

the writer, whether archivist, genealogist, or historian, is like the heart pumping its vital substance into long-departed ancestors. *Le labyrinthe du monde*, in fact, bears eloquent testimony to the distorting effect and essential falsity of current conceptual and terminological conveniences in the archival and records management professions which imply that records are “active,” or alive, only so long as they are serving the cause of organizational or societal efficiency, effectiveness, and economy, that they pass into “dormant” middle age as their administrative usefulness decreases, and that they are “dead,” or archival, once they have lapsed into operational obsolescence. This description of the stages of the life cycle of records reflects the primacy of administrative culture today, a culture which, like any predominant culture, imposes its language and perspective on many aspects of contemporary society — including archives. Swamped as they often are by the demands of this situation, it is easy for archivists to forget the larger significance of their work. In reading Yourcenar’s books, I was happily reminded that, far from being records morticians working at some final resting place for lifeless matter, archivists are involved in preserving life through the care and study of records, the living cells of individual and collective memory.

Those who are interested in sampling Marguerite Yourcenar’s writing can now consult the growing number of English translations which have accompanied her recent popularity in the English-speaking world. *The Dark Brain of Piranesi*, a collection of essays on literary subjects originally published in 1962 under the title *Sous bénéfice d’inventaire*, is her most recently translated work.

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Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art and the Great War. MARIA TIPPETT. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984. xii, 136 p. ISBN 0-8020-2541-2 \$24.95.

On entering the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, the current visitor first sees an enormous black, white, and red canvas the size of a Baroque altarpiece floating above the staircase: Edward Wadsworth’s *Dazzle-Ships in Drydock at Liverpool*. Having ascended the staircase, he soon confronts the signature picture in the National Gallery’s Old Master Collection: Benjamin West’s *The Death of Wolfe*. That both these pictures came to the gallery as part of the remarkable Canadian War Memorials Fund (CWMF) is not acknowledged in either case. Since large-scale acts of arts patronage in Canada are very infrequently encountered, it is particularly surprising that the recipient institution should have failed to give credit where credit is due. Lest we forget the generosity and vision behind Lord Beaverbrook’s scheme to document Canada’s contribution to World War I by commissioning mostly English and Canadian artists to produce an unprecedented number of works of art of all kinds, Maria Tippett has focused on this singular act of patronage to reconstruct a chapter of our cultural heritage. The story had been outlined before in Major R.F. Wodehouse’s *A Check List of The War Collections* published by the National Gallery in 1968, but not with the abundance of detail or with the in-depth analysis of the results which Tippett offers in this illustrated essay.

As a newspaperman, Beaverbrook was very familiar with the idea of the artist-journalist (often competent hacks who had supplied sketches of the Crimean, American Civil, and Boer Wars from the front for the illustrated press), but he did not

want such artists for his project. Sensing that photographs and cinematography alone could not provide a permanent or complete record of the Great War, Beaverbrook got the idea of enlisting major artists to create what turned out to be often the largest and sometimes the best works of their entire careers. From late 1916 until the registered charity's termination in 1921, the CWMF commissioned 116 artists to produce more than 800 works of art under the chairmanship of Beaverbrook's friend Lord Rothermere. While Beaverbrook was undoubtedly interested in the documentary value of this collection — the name of the fund makes this very clear — he was also interested in producing High Art.

Even before the CWMF was established, Dominion Archivist Arthur Doughty arrived in London to challenge Beaverbrook's Canadian War Records Office, which threatened to eclipse his own role as official historian of the war and collector of war documents. After an initial confrontation which, according to Tippet, had elements of a silent film comedy about it, Doughty's challenge completely collapsed. A few months later he was content to say that his work in England was under the direction of Sir Max Aitken. Because the focus of the CWMF was art, and modern art at that, Doughty seems to have deferred to the National Gallery, but the historical pictures which were added to the CWMF in 1918 were another matter: portraits of Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Sir John Franklin, Joseph Brant, and Jeffrey, Lord Amherst, as well as West's celebrated *The Death of Wolfe* (the latter a gift to the CWMF from the Duke of Westminster). Doughty was not content to let these works escape; he arranged their transfer to the Public Archives in 1925 by an order-in-council. Very unhappy to lose such masterworks, the National Gallery reclaimed the portraits in 1928 and West's *Wolfe* only in 1938. (The full tug-of-war is narrated in Greg Spurgeon's article, "Pictures and History: The Art Museum and the Visual Arts Archives," *Archivaria* 17 (Winter 1983-84), pp. 63-66.)

When Canadian artists quite justifiably felt left out because Beaverbrook's first commissions were awarded exclusively to British painters, Sir Edmund Walker, Chairman of the Arts Advisory Council and the driving force behind the National Gallery, and Eric Brown, the gallery's first director, became instrumental in recruiting Canadian artists for overseas service and also in organizing the CWMF's programme for documenting the home front. In 1921, the completed War Memorials Collection was donated to the National Gallery. It hoped to use the considerable publicity surrounding the gift to pressure the government into building a larger gallery which might accommodate the permanent collection as well as the new war art.

Instead, the collection landed in the National Gallery's basement where it was to moulder for decades, but before it descended into the oubliette from which it never returned, there were a series of exciting international exhibitions in London, New York, Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa. Tippet feels that the impact of these exhibitions in Canada was in a way equivalent to New York's famous Armory Show of 1913 that introduced avant-garde European art to America for the first time. In a similar way, but confined to the British avant-garde, the CWMF exhibitions introduced Canadians to radical modern art, and they did not like what they saw. For Sir Robert Borden, some of the pictures were "so modern and advanced that one could neither understand nor appreciate them." While the avant-garde works drew the spotlight, along with the controversial *Canada's Golgotha* by Derwent Wood, a bronze sculpture of a Canadian soldier crucified by the enemy, there were plenty of old-fashioned pictures for the more conservative to admire: Alfred Munnings's sporting pictures with the Canadian cavalry

chasing Germans instead of foxes and John Byam Lister Shaw's romantic and sentimental *The Flag*, possibly the single worst picture in the collection and the one most admired both in London and in Canada! Ironically, a few avant-garde works have survived into the present largely because of their aesthetic accomplishments rather than their documentary value. When the National Gallery transferred the CWMF collection to the Canadian War Museum in 1971, it retained a small group of superior works, including Wadsworth's *Dazzle-Ships*, for the permanent collection.

Tippett rightly stresses the importance for Canadian artists of the CWMF, which provided many of our best painters and sculptors with jobs, exhibitions, and the necessary publicity to launch their careers. She puts forward the very interesting idea that contact with modern British art both in Europe and at home through exhibitions played a role in the development of the Group of Seven, citing the influence of Paul Nash on Lawren Harris and A.Y. Jackson. Unfortunately, she does not really prove her hypothesis with this one comparison, which remains unconvincing. To my mind, the Group's interest in the devastated landscape, such as Frank Johnston's *Fire-Swept Algoma* (1920, National Gallery), was very likely inspired by the tradition of war blasted landscapes which were one of the dominant motifs in the CWMF collection. Even the large heroic scale of Johnston's canvas, himself a war artist on the home front, would seem to derive from the CWMF which encouraged the production of big pictures.

After forming the Canadian fund, the indefatigable Beaverbrook went on to found the British War Memorials Committee, which had a similar goal. A tradition was thus established which produced a similar programme for the Second World War. It is interesting to note that even with television bringing us daily you-are-there installments of the Falklands War, an official war artist, Linda Kitson, was nevertheless sent out to produce war art in the Beaverbrook tradition.

What to do with their war collections never seemed to pose the same problem for the British as for the Canadians. As John Ferguson states in his *The Arts in Britain in World War I* (London, 1980), which Tippett does not seem to have consulted, the Cabinet decided to form a National War Museum, now the Imperial War Museum, which "contains a feature seldom found in War Museums: a record of war through the eyes of artists of distinction and imagination. It is arguable that the Imperial War Museum offers a more comprehensive view of British artists of the twentieth century than any other gallery except the Tate." Alas, no such building followed in Canada. Although an hilarious Panthéon-on-the-Ottawa was designed by E.A. Rickards to house Beaverbrook's collection, no special gallery ever materialized. The pictures now languish in the storage facilities of the Canadian War Museum where a few examples are seen from time to time in special exhibitions.

Strangely enough, Tippett does not consider the virtual disappearance of the CWMF collection as a bad thing, arguing that it was the experience provided to the artists by the war rather than the painted result that was important for the development of Canadian culture. But the fact that Wadsworth's *Dazzle-Ships* still dazzles indicates that many other works should be brought to light. One can only hope that a room in the new National Gallery now rising on Nepean Point will bring together, perhaps on a rotating basis, the best pictures from the CWMF. And may we hope that Beaverbrook and Rothermere will at last be rewarded by having their collection identified as a gift of the Canadian War Memorials Fund?

In conclusion, three defects, small and large, mar this otherwise admirable book. Although the narrative is footnoted to the teeth, Tippet provides no bibliography. The French Académie to which Canadian artists of the time flocked was not the "Julien," a mistake often encountered, but the Julian, founded by Rodolphe Julian (1839-1907). The fifty-one black-and-white plates of indifferent quality provided by the University of Toronto Press are not likely to inspire widespread interest in these neglected works of art.

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Midways, Judges, and Smooth-Tongued Fakirs: The Illustrated Story of Country Fairs in the Prairie West. DAVID C. JONES. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1983. 157 p. ISBN 0-88833-099-5 \$16.95.

It's no secret that there are marked cultural differences between urban centres and rural communities in Canada. These differences come vividly to mind when one compares David Jones's recent book on country fairs in the prairie West with David Breen and Kenneth Coates's book on the Pacific National Exhibition [PNE] in Vancouver [reviewed in *Archivaria* 18]. *Vancouver's Fair* (1983) examined the ways by which real estate developers and civic boosters transformed a regional agricultural fair into a glittery international exposition, complete with musical revues, freak shows, fortunetellers, and carnival rides. Occasionally the PNE promoters battled with city councillors and citizens' groups over matters of finance and neighbourhood development. But rarely were the promoters embroiled in moral issues; rarely were they criticized for the side shows, the scantily clad dancing girls, and other entertainments which were offered annually to city folk at the PNE. Such was not the case for the promoters who feature in Jones's book. Organizers of rural fairs were constantly under attack from local newspaper editors, clergymen, and other social reformers who looked upon frivolous games and titillating shows as a threat to the very foundations of rural society. Maybe these moral crusaders had good cause for concern; most likely, they were being prudish and parochial. Whatever the case, *Midways, Judges, and Smooth-Tongued Fakirs* provides some interesting insights into the *mentalité* of western Canada.

Although the morals and mores of the prairie West lie at the heart of this book, it is essentially a history of rural fairs from the 1800s to the 1930s. Jones has selected over seventy photographs to illustrate the tale and, with few exceptions, the pictures are well chosen. The pictures (most of which are drawn from the Glenbow-Alberta Institute collections) emphasize the edifying aspects of the fairs: stalls laden with sheaves of golden grain at Qu'Appelle, parades of champion horses at North Battleford, enticing displays of preserved foods at Millarville. The bizarre face of the fair is here, too: the "Human Bullet" about to be launched in Edmonton, an aerial equestrian plummeting into a pool of water in Lethbridge, and Serpentina ("half woman, half snake!") reclining seductively somewhere west of Winnipeg.

Linking the four sections of photographs, Jones's text is tightly written, lively, and informative. Notes to the text are testimony to the author's command of contemporary farm journals and the major prairie newspapers. He has successfully mined the published reports of the provincial Departments of Agriculture in Alberta and Saskatchewan and