to others." In his five-page long typed letter, he indicated that he had used his political capital to contact the Minister of Health of the Province of Ontario to have Ahrens admitted to the Toronto Psychiatric Hospital where he could be fed and taken care of. The painter died at the end of February and King telephoned and sent flowers and his condolences to Madonna Ahrens along with a small cheque. "I wish I could send something more in accord with my feelings, and what I know to be your need," he wrote

¹³⁷⁰ Diary November 13 and 14, 1935. Miss Z. [King's secretary, Lucy Zavitske], Memo to King, November 13, 1935. King to Patteson, November 13, 1935. King to Madonna Ahrens, November 14, 1935. Patteson to King, November 19, December 3 and 13, 1935, January 8 and 9, 1936. King to Patteson, January 8, 1936. King to Faulkner, April 14, 1936. LAC reel C3683, pages

Madonna, “but, unfortunately, the demands on me are very many, and my own income is limited.” Ahrens painted watercolors before his death. According to Kim Bullock, his great-granddaughter, “The work that he did in the last few months, while not of any great volume, was among his best.”¹³⁷¹

Louise “Louie” Burrell in 1914, Carl Ahrens in 1923 and 1935-36, and Homer Watson in 1934-35 were of course not the only artists struggling for economic survival King was directly in contact with. When he visited the poet and playwright Nathaniel Benson and his wife in their “small apartment” in 1938, he observed that “He is struggling at present but I have no doubt will come into his own in time.”¹³⁷² In 1939 Vincent Dupuis, the Liberal MP for Chambly-Rouville, Quebec, lobbied King for a pension or appointment for the poet Wilson MacDonald. MacDonald followed up with a letter to King explaining that “I have found it an impossibility to make a living by my art in Canada, and I have also found it impossible to write authentic poetry and do anything else which takes me away from the atmosphere of my true work.” He claimed that “Ninety percent of my time is consumed in a fruitless effort to make my living, five percent is devoted to my art. No wonder the critics are condemning me for non-production, when I could be turning out some of my greatest work, for I am at the zenith period of creative art.”

MacDonald cited the precedent of the pension granted to Charles G.D. Roberts by Prime Minister R.B. Bennett and continued by King, noting, “Sir Charles Roberts was so worried over finances that he did not write one enduring poem for twenty years. Then when Mr. Bennett (with your own very kind acquiescence) gave him a means of livelihood he produced ‘The Iceberg’ and other inspired songs.” The poet also requested a pension of “at least \$2,500” for which he offered to prepare data for government literary maps which would stimulate tourism to Canada. Friends in the United States were assisting him by arranging lecture engagements but were urging him to take

180708-20, and reel C3687, pages 186529-30. King’s correspondence with Dr. Faulkner from January to April 1936 can be found on reel C3687, pages 186518-31.

¹³⁷¹ Diary December 13, 1935. Carl Ahrens to King, December 8 and 28, 1935. King to Ahrens, January 4, 1936. King to Madonna Ahrens, February 28, 1936. LAC reel C3678, pages 173921-30 and C3685, pages 183421-24. Bullock, 84.

out American citizenship. He was making “this last appeal” to the Prime Minister before doing so and closed his letter by thanking King “for your kind reference to my work which was conveyed to me by Mr. Dupuis.”¹³⁷³

In response, King forwarded Wilson MacDonald’s letter with a combined memorandum to his principal secretary Arnold Heeney and to O.D. Skelton, his Under-Secretary for External Affairs, whom H. Blair Neatby characterized as “the equivalent of the Prime Minister’s Deputy Minister” and as “the most influential civil servant in Ottawa.” He noted that the poet’s communication “deserves more than passing consideration” and asked for their suggestions “if there is any way in which you think Mr. MacDonald’s wishes could be met.” He himself would “speak of the letter in Council. Dupuis has spoken of it to me.” In view of the poet’s beautiful calligraphy, King wondered “if he might not be given some post in the Secretary of State’s Office. In my opinion, his work is worth preserving for Canada.” An October 1939 memorandum indicates that King’s staff made inquiries in February about a position for MacDonald with the Department of Mines and Resources (National Parks Branch), the Department of Transport (Canadian Travel Bureau), the Department of the Secretary of State, and the National Gallery. As with his previous lobbying efforts, the National Gallery was again prepared to accommodate King’s wishes. One of his secretaries “had been informed by the Acting Director of the National Gallery [H.O. McCurry], that an offer had been made, in writing, to Mr. Wilson MacDonald but that no reply had ever been received from him.”¹³⁷⁴

Summarizing another personal contact with artists in 1942, King recorded a visit to Laurier House by the sculptors Jean and Cleeve Horne who came to see William Orpen’s 1926 King

¹³⁷² Diary April 27, 1938.

¹³⁷³ Wilson MacDonald, Mount Royal, P.Q., February 1, 1939. Handwritten letter with typed transcription, LAC reel C3745, pages 229674, 229676, 229678. An inscribed copy of Roberts’s *The Iceberg* is located in the Laurier House library.

¹³⁷⁴ H. Blair Neatby, *William Lyon Mackenzie King: Volume III 1932-1939 The Prism of Unity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 134, 135. King February 4, 1939 memorandum to “Dr. Skelton and Mr. Heeney combined.” October 20, 1939 memorandum “Mr. Wilson

portrait but “mainly I think to let me see a bust Horne had made of Admiral Nelles.” King was “quite exhausted but enjoyed the little change and talk with them. Felt it was something they were appreciative of. I feel a great sympathy for artists in times like the present.”¹³⁷⁵ He was probably not aware that the sculptors Frances Loring and Florence Wyle, disheartened by the lack of commissions and the gloom of war, regularly threatened to commit suicide. According to their biographer Rebecca Sisler, “But then, they reasoned, their demise would not be of great value unless they took along a few others with them. They then would proceed to draw up a list of a dozen people the world would be well rid of. Mackenzie King always headed the list.”¹³⁷⁶

Habitus as Destiny

Mackenzie King’s repeated vows of poverty—when in reality he was a rich man—and his support of artists who had either been befriended by his father like Forster, Watson and Ahrens or had strong spiritual inspirations like Lenoir, Allward, Fairbanks and Salisbury point to King’s various *habiti* which structured his convictions and actions in a consistent manner throughout his life. In his lecture “The Laws of Habit,” William James had posited that “All our life, so far as it has definite form, is but a mass of habits—practical, emotional, and intellectual—systematically organized for our weal or woe, and bearing us irresistibly towards our destiny, whatever the latter may be.”¹³⁷⁷ In his *Principles of Psychology*, he referred to habit as “the enormous fly-wheel of society, its most precious conservative agent...it dooms us all to fight out the battle of life upon the lines of our nurture or our early choice, and to make the best of a pursuit that disagrees, because there is no other for which we are fitted, and

MacDonald.” LAC reel C3745, pages 229677 and 229679. King briefly recorded in his May 5, 1939 diary, “Had a talk with Dupuis about his poet friend MacDonald.”

¹³⁷⁵ Diary February 27, 1942.

¹³⁷⁶ Rebecca Sisler, *The Girls: A Biography of Frances Loring and Florence Wyle* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1972), 69.

¹³⁷⁷ William James, *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on Some of Life’s Ideals* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 47.

it is too late to begin again.”¹³⁷⁸ Mackenzie King had already come to the realization in 1899 that an individual’s code of belief and behavior, what he called “character,” “is a growth & tends toward fixity”¹³⁷⁹ and thus shapes his or her actions. He had concluded his memoir of Bert Harper, *The Secret of Heroism*, with the line “Thus does Destiny, linking the cradle with the grave, leave us to wonder over the mysteries which she delights to weave.”¹³⁸⁰ He cited the passage in his diary on the eve of his birthday soon after the outbreak of World War II but added that destiny was not some unknowable mystery. “Destiny, I feel to be part of an eternal purpose. That purpose, according with the will of God, has been a part of the lives of those that have gone before us and is, for each, the supreme purpose of his own individual life.”¹³⁸¹

King’s actions were thus doubly shaped by the predispositions of his own *habiti* and by the destiny which he believed God had predetermined for him and which he sought to fulfill. Even before entering politics, he had written in his diary on July 25, 1907 about “the realization of self—the realization of the purpose of life in service of others.” Allan Levine cited this diary entry exemplifying King’s life belief in a frontispiece to his biography, subtitled *A Life Guided by the Hand of Destiny*. “There is the purpose of God in all, the realization of the dream of my life, the page unfolds as by the hand of Destiny. From a child I have looked forward to this hour as that which should lead me into my life’s work...and now I am led to the threshold by the Invisible Hand.”¹³⁸² King’s magical thinking, his life “dream,” *habiti*, and what he believed to be his predetermined divine plan stipulated that he become Prime Minister of Canada, that he rehabilitate the reputation of his rebel grandfather, William Lyon Mackenzie, honour his father and mother, serve those in need, lead Canada safely

¹³⁷⁸ William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 125.

¹³⁷⁹ Diary September 10, 1899.

¹³⁸⁰ W.L. Mackenzie King, *The Secret of Heroism: A Memoir of Henry Albert Harper* (New York, Chicago, Toronto, London and Edinburgh: Fleming H. Revell, 1906), 161.

¹³⁸¹ Diary December 16, 1939, p. 12.

¹³⁸² Allan Levine, *King: William Lyon Mackenzie King—A Life Guided by the Hand of Destiny* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2011), n.p.

through the spiritual evil and physical ravages of World War II, and shape Canada into a Christian nation exemplifying Christian values.

Because King judged a work of art not solely by its formal qualities but primarily by what the work signified in his imagination—its “associations”—his aesthetic taste functioned according to a different, and perhaps irreconcilable, “code” than that of contemporary artists. King’s *habitus* conditioned his aesthetic taste exclusively towards realism, idealism and themes of Christian service. He therefore could not comprehend and was excluded from the non-realist modernist “code” of artists like the Group of Seven and of cultural nationalists advocating cultural democracy and artistic self-expression in any and all unrestricted artistic forms.

Pierre Bourdieu closely described this cultural divide between King’s anti-modernism and the practice of contemporary Canadian artists when he wrote in *Distinction* that the consumption of art is “a stage in a process of communication, that is, an act of deciphering, decoding, which presupposes practical or explicit mastery of a cipher or code... A beholder who lacks the specific code feels lost in a chaos of sounds and rhythms, colours and lines, without rhyme or reason.” According to Bourdieu, “one can say that the capacity to see (*voir*) is a function of the knowledge (*savoir*), or concepts, that is, the words, that are available to name visible things, and which are, as it were, programmes for perception.” He suggested that “A work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded.” Bourdieu referred here primarily to the recognition of “the styles characteristic of a period, a school or an author, and, more generally, for the familiarity with the internal logic of works that aesthetic enjoyment presupposes.”¹³⁸³ The internal logic of King’s aesthetic taste was based not only on such stylistic considerations but also on aspects of his magical thinking. Maria Tippett misinterpreted King’s aesthetic codes and cultural *habitus* when she concluded in *Making Culture*, “In his view, in sum, art had to

¹³⁸³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Richard Nice, trans. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 2.

reflect Canada's wealth and be securely rooted in European, preferably British, traditions: anything else was suspect."¹³⁸⁴

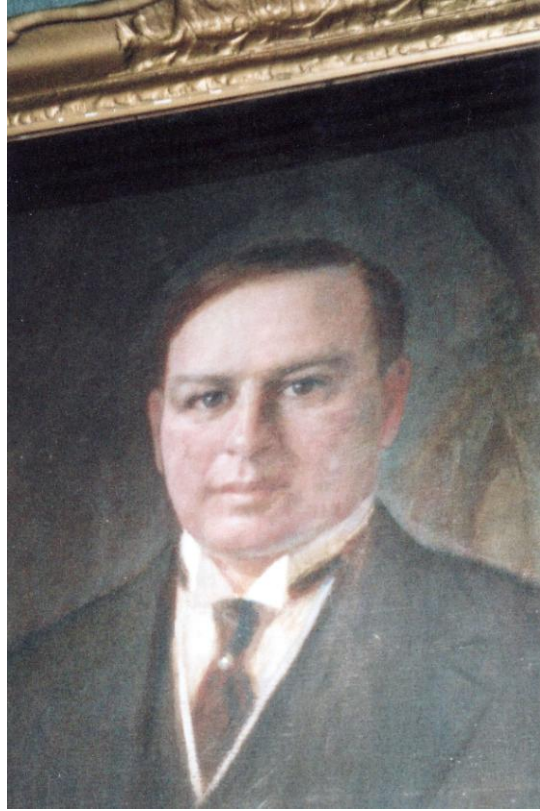
Mackenzie King's Aesthetic Codes

Paradoxically, King's cultural *habitus* and unshaken belief in his own cultural authority developed from his ongoing extensive direct involvement—rather than a lack of contact—with Canadian and non-Canadian artists. King's combination of magical thinking, predispositions and cultural convictions are clearly evident in his dealings with artists and made his interaction with them both predictable and almost inevitable. So when the Berlin Old Boys Reunion in Kitchener commissioned Stanley Gordon Moyer (1887-1968) to paint King's portrait for an official unveiling at the entrance to the Kitchener City Hall Council Chamber during King's visit to the city in 1925, he duly had one of his staffers in the Prime Minister's Office "find out from National Art Gallery who this Moir is; that is, is he a real artist."¹³⁸⁵

As discussed in previous chapters, the "codes" of King's magical thinking and aesthetic taste neatly fall into categories which are discernible over half a century. The most prominent of these was King's view of art as a means of projecting his idealized self-image, which painters and sculptors failed to achieve for two decades until his 1945 portrait by the English portrait painter Frank O. Salisbury.

¹³⁸⁴ Tippett, 74.

¹³⁸⁵ July 10, 1925 Memorandum from Prime Minister's Office "Re: Painting of Mr. King by artist Moyer." LAC reel C2708, page 79089.



Stanley Gordon Moyer's 1925 King portrait.

The Toronto artist Stanley Gordon Moyer began painting King on July 19, 1925 in the garage of Laurier House converted into a studio. King had great misgivings “being painted by an artist with little or no experience, but the offer is such a kind one, so well intentioned, and a chance to do a young artist a helpful turn, that I feel I should submit to lengthy sittings and run the risks that may be involved.” He dismissed the artist’s initial sketches, “some pictures of the Parliament Buildings with me standing in the foreground, perfectly terrible—also an interior of the House of Commons with me as the sole occupant.” After three sittings, Moyers was “doing fairly well but still has too round shaped a head & rather wooden expression in the drawing.” As he watched his portrait emerge, King found the likeness “is not me as yet; looks like Rosebury [the Earl of Rosebury, Archibald Primrose, the former British Prime Minister], Winston Churchill, my grandfather & others by turns. I have still faith he will be able to work it out successfully, though it will lack spirit & fire & life.” When Moyers finished the painting after just six sittings on August 2, two days before its unveiling in Kitchener, King was afraid to make more suggestions

for changes and was more or less satisfied that “he had a good portrait.” “It has some of the marks of the amateur, but there is dignity & strength to it, and character...It gives me a feeling of pride to think of grandfather’s portrait being in the city hall Toronto, and mine in the city hall of Berlin (Kitchener).” When King departed by train for Toronto, Moyers and his painting accompanied him. “It requires a little more modelling, seemed to lack expression.” He saw Moyer’s oil portrait again when he visited Kitchener in 1933 and felt the painting “is not a good likeness—but at least is not repulsive as many are.”¹³⁸⁶

Judging by Moyer’s portrait still on display in Kitchener’s new city hall, King was justified in his criticism of the artist. Yet he was just as unsatisfied the following year by another portrait painted by the distinguished Irish First World War artist and portrait painter Sir William Orpen (1878-1931). The Orpen portrait commission was suggested to King by Lord Beaverbrook at his estate at Leatherhead in 1926 while King was attending the Imperial Conference in London. “Beaverbrook asked me whether I had a painting of myself made and said he would like to present me with one; that it should be by the best artist.”¹³⁸⁷ But King had no sooner left London than he wrote Orpen from Paris enclosing a photograph of himself and requesting that the painter, at his earliest convenience, would allow his friend Peter Larkin, the Canadian High Commissioner in London, “to come to the studio and point out one or two features of the portrait of myself which we both thought it might be of advantage to bring to your attention.”

The first impression the portrait made as we both looked at it was that of the fatigue from which I was more or less suffering throughout my stay in London. You have evidently been very true to life during those hectic days. I am wondering if for the sake of the impression it may make in years to come you could not alter the eyes somewhat, so as to give more of the impression of the photograph I am sending herewith. In the portrait I think the left eyebrow appears too high—there is too much space between the eyebrow and the eye itself. Could not both eyes be made a little deeper and fuller as they are in the photograph with the brow overarching more...If you could make the

¹³⁸⁶ Diary July 18, 19, 22, 26, August 2, 1925 and June 17, 1933. In his diary of December 25, 1925, King recorded receiving Moyer’s painting of Woodside. On Moyer, see also “Stanley Moyer,” *Gossip!*, October 9, 1926 and Lotta Dempsey, “Letter From Mr. King,” *Toronto Globe and Mail*, January 12, 1951.

¹³⁸⁷ Diary October 24, 1926.

eyes in the portrait more like those of the photograph I feel that the expression would be more pleasing.

The Prime Minister concluded his letter by writing, “I shall never forget the delightful hours spent in your studio. They are amongst the happiest remembrances I carry away from this memorable visit.” He also added a hand-written postscript asking Orpen to “please excuse all I have written. It sounds very dictatorial and formidable as I read it over but I am sure you will understand.” Yet he also pointed out to the artist that “It seems to me that there is also in the portrait on the right cheek just below the right eye a fullness and puffiness which does not appear in the photograph and which I think emphasizes the expression of weariness.”¹³⁸⁸



Sir William Orpen’s 1926 King portrait.

There are suggestions in King’s diaries and correspondence that Orpen may have made changes in his portrait. In January of 1928 he recorded receiving a “kind letter from Lord Beaverbrook today re my painting.” The following month he wrote Sir William about the portrait yet was

“somewhat doubtful of about how he will regard this communication, but will trust to luck.” In April he recorded seeing in Laurier House “hanging in dining room the portrait of myself by Orpen. I do not like it [at] all. It is a picture of a very tired man & is exactly what was the case—the painting of a man in the dock [dark?]; the eyes can scarcely be seen. It was more I think the fault of the light & weather than aught else. When I go to England again I will take the portrait with me; meanwhile I will remove it from the dining room.”¹³⁸⁹

Writing Peter Larkin in 1929, King indicated that he was still “not satisfied with the Orpen portrait of myself, and I have not found a single friend who thinks it is good.” Yet he admitted that “There is something curious about it. In a certain light, a very strong light, it is all one could wish it to be. Hung indoors, even in proximity to a fairly good light, it seems to become an entirely different picture, due largely, I think, to the fact that its background is wholly black and that the picture has been made to harmonize with a background of the kind.” He added that he really hesitated “to suggest to Orpen a third try at it; but, if he ever comes to Ottawa and is at Laurier House, I think I can point out wherein something of the kind would not be without its advantage to him, as well as to me.”¹³⁹⁰

Mackenzie King’s strong resistance to accepting his portrait by one of the world’s leading portrait painters illustrates his life-long insistence that his countenance reflect what he believed to be his ideal inner self, his despair when photographs and works of art did not project that inner spirituality, and his conviction that he could achieve such a countenance by following the word of God. When he looked at publications on the 1927 Confederation celebration, he concluded that “most of the photographs of myself are horrible. The painting Orpen has made of me is also horrible in certain lights. I am beginning to wonder if I really look like these pictures; fortunately there are some redeeming ones, but I greatly fear that living the sort of solitary life I do in one way & the rough & tumble in another has not made for the countenance I would wish to have. I

¹³⁸⁸ King to Sir William Orpen, November 30, 1926. LAC reel C2292, pages 116097-98.

¹³⁸⁹ Diary January 28, February 27 and April 10, 1928. King recorded Frank O. Salisbury’s critique of the Orpen portrait during his stay in Ottawa in his diary of November 27, 1938.

¹³⁹⁰ King to Peter Larkin, July 10, 1929. LAC reel C2310, pages 139035-37. Diary July 10, 1929.

can only by striving to do only the right seek to win it in the end, and this I will do with the help of God.”¹³⁹¹

Sculptors and painters who failed to provide King with the kind of idealizing images he desired did so at their peril. He had given the Montreal portrait sculptor Pearle Thurston, another artist still at the beginning of her career who “does only fair work,” photographs of himself in December of 1931 for a relief series she was sculpting of prime ministers. After Thurston made sketches of King in January of 1932 for the clay relief portrait she was making, he noted that the artist “finds it hard to ‘get me’ which all painters, photographers and sculptors seem to do.” In August of 1932 he wrote angrily in his diary that “Miss Thurston came at 6 with a large life-sized relief of myself for which she said she wanted \$1,000 [\$16,000 in 2014 dollars] in bronze; could have a replica for \$800.00. I would not give 80 for the whole thing. It is good up to a point, but in no way true to life beyond outline.”¹³⁹²

King’s great difficulty in accepting how even experienced Canadian artists such as J.W.L. Forster saw and represented him is demonstrated further by his posing for a second Forster portrait in 1932-33. He had telephoned the artist in Toronto as early as 1925 to see if he could come to Ottawa to paint Joan Patteson, King’s closest companion and fellow spiritualist, but Forster had left for England. He wanted a portrait of Joan because “her name is certain to have an association with mine through the years to come & I would like others to know the type & kind of person she is, as well as to have her picture always as she is. She is as beautiful as anyone in Canada—or was in her day.” In 1932, the married Patteson was still reluctant to accept her portrait as a gift from King. Forster offered to paint, at a reduced rate, a small picture of Joan for \$250 to be paid by King and Godfroy Patteson and King’s portrait for \$500 [\$7,900 in 2014 dollars].¹³⁹³

¹³⁹¹ Diary December 12, 1928.

¹³⁹² Diary December 10, 1931, January 25 and August 3, 1932. Thurston’s portrait plaques of the prime ministers of Canada was exhibited at the Public Archives in October of 1932.

¹³⁹³ Diary August 6, 1925, January 18 and 25, 1932. King made an arrangement with Forster to pay him an additional \$250 for his own portrait so he could paint a life-sized one of Joan Patteson at the lower rate without her knowledge. Forster had to cancel the first sitting with her on February 2 because Patteson looked wretched from lack of sleep and anxiety. King wrote in

King had already discussed his own portrait with Forster on January 22 and proposed a painting where he would be seated in his library “at the table with mother’s picture, the books & the window behind.” The following day, they modified their concept to have King standing in his morning coat in front of his library books near his mother’s portrait, “one hand holding glasses & other by the side in a pose similar to that of dear father at the time he was photographed in Preston in his K.C. gown.” They fitted up the front large bedroom of Laurier House as a studio and called in a photographer who took pictures of King posing in the library and seated in the studio. Forster began his second King portrait on January 25 (while King recorded the proceedings in his diary hour by hour), sketching the initial outline, developing the figure and building up the face. Forster perceived a resemblance between King and his father and as he watched “through the canvas I could see father’s face as it were gradually coming into being in my own.” King began correcting Forster’s painting already in the second sitting the next day. “It seems to me he has the head in my portrait too large—too broad & too high. I told him so tonight & he admitted it; he is gradually bringing character into the face...Luckily the photographs have turned out well, they will be a help in proportions etc.” On January 27 he found that Forster “had altered the head on my canvas, making it too small, where yesterday it had been too large. He spent the morning on the coat & vest & trousers, making good headway with the apparel. Tomorrow he will probably get the head into shape, then another day should nearly complete the work.”¹³⁹⁴

his diary, “she worries, is very sensitive, is fearily [sic] of losing her looks & worries a little as to whether the painting should be done or not, though most anxious to have it. We were all disappointed.” Forster returned to Ottawa on March 22, 1932 to complete Patteson’s portrait. King found that “the nose was too broad & that it gave the mouth a wrong position. Forster agreed with this. Also the hair seemed a little too rigid. It just needs a few changes to get it right, but they are much needed; the lips too need more colour.” Forster completed Patteson’s portrait the following day at her residence on 202 Elgin. It took King “a little time to free my mind of impressions formerly created by first efforts, but once it was I became more & more charmed & fascinated with this painting.” He finally found the portrait “a truly great achievement. I am so glad for Forster’s sake, he has worked so hard.” Diary February 2, March 22 and 23, 1932.

¹³⁹⁴ Diary January 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 1932.

But instead of seeing his portrait finished, King commenced wondering whether Forster “is beginning a little to lose his grasp.” While seeing considerable progress on the 28th, he wrote that “it seems to me that he has not yet secured a likeness that is at all what it should be. I have doubts as to the pose of the head. It seems to me he has one half of the face, in one direction & the other half in the other.” Forster suggested that Joan Patteson come to look at the portrait on the 29th and they both criticized the painting, “she of the mouth, I of the right size of the face & a little of the forehead.” King showed Forster his highly realistic 1926 Orpen portrait and many photographs of himself taken at different periods. “It occurred to me afterwards that he might have felt my showing him the many photos was in the nature of suggestion, or criticism.” At the sitting the next day, he realized “It was a mistake to do so. He was tired & is old & I should have thought of this, also of how one feels who has the artistic temperament.”¹³⁹⁵

On February 4, after ten sittings, King and Forster discussed spiritualism and his portrait and “decided to do away with background of books & substitute a dark red curtain; this will be a real gain.” On February 19, King shipped his and Joan Patteson’s portraits to the artist’s studio in Toronto by express. “I do not feel too sure as to how long Forster may live...These will be among his last commissions. I wrote Forster of the slight changes which it seemed to me my picture required.” To assist the artist financially, King convinced Mrs. Fulford to have her portrait done by Forster and suggested “a profile of right side of the face.”¹³⁹⁶

Forster suffered another sixteen months from criticism and changes demanded by King for his portrait. In March he requested that King have a photo taken in Ottawa “to try to catch an expression of affection he wants to have.” King surrounded himself with the portraits of his mother, father and William Lyon Mackenzie for the photo session in order to achieve the desired effect. After two more sessions on King’s portrait, criticism from King and Joan Patteson made

¹³⁹⁵ Diary January 28, 29 and 30, 1932.

¹³⁹⁶ Diary February 4, 19 and 21, 1932. He saw the painting of Mrs. Fulford, and Lady Laurier’s portrait, at Forster’s studio in December 16 and noted in his diary that he “was a little disappointed with the former—the light green background—hand too large in one picture &

Forster “do over what he did at Toronto after getting the latest photos. They had taken away strength that he was now putting back.” King found the artist made progress with the lower part of his face but “the head is not yet just the shape I think it should be; it is too much of a pineapple shape instead of being broad. I think from the outset he made the mistake of having it formed & has got one side straight now but not the other—it may be my bad sight.”



A LAC photo of J.W.L. Forster’s 1932-33 King portrait.

King also found that “The left hand on the table is very poor. I do not like it at all. He has some theory about it being necessary to lean on the hand—but he hasn’t my hand, though what he has

expression not quite soft enough. The one of Lady Laurier I thought very good—excepting the nose, but quite remarkable considering what he had to work from.”

now is much better than the ‘gouty’ one he had. Lastly he will not make my eyes blue, which they should be—he sees them as hazel, which they are not.” Forster returned for two more sessions with King in Laurier House in January of 1933. King was still discouraged about his eyes “which it seemed to me he would never get right; from a distance they are now all right, but up close they have a weakness beneath which I do not like & which is not quite true; the hair too is just a little too grey in front; save in spots my hair has not yet changed.” The eighty-two year old Forster was so exhausted from these continual changes that King feared the artist would break down from the strain. He felt his portrait “is good—excellent from certain positions—but difficult in some lights.” When he looked at the painting again with Joan Patteson in April, he concluded “it really is not true to proportions” and sent the portrait with additional photos and written criticism to Forster. “It was better to speak out if the changes are to be made; it is now or never.”¹³⁹⁷

To get precisely what he wanted, King travelled to Toronto in May and had a sitting in Forster’s studio on 27 Wellesley Street. He did not like his portrait at all when he first saw it, “though it was clear he had altered proportions (upper lip) etc. from photos.” After two hours, Forster substantially changed the portrait so that King came to believe that the painting was now worthy of hanging. But he returned to Forster’s studio in June and “made a suggestion re left side face, shading it so as to bring a true perspective & re a heavier lower jaw of the right side. These changes went far to correct what had been embarrassing—a too round flat face. He changed the colour of the face, giving more of a bronze tinge, which was a great improvement & gave a little more play to the mouth.” King was only now satisfied with how Forster has painted his eyes. “They seemed to give what was wanted, a sort of sizing up appearance, of the audience being addressed. There is fine animation altogether; the picture is restful, it has lost the ‘advertising’ look which it had and which Forster admitted he saw as it came to his studio and disliked very much.” King still criticized the left hand “which was without character & quite untrue to the original. He did it over, quite changing the appearance in that regard.” After at least seventeen sittings, King and Forster could think of no other changes and he left the artist’s studio “with a

¹³⁹⁷ Diary March 12, and 25, 1932 and January 19 and April 6, 7 and 8, 1933.

feeling of pleasure & pride & entire satisfaction & with gratitude in my heart.” King hung his portrait in Laurier House on June 28, 1933, ten days after his meeting with Homer Watson and the sixteenth anniversary of bringing his mother to live with him in Kingsmere, in what he hoped was but an interregnum in realizing Isabel King’s ambition for her son to be the prime minister of Canada.¹³⁹⁸

Over the seventeen months that Forster was painting his portrait, both King and the artist felt they were being “helped” from “beyond the veil,” particularly by King’s father, and “that ‘influences’ were at work prompting suggestions.”¹³⁹⁹ If these “influences” King experienced actually all emanated from his own subconscious, it was his own conflicted self that produced his great obsession with exact physical verisimilitude and the insistence that his artistic representation simultaneously project and embody purity of character and spirit. While Library and Archives Canada has a negative of a photograph of the 1933 Forster portrait, I have not been able to determine the disposition or location—or even a reproduction—of either King’s or Joan Patteson’s portrait. King also appears not to have made further references to the two paintings in his diaries. Both the Patteson and King families probably preferred this erasure of the personal relationship between Joan Patteson and Mackenzie King symbolized by the double portraits.¹⁴⁰⁰

Another King portrait which may no longer be extant was completed by the Hungarian-Canadian artist Josef Hilpert (1893-1966) in 1944. King had encountered the artist’s work in January of 1937, five weeks after the abdication of King Edward VIII. Thomas Wayling, who had covered

¹³⁹⁸ Diary May 8, June 17 and 28, 1933.

¹³⁹⁹ Diary June 17, 1933.

¹⁴⁰⁰ In April of 1934, King purchased George Goodwin Kilburne’s oil painting “The Trysting Place” at auction in Ottawa for \$65 [\$1,120 in 2014 dollars] along with other canvases. He described the painting as “a beautiful soft & tender picture” and intended it as a gift for Joan Patteson. When he showed her the paintings, however, he “did not make a presentation, as I saw she was doubtful about the trysting place one, as being too much like ‘her & me.’” Diary April 7 and 9, 1934. There are three references in King’s diaries to “our trysting place,” “our little trysting place on the moor” and “our little trysting place of a year ago” on the Kingsmere estate. Diary July 10 and September 3, 1939 and April 14, 1941. On November 5, 1933 King recorded a dream

King for the *Toronto Star* since 1926, sent the Prime Minister a photograph of Hilpert's portrait of King Edward for which the King had given him two sittings in England. Wayling suggested the government purchase the "striking likeness" and hang it in the House of Commons entrance. He added that "It would be an acceptable idea also that the painting was done by a Canadian."¹⁴⁰¹

King's private secretary, E.A. Pickering, drafted a response on behalf of the Prime Minister stating that "it is the intention of the government to appoint, at an early opportunity, a Sub-Committee of the Cabinet, to advise the Minister of Public Works on all matters respecting government buildings and their decoration, and the installing therein of works of art. When the Committee is constituted, I shall bring your communication to its attention." King rejected Pickering's draft text since the government had already ordered two paintings of King Edward for the Parliament Buildings and Government House and had the photo of Hilpert's portrait returned to Wayling.¹⁴⁰²

In 1944 King did give the artist permission to take photographs of himself in his Parliamentary office for a portrait to be included in Hilpert's planned "Tower of Fame" which was to feature 365 portraits of the world's greatest geniuses. Known for his highly realistic portraits based on photographs, Hilpert nevertheless aimed to depict the "soul" of his subjects as reflected through their eyes. By the end of the Second World War, King, according to Bruce Hutchison, had become "an old, gray, and grizzled man, his face lined with the labors of his twenty-six years of

vision warning him "not to give political traitors or enemies or anyone a chance to question Joan's relations & mine by travelling together."

¹⁴⁰¹ Thomas Wayling, House of Commons Press Gallery, to King, January 19, 1937. LAC reel C3731, pages 209502-03. The *Toronto Star* had featured Hilpert's silver jubilee paintings of King George V and Queen Mary on its front pages April 28 and May 4, 1935. After hearing of Wayling's death, King recorded in his diary on June 6, 1949 that "I talked with his spirit at night; ordered flowers to be sent Mrs. Wayling—funeral tomorrow." Hilpert had painted portraits on black onyx of Vincent Massey, Sir William Mulock, critic Augustus Bridle, Sir Ernest MacMillan, Principal of the Toronto Conservatory of Music, Herbert A. Fricker, conductor of the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, Mitchell Hepburn, Premier of Ontario, and poet Sir Charles G.D. Roberts 1933-35. See reproductions in Joseph Hilpert, *My Life in Art*, [S.l.: s.n., 1935].

¹⁴⁰² [E.A. Pickering] to Thomas Wayling, January 20, 1937. E.H. to Pickering, January 21, 1937. H.R.L. Henry to Wayling, January 21, 1937. LAC reel C3731, pages 209504-06.

party leadership.” King himself had already recorded in August of 1943 after examining proofs of photographs taken by Yousuf Karsh that “They show a terrible weary and fatigued condition. One or two are fairly good but the rest enough to frighten one.”¹⁴⁰³ Hilpert’s portrait, like his 1941 portrait of President Roosevelt, may have captured this physical decline for King violently rejected his portrayal, describing the likeness as “a horrible bit of work, something I would not wish to have in existence...I did not wish to have the painting of myself exhibited anywhere or used in any way.”



Josef Hilpert’s 1941 portrait of President Roosevelt.

King informed Walter Turnbull, “I hoped he would let the artist know I would be glad to have [the painting] destroyed.” Hilpert had also obtained a photo of King’s nephew Lyon, Surgeon Lieut. W.L.M. King, who had perished in the torpedoing of the *St. Croix* in 1943. When he showed King Lyon’s portrait-in-progress so as to ask for “a few words of assistance as to colouring of eyes, etc.,” King was outraged. “It was a horrible picture, in no way like Lyon...I had difficulty in refraining from showing my feelings of indignation after what was really an

¹⁴⁰³ Bruce Hutchison, *The Incredible Canadian: A Candid Portrait of Mackenzie King: His Works, His Times, and His Nation* (Toronto: Longmans, 1952), 406. Diary August 6, 1943.

imposture. I did however make it plain I wanted back immediately the photograph of Lyon...I did not wish him to proceed with the picture of Lyon.”¹⁴⁰⁴

Mackenzie King’s cultural *habitus* had also made him hypercritical of more established artists. When he saw Edwin Holgate’s 1929 redesign of the Jasper Tea Room in the Chateau Laurier in Ottawa, in which the artist copied First Nations totem poles and carvings from the Upper Skeena, “he recommended Holgate to eternal damnation.”¹⁴⁰⁵ Unlike Holgate, Emily Carr and other artists, King could not perceive native culture as an artistic, social and spiritual stimulus for Canadians. He had met members of Canada’s First Nations while crisscrossing Canada on his various strike mediations as Deputy Minister of Labour at the beginning of the century. Crossing Alberta by train, he remarked with apparent approval that “the Indians seemed to be disappearing and that the stations and small towns have a different class of settlers than appeared a few years ago.”¹⁴⁰⁶

The nature of King’s aesthetic *habitus* that would confront Canadian artists organizing for state support of arts and culture in the early 1940s was again revealed when King returned to Paris for the 1937 World’s Fair. To a greater degree than during his first visit in 1900, Paris was still a site

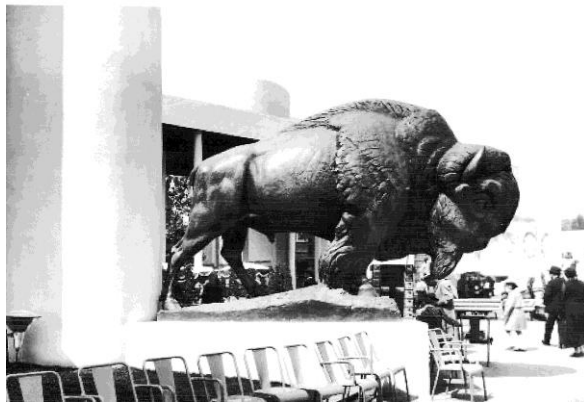
¹⁴⁰⁴ Diary June 27, 1944. When Hilpert finally opened his “Hall of Fame” in the Saisset Art Gallery at the University of Santa Clara, in March 1956 after becoming director of the Gallery, King’s portrait was not among the 200 paintings exhibited. The December 6, 1957 *Windsor Daily Star*, “Artist Visit for Material,” reported that “A dozen great Canadians, including the late Rt. Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie King, are in the collection.” Yet the Gallery’s brochure, *Dr. Josef Hilpert: Painter of the World’s Smallest Portrait and Creator of the Hall of Fame* (Saisset Art Gallery: University of Santa Clara, 1957) listed or reproduced only portraits of Billy Bishop, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and General A. G. McNaughton as the Canadians included among the Hall of Fame’s “Immortals.” Hilpert died of cancer in 1966. According to a communication received on July 28, 2009 from Sheila Conway, archives specialist, Department of Archives & Special Collections, Santa Clara University Library, “Dr. Hilpert’s paintings were sold at auction from his collection at the Tait Studio on 1209 Howard Avenue, Burlingame, California” and “portraits from the Hall of Fame were packed up and returned to Hilpert’s daughter [Ibolyka (Iby) Hilpert] in Montreal.”

¹⁴⁰⁵ Charles C. Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1995), 244.

¹⁴⁰⁶ Diary April 22, 1907.

of contention between traditionalism and modernism, classical art and what King perceived as “morbid” in art and architecture. The theme of the International Exposition, located along the River Seine and in front of the Eiffel Tower, was “Arts and Technology in Modern Life.” But the real conflict was one of ideologies expressed in art and architecture. A giant sculpture of a male worker and a female peasant raising aloft a sickle and hammer towered over the Soviet pavilion. Directly opposite, a giant eagle and a swastika topped the soaring neo-classic German pavilion, designed by Hitler’s favourite architect, Albert Speer. The Spanish pavilion exhibited Picasso’s famous painting of the horrors of the Spanish Civil War, *Guernica*, the Italian pavilion the huge statue of a nude Roman soldier mounted on a stallion entitled the *Genius of Fascism*.

Commenting on the German and Russian pavilions in his diary, King was more alarmed by their modernist architecture and aesthetic than their stark ideological confrontations. “It may all be symbolical of advance but it is the kind of advance that lacks composure and leaves nothing but a weight of destruction in its train. I confess I felt the danger of our times more in this Exhibition than in all I have read in the Press of the unsettled conditions of Europe. It was a covering up of all the natural and artistic beauty of Paris through a substitution of ordinary, common place, unimaginative structures which left the mind and the heart desolate.” King was strongly offended by modernism itself. He was shocked by the modern “soap box” architecture as exemplified by the American and British pavilions. “There may be utility or efficiency in some of these structures from a purely mechanical point of view, but there is nothing of inspiration for the soul in any , calling it “nothing more than a white washed elevator. The painting on the side was like a poster of horses reaping grain; buffalo made of a curious coloured marble; looked as though it has been skinned alive. The Totem pole at the door was barbaric; the building itself looked like a kitchen appended to the British building. Our Department of Trade and Commerce has fallen down terribly.”



pavilion next to the Eiffel Tower, 1937 World's Fair.

After attending the coronation of King George VI and the Imperial Conference in London, seeing Melchior and Flagstad in *Siegfried*, directed by Wilhelm Furtwangler, visiting the March brothers' studio in Farnborough, Kent, to see the sculptures for the National War Memorial before they were shipped to Ottawa, and meeting Frank Salisbury, James Barrie, and Noel Coward (on the train from London to Dover en route to Paris), the 1937 World's Fair was "the most disappointing experience I have had on this trip." When he officially opened the Canadian pavilion on July 1, he "was sorry to have forgotten to speak of Brunet, as I had fully intended to do; however, the building is anything but one to be proud of. The exhibits are very meagre, and many of the notes struck, e.g., totem poles, etc., anything but what one would wish to emphasize in a Canadian exhibition."¹⁴⁰⁷

¹⁴⁰⁷ Diary June 24 and July 2, 1937. King's abhorrence at the Canadian pavilion is surprising since Brunet had showed him the plans for the pavilion and photographs of reliefs in November and December of 1936. At that time he recorded that "Not only will he become immediately the

King's disappointment was greatly amplified by his visit to the Musée du Luxembourg where he was once again shocked by what he referred to as modernistic art.

As we progressed further into the building, the art was more and more of the modernistic school and seemed to me to be deteriorating more and more. Ugly figures and scenes depicted much nakedness; finally a picture called the 'Picture of a Child' which Mr. Roy remarked was that of a syphilitic face. Nose eaten into and mouth eaten partly as well. Clearly there is a degeneracy in art which is appalling. The fact that men's minds see anything to admire in this kind of thing shows how diseased they have become. Between the style of architecture at the Exhibition and the style of art at the modernistic paintings I have received the saddest disillusionment I have known for some time. What appals me is the thought of how all of this has forced itself to the fore and helped to bury the good.

As he had wondered during his first visit to Paris in 1900, King asked, "How this evil spirit is to be exorcised; how the world is to be saved from destruction from this sort of thing."¹⁴⁰⁸ He declined

designer of this Exhibition and its chief spirit, but the Government will unquestionably from now on utilize his services in connection with all artistic development of its buildings and of the Capital. I confess he is like one inspired. He certainly knows his work." Diary December 3 and November 27, 1936. In another long laudatory diary entry on December 12, King thought the contract for Brunet's fees should be \$15,000 [\$253,000 in 2014 dollars] "at least," that "the fee suggested is not half of what it should be," and that "the Government should purchase outright for further exhibitions, many of the reliefs he had prepared." See also diary entry June 25, 1937, August 10, 1939 and Serge Coulombe, *mile Brunet: Un bâtisseur de patrimoine* (comusée de l'au-delà, 2006), 25-30, 58, 128-131. King to Brunet, April 20, 1937. Brunet to Philippe Roy, June 22, 1937. Brunet to King, June 30, 1937. LAC reel C3724, pages 199488-92; King to Roy, April 17, 1937. Roy to King, April 28, 1937. King to Roy, May 3, 1937. LAC reel C3729, pages 207424 and 207428-32.

¹⁴⁰⁸ Diary June 25, 1937. King also objected to what he regarded as "modernistic" in the theatre. When he attended the Ottawa Little Theatre to see Noel Coward's *Tonight at 8:30* (*Ways and Means*, *Red Peppers* and *Hands Across the Sea*) with Governor General the Earl of Athlone (the uncle of King George VI), and Lady Alice, "I did not care for any of the plays nor did His Excellency or Her Royal Highness. They were ultra modern, full of slang and coarse words, subversive... I think all were rather embarrassed by the kind of performance. It really represented part of the degeneracy in smart circles of our time. It was, of course, a take-off on that very thing but it was calculated to give younger people entirely the wrong impressions." He felt strongly enough to write Lady Alice two days later to convey that "I did not think the plays were worthy of the presence of His Excellency or herself; that I could not understand why playwrights and performers should lend themselves to exhibiting subversive influences that have helped to destroy public morale at a time when everyone should seek to be building it up." Diary January 24 and 26, 1941.

an invitation to attend a modern opera on his last day in Paris, fearing “I could not take the risk of a last impression of this beautiful City.” Instead he asked officials “to arrange for the floodlighting of the Louvre statues, and shall spend the last evening contemplating the beauty of the past, and the hope that its glory may not depart, but that yet something of the spirit which is symbolized by light may help to give it greater glory even than it has been.”¹⁴⁰⁹

Five days later, on June 29, 1937, King met with Adolf Hitler in the Hindenburg Palace in Berlin for an hour and fifteen minutes, confident he was helping to prevent war in Europe. He presented Hitler with an inscribed deluxe copy of Norman McLeod Rogers’ biography, *Mackenzie King*, showed him its photos of his birthplace, Berlin, Ontario, and mentioned his stay in the German capital in 1900. That evening at the Opera for a performance of Verdi’s *A Masked Ball*, he was seated in the royal box in the center of the first gallery immediately opposite the stage, “where the Emperors used to sit and where Hitler sits when he attends the Opera.” A member of General Göring’s staff “spoke about secret forces at work to bring about better conditions after this period of stress and strain.” Though he was tired, he felt “nothing could have better concluded the day than the glorious music and singing which seemed to fill the entire Opera House with harmony and joy. The last scene seemed to bring invisible numbers of persons who joined in the chorus which closed the life of one who was playing the leading part. A triumphal end to it all.” King would write of his new global mission at the end of “this marvelous and miraculous year” of 1937: “clearly the purpose of God is related to my securing the good will of Germany & the British Empire, working with Hitler towards this end, and saving France thereby & much else.”¹⁴¹⁰

¹⁴⁰⁹ Diary June 24, 1937. King had already enjoyed such a special showing of the Gallery of the Statues “as a last memory of Paris” on October 15, 1936 when he felt “exquisite delight” seeing impressions of his mother’s face on one or two statues by Praxiteles. He would receive a similar showing on July 2, 1937. For other diary entries of King’s visits to the Louvre, see March 9 and 17, 1900, November 2, 1934, September 18 and October 15, 1936, August 23, 1946 and September 28, 1948.

¹⁴¹⁰ Diary June 29 and December 25, 1937. Ironically, in view of King’s abhorrence of Brunet’s buffalo sculpture at the Paris World’s Fair, he also brought a gift of a Canadian bison for the Berlin zoo in the *Tiergarten*, near the house of the painter Anton Weber where he lived during his stay in Berlin in 1900. King summarizes his meeting with Hitler and Göring in 14 pages of

King once again established contact with Hitler after German troops invaded Czechoslovakia in March of 1939 and proposed Canada and himself as a conciliator between Britain and Germany. Such an attempt at peacemaking “was a sincere gesture based on mutual faith in each other on the part of Hitler & myself—above all I felt that ‘forces unseen’—loved ones in the beyond—were working out these plans, that there were no accidents, or chances in this but all part of a plan in which God was using man to effect His Will in answer to prayer, the Mediums being those in the beyond who were working for peace on earth.” King believed that and he and Hitler “were ‘communicating’ with each other through the world of thought” and that “from Canada I may myself be brought in somewhere to help effect justice between nations; Hitler may agree to or suggest me as one of a tribunal or body to which some matters may be referred to for adjustment.”¹⁴¹¹

Five days before the Nazi invasion of Poland triggered the outbreak of the Second World War, King was still certain that his knowledge of spiritualism and insights into Wagner’s operas were the key to understanding and moderating Hitler’s actions. He was certain Hitler “may become, or strive to become, Siegfried—Amfortas—Parsifal. I believe to understand Hitler one should become saturated with Wagner. Wagner’s music has possessed Germany, his philosophy with it. Hitler loves his music to the exclusion of much else & doubtless has imbibed his philosophy, is a mystic, a spiritualist, believes I am sure in reincarnation—and thus his life becomes intelligible. It is that which makes his appeal to his good, his spiritual side, so important.”¹⁴¹²

Competition in Bourdieu’s “Fields”— “I have nothing”—“I am unchallenged”

his June 29, 1937 diary. For an analysis of his mysticism and interaction with Hitler, see Robert H. Keyserlingk, “Mackenzie King’s Spiritualism and His View of Hitler in 1939,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 20:4 (Winter 1985-86) and C.P. Stacey, “The Divine Mission: Mackenzie King and Hitler,” *Canadian Historical Review* 61:4 (December 1980).

¹⁴¹¹ Diary July 21 and August 28, 1939.

¹⁴¹² Diary August 27, 1939.

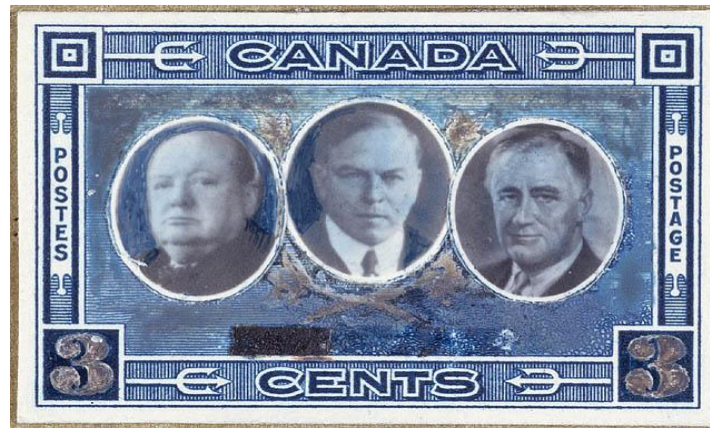
As discussed in previous chapters, Pierre Bourdieu posited that social agents compete against one another for position, status, forms of capital and power in particular fields. After Carl Ahrens died in the Toronto Psychiatric Hospital, his widow Donna wrote Mackenzie King that she did not want to accept the \$25 [\$422 in 2014 dollars] he had sent her but that she had no choice but to do so since “I have nothing.” Thanking the Ontario Minister of Health for his assistance and inquiring whether “if there is any opening, anywhere, it could be given to me,” she repeated, “It is rather sad that I cannot even write a letter of thanks without asking more of you—but I have nothing, and must support myself somehow.” Judging from her correspondence, King wrote Dr. Faulkner recommending Ahrens for a secretarial position: “she has quite exceptional qualifications for the drafting of communications. My own experience has revealed how rare, among those employed in the public service, this art appears to be.”¹⁴¹³

A starker contrast in social positions and power between Mackenzie King and artists such as “Louie” Burrell in 1914 and Homer Watson and Carl Ahrens in the 1930s can hardly be imagined. Newton MacTavish, the editor of the *Canadian Magazine*, commented on King’s ascendancy in the Canadian political field after he won the Leadership of the Liberal Party in 1919. “The public eye of Canada rests to-day on Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie King. Men there are in higher position. Political questions there are of supreme national importance,” he observed. “But no man or no question appeals to everybody’s imagination so much as the youthful leader of the Liberal party.”¹⁴¹⁴ King referred to his status within the Canadian political field ten years later following the death of W.S. Fielding, his former Minister of Finance and rival for the Liberal Party Leadership. “With Fielding gone & Sir Lomer [Sir Lomer Gouin, his former Minister of Justice] gone my right & left bowers of the first cabinet have departed. With Graham [G.P. Graham, the former Minister of Railways and Canals] in the Senate & D.D. McKenzie [the former Solicitor General] in his grave, all who were the nominees for the party Leadership in 1919 have now left the Commons, and my responsibility is greater than it has ever been.” King

¹⁴¹³ Madonna Ahrens to King, March 5, 1936 and to Dr. Faulkner, March 4, 1936. King to Faulkner, April 14, 1936. LAC reel C3685, pages 183425-26 and C3687, pages 186528-30.

¹⁴¹⁴ Newton MacTavish, “W.L. Mackenzie King: The New Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada,” *Canadian Magazine*, November 1919, 71.

concluded that “With Sir William Mulock the last left of the original cabinet of talents, my place at the head of affairs of our country can no longer be challenged by anyone.”¹⁴¹⁵



Proposed design for a 1941 stamp commemorating Canadian, American and British friendship, King fonds at LAC, MIKAN no. 2253966.

A year later, even after his defeat in the 1930 federal election, Mackenzie King was confident that “I have a place in the country and the empire & I believe in the affections of the people. Am now the oldest political leader (as a leader) in the British Empire.” King was a major player in the international political field, particularly during World War II, because of Canada’s great contribution as a producer of war materials for the Allies.¹⁴¹⁶ But because of Canada’s much smaller fighting force, King never achieved the stature of President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill in the conduct of the War, although a stamp designed but never actually circulated in Canada tried to suggest such an equality of status. Roosevelt died of a stroke in April of 1945 and Churchill was defeated by the Labour Party in July of 1945. When he heard the radio broadcast of Churchill’s defeat—following King’s own narrow victory in the June 1945 election—“there came over me at once a sense of greater responsibility which is now mine. I am the only one who really was intimate with both Churchill and Roosevelt throughout the war. My

¹⁴¹⁵ Diary June 26, 1929.

¹⁴¹⁶ Diary December 31, 1930. For King’s assessment and description of Canada’s contribution to the war effort, see his January 26, 1942 address to the House of Commons and December 2, 1942 address in New York to the Pilgrims of the United States, published as “The Real Meaning

position, internationally, will be heightened as a consequence. Also the victory in Canada strengthens that position.”¹⁴¹⁷

Mackenzie King’s conviction that he was an instrument of God, combined with his cultural authority and towering stature in the Canadian and international fields of power, made it virtually impossible for him to work with artists in the collaborative and democratic manner in which they engaged in their cultural lobbying. As the sculptor Frances Gage recalled serving on King’s parliamentary flag committee in 1946, “He was a dictator. It was awful. He came in and told us what he wanted: a Union Jack in the corner and a multicoloured maple leaf.”¹⁴¹⁸

The “Priestly” Mackenzie King and the National Gallery

In the 1940s, Mackenzie King fulfilled his pledge to MP James Samuel Taylor that he would protect traditional artistic standards by preventing the circulation of “bad” art. He was able to impose his own cultural aesthetic and *habitus* through his “priestly” role of enacting conservation strategies that neutralized other social agents or institutions who challenged his cultural authority. In view of King’s stature in the Canadian and international political fields, there are several revealing examples demonstrating that King did not tolerate being challenged within the Canadian cultural field. One of the most illuminating cases in point is King’s competition for political and cultural capital with Harry Stevenson Southam, the publisher of the *Ottawa Citizen*, prominent art collector and chairman of the National Gallery board of trustees from 1929 to 1948, the year King resigned as Prime Minister.

The Gallery was not only Canada’s largest arts organization and the leading single source of income for many artists. Even more important, it was also the arbiter of artistic standards and

of a Total War Effort” and “The Defence of Common Liberties” in his *Canada and the Fight for Freedom* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1944), 42-90, 221-232.

¹⁴¹⁷ J.W. Pickersgill and D.F. Forster. *The Mackenzie King Record. Volume 2, 1944-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 447.

taste and vigorously defended its cultural authority. It was often itself in competition with the Public Archives over which institution should have custody over paintings of a historical nature, competed for physical space with the Department of Mines and the Geological Survey with which it shared the Victoria Memorial Museum building—nicknamed “the castle”—on Metcalf Street,¹⁴¹⁹ and fought for recognition and funding from the Department of Public Works to whose minister it was responsible. In addition to fending off criticism from the Royal Canadian Academy, artists, journalists and critics over its acquisition criteria, it also had to counter proposals from supporting artists such as Lawren Harris who advocated in 1943 that the National Gallery be decentralized so that it could “become more a people’s gallery all across Canada.”¹⁴²⁰ “The need now is for the National gallery to make itself more and more into an efficient distributing agency for works of art of all kinds,” Harris elaborated in *Maritime Art*, “from various crafts, prints and posters to the finest pictures it possesses, and a distributing centre of educational material and personnel, and an administrator of as many small branch galleries and exhibition rooms as possible from the Atlantic to the Pacific.”¹⁴²¹



The National Gallery in three floors of the Victoria Memorial Museum.

¹⁴¹⁸ Elspeth Cameron, *And Beauty Answers: The Life of Frances Loring and Florence Wyle* (Toronto: Comorant Books, 2007), 245.

¹⁴¹⁹ Southam to Bennett, April 23, 1934 and Southam to J.B. Hunter, Deputy Minister of Public Works, April 20, 1934. Bennett to Southam, May 10, 1934. LAC reel M1106, pages 289146-50.

¹⁴²⁰ Lawren Harris, “Canada’s Art Galleries—The National Gallery,” February 1943 *Vancouver Art Gallery Bulletin* cited in Dennis Reid, *Atma Buddhi Manas: The Later Work of Lawren S. Harris* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1985), 41.

¹⁴²¹ Lawren Harris, “The Federation, The National Gallery, And A New Society,” *Maritime Art* 3:4 (April-May 1943), 127.

Mackenzie King's interference with the Gallery's Director and board of trustees is all the more remarkable when compared with H.S. Southam's relationship with Prime Minister R.B. Bennett. Artists were dependent on the National Gallery for patronage and recognition as they competed for status and symbolic and financial capital in the Canadian field of cultural production. In 1932, one hundred eighteen artists describing themselves as "the main body of artists of Canada"—the majority of them members of the conservative Royal Canadian Academy—sent a petition to the Prime Minister charging the National Gallery with "flagrant partisanship" in its acquisitions. According to Charles Hill, "at the core of the conflict was the hostility of the conservatives to the Group of Seven and modern art, a hostility brought to the boiling point by the decline of private patronage due to the Depression. It became all the more imperative that conservative artists be able to regain their lost status and control of the little state patronage that remained." Lawren Harris wrote to LeMoine FitzGerald that the traditional painters' attack against the National Gallery was "dividing the sheep from the goats and will leave nearly all the up and coming painters out in the cold."¹⁴²²

Harry Southam countered this attack on the National Gallery by forwarding another petition signed by nearly three hundred artists supporting the Gallery and its director to R.B. Bennett. Among attached supporting documentation, he asked Bennett to read his communication with George Reid, a former president of the Royal Canadian Academy whose criticism of the Gallery's management in 1906 resulted in the establishment of the Advisory Arts Council by Sir Wilfrid Laurier in 1907. Southam declined to meet with an RCA delegation to negotiate its relationship with the National Gallery. "As long as certain members of the R.C.A. feel that notwithstanding the National Gallery Act they—the R.C.A.—should be the supreme authority in Canadian art matters;" he wrote Reid, "that the primary purpose of the parliamentary grant to the National Gallery is for the purchase of paintings by contemporary Canadian artists; and that the R.C.A. should control, if not appoint, the Director of the National Gallery—and this, I think, is

¹⁴²² Hill, 280, 281.

not an exaggerated summary of the aims and claims of a considerable portion of the membership of the R.C.A.—there can be no permanent peace.”¹⁴²³

Bennett and Southam were both not convinced regarding the two opposing artists’ petitions contesting the functioning of the National Gallery that “counting heads is the best way to determine the efficiency of the institution.” Southam suggested that no “particular weight should be given to either the original protest or the vote of confidence because, in my considered opinion, neither artist group as such is qualified to sit in judgment on the administration of a national gallery intelligently nor even impartially.” He submitted to the Prime Minister, “if I may do so without presumption, that the only person qualified to sit in judgment on the administration of the National Gallery would be a gallery director, either English or American, or one of each, of a standing equal to that of Mr. Constable. An investigation under such a competent authority, no matter how searching, would be welcomed, I am sure, by the trustees of the National Gallery.” Southam had already invited William George Constable, the former assistant director of the National Gallery in London and head of the Courtauld Institute of Art of the University of London, to examine the operations and policies of the National Gallery in 1931 and had submitted his report to the Bennett government.¹⁴²⁴

Artists like Arthur Heming and Franz Johnson who were active organizing the anti-Gallery petition had also written Prime Minister Bennett personally to protest that their works were being excluded by the National Gallery. Heming sent Bennett reproductions and laudatory reviews of his paintings from publications in London, Berlin and New York and charged that “Vincent Massey, Harry Southam and Eric Brown don’t think any of my paintings are good enough to be own[ed] by the National Gallery.” He asked Bennett, “Isn’t it time that a stop was put to

¹⁴²³ Southam to Bennett, February 15, 1933 with Southam to George Reid, December 30, 1932 and other enclosures. LAC reel M1106, pages 289074-93.

¹⁴²⁴ Bennett to Southam, February 21, 1933. Southam to Bennett, February 27, 1933. LAC reel M1106, pages 289095 and 289104-05.

incompetent laymen dictating as to what shall be considered as representative of the national art of this country?”¹⁴²⁵

Frank Armington, an artist working in Paris with his wife, both of whose paintings had also been excluded by the National Gallery, wrote Bennett protesting the autocratic manner of the monocled English-born Eric Brown who had implied they were not Canadian artists: “We are treated by this director in a manner he probably would not act toward a Chinaman.” He charged that the 1927 *Exposition d’art canadien* in Paris, which featured, with some additions, a selection from the 1924 and 1925 Wembley exhibitions that had brought the Group of Seven to international prominence, “was a failure from every point of view.” “Most of the people whom I met, who had seen this exhibition in Paris, and who were not acquainted with our beautiful country, came away with the impression that Canada was a vast, wild expanse of country with very little cultivation, as cold as Greenland, and a very lonely, desolate place to live in. This was the impression given by the ‘Group of Seven,’ the particular protégés of Mr. Brown.” He requested that Bennett “remove Mr. Brown and replace him with a Canadian as director and with instructions to be fair and honest with all Canadian Artists, whether living in Canada or abroad.”¹⁴²⁶

Franz Johnston identified himself to Bennett as a War Records Artist who had completed over fifty paintings during World War I and as one of the founding members of the Group of Seven, “(may I be forgiven).” He charged that when he resigned his membership in the Group, his friendship with Eric Brown ceased “as though cut with a knife” and that “the National Gallery from that time ignored my work and not only did not purchase but now don’t even invite me to exhibit.” Johnston informed the Prime Minister that “My work is sane and conservative and requires no esoteric explanations to be understood, yet work has been invited that I would be ashamed to hang... Thank God, I do not depend on National Gallery purchases or my family of

¹⁴²⁵ Arthur Heming to Bennett, December 29, 1932. Bennett to Heming, January 9, 1933. LAC reel M1106, pages 289047-49.

¹⁴²⁶ Frank Armington to Bennett, January 14, 1933. E.A. Millar, Secretary, to Armington, February 19, 1933. LAC reel M1106, pages 289052-57.

six would be in the bread line.” Like Arthur Heming and Frank Armington, Johnston asserted that “The director of any art gallery must be most catholic in his taste and cannot be a real Curator if he stresses any particular style in his acquisitions. No particular school should be favoured, but the best in all schools represented.” He claimed that “A number have been discriminated against simply because they don’t happen to paint in the ascribed manner,” asked Bennett to “be so kind as to look into it,” and closed his letter by claiming to be “doing more for Canada by depicting its genuine beauty than all these painters of stark, starved, and staggered shacks put together. I can prove it with my pictures before any competent art jury.”¹⁴²⁷

After receiving further correspondence from Heming in which he charged that “the Canadian National Gallery still refuses to own a single example of my painting” and London reviews of Heming’s “exceedingly beautiful fairy-like snowscapes,” R.B. Bennett wrote Southam in 1934 asking, “Would you be good enough to let me know if there is any specific reason why the Gallery has not purchased any of his pictures.”¹⁴²⁸ Southam replied to Bennett in a six-page typed letter in which he justified the National Gallery’s relationship with Heming. The artist had been informed at an early age that he was colour blind and painted exclusively in black, white and yellow until he was 60 years old in 1930. He had himself clarified to the Prime Minister that the National Gallery “owns five of my illustrations—three in black-and-white, purchased over twenty years ago, and two in black and yellow, bought about ten years ago—but the Gallery does not possess a single example of my paintings in colour.”¹⁴²⁹

¹⁴²⁷ Franz Johnston to Bennett, January 25, 1932. LAC reel M1106, pages 289068-71.

¹⁴²⁸ Heming to Bennett, January 23, 1933 and July 28, 1934. Bennett to Heming, January 26, 1933 and July 30, 1934. Bennett to Southam, July 30, 1934. LAC reel M1106, pages 289065-67 and 289158-63.

¹⁴²⁹ National Gallery of Canada Arthur Heming Collection finding aid: biographical sketch <http://www.gallery.ca/english/library/biblio/ngc024.html> accessed May 19, 2014. Heming to Bennett, August 1, 1934. LAC reel M1106, page 289164. The 1910 acquisitions were the monochrome oils *The Cattle Thief*, *Timber Crib in the Calumet Rapids* and *The Bear Hunter*. The 1926 oils were *Leaping Cariboo* and *How We Travelled*. The National Gallery also has two post-1930 water colours, *Northern Lights Over an Igloo* and especially *Death and the Old Man*, gifted in 1997, that illustrate Heming’s continued maturation as an artist.

In his letter to Bennett, Southam referred to these acquisitions and characterized the painter as “an elderly artist in quite affluent circumstances whose career has been that of a book and magazine illustrator and writer.” Three years earlier, just as the Gallery’s budget had been reduced from \$130,000 to \$31,500 [\$538,000 in 2014 dollars], Heming began “painting larger pictures of a somewhat theatrical kind based apparently on his book illustrations.” Paintings such as Governor Simpson *Shooting the Fraser Canyon Rapids*, *The Wreck of the Timber Raft*, *Voyagers Crossing the Rockies* and *Canadian Pioneers* “have brought him a considerable amount of journalistic publicity by reason perhaps of the striking nature, if not sensationalism, of their subject matter.” Southam indicated that Heming “is not a member, not even an associate, of the Royal Canadian Academy” and that his exhibitions in London had failed being acknowledged by “any outstanding and reliable London art critic.”

The main thrust of Southam’s communication with Prime Minister Bennett was to defend the independence and cultural authority of the National Gallery and its board of trustees. He explained that “Up to the present the Trustees have not considered this later phase of Mr. Heming’s work to be sufficiently sincere and different from his illustrations (except in size) to warrant the acquisition of an example of it for the national collection” and referred to “the Trustees’ decision not to be pushed into the purchase of this work until they feel that the purely artistic qualities demand it.” As he stated to the Prime Minister, “The Trustees believe quite firmly in their policy of watchful waiting in this and in any other similar case, and they trust that their position will not be made more difficult by the exertion of pressure from any quarter which it would be difficult to resist.” Should Heming’s artistry improve and the Gallery’s budget be restored, the trustees might decide to purchase one of Heming’s paintings “as it is their policy to have represented all work expressive of the highest type of art produced in the Dominion.”

Rather than acquiescing to Bennett’s pressure to purchase one of Heming’s paintings—as the National Gallery trustees had assented to Mackenzie King’s lobbying on behalf of Carl Ahrens in 1923 and would again when as Leader of the Opposition he lobbied the trustees on behalf of

Homer Watson in 1933-34—Southam even seemed to seek to expand the National Gallery's cultural authority. He pointed out that Heming's *Canadian Pioneers*—depicting according to the *Ottawa Citizen* “a large canoe filled with Indians, French, English and Scots, all fur traders, passing through a great rocky cleft into Lake Superior gleaming in the morning sunlight”—had been purchased by Howard Ferguson, the former Premier of Ontario and Bennett's High Commissioner in London for the decoration of Canada House without seeking the advice of the Gallery trustees. He recalled for the Prime Minister that the trustees had inherited the powers given to the Advisory Arts Council by parliamentary legislation in 1907 and cited that the Council's “advice and assistance shall be available to the Minister of Public Works in connection with all purchases of and expenditure for objects of art which the Government may make.” He also cited clause 4 of the National Gallery of Canada Act, shepherded through Parliament by Sir Edmund Walker in 1913, which provided “That all the duties and authorities of the said council (Advisory Arts Council) are hereby transferred to and invested in the Board as trustees for the Government of Canada.”

Rather than trying to impose this cultural authority upon the Minister of Public Works, Southam reminded the Prime Minister that “even if the Trustees felt that Arthur Heming should have further representation in the national collection, no finances for the purchases of works of art were provided in the parliamentary estimates this year.” He stressed that “there are a number of artists whose contributions to the arts in Canada have been valuable, who are in desperate need,” and reminded Bennett of his letter of June 29 in which he had appealed for a \$500 annual pension for Homer Watson. An even greater danger to the National Gallery was the lack of workshop facilities and the fire hazard resulting from a shared basement occupied by the Department of Mines as a carpenter shop in the Victoria Memorial Museum. He closed his communication by asking Bennett whether, in inquiring about the Gallery's treatment of Arthur

Heming, “you were prompted somewhat at least by a lack of confidence in the Trustees because perhaps of what you had been told by some friend of the artist.”¹⁴³⁰

Bennett accepted Southam’s rejection of the artists’ protests, writing, “So great is my confidence in your sense of justice and fair play, and your very apparent desire to serve the public interest, that I am quite content to abide by your judgment in connection with the conditions in the Gallery.” Regarding Arthur Heming, though he thought that some of his work “would compare favourably with some of those I have seen in the Gallery,” he also agreed that while “it would appear that some of his pictures have certainly attracted very high commendation, I thoroughly understand the attitude taken by the trustees in desiring to be certain of the merit of his productions before acquiring any of them.” Because Bennett—unlike Mackenzie King—was not personally greatly invested in arts and culture, his dealings with Southam were primarily of an administrative nature, which he carried out in brief communications usually less than four short sentences long. In 1933 he forced Netwon MacTavish, appointed by King, to resign as trustee of the National Gallery, and replaced him with Elwood Bigelow Hosmer, the son of his late Montreal multi-millionaire businessman friend and art collector Charles Hosmer. “Even in a period of great depression it is important that we do not entirely lose our interest in the cultural side of our national life,” he wrote Hosmer. “Although it is difficult, we are still maintaining the Gallery, the Museum, and the Archives—not in the same way as heretofore, but in a manner which I think is not unworthy of our country.”¹⁴³¹ When he cabled the Canadian newspaper magnate Sir Campbell Stuart in London to thank him for donating portraits of Dr. and Mrs. John Stuart to Canada, he informed him that “It is proposed to hang them in Public Archives until such time as a National Portrait Gallery is established.” Bennett questioned the purchase for “a very substantial sum for a work of art” after the *Montreal Star* criticized the National Gallery’s

¹⁴³⁰ Southam to Bennett, August 9, 1934 with enclosures of twelve pages of 1932 correspondence with Heming and “Color Secondary In Heming Works Says Art Critic,” *Ottawa Morning Citizen*, July 6, 1934. LAC reel M1106, pages 289165-83.

¹⁴³¹ Southam to Bennett, March 6, 1933. Bennett to Southam, March 8, 1933 and August 11, 1934. Bennett to E.B. Hosmer, February 16, 1933. LAC reel M1106, pages 289107-09, 289184 and 289096-07.

acquisition of Murillo's *A Franciscan Blessing a Dying Monk* in 1933 but passed on Southam's suggestion that he "present the painting to the nation yourself."¹⁴³²

In April of 1934 Southam wrote Bennett, "I hear that there is little likelihood of a new National Gallery Building being proceeded with at the present time." A month later he expressed his earnest hope to the Prime Minister that "if your Government decides not to include a National Gallery Building in your relief building program, and I have not much hope that you will do so, you will at least assure to the Gallery in its present quarters the use for Gallery purposes the whole of the basement, half of which is now used by another department." In a further effort to increase the stature of the Gallery and its director, he expressed the additional hope that "in an attempt to raise the National Gallery above the status of a step-daughter to the Department of Public Works you give the Director the status of a deputy minister so that he as a civil servant, would rank equally with the Dominion Archivist."¹⁴³³

As Bennett's tenure as Prime Minister was entering its final year, Southam lobbied to have funding for the National Gallery increased from \$25,000 for 1934-35 to \$100,000 [\$1.73 million in 2014 dollars] for 1935-36, with an "irreducible minimum" Gallery budget of \$70,00. He informed Bennett, his Minister of Public Works, Hugh Alexander Stewart, and the Minister of Finance, Edgar Nelson Rhodes, that the Gallery's budget had been \$130,000 in 1929-30 and 1930-31; that cuts to the Gallery's budget over the last four years had saved the Government \$324,500; that paintings by the great masters valued at nearly \$300,000 had been presented or bequeathed to the Gallery in the past five years; and that the Carnegie Corporation, for which Southam served on its Canadian Advisory Committee, had contributed nearly \$500,000 for the improvement of Canadian museum services and other educational projects over the past year and would be discouraged to continue this generous policy if the government did not provide

¹⁴³² Bennett to Sir Campbell Stuart, April 1, 1933. Southam to Bennett, January 2, 1934. Bennet to Southam, January 4, 1934. LAC reel M1106, pages 289112 and 289132-34.

¹⁴³³ Southam to Bennett, April 25, 1934. "Extract of letter from H.S. Southam to Mr. Bennett, dated May 16, 1934." LAC reel M1106, pages 289146 and 289156.

adequate support to the Gallery. Bennett replied to Southam's submission, "If conditions at all warrant, we will endeavour to provide for some increase in the grant to the National Gallery."¹⁴³⁴

Mackenzie King, H.S. Southam and the National Gallery

H.S. Southam and Prime Minister Bennett had a functioning working relationship because they were not in conflict with one another in the competition for cultural and political capital. This was not the case with Mackenzie King who was heavily invested in the arts and would not accept a challenge to his cultural authority by either Southam as chairman of the National Gallery's board of trustees or Eric Brown as the Gallery's director. King's relationship with Southam was a complicated one because he was the publisher of the *Ottawa Citizen* and the son of William Southam who had purchased the *Hamilton Spectator* and taken control of the *Citizen* in 1897 and five of whose six sons became newspaper publishers. In 1920, in addition to the *Spectator* and *Ottawa Citizen*, William Southam and Sons owned or controlled the *Calgary Herald*, *Edmonton Journal*, *Winnipeg Tribune* and *Winnipeg Telegram* and added the *Vancouver Daily Province* the following year. According to Allan Levine, the Southam's publishing empire recorded a net profit of \$735,000 [\$10 million in 2014 dollars] in 1929. Except for the *Citizen*, the other six papers usually supported the Conservatives but did not refrain from criticizing the government when the Conservatives were in power.¹⁴³⁵ As King informed one of his secretaries in 1930, "at one time, we were not at all sure of having the Southam Press with us, even in Ottawa."¹⁴³⁶

What made the younger Southams different from other newspaper publishers was that they were also art collectors. When he attended an organ recital at Harry Southam's mansion, Casa Loma,

¹⁴³⁴ Southam to Bennett with "Memorandum Re Commitments of the National Gallery," December 4, 1934. Southam to H.A. Stewart, December 4, 1934. Bennett to Southam, December 6, 1934. LAC reel M1106, pages 289194-201.

¹⁴³⁵ Allan Levine, *Scrum Wars: The Prime Ministers and the Media* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1993), 91, 103-04. The Southams' interest in the arts accounts for the publication of Bertram Brooker's "The Seven Arts" column in the *Ottawa Citizen* and four other Southam newspapers from October 22, 1928 to November 22, 1930.

¹⁴³⁶ King to Harry Baldwin, February 6, 1930. LAC reel C2323, page 155261.

in 1929, King was struck by his “very beautiful home, a lovely atmosphere, exquisite outlook & interior paintings etc.” Southam had been a member in 1901 of the Harper Memorial Fund Committee, contributed to the erection of the monument to Bert Harper, and was part of the social elite in Ottawa. King first mentions him in his diary in 1904 when both attended a “large dinner party for young people” held by the wealthy socialite Mrs. Charles A.E. Harriss, the wife of the composer and conductor, who informed the Deputy Minister of Labour that “it was my position which had caused me to have the seat of honour.”¹⁴³⁷

Southam began collecting conventional nineteenth century paintings in the mid-1920s from realist Hague School artists. But he also saw beauty in modernist painters and was one of the first private collectors in Canada to purchase paintings by Vincent van Gogh, *Landscape Under a Stormy Sky* and *Olive Trees* in 1929. In addition to purchasing paintings from the old European schools, “by 1933, he owned works by Sisley, Pissarro, Gauguin, Derain and Utrillo,” purchased two works by Matisse in 1937 and 1939, a Monet in 1938, a Cézanne and Redon in 1939 and a Picasso in 1940.¹⁴³⁸ When King needed to appoint a new chairman of the National Gallery board of trustees in 1929, Southam was recommended by both the Governor General, the Viscount Willingdon, who reported to him “I don’t think you could get a better man,” and Vincent Massey who “advised Southam’s appointment; was not favourable to Eaton, who is already Chairman of Toronto Gallery. I gave Massey to understand there were possibilities of an Art Gallery being given Canada but mentioned no names.”¹⁴³⁹

King had been involved in National Gallery matters for about five years before he appointed Southam. In 1924 he noted with exasperation that one of his callers soliciting a political appointment had been “Seybold who wants a senatorship because his wife left her paintings to

¹⁴³⁷ Diary January 12, 1929 and February 12, 1904.

¹⁴³⁸ Alicia Boutilier, *Inspirational: The Collection of H.S. Southam* (Hamilton, ON: Art Gallery of Hamilton, 2009), 12, 14, 15.

¹⁴³⁹ Lord Willingdon to King, January 22, 1929, cited in Boutilier, p. 19. Diary February 15 and February 1, 1929. The Governor General sponsored the Lord Willingdon Arts Competitions for Excellence in Music, Literature, Painting and Sculpture in 1928.

the National Art Gallery instead of to himself!”¹⁴⁴⁰ In 1926 he “took up further Art matters & possible buildings with Vincent Massey & Eric Brown.” In January of 1928, he discussed his plans for revitalizing Ottawa as the nation’s capital with the Leader of the Opposition, R.B. Bennett, including “Art gallery matters & the like being dealt with on other than party lines. He was quite agreeable on this.” Five months later he discussed the plans for the Research Laboratories buildings on a new site in Ottawa, “discussing also where National Art Gallery may ultimately go.” “I have been holding out for a National Art Gallery site on this property. Will get my way as to this & as to class of buildings to be erected. The whole treatment to be worthy of Capital & artistic.” At the end of the year, he spoke with Governor General Willingdon about the National Gallery and the “possibility of [Lord] Beaverbrook doing something.” When after Southam’s appointment British Labour Party Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald opened an exhibition of Dutch and Flemish paintings at the Gallery in 1929, King recorded in his diary that “MacDonald stressed the poverty of many of the Dutch painters, etc. His Excellency [Lord Willingdon] made a plea for an Art Gallery. I spoke of Art as surviving political institutions, the love of beauty in the lives of people on the prairies, etc. & new country & made an appeal to MacDonald as Prime Minister of Great Britain & trustee of the National Art Gallery to permit British works of art in hands of trustees to come to Canada; also promised Art Gallery if given enough time.”¹⁴⁴¹

King’s interest in the National Gallery persisted in the early 1930s while he was Leader of the Opposition and R.B. Bennett Prime Minister. Following a long private talk with Hugh Alexander Stewart, Bennett’s Minister of Public Works, he noted in his diary in 1931, “I think the Government has an Art Gallery in mind.” In 1934 he recorded that his “letter to Perley [Sir George Perley, the Conservative MP and Minister Without Portfolio] re expropriating City Hall

¹⁴⁴⁰ Diary July 29, 1924. King had recorded in his diary on April 11, 1923 that he “Spent a short time at the Seybold’s... Was surprised and delighted at beautiful collection of paintings.” Seybold died the end of October 1928. Lila Booth Seybold donated oil paintings by Adolphe Monticelli, Théophile De Bock, Henri Fantin-Latour, Camille Corot, Willem Maris, Jean-Jacques Henner and Franklin Brownell to the National Gallery in 1928.

¹⁴⁴¹ Diary March 24, 1926, January 16, June 25 and 27 and December 1, 1928 and October 18, 1929.

site – may be the determining factor in securing it by the Government if Bennett has in mind placing a National Art Gallery there, as the Mayor told me he had told him was what he wanted the site for. No doubt Beaverbrook has promised to do for him what he spoke to me of, & he Bennett would like to have a ‘monument’ of the kind. It would be a very fine one – if he don’t [sic] perhaps it will be reserved to me to do it.”¹⁴⁴²

Mackenzie King, the Governor General, Southam and the National Gallery thus shared a common goal of establishing a new building for the Gallery, one that could also house a portrait gallery and the World War I Canadian War Memorials collection consisting of about 500 oil paintings and sculptures and another 500 etchings, lithographs and drawings. Already a year before Southam’s arrival, H.O. McCurry, then the Gallery’s secretary, wrote Norman Rogers, then King’s private secretary, “There is no doubt that the Canadian War Memorials collection is the greatest artistic record of the work of any country in war ever made.” He estimated the value of the collection, stored and maintained at the Gallery at the cost of “considerable sums of money each year,” at \$1 million [\$13.75 million in 2014 dollars]. McCurry informed Rogers that “There is no doubt that proper housing is urgently needed and it is the hope of the Board of Trustees, that this will take form in a concrete proposal before long, that when a new National Gallery is built, a special wing or connected building will be added to place them within reach of the Canadian public for ever.”¹⁴⁴³

In January of 1930, Southam forwarded King an article from the *Christian Science Monitor* featuring, as King subsequently described it, “the picture of the magnificent museum, erected as a war memorial in Auckland, New Zealand.” King suggested that Southam reproduce the photograph and article about the museum in the *Citizen*. “It might be pointed out that, in seeking to create a suitable site for the exceptionally fine war memorial [by the March brothers] which is to be erected in Ottawa, our government is trying to do, in the way of a national war memorial,

¹⁴⁴² Diary May 18, 1931 and April 8, 1934.

¹⁴⁴³ McCurry to Norman Rogers, April 12, 1928. LAC reel C2304, pages 131228-29. Rogers was elected to Parliament in 1935 and subsequently became Minister of Labour and Minister of National Defence.

something at least comparable to New Zealand.” He further suggested to Southam, “With all the hesitancy there is about clearing a little space in the centre of the capital and erecting suitable civic public buildings and the like, I believe a series of articles, showing what has already been done in the capitals of other Dominions and other countries, would be most helpful to the citizens of our capital and our country.” King was convinced that “There is the greatest possible need of education as respects the present and future position of our country in these matters of art, and its capital in particular.” He closed his letter by pointing out that the war memorial in New Zealand had cost over \$1 million of which only about \$150,000 had been raised from private contributions and asked, “I wonder how long it would take to raise a million dollars for a war memorial in the capital of Canada, or what would be said if the Government were to suggest an outlay to that extent.”¹⁴⁴⁴

Southam agreed to the Prime Minister’s suggestion for a series of such educational articles in the *Citizen*. Regarding the question of raising \$1 million for a war memorial in Ottawa, he replied that “In view of the wide-spread and growing feeling that a permanent building should be erected to house our war memorial paintings, I do not believe there would be any considerable opposition in the country or in the House if your Government were to announce at the next session of Parliament that you had selected a site for the National Museum of Art, namely, Green Island, and that you proposed to proceed at once to erect the first unit of this building to house these war memorial paintings.” Southam was certain “this would be the case for the reason indicated if it were made known that the Government felt that this would be a suitable way of celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the National Gallery which will occur in 1931.” King responded that Southam’s proposal “sounds very much like something that was said by His Excellency [Governor General Willingdon] in a confidential talk we had together during last evening. I am

¹⁴⁴⁴ Southam to King, January 16, 1930. “Auckland Rears Great Museum In War Memory,” *Christian Science Monitor*, January 10, 1930. King to Southam, January 17, 1930. LAC reel C2323, pages 155253-56.

in whole-hearted accord with the object you have in view, but I think great care will have to be exercised as to the right moment at which to proceed.”¹⁴⁴⁵

Southam gave Mackenzie King his political support in the 1930 federal election, assigning the *Citizen's* editor, Charles Bowman, to cover King's Western Canada speaking tour. He wrote Senator Andrew Haydon, one of the principal Liberal Party organizers, “Because of our keen appreciation of the exceptional service which Mr. King has been rendering the country for some years, we are always glad to co-operate with him in any way that would tend to ease his load.” King expressed his warmest thanks and appreciation to Southam for “the most valuable services which your paper is offering in this campaign, on behalf of the Liberal policy and, in particular, our appeal for the expansion of Empire trade.” He was “happy in your great co-operation and feel that, with your continuing help this week, the cause will be triumphant at the polls on election day.” Southam cabled King to his private railroad car 100 equally optimistically that “I am sure that Monday's vote will record the high water mark of the Canadian Electorate's appreciation of your fine service in the past and your promises for the immediate future.”¹⁴⁴⁶

This convergence of political and cultural objectives was undermined by King's abhorrence of the modernist painting supported by Southam, Vincent Massey and Eric Brown. He had already “detested the so-called ‘Canadian Art’—futurist impressionist stuff & barbaric” when he attended the opening of the *Annual Exhibition of Canadian Art* at the National Gallery in January of 1927. “Molle [sic] everyone was complaining of it save Eric Brown, Massey & a few others.” The same week Brown forwarded to the Prime Minister, compliments of the Gallery, a copy of F.B. Housser's *A Canadian Art Movement: The Story of the Group of Seven*, along with a

¹⁴⁴⁵ Southam to King, January 24, 1930. King to Southam, January 27, 1930. LAC reel C2323, pages 155253-56 and 155258-59. King referred to the Green Island site, at the mouth of the Rideau River near Sussex Street, in a November 7, 1934 letter to Southam. “As you know, we had at one time thought Green Island might be a good location for a National Art Gallery. I am inclined, however, to believe that a more central position is desirable.” LAC reel C3678, pages 173507-09.

¹⁴⁴⁶ Southam to Andrew Haydon, July 10, 1930. King to Southam, July 22, 1930. Southam to King, July 23, 1930. LAC reel C2323, pages 155269-71.

pamphlet of British art reviews of the two Wembley exhibitions, describing the two as “a very interesting account of Canadian art as it is today & show[ing] the very high opinion of it that is held abroad.” King replied, “I still feel very strongly that the word ‘Canadian’ should not be monopolized by any particular school of art and least of all by a school which is new-born and has yet to find its enduring place. However excellent the work specially exhibited the other evening as Canadian may be, I do not think it should be permitted to exclude from the category ‘Canadian’ the work of artists belonging to other schools and who, it seems to me, are as much entitled to have their work given national recognition than others.” He informed Brown that “I must say that I find this view to be generally shared.” Brown knew better than to argue with his Prime Minister and beat a hasty retreat from expounding his cultural nationalism to him. “I entirely agree that it would not be correct for any special phase of art or group of artists to arrogate the title ‘Canadian’ to their exhibitions.” He apologized on behalf of the Gallery trustees for the misunderstanding, signing his letter, “Yours obediently, Eric Brown, Director.”¹⁴⁴⁷

But what Pierre Bourdieu referred to as the aesthetic “codes” adhered to by King and the National Gallery were irreconcilable. The Prime Minister “spent a pleasant half hour” at the Gallery, appreciating “some fine Tintoretts & Constables (3 new ones) very good)” in 1930. When he attended another reception at the Gallery in 1932, however, he again “thought the Exhibition of Canadian paintings ‘frightful,’ the old paintings many of them very good.” Influenced by Eric Brown’s enthusiasm for the Group of Seven, Southam had begun collecting paintings by the Group a year after becoming chairman of the Gallery’s board of trustees so that “by the late 1930s, members of the Group of Seven were Southam’s most collected artists.” According to Alicia Boutilier, when his European and Canadian collection was exhibited at the National Gallery in 1944, “Fifty of the exhibited works were by Tom Thomson and the Group of

¹⁴⁴⁷ Diary January 11, 1927. Brown to King, January 17, 1927. King to Brown, January 18, 1927. Brown to King, January 22, 1927. LAC reel C2295, pages 120274-77. King would again record in his June 19, 1927 diary a meeting with the son-in-law of the owner of the Jenkins Galleries who “called to talk about duty on works of art, which led to my speaking at some length on art & the purpose of the National Gallery & the need to recognize the different schools & not to permit one to monopolize the name of “Canadian.”

Seven, accumulated within the last fifteen years.” H.O. McCurry judged his Canadian paintings “one of the three outstanding collections of Canadian art in this country.”¹⁴⁴⁸

Calling on the Southams in 1933, King “enjoyed the talk with them & looking at Southam’s paintings some of which—the new school, I do not care for at all, others quite beautiful.” The same week he sent Southam a clipped reproduction of *Snow-Covered Village* by the German expressionist painter Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, six hundred and eight of whose works would soon be seized by the Nazis—fifty-one of which were included in the Nazis’ 1937 *Degenerate Art Exhibition*—with the query, “Is this the sort of thing you like?” Southam displayed his modern paintings in his music room at Casa Loma. He explained to King that while initially he had begun collecting older academic representational paintings, modern composers such as Debussy, Cyril Scott and Gershwin had helped him to appreciate modern interpretative non-representational painters.¹⁴⁴⁹

This divergence in King’s and Southam’s aesthetic tastes increased King’s hostility when Southam began insisting that he remove Newton MacTavish from the board of trustees of the National Gallery. MacTavish’s aesthetic sensibility was similar to King’s. In the preface to his comprehensive history *The Fine Arts in Canada*, he asserted that true art was universal and not national in form. The Group of Seven notwithstanding, “the writer is not convinced that there is anywhere any art that is peculiarly Canadian.” He recognized that the handicrafts of “the red man” “almost might be classed among the fine arts” but judged that his totem-poles, while “an expression of an artistic conscience,” were “grotesque in design and crude in execution.” MacTavish acknowledged, with some reluctance, the importance of Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven in the concluding chapter of *The Fine Arts in Canada*. “It is held by some observers that there is, even now, a Canadian school of art and that its centre is the Group of Seven,” he conceded. But—alluding to Lawren Harris’s personal wealth—he also suggested that

¹⁴⁴⁸ Diary September 2, 1930 and July 27, 1932. Boutilier, 30. H.O. McCurry quoted in “H.S. Southam Art Exhibit Open,” *Ottawa Journal*, May 27, 1944. Cited in Boutilier, 27.

¹⁴⁴⁹ Diary November 21, 1933. Boutilier, 52, fn. 20; 13-14. Karl Brix, *Karl Schmidt-Rottluff* (Vienna and Munich: Anton Schroll, 1972), 54.

Harris “can afford to smile at the vulgar and then in turn at the refined, and to flaunt with delightful naïveté his artistic caprices and vagaries...At times one suspects in his work an effort at satire...he persists in going, much beyond the scope of the common eye, painting weird, even fantastic, scenery that he alone has seen but that many others might like to see.” For MacTavish, the Group’s paintings represented “an absolute departure from the art of the so-called academicians, of the realists and of all those who paint things as they commonly are seen.”¹⁴⁵⁰

Southam began writing King in January of 1930 regarding “a rather pressing problem confronting the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery” and thanked the Prime Minister “for your assurance that you hope to be able to find some way to relieve this situation in the near future without occasioning too much embarrassment.” In March he forwarded King extracts from a letter Norman Mackenzie, the Gallery trustee from Regina, had written to the Minister of Public Works and the Minister of Finance “dealing with the discordant condition of our Board of Trustees and giving it as his view that this situation could not be corrected so long as Dr. MacTavish continued to be a member of the Board.” In his letter to the two Ministers, Mackenzie referred to “MacTavish’s disloyalty and fervent attempts to disrupt the Board and harm the National Gallery, the personnel of the Board, and the authenticity of the pictures we are so honestly and successfully collecting.”¹⁴⁵¹

MacTavish supported those traditional artists who felt the National Gallery should not privilege the Group of Seven and other modernist painters and who felt that Eric Brown, as the Gallery’s director, should not impose his own personal aesthetic preferences onto the Gallery’s acquisition criteria. (In a letter to Arthur Heming, Southam referred to MacTavish’s “warped concept of the Director of the National Gallery.”) Because of his political support, Mackenzie King had also appointed MacTavish to the Civil Service Commission of Canada in 1926 where he could

¹⁴⁵⁰ Newton MacTavish, *The Fine Arts in Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1925. Facsimile edition, Toronto: Coles, 1973), v, 1, 154, 154-55, 156. In his December 25, 1925 diary, King recorded that he “looked at MacTavish’s book ‘Fine Arts in Canada’ before the fire” and sent out five copies to his friends (including Senator Hardy and Senator Haydon) as Christmas gifts.

regulate the civil service careers of Brown and his assistant, H.O. McCurry. Maria Tippet records that in 1929 McCurry was brought by MacTavish before the Civil Service Commission “in an attempt to frame me and destroy my clear record of twenty years.”¹⁴⁵² The other Gallery trustees felt MacTavish had a clear conflict of interest and at the very first meeting of the trustees attended by Southam asked MacTavish to resign. After Southam’s persistent entreaties, King pledged in February of 1931—though he had failed to do so before the 1930 election—that he would remove MacTavish should the Liberals be returned to power in the next election. Southam, a fervent Christian Scientist, could not refrain from asking whether King’s pledge had any more validity than the commitment by Ernest Lapointe, King’s Minister of Justice, to revise the Criminal Code in 1926 to permit Christian Scientists to refuse conventional medical treatment for their children.¹⁴⁵³

King was furious at Southam’s “extraordinary letter” regarding MacTavish’s removal. “Whether he is seeking a quarrel or not I do not know,” he noted in his diary. “I rather imagine it is an excuse to get out of contributing to Liberal funds, but when one thinks of my having made him President of the National Art Gallery for him to write in the childish way he does re the dismissal of a trustee is ridiculous. He seeks to make a grave affair out of a mere nothing & to make trouble between me & Massey into the bargain. He reveals himself as a man of no judgment in affairs.” Unwilling to wait another four years for the “almost intolerable” conflict with Newton MacTavish to be resolved, Southam turned to Prime Minister Bennett who finally forced

¹⁴⁵¹ Southam to King, January 23 and March 12, 1930. LAC reel C2323, pages 155257 and 155263-66.

¹⁴⁵² McCurry to Norman Mackenzie, December 14, 1929. Cited in Tippet, 88.

¹⁴⁵³ Southam to Heming, January 26, 1932. Southam to King, January 27 and February 12, 1931. King to Southam, February 16, 1931. Southam to King, February 19, 1931. LAC reel M1106, page 289177-78, and reel C2327, pages 160773-77. Besides Southam, Eric Brown, H.O. McCurry and a previous chair of the board of trustees, Edmund Walker, were Christian Scientists. According to Douglas Ord, “What this forty-four year rule by Christian Scientist directors did, then, was introduce into the developing history of the National Gallery a sense of mission that conflated the national interest with ‘spiritual’ improvement via art, and, following from this, a pattern of exclusions based on principles that were as much metaphysical as aesthetic.” See Douglas Ord, *The National Gallery of Canada: Ideas, Art, Architecture* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 99.

MacTavish's resignation in February of 1933. Bennett appointed Southam a Companion of the Order of Saint Michael and Saint George for his services as chairman of the National Gallery trustees in 1935, the same award Mackenzie King had already received while Deputy Minister of Labour in 1906.¹⁴⁵⁴

After King was returned as Prime Minister in the 1935 election, Eric Brown sought to increase Southam's cultural capital and influence by informing King that he had willed his entire collection of paintings to the National Gallery in June. Brown valued the paintings at not less than a quarter million dollars [\$4.35 million in 2014 dollars] and called the prospective request "by far the largest and most important that has ever been made to the National Gallery and constitutes one of the most significant events in the National Gallery's history." He informed King that Southam's chairmanship of the board of trustees "continues to be one of great inspiration to the National Gallery and under it its organization and collections are growing wisely and rapidly and proving their usefulness to the country as an educative and refining influence."¹⁴⁵⁵ Southam attempted to leverage his prospective donation into a new building for the National Gallery, writing Mackenzie King in December 1935, "I would be willing to turn over my collection to the nation without waiting for my passing whenever the Government—I hope it will be your Government—has erected a suitable and appropriate building to house the national collection." According to Alicia Boutilier, he intimated to Eric Brown a year later that he would ask "the prime minister to accept his resignation if nothing was done about the inadequate space." Southam also contemplated resigning when King again refused to amend the criminal code in 1936 to permit Christian Scientists to treat their ill children with spiritual rather than conventional medical means.¹⁴⁵⁶ He again offered his resignation to King when after the

¹⁴⁵⁴ Diary February 21, 1931. "Minute of a Meeting of the Committee of the Privy Council, approved by His Excellency the Governor General on the 25th February 1933." Bennett to Southam, March 2, 1933. Southam to Bennett, March 6, 1933. LAC reel M1106, pages 289103-08. Boutilier, 21, 28.

¹⁴⁵⁵ Brown to King, November 26, 1935. King to Brown, December 2, 1935. LAC reel C3679, pages 174779-81.

¹⁴⁵⁶ Southam to King, December 6, 1935 and Southam to Brown, October 14, 1936. Cited in Boutilier, 21. See also 21-22.

death of Eric Brown in April of 1939 the Minister of Public Works, Arthur Cardin, delayed for six months accepting the unanimous recommendation by the board of trustees that H.O. McCurry be appointed the new director of the Gallery. “I shall be quite willing to relinquish my position as chairman,” he wrote King, “if you... intimate you wish me to do so.”¹⁴⁵⁷

King vehemently denied that there was any connection between the *Ottawa Citizen*'s increasing critical attitude towards the Liberal government and his and the Minister of Public Works' attitude towards the National Gallery. Yet King had already recorded in his diary in March of 1939 that “I am beginning to feel I should call in Southam and ask him whether he thinks he should continue to act as Chairman of the Art Gallery, with his paper lacking the confidence in the Government it does. Except that I believe they will come around when there is a campaign, I would do this.”¹⁴⁵⁸

The Accumulation and Power of Statist Capital

In his *Mackenzie King*—published for the 1935 federal election—Norman Rogers, whom Bruce Hutchison later characterized as “King’s chosen heir,” accused Prime Minister R.B. Bennett of usurping the power of Parliament like an autocrat. He charged that the government’s legislation such as its Marketing Act and establishment of a Central Bank were beyond the effective control of Parliament and instead of serving the public interest were implemented “to further the ends of dictatorship.” Rogers stated that King had “repeatedly drawn attention to the extent to which ministers of the crown were being ignored in respect in matters pertaining to their several departments, and to the degree to which the business of government was being brought more and more under the exclusive direction of the Prime Minister.” Editorializing on behalf of King, Rogers asserted that

To alienate the authority and control of Parliament by a concentration of power in the hands of the executive, and still further to centralize power in the leader of a political

¹⁴⁵⁷ Southam to King, August 3 and September 26, 1939. King to Southam, October 5, 1939. LAC reel C3751, pages 237346-53.

¹⁴⁵⁸ Diary March 2, 1939, p. 3.

party, through the ready submission of the executive to the will of a Prime Minister, is, in Mr. King's opinion, all tending away from free democratic government, as carried on under the British parliamentary system; and towards an arbitrary and autocratic system, such as exists in Italy, Germany and Russia. Dictatorship, it is to be remembered, means in the affairs of State, less and less of reliance upon argument and reason and more and more reliance upon force. It is government by compulsion, not by consent.¹⁴⁵⁹

Yet Bruce Hutchison, in *The Incredible Canadian*, observed that the concentration of government power in the executive had only increased since King again became Prime Minister in 1935 and reorganized his Cabinet after the outbreak of World War II in September of 1939. "Something much deeper and longer-lasting than Cabinet reorganization was now under way in Ottawa," he suggested. "The effective power of the state had long been oozing out of Parliament into the executive. Under the emergency of war this transfer became almost complete." Hutchison asserted that King "was so well established as head of the state above party division, and in wartime given such broad authority by emergency legislation, that he could largely control Cabinet, brain trust, Parliament, and nation. No Canadian had ever exercised such power since 1867 and no one knew so well how to conceal it."¹⁴⁶⁰ The leftist revisionist historians Henry Ferns and Bernard Ostry agreed with Hutchison that "So successful was Mackenzie King that without resort to violence he managed to create the closest approximation to a one party state among those nations which admit the possibility of two or more political parties."¹⁴⁶¹ As David Jay Bercuson observed succinctly, "The Cabinet War Committee did most of the actual governing, and the Commons was a virtual supernumerary... Without King's guidance, nothing was possible."¹⁴⁶²

¹⁴⁵⁹ Norman McLeod Rogers, *Mackenzie King* (Toronto: George N. Morang, 1935), 170, 171, 174-75.

¹⁴⁶⁰ Hutchison, 264, 265, 267.

¹⁴⁶¹ Henry S. Ferns and Bernard Ostry, *The Age of Mackenzie King: The Rise of the Leader* (London: William Heineman and Toronto: British Book Service Canada, 1955 and Toronto: James Lorimer, 1976), 1.

¹⁴⁶² David Jay Bercuson, *True Patriot: The Life of Brooke Claxton, 1898-1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 108, 115.

Pierre Bourdieu discussed this concentration of power of the emerging state and its ability to regulate and dominate various “fields” in his collection of essays, *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*. “The genesis of the state is inseparable from the process of unification of the different social, economic, cultural (or educational), and political fields which goes hand in hand with the progressive constitution of the state monopoly of legitimate physical and *symbolic* violence,” he posited. “Because it concentrates an ensemble of material and symbolic resources, the state is in a position to regulate the functioning of the different fields, whether through financial intervention (such as public support of investment in the economic field, or, in the cultural field, support for one kind of education or another) or through juridical intervention.” In his essay “Rethinking the State,” Bourdieu elaborated further on this concentration of capital by the state:

The state is the *culmination of a process of concentration of different species of capital*: capital of physical force or instruments of coercion (army, police), economic capital, cultural or (better) informational capital, and symbolic capital. It is this concentration as such which constitutes the state as the holder of a sort of metacapital granting power over other species of capital and over their holders. Concentration of the different species of capital (which proceeds hand in hand with the construction of the corresponding fields) leads indeed to the *emergence* of a specific, properly statist capital (*capital étatique*) which enables the state to exercise power over the different fields and over the different particular species of capital, and especially over the rates of conversion between them (and thereby over the relations of force between their respective holders).¹⁴⁶³

There are several examples of Mackenzie King’s use of statist capital as instruments of coercion. He already exerted great control over the National Gallery by determining its operating budget through annual appropriations from Parliament. When Edmund Walker, the chairman of the Liberal government’s Advisory Arts Council, broke with Prime Minister Laurier over the issue of free trade with the United States and was instrumental in bringing the Conservatives to power in the 1911 election, Prime Minister Borden made him chairman of the Gallery’s board of trustees, greatly increased its budget so that he could hire Eric Brown as the Gallery’s director and transfer the Gallery to the Victoria Memorial Museum, and gave the Gallery its own parliamentary act of incorporation in 1913. King never forgave Walker for his betrayal of Laurier and for causing his

own defeat in the 1911 election. According to Douglas Ord, “Given that in 1921 Walker was still chairman of the National Gallery’s Board of Trustees, the political circumstances that had helped the Gallery on account of his support for Borden were instantly reversed. King had no interest in supporting any project of which Walker was a part... Notoriously, he saw his government’s relationship with the National Gallery as a means mainly of helping his own friends, as well as of punishing Walker.”¹⁴⁶⁴ King exercised control over the Gallery not only through its government appropriations but also through selecting and lobbying its board of trustees and through the Civil Service Commission, which regulated the status and salaries of its staff. In addition to this financial and regulatory intervention, King used the courts—Bourdieu’s “juridical intervention”—in 1941 to mount what H.S. Southam perceived as both a personal and “despicable” attack against himself and the *Ottawa Citizen*.

The Government’s imposition of the War Measures Act and its Defence of Canada Regulations in September of 1939 empowered it to restrict free speech, impose press and radio censorship, ban political groups, intern and imprison people without trial, and replaced Acts of Parliament with Orders in Council made by King’s War Cabinet. Section 21 of the Regulations empowered the Minister of Justice to detain without charge anyone accused of “acting in any manner prejudicial to the public safety or the safety of the State” and to detain such persons “in such place, and under such conditions, as the Minister of Justice may from time to time determine.”¹⁴⁶⁵

A main target of the Regulations was the Communist Party of Canada, which was outlawed and many of its leaders interned because of its opposition to the war against Nazi Germany following the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Non-aggression Pact in August of 1939. In May of 1940, Mackenzie King invited the pro-communist Unity MP Dorise Nielsen to meet with him in his

¹⁴⁶³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 33, 41-42.

¹⁴⁶⁴ Ord, 68, 103. Walker died in 1924. Lawren Harris paid tribute to his support of the Group of Seven in “Sir Edmund Walker,” *Canadian Bookman* 6:5 (May 1924) cited in F.B. Housser, *A Canadian Art Movement: The Story of the Group of Seven*, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1926), 41-43.

Parliament office just two months after she was elected in her North Battleford, Saskatchewan, riding (with a margin of nearly 3000 votes) “to get her sympathy with our party before she gets too quickly antagonistic to it by association with other groups.” He noted that Nielsen had been the sole candidate on relief throughout the election and thought she “spoke very understandingly of poor people; of the effect relief and poverty was having on their characters. Altogether represented point of view that I myself held so strongly and expressed the days I was at Hull House Social Settlement in London and in ‘Industry and Humanity.’” Nielsen struck King “as a woman of real ability” and “promised to send her a copy,” which he did a week later, inscribing the book, “To Mrs. D.W. Nielsen, M.P. on the occasion of her maiden speech in the House of Commons of Canada and with best wishes for her endeavours on behalf of *Industry and Humanity*.” Yet as Faith Johnston documented in her biography of Nielsen, “A month later, when he learned she was a communist, he ordered her investigated by the Department of Justice.” King had been informed by his Minister of Agriculture, James Gardiner, “that she is a Communist and her husband a Communist. I feel very strongly she is a dangerous person. She has all the qualities of a very skilful spy.”¹⁴⁶⁶

In October of 1940 the RCMP and the Department of Justice gathered evidence to charge Nielsen under the Defence of Canada Regulations for her pamphlet *Why I Opposed the Budget*, which contained extracts from her speeches made in the House of Commons and called on Canadians to protest against the government’s war budget. She became a popular speaker on behalf of free speech, civil liberties and the hundreds arrested without trial, and gathered positive press

¹⁴⁶⁵ Neatby, 317. *Defence of Canada Regulations* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1939), 29.

¹⁴⁶⁶ Diary May 23, 1940. Faith Johnston, *A Great Restlessness: The Life and Politics of Dorise Nielsen* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2006), 88-89, 4, 94. Diary June 20, 1940. King also recorded in his diary that on May 8, 1941 “There was a good deal of criticism of Mrs. Nielson [sic] as being a Communist and of Communist activities. I said the best way to destroy her influence was to get another woman into Parliament who could answer her.” When Nielsen came to see King again on February 3, 1942 to ask if he could do something about the terrible plight of the Kirkland Lake miners, King felt “there is something very sinister about that woman. When she shakes hands, she just takes hold only of the fingers of one’s hand. She has a curious way of speaking. She seems to me to be less the real person than she was when she came into the House.”

coverage such as the November 20, 1940 *Globe and Mail*'s "Woman Fights for Freedom." In the House the leader of the CCF, M.J. Coldwell, asked Justice Minister Ernest Lapointe on February 27 why the RCMP had seized Nielsen's pamphlet when he had taken no action under the Defence of Canada Regulations against the *Ottawa Citizen* for its January 11 editorial, "At the Business End of the Bren." The paper's editor, Charles Bowman, had attacked patronage and profiteering in the manufacturing of Bren machine guns for government contracts. He concluded his editorial with the sentence, "When the lads come home from overseas, after some years of service at the real business end of the Bren gun, they may know better where to shoot than Canadian veterans did in the years of debt and privation after the last war."

Lapointe agreed in the House that the *Citizen*'s editorial "was a subversive article" and that "they will have to answer for it before the courts of the country." He had already brought the *Citizen* editorial before the Cabinet in January when King described it as "seditious in its nature re business end of Bren Gun." He recorded that "Members of Council were at one in their view that Bowman was going much too far, and that a similar article anywhere else would have led to prosecution." Council decided to refer the case to the Justice Department for action. King noted that "One would prefer naturally not to have this step taken as it is certain to be greatly misconstrued but to hold back to save the 'Citizen' from what other papers would not be exempted from, would be even more of a mistake." The paper was charged under the Defence of Canada Regulations for its editorial deemed "prejudicial to the safety of the state or the efficient prosecution of the war" that was "likely to prejudice the recruitment, training, discipline or administration of His Majesty's forces."¹⁴⁶⁷

H.S. Southam wrote King protesting against the Minister of Justice's prejudicial statement in the House that the *Citizen*'s editorial was subversive. He was also personally offended that the Prime Minister had consented to the prosecution of a newspaper "with whose record of public service you have been acquainted for at least 40 years, and whose integrity, sincerity and independence

¹⁴⁶⁷ Johnston, 102-04. Charles Bruce, *News and the Southams* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1968), 260, 261. Diary January 23, 1941. Boutilier, 22-23.

you have known during the same period...the attitude of your government toward this paper would be, I think, in view of the Citizen's standing and record in the community, difficult to justify." In view of the government's attack, Southam again tendered his resignation as chair of the National Gallery's board of trustees. H.O. McCurry, shocked by Southam's resignation, intervened with Walter Turnbull, the PM's principal secretary, a week after Magistrate Glen Strike heard the government's case on March 19. Writing Turnbull after their meeting, he explained that "There is no doubt that the Chairman and his brother are both deeply hurt by what has happened...the sense of injury produced by the remarks of the Minister of Justice in Parliament is still considerable." He informed Turnbull that Southam "insists that he will not continue to serve a government which, he thinks, has treated him so unfairly." McCurry highlighted the political fallout that would result from Southam's resignation, which he referred to as "something of a calamity" for the National Gallery. In addition to the likely loss of his art collection, valued at \$250,000, which Southam had willed to the Gallery, "no chairman has ever won the confidence of the Canadian art world so completely...the retirement will be a little difficult to explain in that direction...and might be made some political capital of." In a memorandum to the Prime Minister, Turnbull reported McCurry's statement that "Southam has taken the unreasonable attitude that the prosecution of the Citizen for alleged subversive matter is partly personal, but that he is an exceptionally good man on the Gallery Board, and if the Prime Minister feels so inclined, a kindly personal letter might change his attitude."¹⁴⁶⁸

When Magistrate Strike accepted the *Citizen's* defence that the use of the words "where to shoot" in its editorial had been metaphorical and dismissed the charges against the paper on April 2, 1941, a reconciliation between Southam and King became possible. The Prime Minister "phoned

¹⁴⁶⁸ Bruce, 261, 262. McCurry to Turnbull, March 27, 1941. Turnbull to King, March 29, 1941. LAC reel C4865, pages 260968-70. Despite his strong support of Southam, McCurry provided Turnbull with seven possible replacements as chair of the National Gallery board of trustees: B.K. Sandwell, the poet Duncan Campbell Scott, Senator Norman Paterson, MP Brooke Claxton, "a new member of the House who has an active interest in cultural affairs and particularly in fine arts," and publisher Jean Chauvin and architects Marcel Parizeau and Ernest Cormier from Quebec.

Harry Southam about his possible resignation from the Art Gallery presidency. Cleared that off the slate by telling him it was nonsense to talk of such a thing.”¹⁴⁶⁹

Eric Brown and H.O. McCurry had sat on the advisory committee (with Vincent Massey and H.S. Southam as the committee’s adjunct patrons) which had recommended Carnegie Corporation funding for the 1941 Kingston Conference of Canadian Artists. The Conference concluded on June 29 in Ottawa with artists touring the National Gallery and viewing Southam’s art collection at Casa Loma. Southam remained as chairman of the Gallery board of trustees until 1948, the year King stepped down as Prime Minister. But realizing that the Prime Minister would not build a new legacy National Gallery “monument” that Bennett and King had contemplated which would showcase his entire collection, Southam dispersed his paintings. As Alicia Boutilier documented, he donated dozens and dozens of works to the Art Gallery of Hamilton (36 canvases), the London Public Library and Art Museum, the Edmonton Museum of Arts, the Vancouver Gallery, and universities in Ottawa, Kingston, Toronto, Hamilton, London, Windsor, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Edmonton and Vancouver, in addition to bequests to the National Gallery. “One cannot help but wonder,” Boutilier speculated, “if Mackenzie King had acted upon the chairman’s repeated and passionate plea over the years concerning the dire need for a new National Gallery building, the bequest might have been made a gift, in its entirety, as proposed in 1935.”¹⁴⁷⁰

Deane Russell and the Interdepartmental Committee on Canadian Handcrafts

¹⁴⁶⁹ Diary April 15, 1941. In 1944, King himself announced Southam’s donation of Nicolas Poussin’s 1650 *Landscape With a Woman Washing Her Feet*, described by H.O. McCurry as “perhaps one of the most important additions to the National Gallery in recent years.” King stated that the gift “was but another evidence of Mr. Southam’s public-spirited and generous interest in the development of the National Gallery.” See “Outstanding Work Is Presented To National Gallery,” *Ottawa Citizen*, April 3, 1944, 3.

¹⁴⁷⁰ Boutilier, 26. By dispersing his collection, Southam was in effect fulfilling in part Lawren Harris’s call in 1943 for the National Gallery to become “more and more a people’s gallery all across Canada.”

Despite the statist capital at his disposal, Mackenzie King was unable to control or significantly manipulate H.S. Southam because of his very substantial political, financial, cultural and social capital. This was not the case with another major example of King's "priestly" role of neutralizing other social agents and institutions who challenged his cultural authority—the young Deane Russell from Winnipeg. Russell worked as one of King's several stenographers from June 19, 1939 to April 1946 and used his inside government position to lobby for a national government service for hand arts and crafts. As Sandra Alföldy recorded—inaccurately—in *Crafting Identity: The Development of Professional Fine Craft in Canada*, "The Interdepartmental Committee on Canadian Handicrafts was organized by the federal government from 1941 to 1944 in an effort to administer all Canadian craft activity during the war. It fell under the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture with Russell as its head."¹⁴⁷¹

Deane Russell published a brief historical survey, "Handcraft Activities in Canada," in the May 1942 *Craft Horizons* in which he highlighted the importance of handcrafts in First Nations and Inuit cultures and in the lives of subsequent European immigrants. "Much pride may be taken by a country," he suggested, "which encourages its newcomers to offer the finest of their folklore, art and craft techniques as cultural, educational, social, and economic contributions to the development of their new homeland." It was these economic, cultural, social and emotional benefits resulting from handcrafts activities that Russell promoted to various ministries of the Canadian government. Craft artisans, he proposed, "can play a major part in a national reconstruction programme designed to afford an emotional stability which is so universally desired and necessary after such a long period of economic, social and armed conflict as the world is now experiencing."¹⁴⁷²

¹⁴⁷¹ Sandra Alföldy, *Crafting Identity: The Development of Professional Fine Craft in Canada*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 68, fn. 52. In her *Allied Arts: Architecture and Craft in Postwar Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), Sandra Alföldy reports that Russell presented a report on "Hand Arts and Crafts in Canada" to the International Conference on Food and Agriculture in Virginia in 1941. (108)

¹⁴⁷² Deane H. Russell, "Handcraft Activities in Canada," *Craft Horizons* I:1 (May 1942), 19-20, 21. The magazine was published by the Handicraft Cooperative League of America in New York.

Russell became the eventual instigator of the Interdepartmental Committee when he submitted a comprehensive *Composite Report to the Minister of Agriculture concerning some values to be derived from the development of a National Handcraft Programme* in April of 1941. Because Mackenzie King claimed five years later that all of Russell's cultural activities had been unauthorized, it should be noted that his *Report* was published in Ottawa "by Authority of the Hon. James G. Gardiner, Minister of Agriculture." Russell was actually based in the Department of Fisheries but used his association with King to his advantage by listing his address as "Office of the Prime Minister" and "on loan Office of Prime Minister," implicitly suggesting that King was aware of his cultural organizing activities. His initial direct support came from Dr. Joseph Georges Bouchard, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Agriculture. Bouchard had received his doctorate from Laval University in 1930 and was the Liberal MP for Kamouraska from 1922 to 1940 when he joined the Department of Agriculture until a year before his death in 1956. In 1929, King "spoke of possibility of giving agriculture to Quebec & spoke of Bouchard as a possibility."¹⁴⁷³

The former MP was one of the few officials in government who saw the possibility of bringing about a flowering of the arts through government support. Five weeks before the delegation of artists presented their joint artists' *Brief* to the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment in June of 1944, Bouchard testified before the Committee that "Handcraft means culture to me... My interest in handcrafts goes back to my childhood days when my mother was a weaver. My wife learned from her, thus carrying out the tradition." He suggested to the Committee that "Our leisure is bound to increase. Perhaps I am not too bold in saying that the use of leisure measures, more than anything else, the advancement of civilization" and that handicrafts could productively make use of this increased leisure. He had assumed the chairmanship of the Interdepartmental Committee "with the earnest desire of finding a federal body that would link together all provincial activities and establish a school of good taste, and at the same time prevent handicraft from becoming industrialized." Bouchard informed his former

¹⁴⁷³ Diary December 2, 1929.

fellow MPs of his conviction that “it is useless to attempt to reconstruct this world on an economic basis only. We are greatly in need of the idealists... We need the artists and we need the architects perhaps as much as we need the bankers, the economists and the industrial men, to reconstruct a proper world where everybody will feel at ease in it.”

King had selected Bouchard as the Canadian delegate to the International Congress of Popular Art in Prague in 1928 where he visited hundreds of homes to examine the manufacture of local handicrafts. He suggested to the Reconstruction Committee that after World War II “We have here the chance of our lives for the building up of a civilization that will be comparable to none.” He affirmed that “we are all anxious to create a greater unity in Canada, and I suggest to you that there is no field which can make a greater contribution to that end than the field of handicrafts ... Let us encourage our people to display their talents; and let us be proud of the new Canadian as of the old Canadian. Let us all be Canadians and let us encourage all to make their contribution to the beautification of our national life.”¹⁴⁷⁴ Bouchard had himself published widely on French-Canadian rural culture including his 1932 *The Renaissance of Rustic Arts*, which Russell summarized in his 1941 *Composite Report*.¹⁴⁷⁵

Russell also cited a 1941 Department of Trade and Commerce survey of handicrafts in the Maritime Provinces, Quebec and Ontario. It estimated that “the present value of handicraft articles offered for sale in Canada is between \$350,000 and \$400,000 [\$6.1 million in 2014 dollars], of which at the present time probably not more than \$75,000 worth is shipped to the United States, the balance being sold largely to tourists.” His main recommendation to the Minister of Agriculture was “That some department of Canadian Government concern itself with directing a national programme designed to assist craftsmen and country to realize the many

¹⁴⁷⁴ Session 1944 House of Commons. Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment. *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence No. 7*. May 12, 1944. (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1944), 230, 231.

¹⁴⁷⁵ Bouchard’s publications included *Le domaine rural canadien* (1924), *Les petites industries féminines à la campagne* (1927), *Other Days, Other Ways: Silhouettes of the Past in French Canada* (with woodcuts by Edwin H. Holgate, 1930), and *La renaissance des arts domestiques* (1932).

economic, cultural and educational values suggested by experiences of all agencies willing and able to co-operate to this end.”¹⁴⁷⁶

James G. Gardiner, the Minister of Agriculture, was apparently sufficiently interested in Russell’s *Composite Report* for Georges Bouchard, the Assistant Deputy Minister, to forward a memorandum on “A National Home Industries Programme” to Dr. G.S.H. Barton, the Deputy Minister. Possibly prepared by Russell himself since it repeats text from his *Craft Horizons* article, the memorandum closed with the statement that “The Minister of Agriculture has already examined the attached report with interest, and has asked for a concise memorandum outlining the chief values and recommending a practical plan for the efficient promotion of Canadian handicraft interests. The Minister intimated he would examine such a memorandum with a view to agreeing to it.”¹⁴⁷⁷

Barton sent out invitations to other deputy ministers of government departments in January of 1942 asking them to send representatives having special knowledge of handicraft practices for an exploratory meeting and specifically requested that the Department of Fisheries send Russell to the meeting. D.H. Sutherland, the Acting Deputy Minister, replied that “While this Department has not a particular interest in this subject, it is known that Mr. Russell is keenly interested. He is being asked to attend the meeting on the understanding that it will not interfere with his present duties.” The first meeting of the Interdepartmental Committee on Canadian Handcrafts took place on January 15, 1942 in the Confederation Building with fifteen people in attendance representing the Departments of Agriculture, Pensions and National Health, National War Services, Mines and Resources, Trade and Commerce, Fisheries, Labour, the National Research

¹⁴⁷⁶ Russell H. Deane, *Composite Report to the Minister of Agriculture concerning some values to be derived from the development of a National Handcraft Programme* (Ottawa: s.n., 1941), 9, 13.

¹⁴⁷⁷ Georges Bouchard to G.S.H. Barton, undated 1941 memorandum “A National Home Industries Programme.” The archival materials cited are not available on microfilm but can be found in the “War Files, Interdepartmental Committee On Canadian Handicrafts. Activities of Deane H. Russell, Ottawa, Canada” at Library and Archives Canada, File no. 1500-40-1. MIKAN no. 2001165.

Council and the Foreign Exchange Control Board. Bouchard chaired the meeting and introduced Barton who declared that the Department of Agriculture had a special interest in the welfare of rural people and therefore “would be prepared to participate in development of such a programme by making whatever contribution may be appropriate in a co-operative effort to achieve the most helpful results.”¹⁴⁷⁸ Russell became the volunteer secretary of the Committee.

John Grierson from the National Film Board attended the second meeting of the Committee on March 13 at which it was moved that a smaller Directive Committee (later also referred to as the Policy Committee) be established “to draft a practical preliminary plan to be submitted to the Minister of Agriculture for consideration.” H.O. McCurry, the director of the National Gallery, was selected as one of the members of this policy committee and at its first May 21 meeting moved that “the Chairman, Dr. J.G. Bouchard, and the Secretary, Mr. Deane H. Russell, prepare for the Minister of Agriculture a recommendation to establish by Order in Council an Advisory Committee on Canadian Homecrafts for the purpose of advising the Minister on all matters pertaining to the development of a national homecraft programme.” A report to the larger Interdepartmental Committee stated that “As a result of Mr. McCurry’s motion, a draft memorandum to the Minister of Agriculture was prepared. The draft was submitted for consideration and comment to the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, who agreed with the views expressed and recommendations made.”¹⁴⁷⁹ The April 1943 draft of the Order in Council was accompanied with a “Suggestion for item for Supplementary Estimates 1943-44” that provided \$4,500 [\$62,600 in 2014 dollars] for Committee operating expenses “including salary of Secretary.”

¹⁴⁷⁸ D.H. Sutherland to Barton, January 13, 1942. Minutes of “1st Exploratory Discussion Concerning Development of a National Policy to Further the Interests of Canadian Handcraftsmen,” p. 2.

¹⁴⁷⁹ Minutes of March 26, 1942 meeting. June 22, 1942 “Report to Members of Provisional Interdepartmental Committee on Canadian Homecrafts.”



Deane Russell (centre rear) at the 1942 St. Francis Xavier University handicraft conference.

With Barton's permission and Bouchard serving as the Committee's chair, Russell was able to obtain financial support for travel from the Department of Agriculture. In 1942 he attended a handicraft conference at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, which called upon the provincial government "to inaugurate a province-wide movement under government direction."¹⁴⁸⁰ He also attended the Exhibition of Canadian Arts and Crafts in Toronto, the Women's International Exposition of Arts and Industries in New York, and visited the headquarters of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild in Montreal. In 1943 he met with craft authorities in Toronto, New York, Boston, Worcester and Montreal. A special June 4, 1943 meeting of the Interdepartmental Committee welcomed Muriel Rose, secretary of the British Council Exhibition of Modern British Crafts, from London, and Allen Eaton, director of the Department of Arts and Social Work of the Russell Sage Foundation in New York. The two were probably brought to Ottawa by the National Gallery since H.O. McCurry chaired the meeting. At the invitation of the Subcommittee on Agricultural Policy, Russell and the Interdepartmental Committee prepared a report on *Rural Handicraft Activities in Canada* in September of 1943. Russell and Bouchard presented their findings to the Subcommittee at the Chateau Laurier and

presented a motion calling for “a carefully planned and thorough national survey” which would enable the federal government “to determine the exact nature and extent of services which it may appropriately offer in relation to varied activities across the country interested in co-operating to support a national service to promote useful Canadian hand arts and crafts.”¹⁴⁸¹

However, James Gardiner, the Minister of Agriculture, appears not to have brought the Order in Council proposed by the Interdepartmental Committee before King’s Cabinet. One possible reason may have been—as the 1941 Department of Trade and Commerce survey of handicrafts, cited in Russell’s initial *Composite Report*, had already indicated—that provincial government authorities in Quebec, where the largest part of Canada’s handicraft industry was located, “do not desire any Dominion assistance at the present time.” By 1942 King’s Cabinet was also struggling over the question of conscription, which Gardiner opposed, for Canada’s total war effort. At year’s end, the Cabinet hotly debated the need for rationing butter. King recorded that Gardiner—referring to Donald Gordon, chairman of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board—“said he will have to consider whether he can stay in the government where one man can decide what is to be done and over-ride the policies of the Department of Agriculture.” J.L. Ilsley, the Minister of Finance, in turn “said his life has become intolerable with these continuous fights with Gardiner.” (For King, who was fighting tooth and nail against conscription, “It all comes down again to too large an army. They have been buying up most of the butter.”)¹⁴⁸² Gardiner may have felt that attempting to secure an Order in Council for a national handicraft programme was inappropriate at the time and would not have received sufficient Cabinet support. This failure to secure official government funding and status required a change in organizational strategy by Russell and the Interdepartmental Committee.

¹⁴⁸⁰ “Vision Important Revival of Creative Arts in Nova Scotia—Urge Government Action To Assist Handicrafts,” *Halifax Herald*, April 16, 1942.

¹⁴⁸¹ *Rural Handcraft Activities in Canada: A Correspondence Survey For Study by the Subcommittee on Agricultural Policy Prepared by the Interdepartmental Committee on Canadian Homecrafts*, Deane H. Russell, Secretary (Ottawa: s.n., September 6, 1943). “Minutes of the 14th Meeting, Subcommittee on Agricultural Policy, Chateau Laurier, September 13, 14 15, 1943.”

In February 1944, Russell prepared yet another *Review Statement Outlining the Work and Recommendations of the Provisional Interdepartmental Committee on Canadian Hand Arts and Crafts January 1942 to January 1944*. It was again “Published by Authority of The Hon. James G. Gardiner, Minister of Agriculture, Ottawa, Canada.” The same month Russell reported to Barton that the Interdepartmental Committee had determined that a government hand arts and crafts service “may best be developed under the general guidance of the National Gallery of Canada as an extension of and complement to its existing national art service.” While the program would be developed under the general guidance of the National Gallery, “special provision should be made for close co-operation with the Department of Agriculture and all rural services in order to achieve those benefits which may be particularly appreciated by our large rural population.”

The National Gallery had already demonstrated its strong interest in crafts in its 1927 *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art: Native and Modern* which featured, in addition to paintings, First Nations house poles, masks, apparel and ceremonial objects as well as rugs and pottery by Emily Carr. In the exhibition catalogue, Eric Brown called the work by West Coast tribes “one of the most valuable of Canada’s artistic productions.” H.O. McCurry informed the Interdepartmental Committee that the Gallery “may soon have before it for consideration a recommendation that the National Gallery extend the scope of its interests to include the matter of encouraging useful Canadian hand arts and crafts.” He suggested that the Deputy Minister write the chairman of the Gallery board of trustees offering the Department of Agriculture’s co-operation and the findings of the Interdepartmental Committee. Russell drafted such a letter which Barton sent to H.S. Southam in March of 1944. Southam replied that he agreed that “this is a field which merits a much larger measure of attention on the part of the Dominion Government than it has heretofore

¹⁴⁸² Diary December 18, 1942. In his memoirs, Gordon Robertson records of King’s war cabinet that Gardiner “knew that King disliked him.” See Gordon Robertson, *Memoirs of a Very Civil Servant: Mackenzie King to Pierre Trudeau* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 70-71.

received and the Trustees of the National Gallery will, I am sure, be very willing to co-operate with your Department in carrying forward the work already commenced.”¹⁴⁸³

From this point on, Deane Russell operated out of National Gallery offices, with H.O. McCurry as chairman of the Interdepartmental Committee. McCurry also testified before the Reconstruction Committee on May 12, 1944 and endorsed the recommendations Russell had presented to the Turgeon Committee and to the Subcommittee on Agricultural Policy. These were that the federal government establish a national hand art and craft service; that this service operate under the general guidance of the National Gallery in co-operation with the Department of Agriculture; that the Gallery conduct a national survey “of present activities and potential interests, needs and capacities prevailing in all sections of Canada;” that the Gallery organize a national exhibition of typical Canadian hand arts and crafts; and that an advisory council on Canadian hand arts and crafts be established. “I am now convinced that there are enormous possibilities for the enrichment of Canadian life by some such program as has been outlined for you,” McCurry informed the Reconstruction Committee, “an enrichment that will give us unity and yet diversity throughout this country.”¹⁴⁸⁴

Through his association with McCurry and the National Gallery, Deane Russell established contact with the artists and cultural nationalists lobbying the federal government for support of arts and culture in 1944. He had already met in late February with the MP for Cariboo, B.C., James Gray Turgeon, chair since 1942 of the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment, to outline the Interdepartmental Committee’s proposals for encouraging national interest in arts and crafts. Russell would appear before Turgeon’s Committee, along with Georges Bouchard and H.O. McCurry, on May 12. Writing Herman Voaden in March of 1944, he reported that he had also lobbied Turgeon about the importance of considering “the need to pay some national-scale attention to developing Canadian arts

¹⁴⁸³ Russell to Barton, February 25, 1944. Hill, 191. Barton to H.S. Southam, March 3, 1944. Southam to Barton, March 6, 1944.

¹⁴⁸⁴ Session 1944 House of Commons. Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment. *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence No. 7*. May 12, 1944, 234.

generally—literature, music, painting, sculpture, architecture, folklore, hand arts and crafts, et cetera.” Turgeon had responded favourably to Russell’s “first advance concerning Canadian arts generally.” “‘Until this year,’ he quoted Turgeon, “we have felt obliged to concentrate on economic and social planning. Perhaps the time has come when we can make a start towards planning for cultural development.” Russell reported coming away “feeling rather encouraged by the personal appreciation on the part of the Chairman of the House of Commons Committee” and encouraged Voaden to have arts groups appear before the Turgeon Committee “to make a formal presentation of the combined proposals through a delegation carefully chosen to represent the main interests involved.”¹⁴⁸⁵

In an even more important passage of his communication that would help to convince artists that the Turgeon Committee was *the* forum for lobbying the Mackenzie King government, Russell informed Voaden off the record that “It is a coincidence that I have myself, at practically the same moment, endeavoured to get our highest government authorities at least thinking in terms of the need to pay more attention to Canadian cultural development on a national scale.” He enclosed

a copy of some extracts from my memorandum which I had put before the Prime Minister and discussed with him early this year. You may be interested in learning that the Prime Minister agreed a start could be made by acquainting the House of Commons Committee on Reconstruction with the views of authorities in our several major cultural fields. That is, I believe the Prime Minister would have no objection if some organized effort were made to convince such a Committee of the importance of developing national interest in Canadian cultural fields.¹⁴⁸⁶

In his January 10, 1944 “Extracts from memorandum to the Prime Minister re Canadian cultural development,” Russell suggested “it is becoming increasingly evident, and a matter of considerable concern to many across Canada that, so far, the officially recognized agencies responsible for post-war planning in Canada have devoted their efforts solely towards planning for economic development, including such matters as: domestic economic and social

¹⁴⁸⁵ Russell to Voaden, March 16, 1944. Herman Voaden fonds, York University Archives and Special Collections, call no. 1982-019/004 (15).

¹⁴⁸⁶ *Idem*.

policies, international trade, national and international defence, internal and external affairs, complex financial schemes, and so on—all subjects which, while vitally important and necessary, tend to become too involved for the average person to comprehend.” Russell pointed out that with the exception of a reference in the recommendations of the Sub-Committee on Agricultural Policy to which he and Georges Bouchard had made a presentation, “no evidence on the part of agencies commissioned by the Government to study post-war policies has been offered to suggest that any attention has been paid to planning for Canadian cultural development.” His memorandum stated that “It is felt by many that the purely material effects of economic policies alone will not for long satisfy a whole nation, nor any worth while part of it. Something, perhaps less material and more spiritual in nature, but nonetheless nationally significant and important, will be needed to offer emotional stability during periods of national readjustment and development.” Russell suggested to King that “there are many reasons why a comprehensive plan for national cultural development may advantageously be offered to coincide with and complement plans for progressive Canadian economic and social development. If it is not too late, I would like to propose that even a single sentence, included in the Speech from the Throne, would pave the way for assuming greater interest in this field by the Government.”¹⁴⁸⁷

In his letter to Voaden, Russell referred to his own arts organizing and lobbying within government and the “difficulties in approaching some of our officials who have little or no personal interest or experience in this field, but who, nevertheless, seem to have the final word as to what can or cannot be done.” Russell’s reference is probably to Ministers and Deputy Ministers in various government departments rather than to Mackenzie King himself. King had admired the “habitant” furnishings in Tait McKenzie’s summer home and studio in Almonte, Ontario, and had a wrought iron fender for his fireplace at his Kingsmere cottage made by hand

¹⁴⁸⁷ January 10, 1944 “Extracts from memorandum to the Prime Minister re Canadian cultural development: (For personal information only).” Herman Voaden fonds, York University Archives and Special Collections, call no. 1982-019/004 (15).

by a blacksmith from Chelsea, “a fine old character, a survival of a by-gone era of handicrafts & the village blacksmith. I shall be glad to have a specimen of his work in my house.”¹⁴⁸⁸

Yet when King had Deane Russell come to Laurier House on April 1, 1946 it was not to talk about handicrafts, the arts or cultural policy with his purported stenographer to whom on occasion he dictated his diary. Over a five-year period, Russell had won the support of the Assistant Deputy and Deputy Minister of Agriculture and the director of the National Gallery, had liaised with many other government department and officials, and had testified before the Subcommittee of Agricultural Policy and the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment. At the conclusion of the presentation to the Reconstruction Committee, the CCF MP for Yorkton, Saskatchewan, George Hugh Castleden, ventured that “I think this presentation will have the endorsement of this committee in all its recommendations... In here we have the natural expression of the people of Canada... I do not think there is a dissenting voice in regard to endorsing this presentation.” Gray Turgeon also thanked McCurry, Dr. Bouchard and Russell for “the manner in which you have made your various submissions to us. I feel certain it is our intention to explore further the field which has been opened up for us today.”¹⁴⁸⁹

Yet Russell—despite all his enthusiasm for arts and crafts and exceptional organizing volunteer work as secretary of the Interdepartmental Committee—had no social and cultural capital, government position or status in King’s eyes which would have let the Prime Minister discuss cultural matters with him, much less entertain the inclusion of even a “single sentence” in a Speech from the Throne. “It was really fantastic to listen to him for over half an hour telling all that he had done on arts and crafts work when he should have been working on external affairs and Prime Minister’s office work,” he recorded.

¹⁴⁸⁸ Diary June 24, 1933 and August 26, 1931. On October 22, 1929, King had “called in at Beverley McLaughlin’s to see some worked rugs (French-Canadian work). Should become an important industry.”

¹⁴⁸⁹ Session 1944 House of Commons. Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment. *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence No. 7*. May 12, 1944, 229, 235.

Hardly a department of the government that he had not in some way inveigled into his general scheme which aims at creating a separate branch. What was amusing was his complete lack of any consciousness that he had been doing what was entirely wrong as far as his employment was concerned, or anything out of the way...He admitted quite frankly he had done really nothing on External Affairs work and that his whole heart was on this other business...he has known he has been doing what was not right in following up a personal inclination instead of an official duty...What amazed me however was to see that he had been able to get the Department of Agriculture to publish some report by himself out of appropriations from that department. He has also tried to get the Art Gallery and others similarly interested, using his position with me to get other Ministers and officials of the government to further his ends.

King concluded his outburst by adding that “If I did not have sympathy for the lad I would have him dismissed from the service at once.”¹⁴⁹⁰ There are no further references to Russell in his diary after this date, suggesting that he had, in fact, removed him from his entourage.

Who Decides Whether Artists Get a Seat at the Table?

Deane Russell’s reference to the inequality of power between individuals such as himself with a “keen interest” in the arts and government officials with no interest “but who, nevertheless, seem to have the final word as to what can or cannot be done,” raises the question of who decides whether—and what—artists get a seat at the table. King had precisely such a dream “Vision of Triumph and of Power” in 1934 in which he saw himself “dressed in full uniform and mounted on a horse” in front of a large public building, the seat of government. What he saw and felt was that “I was the leader of the people—a general in uniform—a civil not a military uniform, that all were rejoicing and happy; there was great peace and gladness, no sense of pride of position or of power for the love of power.” He was to have a painting made and inside the building “the artist, who was Jack Russell, looking young & clean cut, said he would like to sit beside me at the banquet into which I was to go.” King “wanted to have him there but I had to tell him, or let others point out, that there was a table of precedence and that my place was at the head table and

¹⁴⁹⁰ Diary April 1, 1946.

seemingly at its very centre.” King recalled being able to speak of this to Jack Russell “without hurting his feelings and he fully understanding; all seemed to be perfect harmony.”¹⁴⁹¹

King’s dream vision of triumph and power suggests that he saw himself—despite his professed admiration for artists—as the sole cultural and political authority at the decision-making table, that he believed artists accepted the supremacy of his cultural authority, and that he thought he was beloved by Canadians for his leadership. This unshakeable certainty about his own abilities and leadership can also be seen in his plans for Canada’s reconstruction, already begun at the very beginning of World War II. Order in Council P.C. 4068½, dated December 8, 1939, provided for the establishment of a special cabinet committee to investigate demobilization and the rehabilitation of members of the armed forces after the conclusion of the war. Order in Council P.C. 5421, dated October 8, 1940, established a General Advisory Committee from several government departments “to consider various matters relating to demobilization and rehabilitation.” Order in Council P.C. 1218, dated February 17, 1941, enlarged the scope of the Advisory Committee to include all phases of reconstruction. But while Canadian artists were anticipating and lobbying for a cultural renaissance for the new society they believed would emerge after the Second World War, King’s plans for a post-war national reconstruction were strictly limited to the economic and social challenges as Canada transitioned from a war to peace. The James Committee on Reconstruction, named after its chairman, Dr. Frank Cyril James, head

¹⁴⁹¹ Diary August 30, 1934. King had secured a portrait of Laurier by Russell for Laurier House in 1923 and was sketched by the artist for Newton MacTavish’s *Canadian Magazine* the following year. See diary entries for March 8, 1923 and March 19 and 20, 1924. In his diary of November 6, 1905, King recorded his unsuccessful attempt to convince Prime Minister Laurier to have his portrait painted by J.W.L. Forster. In 1932, while he was painting King’s portrait, Forster informed King that “Sir Wilfrid had become obsessed with Russell & that Larkin had also, that Larkin had returned to him his portrait of Sir Wilfrid from the Ontario Club & put in instead one by Russell.” King concluded that “Larkin would be governed by Sir Wilfrid’s feelings, of that I feel sure & Russell I am afraid prejudiced Laurier against Forster. The French temperament of Sir Wilfrid gave a certain response to much of Russell’s ways & sayings whilst his loyalty to his political friends, like Russell’s father, would win for Russell a place in Sir Wilfrid’s heart.”

of the commerce department and principal of McGill University, was established on an informal basis in May of 1941 and given formal character by Order in Council on September 2, 1941.¹⁴⁹²

James anticipated that at conclusion of hostilities, Canada's immediate economic and social challenges would be demobilizing the armies, economic decontrol, meeting increased demand for civilian goods, rehabilitating industry and agriculture to peace time, ensuring normal peace time employment, establishing a possible planned program of public works—if necessary to avoid a depression—and the restoration of normal international economic relations.¹⁴⁹³ An Order in Council in January of 1943 stipulated that the James Committee on Reconstruction would report directly to King instead of to the Minister of Pensions and National Health, Ian A. Mackenzie.¹⁴⁹⁴ James's small committee of experts enabled King to by-pass the public hearings and recommendations of the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment. After the presentation of its final report on September 24, 1943, the work of the James Committee was taken over by an advisory committee on economic policy, composed of senior officials under the chairmanship of W.C. Clark, the Deputy Minister of Finance, appointed on January 23, 1943. The House of Commons established its Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment on March 24, 1942 and reappointed it in 1943 and 1944. The Special Committee in turn recommended that the government establish a Department of Reconstruction, authorized by law on June 30, 1944 with C.D. Howe as Minister. Order in Council 7933, approved by the Governor General on October 13, 1944, established the Cabinet

¹⁴⁹² Ian A. Mackenzie, Minister of Pensions and National Health, to King, May 23, 1941.

Mackenzie King, "His Excellency The Governor General In Council," May 1941. LAC reel C4865, pages 261837-41. *Canadian House of Commons Debates*, June 20, 1944, p. 3984-85.

¹⁴⁹³ Frank Cyril James, May 24, 1941 memorandum "Committee on Reconstruction." LAC reel C4865, pages 261852-62.

¹⁴⁹⁴ James to King, January 5, 1943. A.D.P. Heeney, January 11, 1943 "Memorandum For The Prime Minister," LAC reel C7038, page 294242-43. Heeney began working for King as his principal secretary in 1938 and became secretary of the cabinet in 1940. In his memoir, he observed that "In the establishment of the cabinet secretariat, as in other organizational changes effected during his administration, Mackenzie King's primary, if unacknowledged, purpose was to enhance his authority as prime minister by strengthening the means of its exercise." See Arnold Heeney, *The Things That Are Caesar's: Memoirs of a Canadian Public Servant* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 74.

Committee on Reconstruction, chaired by C.D. Howe. King designated the Minister of Finance, J.L. Ilsley, the Minister of Justice, Louis St. Laurent, and the Minister of Trade and Commerce, James A. MacKinnon, as members of the committee the following day.¹⁴⁹⁵

Perhaps misled by King's much repeated pronouncement that "Parliament will decide," the artists and cultural nationalists who presented their artists' *Brief* to the Turgeon Committee were under the impression that they were dialoguing with the King government. After their very positive reception by the Parliamentarians, they believed the Committee would make concrete recommendations to the government in support of arts and culture. They did not seem to be aware of the significant power shift from Parliament to King and his Cabinet and that King had already firmly defined the scope and meaning of reconstruction years before he rose in the House and moved the second reading of Bill 82 to establish a Department of Reconstruction on June 20, 1944, the day before the artists presented their *Brief* to the Turgeon Committee. "The problem of reconstruction will involve the reemployment of nearly two million Canadians now in the armed forces, the merchant navy or war industry," King informed the House. "The great industrial plant created for war purposes must be transformed to meet peace time demands in Canada or abroad. Markets must be found and retained for our greatly increased food production unless we are not to face an agricultural depression." Other needs King cited to provide for full employment, raise living standards and avoid the "appalling depression" of 1919 and 1920 after World War I included investments in railways, highways, civilian aviation, new housing and public works.¹⁴⁹⁶

Neither King nor Gray Turgeon perceived the arts and culture as part of post-war reconstruction. Playwright John Coulter, on the December 12, 1944 CBC radio Citizen's Forum "Can Canada Support the Arts?" would assert that the state "*must find a sequel to war as exciting as war.*" "What in peace can be as exciting as war? I say—the making of a new country," Coulter stated. "That, surely, can be a great creative excitement, and the vision to create this new country can be

¹⁴⁹⁵ King to A.D.P. Heeney, Clerk of the Privy Council, October 14, 1944. LAC reel C7051, page 312870.

¹⁴⁹⁶ *Canadian House of Commons Debates*, June 20, 1944, p. 3981.

generated through the arts.”¹⁴⁹⁷ Gray Turgeon, too, believed that “When the war is over some other definite aim must take its place as a motivating cause of national economic activity.” But for Turgeon that aim would be supplied by the thoughts of those who returned from the field of battle and by the dependents of those who died, “and of what they fought and died for, will supply the aim.” Referring to his Reconstruction Committee, he affirmed that “Your committee is certain that the means of doing so will be found in the conservation and proper utilization of our natural resources, and in the decision that markets will be sought for our production by governmental intervention where necessary from time to time.”¹⁴⁹⁸

Paradoxically, arts and culture were also not mentioned by the CCF or MP Dorise Nielsen. Only Walter Frederick Kuhl, a school teacher and MP for Jasper-Edson, Alberta, who had been elected as a Social Credit candidate in 1935—and would be again in 1945—but was elected as a New Democracy candidate in 1940, raised the subject. Like Georges Bouchard, Kuhl anticipated a post-war “leisure state” in which Canadians, freed from slave-like labour through mechanization, would have “their first opportunity to reach the highest possible state of civilization which any nation can attain.” “They will built cathedrals, compose music, write books, paint pictures, join in acting plays, carry out scientific research, cultivate their gardens, explore jungles, invent a new type of aeroplane, learn to fly, weave rugs, and learn languages. Every human being brought up in conditions of freedom and taught to use his mind and body has something to contribute to the common culture, to be handed on to future generations.”¹⁴⁹⁹ No other MPs commented on Kuhl’s vision of arts and culture in a post-war society. When Gray Turgeon submitted the second and final report of the Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment to the House on July 29, 1944—five weeks after the presentation of the artists’ *Brief* to his Committee—it made no mention of arts and culture but once again called on the government to act to improve

¹⁴⁹⁷ “*Of Things to Come: Can Canada Support the Arts?*” *Canadian Review of Music and Other Arts* 3:11-12 (December-January 1945), 17, 18.

¹⁴⁹⁸ *Canadian House of Commons Debates*, June 20, 1944, p. 3994.

¹⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4000-01.

deficient housing and eliminate “repulsive, unhealthy slum conditions in many of our cities, many of our towns and villages, and many of our rural farming areas.”¹⁵⁰⁰

The artists hoping that the Reconstruction Committee would recommend a major government intervention on behalf of arts and culture were also not aware of the low opinion the Prime Minister held of Turgeon. On June 21, 1943, exactly a year before the sixteen national arts organizations testified before the Committee, King reviewed a draft of the first Reconstruction Committee report Gray Turgeon had prepared for tabling in the House on June 23. King recorded that “It was badly in need of revisions as its recommendations were altogether too extravagant and positive. ‘Phoned suggestions to him but took no responsibility for the draft report in any way.’” Two weeks later, King “felt a little disgusted and annoyed” when the MP for Cariboo threatened to leave Parliament because he had not been made a Parliamentary Secretary and “there was nothing for him to do.” The Prime Minister “thought it was all nonsense... We would talk about it some other day when his ‘Liberal’ was in better shape.” When Turgeon came to see King in September “to press for some cabinet or lesser position,” he recorded that “Gray does not recognize he has not the ability required for a cabinet Minister, though fine qualities of loyalty.” In November Turgeon alerted King of a possible motion by John Ritchie MacNicol, the National Government MP for Davenport, Ontario, that the Reconstruction and Re-establishment Committee disband “on the alleged ground that the Government is paying no attention to our recommendations.” Turgeon added, “There is a fear in the minds of some of our members that the Government is giving more attention to Committees which report to the Cabinet then [sic] to our House of Commons Committee.” King in turn had confided in his diary, “I need a Minister beside me who can follow up the things that I suggest and see that they are done.”¹⁵⁰¹

¹⁵⁰⁰ Session 1944 House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment No. 15. *Second Report* Presented Saturday, July 29, 1944. (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1944), 479.

¹⁵⁰¹ Diary June 21, July 7, September 7, 1943. Turgeon to King, November 22, 1943. LAC reel C7046, page 306202. Diary September 28, 1944. After his defeat in the 1945 election, King rewarded Turgeon for his Party loyalty by appointing him to the Senate in 1947 where he sat until his death in 1964.

When King introduced legislation to establish a government Ministry of Reconstruction in June of 1944, the work of the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment became redundant. The House gave third reading of the Bill and sent it to the Senate five days after the presentation of the artists' *Brief*. The Turgeon Committee never issued recommendations regarding government support for arts and culture to the government and Gray Turgeon was never considered for the Reconstruction Ministry.¹⁵⁰² King appointed C.D. Howe—the previous Minister of Transport and Minister of Munitions and Supply—as Minister of Reconstruction in October of 1944 and of the reconstituted Ministry of Reconstruction and Supply in January of 1946. Howe had little interest in arts and culture.¹⁵⁰³

There was no question in King's mind as to who exercised ultimate political and cultural authority in government when he prepared the Speech from the Throne outlining the government's forthcoming new social legislation for submission to Parliament in January of 1944. "I shall have been responsible for the creation of three new Departments of government of Canada. The Veterans' Affairs; Reconstruction and Social Welfare," he recorded in his diary.

¹⁵⁰² Bernard Ostry, George Woodcock and Paul Litt incorrectly reported that the Turgeon Committee recommended to the King government that it establish either a department of cultural affairs or a non-political arts board. Ostry went so far as to suggest that "The recommendations of the Turgeon Committee became the seed of the Royal Commission on the Arts, Letters and Sciences, chaired by Vincent Massey, which was appointed on April 8, 1949." See Bernard Ostry, *The Cultural Connection: An Essay on Culture and Government Policy in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), 55, 56 and George Woodcock, *Strange Bedfellows: The State and the Arts in Canada* (Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1985), 43-44. In *The Muses, the Masses and the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), Paul Litt asserted that "The Turgeon committee was impressed with the artists' arguments and passed on their proposals to the government of Mackenzie King, suggesting that it consider establishing either an agency to administer aid to artists or a ministry for cultural affairs." (23)

¹⁵⁰³ As Minister of Marine in 1935, he had been involved in the reorganization of broadcasting but subsequently brought the Board of Governors of the CBC, established by the Broadcasting Act of 1936, to the point of resignation through his autocratic directives. See E. Austin Weir, *The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965), 203, 208-13, 217-18. Paul Litt refers to Howe's opposition to the Massey Report, citing Georges-Henri Lévesque, one of the Commissioners. Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent disclosed to Lévesque, a personal friend, that there was opposition within his cabinet to implementing the

Reviewing his four decades in government he added, “I was responsible for the Department of Labour and have had very great responsibility with respect to the Dept. of External Affairs. I was also responsible for the Dept. of Munitions and Supply and the Dept. of War Services, and the Dept. of Naval Affairs and the Air Dept.” This constituted, King noted with satisfaction in his diary, “a pretty good record in itself.”¹⁵⁰⁴

Two days after the sixteen national arts organizations presented their joint artists’ *Brief* to the Turgeon Committee, he perceived the creation of the three new government departments as “fulfilling the efforts that a century ago reformers were seeking to bring about by achieving political and economic freedom.” On Dominion Day a week later, he looked forward to the federal election the following year. “I continue to feel more and more that I must meet the people of Canada face to face in a campaign that will take me from coast to coast. That has grown more strongly and all seems to be leading to a great campaign of social reform, which I shall be able to carry to completion in part at least the great purpose that my grandfather had in his life.”¹⁵⁰⁵

Prophet and Priest: Vincent Massey and Mackenzie King

In his correspondence with Herman Voaden describing his lobbying of government officials, Deane Russell advised that what the sixteen national arts organizations badly needed was a permanent lobbyist in Ottawa. “Little may be expected by long-range contacts (correspondence)” he suggested, while “perhaps a good deal might result if someone could be found here in Ottawa who would undertake to become keenly concerned with following up the interests of the various groups suggested in your letter to me.”¹⁵⁰⁶ Walter Herbert of the Canada Foundation had liaised with Members of Parliament on behalf of arts groups but he had counseled against their strategy of demanding a separate Ministry of Culture or national arts board instead of aligning themselves

recommendations of the Massey Report. “Particulièrement, le ministre C.D. Howe n’est guère intéressé à consacrer des fonds à la promotion de nos valeurs culturelles.” (240)

¹⁵⁰⁴ Diary January 23, 1944.

¹⁵⁰⁵ Diary June 23 and July 1, 1944.

with an existing Department such as Secretary of State. But like Russell, Herbert too lacked sufficient political, cultural and social capital and status to function as an influential arts advocate. The one person who could exert such influence was Vincent Massey though he had a very difficult relationship with Mackenzie King. Michael Bliss, a great King supporter, asserted that “As leader of the Liberal Party for twenty-nine years, King almost never deliberately made an enemy (except possibly Vincent Massey, one of the most egotistic and unlovable of all Liberals; King despised Massey’s British arse-kissing and airs and let him know it, but did make him a Cabinet minister, minister to Washington, and High Commissioner in London).”¹⁵⁰⁷

King and Massey were rivals in the political and cultural fields and also competed for social capital. Gordon Robertson, who became secretary of the Prime Minister’s Office in the East Block in August of 1945, thought Bruce Hutchison “had it right” when he referred to “King’s ‘ceaseless itch for power, an egotism unique and ruthless because he conceived himself as God’s chosen instrument.”¹⁵⁰⁸ In his diaries Charles Ritchie, who joined the staff of Canada House in London in 1938, in turn characterized the millionaire Vincent Massey as being “full of *prévenances* for the feelings of others if he happens to like them. If not, he is ruthless. Sometimes I have been stifled by the too strong atmosphere of the Massey’s love of power.”¹⁵⁰⁹ When King before his retirement contemplated naming a Canadian as Governor General and Gordon Robertson suggested Vincent Massey, “His reaction was immediate. ‘Robertson, I will not have this country run by Alice Massey!’”¹⁵¹⁰

¹⁵⁰⁶ Russell to Voaden, March 16, 1944. Herman Voaden fonds, York University Archives and Special Collections, call no. 1982-019/004 (15).

¹⁵⁰⁷ Michael Bliss, *Right Honourable Men: The Descent of Canadian Politics from Macdonald to Chrétien* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2004), 139.

¹⁵⁰⁸ Bruce Hutchison, *Mr. Prime Minister, 1867-1964* (Don Mills, Ontario: Longmans, 1964), 203. Cited in Gordon Robertson, *Memoirs of a Very Civil Servant: Mackenzie King to Pierre Trudeau* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 53.

¹⁵⁰⁹ Charles Ritchie, *Siren Years: A Canadian Diplomat Abroad, 1937-1945* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1974), 137-38. Cited in Roy MacLaren, *Commissions High: Canada in London, 1870-1971* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006), 315.

¹⁵¹⁰ Robertson, 62.

Vincent Massey was the only Canadian who threatened Mackenzie King's cultural authority. He displayed the characteristics of subversive "prophets" in Pierre Bourdieu's paradigm of social change within both the political and cultural fields. Like the artists and cultural nationalists discussed in chapter VII, he accumulated social and cultural capital through his writings and public lectures (dozens of them published), founding cultural organizations such as Hart House Theatre and the Dominion Drama Festival through funding from the Massey Estate and Massey Foundation, serving as President of the Arts and Letters Club (1920-22), as a member of the board of trustees of the National Gallery of Canada, the National and Tate Gallery in London and as chancellor of the University of Toronto. He enjoyed a close friendship with artists such as Lawren Harris, A. Y. Jackson, Lilius Torrance Newton and David Milne, organized exhibitions and extensively purchasing works of art directly from artists. Fred Varley painted portraits of Massey and his father for Hart House and of Alice Massey and her father, Sir George Parkin. For Karen A. Finlay in *The Force of Culture: Vincent Massey and Canadian Sovereignty*, "His association with the Group of Seven, especially Lawren Harris, was instrumental in persuading him of the national and spiritual vocation of art."¹⁵¹¹

Like the "prophet" artists and cultural nationalists, Massey further competed among the public "laity" for followers and consumers of his symbolic goods through publications such as the two-volume *Canadian Plays from Hart House Theatre* (1926-27), *On Being Canadian* (1948), the seminal *Report of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences* (1951), and *What's Past Is Prologue: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Vincent*

¹⁵¹¹ Karen A. Finlay, *The Force of Culture: Vincent Massey and Canadian Sovereignty* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 115. For Massey's friendship with Canadian artists, see 7, 118-21, 130-44, 128. Mackenzie King spent a week at the Massey's four hundred acre Batterwood estate near Port Hope, Ontario, in August of 1934 while Lilius Torrance Newton was painting a second portrait of Vincent Massey. He enjoyed listening to the Hart House String Quartet, read some of Wilfred Campbell's poems, and recorded that Newton "had done a very modern nude, of a woman, which was not exhibited in Toronto, refused a place." The Massey's had purchased the Montreal artist's controversial painting of a female nude wearing green slippers. King added in his diary that "In appearance she was fair & rather stout with blue eyes. I saw but little of her & had only a short conversation but felt somewhat attracted by her." Diary August 4, 5 and 11, 1934. Finlay, 134.

Massey (1963). His biographers have noted another characteristic he shared with the “prophets” discussed in previous chapters. According to Finlay, “Massey was direct heir to a debate about culture that gained momentum in late nineteenth-century Canada. It crystallized into a campaign led by Protestant theologians and educators—with Massey perhaps the most influential—to catapult the notion of culture into a front-ranking position.”¹⁵¹² Claude Bissell similarly concluded in *The Imperial Canadian: Vincent Massey in Office* that “More than any other Canadian, he was responsible for the first major movement of the arts and letters from the periphery of national concern towards the centre.”¹⁵¹³

Perhaps inevitably, Massey’s preponderant cultural capital eventually brought him into conflict with Mackenzie King. In his study of Canadian High Commissioners to Great Britain, Roy MacLaren cited “the oft-repeated observation ascribed to Lord Salisbury that Massey ‘always makes one feel like a bloody savage’ and that King ‘could savour his disdain for him as salve to his own covert and longstanding feeling of inferiority.’”¹⁵¹⁴ In stark contrast to the financially strapped John King family, the immensely wealthy Masseys—owners of the internationally successful Massey-Harris farm machinery manufacturing empire—were esteemed for their philanthropy. In the cultural sphere alone, the family patriarch Hart Massey donated Massey Music Hall in Toronto in 1894. Chester Massey, Vincent’s father, was one of the founders of the Art Museum of Toronto (later the Art Gallery of Toronto) in 1900. When the Hart Massey Estate was reconstituted as the Massey Foundation in 1919, its assets were roughly \$3 million [\$39 million in 2014 dollars].¹⁵¹⁵ Vincent Massey, administrator of the Massey Foundation, provided Hart House—King thought it a “splendid institution”—and Hart House Theatre at the University of Toronto in 1919 and subsidized the Hart House String Quartet 1923-46. Massey purchased his

¹⁵¹² Finlay, 15.

¹⁵¹³ Claude Bissell, *The Imperial Canadian: Vincent Massey in Office* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), x.

¹⁵¹⁴ MacLaren, 315, 395. King recorded in his November 30, 1928 diary after inviting the Masseys to tea that “there is always a certain formal social side to both ‘Vincent & Alice’ which I find it difficult to encounter. One feels that everything said is being recorded & that phrases are studied etc.”

¹⁵¹⁵ Finlay, 34.

first paintings in England in 1910, his first Tom Thomson sketches in 1918, and according to his biographer Claude Bissell, assembled in the 1920s the finest private collection of Group of Seven and other contemporary Canadian paintings at his Batterwood estate. He was president of the Massey Harris Company from 1921 to 1925 when King, while addressing students at Hart House Theatre, announced he was making Massey a trustee of the National Gallery and subsequently appointed him minister without portfolio.¹⁵¹⁶

When Massey was defeated running for Parliament in the 1925 election, King appointed him minister to the United States the following year. Three days after the election, he had written in his diary that “Massey & his wife are indignant over Tory methods, the lowness of the campaign, the cynicism of it all. It is a blessing to me to have someone who shares the spiritual side of public endeavour. Massey will be a great help, a tower of strength, of that I am sure. Our aims & ideals are the same.”¹⁵¹⁷ David Jay Bercuson, Brooke Claxton’s biographer, perceived Massey in the late 1920s quite differently. “He craved King’s job and cultivated an image as a Liberal reformer after the party was forced into opposition in 1930.”¹⁵¹⁸ After R.B. Bennett became Prime Minister, King appointed Massey President of the National Liberal Federation in 1932 and High Commissioner to Great Britain in 1935, a post he held until 1946. He had suggested to Massey that heading the National Liberal Federation “was a chance to launch a great political educational movement which would go on in Canada for generations, raising the political life of the country” and that the NLF “was an instrument of political power; between us we could

¹⁵¹⁶ Diary January 12, 1925. Claude Bissell, *The Young Vincent Massey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 69, 154-55, 180-83, 91. Massey also became president of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and chairman of the Dominion Drama Festival in 1932. The Massey Foundation provided an initial grant of \$2,500 [\$42,500 in 2014 dollars] for the first DDF competition in 1933 and smaller amounts in subsequent years. See Finlay, 157.

¹⁵¹⁷ Diary November 1, 1925. Two weeks later King expressed surprise when Joseph Atkinson, owner of the *Toronto Star*, informed him that “he did not think Vincent Massey equal to job of Cabinet Minister” and that “he is too aloof, not in touch with people.” King told Atkinson “of my promise to make him Minister of Trade & Commerce.” Diary November 14, 1925.

¹⁵¹⁸ Bercuson, 72.

determine the appointments of the future etc. on right lines.” He concluded that “No man ever had such a chance as Vincent has, if he would only seize it with his might.”¹⁵¹⁹

Yet these political postings also created conflict with Mackenzie King who jealously guarded his political authority. In order to restore Liberal fortunes, Massey attempted to steer the Liberal Party towards more progressive positions, suggested possible co-operation with the CCF, and tried to revitalize the party through a “New Liberalism” and the Liberal Summer Conference in Port Hope in 1933. According to Claude Bissell, “King’s attitude towards Massey changed dramatically. Massey became a noxious rival who had to be ruthlessly suppressed, removed from the high position that had been assigned him as co-imperator of the Liberal empire and reduced to the status of a dependent bureaucrat.”¹⁵²⁰ During Massey’s posting in London as Canadian High Commissioner, King resented Massey’s socializing with politicians, newspaper editors, cultural figures, aristocrats and royalty and decreed that “any important communication between British Government and Canadian Government should be directed in form of communication from Prime Minister to Prime Minister...and should not be through the High Commissioner.”¹⁵²¹

Claude Bissell, in *The Imperial Canadian*, also documented how King took care to deny Massey a platform at international meetings. “In the early years of Massey’s London appointment King had taken his most malevolent view of Massey. He saw him as a corrupt force threatening the moral universe of which he, King, was the centre, and of which his rebel grandfather, his grandmother, his parents, and the great Liberal saints, Gladstone and Laurier, were the guardians.” Bissell suggested that for Mackenzie King, “Massey represented everything that was antithetic to this world: inherited wealth, an effete aestheticism, a burning zeal for self-advancement, and a servile attitude towards the English upper classes.” The Prime Minister had a heated confrontation with Massey in London after King attended the 1937 Imperial Conference.

¹⁵¹⁹ Diary May 29, 1932.

¹⁵²⁰ Bissell, 216-17. Roy MacLaren agreed that King “never fully trusted Massey, resenting his interest in public policy which he regarded as his own preserve...He determined that there should be no more policy conferences.” (310)

¹⁵²¹ MacLaren, 362, 316-17.

Massey asked if he could accompany the Prime Minister on his peace mission to see Hitler in Berlin since he had also been invited by von Ribbentrop, then the German ambassador to Britain. He also again requested that he be given more of a diplomatic role in dealing with the British government. In his diary, Mackenzie King recorded that he “went for him very strongly and...said I was getting disgusted with people who kept talking of service and serving, etc. who were really thinking about positions, titles etc....I told him he was considering only himself.” Massey also gave an account of their confrontation in his own diary, describing “the unpleasant—almost sinister—expression which was created.” “It was almost as if he was possessed by something evil...He seemed to have, if not a ‘persecution complex’ at least a conviction of neglect—lack of appreciation. I am certain that there is a pathological interpretation of this appalling mood.”¹⁵²²

This rivalry over political and social capital between King and Massey was exacerbated by their very different aesthetic tastes and codes. King had invited Massey to become a trustee of the National Gallery in January of 1925 not because he admired his taste in paintings but as a means of enticing the millionaire industrialist to become a candidate for the Liberal Party.¹⁵²³ He discussed “further Art matters & possible buildings” with Vincent Massey and Eric Brown in 1926 but then had a falling out with Brown over his handling of the Lord Dillon donation of the Charles I portrait as examined in chapter VI. In 1929 Massey received a proposal while serving as Canadian minister to the United States in Washington from the president of the Carnegie Corporation, F.P. Keppel, offering to cover the costs of touring a representative National Gallery collection of Canadian paintings in the US under the auspices of the American Federation of the Arts. King vetoed the National Gallery’s involvement on political grounds because of the potentially controversial question of “the selection of the paintings to be exhibited.” “Personally, I should rather see no exhibition at all,” he wrote Massey, “than one which would favour a few

¹⁵²² Bissell, *The Imperial Canadian: Vincent Massey in Office*, 119. King diary June 17, 1937. King also recorded that he had begun the day by taking the crystal ball he had bought in London “to show it to some friends at the Institute of Psychological Research” and “had a talk with Miss Phillimore,” the psychic medium at the Institute. He had described a similar confrontation with Massey in his diary of August 14, 1931.

Canadian artists at the expense of others, and which would seek to put forward any particular group as being distinctively Canadian.” Massey arranged to have Lawren Harris and A.Y. Jackson select “modern” paintings for the touring exhibition without the National Gallery’s involvement. Karen A. Finlay observed that King’s “efforts to prevent the sending of an exhibition of Canadian art sanctioned by the National Gallery highlights the difficult course that the gallery was obliged to tread.”¹⁵²⁴

When Vincent and Alice Massey arrived in evening dress for dinner at Laurier House in January of 1932, it already began to appear as if King and Massey did not share the same vision and enthusiasm for a new National Gallery. Their conversation included “the National Liberal Association & what the Massey Foundation may do in the way of establishing a wing of the Art Gallery, or Vincent himself, a collection of British modern paintings to be given to the Gallery.” J.W.L. Forster had just begun painting King’s 1932 portrait at Laurier House two days before the Masseys’ arrival so King “was sorry not to have shewn them more in the way of hospitality. But with Mr. Forster painting & they not very fond of him or his work, I felt I could not do more than I did.”¹⁵²⁵

King again entertained the Masseys at Laurier House two years later. “Vincent told me of their thought of using the Foundation money towards the building of an art gallery & auditorium in Ottawa—a part of City-beautiful beautification of the Capital. Vincent said he had caught my vision on that & meant to do the next big thing for Ottawa—not Montreal or Toronto.” Six

¹⁵²³ Bissell, *The Young Vincent Massey*, 181.

¹⁵²⁴ Finlay, 151. King to Massey, 4 October, 1929. Massey to King, October 10, 1929. Cited in Finlay, 150, 151. King to Southam, October 8, 1929. Southam to King, October 10, 1929. Southam to Massey, October 7, 1929. LAC reel C2314, pages 143870-73. Massey did not refer to this incident in his autobiography but related another occasion of King’s political interference in the operations of the National Gallery after Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935. “Our decision to acquire a casting of Epstein’s superb bronze statue of the Ethiopian Emperor [Haile Selassie] was vetoed on the absurd ground that its purchase would be regarded as an indication of Government policy in the Italo-Abyssinian War!” Vincent Massey, *What’s Past Is Prologue: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Vincent Massey* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1963), 91.

¹⁵²⁵ Diary March 24, 1926 and January 27, 1932.

months later Massey repeated “his intention to use the Massey Foundation Fund towards placing in Ottawa a hall to seat about 1500 which can be used for theatre & lecture purposes, also Art exhibitions & to house executives of such bodies as National Council of Women, Red Cross, Child Welfare etc.” King did not enthusiastically press Massey to act on his proposal but merely “told Vincent of my intention to give Kingsmere to the Nation as a Park, also Laurier House to some public purpose & need.” He did record spending “an hour or more signing 250 copies de luxe edition of [Norman] Rogers’ biography,” one of which he presented to Adolf Hitler two years later in Berlin. Four weeks prior to that peace mission, the Prime Minister attended a dinner at the Middle Temple in London at which the Presidents of the Royal Academy and of the Royal Society were guests. King “had an interesting talk with the former about modern art. He doesn’t like it at all; thinks that this is not the time for any new venture in art to be made. Things are too unsettled and art is likely to get off on the wrong line. I confronted Massey with him before the evening was over.”¹⁵²⁶

In another of their almost ritualistic encounters, King once more entertained Alice and Vincent Massey at Laurier House in October of 1937 and “spoke of the building which Vincent had told me the Foundation might erect in Ottawa.” But he “saw at once that he and Alice had anticipated this question and were going to decide against doing anything because of not being sure of whether there would be enough demand for the Hall. I told them I thought there would be; that I thought the Governor [Governor General Lord Tweedsmuir] and Osborne [Colonel Henry Osborne, the president of the Dominion Drama Festival] could advise them on this as well; that my own motive in mentioning the subject was to enable them to have the best site possible in the City.”

But like H.S. Southam’s proposal that the government cover the cost of a new National Gallery building if he donated his valuable art collection to the Gallery, Massey wanted to leverage a potentially substantial donation from the Massey Foundation for a matching government contribution. “Vincent then spoke of the possibility of the Government giving them a site. I told

¹⁵²⁶ Diary November 30, 1934, July 21, 1935 and June 1, 1937.

him I saw no possibility of this, and if the Foundation were to do it, they would have to do it all or not at all. I did not urge him in any way to go on with the matter. He spoke then about the Government giving a site for an Art Gallery. I told him I thought until the Supreme Court and other departmental buildings, which were most necessary, were built, we would have to continue to look for some private interest to further that particular project.”¹⁵²⁷ Massey was unsuccessful in transforming the Massey Foundation’s financial capital into greater political and cultural capital. Without identifying King as his impediment, he noted of his offer for the Massey Foundation to build and equip a concert hall if the government provided the site, “This aroused no interest, let alone enthusiasm, and the proposal died a natural death.”¹⁵²⁸ King had once again played his “priestly” role of maintaining the cultural status quo and eliminating a rival in the cultural and political field. Maria Tippett observed in *Making Culture* that “The National Gallery of Canada thus missed an opportunity of securing a building of its own at little cost to the people of Canada, and Massey lost the chance to memorialize the family name on a national scale.”¹⁵²⁹ Referring to Massey’s several attempts to contribute towards the building of a new National Gallery, Karen A. Finlay added that “Federal disinterest on this occasion approached almost perverse neglect.”¹⁵³⁰

Mackenzie King continued to denigrate Massey to the end of his life, perhaps especially so as he saw his own cultural authority become diminished. H.O. McCurry had called for Massey’s assistance in 1941 while lobbying the federal government to initiate a Canadian war artists’ programme. “Acknowledging that a federal minister of education was out of the question and that public opinion would not support a minister of fine art, he argued: ‘What we need is a Department of Public Information under a minister of vision and energy to get the war job done and afterwards to remain as a virtual Minister of Education and cultural affairs...My nomination would not be hard to guess!’”¹⁵³¹ However King’s cultural authority was still unchallenged in

¹⁵²⁷ Diary October 19, 1937.

¹⁵²⁸ Massey, 59.

¹⁵²⁹ Tippett, 124.

¹⁵³⁰ Finlay, 155.

¹⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, 177.

1946 when he met in the East Block with a British delegation negotiating what would become a loan of \$1.25 billion [\$17 billion in 2014 dollars] from the Canadian government. He noted, “We went in the little room reserved for External Affairs downstairs. I thought the arrangements were very bad. No attention paid to chairs, drinking water, tables, etc. Also room filled with horrible modernistic pictures which should be burned rather than hung on walls as samples of Canadian art. One picture supposed to represent trees in a rocky quarter. One of the British delegates thought they were representations of oil wells.”¹⁵³²

The following month Vincent Massey informed King that he was donating over seventy paintings by contemporary modern British artists to the National Gallery. He and Alice Massey had purchased the pictures through the Massey Foundation since 1938, with an annual expenditure of about \$5,000 [approximately \$75,000 annually in 2014 dollars]. Only six of the artists in this “Massey Collection of Contemporary British Painting” were represented in the National Gallery. According to Karen A. Finlay, “the Massey’s clearly envisioned the gift as an act of cultural propagandizing ... an effort to use art to promote closer relations between the two countries, to evoke a common set of values, and, less directly, to affirm the project of nationalism.”¹⁵³³ Paul Litt, in *The Muses, the Masses and the Massey Commission*, reported that at practically the same time, in April of 1946, Brooke Claxton, then Minister of National Health and Welfare, “urged Prime Minister Mackenzie King to consolidate the administration of the government’s cultural institutions and to put Vincent Massey in charge of them upon his return from his post as high commissioner in London.”¹⁵³⁴

The same month, King had “a curious vision just before waking” in which he was in a room with Vincent Massey who ignored his presence as he dictated to one of King’s staff. King resented his

¹⁵³² Diary February 11, 1946.

¹⁵³³ Finlay, 187. The Massey’s collection was exhibited for the reopening of the Tate Gallery before they returned to Canada in April of 1946. The board of trustees of the National Gallery officially accepted the seventy-five paintings of what came to be known the Massey Collection of English Painting, the largest donation to the Gallery to date, in October of 1946. With Massey Foundation funding, the Gallery toured the Collection widely within Canada. See Finlay, 182-89.

¹⁵³⁴ Litt, 11.

attitude and interpreted his animosity towards the Massey's as having been revived "by his undertaking to make to the Art Gallery of Canada a gift which involves the housing and exhibiting of pictures he has collected without even regarding their acceptance by the trustees of the Gallery as a necessary preliminary." He could not help thinking that the Massey Foundation, with Vincent and Alice as trustees, had accumulated its tax exempt capital off Canadian farmers and that the Massey's had used the Foundation's funds "for their own personal pride and pleasure in London, making themselves popular with a certain group of artists and friends." King was sure this donation would assist the Massey's by "gaining freedom from taxation both in the way of customs dues and also purchase of the pictures themselves. It is a curious kind of self glorification and winning of public favour at the expense of the public itself." He added, "This may seem harsh criticism but it is nevertheless true."¹⁵³⁵ Violet Markham, also a friend of the Masseys, recalled of King in her *Friendship's Harvest* that it was "modern art which aroused in him a passion of resentment, not to say anger... He could not endure modern painting, which Vincent Massey's famous collection had forced on his notice. 'You cannot possibly like those dreadful pictures Alice and Vincent buy,' he would say to me indignantly."¹⁵³⁶ This was probably also the subject of conversation at a welcoming dinner for the new Governor General, Lord Alexander, and Lady Alexander hosted by King at Laurier House. Guests include Louis St. Laurent (Minister of Justice and Attorney General), C.D. Howe (Minister of Munitions and Supply and Minister of Reconstruction), Douglas Abbott (Minister of National Defence and Minister of National Defence for Naval Service) and their wives. King recorded that "After the

¹⁵³⁵ Diary April 20, 1946.

¹⁵³⁶ Violet Markham, *Friendship's Harvest* (London: Max Reinhardt, 1956), 163, 164. Markham attempted to convince King that "'We are living through the greatest of all revolutions and this is a revolutionary art. It is not pretty or romantic—revolutions are not romantic.' But he remained wholly unconvinced. He liked pretty pictures and there was nothing more to be said." Inspecting the new Canadian embassy residence in Washington in 1948, King thought it "a beautiful building. Looks very well both inside and out. Do not, however, like the Canadian pictures. They give an entirely false note." Diary March 30, 1948. As Canada's first minister to Washington in 1927, Vincent Massey had secured Canadian paintings, including several by the Group of Seven, for the Canadian legation on 1746 Massachusetts Avenue. See Finlay, 129-30.

ladies withdrew, we talked for a while in the dining room, largely about paintings, old and new schools, etc.”¹⁵³⁷

But a year later when the question came up before King’s Cabinet regarding appointing a new chair of the board of trustees of the National Gallery to replace H.S. Southam, at least one dissenting voice to King’s previously unchallenged cultural authority began to be heard within Council. King “told the Cabinet frankly I thought it would be difficult to pass over Massey but that I personally felt responsibility of the government to put him at the head of the Gallery with his views and leanings to modern extremes. I did not think it was being fair to Canada to have that side emphasized. Mitchell [Humphrey Mitchell, the Minister of Labour] said he still believed that a tree was a tree. St. Laurent [Louis St. Laurent, then Secretary of State for External Affairs] said he had been to see the French exhibit. He did not see among the lot a picture that he could have for his own house. This was the kind of thinking Massey lends himself to.” As discussed in chapter IX, Brooke Claxton had attempted to assist the Federation of Canadian Artists with its Artists in the War Effort petition in 1942 and endorsed its proposal for a Canada-wide chain of community art and recreation centres in 1945. King “was not surprised at Claxton [the Minister of National Defence] speaking in favour of Massey. He thought it was difficult to pass him over because of his interest in art. He, of course, is a great admirer of the Masseys and also shares some of his views on art. He likes modernistic pictures. There was not another member of Council favourable to Massey’s appointment. No one seems to be able to suggest any other name. The matter was left open.”¹⁵³⁸

After he stepped down as Prime Minister, King opposed the appointment of Massey as chairman of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences. Three

¹⁵³⁷ Diary April 17, 1946.

¹⁵³⁸ Diary March 21, 1947. Perhaps anticipating the selection of a new chairman of the board of trustees, King “Arranged for an additional sum to go into the supplementary estimates for the Art Gallery.” Diary July 4, 1947. When he finally informed the Masseys six months later that he had passed an Order in Council appointing Vincent Massey chairman of the National Gallery board of trustees, “each of them acknowledged this in a word. Not with any appreciation or thanks but as something they would be interested in.” Diary January 27, 1948.

months before Louis St. Laurent passed the Order in Council 1786 on April 8, 1949 establishing the Commission, he advised the new Prime Minister “against doing for those who had opposed the Government that had done everything for them—Massey a Tory at heart—no support from our members for him. He is Brooke Claxton’s pet.” A month later he told the Attorney General of Nova Scotia that “The Massey appointment is another case of giving the high positions to traitors—those who have made themselves by the Liberal Government & done much to seek to destroy it.” Yet ten months before his death, Mackenzie King appeared to acknowledge Vincent Massey’s cultural supremacy when Premier Joey Smallwood asked for his assistance with a fundraising committee to raise about \$6 million [\$62 million in 2014 dollars] for Memorial University in Newfoundland. King declined any involvement for health reasons but “mentioned Massey as a possible honorary chairman, he being anxious to take a leadership in not only most, but possibly all cultural movements & suggested Claxton as best person to approach Massey.”¹⁵³⁹

¹⁵³⁹ Diary January 8, February 22 and September 20, 1949. St. Laurent informed King that he wanted to appoint Massey “as Chairman of a Commission on UNESCO, Broadcasting, television, fitness etc etc.”

Conclusion:

The *Habitus* of Mackenzie King: Canadian Artists, Cultural Capital and the Struggle for Power

This dissertation has analyzed two opposing visions of the arts and artists in Canada prior to the 1949 Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences—that of William Lyon Mackenzie King and that of artists and cultural nationalists.

The research gathered in this dissertation dispels the commonly held belief that Mackenzie King was a philistine who had no interest in arts and culture. My examination of the archival record, in both his diaries and government correspondence, establishes on the contrary that King was more actively involved in the arts than any Prime Minister to date. The archival record also reveals that as head of the Liberal Party and as Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council, and Secretary of State for External Affairs, King accumulated such a vast quantity of political, cultural and statist capital that his political and cultural authority was largely unchallenged within government. He was therefore also able to function as Canada's first de facto Minister of Culture from 1922 to 1948 without the need actually to implement or legislate—with the exception of broadcasting—cultural policies. This gave him both the freedom and the power to decide cultural matters on a case-by-case basis without establishing binding precedents.

In this conclusion I return to my central research question why King's half-century-long direct involvement with the arts—both in Canada and internationally—failed to make him a champion of artists and the arts. I have suggested in chapter III that unlike the arts critic Hector Charlesworth, who pursued beauty as an end in itself, King made beauty and the arts subservient to his religious belief in Christian service to one's fellow men and women and to the state. His political belief in the ideology of Liberalism emphasized individual responsibility, regeneration and character development and therefore militated against government intervention in arts and

culture to regulate or improve the lives of artists. Using Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, I have shown in great detail how religious, cultural and political values, beliefs and practices were transmitted from John and Isabel King to Mackenzie King from childhood on and how both his parents fostered his life mission to rehabilitate the reputation and social status of Isabel's father, William Lyon Mackenzie, the rebel leader of the failed 1837 Rebellion in Upper Canada. As he recorded in December of 1938 while organizing the royal Canadian tour of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth the following May, "I feel that through Destiny, it has been given to me to round out, at the end of a hundred years, the struggle not only for self Government and responsible Government but for national sovereignty in Canada, for which my grandfather stood, fought and eventually died suffering imprisonment and exile. It is the way in which God vindicates the right in the end."¹⁵⁴⁰ King's parents shaped his religious, cultural, political and social *habiti* which Mackenzie King continuously reinforced during his university studies, as a civil servant and as a politician. I have traced how King's *habitus* and accumulation of social, cultural and political capital enabled him to become Leader of the Liberal Party and Canada's longest serving Prime Minister.

My close reading of Mackenzie King's diaries—combined with Paul Roazen's analysis in *Canada's King: An Essay in Political Psychology* of his medical records from his physical and psychological examinations at the John Hopkins hospital and medical school in 1916—documents King's powerful life-long sexual drive and his persistent struggle to control his "lower" instinctual self through his will and spiritual "higher" self. King repeatedly refers in his diaries to "my struggle, the brute instinct controlling the high and noble impulses."¹⁵⁴¹ Analyzing this conflict between King's religious and sexual *habiti* enabled me to show why King felt compelled to espouse a conception of public art whose primary function was to project Christian character and ideals and to commission paintings, sculptures and photographs of himself that would exteriorize and make visible what he believed to be his real ideal spiritual self.

¹⁵⁴⁰ Diary December 5, 1938, p. 9.

¹⁵⁴¹ Diary July 7, 1939.

I traced in chapter I how at the beginning of the 1900s, King was greatly influenced by his favourite poet and cultural thinker, Matthew Arnold, and thought he identified with Hellenism, the attainment of culture through the unfettered pursuit of beauty and intelligence. But he failed to assimilate Arnold's belief that the pursuit of perfection through beauty and intelligence was not the privilege of an elite few but should extend to all members and classes of society and that the state was the expression of "our collective best self." He thus also failed to follow the example of his political idol, British Prime Minister William Gladstone, who gave his public support to Henry Irving and to the creation of a British national theatre which, as Arnold had suggested, could be made accessible to all through government support. Instead, as he had himself observed in Canadian Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier, King's *habitus* and outer character tended towards "fixity" and he increasingly turned towards what Arnold referred to as *Hebraism*, the predisposition to let religious thought and practices predominate his thinking and actions. As Reginald Whitaker observed, "one is perhaps justified in looking to the early King of pre-leadership days for the accumulation of 'intellectual capital,' and to the later King for the relationship between more or less congealed ideas and his political actions—which in this case stretch over almost thirty years."¹⁵⁴²

I suggested in various chapters that the aesthetic taste and convictions of King and of contemporary Canadian artists consisted of different, and perhaps irreconcilable, "codes." For King the most fundamental of these differences was what he referred to as "the things of the senses versus the things of the soul." Artists create and convey works of art and their degrees of beauty through their own senses and the senses of their viewers. King believed that "to behold the beauty of the Lord" required passing "through the valley of Temptation from the Beauty which we see with our eyes & which often leads us astray to the beauty of God—the beauty which alone can appeal to the soul & which is at the heart of all."¹⁵⁴³

¹⁵⁴² Reginald Whitaker, "Political Thought and Political Action in Mackenzie King," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 13:4 (Winter 1978-79), 42.

¹⁵⁴³ Diary March 1, 1942 and June 1, 1930.

In chapter VII, I analyzed how King and Canadian artists agitating for a more central position in society closely adhered to Pierre Bourdieu's paradigm, expanded from Max Weber's model of religious change, in which charismatic "prophets" with subversion strategies but limited symbolic capital struggle for consumers of their symbolic goods against "priests" with conservation strategies monopolizing the specific capital of their field. Artists analyzed and debated their marginalized social and cultural position at the 1941 Kingston Conference. In 1892, the poet and playwright Wilfred Campbell was forced to make a public retraction when he suggested in the *Toronto Globe* that much of the Old Testament was "pure mythology" rather than fact and that "the story of the cross itself is one of the most remarkable myths in the history of humanity connected with the old phallic worship of some of our most remote ancestors."¹⁵⁴⁴ Half a century later, University of Toronto art professor John Alford informed the Kingston Conference that the religious function of art (which Mackenzie King still adhered to), namely, "to impress upon the popular mind the reality of the objects of faith, and the truth of the histories of Scripture, by giving visible form to both," had passed away leaving the painter with "no profession, no purpose." Edward Rowan of the Section of Fine Arts at the Federal Works Agency in Washington concurred that in the United States the religious impulse was no longer strong enough "to encourage our artists to be creative, as they have been under the same impulse in the past." Walter Abell, in his keynote Kingston address "Art and Democracy," contrasted the counter-striving autocratic and democratic social pattern of art from the monarchical and priest ruling civilizations in Egypt and Mesopotamia to the present and agreed that in Canada as well, "We have lost our faith, to a certain extent, in those [religious] symbols; but the things that are felt are just as real as ever, and they themselves are the sources of religion."¹⁵⁴⁵

For cultural "prophets" like Roy Mitchell, Bertram Brooker, Lawren Harris and Herman Voaden

¹⁵⁴⁴ Wilfred Campbell, "At the Mermaid Inn," *Toronto Globe*, February 27, 1892. Reprinted in *At the Mermaid Inn: Wilfred Campbell, Archibald Lampman, Duncan Campbell Scott in The Globe 1892-93* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 25, 26. Campbell's March 3, 1892 retraction, "Letter From W.W. Campbell," is reprinted pages 30-31.

¹⁵⁴⁵ *The Kingston Conference Proceedings* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, 1991), 76, 33, 34.

in the 1920s and 1930s, the arts had constituted “our Gateway to the Divine,” “the holiness of beauty,” “the active channel for the infiltration of the light of the spiritual realm into the darkness of earth life,” and “a new religion trembling near the hearts of men.” In response to the devastating political and military conflict prior and during World War II, the “new religion” of the Federation of Canadian Artists that emerged from the Kingston Conference became cultural democracy, with massive state support for arts and culture, following the example of the United States and Great Britain, the new paradigm. As the poet Frank Scott, one of the founders of the socialist movement in Canada, suggested to the first annual meeting of the Federation of Canadian Artists in 1942, “We no longer build to glorify the pharaohs; now we need a new relationship between artist and public.”¹⁵⁴⁶

Mackenzie King as a Cultural “Pharaoh”

But despite the persistent lobbying by artists and cultural groups, Mackenzie King refused to initiate government support of the arts and cultural democracy in Canada. He shared, in fact, four characteristics of a “pharaoh” of past autocratic cultural periods: his followers offered him images of himself as gifts; he used drawings, paintings and photographs of himself for political purposes; he used family photographs, paintings and sculptures as totemic objects to communicate with the beyond; and he attempted to transform his nation’s capital into a city of God.

It is surely also of significance that the only personal meetings with artists King recorded in his diaries from 1939 to his death in 1950—just when Canadian artists engaged in their most intense lobbying for government support—was with foreign artists with the exception of Yousuf Karsh whose photographs of himself and of meetings with foreign heads of state and government

¹⁵⁴⁶ Frances K. Smith, *André Biéler: An Artist’s Life and Times* (Toronto: Merritt Publishing, 1980), 95.

officials he used for political purposes to create an image of assured competence and confidence and as gifts from 1939 to the end of 1949.¹⁵⁴⁷



Yousuf Karsh's April 15, 1941 King portrait, LAC MIKAN no. 3217560.

Gifts for “My dear Chief”

In 1943 Jean-François Pouliot, the Liberal MP for Témiscouata, asked King to see a bust of himself which the Dominion Sculptor Cléophas Soucy had been making from photographs. He found the bust “On the whole rather good” and “promised him a sitting or two” but made no

¹⁵⁴⁷ On December 9, 1940, for example, King “Made arrangements for printing of photograph to be sent out to Liberal members of the two Houses.” He rarely commented on Karsh’s images as works of art, however. One exception was when King viewed “an exceptionally fine collection” of his photographs at the Chateau Laurier on February 17, 1944. “What usually happens in reference to anything related to myself was evident there. The picture he had of me was a large head, larger than any of the rest, and looked to me completely out of place. If kept at the same size as others I would have been quite content. Some of the pictures were exceptionally good. I would think they represent the highest achievement in photography anywhere.” King began referencing Karsh in his diaries on July 4, 1939. See diary August 21 and 23, November 26 and 30, 1940; April 15, July 19, 21, 22, December 30, 1941; January 7, 1942; April 1, 15, June 3, 15, 17, July 16, August 4, 6, 25, October 2, 1943; March 5, 8, 9, May 6, 1944; December 30, 1946; March 15, May 1, September 27, November 16, 1947; January 4, 22, May 20, July 1, September 9, 1948; and April 29, November 2, 1949.

further entries in his diary that such sittings actually took place.¹⁵⁴⁸ In 1948, Armand Cloutier, the Liberal MP for Drummond-Arthabaska, presented the Prime Minister with “a small statuette of myself which had been made by Mr. [Lionel] Fosbery, the artist and sculptor.”¹⁵⁴⁹ Less than two months after he stepped down as Prime Minister in November of 1948, King recorded for the last time sitting for a portrait sketch by the English artist Arthur Guthrie, a friend of Governor General Viscount Alexander and Lady Alexander. He “experienced a certain sense of freedom today in being able to ‘sit’ for a sketch” and recorded that after Guthrie finished the crayon portrait the next day that “he has done remarkably well. I look tired and older than I thought but so I am.”¹⁵⁵⁰

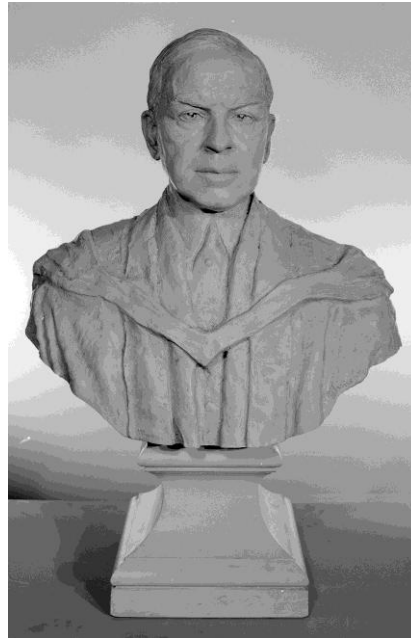
Mackenzie King’s most extensive interactions with artists just prior and during World War II were with the Austrian sculptor Felix de Weldon (1907-2003), the American sculptor Avard Fairbanks (1897-1987) and the English portrait painter Frank O. Salisbury (1874-1962). De Weldon possessed considerable cultural capital as a result of commissions to create a bust of King George V and the coronation bust of King George VI in 1935 and 1936. After he created his bust of Mackenzie King in 1938, de Weldon embarked on a major career in the United States

¹⁵⁴⁸ Diary March 17, 1943. King’s diary of July 30, 1948 also refers to “a bust of myself which was made by Mr. C. Soucy here in town.” Soucy may be the sculptor of the bronze bust King refers to in his diary of March 15, 1947. “I was surprised to see in the committee room a bust of myself in bronze which I did not know was in existence. There was a larger one of Alexander Mackenzie and one of Sir Wilfrid. Much more massive than Sir Wilfrid was himself and one of myself. Apparently those had been there for some time. I had not known of their existence. The book [bust] of myself looked rather good from a distance but looking at it closely, I did not care at all for the eyes, particularly when seen from the side but I did notice a curious resemblance of Asquith’s [former British Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith’s] features...It came as a real surprise to see the bust there. I could not quite believe my eyes.”

¹⁵⁴⁹ Diary June 26, 1948. King thought “It seemed to me rather too heavy on the side face and too narrow and too compressed in the front face. There were likenesses and that was all.” In his diary of March 25, 1943, King had recorded that he “Had a talk with Hanson [former Conservative Leader of the Opposition Richard Hanson] about Fosbery’s bust of Borden and later had Isley [J.L. Isley, Minister of Finance] agree to its purchase either in funds under Speaker’s control or by supplementary estimate. Told Hanson later this would be done.”

¹⁵⁵⁰ Diary January 6 and 7, 1949. Guthrie “had asked through [H.O.] McCurry of the Art Gallery for the opportunity.”

that included commissions for the Marine Corps War Memorial of the flag raising on Iwo Jima and busts of Presidents Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy.



Felix de Weldon's 1938 bust of Mackenzie King in his Oxford gown.

On first meeting de Weldon, King was impressed by the young “celebrated Viennese sculptor...one of the greatest sculptors of our day.” The artist showed the Prime Minister the Coronation number of *The Sketch* with his bust of King George VI on the cover as well as photographs of his portrait busts in bronze or clay “of King George V as well as King Edward VIII; [former British Prime Minister] Lloyd George; Lord Allenby; Mrs. Anthony Eden, and many other celebrated personages. Some idealist heads, etc., etc.” The artist also brought letters of introduction from the Montreal Liberal Party organizer Gordon Scott and Senator Knatchbull Hugessen, who became President of the Liberal Party in 1940, suggesting “the Liberal Party would like to have a bust of myself.” Paul Martin, the Liberal MP for Essex East, also proposed that the Party purchase King’s portrait bust to celebrate his twenty years as leader of the Liberal Party in 1939 but King demurred. He agreed to sit for de Weldon in the Laurier House library the next day only on the condition that the sculptor put in writing that King had no financial responsibility for his portrait bust, though he subsequently conceded that “I only wish I were

where I could assist financially one so gifted.” While he consented to the sculptor’s wish to exhibit the bust at the Royal Academy in London, he also insisted that “publicity should not be given to its existence.”¹⁵⁵¹

The artist also created a “mystical” relief of King’s parents, claiming that “As I sat here, I could see your mother sitting in the arm chair beside me, quite distinctly. It seemed to me that she was there watching all that I was doing.” King himself could not “account for the exceptional success in the relief which Weiss has made, excepting in the way he accounts for it himself; that he was simply a medium, not giving thought himself to what he was doing but allowing unseen powers to direct his hand, though employing in that direction all the knowledge and the skill which he, himself, has acquired.”¹⁵⁵² As with Giuseppe Guastalla’s 1935 portrait bust, King was particularly concerned how de Weldon sculpted his lips, which he associated with his “lower nature.” On March 19, the artist “spent the time almost entirely in touching up the lips in making them truer to what they are.” He had read Isaiah, Chapter VI, about the man of unclean lips and was certain “that I was being given an assurance that my nature is becoming increasingly spiritual—that the lips are not sensual which I would loathe but that—a live coal had touched the lips, purification by fire—by suffering.” De Weldon knew how to cater to King’s spiritualist inclinations, inscribing a selection of photographs of his work for the Prime Minister, “All that is good in art is the expression of one soul talking to another, and is precious according to the greatness of the soul that utters it.”¹⁵⁵³

¹⁵⁵¹ Diary February 28 and March 4, 16 and 17, 1938.

¹⁵⁵² Diary March 4, 1938. De Weldon at the time used the names Felix Weihs and Felix Weiss. For King’s posing and interactions with the sculptor and his creation of several copies of the artist’s relief of King’s mother and father, a gold portrait medalet of Isabel King, and a plaque of his sister Bella, see Diary March 1-9, March 11, 12, 14-17, 19, 23, 25, 28, 1938 and April 2, 9, 10, and 23, 1938 and Felix Weiss to King, April 27, 1938. King to Weiss, April 29 and 30, 1938. Weiss to King, June 1, 1938. King to Weiss, September 16 and 25, 1938. Edouard Handy to Weiss, September 28, 1938. Weiss to King, October 24, 1938. King to Weiss, November 2, 1938. LAC reel C3740, pages 222721-53. For April 5, 1939 correspondence see LAC reel C3751, pages 238300-11.

¹⁵⁵³ Diary March 19 and April 10, 1938.

While he played on King's spiritual needs de Weldon—like the Canadian artist “prophets”—also stressed the necessity of providing artists with material support and the desirability of making their creations, and the ability to create, available to all. Requesting that King provide him with letters of introduction to John D. Rockefeller Jr. and Mrs. Andrew Carnegie in New York, de Weldon explained that “art can not blossom and expand in reticence, without encouragement. I regard it as one of the greatest tragedies of the age that art, and particularly sculpture, is regarded as a luxury instead of a necessity of life.”

In ancient Greece, sculpture played almost as big a part in the national life as anything else. Today in Austria and many other countries music is just as much a necessity. Everyone has an instrument and plays. In these countries music is a family institution. And so should be all form of art today in this and other civilised countries. Unfortunately commerce has far too long dominated life, but I think there are signs of an awakening and we may yet see the day when music, painting and sculpture are again what they were in the days of the Renaissance. The artists must, in course of time, transmit their enthusiasm for Peace, creative Work, Health and Beauty and so turn the lock of the invisible door of progress, that others too may enter.¹⁵⁵⁴

In 1939 de Weiss also made a plaster bust from his original mould for King's bronze bust and a large bronze relief of King's parents. King suspected the sculptor “is doing this in the hopes of getting some local orders here—to give him a chance to say to others that he is making a bust of the Prime Minister.”¹⁵⁵⁵ In December of 1939 King “learned from Osborne [probably Colonel

¹⁵⁵⁴ Weiss to King, April 27, 1938. LAC reel C3740, pages 222721-28. King was content to let the free market resolve artists' needs. When Colonel Osborne informed him the following year “that Weiss, at present, is living at the Plaza in New York, has apartments there that belonged to Lazlo [the Hungarian painter Philip de László] and is travelling in a Rolls Royce” and that “Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbuilt [sic] had had a letter from Mrs. Claude Beddington concerning him as a sculptor of Kings, etc.,” he recorded that “I am glad the little fellow has come across good days again.” Diary December 12, 1939.

¹⁵⁵⁵ Diary March 21 and April 15 and 26, 1939. De Weldon used the symbolic capital he gained from sculpting the Prime Minister to obtain commissions from the Countess de Dampierre and Senator Cairine Wilson. See Valerie Knowles, *First Person: A Biography of Cairine Wilson—Canada's First Woman Senator* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1988), 12-16, 133, 193, 219. His 1939 portrait bust was donated to the government by the Wilson family and unveiled in the Senate antechamber in 1960. In 1939, he also sculpted the bronze bust of Agnes Macphail, the first female MP, unveiled in the Centre Block in 1955. King invited the Southams to see his bust and used his political capital to lobby Frank Ahearn, the Liberal MP for Ottawa-West and H.S. Southam's brother-in-law, to have his father commission a bust as well. “This will be helpful to

Henry Osborne, the president of the Dominion Drama Festival] that my bronze bust was in the city somewhere. He thought it had been purchased by the Party for presentation to myself... He says his own bust—a small one—is extremely good.”¹⁵⁵⁶ King again recorded in 1946 that de Weldon had informed him that “the portrait [bust] of myself, which Mrs. Wilson [Senator Cairine Wilson] has, does not belong to her; that the party had intended purchasing it for presentation to me. He said that so far as its present position is concerned it is simply in her safekeeping. I presume it belongs to Weihs himself.” In 1949 he attended a dinner party at Senator Wilson’s and “saw Weihs de Weldon’s bust of myself, did not like it at all & could scarcely recognize it.”¹⁵⁵⁷

When Mackenzie King consented to have the Liberal Party commemorate his quarter century as Leader of the Liberal Party in 1944, the portrait bust it presented to the Prime Minister was sculpted by the American artist Avard Fairbanks—famous for his busts of Lincoln—and not by Felix de Weldon. Fairbanks sent King “a photograph of his fine statue of Abraham Lincoln” in January of 1943 and met with the Prime Minister, who told the artists he “was not in a position to give anyone a commission,” in Ottawa four weeks later. The sculptor flattered King by declaring he was “anxious to make a bust of myself as among the men outstanding in the new world movement today” and offered to make his bust at his own expense.¹⁵⁵⁸ He also approached Liberal politicians, through Gerald Grattan McGeer, the MP for Vancouver-Burrard whom King would appoint to the Senate in 1945, about a commission for a bust of the Prime Minister.¹⁵⁵⁹

Weiss.” Diary March 28, 1938 and March 21, 1939. He also showed de Weldon’s relief and bronzes to Lord and Lady Greenwood, both of whom “at once said they knew of Felix Weiss very well and would undertake, when they get back to England, to have him do something for them.” Diary September 6, 1938.

¹⁵⁵⁶ December 12, 1939. See also Diary March 12, July 21, November 4 and 9, December 18, 1940; November 25, 1941; December 19, 1942; December 18, 1943; February 4, 1944; October 20, 1945; and February 4, 1946.

¹⁵⁵⁷ Diary February 4, 1946 and January 21, 1949.

¹⁵⁵⁸ Diary January 2 and 29, 1943.

¹⁵⁵⁹ King recorded in his diary on May 16, 1945 that when he visited McGeer’s lovely home in Vancouver, his study contained “a replica—the plaster of my bust by Fairbanks. On one side, statue of Lincoln and on the other, a bust that Fairbanks has made of himself. It is quite touching to see his devotion for myself... He did not raise the question of Senatorship except in a very

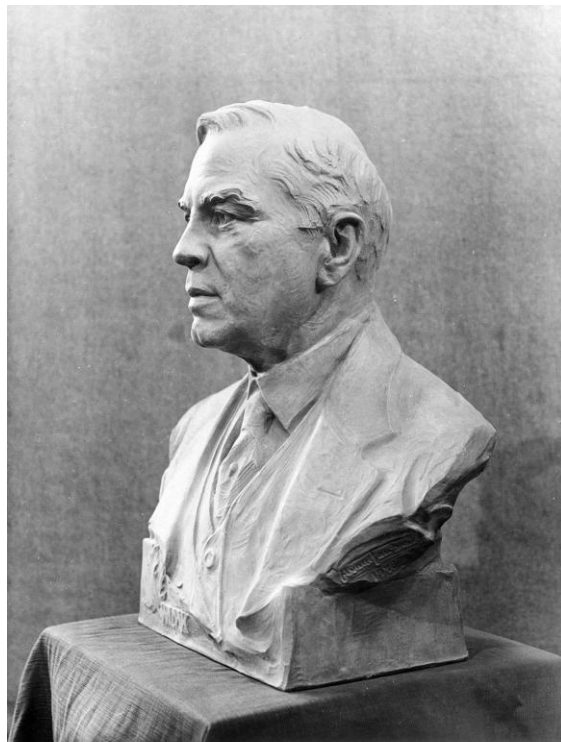
Ian Mackenzie, the Minister of Pensions and National Health, wrote a confidential letter to “My dear Chief” in May of 1943 informing him that “members of the Party would like to give special recognition to the twenty-fifth anniversary of your being appointed the leader of the Liberal Party in Canada.” Such an event, to take place on August 7, 1944, would “give our leading Liberals throughout Canada an opportunity of contributing to this recognition.” He informed King that “tentative arrangements have been made with Mr. Fairbanks, whom you know” and that “to make the thing truly democratic, the Liberal Members of the House of Commons would be permitted to make a very small financial contribution.” The Fairbanks commission “would be entirely unknown except to a very few—possibly two or three of us—until the event transpires.” King thanked Mackenzie and McGeer and responded that “If in the providence of God I should continue to be in office until August 7th, 1944, there is nothing I should welcome more than something which would commemorate, on that date, the unbroken association, for a quarter of a century, between the members of the Liberal Party in Canada, both in and out of Parliament, and myself as the leader of the Party.” In a post script he strongly advised “that any thought of the recognition of the occasion as suggested be kept as strictly confidential and confined to as few as may be possible.”¹⁵⁶⁰

Fairbanks began sculpting King’s bust in the little library at his Kingsmere cottage on October 11, 1943. A Mormon, he had created many statues and friezes for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. King immediately felt “the greatest possible sympathy between us” because of the artist’s religious convictions, “the right of man to believe that God still spoke to me, still raises up leaders among, [sic] still inspires life, as with Moses, Abraham, Israel, Isiah [sic] etc. etc., that this goes on in our age—which is what I believe.” Already on the second day of the sculptor’s work, King “felt a gratitude too deep for words” and was “profoundly moved” at the

indirect way.” The same day, King felt “more decided in my mind than ever that McGeer is the right appointment to make.” See also Diary June 8 and October 15, 1943 and June 6, 1944.

¹⁵⁶⁰ Ian Mackenzie to King, May 13, 1943. King to Mackenzie, May 14, 1943. LAC reel C7040, pages 296877-80. For King’s reservations that “such a personal matter” should be organized at a time of war, see Diary May 14, June 8, and October 15, 1943.

artist “rapidly bringing out the spirit—the nature behind the flesh.” He was making “‘a document’ in the word of the scientist, a record for all time...there was one record that was true to be preserved.”¹⁵⁶¹ The Prime Minister knelt and thanked God for the portrait given to him and the world as a permanent record. “I have suffered so greatly from bad pictures in the press...that I have become so that I can hardly stop or bear to look at any pictures of myself. He felt that “here at least, at last, is something that does not lie—something that is true to what I am.” He wondered “if Michel Angelo had not helped to guide the hand of the Sculptor.” And indeed Fairbanks “said when the portrait was completed, ‘It is not I. I am only an instrument, something is working through me,’ and so I believe it is. Our real work & influence is from ‘the beyond’—the here & Now—is all a part of the eternal.”¹⁵⁶²



PA-186961

Avard Fairbanks' 1943 King bust.

¹⁵⁶¹ Diary October 11 and 13, 1943.

At Ian Mackenzie's suggestion, Fairbanks also began sculpting a small silver statue of King and his first terrier Pat (1924-41) on October 14. King speculated that the statue might be created "in heroic size" on his Kingsmere estate which he planned to donate to the nation as a national park. "It might even be placed in the Capital, on Parliament Hill, or on the public thoroughfare, the little triangle overlooking the War Memorial, with which I had so much to do & near the Houses of Parliament." The artist finished both sculptures on October 16. At Gerald Grattan McGeer's suggestion, King asked Fairbanks to make his life mask. Conversing with and watching the artist at work reminded King of the spiritual and the divine: "talking of the casting of bronze, etc. speaking of the resurrection, then with the use of clay, then plaster, etc. etc., creates a man & immortalizes him by the different processes, so God can transform his own creation, casting & recasting." After Fairbanks finished his work, King concluded, "I am being shown in curious ways, the ups & downs, the ins and outs & roundabouts of these works of Art, as if the gods were playing with mortals who were seeking to imitate their aims and ways."¹⁵⁶³

Yet when he received Fairbanks' photographs of the plaster casts of the two sculptures in March of 1944, King felt "a keen sense of disappointment." "It had lost the character and characteristics which had been so satisfying in the original clay...the eyes might be those of a business man, had lost the soul and thought that should be in them...the face has a drawn look and really has lost the distinction that the original model had...The mouth has lost a certain look. The bust has gained a sort of sullen appearance which was the opposite of what I thought it had before." While he very much liked the statuette of himself standing next to his terrier, "little Pat is grotesque. Either the forehead is too broad or the nose too narrow, it is not him at all."¹⁵⁶⁴ Fairbanks returned to Ottawa in June with King's reworked bust, now bearing "a sort of old ivory colour," which delighted the Prime Minister.¹⁵⁶⁵

¹⁵⁶² Diary October 11 and 13, 1943.

¹⁵⁶³ Diary October 16 and 17, 1943. King had used a photo of himself and his terrier Pat for the March 26, 1940 federal election "Forward With Mackenzie King" campaign, LAC MIKAN no. 3000483, as well as for gifts to his friends.

¹⁵⁶⁴ Diary March 15, 1944.

¹⁵⁶⁵ Diary June 6, 1944. Fairbanks also made an "exceptionally good" head in plasterine of Pat II. King gave final approval to both sculptures on June 27.



The August 7, 1944 Liberal Party banquet with Fairbanks' sculptures of King and his terrier Pat.

Both sculptures were presented to King, in the presence of Avarad Fairbanks and his wife, at the August 7, 1944 Liberal Party banquet attended by one thousand in the large ballroom and adjoining dining rooms at the Chateau Laurier. King recorded that “The bust of myself was immediately in front of the head table and the little silver statuette placed later on the table in near proximity to it.” The Prime Minister debated “how far I should go in revealing my inner beliefs and outlook on life” for his hour-long reply to the many tributes that were paid to him. But he “did not hesitate to express quite publicly my firm belief in the survival of human personality and to make at the close a reference to the influences of childhood and home, what I owe to my parents and also to my grandfather and others.” What really pleased him most and “seemed to bring a joy to the heart that nothing else could, was the little replica of Pat in silver. It gave me gladness greater than almost all else. I was glad to pay the tribute in public which I owed to his life.”¹⁵⁶⁶

The God Statue Inside the Temple

¹⁵⁶⁶ Diary August 7, 1944. On King and Fairbanks, see also Diary July 7, October 10, 12, 14, 15, 1943; April 9, June 24, and October 28, 1944.

King's reference to Fairbanks making "a record for all time" and "bringing out the spirit—the nature behind the flesh"—as well as the Prime Minister's public affirmation at the Liberal Party banquet of his firm belief in the survival of human personality—highlights the cultic nature of King's use of works of art. Walter Benjamin in his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" discussed in chapter IV, referenced "the cult of recalling absent or dead loved ones" and posited that works of art "came into being in the service of some ritual," "became primarily an instrument of magic" and were objects of worship.¹⁵⁶⁷

King's care to find suitable inscriptions on sculptures and reliefs he commissioned or that were gifted to him reveals that he used paintings and sculptures of members of his family as totemic figures intended to be worshipped. We most clearly saw King engage in such rituals in the election campaigns of 1921, 1930 and 1935 when he spoke to and kissed the bust and photographs of his mother and, in 1930, made his final nationwide radio broadcast surrounded by his family portraits in the Laurier House dining room, "that memorable and sacred spot." In 1935 he "kissed the photos of all the loved ones" and "touched on the shoulder the busts of dear father & mother and said I was so happy they were with me."¹⁵⁶⁸ For King these family images were physical incarnations of the persons they represented and therefore had to be completely life-like. The representations—including those of King himself—had to establish an exact photographic verisimilitude or—as he criticized Fairbanks' initial sculpture of his dead terrier Pat, "it is not him at all." King believed that these cultic works of art not only transcend time but—via his

¹⁵⁶⁷ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (London: Penguin, 2008), 14, 11.

¹⁵⁶⁸ Diary July 26, 1930 and October 14, 1935. On the day of the 1940 federal election, King placed a photograph of William Lyon Mackenzie—"an interesting symbol of the loyalty which is seen where things are known as they are though not apparent to us who only see in parts"—on a table in front of his mother's portrait along with the photographs of his father and other family members. "I wanted to hear the returns as they came in with those to whom the victory itself is due." When election results came in on the day of the 1945 election, King looked at the pictures of his grandfather and parents and told Joan Patteson that "what is deepest in my heart... is where the foundation lies. It is to those lives that is owing above all else what has taken place today. My

occult spiritualism after World War I in which he communicated “beyond the veil” with those individuals depicted in these works of art—also space, as Benjamin had described the “auric” quality of cultic objects. King described one of the effects of his ritualistic use of cultic objects in a 1935 diary entry. “It is the immortal dead who by their presence are living again in my mind— influencing my thoughts, passing on to the world their own immortality.”¹⁵⁶⁹

In his best-known work, *Distinction*, Pierre Bourdieu proposed that what appear to be the idiosyncratic cultic and ritualistic private and public commemorative practices Mackenzie King engaged in were actually omnipresent. “Every group,” whether King’s family “clan,” the Liberal Party or Parliament, “tends to set up the means of perpetuating itself beyond the finite individuals in whom it is incarnated... In order to do so, it establishes a whole set of mechanisms, such as delegation, representation and symbolization, which confer ubiquity and eternity.” He suggested that

[symbolic] capital makes it possible to appropriate the collectively produced and accumulated means of really overcoming anthropological limits. The means of escaping from generic alienations include representation, the portrait or statue which immortalizes the person represented... and memorials, the tombstone, the written word, *aere perennius* [“more lasting than bronze”], which celebrates and ‘hands on to posterity’, and, in particular, historical writing, which gives a place in legitimate history—hence the particular status which the public, especially the bourgeois public, gives to historians, the masters of scientific eternization—and the commemorative ceremonies in which the group offers tributes of homage and gratitude to the dead, who are thereby shown to be still living and active. Thus it can be seen that eternal life is one of the most sought-after social privileges.”¹⁵⁷⁰

As Bourdieu suggested, King and his family engaged in a life-long process of transforming the existing narrative of William Lyon Mackenzie as a traitor into a champion for liberty and representative government through historical writings and works of art. King’s most significant

grandfather’s great integrity and courage; the beautiful lives of my father and mother, and their training.” Diary March 26, 1940 and June 11, 1945, p. 7.

¹⁵⁶⁹ Diary May 26, 1935.

¹⁵⁷⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Richard Nice, trans. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 72.

public monument, the National War Memorial, continues the widely popular annual commemoration of service to the country by Canada's fallen soldiers.



The 1939 dedication of the National War Memorial by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on the *Via Sacra*.

King perceived Laurier House as “the home of Liberalism, the temple of Liberal traditions” from which, as the Public Archives suggested, “one might almost say that Canada was governed for twenty-two years.”¹⁵⁷¹ But what several of his biographers observed as King’s spirit and pride of the clan¹⁵⁷² extended beyond his immediate family whose qualities and influence he invoked through totemic works of art. He had also left a physical “imprint on the House of Commons,”¹⁵⁷³ another “temple” in which King placed or dedicated works of art that embodied

¹⁵⁷¹ Diary June 1, 1930. Public Archives of Canada. *Laurier House: Former Residence of Two Prime Ministers of Canada, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Rt. Hon. W.L. Mackenzie King* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1961), 5.

¹⁵⁷² John Lewis. *Mackenzie King the Man: His Achievements* (Toronto: Morang, 1925) 13; Norman McLeod Rogers. *Mackenzie King* (Toronto: George N. Morang, 1935), 9; Emil Ludwig. *Mackenzie King: A Portrait Sketch* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1944), 31.

¹⁵⁷³ Diary December 30, 1919.

men and women (including himself) and human qualities he felt should be idealized and emulated by the nation. In Parliament King's "clan" was the Liberal Party who considered him their "Chief." At the dedication of the Bert Harper memorial on Wellington Street in front of the Parliament Building in 1905, Governor General Earl Grey expressed the hope that "this statue may be only the first of a set of noble companions which in the course of time will make this street the *Via Sacra* of the Capital."¹⁵⁷⁴ King accomplished creating such a *Via Sacra* over the next four decades through the erection of the Laurier monument on Parliament Hill near Wellington and Elgin St., the National War Memorial, also on Elgin and Wellington, dedicated by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in the presence of 100,000 spectators in May of 1939, the Arthur Doughty monument at Library and Archives Canada at 395 Wellington and, inside Parliament, the Nurses Memorial, the Lt. Col. George Harold Baker memorial, the Bowman Brown Law Memorial, the Confederation Memorial, and the carillon and Memorial Chamber in the Peace Tower with its "Altar" and *Book of Remembrance* inscribed on illuminated parchment with the names of sixty thousand Canadians "who, in the hour of the world's greatest need, made the supreme sacrifice."¹⁵⁷⁵

This cultic use of recalling dead loved ones is exemplified by Avard Fairbanks' bust of King himself. Arnold Heeney, his principal secretary whom he appointed clerk of the Privy Council in 1940, noted in his 1972 memoirs of his suite near the entrance to the Privy Council Office, "It is fitting that now Mackenzie King in imperious bronze should be situated just outside, his eyes directed towards the windows behind which later privy councillors and their officials continue to

¹⁵⁷⁴ "Statue Unveiled," *Ottawa Citizen*, Nov. 20, 1905. W. L. Mackenzie King, *The Secret of Heroism: A Memoir of Henry Albert Harper* (Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1906), 17.

¹⁵⁷⁵ W.L. Mackenzie King, "Canada" in his *The Message of the Carillon and Other Addresses* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1927), 6. As with Bert Harper, King also perpetuated the memory and inspiring example of government service and faith in "the call of duty even unto death" when he unveiled Kenneth Forbes' portrait of Norman Rogers in the Queen's University Memorial Hall on October 17, 1941. Rogers had served as Minister of Labour for four years and as Minister of National Defence for nine months before dying in a plane crash on June 10, 1940. See W.L. Mackenzie King, *Norman McLeod Rogers* [Kingston, ON: 1941].

wrestle with the nation's familiar problems.”¹⁵⁷⁶ When I enquired in 2014 whether Fairbanks' portrait bust was still in this location, Maxine Valiquette of the House of Commons curatorial services indicated that “The bust has been displayed in the Centre Block in two prominent locations over the years: The Prime Minister's office and the Leader of the Opposition. It has followed the Liberal Leaders for the last 70 years.” Only since the Liberals' loss in 2011 when they no longer formed the Official Opposition has the bust been stored in the curatorial services' collection management facility.¹⁵⁷⁷

The 1945 Frank O. Salisbury Mackenzie King Portrait of Distinction

While King was unable to prevent the appointment in 1949 of Vincent Massey as chairman of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, he was able to impose his cultural aesthetic and cultic persona on Parliament at least on a symbolical level through sculpture and painting. His crowning achievement was the installation and dedication of his portrait by the English portrait painter Frank O. Salisbury in the House of Commons Hall of Fame in 1947, the twentieth-fifth anniversary of his service as Prime Minister, in the presence of the leaders of all the political parties, the Governor General and visiting American President Harry S. Truman. Salisbury's portrait, along with the portrait of another wartime Prime Minister, Robert Borden, now hangs at the very entranceway to the House of Commons.

Salisbury arose from humble beginnings—he was born in 1874 the ninth of twelve children of a father who identified himself to the 1881 British census as a “plumber, decorator and ironmonger”—to become one of the world's most commercially successful portrait painters. He came to prominence during the First World War when he painted posthumous portraits of fallen soldiers, war scenes and members of the royal family. According to his biographer Nigel McMurray, “This contact with Royalty was to result in his becoming its first choice for the grand

¹⁵⁷⁶ Arnold Heeney. *The Things That Are Caesar's: Memoirs of a Canadian Public Servant* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 64.

¹⁵⁷⁷ Email to Anton Wagner from Suzanne Dulude, Manager Interior Design Services, Building Management, House of Commons, forwarded by the Privy Council Office, June 17, 2014.

canvases of pageantry for thirty years. This in turn led to links with the political establishments of the Empire and the USA.” Salisbury first sailed to America in 1925 and “for the next six years would spend six months per year in the USA painting portraits. In total thirteen visits would be made. Salisbury portraiture in the USA would be a roll call of American wealth. He based himself strategically at New York [in his studio on the forty-first floor of the Waldorf Hotel], Chicago and Washington, the homes respectively of the aristocratic elite, the nouveau riche and the political elite.”¹⁵⁷⁸ His over eight hundred portraits included five American Presidents.

When Mackenzie King met Frank Salisbury in 1937, the artist was at the height of his career, having painted by royal command the official painting of the Silver Jubilee Service at St. Paul’s Cathedral celebrating the 25th anniversary of the reign of King George V in 1935. King was in London to participate in the coronation of King George VI and the subsequent Imperial Conference called to discuss the future of the Commonwealth and common Imperial defence measures. In his diary, he recorded receiving a letter from Salisbury, “one of the famous portrait painters of today” who was just completing a painting of the new King and Queen for the City of London, asking for a sitting.

From their first meeting on June 12, Mackenzie King was enchanted by Maude and Frank Salisbury and their mansion, Sarum Chase, in West Hampstead, London. In his diary, he described entering “a hall filled with exquisite paintings and endless treasures. At the top of the stairs were other paintings and a mural which reminded me of the Arthurian legends...All his paintings are full of life and spiritual life. He is particularly fond of gold and bronze colours, and soft blues and reds. Everything throughout the place seemed to speak of the middle ages; the period of the Crusades or the mysticism of the middle ages made comfortable by modern

¹⁵⁷⁸ Nigel McMurray. *Frank O. Salisbury: “Painter Laureate.”* (Great Britain and U.S.: 1stBooks, 2003), 4, 13. McMurray cites a writer in the April 25, 1936 *Chicago Daily News*: “So many Salisbury portraits appear in the rooms of rich, American industrialists that I concluded that it was an essential hallmark of American success. Four hundred portraits of big business leaders and their wives have been painted by him, none for less than \$1,000 [\$17,000 in 2014 dollars]. (22)

development... The whole place above and below had the Italian touch and the spirit of knight errantry.”

King was so impressed by Salisbury because for once the artist had greater social, cultural and financial capital than he himself but nevertheless completely shared King’s views on art, religion, spirituality and politics. “I had not been with him a minute before I found him to be a man after my own heart in everything.” King remarked that the artist’s paintings of his young girls reminded him of Joshua Reynolds’ angels. Salisbury “told me that Reynolds was the one to whom he owed the most and whose art he followed.” The artist also knew and “spoke highly” of J.W.L. Forster and Walter Allward.¹⁵⁷⁹ “I found his views on religion and art were exactly the same as my own. He loathes modern painting, regards it as degenerate and refuses to yield a bit to modern taste. He does not think it will last long. He views it as decadent.” Frank and Maude Salisbury were devout Methodists. The artist painted many religious leaders of different faiths and provided book illustrations for G. Robinson Lees’ *The Life of Christ* (1920), the Rev. Samuel Parkes Cadman’s *The Prophets of Israel* (1933) and Sir Robert Evans’ and Horace Shipp’s *The Lord’s Prayer* (1947). For King, “It was truly delightful to find this man with his great artistic genius and skill conversing quite frankly on spiritual things and in no way concealing that he owed all the success of his art to his Faith and religious life.”¹⁵⁸⁰

¹⁵⁷⁹ Salisbury recalled seeing Allward and his Canadian National Vimy Memorial just before its unveiling in 1936. “Never shall I forget the day I stood gazing on it with the great sculptor from whose genius this mighty monument has come into existence. Dark storm-clouds were gathering, and suddenly the sun shone and set the monument in dramatic relief, Nature seeming to crown this majestic wonder with a glory of her own.” Frank O. Salisbury, “Canada” in his *Portrait and Pageant: Kings, Presidents and People* (London: John Murray, 1944), 164 and in his *Sarum Chase* (London: John Murray, 1953), 176.

¹⁵⁸⁰ Diary June 12, 1937. When the Salisburys visited King in Ottawa the following year, he recorded that “They are each keenly interested in psychical problems and have had many quite exceptional experiences. We talked a good deal of psychical phenomena and, in particular, of evidences of design and of purpose and of guidance as seen, for example, in the way in which we had been brought together in London, and how, out of the association there, came the painting of the Coronation picture which I have not the least doubt was a factor which entered largely into



Frank O. Salisbury in the Gallery at Sarum Chase. The portrait of King George VI hangs in the centre. The “magnificent large polar bear skin” was gifted by Mackenzie King on May 19, 1946.

King also discovered that he and the artist moved in the same social and political circles. He immediately recognized a painting of Martin-Harvey as Henry VIII since he had an autographed copy he received from the actor in his library at Laurier House as well as “a magnificent painting of Franklin Roosevelt” which Salisbury recently painted at the White House. “It combines all Roosevelt’s strength with great tenderness.”¹⁵⁸¹ The artist had painted Mussolini in 1934, six years after King had met the Italian leader in Rome. He had also met many of the wealthy industrialists Salisbury had painted while King worked as a labour consultant for the Rockefellers. On June 13, he and Joan Patteson had tea at Sarum Chase with Mrs. Andrew

the decision of the King and Queen to visit Canada in the coming year.” Diary November 27, 1938.

¹⁵⁸¹ Diary June 12, 1937.

Carnegie who gave King “the warmest of welcomes.” Salisbury had painted both Mrs. Carnegie and Andrew Carnegie (posthumously) in 1934.¹⁵⁸²

One other factor which cemented King’s friendship with Salisbury was his charcoal and white chalk portrait drawing of the Prime Minister which the artist quickly completed on June 12 before the Maharaja of Baroda arrived for his scheduled portrait. His 1937 sketch depicts a determined, energetic statesman and appears even more youthful than the 1926 and 1927 King portraits by Sir William Orpen and Kathleen Shackleton. The Prime Minister “was delighted with the portrait when I saw it—side face on the left side. It really seemed more like what I would wish to like in any painting or sketch of myself or photograph that I have seen, though done in an hour and a half.”¹⁵⁸³



Frank O. Salisbury’s 1937 King portrait.

¹⁵⁸² In his diary of June 21, King recorded that in a conversation about the Salisburys with Mrs. Carnegie, “she told me he was getting so many commissions in New York that the artists there were getting to be jealous of him; that the two weeks she had spent in his studio, off and on, were among the most delightful experiences of her life.”

¹⁵⁸³ Diary June 12, 1937.

Two days later, King suggested to the other Premiers attending the Imperial Conference that the Dominions present the new King and Queen with a painting of their Coronation in recognition of the hospitality they had received during their stay in London and that Salisbury should be the chosen artist. The Premiers asked British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain to obtain the King's consent and also wrote King George VI themselves asking their Majesties to accept the painting. When Mackenzie King informed Vincent Massey of the Premiers' request, "I noticed his face and manner and countenance sort of dropped when he discovered that the matter had been arranged by someone other than himself. I imagine too he was not sympathetic to Salisbury who is not of the modern school. He simply said that he knew his work." Salisbury was tremendously pleased at the proposed commission and "was sure that Reynolds and his angels' hosts were in all that had taken place."¹⁵⁸⁴

King informed Massey that he and the Premiers of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa had charged their High Commissioners in London to make the arrangements for the commission, that the cost of the painting would be shared by the four countries, and that he hoped the Canadian payment could be made from the appropriation made by Parliament for Coronation expenses, requiring payment within the 1937-38 fiscal year. Massey reported to Mackenzie King that George VI "had expressed his hope that the picture might record the moment of the Coronation Ceremony in which The King and the assembled company received the blessing of the Archbishop" and that in addition to the persons standing about the throne "there would be in the proposed picture portraits of the five Prime Ministers who would be painted as standing near one of the pillars at the north end of the Choir." The payment to Salisbury for the seventeen feet by ten feet painting would be five thousand guineas, slightly more than £5,000. He completed his *Coronation of Their Royal Majesties King George VI and Queen Elizabeth* for presentation by Vincent Massey and the other three High Commissioners to Their Majesties at Buckingham Palace in March of 1938. According to Nigel McMurray, Salisbury's painting—which Mackenzie King and the royal couple saw exhibited at the World's Fair in New York after their

¹⁵⁸⁴ Diary July 15 and 16, 1937.

Royal Canadian tour in 1939 and then toured to Australia and New Zealand when W.W. II broke out—“was the most significant confirmation of the acceptance of his qualities as a painter throughout the Empire.”¹⁵⁸⁵



King George VI and Queen Elizabeth at the entrance of Parliament, May 19, 1939.

King had shown the Parliament buildings to the Salisburys during their visit to Ottawa in November of 1938. In his *Portrait and Pageant* and *Sarum Chase*, the painter wrote that he saw a newsreel of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on the steps to the entrance of Parliament in May of 1939, “with the Prime Minister just behind them, the King saluting Canada, and the great crowds cheering themselves hoarse just in front. It was a moment for any painter’s brush.” He determined to paint the event as a gift to Mackenzie King in “admiration of his work in promoting understanding between the Empire and the United States.” King described George VI taking the salute at the entrance to Parliament in his diary but does not mention “great crowds

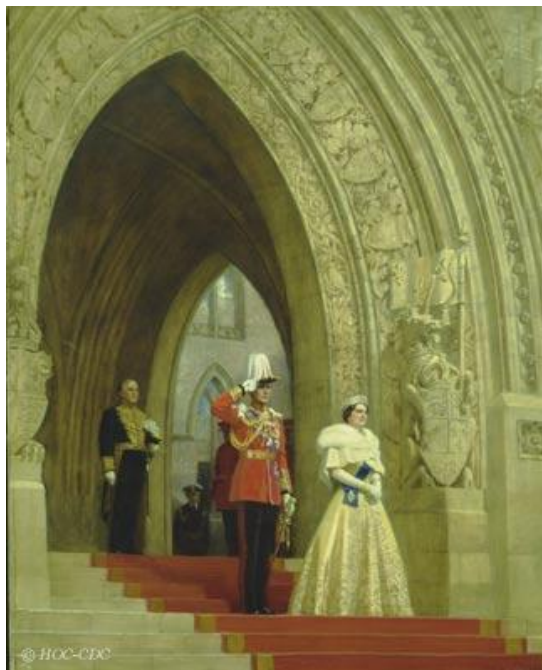
¹⁵⁸⁵ King to Massey, July 10, 1937. Massey to King, July 22 and July 23, 1937. King to Massey, August 20, 1937. Massey to King, September 7, 1937. King to Salisbury, March 21 and 24, 1938. LAC reel C3727, pages 205069-70, 205077-79, 205082, 205092 and reel C3738, page 220091-92. Salisbury, “The Coronation” in his *Portrait and Pageant*, 144-154 and in his *Sarum Chase*, 156-166. McMurray, 25, 163-64. Diary April 11, 14 and November 27, 1938. King recorded receiving a copy of *Portrait and Pageant* from Salisbury on July 15, 1944 and showed its chapter on Canada to Emile Ludwig on September 30, 1944. The National Gallery of Canada held a special exhibition of Salisbury’s *Coronation of King George VI* in the spring of 1946.

cheering themselves hoarse just in front.”¹⁵⁸⁶ After King flew to England in a Liberator bomber in August of 1941 to confer with Churchill, he recorded that Salisbury informed him that he was giving the painting “as a gift, as a friend and in admiration of my own, Canada’s part, in the present war effort.” The King and Queen had requested to see the painting before it was sent to Canada. The Prime Minister specified that the artist “drove me over to Buckingham Palace to show me the painting he had made from the photo taken in front of the Parliament Building at the time of the King and Queen’s visit after the session of Parliament...The painting is a beautiful one and the likeness, exceedingly good.”¹⁵⁸⁷

As seen from the previous page, Salisbury’s “The King Saluting Canada” appears to be exclusively based on the single LAC photograph, MIKAN no. 3194614. His only noticeable alterations are adding the red royal carpet and extending the steps leading to the entrance of the Parliament building, dressing the three figures in the centre background in military uniforms, and moving one of these figures further into the background to give greater prominence to a more youthful-looking Prime Minister and the King and Queen. By transforming a photographic moment in time (one of many reproduced in newspapers and newsreels Walter Benjamin referred to in his “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”) into a single iconic painting, Salisbury greatly increased the symbolic and cultic value of “The King Saluting Canada.” The canvas can be read as proclaiming the unity of the Empire and its largest Dominion as well as Mackenzie King as the guardian of Parliament’s independence from the mother country and of the autonomy of the Dominions.

¹⁵⁸⁶ Diary November 26, 1938. Salisbury, “Canada” in his *Portrait and Pageant: Kings, Presidents and People*, 165 and in his *Sarum Chase*, 176-77. Diary May 19, 1939, p. 3.

¹⁵⁸⁷ Diary August 27 and September 3, 1941. Nigel McMurray also specified that “Mackenzie King had shown the Salisbury’s around the Canadian Houses of Parliament in Ottawa and had shown them photographs of the royal visit there...He produced [the painting] from the photographs without special sittings; he referred to previous studies of George VI and Queen Elizabeth that he had made for their Coronation, newspaper photographs and newsreels.” (167) Both Salisbury and King indicated that the Prime Minister did give the artist a sitting for the painting while in London.



Salisbury's 1941 "The King Saluting Canada."

After Vincent Massey dispatched the painting to Ottawa, King wrote the artist thanking him for his "truly magnificent" gift. "I shall, before the year is out, take the appropriate moment to have it hung in our Houses of Parliament, where you may be sure it will for all time be a most treasured national possession. Words cannot begin to disclose the gratitude I feel for all that the painting and the inscription represent of your personal friendship and for what the picture, in its historic and artistic values, expresses of your unparalleled gifts and noble patriotism." The Prime Minister thanked Salisbury again on December 29, 1941 when "The King Saluting Canada" was installed in the main entrance to the Hall of Fame, "which is the central feature of the interior of the Parliament Buildings." The installation coincided with the twentieth anniversary of King becoming Prime Minister of Canada and the arrival of Prime Minister Winston Churchill who addressed both Houses of Parliament in a world-wide radio broadcast the following day. On behalf of the government and the people of Canada, King expressed his thanks "for your

memorable historic gift, which more than ever has become a symbol as well as a bond of Empire unity.”¹⁵⁸⁸

In his diary, King highlighted the distinction and unequalled status within the Canadian political field that Salisbury’s “The King Saluting Canada” and the royal couple’s and Churchill’s visits conferred upon him, thus increasing the picture’s cultic value. “Today the painting given me by Salisbury has been hung in the main entrance of the Parliament Buildings in the Hall of Fame.”

It makes mention of the fact that the painting was presented to myself as P.M. It commemorates the visit of the King and Queen to Parliament, and the assent of Bills, the first time a British Sovereign ever visited Canada or ever performed a Royal function in the Houses of Parliament. I appear in the picture as P.M. of Canada at that time. Then today, the P.M. of Britain at a time of war came to Ottawa being accompanied by myself, seated to my right in the War Committee of the Cabinet, and entertained by myself with colleagues, Chiefs of Staff, representatives of the press and representatives of some other countries. ... Also possessing in the P.M. a personal friend of many years’ standing. Dining tonight with the Governor General and Her Royal Highness [Princess Alice], a grand-daughter of Queen Victoria. The appointment of the King’s representative [the Governor General The Earl of Athlone] was on my own recommendation. Also on my recommendation Churchill was made a member of the Privy Council of Canada.

King concluded—in reference to yet still another “clan”—what he believed to be his own and his family’s special Christian relationship with God: “It is not by chance that these events have all come on this anniversary at the end of 20 years. It is the expression of God’s mercy and of His love and of some purpose in my life. A purpose that runs back to that of my grand-father; sacrifices that my father and mother and of others who have feared God and sought to fulfil His commandments. It is all a part of His Covenant.”¹⁵⁸⁹

King had commented on the traditional interpretation of “the covenant between God & his people,” and “the fulfillment of God’s promises in the working of His ‘eternal laws’” from the

¹⁵⁸⁸ King to Salisbury, November 16, 1941. LAC reel C4868, page 266298. Diary November 15 and 17, 1941. King to Salisbury, December 30, 1941. Cited in Salisbury, “Canada” in his *Portrait and Pageant*, 166 and in his *Sarum Chase*, 178. See also Diary October 2, 1946. The House of Commons Heritage Collection lists the title of the painting “The Royal Visit, 1939,” catalogue no. 0-700.

beginning of the nineteen hundreds.¹⁵⁹⁰ But in the late 1930s he enlarged this conventional belief that God stands with those who “do God’s holy will” to the conviction that God had a covenant with both his grandfather and with King himself. His diary of January 1, 1938 describes King on his knees, “praying that God would use me to further peace and good will on earth—between individuals, classes, races, creeds & nations—the unity of Canada & the good-will of nations.” He looked back on 1937 as “the most marvellous of years.” “It was the fulfillment of God’s covenant with grandfather in all his struggles. No one will ever know what it has meant to me to have been Prime Minister of Canada throughout the year & to have that office united with my grandfather’s name at the end of 100 years...I have lived to be able to say with the prophets of old, God has fulfilled His covenant.”¹⁵⁹¹ On July 7 he again recorded, “Thus God fulfills his promises, the promise made to my grand-father when he issued the first number of the Colonial Advocate...and when he went forth in God’s Light and with His strength to uphold & fight for the cause of the people against the powerful selfish interests of his day, and remained true to the end unto the third and fourth generation.” The following day he wrote of “the fulfillment of God’s Covenant to my grandfather, and those associated with him in the struggle for Responsible Government in Canada—a responsibility which looks above all else to God through his people.” Three days later he recorded a conversation with his friend, the Canon William Bertal Heeney. “We talked of our respective callings & of being ‘chosen’ for particular work of ‘foreordination’ which I told him I regarded as the most difficult of all beliefs to accept but which I am being compelled to believe in, despite myself. Spoke of the Covenant—God’s Covenant with the individual, the family, the race, the nation, the people who obey His commandments—this inevitability of law—the fulfillment of righteousness and justice.”¹⁵⁹²

¹⁵⁸⁹ Diary December 29, 1941, p. 6.

¹⁵⁹⁰ See for example Diary December 17, 1904, May 26, 1929, May 26, 1935, June 30, 1938, June 27, 1944, June 10 and 28, 1946.

¹⁵⁹¹ Diary January 1, 1938. See also Diary January 2, 1938.

¹⁵⁹² Diary July 7, 8 and 10, 1938. See also Diary March 14, 1940 and April 19, 1946.



Salisbury's 1944 portrait of Isabel King.

Frank Salisbury had already offered to paint King's portrait as a gift during his visit to Ottawa in 1938 but his stay was not long enough to make this possible. When King was again in London in 1944, the artist offered to paint a portrait of Isabel King from photographs as a gift and King accepted with delight. Salisbury received King's photos in July, completed the portrait in August and sent it by steamer via Vincent Massey to Ottawa where it arrived in September.¹⁵⁹³ King found the usual discrepancies between the work of art and his memory of the individual it depicted. The artist had painted Isabel King younger than the photographs the Prime Minister had sent him and had used Maude Salisbury's sister to capture the silvery hair of his subject. King thought the portrait had "a little of the resemblance of Mrs. Salisbury" but felt "a few strokes of the brush would correct any bit of it which might not be true to life." Emil Ludwig, who had perceived a resemblance between King's mother as painted by J.W.L. Forster and some of Leonardo de Vinci's work while writing his *Mackenzie King: A Portrait Sketch*, "thought all English painters paint their women as 'society' types; he felt it had not the spiritual expression of

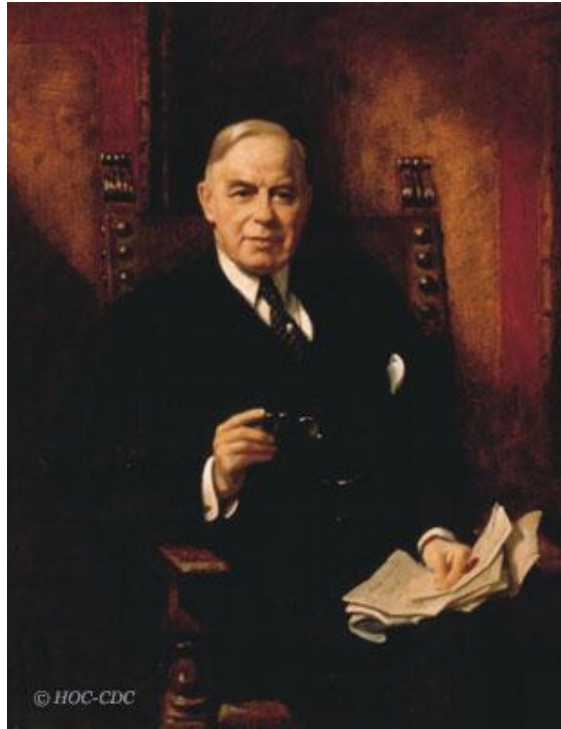
¹⁵⁹³ Diary November 27, 1938, p. 5, May 14, July 12, August 18 and 22, and September 14, 1944.

Mother.” King nevertheless was amazed by “so true and noble a portrait, so perfect in every detail, and so exquisite as a work of art.” Thanking Salisbury he wrote the artist—referring to what Benjamin would call the painting’s “auric” quality—that the portrait “has brought my mother and Maude and yourself very close to my side.”¹⁵⁹⁴

The September 1945 defection of Igor Gouzenko, the cipher clerk for the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa who revealed the existence of Soviet espionage activities in Canada, the U.S. and Great Britain regarding the development of the atom bomb and other secrets, brought Mackenzie King to London the following month to confer with Prime Minister Attlee before the two travelled to Washington to meet with President Truman. Sir William Mulock had left King a legacy of \$50,000 [\$684,000 in 2014 dollars] so when Frank Salisbury again asked to paint his portrait he agreed on the condition “that he would treat me in the same way he would any other sitter.” Though he felt “so tired, so depressed and, of late, so unworthy,” he realized, “I shall get no younger and I think it is important I should be painted while I am Prime Minister. There is no one in the world by whom I would rather have a portrait than Salisbury...one which would really portray the side of my nature which I thought Frank knew perhaps better than any other artists.” The painter made three preliminary sketches of King in a seating position and suggested he hold documents in one hand and his glasses in the other as if he had just taken them off to speak after reading. King selected correspondence from Attlee and Truman relating to the founding of the United Nations, the atom bomb and atomic energy. The fact that these documents were all dated October 17, the day Salisbury began his portrait, were “the clearest evidence,” King believed, “of the purpose of my present mission and of invisible hands and minds helping to guide and control my actions at this time. It would be impossible not to believe that there is a Divine purpose in the present mission. Moreover it marks quite the largest and most important world mission that any individual could participate in at the present time.” In another example of King’s magical thinking, discussed in chapter II, he felt that interpreted spiritually, the collection of documents in

¹⁵⁹⁴ Diary September 21 and August 19, 1944; December 15, 1943, September 30, 1944. See also December 5 and 9, 1944. Salisbury made slight changes in Isabel King’s eyes, cheek, chin and hair on October 1, 1946 during his visit to Ottawa.

his hand “has not only highest significance but carried with it the highest possibilities of fulfillment itself.”¹⁵⁹⁵



Salisbury’s 1945 “The Rt. Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie King.”

As Salisbury proceeded with his portrait, King was pleased that “He has a golden bronze screen behind the chair which brings in the [golden brown] colours that I like most in a painting.” While the artist was working, Maude Salisbury played the piano (Handel’s “Largo” was a favourite) and sang. “Her voice came through into the Studio like a bird singing in the room itself,” enabling the painter to catch “the best expression while Maude was playing. He had been working all day on the face to get in the different moods.” At one point Salisbury had captured “almost a laugh in my countenance and then had painted it out bringing in the serious side but leaving just enough of a smile to indicate the inner nature.” This is the sympathetic expression we see in the final portrait. King was “really delighted beyond words” that Salisbury “has given the best expression in everything...I now feel that under God’s Providence, guidance and direction, part of the final

¹⁵⁹⁵ Diary October 14, 17 and 18, 1945.

chapter has been written, literally, in letters of gold. Of all the psychical experiences of my life, this has been the greatest.” He had finally obtained the “record for all time” he had sought in vain in artistic representations of himself for over four decades. The portrait “seemed to mark a completion of some thing that I had hoped most for in my life—a permanent record of which I was wholly satisfied to bring it to the country.”¹⁵⁹⁶ As Augustus Bridle anticipated in 1921, the Salisbury portrait achieves the public mask King would wear to achieve victory at the ballot box for the next quarter century. “We may trust Hon. Mackenzie King to simulate a vast moving-picture smile of high benevolence and great sagacity” as he attempted to reconcile political conflicts in French and English-Canada.¹⁵⁹⁷

King was nevertheless conscious of the fact that he could be criticized for having his portrait painted by an English rather than a Canadian artist, particularly since he had always intended to have it hung in Parliament. He was not averse to Salisbury’s exhibiting the painting at the Royal Academy in London in December since “it will of course add immensely to the value of the portrait.” But he asked him “to keep it out of sight until that time; say nothing about it. In the meantime, the meeting will have taken place at Washington between Truman, Attlee and myself. Parliament will probably be adjourning. Members will be scattered and there would not likely be the same adverse criticism as having had a painting made while in England. Then it could come out to Canada later.” He contacted H.O. McCurry who indicated the National Gallery would be pleased to look after Salisbury’s painting until it was donated to Parliament since the Gallery had no good portrait of the Prime Minister. Frank and Maude Salisbury were delighted when they saw both “The King Saluting Canada” and “The Rt. Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie King”

¹⁵⁹⁶ Diary October 18, 19, 20, 22, 1945. King described Salisbury painting his portrait in a letter to Joan Patteson included in his diary of October 21, 1945, pages 1015 (a)—1015 (d). “You know how my spirit responds to the beautiful in thought, in word and sound, so you will, therefore, be able to imagine the effect the environment had on me during the week.” Louis St. Laurent was also enthusiastic after seeing the Salisburys and viewing King’s portrait at Sarum Chase. “He said, after meeting them and seeing the house, he could understand the very happy look on my face in the painting.” Diary January 25, 1946. See also Diary October 30, 1945, June 10 and July 26, 1946.

¹⁵⁹⁷ Augustus Bridle, “The Grandson of a Patriot: Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie King,” in his *The Masques of Ottawa*. By “Domino” [pseud.] (Toronto: Macmillan, 1921), 64.

exhibited at the National Gallery in September of 1946. “They were both more pleased than ever with my portrait. Maude said the two pictures marked the high water mark in Frank’s painting. That of the Coronation picture, in his ceremonial paintings, and in the portraits, one of myself.”¹⁵⁹⁸



C-031304

The 1947 unveiling of the Sir Robert Borden and Mackenzie King portraits.

“The Rt. Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie King” was unveiled, along with Sir Robert Borden’s portrait by the Toronto artist Kenneth Forbes, inside Parliament’s Confederation Hall on June 10, 1947, the twentieth anniversary of King’s tenure as Prime Minister. The event was not unlike the many regal ceremonies Frank Salisbury had painted in England. Present were the Governor General of Canada, Field Marshal Viscount Alexander of Tunis, President Truman and Fleet Admiral W.D. Leahy, the Speakers of the House of Commons and of the Senate who presided, Mackenzie King, Government Leaders, Opposition Leaders and Members of the House and Senate. Kenneth Forbes and Salisbury were both acknowledged and bowed to the assembled company before their paintings were unveiled. The Governor General affirmed that “Now these

¹⁵⁹⁸ Diary October 20, 1945, February 4 and 14, 1946, September 28, 1946. See also September 11, 1946 and May 5, 1947.

noble pictures of two great Canadians, from the brush of distinguished portrait painters of world-wide reputation, find a happy and fitting home in the very heart and centre of the Canada they have both served so loyally and have loved so well.” Senator C.C. Ballantyne, a former minister in Borden’s government, declared that it was fitting “that these two illustrious Prime Ministers should have their portraits placed for ever in these parliament buildings, as a constant reminder to present and future generations, and to the thousands of visitors passing through our portals, of the great and loyal service rendered by them to king and country.”¹⁵⁹⁹

King had laboured to create such a lasting memory and ideal of service through all the public art he had commissioned or dedicated. He closed his own remarks with the “hope that, to those who seek a noble calling, the memory of this occasion will serve to lend a glow to public life and to reveal the richness of the rewards of public service.” He had achieved placing his own “God statue” inside the temple, in Parliament’s Gothic Revival Confederation Hall with its fan vaulted ceiling, limestone pillars and adjoining Hall of Fame. And he had done so with a portrait by one of the world’s most commercially successful artists, “Britain’s Painter Laureate.” As Pierre Bourdieu had posited, King referred to the higher social status, personal authority and culture conveyed on him by Frank Salisbury’s portrait. “Perhaps nothing could better illustrate Mr. Salisbury’s skill as an artist than what he has been able to make of me! I am indeed grateful to him for including me among the number of those to whom his brush has of itself helped to bring distinction.” Salisbury’s portrait, with its didacticism and confident projection of character and authority, echoes J.W.L. Forster’s portrait of William Lyon Mackenzie holding his “Petition to the King for a redress of grievances” painted nearly a half-century earlier. King had himself drawn a comparison between the two painters, writing, “Salisbury is to me what Forster was to my father.” He had inscribed himself—just as he had inscribed his grandfather with Walter Allward’s Mackenzie monument erected outside the Ontario Parliament building in 1940—among the pantheon of Canada’s great founding statesmen. In his diary, King referenced the recognition given to him by the Governor General in the presence of President Truman. “If

¹⁵⁹⁹ *Unveiling of Portraits of Canada’s Prime Ministers in Two World Wars: The Late Right Hon. Sir Robert L. Borden and The Right Hon. W.L. Mackenzie King, June 10, 1947* (Ottawa:

anyone would have me believe that there was not behind all this a plan that was being worked out by invisible forces representing Divine Providence, and something of the inevitable Justice, I should tell him that he lacked ordinary intelligence. To speak of this as co-incidence is just perfect nonsense. It is evidence of a moral order based on Righteousness and Justice which in the end rules the world and determines the final issues.” In what is perhaps also not a coincidence, King concluded his diary entry for June 10 by citing a line from his reading of the 41st chapter of Genesis. “I was struck in reading this chapter with the line: ‘And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand.’”¹⁶⁰⁰

The Apparent Triumph of the “Priestly” Mackenzie King

The installation of King’s portrait in Parliament was a personal triumph for the Prime Minister but marked a disaster for Canadian artists and cultural nationalists. King’s decade-long relationship with Frank Salisbury reconfirmed all the worst characteristics of his dealings with artists as determined by his *habiti* over the past half-century. These included his belief that his relationship with artists should be built on friendship; that artists should share his Christian, spiritual and psychic convictions; that artists could compete very successfully in the international field of cultural production without government assistance; that art was universal and that Canadian nationality did not confer special privileges; that the arts were largely the property of the wealthy and upper classes; that art was based on exact representation and not on abstraction or individual self-expression in whatever form; and that he and Canada must obey the will of God. Even his conception of beauty was God-sent. When he saw the Salisburys in Sarum Chase again in November of 1947 and they sang hymns together and listened to Maude playing the piano surrounded by beautiful paintings, King concluded, “There is no accounting for my having come into the midst of this beauty of thought and its expression in so many forms except the

King’s Printer, 1947), 5.

¹⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., 7. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Richard Nice, trans. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 282. Diary April 15, 1943 and June 10, 1947.

Providence that has been guarding and directing my path despite all I may have done, from time to time, to miss the way.”¹⁶⁰¹

Frank Salisbury essentially gave King and his other clients what they wanted. According to his biographer, he “could capture whatever mood his sitter wished to be portrayed in. He painted them at their best. He was a flatterer. Salisbury was satisfying his customers...His portraits are absolutely conventional, dignified and beautiful, which was precisely what his successful and conventional subjects required.” In his critical assessment of the artist, Nigel McMurray cited an obituary from the September 1, 1962 *Guardian* which noted the “complete divorce between the fashionable portrait painter and his patrons and the artistic establishment and its twentieth century movements.”¹⁶⁰²

Mackenzie King had asked Salisbury to address both Houses of Parliament as part of the tribute paid by the special sitting in honour of his twentieth anniversary as Prime Minister that preceded the unveiling of his portrait.¹⁶⁰³ Fortunately, President Truman’s decision to come to Ottawa cut short the special Parliamentary session and Salisbury was spared “freely” expressing his strong views on art. He was a fierce critic of the Royal Academy in London and was never accepted by it as a member. In an interesting variation on artistic conflict in Canada, he had begun attacking the Academy in 1921—the year King became Prime Minister—because “artists of reputation and distinction, who have continuously exhibited for up to 10, 20 or 40 years, have been ruthlessly thrown aside”; and the Academy’s Hanging Committee, “I am given to understand, is composed of men mostly of the new school.”¹⁶⁰⁴ In 1929 he attacked the Walker Gallery in Liverpool for its Autumn Exhibition and “your cubism, your impressionism and degrading realism.” And in the chapter “The Challenge to Beauty” that precedes the chapter “Canada” in both his *Portrait and*

¹⁶⁰¹ Diary November 16, 1947.

¹⁶⁰² McMurray, 71, 72, 311. For example, although the National Gallery of Canada exhibited three of Salisbury’s paintings in 1946, the Gallery’s website indicates that it does not have a single painting by the artist in its collection.

¹⁶⁰³ Salisbury, *Sarum Chase*, 179-80.

¹⁶⁰⁴ Frank O. Salisbury, “Distinguished Painters Rejected,” *The Times*, May 14, 1921 cited in McMurray, 322.

Pageant and *Sarum Chase*, he affirmed that “Art is at its best where it seems to be Nature” and attacked “the modern critic’s praise of the worship of ugliness and obscurity.” “Is it not the Nazi idea in Art? It is a generation since Germany tried to destroy the Bible with its higher criticism, but the Bible remains unshaken. Now a quisling spirit appears to be seeking to break down our idealism in Art and set up a pagan school to worship ugliness.”¹⁶⁰⁵

Mackenzie King was in total agreement with Salisbury’s anti-modernism and perceived his canvases with the same eyes with which he had admired the old masters during his 1899-1900 tour of European museums and galleries. “All his work has the Titian touch about it, with Rembrandt colourings, but there is a beauty in all his portraits that I have not seen in most of the pictures by the old Masters. He speaks of liking to keep the old masters’ touch, hates the modern trends—modernistic schools, etc.; regards them as degenerate, which I think they are.” He noted Salisbury’s address on art and life to the National Liberal Club in London in 1948 and the following year, “a fine article from *Graphic* by Frank Salisbury, ‘This terrible wave of Modernism.’” In the *Daily Graphic*, the artist had cited Psalm 90:17, “Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us,” and asserted that “Seldom in human experience has the citadel of art and the temple of beauty been so rudely assailed... Art critics applaud incompetence, gross and debased ugliness in form and colour. Beauty and fine craftsmanship are denounced as old fashioned. Therefore we get this terrible wave of modernism.”¹⁶⁰⁶

In addition to reinforcing Mackenzie King’s extreme conservative views on art, Salisbury also distorted the Prime Minister’s sense of the value of cultural products. Like other artists before him, he had presented his 1937 portrait sketch, the 1941 “The King Saluting Canada,” and the 1944 portrait of Isabel King free of charge. The Prime Minister had noted that while Kenneth Forbes had been paid by the government for Sir Robert Borden’s portrait, he had donated his own portrait to Parliament at no charge. “Financially this is a gift of of over \$7,500 [\$92,000 in

¹⁶⁰⁵ McMurray, 319. Salisbury, *Portrait and Pageant*, 162, 161, 163 and *Sarum Chase*, 174, 173, 175.

¹⁶⁰⁶ Diary May 14, 1944, October 12, 1948, August 31, 1949. Frank Salisbury, *Daily Graphic*, August 27, 1949 cited in McMurray, 329-30.

2014 dollars]—an amount equal to half my salary as P.M. for a year.” Yet he had also discovered from John D. Rockefeller Jr., whom he had urged to engage Salisbury for his own portrait and portraits of his family, “the amount Salisbury was asking which Mr. R. said to me he thought were ‘certainly most reasonable.’ The letter shows that for the portrait he painted of me, Salisbury only charged 1/3 of his usual fee and in addition presented me with portrait frame.”¹⁶⁰⁷ He had also learned the previous year that Salisbury had spent the evenings for a couple of months writing the manuscript “What the Experiences of Life Have Taught Me” for which he had been offered \$250 [\$3,348 in 2014 dollars]. King noted that “He had done the writing just for the joy of it and a message he might leave” and estimated that “In an equivalent amount of time, he could easily have made in painting at least \$250,000 [\$3.348 million in 2014 dollars].”¹⁶⁰⁸ Like Felix de Weldon, Salisbury’s “great hobby was driving his black Rolls Royce with its silver model of a knight in armour atop its specially reinforced radiator.”¹⁶⁰⁹ While some Canadian artists were starving and gave up their profession because of a lack of demand for their cultural products, Mackenzie King interacted with de Weldon and Salisbury who were living in luxury. In his dealings with Guiseppe Guastalla and Frank Salisbury in the 1930s and 1940s, King literally placed his cultural, social and financial capital in the hands of foreign rather than Canadian artists.

Creating the City of God

Nothing illustrates the diametrically opposed visions of Canadian artists and Mackenzie King better than the artists’ attempts to create and disseminate cultural products across Canada via a comprehensive chain of community centres and Mackenzie King’s three-decades long involvement in the use of town-planning, architecture, landscaping and public sculpture to transform Ottawa from a sleepy backwoods provincial town into an international cultural capital

¹⁶⁰⁷ Diary January 10, 1947. King also paid Salisbury \$816 [\$10,000 in 2014 dollars] for several photomechanical reproductions of his 1945 portrait made by the Alfred Bell Co. in London in 1946 that were sent to the National Gallery. These were signed in pencil by Salisbury and King. See LAC item MIKAN no. 3959540. Diary May 5, 1947.

¹⁶⁰⁸ Diary October 1, 1946.

on par with Paris and Washington. Rodney Fowler posits that in his attempt to advance a national identity in the national capital landscape, “between the early 1900s and 1939 William Lyon Mackenzie King exercised almost complete aesthetic control.”¹⁶¹⁰

In addition to rehabilitating his grandfather, William Lyon Mackenzie, King was driven by this further guiding narrative—the creation of Ottawa as a capital exemplifying Canada’s new status as “a nation among the Nations of the World”—that led him to allocate resources towards the establishment of national institutions and edifices rather than towards the cultural needs of individual artists and their public. As he wrote in his diary in 1940, “I feel I must from now on, more than ever, seek to bring to their full fruition, the forces that have been working through the past and are working now in the present, to bring into being the newer and higher civilization which I believe will come through the defeat of Germany in this present war.” The following year he hoped “some day to see the Ottawa flow through the centre of the new Capital of Canada that is to be after the war & which with God’s help & if it be His will I may help to bring into being.” When he laid the cornerstone of the new Lord Elgin Hotel, the *Ottawa Journal* reported, “he likened the Elgin street of the future to the beautiful thoroughfares leading to the Parliament buildings in Washington, London and Paris. In every capital there was one street that stood above the others, and Elgin was the street in Ottawa.” During the debate on the Ottawa Bill in Parliament in 1944, he spoke on behalf of his vision of “A Capital City which would be a model to other cities and other countries. As now we had the War Memorial symbolical of the last war in the heart of the Capital, so succeeding generations would have, as the Memorial of this war, the national capital in the form of a greater Ottawa...It would be a great symbol of the elements

¹⁶⁰⁹ McMurray, 261.

¹⁶¹⁰ Rodney A. Fowler, “The Image of Canada: National Identity in the Capital’s Landscape,” Ph.D. thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1998, 150. On King’s role in Ottawa’s redevelopment, see in addition to Fowler, David L.A. Gordon, “From Noblesse Oblige to Nationalism: Elite Involvement in Planning Canada’s Capital,” *Journal of Urban History* 28:1 (November 2001) and “William Lyon Mackenzie King, planning advocate,” *Planning Perspectives* 17 (2002); Susan Phillips-DesRoches, “Canada’s National War Memorial: Reflection of the Past or Liberal Dream?” MA thesis, Carleton University, 2002; and David L.A. Gordon and Brian S. Osborne, “Constructing national identity in Canada’s capital, 1900-2000: Confederation Square and the National War Memorial,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 30 (2004).

that have gone to make the present Canada what it is, and the future of Canada what it will become.” And after the end of the Second World War, he evoked what to him was Matthew Arnold’s signature poem, “Rugby Chapel,” with its concluding line about humanity’s march “On, to the City of God.” He was sure that “if there ever was a time that one was on a great mission, where there is need to help nations, I have that mission today.” “These very lines appearing at the close of this particular poem, helping others on to ‘the bound of the waste,’ ‘on to the City of God’ makes one believe that surely they have reference to the devastation of the past and the new life of the nation ahead.”¹⁶¹¹

King had become enchanted with several European cities beginning with his first journey through the continent in 1900 and perceived how cities themselves could be like a work of art. In Venice he marveled as “the waning moon rose above the buildings & poured out its light on the towers, the canal & the cathedral. The view was one never to be forgotten, song, water, music, colour, sea air, silence. All is poetry here. The loveliest city I have ever seen.” During his 1934 European trip, he recorded that “the great parks of Paris & environs are an example to the world. How I wish I could help to make a small Paris of Ottawa.” Back in the French capital for the opening of the Paris Peace Conference after World War II, he still found that “I love the way in which the city is laid out and what it expresses of the human spirit.”¹⁶¹²

In addition to Paris, the design of Washington, D.C., had the strongest hold on King’s imagination of what Canada’s capital should be like. After he met with President Calvin Coolidge at the White House in 1927, he visited the Lincoln Memorial and drove through the beautiful parks in the city, noting that “the parks are much larger than ours in Ottawa, the buildings much finer. The country is spending this year 230 millions on buildings alone.”¹⁶¹³

¹⁶¹¹ Diary October 7, 1940 and July 16, 1941. “Premier Tells of Future Elgin Street: Greber Plan Calls for Big Changes,” *Ottawa Journal*, February 28, 1941. Diary April 21, 1944 and September 28, 1945. See also June 26 and June 28, 1948.

¹⁶¹² Diary June 16, 1900, October 28, 1934 and July 30, 1946.

¹⁶¹³ Diary November 23, 1927. For King’s actions to redevelop Ottawa, “changing its aspect completely from a town to a capital city,” see Diary February 3, and May 11, 1923; March 24 and April 18, 1926; October 24 and 25, 1927; April 11, 14 and July 23, 1928; April 3, 1931; and

King's plans to make Ottawa a capital worthy of other major urban centres he had seen in the United States, England and Europe intensified in the late 1920s. When he returned to Canada the end of October 1928 from his visit to Vimy Ridge, lunch with King George V at Buckingham Palace and meeting Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin in London, he was gratified that most of his Cabinet, the head of the U.S. legation, the High Commissioner for Great Britain and the mayor and civic officials warmly welcomed him at the Ottawa train station. A procession led by Mayor Ellis, accompanied by pipers playing a march, conducted King to the City Hall and then to Laurier House. They passed the ruins of the Russell Hotel which burned down in April and the remains of the adjoining Russell Theatre, demolished in August. For Canadian artists the demolition of Ottawa's only legitimate touring house initiated a debate about the possibility of a Canadian national theatre. Duncan Campbell Scott and others associated with the Ottawa Little Theatre urged that the federal government appoint a royal commission to consider the feasibility of the federal government subsidizing "theatres throughout Canada for the production of a national drama."¹⁶¹⁴

When King was informed in April of 1928 that the elegant Russell Hotel at Elgin next to the Russell Theatre was on fire, the Prime Minister "did not trouble going up to see it" but examined the damage on his way to church the next day. "It is pretty much a ruin, the front at present covered with ice, but the interior pretty well gutted. This will make easier & speedier its demolition." He "could not help wishing the Russell Theatre had as well been burned, for there is some agitation to retain it till another is built & it looks in shape for some years yet. However I imagine the plan for a larger open square in the heart of the city will go through." Upon his return from Europe, King did not reflect about how to restore a venue for professional touring productions to the city but thought of his larger vision of Canada's capital. "I saw something of the improvements—Russell House gone & most of the theatre," he wrote in his diary. "The effect

February 22, 1934. H.S. Southam to King, November 27, 1934. King to Southam, December 7, 1934. LAC reel C3678, pages 173506-09.

¹⁶¹⁴ See William Arthur Deacon, "National Drama for Canada by Government Subsidies" and "A Subsidized Theatre for National Drama," *Toronto Mail and Empire*, November 16, 1929; Merrill

is becoming apparent & the people are beginning to respond. There is no doubt what I have done for Ottawa is being appreciated. It was a great home coming.” He found that “The changes are truly remarkable; the city is quite different in appearance; a visible change has been made.”¹⁶¹⁵

Mackenzie King was already being attacked in Parliament in 1928 regarding his vision of transforming Ottawa, citing in his diary the accusation that “The P.M. was seeking a monument for himself.” But he was undeterred and upon being returned to office in 1935 obtained an Order in Council in November of 1936 appointing the French architect and urban planner Jacques Gréber as an advisor to the architects engaged by the Department of Public Works and the Federal District Improvement Commission, established in 1927, for Ottawa’s redevelopment. Gréber was a proponent of the Beaux Arts style King favoured and was the master architect for the 1937 Paris International Exposition. He had designed the master plan for the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in Philadelphia in 1917 and had created plazas above railways in Chicago and New York. The Prime Minister sought his advice on the “development of Supreme Court and other buildings, also centre of city and bank of the Ottawa, linking all into one harmonious whole. This clearly is the sensible thing to do before final decision reached on exact location of War Memorial, tearing down of Post Office building, and erection of Supreme Court and new offices for Prime Minister, etc.” Already in 1937, when King inspected and applauded the new building of the French embassy, he saw the construction of its “very fine edifice” as a sign of “how Ottawa is growing into a city of another and higher order—the international.” When Gréber proposed that the planned War Memorial be centered facing down the head of a widened Elgin Street, King “at once saw that I had my Champs Elysées, Arc de Triomphe and Place de la Concorde all at a single stroke.”¹⁶¹⁶

Denison, “Canada Can Have No National Theatre,” *Toronto Star*, November 19, 1929; and Herman Voaden, “Government Owned Theatres?” *Toronto Globe*, November 30, 1929.

¹⁶¹⁵ Diary April 15, October 29, and November 1, 1928. King comments on how fires in Ottawa and Hull aided his efforts to redevelop the greater Ottawa area in his March 29, 1946 diary.

¹⁶¹⁶ Diary May 5, 1928, November 26, 1936, August 5, and 12, 1937. King to the Canadian Minister to France, January 16, 1937. LAC reel C3729, pages 207288-90. Gréber’s 1937 resumé can be found on LAC reel C4263, pages 121310-13.

Jacques Gréber returned to France at the outbreak of World War II. But as soon as the war was over, and even before Japan had signed the terms of surrender, King cabled the architect in August of 1945 that the Cabinet had selected the redevelopment of Ottawa as Canada's national war memorial and that he would be responsible for the master plan for an expanded Federal District covering 900 square miles on both sides of the Ottawa River. He used the occasion of General De Gaulle's visit to Ottawa on August 29 to make this announcement after securing De Gaulle's permission for Gréber to return to Canada to continue his work. *Saturday Night*, in "Canada's Capital to Become Nation's War Memorial," stated that Canada was the first nation in the world to dedicate her capital as a memorial to those who had died in World War II and cited Gréber that all of Ottawa would become "a living remembrance." His master plan, *Saturday Night* asserted, "will some day make Ottawa one of the most beautiful capitals in the world...He believes that cities should be planned and zoned so that they will be beautiful, and so that the people in them will be able to lead safe, healthy, happy lives. Town planning recognizes the influence of surroundings on the soul of a people...He visualizes Ottawa as a Geneva of the future."¹⁶¹⁷

In October of 1947 King put through another Order in Council giving the Federal District Commission the power to expropriate sites for industries and to eliminate the cross-town railways. He and Gréber also agreed that another bridge must be built across the Ottawa River to relieve traffic congestion in the centre of the city. Before he resigned as Prime Minister in November of 1948, King discussed plans with Gréber to develop a war memorial in the Gatineau hills two miles outside Ottawa that would show the European battlefields and Canada's contributions to winning the Second World War. He suggested having "plinths carry the record of the battles of the war just as the last war of 1914-18 was recorded inside the peace tower. Significant facts could be recorded on the stones to be cut in the mountainside." Gréber planned to connect the memorial with Ottawa through a boulevard to be called the Mackenzie King Boulevard. A great memorial terrace at the foot of the Gatineau hills would provide an imposing

¹⁶¹⁷ Janet R. Keith, "Canada's Capital to Become Nation's War Memorial," *Saturday Night* 61:15 (December 15, 1945), 6.

panoramic view of the capital. In a preliminary report to Parliament, Gréber indicated that “The terrace would lie at the foot of a large wall facing the city, and formed of the natural stone of the ground, and on which inscriptions and symbols would portray the glorious deeds of the Canadian forces, while the National Capital Plan would appear, in reality, from the terrace. A memorial room would be incorporated in the design, and therein would be perpetuated the names of Canadian heroes.”¹⁶¹⁸

By the end of his life, King had achieved his aim of enshrining the unselfish heroism and nobility of Canadians, from the sacrifice of Bert Harper at the beginning of the century to the sacrifice of Canadians during World War II. He had led the transformation of Canada from colony to independent nation and, through the 1946 Canadian Citizenship Act, of Canadians from being British subjects living in Canada to Canadian citizens. King himself received the first Canadian citizenship in January of 1947. He had rehabilitated the reputation of his grandfather, William Lyon Mackenzie, as a champion of responsible government and democracy and had positioned himself and Canada as a champion for peace and freedom on the international level. These interrelated narratives gave an overall meaning and purpose to King’s life. In 1937, while he was engaged in transforming Ottawa into an international capital, he confided in his diary that “Some day if a statue of grandfather could find its place on Parliament Hill, I would be glad and would feel the right thing had been done. If I were worthy of one near by, and each could be near the Mackenzie Tower part of the Hill, I should be happy, wherever my spirit might be.”¹⁶¹⁹ King’s belief in the “soul purifying” effect of art and music in 1900 and in “helping the soul of our people” through the creation of a national theatre and opera and a department of fine arts, as he intimated to the Dominion Drama Festival in 1934, had been submerged by other life narratives generated by his *habiti*.

The Eventual Vindication of the “Prophet” Artists

¹⁶¹⁸ Diary March 19, 1948. “Idea Developed By Mackenzie King,” *Ottawa Citizen*, April 30, 1949.

I analyzed in chapters VII and IX how the Canada-wide organizing by artists for government support of arts and culture before and after World War I generated significant public and media support and significantly increased the social, cultural and political capital of artists. Yet this symbolic capital was unable to significantly challenge the “priestly” Mackenzie King who had largely monopolized cultural, political and statist capital in the fields of culture and politics. King was such an insurmountable opponent to the “prophet” artists challenging him because he truly believed for half a century that he was an instrument of God. He entered the 1930 federal election “with the belief that God is on my side, that I am being guided in order to fulfil a destiny, the instrument of other lives to work out God’s purpose as they have sought to effect in dealings with His people & to pass on to others a greater faith.”¹⁶²⁰ He not only believed that he had the power to cure his dying mother and ailing terrier Pat through the laying on of hands and channeling Dr. Louis Pasteur. During the 1935 federal election he also wrote that “It seems to me I am being led into the mystery of where I shall really feel that the hand of the Lord is upon me...& where with loins girded up I shall be ready also to run—and with an increased power of healing, of animals, of humans, and of the Nation.”¹⁶²¹

In *The Field of Cultural Production*, Pierre Bourdieu posited that “the opposition between orthodoxy and heresy...is constitutive of all fields of cultural production.” His observation that “Those in dominant positions operate essentially defensive strategies designed to perpetuate the status quo by maintaining themselves and the principles on which their dominance is based,” accurately characterizes Prime Minister Mackenzie King and his unalterable cultural orthodoxy. In his study, Bourdieu wrote that “The dominant are drawn towards silence, discretion and secrecy, and their orthodox discourse, which is only ever wrung from them by the need to rectify the heresies of the newcomers, is never more than the explicit affirmation of self-evident principles which go without saying and would go better unsaid.” As discussed in chapter IX, Canadian artists refused to accept their marginalization as a historical and social law and to

¹⁶¹⁹ Diary August 14, 1937.

¹⁶²⁰ Diary June 1, 1930.

¹⁶²¹ Diary August 11, 1935. He is referencing Kings XVIII, “And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins.” On faith healing and Pasteur, see Diary March 15, 1938.

“misrecognize”—what Bourdieu also referred to as *doxa*—their social marginalization as the normal order of things. Bourdieu therefore suggested that the initiative in the struggle with “priestly” orthodoxy lay with the “prophet” artists. “‘Social problems’ are social relations: they emerge from confrontations between two groups, two systems of antagonistic interests and theses. In the relationship which constitutes them, the choice of the moment and sites of battle is left to the initiative of the challengers, who break the silence of the *doxa* and call into question the unproblematic, taken-for-granted world of the dominant groups.”¹⁶²²

When he expanded Max Weber’s model of religious change to encompass all phases of cultural and social life, Bourdieu suggested that neither orthodox “priests” nor subversive “prophets” could succeed without building a community of followers. “The prophet’s power rests upon the force of the group he can mobilize.”¹⁶²³ Canadian artists and cultural nationalists had supporters and followers. Mackenzie King did not. By establishing the Canadian Arts Council in 1945, artists had created the mechanism to perpetuate their lobbying for government support of government officials who eventually were able to influence government policies after Mackenzie King stepped down as Prime Minister in 1948.

Herman Voaden, the first president of the Canadian Arts Council, continued pressing King himself. In April of 1946, he reminded the Prime Minister of the submissions made to the 1944 House of Commons Reconstruction Committee and renewed the artists’ proposal that the Government set aside “\$10,000,000 [\$134 million in 2014 dollars] to be used to provide grants-in-aid to the provinces to encourage the building of community centres.” These centres would be serviced by a National Arts Board similar to the Arts Council (formerly the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts) in England. The National Arts Board could also “provide

¹⁶²² Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. Randal Johnson, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 182, 83. For a discussion of *doxa*, see Cécile Deer, “Doxa” in Michael Grenfel, ed. *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts* (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008).

¹⁶²³ Pierre Bourdieu, “Legitimation and Structured Interests in Weber’s Sociology of Religion” in *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity*, Scott Lash, Sam Whimster, eds. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 129.

cultural information and services as required by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. In this phase of its activities it would be an indigenous Canadian development, perhaps along similar lines to the British Council.” Voaden referred to a January 22 letter received from Brooke Claxton, the Minister of Health and Welfare, which explained that government policy with regard to community centres “ordinarily would fall under provincial jurisdiction,” indicating that the artists continued to lobby and look to Claxton as a supporter of the arts. Arnold Heeney, Clerk of the Privy Council and Secretary to the Cabinet, replied to Voaden on April 20 with the standard response that “Mr. King feels that there would be better opportunity for considering the Council's proposals at a time when Parliament is not in session, and when the pressure of public business is not so great as it is at present.” In the meantime, “the Prime Minister has taken note of the Council's representations and copies of your letter have been sent, at his direction, to the Ministers principally interested, so that they may give consideration to the Council's views.”¹⁶²⁴

¹⁶²⁴ Herman Voaden to King, April 16, 1946. Arnold Heeney to Voaden, April 20, 1946. LAC reel C9180, pages 379724-30. Voaden continued to implement the CAC's strategy of pointing out that Canada was not fulfilling its obligations to UNESCO. Following the June 1946 CAC conference, he telegraphed the Prime Minister before King departed for the Paris Peace Conference in July, urging that Canada's ratification of the UNESCO charter “be preceded by free debate in Parliament” and not by Order in Council, “followed by conference of national bodies called to arrange for their participation in the work of the organization as suggested in article seven of the charter.” In 1947 he again wrote King protesting that “the government has not yet fulfilled its obligations and set up a National Commission” although Canada was committed to paying “approximately \$250,000 [\$3.085 million in 2014 dollars] for the central organization in Paris. Common sense indicates that if we are to realize on this investment we should be prepared to spend a comparable amount at home to set up a National Commission and put the programme into operation.” Voaden copied his letter to the leaders of the Progressive Conservative, CCF and Social Credit parties and sent a mimeographed copy to individual members of the House of Commons. It listed among the CAC's officers Ernest Fosbery as Honorary President, Lawren Harris as one of the Vice-Presidents, Elizabeth Wyn Wood as chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, and F.R. Scott as chair of the Copyright Committee. J.W. Noseworthy, the CCF Member for York South, informed Voaden in 1949 that the Canadian government paid UNESCO \$311,640 [\$3.846 million in 2014 dollars] in 1947; \$320,772 in 1948; and \$297,980 in 1949. In answer to his question in Parliament ““How much has been spent in each of these three years in Canada in implementing the programme of UNESCO?”, the reply for each year is ‘Nil.’” Voaden to King, July 8, 1946 and April 30, 1947. J.W. Noseworthy to

In May of 1947 Voaden also lobbied Louis St. Laurent, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, regarding the establishment of a Canadian National UNESCO Commission. His communication referred to a meeting with Lester Pearson, the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, and an April 15 written assurance from Pearson that Canada would establish a National Commission before the next UNESCO conference. He also corresponded with Pearson regarding his inquiry whether arts organizations would be willing to sponsor visits of artists from war-devastated countries to Canada. In January of 1948, Voaden circulated a “Report on Conferences with The Honorable Paul Martin, Minister of Health and Welfare, and The Honorable Louis St. Laurent, Secretary of State for External Affairs, Wednesday, December 17, 1947” to the member organizations of the Canadian Arts Council. A delegation of fifteen consisting of CAC officers and representatives of eleven of its national organizations attended the two meetings in the House of Commons. The report indicated that Paul Martin was sympathetic to the CAC’s submission that the Division of Physical Fitness be broadened to include a cultural component, that a CAC representative be appointed to the Physical Fitness Council, and that the Department of Health and Welfare provide a grant for an executive secretary to enable the CAC to assume this additional work load. Such a grant, however, was “a matter in which he would have to secure the approval of his colleagues in the Cabinet.” Voaden indicated that Paul Martin gave his “assurance of his genuine concern for the arts and his appreciation of the interest of the Arts Council and its member societies in making its submission.”

The report on the meeting with Louis St. Laurent regarding the establishment of a Canadian National UNESCO Commission was less positive. St. Laurent was dissatisfied with the ineffectiveness of UNESCO and maintained there were constitutional difficulties because education was under provincial jurisdiction. “Finally, he echoed what is probably the prevailing sentiment of cabinet ministers when he suggested that music, literature, theatre and the visual arts do not really have a wide popular appeal in Canada—their place having been taken by the

Voaden, November 18, 1949. Herman Voaden fonds, York University Archives and Special Collections, call nos. 1982-019/003 (13), 1982-019/001 (15) and 1982-019/003 (33).

movies, the radio and the more popular magazines and newspapers.” St. Laurent “noted with some interest and surprise, however, that no public outcry had been made about the recent ban on the importation of comic magazines.” Voaden suggested that St. Laurent’s responses “constitute a challenge to the Arts Council and its national membership” and proposed a lobbying campaign aimed at all 245 members of Parliament, including the sixteen Cabinet ministers. “Perhaps the greatest lack of faith is concentrated in the cabinet.” His report concluded by printing the January 16, 1948 communication from Lester Pearson on behalf of Louis St. Laurent thanking the CAC for its proposals.¹⁶²⁵

Reviewing the arts organizing by artists and cultural nationalists in the 1940s beginning with the 1941 Kingston Conference, the founding of the Federation of Canadian Artists, the 1944 submissions by sixteen national arts organizations to the House of Commons Reconstruction Committee, the organizing by the Canadian Arts Council, and the leadership in these efforts by Vincent Massey’s friends Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson and Sir Ernest Macmillan, Claude Bissell concluded that “From these activities had emerged a political ideology of the arts,” an ideology with which Massey had great sympathy. He accepted the chairmanship of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences in part, Bissell wrote, because Massey “knew that he could count upon faithful allies and could draw support from groups who had learned how to articulate their ideas and present them to a wide public.”¹⁶²⁶

I outlined Vincent Massey’s extensive patronage and involvement in the arts and his rivalry with Mackenzie King in the cultural and political field in chapter X. In the struggle between artists

¹⁶²⁵ King to Louis St. Laurent, May 1, 1947. Pearson to Voaden, August 6, 1947. Voaden to Pearson, August 25, 1947. “Report on Conferences with The Honorable Paul Martin, Minister of Health and Welfare, and The Honorable Louis St. Laurent, Secretary of State for External Affairs, Wednesday, December 17, 1947.” Herman Voaden fonds, call nos. 1982-019/003 (19) and (21).

¹⁶²⁶ Claude Bissell, *The Imperial Canadian: Vincent Massey in Office* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 200. Roy MacLaren noted that, like the Canadian Arts Council, Massey also had a great interest in UNESCO and became the chairman of the Canadian delegation to its first session in London in November of 1945. See Roy MacLaren. *Commissions High: Canada in London, 1870-1971* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006), 381.

and King over the nature of arts and culture in Canada, Massey can also be regarded as a “prophet” with subversion strategies combating the orthodoxy of the “priestly” Mackenzie King. Because of his great social, cultural and financial capital, Massey attracted the “followers” who were eventually able to convince Louis St. Laurent to establish, over his own initial misgivings, both the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences and the Canada Council. Arnold Heeney, who attended the Liberal Summer Conference organized by Massey in 1933, recalled that Paul Martin also attended and that “Brooke Claxton’s subsequent entry into active politics was precipitated by his experience at Port Hope.”¹⁶²⁷ Clause Bissell recorded that Massey had helped to launch Paul Martin’s political career and that “The young man, rapidly moving upward in the political world, never forgot his early indebtedness to Vincent, and was in his later, influential years to acknowledge that indebtedness actively and generously.” Bissell noted of Brooke Claxton that even after Mackenzie King appointed Massey as the High Commissioner to London in 1935, Claxton “still thought of Massey as a potential political leader.” In April of 1938 he wrote Massey that “There is moreover, a growing feeling in well informed circles in Ottawa that King must give way to a more vigorous leader if Confederation is to be saved. I would not be surprised if that was the view of several members of the Cabinet to-day.”¹⁶²⁸

Paul Litt characterized Claxton after he joined King’s Cabinet as Minister of National Health and Welfare in October of 1944 as “the cultural community’s unofficial representative inside the government” who “often proposed new policies in cultural affairs.”

In April 1946, for example, he urged Prime Minister Mackenzie King to consolidate the administration of the government’s cultural institutions and to put Vincent Massey in charge of them upon his return from his post as high commissioner in London. The only problem with this proposal was that King did not particularly want Massey involved in his government or his government involved in culture. The days of ‘Babbitt Rex’ as

¹⁶²⁷ Heeney, 33. David Jay Bercuson noted of Claxton’s important friendships that the most important “was the one with Arnold Heeney—then principal secretary to W.L. Mackenzie King—who became Claxton’s link to the new generation of bureaucrats that was about to transform the government of Canada.” See David Jay Bercuson, *True Patriot: The Life of Brooke Claxton, 1898-1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 93.

¹⁶²⁸ Bissell, 62.

prime minister were numbered, however, and Claxton decided to bide his time until the advent of a new regime.¹⁶²⁹

Claxton had been an important Liberal Party organizer in federal elections and was on the National Liberal Federation Committee that refined resolutions submitted for the August 1948 National Liberal Convention called to select a successor to Mackenzie King and review Party policies. He refined and synthesized a resolution submitted by the Canadian University Liberal Federation that called for a government commission to investigate cultural institutions such as the CBC, the National Gallery, the Public Archives, a National Library, the National Film Board and academic scholarships. Recalling the artists' 1944 submissions to the House of Commons Reconstruction Committee, Claxton added government support for the arts to the policy proposal. Following opposition from King and his Cabinet who vetted all the convention resolutions, Claxton's proposal was dropped and never brought before the Convention, however.¹⁶³⁰ But after Louis St. Laurent was elected as Party Leader and became Prime Minister, Claxton sent him a lengthy memorandum pointing out that a significant portion of the voting public was now interested in and attended cultural events. These activities "had a very definite appeal to those Canadians who have a distinct national consciousness and feel that more should be done to encourage national culture and strengthen national feeling." As Maria Tippett recorded in *Making Culture*, "Given, concluded Claxton, the increasing legitimacy of government involvement in such matters, and given the clear need to outflank the CCF, Liberal action was desirable and perhaps mandatory. 'It might,' he therefore told St. Laurent, 'be advisable to set up a Royal Commission,' which august body—here was the finishing touch—could best function 'under the chairmanship of the Right Honourable Vincent Massey.'"¹⁶³¹

¹⁶²⁹ Paul Litt, *The Muses, the Masses, and the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 11.

¹⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*, 12-14.

¹⁶³¹ Maria Tippett, *Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts before the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 182, 183. Tippett cites Claxton's November 29, 1948 memo to St. Laurent, "Memorandum for the Prime Minister, Re: Commission on National Gallery, etc." in the Louis St. Laurent Papers at LAC, MG 26, L, vol. 222.

Claxton had also consulted with his friend Jack Pickersgill, the head of the Prime Minister's office with whom he had already collaborated in 1943 to move the Liberal Party to the left, about the possibility of a royal commission to examine cultural matters. Like Claxton, Pickersgill—who would himself be elected to Parliament in 1953 and become the Secretary of State—“believed that the voters would not return the government merely out of gratitude for its having run the war well.”¹⁶³² He in turn contacted Lester Pearson, now the Secretary of State for External Affairs, who supported the idea of a royal commission and improving Canada's cultural profile abroad. According to Claude Bissell, “Pearson, who saw Massey in England in November, was deeply concerned that the government might lose him both as a supporter and as an agent in the carrying out of Liberal policy. He wrote to Jack Pickersgill, King's private secretary and influential advisor, who was clearly destined to play the same role for King's successor, expressing his concern about the government's failure to satisfy Massey's desire to have a continuing national responsibility.”¹⁶³³

Pickersgill and Pearson strongly supported Claxton's suggestion that Vincent Massey head the proposed royal commission. “When it became clear that St. Laurent was not keen on a commission to look only at cultural matters, Claxton broadened out his proposed terms of reference to include national funding for universities and broadcasting policy. St. Laurent then agreed, and the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences was established in April 1949.”¹⁶³⁴ In his memoir, *My Years With Louis St. Laurent*, Pickersgill—King's estate executor and editor of the four-volume *The Mackenzie King Record*—wrote of the Massey Commission that “the very idea of such a commission would have been rejected by Mackenzie King as ridiculous.” He also recalled Prime Minister St. Laurent stating that “he was not very enthusiastic about subsidizing ‘ballet dancing.’”¹⁶³⁵

¹⁶³² Bercuson, 116.

¹⁶³³ Bissell, 193.

¹⁶³⁴ *Ibid.*, 200. Litt, 15-17. Bissell, 195-96. See also 198, 227, 274-76.

¹⁶³⁵ J.W. Pickersgill, *My Years With Louis St. Laurent: A Political Memoir* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 139.

But the Massey Commission gave the Canadian Arts Council another opportunity of submitting the case for government support of arts and culture its member organizations had first presented in their artists' *Brief* to the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment in 1944. Vincent Massey marked the opening statement in his own copy of the CAC's submission and cited it in the introduction to the chapter "The Artist and the Writer" in the Commission's 1951 *Report*. "It has been suggested to us that one measure of the degree of civilization attained by a nation might fairly be the extent to which the nation's creative artists are supported, encouraged and esteemed by the nation as a whole."

The Canadian Arts Council, representing eighteen societies comprising some 10,000 members engaged in such creative arts as architecture, painting, music, literature, sculpture and drama, submitted a brief to us at our Ottawa session in April 1950, which begins with the following statement: "No novelist, poet, short story writer, historian, biographer, or other writer of non-technical books can make even a modestly comfortable living by selling his work in Canada. No composer of music can live at all on what Canada pays him for his compositions. Apart from radio drama, no playwright, and only a few actors and producers, can live by working in the theatre in Canada. Few painters and sculptors, outside the fields of commercial art and teaching, can live by sale of their work in Canada." This very serious statement concerning the arts in Canada deserves the most earnest consideration.¹⁶³⁶

As discussed in this dissertation, English-Canadian artists had publicly protested their marginalized social position since Wilfred Campbell, Archibald Lampman and Duncan Campbell Scott wrote their "At the Mermaid Inn" weekly cultural column in the *Toronto Globe* in 1892-93. The Massey Commission repositioned the artist in a more central position in society. Paul Litt noted that when the five commissioners came to write their recommendations to the government, they structured their *Report* like a pyramid with proposals dealing with mass media—radio, television, film and newspapers—at its base and cultural institutions such as national libraries, universities, museums, art galleries and archives on a second level. The top of the pyramid, as the commissioner Hilda Neatby described the *Report*, "is represented by a few

¹⁶³⁶ "Brief to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences by the Canadian Arts Council" cited in Canada. Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences 1949-1951, *Report* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1951), 182 and in Karen Finlay, *The Force of Culture: Vincent Massey and Canadian Sovereignty* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 229-230.

people whose names are unknown to the vast majority of their fellow Canadians; but it is these few who literally sustain and nourish us all. These are the painters, the sculptors and the architects; the musicians and the actors; the scholars and the scientists. They are the men and women who do the truly creative work which preserves, interprets and enriches our civilization.”¹⁶³⁷

After Louis St. Laurent appointed Vincent Massey as Governor General of Canada in 1952, he used his position and influence to lobby the Prime Minister to implement the main recommendation of the 1951 *Report* of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences—the establishment of the Canada Council for the Encouragement of the Arts, Letters, Humanities and Social Sciences. The *Report* had stated that the purpose of the Canada Council would be “to stimulate and to help voluntary organizations within these fields, to foster Canada’s cultural relations abroad, to perform the functions of a national commission for UNESCO, and to devise and administer a system of scholarships.”¹⁶³⁸

There is perhaps a degree of poetic justice in the fact that Mackenzie King died in July of 1950, three months after the Canadian Arts Council presented its brief to the Massey Commission. Within his lifetime, he had been largely successful in imposing his cultural authority and aesthetic on the federal government. He had not generated followers, however, nor been successful in generating a lasting memory of the ideal of service to humanity and country his public works of art were intended to convey. Few visitors to Ottawa perceive the meaning of the Harper memorial standing directly opposite John Hooper’s iconic statue of Terry Fox on Wellington Street or of the Nurses and Confederation memorials inside the Hall of Fame. The Arthur Doughty memorial, once in a central position in the courtyard of the old Public Archives building on Sussex Drive, now sits forlorn and unattended behind the new Library and Archives building on Wellington Street whose entrance features Lea Vivot’s suggestive sculpture, *The Secret Bench of Knowledge*, which Mackenzie King surely would have labeled “decadent.”

¹⁶³⁷ Litt, 213-14.

¹⁶³⁸ *Report*, 377.

This loss of memory and of the intended meaning King sought permanently to inscribe in public works of art and in the Canadian psyche already occurred near the end of his life. The same month that the Canadian Arts Council presented its brief to the Massey Commission, King showed the Duke of Windsor (the former King Edward VIII) his portraits in the Laurier House dining room. “After looking at Gladstone, he turned to me and spoke about the many years that I had been P.M. He asked who was the next. I told him I thought it was Walpole who had been in the 20’s...When I showed him Mackenzie’s painting, spoke of him as the rebel of ’37. He said he had forgotten that there was a rebellion.” Three days later, he was outraged at a special National Film Board screening at Laurier House of Donald Fraser’s 1949 documentary *Planning Canada’s National Capital* that omitted any mention of his name and role in Ottawa’s transformation. “I do not recall anything in the course of my public life that seemed so gratuitously ignoring the one person who more than any other has, in and out of Parliament, furthered the work of the Ottawa improvements. The action cannot be other than deliberate.” That night, he wrote in his diary, he went to bed “feeling more tired than perhaps I should have been.” Three weeks before his death, he tried to write a letter of thanks for the naming of the new Mackenzie King Bridge across the Ottawa River but “felt wholly unequal to the task. Had the same feeling on Sunday.” Four days before he died on July 22, 1950, he again wrote the Macmillan Company of Canada regarding a contract in which he guaranteed a \$4,000 subsidy for two years for the English biographer Catherine Macdonald Maclean to write a *Life of William Lyon Mackenzie*.¹⁶³⁹

Mackenzie King’s antagonists fared much better. Vincent Massey not only became Canada’s Governor General but also succeeded in imposing his views on arts and culture through the *Massey Report*. Brooke Claxton was appointed the first director of the Canada Council in 1957 and promptly asked Massey to become the Council’s Patron. The Canadian Arts Council changed its name to the Canadian Conference of the Arts in 1958 and continued lobbying on behalf of

¹⁶³⁹ Diary April 17, 20, July 1 and 18, 1950.

artists and their publics until 2012 when the Harper government cut its financial support. The National Arts Centre opened in 1969 near the site of the former Russell Theatre. Its first director general for a decade was Gordon Hamilton Southam, a grandson of William Southam, the founder of the Southam newspaper chain and publisher of the *Ottawa Citizen*. Canadian artists continue to create and their cultural products continue to be purchased locally, nationally and internationally. In the struggle between artists and Mackenzie King over the nature and distribution of arts and culture in Canada, the artists won.

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