

The Canadian Magazine 1893-1939: Canadian Women, Art and a Modern National
Identity

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Introduction – This paper outlines a project that began a few months ago. I am an art historian with an interest in women’s art education in Canada in the period 1880-1929. I have been looking for the impetus that lead an increasing number of women into art schools (at home and abroad) in this period → and as I was often lead to the Can Mag through bibliographic searches, I have begun to look more closely at the relationship between women and reading!

I believe that the journals of the day could allow women the chance to reflect on their position in society and present options to them. Illustrated magazines often focused on subjects of interest to the female head of household, women in the latter half of the nineteenth century being held to be at the vanguard of cultural appreciation. These magazines featured women who had achieved professional standing in the cultural arena – as artists, musicians, actresses, and writers.¹ Through their access to American and British magazines, Canadian subscribers enjoyed not only Canadian publications such as the Canadian Magazine and Canadian Illustrated News, but also periodicals such as Scribner’s Monthly Magazine, Harper’s New Monthly Magazine and Lippincott’s Magazine.² These furthered the reader’s knowledge of the arts and women’s place in the profession. American magazines that specifically targeted a female audience, such as Godey’s Lady’s Book, had been discussing women in the arts since the early 1870s. The

¹ Kirsten Swinth, Painting Professionals Women Artists and the Development of Modern American Art, 1870-1930 (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). See Bibliography of Primary Sources, 264-270.

² Canada was a great importer of books and journals. The United States was the principal source and Great Britain was the second greatest exporter of reading material for Canadians. See Fiona A. Black, “Supplying the Retail Trade,” In Yvon Lamonde, Patricia Lockhart Fleming, and Fiona A. Black, History of the Book in Canada Volume 2 1840-1918 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005): 206-207.

article, “Painting as a Profession for Women” published in Godey’s Lady’s Book in 1871 started an editorial genre that flourished from that point onwards.³

The knowledge gained from the monthly papers and from other literary sources gave women the chance to create a connection with culture⁴ and reading allowed women the opportunity to cross physical and ideological distances without ever leaving home, but nevertheless being confirmed in the notion that they could make a move into the wider world.⁵

Before the turn of the 20th century there were few periodicals in Canada devoted exclusively to the arts. The exceptions were Arcadia (1892-93) a magazine whose sole focus was art, music and drama and a French language magazine Revue de l’art: littérature, esthétique, peinture, sculpture, architecture (of which only one issue was published in 1895), both of which were published in Montreal.

The first magazine to be considered a “little” or “Modernist” magazine in Canada, The McGill Fortnightly Review would not appear until 1925.

In the meantime, many other short-lived publications with broad interests including the arts were published in mainly Toronto or Montreal between 1871 and 1930.

(PP.# 2 - 3 -Timeline) These publications ranged from the monthly Canadian Queen (Toronto, 1890) a periodical devoted to fashion, art and literature, to Tarot (Toronto, 1896), an illustrated magazine dedicated to the Arts and Crafts movement and in 1903 – 1904, Neith: A Magazine of Literature, Science, Art, Philosophy, Jurisprudence,

³ Swinth, op.cit.18.

⁴ Maria Frawley, A Wider Range: Travel Writing by Women in Victorian England (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1994): 24.

⁵ Frawley, op. cit. 15.

Criticism, History, Reform, Economics appeared in St. John, New Brunswick. The magazine was edited by Abraham Walker, a black lawyer and author who wished to publish a magazine that would reflect the interests and concerns of both the white and black population in that province.

These magazines reflected a growing interest in the social value of visual culture for the emerging autonomous nation. This interest was pushed further as the weekly and monthly magazines such as the general interest Canadian Magazine of Politics, Science, Art and Literature kept up a steady stream of articles on developments in the arts, along with innovations in science and engineering, travel articles and regular columns devoted to opinions and commentary on home grown politics and world events.

The Canadian Magazine was published monthly from 1893 to 1939. Its longevity was impressive in such a small market. The population of Canada in 1893 was 4.9 million – with the two largest cities, Toronto and Montreal hovering around 200,000 citizens respectively. The loyalty of its readers was another remarkable factor, as the subscribers would have had access to many American and British magazines.

PP # 4 Cover - By no means was the magazine intentionally modernist – there were no modern typefaces or graphics but it did fulfill its mandate –which was to explore the modern world of politics and science and give a voice to the arts and culture in Canada.ⁱ In doing so, women's role in the arts was prominently featured. Articles highlighting the work of women who had achieved professional standing in the cultural arena – as artists, musicians, actresses, and writers – began to appear by the mid-1890s. These and other articles furthered the reader's knowledge of the arts, in terms of national and international artists and art movements, art associations, art schools, and art exhibitions. In highlighting the presence of professional women in the arts the magazine allowed women the chance to reflect on their identity as Canadian and their position in Canadian society. I believe the magazine was unique in co-opting the achievements of Canadian women as emblems of national modernist identity.

- Power Point Images # 5
 - and descriptive examples – Some of the Earliest Examples –
1. “The Canadian Girl” vol.1, no.3 (May, 1893):186-193 – the author, Hector Charlesworth characterized the Canadian girl as having “practical independence, ..with a demure regard for propriety and form, ... in art and music, lady artists have begun to make their mark...among them are numbered some of the most sympathetic painters in Canada, [many] with an instance of original strength and vitality.” These remarks echo the “characteristics” of Canadians generally– practical, polite and self-reliant and they fitted within the magazine’s desire to “cultivate Canadian patriotism and Canadian interests...which would aid in the consolidation of the Dominion on the basis of national self-respect and a mutual regard for the ...elements that make up the population of Canada.” (Can Mag, vol.1, no.1 (March, 1893))
 2. “Women and Money” Ella Atkinson vol.1, no.4 (June, 1893): 277-79 Similarly, to the Charlesworth article, Atkinson credits Canadian women as being socially and politically active, in terms of suffrage and educational opportunities, as well as in earning their own livelihood. She appreciates the fact that Canadian women are self-reliant and independent. She advocates that women maintain this position as they make and use their own money.
 3. advertisements for girls’ schools –vol.1, no.5 (July, 1893): vii Helmuth College, London, Ontario –from one ad to over five pages by 1900. The value of girls education was an ongoing theme in the mag –the first advertisements appeared in 1893, the first articles advocating both technical (Sept. 1893), art (March 1894), and higher education (Aug, 1894) for girls
 4. vol.5, no.4 (August, 1895): 328-336 “Women’s Suffrage in Canada” In which, the author Edith M. Luke presents a national history of the suffrage movement with an overview of major figures and associations across the country. This was an unusually early article – and positive! The attitude towards women’s suffrage shifted from ambivalent (vol.28, no.1 Nov,1906 in “Woman’s Sphere”) to a call in favour of women having the vote (vol.29, no2 June, 1907 “A Plea for Women’s Suffrage in Canada”). In 1910 the columnist for the renamed

“Women’s Sphere column “At Five O’Clock” wrote of Mrs. Pankhurst’s visit to Toronto, writing “These women are not faddists..but earnest, well-educated women who have planned an exceedingly clever campaign in behalf of a cause for which they are willing to sacrifice life itself.”

5. “A Canadian Bicycle in Europe” Constance Rudyard Boulton vol. 6, no.6 – vol. 7, no.4 (April, 1896 – August, 1896) a series of five articles in which Boulton described her bike tour from Algiers to Rome – These travel sketches encapsulated women’s physical independence and were based on the round the world trip undertaken by two journalists in 1889 – Sara Jeannette Duncan and Lily Lewis. This was an audacious and newsworthy a re-enactment because as Patricia Marks has noted “for the feminist movement at the end of the nineteenth century...[a] woman on a bicycle represented both activity and options, the woman on the bicycle may decide where she wishes to go and what she plans to do when she gets there, regardless of a male companion, or lack of one. Her influence upon the world is more immediate; no longer confined to the home or hoping to escape from the vicissitudes of earning a living, she actively seeks new experience and intends to have some impact on the world around her.”ⁱⁱ.

6. In vol.16, no.1 (November, 1900) “Woman’s Sphere” was introduced. The columnist, Mrs Willoughby Cummings began her first column with a dedication to her readers, “and especially to all women workers.” She made reference to the National Council of Women’s handbook on the life and work of Canadian women (published that year) and included notices of the annual meetings and exhibitions of the Women’s Art Association. Mrs Cummings ended the column expressing her belief that women working was good for the economy and wouldn’t displace men.

These articles reflect the fact the magazine could not ignore the reality of women’s involvement in society and therefore when a new editor was installed in 1906 he made an effort to highlight women’s contribution to Canadian society in the twentieth century.⁶

⁶ In the last years of the nineteenth century numerous women’s organizations were formed – YWCA, Victorian Order of Nurses, Women’s Institute, the National Council of

Newton MacTavish (1875-1941) had been a newspaper reporter and a frequent contributor to the Can Mag and others (in Canada, the US and GB). He had many connections to the art and literary worlds as he counted among his friends many artists. MacTavish was a bit of a contradiction – as his own written pieces for the magazine – often in under the heading “Thrown Out,” were gentle recollections of Ontario village life and his Methodist upbringing, but he was also aesthetically forward looking. He began introducing decorative vignettes by two members of the Group of Seven - Arthur Lismer and JEH MacDonald into the magazine around 1910-13, as well as reproducing etchings or illustrations by other young Canadian artists such as, Clarence Gagnon, J.W. Beatty and Suzor- Cote, all of whom were sympathetic to the new trends in nationalistic landscape painting.ⁱⁱⁱ And it was during MacTavish’s tenure (1906 – 1926)^{iv} that the greatest number of feature articles regarding women and their participation in the art world along with reproductions of their work appeared. This was especially so in the years between 1910 and 1918.

Examples PP # 6 (Kerr, Muntz and Hamilton)

1. Estelle Kerr was a prolific writer and illustrator she had trained in Toronto and at the Art Students League, NY, she made her living as a painter, illustrator and writer. Her written work regularly appeared in the magazine from 1910 to 1920. vol.34, no.5 (April, 1910): 545-552 “A Weekend in Volendam” was a travel article that highlighted the fact that Canadian women had been traveling to Europe to train as artists from the 1880s. This piece describes the Dutch village as a site that drew artists from all over the world. Eg.1910 - 11 in volume 35, no. 4, vol. 36, no.2 thru to 1920.
2. Laura Muntz and Her Art vol. 37, no.5 (September, 1911): 419- 426. Written by MacTavish as he was hugely interesting in current art. In the article he lambastes

Women, Women’s Art Association of Canada – no matter what their political outlook these organizations proved that women could unite into cohesive and powerful political units.

- the RCA as it refused to confer Member status on Muntz or any other women. He was taking exception to the RCA as it had a well-deserved reputation for disliking anything that was adventurous or unusual. No doubt he thought Muntz a strong artist who would therefore deserve membership in the country's most important national artists' group.
3. The Art of Mary Riter Hamilton by Florence Deacon vol.39, no.6 (October, 1912): 557- 564. Riter – a pupil of Muntz's – Deacon, an executive member of the Women's Art Association
 4. PP # 7 and 8 Dorothy Stevens's etchings The Jade Bracelet vol.45, no.1 (May, 1915):2 The Brunette vol.45, no.3 (July, 1915):2, The Black Muff vol.45, no. 5 (Sept, 1915):377, Deborah vol.45, no.6 (October, 1915):2, The Japanese Fan vol. 46, no.1 (Nov, 1915):14, Apples vol.46, no.3 (January, 1916):2 Mactavish commissioned the six etchings from Stevens. This had never been done prior to 1915, nor were any other artists commissioned. Stevens' work appeared in the magazine from 1911 and her association with the magazine lasted into the early 1920s.
 5. PP # 9 In 1918, the writer – photographer team of Victoria Hayward and Edith Watson began an association with the magazine that would carry on into the 1920s. The pair spent their summers traveling across the country photographing images that spoke of the changes that were taking place in rural communities. They most often focused on the women's work. (Their association with the magazine ended with MacTavish's retirement in 1926.)
 6. PP # 10 -Literary Contributions - between 1900 and 1920 the Can Mag published over 300 stories by Canadian women authors – many were conventional and uninspiring but others are true to the era of the New Woman – suffrage and temperance as well as women's independence are all themes that were dealt with by authors such as Agnes Maule Machar, Kit Coleman, Nelly McClung, Pauline Johnson^v, and Jean Blewett (among many others).
 7. PP # 11 During and after WWI – Canadian war paintings by artist servicemen illustrated in the mag.– Wyndham Lewis, A.Y. Jackson and Frederick Varley (two

members of the Group of Seven) In the war years work by women such as Estelle Kerr, Mary Riter Hamilton and Marion Long illustrated the war effort in words and pictures.

The war demonstrated Canadian valour (and thus lead to Canada being invited to the political table as a nation in its own right at the end of the war) it also revealed Canada's uniqueness –as a country with its own intellectual and creative spirit. The magazine celebrated the Group of Seven (1911 – 1930) and their approach to painting the northern landscape, as it finally fulfilled the ongoing desire to see a truly Canadian school of painting – a subject that had been discussed in the magazine since the early 1890s. ((See J. A. Radford, “Canadian Art Schools, Artists and Art” Can Mag vol.2, no.5 (March, 1894):462- 64 and Harriet Ford, “The RCA” vol.3, no.1 (May, 1894): 45-50.)

PP # 13 - I end with an image by Prudence Heward “Rollande” (1929) (Even though it was never illustrated in the magazine).

Because in the 1920s a number of women were associated with the group – Prudence Heward, Kathleen Morris, Anne Savage, Liliias Torrance Newton (all members of what is called the Beaver Hall Group – also included Sarah Robertson, Ethel Seath, Nora Collyer and Emily Coonan). These artists established an identity that was a counterpoint to the rugged northern landscape by painting a domesticated (or urban) landscape that was equally valid to the notion of a cultural/ nationalist icon.

The ideas and actions of women during the late 19th century and early 20th century shaped the experience of these women in the 1920s. Their recognition as professional artists was the culmination of an era of female achievement that was recognized in the magazine between 1893 and circa1926.⁷

Between 1893 and 1926 the Canadian Magazine worked hard to convey the notion that Canada was/ could be a strong and independent nation and capable of social, economic

⁷ These accomplishments were less recognized in later decades – particularly as the histories of Canadian art were written in the 1940s (Colgate), 1960s (Harper) and 1970s (Reid). Women's contribution to the authentically modernist magazines in Canada (McGill Fortnightly Review, Canadian Mercury, The Canadian Forum was never as extensive as theirs had been to the Canadian Magazine in the years 1893 and 1920.

and intellectual autonomy. Throughout the same time period the magazine also featured many articles in which Canadian women were represented as cultured, hard-working, capable of earning and managing their own money, politically competent and therefore had the right to political independence and had the competence to pursue a professional life.

Time Line –magazines with an interest in the arts in Canada 1871-1930

1871 – Canadian Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature, Science and Art – Toronto

- 1872 – Forerunner of The Canadian Magazine appears – The Canadian Monthly – Toronto – merges with The Canadian Magazine in 1893
Canadian Antiquarian and Numismatic Journal begins publication in Montreal runs to 1933
- 1873 – J.W. Bengough begins publishing Grip with his own articles illustrated with editorial cartoons
- 1876 – Belford's Monthly Magazine of Literature and Art appears in Toronto
- 1880 – The Arion, A Journal of Art, Music, Literature and Drama – Toronto, publishes one year
- 1884 – Monde illustre begins publication in Montreal - runs until 1892-93
- 1887 – Saturday Night begins publication
- 1888 – Dominion Illustrated begins publication in Montreal
- 1890 – Canadian Queen; A Magazine of Fashion, Art, Literature, etc begins a two year publication run in Toronto
- 1892 – Arcadia published in Montreal 1892-93
- 1893 – The Canadian Magazine of Politics, Science, Art and Literature merged with The Canadian Monthly – until 1939
- 1895 – Revue de l'art publishes a single issue in Montreal
- 1896 – Tarot – an illustrated magazine devoted to Arts and crafts movement published two issues in Toronto
- Our Monthly: A Magazine of Canadian Literature, Science and Art appears for a short period in Toronto
- 1903 – Neith: A Magazine of Literature, Science, Art, Philosophy, Jurisprudence, Criticism, History, Reform, Economics appears in St. John, NB
- Etincelle – a weekly journal with arts coverage makes a short-lived appearance
- 1905 – Vie artistique – Montreal – short publication history
- 1910 – The Toronto Arts and Letters Club (men only) begins to publish Lamps sporadically until 1939
- 1911 – Art and Photography journal published in Toronto
- 1918 – La Nigog – a literary and art journal begins 12 month publication run in Montreal
Terroir – appears in Quebec – published until 1960
- 1925 – McGill Fortnightly Review begin publication – runs for almost two years in Montreal out of McGill University– credited as Canada's first “little” poetry magazine – virtually no arts coverage
- 1926 – Paintbox appears in Vancouver – probably connected with opening of art school
- 1928 – Canadian Mercury – edited by many of the same group who had published McGill Fortnightly Review – poetry and literary focus – the editors commissioned A.Y. Jackson to review 50th Annual RCA exhibition in 1930
- 1930 – in Toronto the Toronto camera Club began publishing Focus
- Etcetera: A Journal of the New Age began publication in Toronto – until 1933.

ⁱ In 1897 Massey's Illustrated (1896) (previously Massey's Magazine founded in 1882) merged with the Can Mag. The 10-cent magazine had been the first to publish work of amateur photography clubs and one of the first four-colour half-tones in a mag (Bell-

Smith ptg). When M. III evolved, its stated mandate was to produce the work of Canadian *literatures* and artists that will compare favourably with the magazines of any other country. When the merger took place a joint statement explained that the two mag's had a similar ethic and that the compromise was that the one would do all that is best in the two." (Fraser Sutherland, 98)

ⁱⁱ Patricia Marks, Bicycles, Bangs and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press (Lexington, KN: University of Kentucky Press, 1990): 175

ⁱⁱⁱ Morrice's work was not included in the magazine until the colouristic subtleties of his paintings could be reproduced in about 1913. Though there was an article written about Morrice and the sculptor, G.W. Hill, "Canadian Artists Abroad" by William H. Ingram written much earlier in 1907.. (vol. 28, no.3 (June, 1907): 218-222.)

^{iv} At the end of MacTavish's editorship the magazine was taken over by Hugh C. MacLean Publications. The editor's post went to Joseph Lister Rutledge – the magazine began to pay more attention to business and Canada's place in the international sphere, but at the same time the number of fictional pieces in each issue increased. In 1927 the magazine introduced a woman's editor – of whom the paper noted she "has retained and developed in herself and in her work all the charms of viewpoint and domestic feeling that are sometimes considered old fashioned today." As Mary Vipond pointed out in her study of women and magazines in the 1920s (in Canada) – the stress was placed on how "serene, womanly and innocent the woman was able to be despite her career." Mary Vipond, "The Image of Women in Mass Circulation Magazines in the 1920s" In Alison Prentice and Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, ed. The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977): 116-124.

^v Pauline Johnson (of Mohawk ancestry and the daughter of a chief, Johnson saw herself as an advocate of her people in art as well as in life) addressed the treatment of native peoples. ("The Haunting Thaw" the Indian sled driver is portrayed as the proud equal of both the wilderness and the Scots trader – skill and self-knowledge – landscape creates a haunting atmosphere and a touch of romance) Nelly McClung campaigned for temperance and women's suffrage from the perspective of a maternal feminist seeking to bring women's domestic virtues to bear on social ills. Kit Coleman wrote fiction as well as a regular column that dealt with social issues and current events.

The poet Isabel Ecclestone Mackay, and Jean Blewett "The Experiences of a Woman Bachelor" – an exchange of letters between a university graduate and her conventional friend – great things are expected of the young woman – she tries to form intellectual platonic relationships with men to no avail – the tone is half-teasing, wistful and subversive as the young wife tells her to leave the foolishness of love and marriage to those who know nothing of new womanhood."

The magazine celebrated the achievements of Agnes Maule Machar ("Fidelis") 1837-1927 in vol.27, no.6 (October, 1906):499-501– essayist, poet and novelist, an ardent nationalist (another pseudonym "Canadensis") and a maternal feminist – 1890s – Machar at the peak of her career – active as a religious and social critic, she took a leading role in the National Council of Women – advocating higher education for women (also espoused temperance, labour and educational reform)