

Lumena Natura, The Light in Nature:

The Life and Work of Canadian Painter and Author, Emily Carr

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Preface

A Jungian analyst, Gustav Dreifuss recalls Jung's response when asked, "What is the meaning or value of consciousness?"

I vividly remember Jung's answer with regard to the meaning of consciousness. Then Jung added: But a still bigger problem is unconsciousness. How can man time and again become unconscious in order to unite with the depth of his soul and drink from the deepest well? ⁱ(

Emily Carr's life and work privately answered this paradoxical question. Via her paintings, and her writings, this presentation takes a look into the wilderness of being she embodied where this became so.

Introduction

Out of the Canadian West Coast culture of the late 1800s sprang a woman artist whose individuation brought forth in literature and painting the intimate numinous presence of psyche in nature, the *lumena natura* present in Canadian forests, seascapes, and indigenous villages, peoples, and totems of the time.

Emily Carr was born December 13, 1871 in Victoria, British Columbia. Carr spent most of her life on Vancouver Island, but she also studied for three years at the California School of Design in San Francisco (1890-1893); for five years at the Westminster School of Art in London, England (1899-1904), where she also attended sketching classes at St. Ives in Cornwall, at the Meadows Studio, Bushey; and at the Académie Colarossi in Paris for one year (1910). Returning home in between to her beloved British Columbia, she lived out the last of her years and died March 2, 1945, at the age of 74.

The living cornerstone at the center of her life and work is the intimate relationship Carr shared with the primeval forests of Canada, and her forays for decades into the remote indigenous people's villages of Canada and Alaska. Throughout the 1930s she specialized in scenes from the lives and rituals of the Native Americans. Living among the Native Americans to research her subjects, she eventually incorporated totem poles and other artifacts of Indian culture into her Expressionist paintings. Her life and work were infused by an ever-deepening relationship with the embodied natural world.

For the major portion of her life, her work was not well received and she had to supplement her income by farming, running a boarding house, and making pottery. She suffered a terrible long depression during which she stopped painting for years, picking it up again in her late 50s. Yet by the time she died, Carr left behind thousands of paintings and sketches, numerous journals, an autobiography, and many award-winning books. She is considered by Canada today to be a national treasure.

Regarding her art career, she considered these teachers and influences of most importance: In France she studied with Frances Hodgkins and Phelan Gibb. The post-Impressionists –Picasso and Matisse and others--were at their peak in France at the time and the influence of post-Impressionism and Fauvism made a profound enduring impact upon her vision and her work. The painter Lawren Harris later in life was her true friend and his encouragement of her work brought her through a deep decade of depression and opened her up to new explorations that became the signature of her later and greatest works.

The Primordial Influences Upon Her Artwork

In her first foray into indigenous villages, she spent three months with the native tribes at Uclulet on the western shores of Vancouver Island, where her sister was stationed as a missionary. Carr grew to detest the imposing of Christianity upon indigenous peoples, along with forced education apart from their tribes and homelands, and wrote about this in her journals. It was among the people of Uclulet that Carr made her first friendships with indigenous peoples and a lifelong friendship with a woman whose white name was Sophie. This tribe, the Nuu-chah-nulth of Vancouver Island's west coast, nicknamed Carr *Klee Wyck*, "the laughing one." It was in her late 60s when

bedridden with heart problems that Carr took to writing her first book, which she named *Klee Wyck*, and which was read on the radio. The book won the Governor General's Award that year. One telling line from the book reads:

When the Indian agent dumped me on the beach, he said, There is not a soul here—I will come back for you in a few days...

She trekked by steamers and canoes alone except for her Native guides into remote villages of Canada and Alaska between 1909 and 1938. She sketched and painted their totems, carvings, and villages. In her autobiography, *Growing Pains*, Carr thanks the Native peoples for teaching her about the depth of artistic life.

The Indian caught first at the inner intensity of his subject, worked outward to the surfaces. His spiritual conception he buried deep in the wood he was about to carve.. then chip chip.. his crude tools released the symbols that were to clothe his thought—no sham, no mannerism. The lean neat Indian hands carved what the Indian mind comprehended. Indian art taught me directness and quick, precise decisions. I learned a lot from the Indians, who except Canada herself could help me comprehend her great woods and spaces? ⁱⁱ

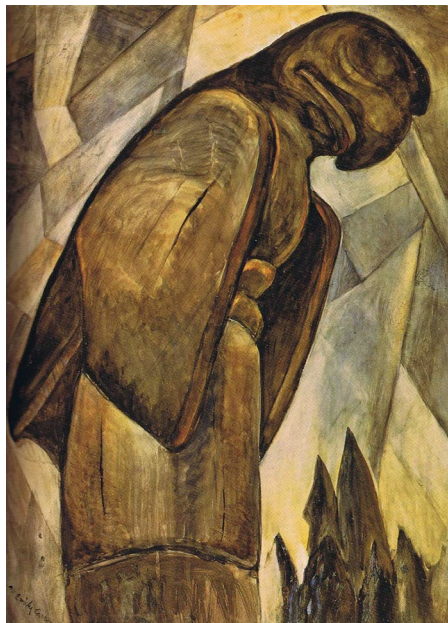


Figure 1: The Great Eagle 1930

The wild, mysterious forests of British Columbia were penetrated by Carr's refined eye and artist's hand. Her later work portrays a vision and energetic communion with nature, including its awe-inspiring and numinous dark qualities.



Figure 2: Big Raven, 1931



Figure 3: Forest, British Colombia, 1932



Figure 4: Vanquished, 1930

Emily Carr once stated, “It is wonderful to feel the grandness of Canada in the raw, not because she is Canada but because she's something sublime that you were born into, some great rugged power that you are a part of.” Carr’s devoted response to the natural attraction she felt toward the raw natural beauty of Canada and toward indigenous peoples and their art brings to mind Jung’s thoughts after his visit to the Taos Pueblo in New Mexico. In *Memories Dreams and Reflections*, after Carl Jung visits the indigenous people of the Taos Pueblo in New Mexico and begins to muse on the impact it had upon him, he speaks to the fate of modern individuals living in the Americas, pointing out that we have the fate of needing to make peace between the intellect of the West and the soul of the indigenous which lives in the land itself.ⁱⁱⁱ Carr was living that fate in the wilds of British Columbia in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

As one of her biographers states it, she “traveled alone by canoe, steamship, trading scow, and wagon, slept in a tent, in mission houses and grave houses in isolated Native villages at a time when tribal culture was being crushed, and even attended illegal potlatches raided by the Provincial Police.”^{iv}

Yet, Who Was Emily Carr?

She was a woman of the West--clearly the true Canadian Wild West. Her courage and robust vitality took her deep into remote Native villages alone by canoe for years, and her love of riding took her deep into the woods alone. Emily Carr was the eccentric crone: she strolled with her menagerie of animals, including her pet monkey Woo in a baby carriage—a pram—to the grocery store. She wasn't fond of having company, and hated a crowded house so she jerry-rigged chairs at her home that she could pull on ropes up to the ceiling and store there, only taking them down for company if she decided she wanted the company to stay.

She lived in a caravan for months at a time in the woods, bringing her menagerie of animals. Each had its own sleeping place and most of the time they got along amazing well. Cats, dogs, birds, monkey. She even had a vulture she bought for 50 cents from a Native American once and named him Uncle Tom. The vulture slept under the floorboards of her bedroom and went out with her at times on painting expeditions.

Early Life Experiences and Her Developing Character and Psychology

Carr was born in a raging snowstorm, and her father had to go out into the storm to get the doctor. She later in her writing identified her stormy character with that snowstorm,

She was the youngest daughter, with three older sisters and a younger brother. Carr was a tomboy, preferring to climb trees and play with animals rather than children or dolls. She took birds from nests and then brought them in as pets, as she once did with a raven.

Carr didn't believe in the British persona and rules of etiquette, although her sisters did and this divided them. She identified with her mother deeply and when her mother died Emily was only 12,. Emily never found her way in the family afterward. Her early relationship with her father was close at first. She was his favorite child, but she reports she began to feel it wasn't her he was interested in and she grew to resent this deeply. She began fighting with him and his authoritarian ways.

After her mother's death, Carr's father sat her down to tell her the facts of life. Carr would later confide that she was traumatized by what she calls his "brutal telling" of

sexuality. Something ruptured in her psyche and she never forgave him, nor spoke with him thereafter. He deeply felt the breach—this was never healed in his lifetime. This event affected Carr’s sexuality deeply: she never married, never had children, never had a deep, meaningful sexual relationship. No one knows what actually happened during this “brutal telling,” but whatever happened she was deeply traumatized and that trauma and her defenses kept her from sexual love relationships thereafter. He died just a few years afterwards, leaving her parentless at age 17.

With both parents gone, things got even worse. The oldest sister, Edith, took up the whip and in an animus-possessed authoritarian way beat Emily repeatedly. She left high school after one year, and went to San Francisco to paint. About the starting point behind her art, she states in her autobiography:

It had been absolutely necessary for truth’s sake to include a short few pages on our home life, which for me had not been happy after the death of our parents. I had to show what drove me to the woods and to the creatures for comfort, what *caused the real starting point of my turn to art*. My family had never been in sympathy with my painting, nor entered into my life as an artist. My home life was always a thing entirely apart from my art life. ^v

Carr’s character was fiercely individual, cantankerous, moody, ecstatic, generous, willful, self-directed, opinionated, stubborn, at times distinctly anti-social. She was iconoclastic, emotional, robust and passionate. She had a number of psychophysical ailments (a long-endured foot wound, lung problems, nervous breakdown, and heart problems). At times she was withdrawing and encapsulated, and at times intensely seeking connection with others. Continually seeking renewal in experiential dialog with nature, she used writing and painting to facilitate the dialogue.

What Did Emily Carr Gravitate Toward in Life that Fed her Soul and Strengthened Her?

Besides gravitating toward animal relationships, continual experiential emersion in nature, women friendships, and indigenous people, Carr thrived on the discipline and joy of painting and writing.

She looked to poets for soul nourishment. The essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson brought her the possibility of a higher experience of God through nature, and the poetry

of Walt Whitman in *Leaves of Grass* encouraged her to see a universal divinity incarnating into all of life. She "learned heaps of him by heart" during morning and evening walks with the dogs on Beacon Hill. ^{vi} Carr's words, in a letter to a friend:

When I want to realize growth and immortality I go back to Walt Whitman. Everything seemed to take such a hand in the everlasting ongoing with him – eternal overflowing spilling into the universe and nothing lost. ^{vii}

She also turned to Christian Science and the teachings of Raja Singh. Carr attended lectures in May of 1931 in Victoria where she heard Harry Gaze speak on Applied Psychology in five lectures dealing with meditation and "absolute communion with the Divine." And most importantly, in the fall of that year she heard Christina Killen offer the student with the "unlimited mind" a means of uniting with a "Higher Order of Being." These teachings hold classic elements for learning to cultivate experience of the subtle body. As biographer Maria Tippet clarifies,

The formula for doing so was easy to grasp: by setting up vibrations, an individual could contact the living Energy inherent in all of matter. A tree to use Killen's example, "though apparently at rest" was "alive," "vibrating all the time." The energy within its trunk, branches, stems and leaves was never still for an instant; it was "continually sending itself through the tree." The human mind was an open receptacle for these energy vibrations, contact with which was tantamount to linking up with God in the universe. ^{viii}

Carr absorbed the teachings and made them her own, confirming her feeling that God could be found *in nature in field of energetics and imagination*. She ensouled this confirmation in her practice of painting where she felt she could elevate her soul into an experiential oneness with the divine universe. ^{ix} It was in the process of her painting that Carr's spiritual life ultimately came alive.

The Process of Painting Takes on Unique Shape Within Carr's Life

Carr would later recall the words of a female substitute critic teacher at her first art school in San Francisco. These words remained with her throughout her life and

seemed to live at the foundation of her artistic process until her death. As she recalled 50 years later, the teacher said to her at age 17,

Child, you have got things wrong, surface vision is not art. Beauty lies deep, deep; it has the power to draw, to absorb, make you part of itself. It is so lovely it actually makes you ache all the time that it is raising you right up out of yourself to make you part of itself. ^x

About the process of painting, Carr goes on to say,

Sketching outdoors was a fluid process, half looking, half dreaming, *awaiting invitation from the subject, to “come meet me half way.”* Outdoor sketching was as much a LONGING as a labour. Atmosphere space cannot be touched, bullied like the vegetables of still life... These space things asked not to be touched with one’s fingertips, but with one’s whole self. ^{xi}

This is remarkably reminiscent of Jung’s sense that with creativity one makes a conscious sacrifice and meets the unconscious halfway and then something is co-created in the field of the third.

Landscape painting for Carr was not about making a “pretty picture” but instead was about:

Relating to the thing itself and waiting for it to speak to me and then trying to portray the FELT VISION of the mysterious communication, the thing itself, its spirit and the impact it was having on me. Until it communicated to me there would be nothing to paint. ^{xii}

Her direct dialog with nature, essential to each of her creative works, involved active imagination experiences. In these dialogs, Emily Carr called forth the spirit of nature into subtle energetic and imaginal relationship with her, which she would then translate into paintings and writings.

Carr sought to broaden her vision and rendering of the forest by reading art books. She learned from Mary Cecil Allen’s *Painters of the Modern Mind* (1929) that the function of the artist is to translate “the images of the seen world into other terms,” to move them into “another sphere of being.”

The Intersection of the Eternal and the Temporal brings *Felt Vision- Felt Sense*

Emily Carr had an embodied spirituality and genuine ensouled eco-psychology that grew in her—that she took care to grow over her lifetime into an entire Weltanschauung that lives in her works. It is a worldview that communicates from her paintings, a worldview that is deeply feminine—and *feminist* before the word was coined.

Looking in at her work in tandem with depth psychology, I admire her complex character, her robustness and her fragility, and her hearty, nature-loving self that fiercely dove into her life with the passion within her. She took care of this passion through great difficulties and it grew into a body of work in painting and writing that communicates her growing experiential vision. Her dreams and journal entries carry the immediacy of the relationship she developed with psyche in nature, to what Carl Jung and Paracelsus valued most highly, *la lumina nature*, the light in nature. Alchemical myth and imagery and the work of Jung on the *quintessentia*, the subtle body light in nature, serves as a cornerstone for exploring the unfolding legacy of Carr's life and work.

She spoke of sitting in front of trees where the “appalling solemnity, majesty and silence was the Holiest thing I ever felt.” And she felt “resentful when the trees hid their secrets from me.”^{xiii} The synchronistic connection she sought -- where subject and object division evolves to co-participation and an occurrence of a third unified field, and ecstatic union with its own eternally unique presence. Also this is where the vibrational field of the eternal and the temporal bring a *felt vision, a felt sense* (to use her words which are also the same words in our Jungian alchemical tradition), --this transcendent function alone (that living experiential intersection between the timeless and the bound in time) inspired her most rewarding painting. And in turn the alchemical discoveries she found nourished, invigorated and strengthened her deepest heart's core. Her felt vision of this third unified field seems particularly present in the following painting, *Forest, Interior Shafts of Light*.



Figure 5: Forest Interior in Shafts of Light, 1935

As Jung points out, one “learns” the *lumen naturae* through dreams, among other things.^{xiv} Emily Carr was a natural. She “learned” the *lumen naturae* through her dreams and most of all, her relationship with nature and artistic expression led by her religious instincts.

An important dream came to Emily one night. After Emily painted two totemic eagles on the ceiling of her attic room in the boarding house she ran during the first World War, she said, “Sleeping beneath these two strong birds, the stout Western Maple tree beneath my window, it is no wonder that I should have strong dreams, dreams that folded me very close!!” Then comes the dream:

One night I had a dream of greenery. I never attacked the painting of growing foliage quite the same after that dream I think; growing green had become something different to me. IN MY DREAM I saw a wooded hillside, an ordinary

slope such as one might see along any Western roadside, tree covered, normal, no particular pattern or design to catch an artist's eye were he seeking the subject matter. But in my dream that hillside suddenly LIVED—weighted with sap, burning green in every leaf, every scrap of it VITAL. Woods that had always meant so much to me, from that moment meant so much more.^{xv}

In alchemy this greening spirit is personified as spirit Mercurius, and in Sufism as Khidr, the greening one, the guide of souls who leads us via the religious instincts into renewal.

In film the image of the greening spirit is seen in the Japanese fantasy feature *Princess Mononoke*, where relationship with this spirit is crucial for the human, animal, and spirit worlds to reunite. In the film this shamanic spirit of nature personified as a cosmic stag called “forest spirit” and “Night Walker,” steps down to earth through a crack between the world-- from the cosmos. His presence creates abounding life everywhere he steps: ‘greening’ abounds wherever he is present. It takes a crack to bring him into the human world. And this greening spirit brings renewal of life, of consciousness, of culture and our connection to the many dimensions of existence.

One way we know this renewal is taking place in our lives, as Jung points out, is that our lenses of perception clear and we learn to see and hear continually in new ways as we live in the many dimensional universe.^{xvi} So too with Emily Carr.

The Crack in Her Psyche

Looking into Emily's life, there comes the unanswerable question: What or who was dreaming Emily Carr? Much was given in life to Carr in terms of energy, passion, ‘stick-to-itiveness’, and so on, yet much was asked of her from within in a lifetime that also had immense loneliness and struggle. How could she carry such a driving spirit, such unique individuality, such an energetically robust daimon, and yet at the same time such delicate sides of her interpersonal and psychic constitution? We are aware that to tap into such deep mysteries of soul one usually has a wound that creates a crack or plunge through ordinary states of consciousness and working with this one may come to embody more wholeness, initiated consciousness that is less encapsulated in the ego and complexes, and then able to live more from ones essence.

Emily Carr experienced a dramatic crack in her psyche. In England in 1902, in her early 30s, she suffered from headaches, persistent vomiting, ennui, bouts of weeping,

numbness, paralysis in one leg and stuttered speech. She was hospitalized in January 1903 to March 1904 and diagnosed with a conversion reaction. At East Anglia Sanatorium in Essex, England for these 14 months she received shock treatments, strange diets, massage, and--finally allowed to have birds in her room and to draw!-- she started to emerge from the breakdown. When she left the sanatorium after these many months she was pronounced cured from the conversion reaction but troubling symptoms went with her; namely, sexual fear, revenge seeking, insecurity and attention-getting behaviors.^{xvii}

It seems a large part of the psychic pressure she was feeling that led to the crack was her perceived lack of success. The outer reality of little recognition left her feeling invalid and invisible. Before she entered the sanatorium, her ambition and ego ideals broke down. Something had burned its way through and she was left vulnerable.

She went back to painting in England but felt great angst and depression over the lack of recognition and soon returned home to Canada. Then back at home in Victoria, her collection of totemic art was rejected for an exhibition by the Vancouver Art Museum, her work deemed not representational enough for the subject. Carr went into a long yet functional depression in which she stayed away for over a decade in her 40s and early 50's from deep painting experiences and could not find that open window into the shared field. Accepting this, she tended to the mundane in her life. It is as if a certain relationship between her and her daimon had ended. With the breakdown, the defense against a lesser known and lesser addressed self had crumbled.

What a loss to her that was, for it had been the energy behind her work for years, and had kept her deeply engaged. And yet it brought much soul to her life in the end. Her crack in consciousness took her into a true deep nigredo. The old way was gone and the new way had not appeared, and she knew not if it ever would. She surrendered, albeit living with a depression.

Yet the long time out soothed her nerves, calmed her disposition, and made her more human, more at ease with however things unfold. She learned to tend the earthy dimensions of her human life with care. When she returned to her work over a decade later, the dynamism within her psyche had changed and her work deepened. There was

more Emily Carr present in her complexity to hold the relationship with the daimon, found beyond the “mirror of success.”

The Peacock and the Mirror

After Carr returned from San Francisco and before she went to England, she created a funky studio in her barn in the countryside near Victoria where a peacock came to visit her. This visitation and the resulting relationship are like a dream. There is a level of relatedness and synchronicity in the whole of the events involving the peacock that illustrates her Weltanschauung, her unique way of Being in the World. Here is her experience in her own words...

Suddenly into the honeyed sweetness of the morning burst the passionate cry of the peacock—with its long drawn tang of bitterness. He belonged to the public park but wearying of its confines he had flown the fence, wandering through the little pine grove and thence into our old garden (by my studio in the barn.) From head to tail he was magnificent and he knew it... beneath the cherry tree out my window in full bloom he cried again.

Presently he flew to the low roof of the barn... Then he spied the mirror formed by the folding back of the dormer window on my art studio. He ran to it with evident delight and began to peer and prance and preen before it, bending his small lovely head this way and that, dancing and spreading his tail in a shower of glory. Then he saw me. The indifferent way in which he looked me ... Just a careless glance, then returned to his mirror where he remained all day as though he could not bear to part with himself.

Towards evening his appetite overcame his pride and he returned to the park. Next day, before the dew was gone, he was back at his mirror. From the sunshine he absorbed the glint and glisten, from the quiet grey roof the contrast which multiplied and offset his brilliance, from me tried to draw admiration and flattery...

“Vain Creature!” I said. “Pretty you’d look if they turned you inside out and showed your selfish, shabby heart.” I turned to my work disgusted at his conceit. He continued to come every day and I grew to like him there behind me as I worked.

Sometimes I pandered to his conceit and applauded his showing off. Then he was pleased and would come and sit on the window shelf in the far corner.. gradually moving closer and closer until his head surmounted by that glorious coronet of sparkling feathers, rested on my shoulder, and my hand *had* to steal out and caress it!

Subtly the bird was drawing from me as he was drawing from everything else. I knew it, but I knew also that now he was returning what he drew, tenfold.

Suddenly I sensed the loneliness of this creature..hatched from an egg, brooded over by a common domestic hen. No kith, no kin: his looking glass self the only mate he had ever known. I learned his call. He answered from the pine wood and came hurrying. Often his call woke me in the morning. Then one day—I kissed his crest, put him out, and closed the window.. that night I went abroad...

In my absence a parson occupied the studio and wrote sermons...

“What of my peacock?” I wrote home.

“He came once, the morning after you left. Since then he has not come at all”.. was the reply. “We see him strutting in the park, delighted with admiration. HE has doubtless forgotten you,” – they added.

I was absent for over five years. When a young thing stays out of her own world as long as that, and comes back grown, it is hard to fit in. Some things have grown ahead of you, and you have grown ahead of others.

As I ran up the stairs to the study—how musty and sermony it smelt! I threw the dormer wide. The garden was full of November fog.... Everything was drab, the old cherry tree past bearing was cut down.

I thought of the peacock. “Gone where good peacocks go,” I sighed and wondered where THAT was.

Next morning, I was busy on the floor with a pail of suds... HARK! I leaned from the window and screeched that unwriteable screech (just for the hell of it) and it answered instantly. The peacock was hurrying through the garden, unmindful of his tail. Hurrying hurrying NOT TO THE MIRROR— He could have had that all these years— BUT TO ME.!

Oh, peacock, Now I know that if they did turn you inside out your loyal heart would be lovelier than your feathers! How was he aware that morning that I had come? I do not know, that is one of the mysteries, and his secret. The park was out of earshot, and I had not been there... xviii

This story rings with meaning at so many levels of experience between the peacock and Carr. The loneliness, no mate, such beauty and love. Carr-- in her very nature, in her adaptations and in her life choices--was available for and attuned to other forms of courting that indeed did happen for her in the natural world.

Listening to the story, two of the faulty mirrors in her life also come to mind: the father who loved his anima in the mirror of her childhood self, not ‘her’ as she had said; and then the narcissistic wound that may have attached to the craving for “success” in the world as if that could mirror enough of who Emily Carr was to become. So as with the peacock, perhaps Carr too came through some of the dross to discover such a connection to Self which this relationship with the peacock mirrors. It is an essence-to-essence connection beyond personality and complexes that is at the heart of subtle body

consciousness. The Sufi use the metaphor of the “garden of secret lovers” to allude to such mysterious communion. And what a gift she gives us by revealing here one of her own “garden of secret lovers.”

Renewal and a Way Back to Her Artwork

It was distinctly a relationship with renowned Canadian artist Lawren Harris after her breakdown that helped her find her way back to her work and the source of true inspiration beyond her drive for success. Importantly, Lawren Harris told her:

When we enter the stream of creative life, then we are on our own and have to find self-reliance, active conviction, learn to see logic behind the inner struggle. Do, please keep on and know, if it will help you, that your work has tremendously improved; know too that the greater it becomes the less you will be aware of it, perhaps be almost incapable of being convinced; and what does it matter? ...There is only one way—keep on. How can greatness be true greatness unless it transcend any personal estimate? How can it live in great searching in the true spirit, in the informing unity behind the phenomenon, if it knows itself as great?... Creative Imagination is only creative when it transcends the personal... Personality is merely the wax and wane of forces far greater than itself.”^{xix}

After over a decade away from painting here are her words as she delicately re-entered that world:

Slowly slowly I began to put feeble scratching and smudges of paint onto my paper, returning home disheartened, wondering, waiting for the words to say something to me personally. Until they did, what could I say????^{xx}

She suffered tremendous feelings of isolation and lack of collegial support living way out west. “Solitude is swell, all too much chatter goes on,” said Harris. Carr wrote in response, I knew he was right, I always chose solitude.

It was now, in her 50s and early 60s that Carr created her greatest artworks.



Figure 6: Overhead 1938



Figure 7: Above the Trees 1939

I often wonder what would have happened to her and her process with her work if she had lived to see her current “success” in the world, for example that one of her paintings sold for \$2.16 million dollars last year in Vancouver at an auction! How strange indeed this is in comparison to the hand-to-mouth existence she lived while she brought this greening spirit to earth via the crack between the worlds, and through her love and her devotion to hard work.

She Shifts To Writing and Her Death Approaches

Carr in her late 60s had to stop her forays into nature to paint due to two heart attacks and a stroke. The ache she suffered drove her into writing. She wrote prolifically

from 68 to 73. One of her four substantial works, *Klee Wyck*, is read along with her other books in schools in Canada today.

When Carr felt it was time and she could go on no longer on her own, she found homes for her animals and walked across the street from her beloved home to a phone booth and called to get a ride to the senior living facility. She died within weeks of this call. In one of Emily's last paintings her beloved companion monkey, "Woo" eats from the tree of many ripened fruits. An exquisite mirror to the fruitful life she spent living and working with her creative daimon.

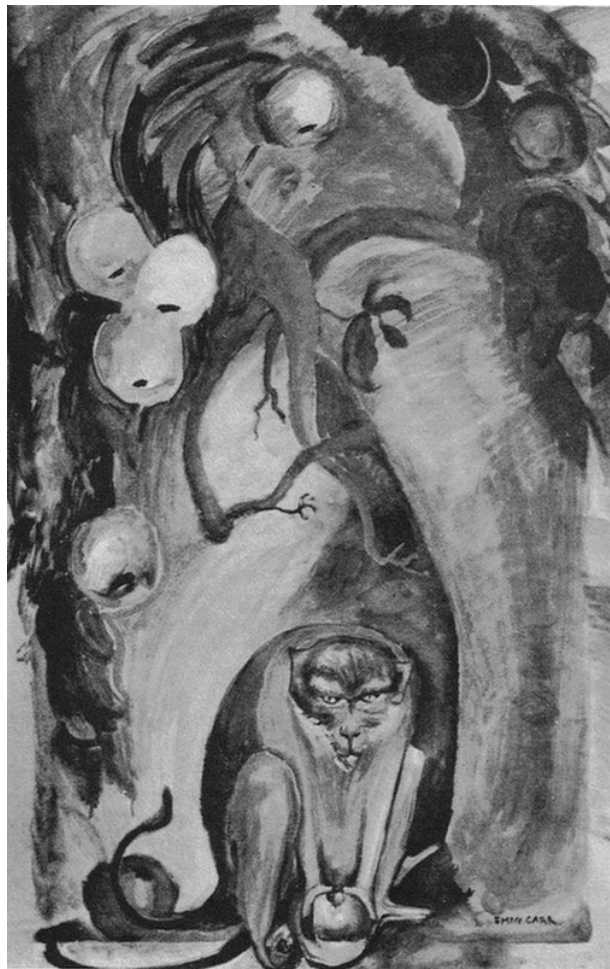


Figure 7, Woo 1945

About her own dying she wrote:

Dear mother earth, I think I have always specially belonged to you. I have loved from babyhood to roll upon you, to lie with my face pressed right down onto you

in my sorrows. I love the look of you, and the smell of you and the feel of you. And when I die I should like to be *in* you, *uncoffined*, *unshrouded*, the petals of flowers against my flesh and you covering me up.

Carr at the end of her life looked back on her early life and said in the end maybe she owed a thank you to these people and events that were so difficult, abusive, invasive and traumatic, for they drove her out into the woods on her horse beginning in early life— and it was the early experiences on her horse which became the foundation for her work as a painter. In this reflection she directly thanks her horse Johnny:

Johnny had been a performing horse in the traveling circus and he knew a lot. When he had galloped me beyond the town and over the highway till all houses and fences were passed, he would saunter, stopping now and then to sniff the roadside bushes as if considering... Suddenly he would nose into the greenery finding a trail no one else could see, pressing forward so hard that the bushes parted, caressing him and me as we passed, and closing behind us shutting us from every “towny” thing. My horse pressed and pressed till we were hidden from seeing, noise and people. We came to some mossy little clearing where soft shade-growing grass grew. He stopped with a satisfied sigh. I let down his bridle and we nibbled.. he on the grass, I at the deep sacred beauty of Canada’s still woods. I owe gratitude to him for finding the deep lovely places that were the very foundation on which my work as a painter was to be built. ^{xxi}



Figure 8: Emily and her horse, Johnny

Emily Carr's work, for some, may awaken a deeper appreciation for communion with the lumina natura, the eternal light and preesence in nature that awakens this artist's soul perception and brings powerful works to bear in the world. Seeing Emily's horse, Johnny, also as a symbol in her soul, brings to mind how the Sufi see the process being very important in psycho-physical developement to "get to know the animal beneath you that carries you along,"

Emily Carr had in this incarnation, as the Sufi metaphor puts it, quite a unique and complex 'horse' to learn to ride that carried her along. And, I know I for one forever "see" trees and forests differently with gratitude to Emily Carr for her keenly developed felt sense of the subtle body communion that was carried her along and remains alive in her work.



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ⁱ Quoted in Wikman, *Pregnant Darkness: Alchemy and the Rebirth of Consciousness*, p. xx.

ⁱⁱ Emily Carr, *Growing Pains*, p 258.

ⁱⁱⁱ C.G. Jung, *Memories Dreams and Reflections*, p. .

^{iv} Susan Vreeland, website.

^v Emily Carr, *Growing Pains*, p. 315.

^{vi} Maria Tippet, *Emily Carr: A Biography*, p 177).

^{vii} Emily Carr in a letter to Ruth Humphrey, April 1938.

^{viii} Maria Tippet, *Emily Carr: A Biography*, p. 177.

^{ix}.ibid, p. 178.

^x Emily Carr, *Growing Pains*, p. 51.

^{xi} ibid, *Growing Pains*, p. 46-47

^{xii} ibid, *Growing Pains*, p. ?.

^{xiii} Maria Tippet, *Emily Carr: A Biography*, p.73.

^{xiv} Jung CW vol 8, paragraph 388, fn 82 *Liber de Caducis, IV p. 274. and VIII p. 298.*)

^{xv} Emily Carr: *Growing Pains*, 315- 316.

^{xvi} Wikman, *Pregnant Darkness: Alchemy and the Rebirth of Consciousness*, p.xxii.

^{xvii} Maria Tippet, *Emily Carr: A Biography*, pg 61.

^{xviii} *The Complete Writings of Emily Carr, Heart of a Peacock.* Douglas & MacIntyre, Vancouver 1993, p. 480-482.

^{xix} Emily Carr: *Growing Pains*, 317-318.

^{xx} ibid: *Growing Pains*, 317.

^{xxi} ibid, *Growing Pains*, p. 42.