



This Woman in Particular: Contexts for the Biographical Image of Emily Carr

Stephanie Kirkwood Walker, William Closson James

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What happens when an individual becomes the subject of many and divergent portraits?

“Biography,” says Stephanie Kirkwood Walker, “is a deceptive genre. Positioned between fact and fiction and elusive in its purposes, biography displays an individual life, an existence patterned by conventions that have also shaped the reader’s experience.” In *This Woman in Particular*, Walker explores versions of Emily Carr’s life that have appeared over the last half-century.

Walker contends that the biographical image of Emily Carr that emerges from an accumulation of biographies, films, plays and poetry as well as her own autobiographical writing establishes an elaborated cultural artefact — an “image” that is bound by its very nature to remain forever incomplete and always elusive. She demonstrates how changes in Carr’s biographical image parallel the maturing of Canadian biographical writing, reflecting attitudes toward women artists and the shifting balance between religion, secular attitudes and contemporary spirituality. And she concludes that biography plays a crucial role in all our lives in initiating and sustaining debate on vital personal and collective concerns.

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