

Cultural Appropriations and Identificatory Practices in Emily Carr's "Indian Stories"

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The fact that Carr incorporates aboriginal peoples into her conception of who she is is not contestable. . . . This process, as it occurs in Carr, deserves to be highlighted and examined.¹

In this paper, I aim to probe the complexities that underlie Emily Carr's narrative practices, particularly those evidenced in her "Indian Stories" of *Klee Wyck*.² I argue that these practices are markers of her identification with First Nations peoples, whose representations Carr both crafted and internalized by the practice of colonizing appropriation. How is one to read today the stories of a middle-aged, middle-class, white woman who imagined herself as a member of First Nations in the 1930s, and what issues of race and gender, for us and for Carr, are brought to bear on an understanding of that particular aspect of Carr's imaginary space? Academic research concerning Emily Carr and her relationship with First Nations has tended, unproductively, to produce accounts of her appropriative acts that function discursively to entrench an analytic binary, where Carr is either forgiven by contextualizing her actions in the cultural values³ of her era or demonized as a narcissistic white colonizer.⁴ It is my intent here to produce a critical (re)reading of Carr, one that examines the complexity of her identification with First Nations peoples and establishes itself as a space between redemption and condemnation. My aim is to produce a rereading that is productive as a result of this tension and that is useful in that it exceeds the totalizing tropes of salvage or accusation.

The central focus of this article concerns the intricacies of Carr's writing and her treatment of First Nations peoples of the northwest coast. These writings not only reveal a fictive portrait of the northwest coast and its aboriginal inhabitants but also serve as the textual traces of Carr's struggles both to understand her own creativity and to forge a place in the world as a female artist.

Identification with First Nations peoples enabled Carr to generate an artistic identity through appropriative acts.

On June 24, 1937, in the midst of writing her Indian sketches stories, which would later be gathered in *Klee Wyck*, Carr recorded the following in her journal: "I tried to be plain, straight, simple and Indian. I wanted to be true to the places as well as to the people. I put my whole soul into them and tried to avoid sentimentality. I went down deep in myself and dug up."⁵ This journal entry, especially when considered in the context of Carr's numerous works of First Nations material and her youthful desire to have been born an "Indian," raises many important questions. What does it mean to Carr to be Indian, and how does this "Indianness" become engaged with Carr's creative process? What identificatory struggles enabled Carr to write her Indian stories and, in so doing, to forge a sense of self that enabled her to exceed the impoverished roles available to a female artist working toward recognition and against the grain of pervasive sexism?

Klee Wyck is the name that Carr finally chose to give the collection of short stories, depicting her frequent visits to west coast villages of First Nations peoples, visits undertaken decades earlier. Carr's first visit came about in the spring of 1899, when she was invited by E. May Armstrong to visit the Presbyterian Mission School at Ucluelet, where Miss Armstrong was the missionary teacher. A remote Nuu-Chah-Nulth village on the west coast of Vancouver Island, Ucluelet had been host to the Presbyterian presence for only five years, and its inhabitants still lived in community houses, preserved traditional kinship alliances, and depended on the resources of the sea for food. Despite the efforts of Reverend Melvyn Swartout and E. May Armstrong, Carr noted, not one Nuu-Chah-Nulth person of the two Ucluelet villages had been baptized into the Christian faith. Carr's memories of that journey are recorded as the first narrative of *Klee Wyck*, "Ucluelet."

In "Ucluelet," Carr recounts that "Klee Wyck" was a name given to her by a Nuu-Chah-Nulth elder. After being chased out of the great house by a shouting Mrs. Wynook for capturing souls in her sketches, Carr approached the missionary in hopes of facilitating a reconciliation. Unable to speak Chinook patois or Aht, the Nuu-Chah-Nulth native language, Carr was forced to ask the female missionary, May Armstrong, who could speak the trading language of Chinook, what Mrs. Wynook had been yelling as Carr fled from the great house. Unable to speak Aht, Miss Armstrong asked Mrs. Wynook to translate *Klee Wyck* to Chinook so that she might translate it into English for their visitor. Finally, after much pantomiming and discussion in Chinook, Armstrong told Carr that "'Klee Wyck' is the Indians' name for you. It means 'Laughing One.'"⁶ Carr was chased from the Wynook house for "stealing souls" in

sketches, and so it seems ironic that she left the village having assumed an aboriginal soul of her very own. An identity named.

The naming of Carr is more than a simple emblem of acceptance and belonging. Specifically, the process of repeated translation of Klee Wyck from Aht to Chinook to English demonstrates not her closeness to the Nuu-Chah-Nulth—her Indianness—but her twice-removed status as a foreigner. Of course, one could argue that Carr’s affinity with the Nuu-Chah-Nulth occurred at a level deeper than the symbolic order of language, which of course it did. But Carr *does* want to know what was said, and for her to communicate her experience, her name in Nuu-Chah-Nulth has to pass through the filters of the Hudson’s Bay Trading Company and the civilizing mission branch of the Presbyterian Church. The question of what is being traded and what is being saved, stolen, or missionized is brought to bear on questions of how this Canadian baptism of sorts is a critical moment of self-identification.

Significantly, Carr does not entitle her first collection of stories “Laughing One” but uses an Anglicized phonetic representation of her Aht name, Klee Wyck. It is important to remember that the collection of stories was published as *Klee Wyck* by Emily Carr. Is Klee Wyck Emily Carr? Is Emily Carr Klee Wyck? Are the two interchangeable or supplemental? When Carr takes on the name Klee Wyck, what is at stake both for Emily Carr and for the representations of First Nations peoples in Canada? Marcia Crosby writes, “It is also important to point out that external interest in native communities would logically produce work that has more to do with the observers’ own values.”⁷ Daniel Francis and Douglas Cole note that these values were not unusual for Carr or her contemporaries.⁸ However, the words Klee Wyck *have* been removed from their specific and situated historical and material cultural context and assimilated into the English language as the fanciful nickname of an eccentric Canadian painter. Klee Wyck is now more readily recognized as attendant to Emily Carr than to its indigenous origins. This linguistic sleight of hand provides us with a paradigmatic instance of the ways in which Native art and culture have been appropriated and decontextualized through translation into primitive art.

The transfiguration of Emily Carr into Klee Wyck is an important identificatory moment. A name is intimately bound with the identity of its owner. The taking on of a new name, even if only temporary, especially in such a public manner, is a renegotiation of subjectivity insofar as it is an external marker of identity. Adams points out that identification accomplishes an “important task: the reconciliation of life with self.”⁹ The most obvious psychological inference that can be made from Carr’s seeming willingness, perhaps even eagerness, to change names is that it is a symbolic refusal of the names she had been

given by her parents and of the restrictions of Victorian sensibilities and familial responsibilities that names carried with them. “Emily Carr” was cramped by the constraints of a society that believed ladies and daughters do not do. Carr herself comments, “I was not always polite, not always biddable. The monotony bored me. I despised the everlasting red-tape, the sheep-like stupidity. What one did, all did, and because they always had done such and such it meant that they always must.”¹⁰ One can imagine that Klee Wyck, however, was unfettered by such restraints and would be free to wander the woods and life as she naturally willed. In “The Joker” of *Pause*, Carr recalls, “I stayed with some Indians, lived right in their own home. Primitive it was but wise. When they were hungry, they ate—happy, they sang—sleepy, they slept—when they wanted to cry, they cried torrents, vast oceans of tears that washed their miseries completely away, left their faces clear as morning.”¹¹

However, in Victoria, where the population of First Nations peoples, predominantly the Songhees, was almost equal to the population of whites, First Nations peoples were not typically represented as the glamorized naturists of legend or of Carr’s reminiscences but were largely dismissed by Carr’s contemporaries as “lazy, gambling, drunks” who were “a nuisance and trouble to the authorities” as “individuals warranting charity.”¹² While Emily Carr’s writing idealizes the *naturalness* of First Nations life, it also reflects the negative stereotypes according to the mores of her historical and cultural context.¹³ In *Klee Wyck*, members of First Nations are presented as second-class citizens. For example, in “Martha’s Joey,” the missionaries take Martha’s adopted white child away from her because Martha is not white, though in “Sophie,” Sophie’s sick eye must be tended in the segregated “Indian Ward” of the local hospital rather than in the general (white) surgery ward. Cole writes, it is “[not] surprising that Carr’s view on the history and future of Aboriginal peoples in many ways conformed to the prevailing ideas of the times. Like others, she believed in the prevailing myth of the ‘vanishing Indian.’”¹⁴ Carr’s adoption of the name Klee Wyck can be read, in part, as a rejection of the monotony of Victorian notions of womanhood and the rigid order and decorum of her father’s house. This lens, however, would be limited if we simply read Carr as enacting a daughter’s rebellion or as a woman’s rejection of white male authority. For most of her life, Carr turned to masculine authorities, such as John Duncan Fergusson in England and France Lawren Stewart Harris, William Newcombe, and Ira Dilworth in Canada, for final judgment of her work rather than to her circle of reading ladies or other women artists.

Just before the opening of a gallery show in Toronto in November 1927, where Carr was to exhibit her work with several other Canadian painters, including members of the Group of Seven, Carr writes rather proudly in her

journal, “I felt my work looked dead and dull, but they [Langdon Kihn, Pegi Nichol, A. Y. Jackson, Arthur Lismer, and Edwin Holgate] all say I have more of the spirit of the Indian than the others.”¹⁵ Apparently Carr did not find it odd that the works in the exhibition, an exhibition which involved no contemporary Native Canadian artists, were being judged on their capacity to reflect “the spirit of the Indian”—it goes without saying from an entirely white perspective.

Emily Carr found in her unproblematic identification with the Indians of the Canadian west coast a second skin to inhabit, which seems to have allowed her to paint and write beyond the gendered boundaries of contemporary conventional aesthetics. Carr identified the creative part of herself as Indian. Her imaginary notions of what it meant to be Indian when she went “down deep . . . and dug up” were intimately tied to her capacity to write. Simply stated, Emily Carr constructed an authorial role as the “true Indian” of her narratives; the aboriginal people of the west coast were no longer the true Indians of her imagination. Carr identified with the First Nations of the northwest coast, especially her romantic notions of the myths and natural order represented by totem poles.¹⁶ In identifying with her own mythic version of the Indian, Carr was repeatedly confronted with “real” Indians, who, it comes as no surprise to learn, did not necessarily conform to her notions of the “true ancient Indian” spirit. What emerges from this confrontation of her mythic “true Indian” and the “real Indians” living on reservations is the necessary result that the less romantic “real Indians” are stripped of their authenticity and posited as inhabitants of a sort of liminal state in which they are re-presented as neither white nor Indian. They lose any claim to identity so that Carr may have theirs as hers. Thus, for example, in “East and West,” Carr writes about the Indian of Victoria by claiming, “He was the link between the primitive and civilization.”¹⁷ In “Ucluelet,” Carr describes meeting an elderly man “upon a strip of land that belonged to nothing. The sea soaked it often enough to make it unpalatable to the forest. Roots of trees refused to thrive in its saltiness. In this place belonging to neither sea nor land.”¹⁸ In “In the Shadow of the Eagle,” Susan Dan lives between life and death. She is given the key to the cemetery gate and allowed to live in the gravediggers’ hut near the graves of her eighteen dead children and paid ten dollars a month to show tourists the quaint Indian cemetery. The Indians of Carr’s narratives speak a pidgin English taught by missionaries, or Chinook learned through the fur trade. Neither the fragmented and mispronounced English nor the trading language of the Hudson’s Bay Company are pure languages. They are in-between languages.

This in-betweenness is the fictionalized representation of the ways in which Carr perceived the impossible position that First Nations had to endure. White

religion, language, economics, law, real estate, and decorum were forced upon them, but they were allowed few, if any, of the privileges of whiteness.¹⁹ The Native Canadian was forbidden to be Indian and was prohibited from being white, living an in-between existence, a cultural limbo, without a space for his or her own identity to be recognized.

In the context of Emily Carr's "Indian Stories," this in-betweenness is the way in which Carr imaginatively compensates for a fantasy identification consistently in conflict with an experienced reality. Carr's idealized and imaginary Indian was not who she found on her visits to the villages and reserves of the First Nations. There she found a people struggling with the burdens and boons brought by contact with white culture. Missionaries, the Hudson's Bay Trading Company, ethnographers, sealers, fishers, and visitors like Carr had all left their traces. Carr imaginatively erases all these traces to keep a "true record," but, of course, this imaginative erasure was not just that. For Carr, the real living people of the First Nations were not the true Indians of her imagination. Carr's writing ensures that other Canadians would fail to see "real Indians," only the "faux Indians" who were re-produced by (and as) Emily Carr.

Identification that proceeds by means of a colonizing act of appropriation is inherently problematic. To the extent that such identification is parasitic, it is always already an expropriating practice. It is the process whereby members of a powerful group imaginatively possess an Other or the qualities of an Other. What I want to emphasize here is that the act of colonial (mis)identification is, in many aspects, akin to the colonizing project, whereby we internalize what we desire from outside ourselves and pretend that it was ours all along, that no real debt need be acknowledged or owed. Rey Chow writes, "Our fascination with the native, the oppressed, the savage, and all such figures cloaks a desire to hold on to an unchanging certainty somewhere outside our own 'fake' experience. It is a desire for being 'non-duped,' which is a not-too-innocent desire to seize control."²⁰

Chow's contention that the primitive Other is imaginatively construed as the real counterpoised against our false not only leaves the primitive Other as a commodity to be sought, but also to be grasped, controlled, and, in effect, collected. The way in which the primitive is imagined, then, is as a transformative object, capable of changing from a dull existence to an exciting imagined existence. Emily Carr appropriated the cultural capital she mined in the First Nations of the British Columbian coast (individuals close to nature and people spiritually attuned to the rhythms of life) to enable and resolve her own identity crises. I do not include the word appropriated here lightly; I believe that there are elements of cultural violence, or imaginary colonialism, in the way Carr effectively seized control over the public representation of the First

Nations people and their totem poles of the British Columbian coasts; they became great “white” art in both text and portrait, and Emily Carr became the great white Indian painter.

According to Chow’s model, Carr used identification with First Nations peoples as a vehicle to allow her to escape imaginatively what she perceived as an empty existence, shunning the plastic manners, morality, and aesthetics of Victorian society for what she imaginatively perceived as the childlike simplicity, honesty, naturalness, and realness of First Nations peoples. Thus, in “Skedans,” Carr recalls her visit to Skedans on the east coast of Louise Island: “We had got close to real things. In Skedans there were no shams.”²¹ In “Cumsheewa,” Carr admires the inhabitants’ close connection with nature: “Indian people and the elements give and take like brothers, accommodating themselves to each others’ ways without complaint.”²² Going native may be read as relatively innocuous; however, as Chow points out, fascination and identification with “the native, the oppressed, the savage” does not end in simple, cheerful emulation but quickly becomes an aggressive act: “For a First Nations reader, there is the uncomfortable recognition of the dominant culture once again engaged in a conversation with itself, using First Nations people to measure itself, to define who it is or is not.”²³

When Emily Carr forged her identification with a fictive image of west coast First Nations peoples, she also assumed control of that image; it was now part of herself and under her control. Internalizing an image of First Nations peoples—however positive or creative that image might be—and placing it within the confines of herself, Carr assumed dominion over that image. Carr’s acts of preservation are thus read as acts of colonization, even as they can also be seen as acts of imaginative production and self-presentation. We cannot look at this particular form of cultural appropriation unproblematically.

As evocative objects in Carr’s imagination, the people and art of the First Nations of the northwest coast act as metaphors for Carr’s *own* body and sensibilities. Imagined as natural artists, the artists of the First Nations—specifically totem pole carvers—serve as a continuous point of reference for Carr’s own quest to form an artistic identity as a *female* artist. Carr’s identificatory detour through the aboriginal people and the art of the northwest coast must be regarded as a trespass. To claim for oneself, even if only figuratively, the status of Indian is what John Lavelle claims to be “the final phase of genocide. First whites took the land and all that was physical. Now they’re going after what is intangible.”²⁴ To take from a population already beleaguered by the incursions of foreign nations that most precious and ineffable commodity of identity is an act of colonization. Compounding the imaginary colonization is the refusal to allow First Nations peoples to exceed romantic or

traditional notions that popular representations have designated for them, in part, as an elaborate disavowal and silencing.

What I propose here is a shared link among Carr's internalization of an idealized First Nations, her belief that she is unworthy of public accolades, and her inability to accept recognition as a meritorious artist. Carr struggled her whole artistic life to find a space for herself as a female artist. In *Hundreds and Thousands*, Carr writes of her first meeting with the Group of Seven. There we are given a clue to one possible basis for Carr's apparent investments in a self-enforced inferiority that was undoubtedly related to the pervasive gender bias and sexist social norms that female artists of her era struggled with. In 1927, Carr visited with members of the Group of Seven and was welcomed at several of their studios and homes. On November 15, she met Arthur Lismer and recorded the following passage in her journal: "I know they [the Group of Seven] are building an art worthy of our great country, and I want to have my share, to put in a little spoke for the West, one woman holding up my end. I feel the group will be dissatisfied when they see my work. . . ." ²⁵ It is interesting to note that immediately after Carr describes herself as one woman, she asserts her inferiority and drafts an imaginary model of rejection. The next day, Carr recounts her feelings of immediate identification with the group:

I don't feel as if these men are strangers. Somehow they wake an instant response in me. . . . I wonder if these men feel as I do, that there is a common chord struck between us. No, I don't believe they feel so toward a woman. I'm way behind them in drawing and in composition and rhythm and planes, but I know inside me what they're after and I feel that perhaps, given a chance, I could get there too. Ah how I have wasted the years! But there are still a few left. ²⁶

Clearly, Carr felt an immediate artistic kinship with the men (Harris, Jackson, Johnson, Lismer, and Varley), whose paintings entranced her, but adroitly recognizes that they cannot feel the same kinship with her because she is a woman. Again, after reminding herself she is a woman, Carr goes on to list her perceived technical shortcomings and reminds or warns herself that she is far behind the group. On April 3, 1937, after a successful one-woman show in Toronto, Carr records in her journal that "the men resent a woman getting any honor in what they consider is essentially their field. Men painters mostly despise women painters." ²⁷ As these few samples demonstrate, Carr's gender is inextricably linked to her own internalized notions of inferiority and perceived lack of artistic merit.

Carr's perception of her own artistic inferiority was connected to the pervasive sexism of her time and place. Her self-doubt manifested itself in the dis-

parity of diction and enthusiasm, which she uses to describe the masculine Group of Seven and the feminine Pegi Nichol (who was working and exhibiting with the Group of Seven) and suggests that Carr exhibited historically appropriate gender bias in her perceptions of art and artists. The Group of Seven and their work are described as follows:

These men, this Group of Seven, what have they created?—a world stripped of earthiness, shorn of fretting details, purged purified; a naked soul, pure and unashamed; lovely spaces filled with wonderful serenity. . . . They too have had to struggle and buffet and battle, but they've stood together and the fire in them has burned steadily. They're rising above it with sincerity and bigness and courage. They've forged ahead, helping each other, sympathizing, strengthening each other and straightening out the way, working vitally and serenely. Surely such a movement that has such men for its foundation must prevail and live and become an honoured glory to our land.”²⁸

Conversely, when Carr met Pegi Nichol and saw her work, Carr's commentary was far less exuberant, diminutive rather than aggrandizing: “Peggy [*sic*] Nichol paints too, Indian things, but they're feeble. Poor kid, she's so enthusiastic, a dear little soul, and perhaps it will carry her on.”²⁹ The Group of Seven, it would seem, are valiant, fire-driven, nationalist aesthetic warriors. Nichol is not even granted the title of artist but is added as a sort of apologetic addendum: a woman who paints, *too*. One wonders if *too* refers back to the Group of Seven or to Carr herself. Nichol's work is dismissed as “feeble,” and Carr proffers the patronizing observation that Nichol is an enthusiastic and “dear little soul.” Although Nichol's work may well have been less to Carr's aesthetic tastes than the grandeur of the Group of Seven's canvases, the contrast in personalities and paintings seems somewhat overstated. Rather than presenting Nichol as simply less accomplished and a bit younger than the group, Carr's opinion seems to reduce and infantilize Nichol to the level of a cheerful child mucking about in paint.

Carr's treatment of Pegi Nichol does not necessarily indicate a clear gender bias in Carr's evaluation of art and artists; however, in connection with Carr's insistence upon her own artistic weakness and imaginary failure, it becomes an interesting point for conjecture. Carr's femininity (and all the cultural meanings that this gendered identification carries) offers critics a view into the spaces that motivated Carr's identification with the First peoples of the northwest coast. In “Kitwancool,” when asked by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police why the people of the Kitwancool village, who had run off masculine missionaries and surveyors, had treated her so well, Carr replies, “Perhaps it is

because I am a woman that they were so good to me.”³⁰ Several pages earlier in the story, the reader has already learned that not only were the Douses and other Kitwancool villagers kind to Carr, but “the Indians accepted [her] as one of themselves.”³¹ Reading Carr’s November 15, 1927, journal entry, which indicates that she believed the Group of Seven did not feel the common chord that she felt with them *because she was a woman*, beside the story of her 1928 visit to Kitwancool suggests that Carr believed that she was accepted by the Kitwancool *because she was a woman*. This raises interesting questions of the ways in which identification is facilitated and debilitated by cultural categories, especially those of race and gender.

Among these points, or cultural categories, that Carr’s description of Nichol brings to bear on the writing of Carr’s own history in *Klee Wyck* is the way in which Nichol is effectively infantilized as a “sweet kid” and a “dear *little* soul” (*italics mine*). This age defiance may have been incurred by the disparity in Carr’s and Nichol’s ages, Nichol’s gender, or even perhaps that Nichol painted “Indian things.” We might understand such references as Carr, the elder, distinguishing her serious Indian work from Nichol’s play with Indian *things*. Questions of age and aging, when brought to bear on *Klee Wyck*, reveal that Emily Carr consistently depicts her narrative self as experiencing certain events at a markedly younger age than her corporeal self did. Thus, the third sentence of “Ucluelet,” the first story of *Klee Wyck*, reads: “Everything was big and cold and strange to me, a fifteen year old school-girl.”³² The second to last sentence reads: “I was to them a child.”³³ Carr first visited Ucluelet at the age of twenty-six, hardly a schoolgirl or a child. Peter Sanger contends that this misaging is a rather pathetic attempt to disguise “what she was ashamed of and what she was afraid to reveal: her immaturity, dependence, and the contrast between what she was and wished to become.”³⁴ Nancy Pagh interprets Carr’s misaging as a creative attempt to express a feminine internal reality in an intolerant and stringent world.³⁵ Timothy Dow Adams contends that Carr was not concerned about being accurate about her age because, when she painted, Carr felt that she was ageless.³⁶ In *Emily Carr*, Maria Tippett suggests that in Carr’s writing her age was “altered and coloured by literary instinct.”³⁷ Hilda Thomas contests that Carr’s writing is impelled by an “unconscious motivation” and a drive for psychic wholeness, which could not be met in the external real world. Rather pessimistically, Thomas concludes, “Obviously this experience of plenitude can be achieved only symbolically, at the level of psychological affect.”³⁸ Thomas believes that it is from this impossible dream of wholeness that Carr’s romantic fascination with the mythical connections between First Nations peoples and nature emerges.

I would like to add another reading to this mix. Emily Carr presented her-

self as childlike because she imagined First Nations peoples, with whom she identified, as childlike. In presenting herself as a younger version of herself, Carr was effectively attempting to enhance her Indianness. The link forged between the savage and the child has been exploited and reinforced by moderns from Sigmund Freud to Paul Klee. Carr uses this paradigm of the primitive as childlike when she describes the behaviors and attitudes of the First Nations peoples she includes in her narrative. For example, in “Wash Mary,” Carr describes Mary as “little Mary”³⁹ and recalls that, when Carr was a child, Mary laughed at Carr “just as one little girl laughs at another little girl.”⁴⁰

In this context, one may ask, what does becoming the ideal Indian do for Carr? Why does she, at some level, want to identify herself with a culture that she believed was, if not dying, in marked decline?⁴¹ Are there ways of reading through this identification that do not stutter and fail at the categorical limits of colonial racism? Are there ways of rereading and critiquing Carr’s short stories without engaging overly in what Indira Karamcheti astutely calls “the commodification of the multi-cultural body, the modern-day skin trade, the post-modern trading of the flesh”?⁴² Judith Butler, navigating the erratic topography of identity politics in *Bodies that Matter*, offers a suggestion that certain identifications may be made to facilitate a displacement, whereby the subject can respond to the injuries done to others “*through and as the other.*” Butler argues the following: “Inhibited from petitioning the injury in one’s own name (for fear of being further steeped in that very abjection and/or launched infelicitously into rage) one makes the petition in the name of another, perhaps going as far as denouncing those who would turn the tables and make the claim for the one self.”⁴³ In other words, rather than showing the injustices and neglect Carr perceives as having enacted upon her own work by a largely white male artistic establishment (whom she feels cannot identify with her), she rails against the injustices done and the neglect shown to the totem pole art and artists of the northwest coast. The images of First Nations peoples in “Stories in Cedar” are thus akin to the carvings on the poles of the northwest coast—they are symbolic components of a part of a story in which they are representative rather than represented. Using members of First Nations as metaphor, however, seems to be balanced by the overriding metaphor of the totem pole. The figures of the First Nations’ totem poles were chosen in part because of the power that was accorded to the original model. Creatures accredited with specific strengths, powers, and levels of respect were the models of the poles’ carvings. In recreating members of First Nations as models, Carr is textually reproducing the same idealizing respect.

Carr’s idealized view of First Nations peoples glosses over, or elides entirely, many of the social problems they faced. Her adoption of a Nuu-Chah-Nulth

name, Klee Wyck, may be read as what Doris Sommer refers to as the “presumption of identification.” A presumptive identification is an overly romanticized, self-indulgent, and almost mythical identification that marks “the ultimate violence . . . appropriation in the guise of an embrace.”⁴⁴ Jane Tompkins comments that this sort of identification is the “relationship that most non-Indians have to the people who first populated this continent, a relationship characterized by narcissistic fantasies of freedom and adventure, of a life lived closer to nature than the life we lead now.”⁴⁵ Tompkins adds that this fantasy so clouds most non-Indians’ perception of Indians that it prevents most such identifiers from acknowledging any present situation of First Nations. Carr’s identification with First Nations is without question problematic. She created a pseudomythical portrait of herself and the native villages that she visited, and she became the west coast painter and marketer of Indian Art, not only in the high art realm of Canada’s National Gallery, but also in the tourist trade in kitsch. Carr sold her creative work (including native pottery and rugs often signed Klee Wyck accompanied by a hook-shaped symbol), while the art of many of the west coast First Nations was going unnoticed and unpaid; she overwrote the totem poles of the British Columbian coast with a white signature; and, despite her voiced intentions, she retrenched the imaginary moat dividing the civilized from the savage. However, simply to dismiss Carr as a naïve poseur—a politically incorrect Victorian woman entranced in the quagmire of her own ostensibly childish fantasies—does not offer anything except an easy and unproductive termination of inquiry. What is more interesting, and ultimately more worthwhile, is to trace the creative path Carr took and to examine the intricacies of her colonizing and appropriative moments, acts, and practices of identification. If one considers the symbolic significance of the unique place of Emily Carr in the Canadian imagination—a positioning Laurie Ricou has aptly described as “the grandmother of literature in British Columbia,”⁴⁶ then it becomes critical in this postcolonial moment to read Emily Carr against the grain of romantic reclamation and to risk engagement with difficult questions concerning her “Indian Stories.”

NOTES

1. See Douglas Cole, “The Invented Indian/The Imagined Emily,” *BC Studies* 125/126 (2000): 162.

2. “Indian Stories” is the term that Carr uses in her journal to refer to the stories of *Klee Wyck* before they were published. See Emily Carr, “Hundreds and Thousands: The Journals of an Artist,” in *The Complete Writings of Emily Carr* (Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1997), 864.

3. For excellent examples, see Gerta Moray, "Wilderness, Modernity and Aboriginality in the Paintings of Emily Carr," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 33, no. 2 (1998): 43–65. Also see Doris Shadbolt, *Emily Carr* (Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1990), 1–14.
4. Peter Sanger, "Finding D'Sonoqua's Child: Myth, Truth, and Lies in the Prose of Emily Carr," *The Antigonish Review* 69/70 (1987): 211–239.
5. See Emily Carr, "Hundreds and Thousands," 864.
6. See Emily Carr, "Klee Wyck," in *The Complete Writings of Emily Carr* (Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1997), 24–25.
7. For one of the most impressive articles on cultural appropriation and its effects see Marcia Crosby, "Construction of the Imaginary Indian," in *Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art*, ed. Stan Douglas (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1991), 270.
8. See Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992).
9. Timothy Dow Adams, "'Painting Above Paint': Telling Li(v)es in Emily Carr's Literary Self-Portraits," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 27, no. 2 (1992): 37–48.
10. See Emily Carr's journal "Pause: A Sketch Book," in *The Complete Writings of Emily Carr* (Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1997), 625.
11. Carr, "Pause: A Sketch Book," 624.
12. See Maria Tippett, *Emily Carr: A Biography* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1979), 29.
13. See Francis, *The Imaginary Indian*, 31; Cole, "The Invented Indian/The Imagined Emily," 148.
14. Cole, "The Invented Indian/The Imagined Emily," 148.
15. Carr, "Hundreds and Thousands," 659.
16. For a critical discussion on the links between Emily Carr and romantic notions of the natural order, see Greta Moray, "Paintings of Emily Carr," 43–65. Laurie Ricou, "Dumb Talk: Echoes of the Indigenous Voice in the Literature of British Columbia," *BC Studies* 65 (1985): 34–47.
17. Emily Carr, "The Book of Small," in *The Complete Writings of Emily Carr* (Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1997), 155.
18. Carr, "Klee Wyck," 27.
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