F.R. Scott and the Emergence of a Poetics of Institutional Critique

by Bart Vautour

> *I never felt the slightest contradiction between activities and politics and writing poetry, because the politics I professed and practiced was to me a creative idea about society, and any creation is art. You can have as imaginative ideas about society as you can have about a new form of verse.*[1]

F.R. Scott's instigation of a poetics of institutional critique can be found within his earliest poems. It is through teasing out how Scott critically navigates multiple formal and institutional alignments that we can get an account of the ways in which politics and poetics join forces in his work. In some cases this poetics of institutional critique gets articulated through direct appraisals of singular institutions, in other cases it is through critiques of poetic institutions and traditions, and in others still, it is through critiques of institutionalized social inequity. Throughout the development of this poetics of institutional critique there is never a critique of institutions *qua* institutions. Scott fights hard for the establishment and maintenance of an assortment of institutions. For Scott, institutions facilitate a space for critique and creative shaping of society. We find Scott's mastery in his ability to mobilize the enabling and disabling conditions of institutions through—and in the service of—politics and poetry.

Starting with his first published poetry about various universities and systems of education, then on to his critique of a national body of artistic producers—the Canadian Authors Association—to the rise of his poetic manifestoes that appeared in the *Canadian Forum*, I argue for a view of Scott's early poetry that finds the integration of politics and poetics rather than an incongruity. In order to get a detailed sense of this poetics of institutional critique a different critical tack must be taken. To varying degrees, two critical narratives have persisted throughout many scholarly portraits of F.R. Scott and his work. While one critical path has highlighted a supposed ambiguity and duplicity in Scott's poetics, the other uses political commitment as a measuring stick with which to judge his poetry.[2] Both narratives have played a role in consolidating a critical polarization between Scott's poetry and politics. A framework that constructs in Scott a debilitating inner struggle between the pursuit of social justice and artis-

tic production is neither compelling nor adequate when looking at a broad range of Scott's poetry. A framework of commitment must also be avoided in order to deal with the connection between poetry and politics in Scott's work. We know that Scott was "committed" to both social justice as well as poetry but when we view poetry through the lens of commitment we too often linger on searching for and considering *direct* manifestations of political affiliations; the poet's membership card risks becoming his or her best-known poem. The academic bifurcation of Scott's poetry and politics is more a symptom of the structural limitations of disciplinary critical practice than it is about a strict division in Scott's mode of production.[3]

Because Scott did not publish a single-author collection of poetry until the 1940s, the most readily available way to highlight these connections is through Scott's early relationship to periodical culture. By reading representative examples from magazines across three decades a pattern emerges that shows literature and politics have more than nominal adjacency or "imagined proximity" in Scott's early oeuvre (Anderson 34). The primary task of this article will be to take seriously Scott's use of a mode of production through which politics and literature become inextricable.

I

F.R. Scott's juvenilia and early poems of the 1920s reveal a preoccupation with fashioning poetic equivalents to what would later be called the campus novel. Unlike later campus novels, though, Scott's poetry does not simply take the university or college as its constructed *mise en scène*. More than that, Scott persists in grappling with organizational structures of education in his early poetry. By organizational structures I mean to point to an engagement with governing bodies within the university as well as cultural formations within the general student population that shape student life. His poems participated in institutionalized educational cultures through their publication in university-affiliated periodicals insomuch as these periodicals acted as forums for debate, protest, and satire.

This early poetry has not enjoyed the measure of critical attention afforded to the rest of his oeuvre. In relation to the successes of his later poetic production, Scott's early poetry has been generally shunned as aesthetically and politically un-representative of his poetic voice. In spite of this dismissal, there is an argument to be made for going back to these texts to find emergent tenets in Scott's career. Despite scholars' attention to the supposed ambiguity and duplicity in Scott's poetics, a genealogical approach to Scott's poetry that looks for the founding of a particular mode

of discursivity is needed if we are going to avoid dismissing Scott's earliest poetry as either the scribbling of an adolescent or as representative of a repulsively residual Victorian or Georgian comportment.

Brian Trehearne outlines the messy ways this early work of Scott's has been classified: it has been called Victorian *and* Georgian *and* Aesthetic but, as he suggests, "Victorian poetry simply is not Aesthetic poetry, nor is either of these the same as Georgian poetry: and it is not critically sound (at least not without evidence) to suggest that Scott was a relaxed practitioner of all three indifferently" (139). Because Scott has been placed within a literary narrative that has him act the part of a founding member of a Canadian modernist movement, his small amount of pre- and proto-modernist verse has been discharged from the active service of narrating the full spectrum of his poetics. Perhaps this narrowing of vision has occurred as a matter of access, as much of Scott's early poetry has simply been left out of *The Collected Poems of F.R. Scott*, for which he received the Governor General's Award for poetry in 1981.[4]

Trehearne suggests that Scott's public career as a poet began while he was enrolled at Oxford as a Rhodes scholar. Before exploring these Oxford poems, though, it is important to note that Trehearne skips over Scott's earliest extant published poem, "The girls are too much with us," which appeared in *Mitre* in February 1918. This poem speaks directly to a notion of how tradition is able to shape the function of the educational establishment. In this case it is Bishop's College, where, in September of 1916 Scott enrolled and remained until graduation in June of 1919 (Djwa 37, 41). The sonnet, co-authored by Sydney Williams, is a parodic critique of the admittance of women into the school. Their call was for the maintenance of the college's fraternal tradition and the poem enacts a familial—paternal—tradition as well.[5] The opening quatrain is overly concerned with the protection of a gendered cultural authority:

> The girls are too much with us; late and soon,
> Working and playing, they usurp our powers;
> Little remains at Bishop's that is ours;
> They are taking our rights away, no thing's immune.
> (1–4)

Apart from the obvious chauvinism that attempts to uphold institutional patriarchy, the poem is an example of the integration of Romantic poetics into the service of appraising institutional practice and tradition. While the poem is far too close to Wordsworth's "The World Is Too Much with Us" (1807) to grant it any formal ingenuity, what the poem does show is that

Scott and Williams had enough sophistication to recognize how to employ an established literary mode of production in a critique of the direction in which the educational establishment was headed. It is this very action that distinguishes Scott's political poetry from beginning to end. But of course we cannot end here.

With his removal to England, Scott continued to incorporate Romantic poetics into a field of critique, but this time, a critique of his own place in academia. In "Lament, after Reading the Results of Schools"[6] Scott reflects on the disappointment of only achieving "a third" in history at Oxford, referring to a place in an examination list, instead of his aimed at "first." The opening lines of Scott's sonnet echo Keats's "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" (1816): "Now know I how stout Cortez would have felt / Had fog hid the Pacific from his sight" (1–2). The solipsistic reflection and self-aggrandizement within the poem does not suggest to the reader of Scott's later poetry the emergence of a preoccupation in Scott's writing. But, if we put the tone aside, we can see the continued emergence of a mode of composition that calls upon poetic tradition to engage in the structural functioning of the institution. In this poem we also begin to see the influence of the Aestheticism so present at what Trehearne refers to as "that remarkable socio-cultural institution" (153). Oxford, while being a bastion of tradition, was also a space of exuberant bending of cultural assumptions where young men were presented with alternative opportunities for their performances of self. Scott, it would seem, was not outside this identity play. The poem was signed De Profundis, almost certainly an allusion to the Aesthete *par excellence* in its mimicry of the title of Oscar Wilde's famous letter to Lord Alfred Douglas.

"The Problem," also published in *Isis*, renders obvious Scott's engagement with both Oxford's adventurous Aestheticism as well as its traditionally masculine configuration. This too has been well documented by Trehearne (157–9). The first stanza of the poem sets the rhetorical situation:

> No problem can be worse than mine,
> My state is quite pathetic;
> One half my soul's a Philistine,
> The other half's aesthetic.
>
> (1–4)

What the poem shows is that Scott was able to survey the field of campus culture and put his findings in poetic—albeit ironic—form. Trehearne suggests that when reading "The Problem" our conclusions can reach no fur-

ther than to point out that Scott was attentive to the Aestheticism of Oxford "and that he understood the social polarization of the university's student populace" (159). But Trehearne goes further to suggest that Scott's understanding of Aestheticism at Oxford is crucial for an understanding of his Aesthetic poems that were to be published four years later in the *Fortnightly* under the pseudonyms Brian Tuke and Bernard March.[7] Trehearne's assertion provokes questioning: if Scott's understanding of Aestheticism is important for our reading his poetry in the *Fortnightly* under the names Brian Tuke and Bernard March, what are the implications of Scott's well-developed understanding of the social and cultural division in the student body when reading the poems published in the *Fortnightly* under the names Student, Sax, X, T.T., R.S., and F.R.S.?[8] While it may be important to trace the figurative philistine, it is perhaps more important, I argue, to look for continuities in the ways Scott mobilizes his institutional surroundings in poetic form. In other words, our critical account of Scott's emergent poetics cannot be based on a struggle between Aestheticism and a more masculine "philistine" poetics alone. Nor can it be based on attempting to hear an opportunistic mid-Atlantic poetic accent upon Scott's return to Canada and enrolment in the Faculty of Law at McGill. Instead, I suggest that a focus on Scott's grasp of the social and cultural division in the student body can better assist a reading of Scott's movement toward an increasingly political poetics.

On Saturday, 21 November 1925—just over a year after Scott enrolled at McGill—the *McGill Fortnightly Review* introduced itself and took centre stage in the political and literary life of the McGill campus. Literary critics more often than not refer to the *Fortnightly* as an integral component of the first modernist movement in Canada, namely, the McGill Movement. Trehearne rightly makes a corrective by identifying the pre- and proto-modernist aspects of the periodical in reference to Scott's poems published under the pseudonyms Brian Tuke and Bernard March. So, while the magazine was definitely part of a movement *towards* modernism it is not the place to look for a cohesive and consolidated modernism. If there was a unifying movement in the *Fortnightly* it was the fact that it was born as part of an animated student movement.

Scott was part of these spirited student politics and after a year in the McGill Law faculty he became critical and publicly vocal about how the university—Administration and Student Council—was being run. Perhaps the best example of Scott's early poetic engagement with student politics at McGill is his poem, "The Scarlet Key Society," which was published just before the advent of the *Fortnightly*. Signed "Student," "The Scarlet

Key Society" was published in the literary supplement of the *McGill Daily* in October 1925.[9] The poem was published just as political tensions on campus were erupting—one month prior to the emergence of the *Fortnightly*—and it has not been published since. The student union had decided that they would form a new society for the purpose of entertaining students visiting from other universities for sports or debating or what have you. No longer were varsity teams going to entertain their competitors in a gesture of gentlemanly gamesmanship. Instead, the Student Council adopted an American tradition and Scott was infuriated. The final stanza of "The Scarlet Key Society" shows his irritation:

> Then toast the Scarlet Key, boys,
> The latest Yankee fad.
> Our manners must be changed, boys,
> The Council says they're bad.
> So scrap the old-time customs,
> And let each student shout;
> "The Scarlet Key! The Scarlet Key!"
> (Let['s] K-ck the d——— thing out —).
> (33–40)

While the poem takes the satiric tone of a locker-room chantey, it has something serious to say about cultural imperialism coming from south of the border. For the young Scott, it was also crucial that McGill maintain a respectable image in the eyes of rival universities as well as the general public. The many letters and editorials that would accompany the poem in railing against the society during Scott's tenure at McGill can evidence this. The frequency of the rejoinders were so high that his *Fortnightly* editorial of 6 February 1926 makes the analogy that, "[c]onstant dripping, though a monotonous process, is reputed to have its effect even upon the hardest material" (54). Scott's persistent and unremitting critique of the society reveals a deep engagement and concern for the ways in which organizational structures could be a determining factor in the stratification of the student populace. For the main criticism pitted against the formation of the Scarlet Key Society was its members' claim to a collegiate aristocracy.

Just as Scott incorporated Romanticism into his Bishop's College poem and his Oxford poems, he begins to incorporate and satirize Modernism into his critiques of student life at McGill. Perhaps the best examples of this are his "Sweeney Comes to McGill (With apologies to Mr. Eliot)," and the prose piece "Gertrude Stein Has Tea at the Union" published in the *Fortnightly* in November 1926 and March 1927 respectively. Sweeney

appears again in the *McGilliad* in 1930 with a poem entitled "Sweeney Graduates (With all necessary apologies)." In both of the "Sweeney" poems Scott comments on the corporatization of higher education. In "Sweeney Comes to McGill" it is the physical arrival at the university that signals the moneyed prospects of the bourgeois subject's matriculation into a corporate class: "The fifty-thousand-dollar gates / Give promise of more startling sins" (3–4). In "Sweeney Graduates," Scott decries the granting of degrees to the pupil who has not actually engaged in any serious scholarship but the student who only "Emits stenography" (2) to arrive at commencement into a corporate class. In this sense the university only functions as a place where the "educated hordes intrude / On meretricious premises, / And magnates in their magnitude / Dispense the dubious degrees" (25–28). By adopting Stein's persona in his parodic prose report and one of Eliot's characters for the two Sweeney poems, Scott is emulating his old habit of adopting discrete literary modes in the service of expounding upon student life. The difference is, of course, that this time he was looking to newly established modernist literary celebrities instead of Romantic poets.

Although Scott adopts the character and persona of two rather prominent modernist writers, we should not be too hasty in suggesting the poems were a straightforward embrace. Scott is not the reverent young student paying homage. Instead, Scott is rather irreverent towards Eliot and Stein. He is utilizing their literary clout while at the same time mocking the products of their work. He soon turned this mocking and irreverent attitude at a closer target, namely, the Canadian Authors Association.

II

When Scott published "The Canadian Authors Meet" in April 1927 in the *Fortnightly*, he was taking steps to move beyond the campus. This time the scene was a Canadian Authors Association meeting and Scott placed himself in an irreverent location in relation to a national body of literary producers. For an idea of this impertinent position we need only look to the final figure of the poet in the last stanza of Scott's oft-cited poem:[10]

> Far in corner sits (though none would know it)
> The very picture of disconsolation,
> A rather lewd and most ungodly poet
> Writing these verses, for his soul's salvation.
> (25–28)

Dean Irvine, is his introduction to *The Canadian Modernists Meet*, suggests that Scott situated the Canadian modernist poet as "distant from the metropolitan centres of international modernisms and detached from the antimodernism of the Canadian authors he satirizes" (1). While this is no doubt the case for the poet's distances and detachments, it remains that the poet attaches a meaning to the composition of the occasional poem: he writes "for his soul's salvation" (28). While creating a distance from the central figures of international modernism (Eliot and Stein) as well as the metropolitan centre, Scott incorporates modernism's productive break from older literary practices in order to produce institutional analysis. Scott moves to a rejection of the poetic *status quo*—through parody—as well as Canadian poetic and public tradition in order that he might envision the rise of a new modernist Canadian poetry of institutional critique. Louis Dudek points out a supposed odd contradiction in the final stanza of the "The Canadian Authors Meet": "I hardly need to point out," he writes, "the contradiction between an 'ungodly poet' and one 'writing verses for his soul's salvation.' In dreams, Freud tells us, contradictions simply co-exist, and the same is true of poems" (qtd. in Trehearne *Aestheticism* 170). The contradiction is not really much of a contradiction if we look closely. The ungodliness that Scott's poem enunciates is the irreverence held not for the metaphysical pursuit of Beauty or Art, or God for that matter, but for the residually colonial poetic practice of "Lampman, Roberts, Carman, Campbell, Scott" and all the other "*literati*" he satirizes in the poem ("The Canadian Authors Meet" 10, 14). The salvation of the soul in the last line of the poem recalls Scott's own Aesthetic leanings, which are not alien to formal analysis, literary innovation, or social engagement.[11] Because salvation for Scott does not lie in obligatory reverence but in the realm of institutional critique and reform, Scott's poem seeks to institutionalize a national poetics that is resistant to Victorian or Georgian coloniality. Scott confronts Canada's residual imperialist ties as he gestures toward the poets who are "puppets" to the waning myth of imperial order, positioned "Beneath a portrait of the Prince of Wales" (1–2). Indeed, Scott would write in "New Poems for Old: I. The Decline of Poesy" that poetry in Canada "in a word, was cut and trimmed to suit a particular body politic with a revered constitutional monarch and wide Imperial interests....and it fitted like a frock coat on an M.P." (297). Scott recognized that there was already an institutional connection between poetry and politics in Canada but, importantly, Scott did not see the development of a new vision for an institutional and national poetics as something coming out of formal literary criticism but out of critical poetic practice.[12]

Within close temporal proximity of the publication of "The Canadian Authors Meet" Scott sent a letter to the editor of the *Canadian Forum* in response to A.J.M. Smith's article "Wanted—Canadian Criticism." If in "The Canadian Authors Meet" he satirizes the Canadian poetic establishment, he offers a structural analysis of how new literature could emerge in Canada with his letter to the editor published in June 1928. While suggesting that Smith's article was correct in pointing to the "predominance of commercial standards and the confusion between commerce and art in Canada," he questions Smith's insistence on the development of a national critical apparatus prior to the emergence of a "native" literature (698). Scott writes: "It is true to say that in a country where there are good critics the level of literary attainment will probably be high. But it is a very different matter to say that so soon as a country has found its critics, a native literature will arise" (698). Scott's rather structuralist analysis of how the emergence of a "native" literature in Canada might be facilitated is remarkable in relation to "The Canadian Authors Meet." As if trying to meet Smith half way, Scott develops a poetics of critique instead of a literary criticism.

The slow movement away from examinations of the educational institution and its politics towards a critique of the Canadian poetic *status quo* is correspondent with a movement towards an ever-widening figuration of spheres of civic participation. For example, Scott's "Vagrant," published in the first issue of *Canadian Mercury* (December 1928), is a satiric illustration of a mythologized individualism that positions itself spatially "beyond the outer star / to spaces where no systems are" (1–2). He also calls abstract temporality into question in the life of an individual for whom "infinity became his own / himself the sole criterion" (11–12). In the final lines of "Vagrant" Scott points to the absurdity and hypocrisy of an individualism that disregards the very public and material surroundings that enable the conditions of abstract individualism, as his subject must, in the end, be "content to live in montreal" (16). Alan Richards, in "Between Tradition and Counter-Tradition: The Poems of A.J.M. Smith and F.R. Scott in *The Canadian Mercury* (1928–29)," notes that Scott "sardonically deflates the vagrant's vaulting individuality" (123) and makes the astute suggestion that the poem is an explicit move away from Bliss Carman's mystical "vagabondia" (124). While Richards reads resignation in the figure of the vagrant, I read Scott's poem as an ironic expression of a character who does not know that his "search" is actually a romantic disengagement with, and ignorance of, society's structures and normative alignments. Scott was not afraid of structures or norms within society; he was critical of hypoc-

risy and disengagement. By the time "Vagrant" was published, he had already begun advocating for vigorous codification of the Canadian legal system as well as federal economic planning along socialist lines. This becomes an increasingly pronounced tenet of Scott's thought with the onset of the depression and the election of a Conservative government in the summer of 1930.

III

In the early 1930s Scott laid the foundations for what would become an increasingly articulated and integrated social and poetic programme with national consequence. This shift was coincident with the *Canadian Forum* becoming Scott's primary venue of publication. The most developed instance of Scott's early 1930s integration of poetic and political modes of production came in the form of two poem cycles published in the *Canadian Forum* under the titles "An Anthology of Up-to-Date Canadian Poetry" (1932) and "Social Notes" (1935). Published in May 1932, "Anthology" is a poem cycle consisting of sixteen poems with a prologue and epilogue. "Social Notes," published in March 1935, is a poem cycle consisting of thirteen poems. These poems, which appear in various configurations in subsequent collections, have gained some attention in recent scholarship.

In "F.R. Scott and Social Justice in the 1930s," Robert May suggests that the "effectiveness of these poems emerges not so much from the clever or unorthodox phraseology, but from the righteous indignation the reader inevitably feels upon reading an unvarnished account of social injustice" (41). He intimates that the force of the poems lies in readers' emotional intelligence or empathetic apprehension of the subject matter. May couples this assertion with a sustained effort to point to intricate links between the poems and Scott's political and legal writings. Dean Irvine, in "Editing Canadian Modernism" focuses on the paratextual anthologising impulse suggested in the first cycle's title. He links this practice of socialization to a modernist poetics that is in line with a socialist politics, "where the modernist poet creates a new kind of anthology as the poetic form through which he enacts his socialist critique of the capitalist social order" (70). Anouk Lang, in "Creative Advocates: Art, Commitment, and Canadian Literary History," obstructs the possibilities of intertextual or paratextual readings by contending that, among others, the poems in "Anthology" and "Social Notes" contain "no complexity or ambiguity at all to the meaning: no figurative depth, no metaphorical possibilities to be excavated and weighed up against each other" (171). Both Lang and May attempt to push

readings of the poems to the realm of the extra-literary, albeit for different reasons. Lang's contention builds on Scott's own assertion that his early poetry consisted of some instances of "pregnant doggerel" (qtd. in Lang 169).[13] For Lang, there are poems in Scott's early oeuvre that are not as "easily assimilable to a modernist aesthetic" as his "stylized and semantically opaque" poems (169). She cites his later poem "Laurentian Shield" (1945) and his even later poem "Impressions" (1965) as examples of Scott's "stylized and semantically opaque manner" (169). While it may be correct to say that the diction is more dense and opaque in the later poems mentioned by Lang, I want to contend that both the "Anthology" and "Social Notes" are as equally "stylized" as these later poems. A critical account of phraseology, diction, semantic apparatuses, idiom, or style in poetry would do well to figure the productive capacity of what is presented and not the negative capacity of what is absent. In other words, it neither critically suffices to suggest that only intensely difficult or opaque poetry can be enumerated in critical narratives of modernist production, nor does it suffice to insist upon a specific "style" as the *de facto* modernist mode. Modernism presents many more possibilities. When Lang suggests that the "pregnant doggerel poems evidently do not make anything new, despite their overt anxieties over modernity" (176), she is making an implicit comparison here with easily recognizable high modernist form and an evaluative assessment based on an adherence to Pound's dictum to *make it new.*

Under this rubric Scott's poems are placed within a limited framework that allows for no more than a single-sided (high modernist) and dismissive view that Scott was just attempting to aestheticise the social. Scott asserts a more comprehensive modernist mode of production that can be better ascertained by looking to the ways Scott was attempting to socialise aesthetics through the adoption of a political idiom. In making this assertion I mean to point to what I see as the distinctly formal innovations that Scott makes with "Anthology" and "Social Notes." It is by looking toward a wider array of aesthetic possibilities that these poem cycles can be given their due. Trehearne, in a review of Sandra Djwa's biography of Scott, suggests that "Scott's 1930s satiric squibs at the expense of capitalism could have been criticized on aesthetic grounds much more firmly than Djwa has done" (Trehearne "An Interpreted Life" 87). I want to take Trehearne seriously on this point in order to push an analysis of "Anthology" and "Social Notes" into a framework of modernist poetic practice. Before doing this, though, I want to introduce some political context that allows us to push the aesthetic analysis further.

79

In August 1931 Scott travelled to the Institute of Politics at Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts. There he met Frank Underhill, a history professor at Toronto. Together, while hiking Mount Greylock, they planned the formation of The League for Social Reconstruction (LSR). Once back in Canada they set about organizing—Scott in Montreal and Underhill in Torotno. The LSR was loosely modelled on the British Fabian Society, the organisation that profoundly shaped left wing thought in Britain.[14] On 19 July 1933 the national convention of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) opened in Regina. Among delegates from farmer and labour parties as well as CCF clubs were delegates from Ontario and Quebec who were members of the LSR, F.R. Scott among them. They were at the convention to discuss the party's draft manifesto that the LSR had been charged with preparing. The political party was just a year old and was in need of a solid programme. Frank Underhill drafted the manifesto in consultation with other members of the LSR. Textual evidence points to the fact that Underhill relied heavily on the manifesto the LSR had adopted for itself in 1932. "In an important sense," Michael Horn tells us, "Forsey, Gordon, and Scott, as well as their chief collaborator, a law student named David Lewis, were the original drafters of the Regina Manifesto" (31–32). The evidence suggests that Scott was busy composing his "An Anthology of Up-to-Date Canadian Poetry" at the same time the LSR manifesto was being drafted and that he was composing "Social Notes" while members of the LSR were drafting the "Regina Manifesto." I mean to suggest that the "LSR Manifesto" and the "Regina Manifesto" have more in common with Scott's "Anthology" and "Social Notes" than composition within close temporal adjacency: both texts engage with the genre of the manifesto.

Janet Lyon, in *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern*, suggests that "the manifesto form has much to teach us about the problems of modernity: while it may be best known as the no-nonsense genre of plain speech, the genre that shoots from the hip, it is in fact a complex, ideologically inflected genre that has helped to create modern public spheres" (2). Mary Ann Caws, in the "The Poetics of the Manifesto," the Introduction to her collection *Manifesto: A Century of Isms*, suggests that the "manifesto is an act of *démesure*, going past what is thought of as proper, sane, and literary. Its outreach demands an extravagant self-assurance. At its peak of performance, its form creates its meaning" (xx). She also adds that "the manifesto, at its height, is a poem in heightened prose" (xxvii). Charles Jenck, in his preface to the anthology *Theories and Manifestoes of Contemporary Architecture*, writes that the manifesto is a "curious art form, like the haiku,

with its own rules of brevity, wit, and *le mot juste*" (2). He also suggests that the "good manifesto mixes a bit of terror, runaway emotion and charisma with a lot of common sense" and that "the genre demands blood" (2). Janet Lyon goes further to explore some of the consistent formal features of the manifesto: "its selective and impassioned chronicle of the oppression that has led to the present moment of rupture; its forceful enumeration of grievances; its epigrammatic style" (3). Further, she suggests that one of the oft-employed conventions

> involves the forceful enumeration of grievances or demands or declarations which cast a group's oppression as a struggle between the empowered and the disempowered, or between the corrupt and the sanctified, or between usurpers and rightful heirs. The numbered lists in which these demands are often presented convey a specific rhetorical force: the parataxis of a list—its refusal of mediated prose or synthesized transitions—enhances the manifesto's descanting imperative. (15)

Lyon's taxonomy of the manifesto helps us understand the ways through which Scott helped to create a modernist public and poetic sphere. To push the point even further, if we allow that Scott's "Anthology" and "Social Notes" (1932 and 1935) have a significant correlation to both the "LSR Manifesto" the "Regina Manifesto," it will facilitate a clearer view of Scott's political and poetic integration; all four sites were part of the same process. In addition, Scott did not publish any new poetry in the interval between the two series of poems, which allows for a larger sense of their coherence. In that vein, it is certainly justifiable to suggest that "Social Notes" is a continuation of "Anthology," especially given that the two would collapse into the demarcation of "Social Notes I" and Social Notes II" in subsequent publications.

There is a marked correspondence between the "LSR Manifesto's" preamble and ten-point programme, the "Regina Manifesto's" preamble and fourteen-point programme, the sixteen sections (with prologue and epilogue) of "Anthology," and the series of thirteen sections of "Social Notes." The multiple poems act like grievances that will be alleviated by the point-by-point programmes of the manifestoes of the LSR and the CCF. What follow is a brief look at some of those correspondences.

The first insistence of the "LSR Manifesto" and the third point of the "Regina Manifesto" speak to the need for public ownership. The "Regina Manifesto" makes clear that "public utilities must be operated for the public benefit and not for the private profit of a small group of owners of financial manipulators" (2). As one of the main tenets of socialist politics, it is

not surprising that this contentious issue is addressed so often in "Anthology" and "Social Notes." In "Sound Finance," for example, Scott condemns the "executive heads" (1) of private corporations who "Follow principles of sound, conservative finance" (2) such as "reducing wages" and "turning workers into the streets" (3) so that they can "continue paying full dividends" (5). Likewise, in "Big Brothers" Scott points to the contradiction of businessmen "Setting up charitable organizations / To overcome some of the inevitable consequences / Of the economic system they support" (3–5).

In the fifth poem of "Anthology," "Modern Medicine, " Scott speaks directly to the dangers market capitalism poses on the health of the population, especially the poor:

> Here is a marvellous new serum:
> Six injections and your pneumonia is cured.
> But at present a drug firm holds the monopoly
> So you must pay $14 a shot — or die.
>
> (1–4)

Corresponding to this is the fifth point of the "LSR Manifesto" and the eighth point in the "Regina Manifesto" that call for publicly organized health, hospital, and medical services. Scott also takes up these concerns in "Hospital," where "the sick and dying are cared for / With the latest scientific skill" (1–2). In this poem Scott bemoans the economic division between patients: the rich are visited by their loved ones daily while "The poor, in the public wards," may only be visited "From 2 to 5 P. M. on Tuesdays and Thursdays" (5–6). Without the universalized healthcare that the LSR and CCF call for, privilege is proportional to the patient's economic support of the hospital.

The final demand of the "Regina Manifesto," "An Emergency Programme," speaks directly to the development of a system of employment insurance and the maintenance of a living wage through measures resembling various American New Deal programmes, the likes of which the Conservative government in Canada neglected to enact. This can be seen echoed in Scott's "The New Philanthropy":

> This employer, who pays $9 a week for a 10 hour day,
> Is exceedingly concerned
> Lest Mr. Bennett should adopt the dole,
> And so ruin the morale of the workers.
>
> (1–4)

Scott sets R.B. Bennett, then Prime Minister, in the role of mediator between the bourgeois employer and the worker, assuming the invested role of government as an overarching economic regulatory institution. Indeed, this final proposition of the "Regina Manifesto" is an overarching demand to alleviate the economic crises of the Great Depression and corresponds with the general grievances of most poems in the two cycles.

In each case of correlation between the poetry and the political demands of the LSR and CCF—and there are more for which space disallows further explication—the reader is required to make the figural connection between the plain-speaking poetry and the implied political programme. While the manifestoes of the LSR and CCF are more traditional assertions of manifesto form, the two-part poetic manifesto asserts itself into a poetic practice while disrupting dominant notions of high modernist production through the production of an "up-to-date" national poetics. With reference to Scott's anthologizing impulse, Irvine suggests that "the modernist's remaking of the poetic form is analogous to the socialist's renovation of social order" (70). Taken as manifestoes, I suggest that the poem cycles participate in modernist practice through adopting the manifesto form while disrupting the expectations of high modernist syntax and individuality. The manifesto form, with its inbuilt unclouded idiom, acts to socialize aesthetics in explicitly figural ways. The manifesto, as Lyon, Caws, and Jenck show, relies heavily on form to constitute the force of the language. Much like the sonnet, the specific grievances that the manifesto enumerates can be wide ranging but the form is fairly consistent. "Anthology" and "Social Notes" enact the "rules of brevity, wit, and *le mot juste*" in unique and sustained ways (Jenck 2).

Though the two poem cycles perform a paratactic enumeration of grievances without opaque language, they are not without their figural complexity. Indeed, the formal adherence of the poem cycles to the manifesto form is, in part, the strength of that figural complexity. The extended conceit of the poems is one of institutional critique: topical critique of hegemonic capitalist institutions and the formation of an institutional poetics whose job it is to support that mode of critique. This poetics of institutional critique does not arise from the aestheticisation of the social—there are not the beautiful labouring bodies one finds in Canadian communist poetry of the early 1930s—but through the socialization of aesthetics whereby poetic complexity, in this case formal complexity, does not occlude the possibilities of the poetry making incursions into the public sphere. This is the rise of a critical poetics—supported by institutional affiliation—which Scott thought was structurally necessary for an unyielding literary criti-

cism to arise and persist in Canada ("Letter" 698). Indeed, as Allen Mills tells us, it "requires little imagination to infer [...] that there is in Scott a theory of the importance of institutions, the legitimacy and significance of which are crucial pre-conditions of a democratic, participatory politics" (59). By correlating the manifestoes of the LSR and CCF with "Anthology" and "Social Notes," we come to a point at which it is safe to say that Scott's involvements in the formation of a socialist national opposition party corresponds to his poetic production. Again, we find Scott's mastery in his ability to mobilize the enabling and disabling conditions of institutions through—and in the service of—politics and poetry.

Notes

1 F.R. Scott interviewed by Elizabeth Chisholm. F. R Scott Fonds (FRSF), Library and Archives Canada: Vol. 82, File 16.

2 For a variety of opinion on Scott's "duplicity" see Dudek 1983; Jones 1983; Campbell 1990; Lang 2008. For different accounts of Scott's "commitment" see Shore 1980–81; Campbell 1990; Djwa 1987; May 2003; Lang 2008.

3 For detailed arguments against using a framework of commitment in our critical accounts of poetry, see E.P. Thompson's "Commitment in Poetry" and Michael Denning's *The Cultural Front*.

4 The following early poems are not included in *Collected Poems*: "The girls are too much with us; late and soon" (1918); "Lament, after Reading the Results of Schools" (1922); "To R.P.S.: On His Going Down" (1923); "At L.C.C.: 1923" (1923); "The Scarlet Key Society" (1925); and, "Trivium" (1926, later published as "Lines").

5 In June 1906 F.R. Scott's father, F.G. Scott, as an external member of Bishop's College Council, attempted to pass a motion, albeit unsuccessfully, that no more women be admitted to the college (Nicholl 135).

6 "Lament" was later published as "Sonnet (*On reading the results of the examinations*)" in the *McGill Fortnightly Review* (23 January 1926: 43) and signed "T.T."

7 Although Trehearne suggests that "Miniature" was signed "Brian Tuke," it was, in fact, signed "R.S."

8 To give Trehearne due credit, he wrote a book on Aestheticism so he obviously need not follow the path himself.

9 "The Scarlet Key Society" was not Scott's first publication at McGill. As he notes, "In the course of the [first] year [at McGill] I sent along two pieces [to the McGill Daily]: one a satire in prose written after I had read about the building in Pittsburgh of the "Cathedral of Learning," fifty-five stories high; the other was a translation from a medaeval [sic] French poem" (Francis Reginald Scott Fonds [FRSF] Vol. 81, File 6). "The Cathedral of Learning" is an allegory in which the speaking subject sets out from "the secret cave on Mount Royal where I kept my private Time Machine" to an overly efficient institution of higher learning that allows for no reflective thought (1).

10 Desmond Pacey, in *Ten Canadian Poets*, deems this final stanza superfluous (249). I disagree. Though the poem later appeared without this final stanza, its inclusion as aid to the present argument is based on the poem's textual history. It should be noted that while I am well aware of the importance of the debates about the poem's apparent mi-

sogyny, I refrain, in this article, from joining that discussion. For a detailed discussion of critical accounts of the poem, see Bentley, 259–61.

11 See Wilde's "The Soul of Man Under Socialism" which was published in the British *Fortnightly Review* in February 1891.

12 I take Scott's "New Poems for Old" series as the work of literary history instead of literary criticism because there is no real prescription for a direction in which modernist poetry ought to go in Canada.

13 Speaking about his early poems, Lang suggests that "These poems, which he himself termed 'pregnant doggerel,' address social and economic inequities by employing a degraded kind of social realist mode. Ranging from mordantly sardonic to outraged, these texts employ a regular meter and a straightforward rhyming scheme to rail against injustice and corruption and the capitalist system causing them" (169). Lang leaves the concept of "pregnant doggerel" undertheorised. Outside of archival holdings, the only uses of the term that I have been able to locate are in Lang's article and Djwa's biography. Djwa suggests that the term came out of conversation with Scott. There is an indication that Scott was talking about poetry quite different from "Anthology" and "Social Notes" when, in writing in his diary on 12 January 1961, in the Vancouver Airport, en route to San Francisco, he wrote the following: "I have written frequently a kind of 'pregnant doggerel,' to express ideas about man, society and history. Such as my 'Ode to Confederation,' or 'A Lass in Wonderland'" (FRSF Vol. 91, File 8).

14 For a detailed account of the LSR see Michiel Horn's *The League for Social Reconstruction: Intellectual Origins of the Democratic Left in Canada 1930-1942*.

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