# Chrysalis

[kris-*uh*-lis]

from Latin chrȳsallis, from Greek khrusallis

1. the obtect pupa of a moth or butterfly

2. anything in the process of developing

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CHRYSALIS was created by Dr. Charmaine A. Nelson as a vehicle to showcase the most innovative, rigorous, and sophisticated research produced by students within the context of her Art History courses at McGill University (Montreal). Over the years, Nelson observed that undergraduate students in her courses were more than capable of producing exceptional research on par with that of graduate students, and at times even professional academics. Disappointed that the majority of these students were faced with a negligible audience (if any) for their incredible work, with the help of her MA Art History student Anna T. January, Nelson came up with the idea to provide another platform for their research dissemination. CHRYSALIS is that platform!

CHRYSALIS is an open access, electronic journal that will be published bi-annually on Nelson's research website: www.blackcanadianstudies.com The goal of CHRYSALIS is transformation: to publish scholarship that seeks answers to exciting new questions, to encourage students to undertake primary research and to open the discipline of Art History in ways that make it more welcoming to a diverse population of students. For more information please contact: charmaine.nelson@mcgill.ca

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Wm. Notman & Son, Henry Y. Lee (1920), Silver salts on glass - Gelatin dry plate process, 15 x 10 cm, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal, Canada

**ARTICLES:**

THROUGH THE LENS OF WILLIAM NOTMAN'S CAMERA: THE EXOTICIZATION OF "INDIANNESS" IN MONTREAL FANCY DRESS BALLS AND SKATING CARNIVALS
JAYA BORDELEAU-CASS PG. 3

THE NEW LESBOS AND PHOTOS:
EDITH WATSON'S JOURNEY THROUGH RURAL CANADA WITH HER LOVES: VICTORIA HAYWARD AND A KODAK
CHRIS GISMONDI PG. 16

PICTURING PERFORMANCE:
GENDERED LABOUR PRACTICES IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY CANADIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS
JEREMY KEYZER PG. 31

THE 'PICCANINNY TYPE': REPRODUCING COLONIAL DISCOURSE,
BLACK CHILDREN AS SUBJECTS IN CANADIAN PAINTING
BLAIR MCFADDEN PG. 44

LIFE IMITATING ART:
PAULINE JOHNSON'S PERFORMANCE AND EMBODIMENT OF THE "AUTHENTIC INDIAN''
CERIAN PHILLIPS PG. 57

WILLIAM GOSSE'S SHANAWDITHIT:
ETHNOGRAPHIC OBJECT *AND* MARGINALIZED SUBJECT
JESSICA WALSH PG. 66

ON DIFFERENT SIDES OF THE STUDIO: CHINESE MALE AND FEMALE SITTERS IN MONTREAL'S PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAITURE, PRE EXCLUSION ERA (1885-1923)
EMILY WING PG. 77

THE WORK OF LOUIS MUHLSTOCK:
A COMPASSIONATE DEPICTION OF DEPRESSION-ERA SUBJECTS
LAUREN WISEMAN PG. 91

# THROUGH THE LENS OF WILLIAM NOTMAN'S CAMERA: THE EXOTICIZATION OF "INDIANNESS" IN MONTREAL FANCY DRESS BALLS AND SKATING CARNIVALS

JAYA BORDELEAU-CASS

In the late nineteenth century, Montreal was alive with the swift expansion of commerce, the railway and canals, population increase, and the tourism industry boom - all of which were a part of a nation-building project.[1] During these times in Canadian history, European and Indigenous cultures[2] collided intimately in "contact zones" such as Montreal, "where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination".[3] This period also coincided with the development of photography as a medium, which provided artists with a method of capturing these significant moments of transculturation and nation-building efforts in Canada as well as the opportunity to disseminate a desirable "self-image" of the country and its people. The power dynamics present in Montreal during these times are exemplified in photographs such as Mr. Reynolds in costume (1870) [fig. 1] taken by William Notman who commonly photographed costumed dress balls and skating carnivals. This portrait blurs the lines between the individual and the representation of a stereotypical "type" since costumes were often created from "a pastiche of decontextualized objects" in attempts to represent "exotic" Others.[4] The photographs taken during these events also acted as colonial objects documenting a particular moment's racialized and asymmetrical power structure and how photography as a medium was used to serve these ideological functions. Thus, through the examination of William Notman's late nineteenth-century photographs of fancy dress balls and skating carnivals - placing particular emphasis on the act of dressing as an "Indian"- one can begin to unravel how the Indigenous Other was stereotyped and exoticized in this period of Montreal and Canadian history.


Fig. 1: William Notman, Mr. Reynolds in costume, Montreal, QC, 1870 (1870), Photograph: Silver salts on paper mounted on paper – Albumen process, 13.7 x 10 cm, McCord Museum, Montreal, Canada.

A native of Paisley, Scotland, William Notman arrived in Montreal in 1856 at the age of 30. Leaving all family ties and acquaintances behind, he completely remade himself in Montreal by diving into the relatively new medium of photography and the wondrous potential it offered for the creation of permanent images.[5] In this sense, photography is an important tool for examining a particular piece of history as it offers a "documentary" image of a person or scene.[6] By the time Notman arrived in Canada, the production of photographs through a wet-plate process was gaining popularity and allowed for the easy reproduction of images, compared to the older daguerreotype method, which only

produced one unique image. A cunning businessman, Notman soon expanded his business to other major cities, including studios in the United States.[7]

One could say that Notman's success can be attributed in part to his being "in the right place at the right time" as Montreal was entering a period of great prosperity, playing host to a large, wealthy business class and attracting those who wanted access to this wealth.[8] Compared to England, Montreal's class system was much less entrenched and it was therefore easier for one to "work their way to the top".[9] The Montreal of the mid-to-late nineteenth century included a large English population, which occupied the majority of the upper-middle class. The strong military presence - soldiers sent from England to defend Canadian borders during the American Civil War - added to this upper-class society.[10] It was this segment of the Montreal population which provided Mr. Notman with most of his business, commissioning portraits of themselves and their families - of which Notman produced 14,000 per year - or buying landscape photographs of quintessentially "Canadian" scenes to send to relatives in Europe.[11] With such a booming business, Notman employed a team of approximately thirty staff who assisted with photography, props, makeup, costumes, and editing.[12]


Fig. 2: William Notman & Son, Sitting Bull and Buffalo Bill, Montreal, QC, 1885 (1885), Photograph: Silver salts on glass - gelatine dry plate process, 17 x 12 cm, McCord Museum, Montreal, Canada

Fig. 3: William Notman, Skating Carnival, Victoria Rink, Montreal, QC, painted composite, 1870 (1870), Photograph: Silver salts, oil on canvas – Albumen process, 137 x 176 cm, McCord Museum, Montreal, Canada.


As explained in the 1989 film Notman's World by Albert Kish, Notman strategically chose to photograph the pleasing aspects of Victorian society while negating the widespread poverty, hunger and discrimination afflicting the lower-classes and minority groups of the time.[13] For instance, in 1885, the year smallpox gripped Montreal, Notman's studio took 3,000 images, "yet, looking at them, you'd never know this tragedy took place".[14] Despite how the birth of photography democratized the art of portraiture, making portraits much more accessible to lower classes in White society,[15] Notman predominantly photographed the upper classes or "interesting" characters such


Fig. 4: William Notman, Mr. Reynolds in costume, Montreal, QC, 1870 (1870), Photograph: Silver salts on paper mounted on paper – Albumen process, 17.8 x 12.7 cm, McCord Museum, Montreal, Canada.

as Sitting Bull and Buffalo Bill (1887) [fig. 2]. This was quite fitting with the period in which he lived, mirroring the ruthlessness deployed by the entrepreneurial class to build a "society" and the new Canada into the image of a respectable "civilized" nation.

During the Victorian era, photography played a large role in this nation-building project as photographs f the country and its people could be disseminated to the world and used to create a desirable "self-image". As remarked by author Benedict Anderson, "[a] nation…is an imagined community, and nations are distinguished from each other by the stories they tell about themselves."[16] Considering this, one must also question who had the power and the authority to tell these stories and to disseminate the "self-image" of the Canadian nation at this time as well as how photography served to reinscribe this phenomena of exoticizing the Indigenous Other. As explained by Eva Mackey, "[i]n Canada…the white Anglophone majority undoubtedly has cultural, economic, and political *dominance.* If Canada is the 'very house of difference', it contains a family with a distinct household head."[17] Considering this fact, with regards to photography, white male artists such as William Notman played a large role in how the story of the new "Dominion of Canada" (formed in 1867) would come to be represented in visual culture. In a Montreal Gazette article from 1955, nearly sixty-five years after William Notman's death, Notman was remembered for having been a part of a national heritage, having recorded "famous personages of Montreal, and of Canada …[and]… the gaieties of the winter carnivals in Victorian and Edwardian Montreal," preserved into elaborate composite photographs. [18] These skating carnivals and elaborate masquerade balls were social events that helped create cohesion between members of upper class Montreal society in the Victorian era.

Fig. 5: Caroline Gros-Louis, "Headdress", Huron-Wendat, Quebec, before 1911, Felt, cotton, ribbon, feathers and moose hair, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, Canada. III-H-118, S95-07709.

As emphasized by Cynthia Cooper in her book Magnificent Entertainment (1997), "over several decades, Victorians of many walks of life had generated a veritable passion for dressing up."[19] Picking up in the late 1830's, fancy-dress balls became widespread throughout Europe as well as in Canada, where fancy costumed skating carnivals were also

popularized. As they required a fair amount of leisure time and money to pay for costumes, fancy dress balls were often only accessible to the white upper classes of society.[20] Significantly, "the characters people chose to represent and the costumes they devised reveal their perceptions and beliefs about their own identities and the identities of the country."[21] As such, examining the costumes of wealthy, white attendees dressed as "Indians" also reveals information about how they positioned themselves vis-à-vis the Indigenous Other and how they came to create the stereotypical images of the caricatures they chose to play.

On the other hand, fancy dress skating carnivals, held on a more regular basis, were open to a wider range of costumed attendees and popular among people of "many walks of life."[22] As explained by Cooper, "newspapers indicate that in the winter most [Canadian] towns and cities held one large carnival a month in the 1870s and 1880s."[23] On 1 March 1870, a skating carnival was held at the Victoria Rink in Montreal to honour Prince Arthur, the Duke of Connaught.[24] One of the best-known pictures of this event is William Notman's composite photograph that commemorates the evening and the diversity of costumes worn [fig. 3].

Due to the long exposure-time needed to take photographs, as well as the fact that the skating carnival was held indoors and packed with skating attendees, it would have been impossible to photograph this event. And so, to commemorate the skating carnival, William Notman placed an ad in the Gazette on 25 February 1870, inviting attendees to have individual portraits taken which "were then cut out and pasted to a painted backdrop of the rink, and the whole rephotographed"[25] and painted over with oils by Edward Sharpe and Henry Sandham. Containing approximately three hundred figures,[26] all individuals are recognizable in this scene, having each been photographed individually and then pasted into the composite, unlike a genre work where individual likeness is unidentifiable. Notman's innovative advertising and marketing skills become evident with works such as this one as most upper-class attendees would end up purchasing two photographs from the studio: one of their individual portraits and one of the larger composite, therefore doubling the profit from the event.[27] Thus, advertisements such as the one included in the Gazette on 26 February 1870 are demonstrative of Notman's skill as a creative businessman as well as the widespread exposure these photographs and depictions of "Indianness" received.


Fig. 6: Anonymous, Comb (1000-1700), Ivory, 4.8 X 13.5 cm, McCord Museum, Montreal, Montreal, Canada.

Often described as "kaleidoscopic,"[28] the costumes present at these skating events also featured a significant amount of cultural appropriations and stereotypical depictions of "exotic" populations, including costumes of Turks, Greeks, Chinese, Spaniards, Jews, "Indians" or people in blackface.[29] These costumes "reinforced widely accepted cultural ideas about 'the other' [and]… conformed to prevailing ethnocultural and racial stereotypes."[30] As mentioned above, at the time of the 1870 Skating Carnival in Montreal, Canada as a country was only three years old and was therefore undergoing a strong nation-building project. As part of this process, the social categories of "white" and "Indian" became key tropes in the discourses surrounding Canadian nationalism. Indigenous Peoples were regarded as exotic Others, lower on the civilization scale – yet worthy of photographers' attention for the exoticism and tourism potential they provided. As reiterated by

Daniel Francis in National Dreams: Myth, Memory and Canadian History, "the Indian represented the untamed, uncivilized essence of the New World."[31]

Significantly, Indigenous Peoples in "contact zones" like Montreal also strategically adopted these ideas imposed on their identities ("noble savage," picturesque exotic) in order to benefit from the tourism market.[32] Kathleen Buddle further explains this idea,

> "Euro-Canadian settlers effectively inscribed Canadian nationalism through the stories they told themselves about themselves in relation to a fabricated Indigenous otherness. Euro-Canadians, in general, approached Aboriginal peoples after having framed their own virtual realities or 'pictures' of Indianness, after compiling information about the imaginings about Indian peoples communicated by other whites in public discourses."[33]

As such, previous depictions of "Indianness" as well as the souvenirs and information collected during cross-country travels provided the stereotypical images used to put together "Indian" costumes. One of the portraits featured at the very front of William Notman's 1870 composite is of a Mr. Reynolds dressed as an exoticized caricature of an "Indian" [fig. 4]. When he came into the studio the day of the skating carnival, Mr. Reynolds was also photographed in multiple poses and with a friend.[34] A powerful and chilling image, Mr. Reynolds' costume is best revealed in the portrait entitled Mr. Reynolds in costume (1870) [fig. 1].[35]

Fig. 7: Anonymous, "Sir John Caldwell" (c.1780), oil on canvas, *In* Beth Fowkes Tobin, Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth Century British Painting (Durham: University Press, 1999), p. 81, Courtesy of the Board of Trustees of the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, UK.

In this portrait, Mr. Reynolds wears a costume "composed of authentic Aboriginal-made elements, all available at this time in the Montreal area, juxtaposed incongruously."[36] Referred to as "Quewaygoosquequamteros," an unpronounceable name most likely made up to sound "authentically Indian," Mr. Reynolds is dressed in a buckskin jacket with matching leggings and leather moccasins.[37] On his head, he wears a wig of dreaded shoulder-length black hair, on top of which sits a headdress. Mr. Reynolds accessorized his skating carnival outfit with a beaded bag, beaded bracelets and a matching choker as well as a longer necklace on which hung small artefacts. Seated on what looks to be furs, with his legs crossed and his head tilted towards the camera, Reynolds also holds a tomahawk-pipe up to his lips with one hand while the other carefully holds an unusable bow.[38]

Mr. Reynolds' costume is an agglomeration of Indigenous clothing and accessories from across North America. For instance, according to curators at Montreal's *McCord Museum*, the beaded bracelets and matching choker are said to be the style of Plains Nations (Southern Canadian Prairies and Central United States) yet are also "typical of work being done by Native people in Quebec in this period."[39] This fits in with the transculturation processes of the time, where in order to appeal to European and settler tourism markets and ideas of "authentic" indigeneity, "Woodlands Indians would increasingly replace elements of their earlier dress with the pan-Indian styles derived from Plains clothing."[40] Additionally, it is speculated that the headdress worn by Reynolds is Huron-Wendat (Quebec City).[41] This is a sound assumption as another Huron-Wendat headdress dated pre-1911 and found on display at the *Canadian Museum of History* [fig. 5] very much resembles the one worn by Reynolds. As a final example of the diverse backgrounds and stories of the objects worn by Reynolds one can look to the small comb featured on his necklace [fig. 6]. The McCord Museum remarks that this piece is of particular interest as it has been identified as an "authentic" item from the Arctic Thule culture, ancestors of today's Inuit, dating from the eleventh to the seventeenth century.[42]

Mr. Reynolds' "lumping together" of these distinctive objects into one "pan-Indian" costume essentially wipes out the uniqueness of these cultural groups' identities. For instance, for the Plains Indians, their beading is viewed as a visual expression of family values and tribal identities,[43] while beading for more Eastern nations such as the Haudenosaunee may be linked to treaties and the shell beads that went into making the wampum belts used to make agreements between nations.[44] It is also important to acknowledge that the various origins of these items demonstrates the effects of trade and the widespread travels that European immigrants undertook, having established contact with these diverse societies to obtain these objects.

Fig. 8: William Notman, H. Reynolds and friends, Montreal, QC, 1871 (1871), Photograph: Silver salts on paper mounted on paper – Albumen process, 13.7 x 10 cm, McCord Museum, Montreal, Canada.


Moreover, when discussing an earlier painted portrait of a British officer named Mr. Caldwell (c. 1780) [fig. 7], who is also dressed as an Indian chief with items of clothing from different Indigenous groups, author Beth Fowkes Tobin argues that "separating the items from those who created and wore them has the effect of reducing their power to signify, to be a part of an elaborate sign system that constitutes [who they are]."[45] From these decontextualizing acts, the objects become exoticized and an illusion of "Indianness" is created: "an Indianness rendered powerless by incoherence."[46] Not surprisingly, the wearers and manipulators of these pastiches of objects consequently become more powerful.

Furthermore, one cannot examine Mr. Reynolds' elaborate costume and portrait without questioning who he was and how he fit into late nineteenth-century Montreal society. Although named in this portrait, there were many "Mr. Reynolds" listed on record as living in Montreal in 1870.[47] However, another photograph taken in William Notman's studio in 1871 entitled H. Reynolds & Friends [fig. 8] features Reynolds with two others on a sleigh in one of Notman's popular staged winter scenes. This could very well be the same Mr. Reynolds as the Skating Carnival photograph because he is wearing the same leather-fringed jacket. From these sleigh photographs, an initial "H" is provided in the title when naming Mr. Reynolds, enabling one to speculate that the costumed Mr. Reynolds in 1870 is the same person as "Master Henry Reynolds," a teenage boy photographed by Notman four years earlier in 1866.[48] All of these photographs appear amongst many other portraits of the Reynolds family taken by William Notman's studio, suggesting that young Mr. Reynolds came from a wealthy family occupying the upper rungs of Montreal society that was able to commission a plethora of photographs.[49] Furthermore, the fact that costumed Mr. Reynolds is featured at the very front of William Notman's 1870 composite picture of the Skating Carnival at Victoria Rink suggests that he was a prominent member of society at this time.[50]


Fig. 9: William Notman & Son, Mr. McCulloch, costumed for Chateau de Ramezay Ball, Montreal, QC, 1898 (1898), Photograph: Silver salts on glass – gelatine dry plate process, 17 x 12 cm, McCord Museum, Montreal, Canada.

As cited in the McCord description of this photograph, "in the late 19th century, using Native-made objects and clothing to portray stereotypical and romanticized North American Aboriginal people was commonplace at fancy dress balls."[51] Thus, Mr. Reynolds, a budding member of Montreal's upper-class society, was most likely exposed to these types of costumes before he put together his own. Other examples of upper-class men (and sometimes women) dressing up as "Indians" can also be found throughout the Notman collection.[52] For instance, one can look to the portrait of Mr. A. A. McCulloch [fig. 9], a wealthy commission merchant, who came to the Notman studio to be photographed in his "Indian" costume for the Chateau de Ramezay Historical Fancy Dress Ball held in Montreal in 1898.[53] Much like Mr. Reynolds, McCulloch is pictured wearing a collection of objects from his many travels – beaded bags, moccasins and a tomahawk. As such, the popular trend of commissioning photographs of appropriated "Indian" costumes further disseminated these clichéd images in a society that looked up to historically wealthy figures such as Mr. Reynolds and Mr. A. A. McCulloch.

These types of costumes demonstrate a common fascination with Indigenous societies paired with patronizing attitudes and views of Indigenous Peoples as savage or uncivilized. Oftentimes, those who chose to dress as "Indians" also came to play the part, channelling the stereotypically "savage Indian," by chasing other party-goers with tomahawks, letting out loud war cries and scowling for pictures.[54] Thus, it was not a rare occurrence for people of Montreal's upper classes to see white individuals dressed as "Indians," further propagating stereotypical behaviours of Indigenous peoples as "noble savages" – in contrast to the "civilized" life of the colonizer.[55] Due to the widespread beliefs of white racial superiority of time, Indigenous peoples, like people of colour, were most likely not invited or welcomed to these particular events and thus had no way of demonstrating their own expressions of culture and selfhood. As such, the wearing of these costumes only reinforced the existing "representations of Native Americans as other, as marginalized, and as premodern."[56]

As reiterated by Ruth Phillips, "in the Great Lakes region, as elsewhere in North America, dress has traditionally been one of the most important sites for the aestheticized expression of group and individual identities."[57] Considering this, when costumes of a romanticized and stereotyped vision of pan-Indianness are worn by those occupying a powerful place in a society (in this case, white males) it does not leave room for members of these colonized cultural minorities to represent themselves and this important part of their identities. Unfortunately, this trend of "playing Indian" has followed us into the present, where Halloween costumes of "PocaHotties" or "Indian Warriors" continue to depict Indigenous peoples as exotic, mythical creatures set in a distant past, furthering the power and privilege of White Canadians over diverse cultural groups.[58] Furthermore, creating and propagating images of 'Indianness' as 'exotic' implies a certain distance, an assumption that these peoples are from *somewhere else*. These acts displace Indigenous People and deny the fact that they are the original inhabitants of the place we call Canada.

In his book The Imaginary Indian (1992) Daniel Francis notes that "the Indian was a white man's fantasy, a screen on which non-Natives projected their anxieties and assumptions about their place in the New World."[59] In this sense, the "Indian" constructed in Mr. Reynolds' costume and in other costumes photographed by William Notman can in fact be viewed as exoticized types, as cut-and-paste fantasies. These are exemplary of the historical romanticization and "glossing over" of the distinctiveness of Indigenous cultures in Canadian art, something that unfortunately continues to manifest itself in contemporary depictions of Indigenous peoples. In order to move away from this colonial trend of oppression, Indigenous peoples will need to be given more spaces in artistic circles to represent themselves and their uniqueness as it is defined by their own criteria.

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**Notes:**

[1] Stanley Triggs, "The Man and the Studio," McCord Museum, p. 1. http://www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/notman_doc/pdf/EN/FINAL-NOTMAN-ENG.pdf (date of last access 20 November 2013)

[2] "Indigenous" is spelled with a capital "I" in this text to observe the preference of Indigenous peoples who are descendants of the original inhabitants of the region (eastern Canada) prior to colonization. Throughout this essay, "Indigenous" is used to describe the peoples and communities who have lived on this land for generations in both rural and urban areas such as in the city of Montreal, which is located on Haudenosaunee territory.

[3] Ruth Bliss Phillips, "Souvenirs, Commodity, and Art in the Northeastern Woodlands," Trading Identities: The Souvenirs in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900 (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press 1998), p. 17.

[4] Beth Fowkes Tobin, "Cultural Cross-Dressing in British America: Portraits of British Officers and Mohawk Warriors," Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth Century British Painting (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 85.

[5] Albert Kish, Notman's World (1989), National Film Board of Canada, 29 minutes, 7 seconds.
[66] Kish, Notman's World (1989).
[7] Conversation between author and Nora Hague, McCord Museum.
[8] Kish, Notman's World (1989).
[9] Kish, Notman's World (1989).
[10] Kish, Notman's World (1989).
[11] Kish, Notman's World (1989).
[12] Conversation between author and Nora Hague, McCord Museum.
[13] Kish, Notman's World (1989).
[14] Kish, Notman's World (1989).
[15] Charmaine Nelson, "Defining Nation (Canada) and National Belonging (Canadians)," Introduction to Canadian Art (ARTH 300), McGill University, Undergraduate Art History Lecture, 15 October 2013.
[16]As cited by Eva Mackey, "Introduction: Unsettling Differences: Origins, Methods, Frameworks" The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002) p.2. See: Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London and New York: Verso, 1991)
[17] Mackey, "Unsettling Differences" p.12.
[18] Anonymous, "Photographer for Posterity," Montreal Gazette (Montreal, QC, Canada), Monday, 28 February 1955, p.8.
[19] Cynthia Cooper, Magnificent Entertainments: Fancy Dress Balls of Canada's Governor General, 1876-1898 (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 1997) p. 21.
[20] Cooper, Magnificent Entertainments, p.22.
[21] Cooper, Magnificent Entertainments, p.18.
[22] Cooper, Magnificent Entertainments, p.24.
[23] Cooper, Magnificent Entertainments, p.24.
[24] Conversation between author and Nora Hague, McCord Museum.
[25] Cooper, Magnificent Entertainments, p.25.
[26] Kish, Notman's World (1989).
[27] Conversation between author and Nora Hague, McCord Museum.
[28] Cooper, Magnificent Entertainments, p.26.
[29] Conversation between author and Nora Hague, McCord Museum.
[30] Cooper, Magnificent Entertainments, p.35.
[31] Daniel Francis, National Dreams: Myth, Memory and Canadian History (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1997), p.75.
[32] Ruth B. Phillips, "Nuns, ladies and the 'Queen of the Hurons': souvenir art and the Negotiation of North American Identities," Local/Global: Women Artists in the Nineteenth Century, eds. Deborah Cherry and Janice Helland (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, Oxford: 2006), pp. 155-178.
[33] Kathleen Buddle, "Media, Markets and Powwows: Matrices of Aboriginal Cultural Mediation in Canada," Cultural Dynamics, vol. 16, no. 1 (July 2004), p.35.
[34] Please see McCord catalogue entries I-43611.1, I-43612.1 and I-43615.1 for more poses of Mr. Reynolds, McCord Museum, Montreal, Quebec. http://www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/scripts/search_results.php?Lang=1&keywords=Mr.+Reynolds+in+costume (date of last access 26 November 2013).
[35] Conversation between author and Nora Hague, McCord Museum.
[36] "I-43610.1 | Mr. Reynolds in costume, Montreal, QC, 1870" McCord Museum, Montreal, Quebec. http://www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/en/collection/artifacts/I-43610.1 (date of last access 26 November 2013).
[37] Cooper, Magnificent Entertainments, p.35.
[38] Conversation between author and Nora Hague, McCord Museum.
[39] "Mr. Reynolds in costume," McCord Museum, Montreal, Quebec. (date of last access 26 November 2013).
[40] Phillips "Nuns, ladies and the 'Queen of the Hurons," p.172.
[41] "Mr. Reynolds in costume," McCord Museum, Montreal, Quebec. (date of last access 26 November 2013).
[42] "Mr. Reynolds in costume," McCord Museum, Montreal, Quebec. (date of last access 26 November 2013).
[43] Ray McCallum, "The History of Beads," Saskatchewan Indian, vol. 27, no. 2 (June 1997), pp. 22.
[44] "Wampum," Iroquois Indian Museum. http://www.iroquoismuseum.org/ve11.html (date of last access 26 November 2013).
[45] Fowkes Tobin, "Cultural Cross-Dressing in British America," p. 85.
[46] Fowkes Tobin, "Cultural Cross-Dressing in British America," p. 85.

[47] Conversation between author and Nora Hague, McCord Museum.
[48] Conversation between author and Nora Hague, McCord Museum; image: I-19375.1, William Notman, Master Henry Reynolds, Montreal, QC, 1866 (1866), Photograph: Silver salts on paper mounted on paper – Albumen process, 8.5 x 5.6 cm, McCord Museum, Montreal, Canada, http://www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/en/collection/artifacts/I-19375.1 (date of last access 26 November 2013).
[49] Conversation between author and Nora Hague, McCord Museum.
[50] Conversation between author and Nora Hague, McCord Museum.
[51] "Mr. Reynolds in costume," McCord Museum, Montreal, Quebec. (date of last access 26 November 2013).
[52] Conversation between author and Nora Hague, McCord Museum.
[53] Conversation between author and Nora Hague, McCord Museum.
[54] Cooper, Magnificent Entertainments, p.35.
[55] Ruth B. Phillips, "The Iconography of Indianness: Picturing Natural Man," Trading Identities: The Souvenirs in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900 (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press 1998), p. 120.
[56] Phillips, "The Iconography of Indianness: Picturing Natural Man," p. 150.
[57] Ruth B. Phillips, "Making Sense out/of the Visual: Aboriginal Presentations and Representations in Nineteenth-Century Canada," Art History, vol. 27, no. 4 (September 2004), p. 599.
[58] "Open Letter to the PocaHotties and Indian Warriors this Halloween," Native Appropriations: Examining Representations of Indigenous Peoples. (October 26, 2011) http://nativeappropriations.com/2011/10/open-letter-to-the-pocahotties-and-indian-warriors-this-halloween.html (date of last access 20 November 2013).
[59] Francis, National Dreams, p.10.

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**PLATE LIST:**

Figure 1: William Notman, Mr. Reynolds in costume, Montreal, QC, 1870 (1870), Photograph: Silver salts on paper mounted on paper – Albumen process, 13.7 x 10 cm, McCord Museum, Montreal, Canada.

Figure 2: William Notman & Son, Sitting Bull and Buffalo Bill, Montreal, QC, 1885 (1885), Photograph: Silver salts on glass - gelatine dry plate process, 17 x 12 cm, McCord Museum, Montreal, Canada

Figure 3: William Notman, Skating Carnival, Victoria Rink, Montreal, QC, painted composite, 1870 (1870), Photograph: Silver salts, oil on canvas – Albumen process, 137 x 176 cm, McCord Museum, Montreal, Canada.

Figure 4: William Notman, Mr. Reynolds in costume, Montreal, QC, 1870 (1870), Photograph: Silver salts on paper mounted on paper – Albumen process, 17.8 x 12.7 cm, McCord Museum, Montreal, Canada.

Figure 5: Caroline Gros-Louis, "Headdress", Huron-Wendat, Quebec, before 1911, Felt, cotton, ribbon, feathers and moose hair, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, Canada. III-H-118, S95-07709.

Figure 6: Anonymous, Comb, (1000-1700), Ivory, 4.8 X 13.5 cm, McCord Museum, Montreal, Montreal, Canada.

Figure 7: Anonymous, "Sir John Caldwell" (c.1780), oil on canvas, *In* Beth Fowkes Tobin, Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth Century British Painting (Durham: University Press, 1999), p. 81, Courtesy of the Board of Trustees of the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, UK.

Figure 8: William Notman, H. Reynolds and friends, Montreal, QC, 1871 (1871), Photograph: Silver salts on paper mounted on paper – Albumen process, 13.7 x 10 cm, McCord Museum, Montreal, Canada.

Figure 9: William Notman & Son, Mr. McCulloch, costumed for Chateau de Ramezay Ball, Montreal, QC, 1898 (1898), Photograph: Silver salts on glass – gelatine dry plate process, 17 x 12 cm, McCord Museum, Montreal, Canada.

# THE NEW LESBOS AND PHOTOS*: EDITH WATSON'S JOURNEY THROUGH RURAL CANADA WITH HER LOVES: VICTORIA HAYWARD AND A KODAK

CHRIS GISMONDI

** The terminology 'Lesbos' is not a usage of the derogatory contemporary slang term, but rather an allusion to the Greek Isle from which Lesbian derives its name. The word "photos"-being Greek for light- is a continuation of this nod Grecian culture meaning light and more importantly as one of the root words of the English word for the invention of photography.*

Before the destinations of Provincetown and Castro Street, Church/Wellesley and Rue Saint Catherine East, did rural Canada provide a space for early twentieth-century women to lead a non-normative lifestyle? Could it be that rural Canada was the new Mediterranean paradise to openly live, work and love for two female journalists? Victoria Hayward and Edith Watson published a massive travel narrative of the racial diversity and rural Canadian experience titled Romantic Canada (1922), with Watson supplying photographs to accompany the text. The physical concept of creating the travel narrative required these two women to travel and work intimately together for long durations in near seclusion. A discussion of social context inspired from Charmaine Nelson's analysis of Mary Edmonia Lewis' racialized experience in Rome in The Color of Stone (2007) will help to situate Watson and her work in the context of social history.[1] This paper argues that rural Canada and photography provided Watson an outlet to pursue a non-normative and non-conforming lifestyle.[2] A critical social analysis of Watson's photographs will follow to ask the same questions scholar Kristina Huneault asked when analyzing Frances Anne Hopkins: "at whose cost comes the empowerment of the white, Western woman away from home?"[3]

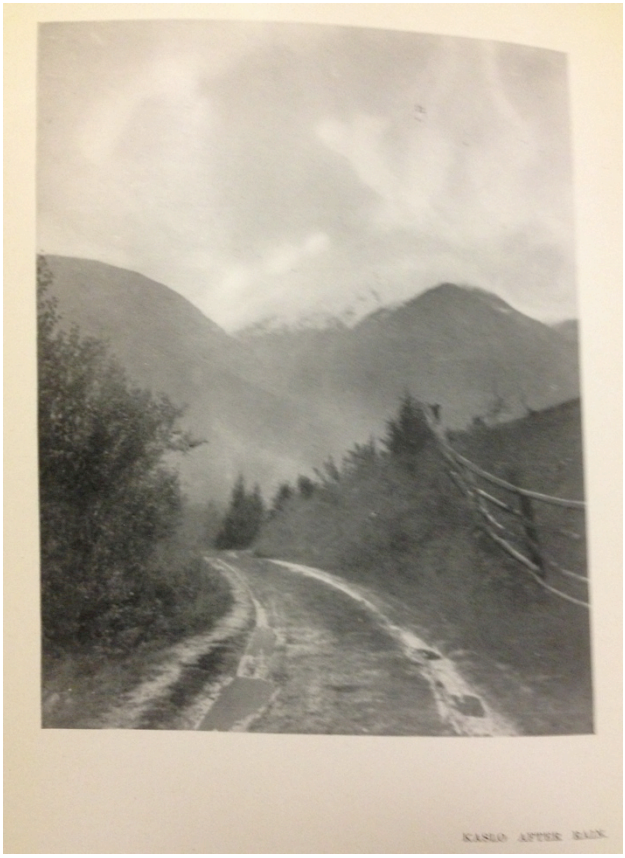

Fig. 1: Edith Watson Kalso After Rain (ca. 1922), photograph, 15 x 11.5cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 208.

This work is important for me as it is about a larger reassertion of the presence of diverse sexualities traditionally denied and policed in patriarchal societies defined by gender and sexual "normativity". Problems in scholarship make a difficult task of reclaiming retroactive queer histories. As would be predicted, publications of the eras in question and even primary sources fail to confront sexual identity directly. A period example would be Girls Who Did published in 1927, which I encountered in the beginning stages of research when the scope initially included photographer Clara Sipprell. An interview included fails to ever mention Sipprell's alternative relationships.[4] Even more troubling is modern scholarship's reluctance to address sexuality. Although Frances Rooney's work on Edith Watson, Working Light (1996) was factually informative, he fails to address Hayward and Watson's relationship as anything more than a working relationship.[5] This refusal of a romantic or sexual relationship appears along with Rooney's choice to use Watson's term of endearment for Victoria Hayward: "Queenie". The appropriation of the name - a symbol of their relationship - along with the simultaneous refusal of a relationship was a frustration and in my opinion a fault in the work. Consequently, this work of modern scholarships refuses to consider Watson's queer sexuality as worthy of identifying even within the context of a long-term relationship.


Fig. 2: Edith Watson The Water-Carrier (ca. 1922), photograph, 14 x 12cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 48.


Fig. 4: Edith Watson Fit Subject For A Millet (ca. 1922), photograph, 11.5 x 11.5cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 40.

Another problem of retrospective queer history arises around "evidence" of non-normative sexuality. Cameron Duder found a lack of "evidence" of physical sexual acts in primary sources in his work on early Canadian lesbianism, Awfully Devoted Women (2010). Analysing letters and correspondence of female

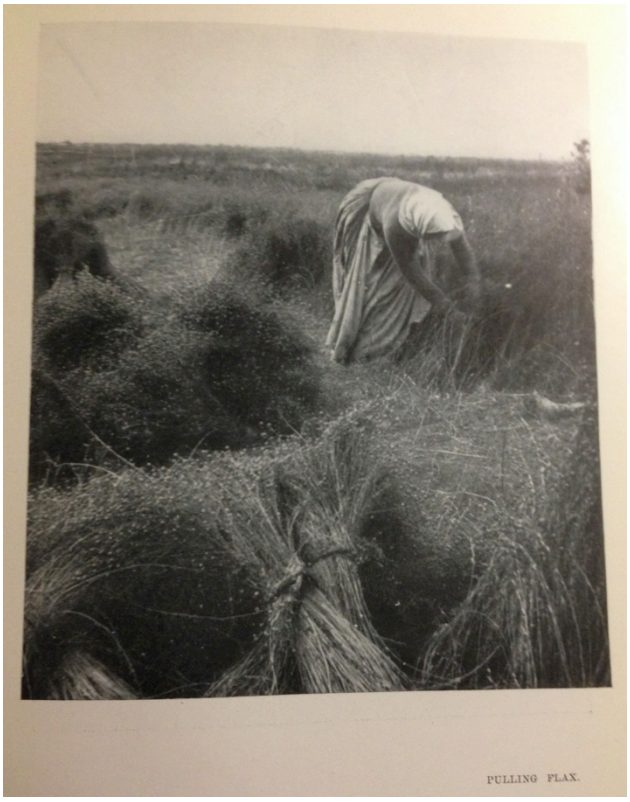


Fig. 6: Edith Watson Pulling Flax (ca. 1922), photograph, 16 x 14cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 230.

couples he found that references to genital sex were distinctly absent.[6] Duder then states however, that the absence of physical sexuality might be a commonality in the era. It was deemed impolite to discuss one's own sex and in the early 1900's only the new science of sexology,[7] the medical community or governments could openly discuss the sexuality of others.[8] Sharon Marcus found an identical absence of genital reference in her analysis of female relationships in Victorian England. However, she notes even hetero-normative correspondence never make references to genital sex. Marcus pokes fun at the issue of "evidence" asking if menstruation and excretion happened in Victorian England since there is no recorded evidence of them.[9] Marcus concludes this obsession with evidence stating "if firsthand testimony about sex is standard for defining a relationship as sexual, then most Victorians never had sex."[10] To further put the question of "evidence" to bed, Lillian Faderman's work Surpassing the Love of Men (1981) includes a quotation by scholar Barbra Ponse, "Lesbian is an essential identity that goes far beyond sex".[11] Marcus also states "Lesbian studies place women's friendships on a continuum with lesbian relationships and equate both with resistance to the family and marriage. [These women's friendships] defy compulsory heterosexuality."[12] A speculative outlook towards physical sexuality then becomes irrelevant. Even if there is no recorded evidence of physical sexuality, to dismiss these relationships as either non-existent or not monumental in their achievement of resistance to society would be a major fault.

To begin to provide a social context for Edith Watson one should look at non-normative female relationships elsewhere in the same era and the time period leading up to the 1920's. As previously mentioned, Marcus' analysis of female relationships in the homo-social saturated society of Victorian England was consulted. Nelson's context of Lewis included extensive information about the predominately white "flock" of female neoclassical sculptors that set up base in Rome in the mid-nineteenth century. This female community of artists and sculptors was a phenomenon that did not go unnoticed by male artists and other male thinkers. For these women, Rome was a haven for "alternative significations of the white female body that ruptured and displaced normative ideas of bourgeois gender, sex and sexuality" which were well established in the American culture from which most of them came.[13] A parallel can begin to be

drawn between these women decades prior to Watson for the use of travel to live beyond restricted sexualities. Many of these women in Rome were openly involved in what Nelson classified as lesbian relationships,[14] and the shared experiences of these women provided a "safety zone, support network and community".[15] The uses of travel for art as means to live beyond confined definitions of sexuality are parallels that can later be applied to Watson's circumstances.

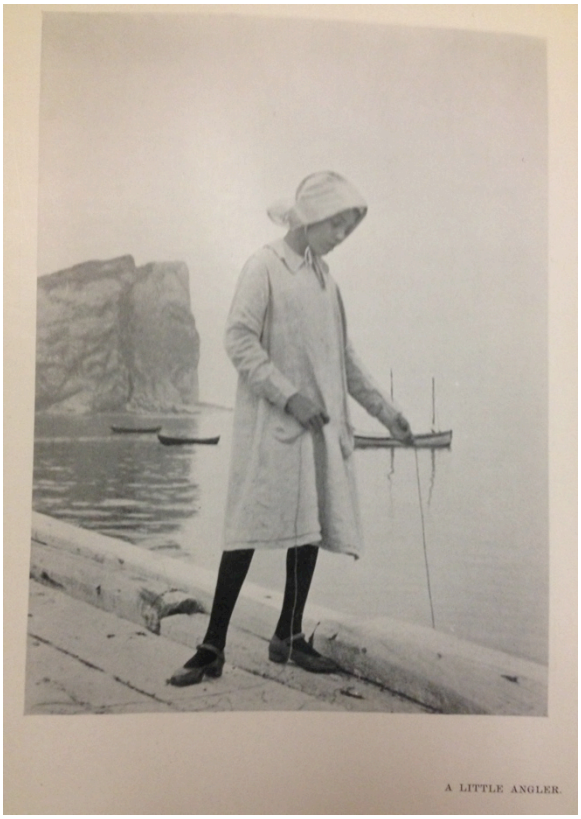


Fig. 7: Edith Watson A Little Angler (ca. 1922), photograph, 15.5 x 11.5cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 89.

An additional parallel can be drawn between Watson's experience in Canada and the solace American sculptors Florence Wyle and France Loring found eventually settling in Toronto. Loring met Wyle at *The Chicago Art Institute* in 1907.[16] Interestingly enough, it was rural Canadian resources that exposed Loring to the possibility of Canada when her father moved to Cobalt, Ontario for a mining job.[17] After being established in Greenwich Village, financial trouble had the couple move to Toronto in 1914 with financing from Loring's father.[18] In a more contemporary biography of these two women Elspeth Cameron contends that after summering in Cobalt the pair built a log cabin in Temagami and that the Lorings did not object to Florence sharing studio space with their daughter because they thought Florence "stabilized" her.[19] Here a parallel of rural seclusion - free of scrutiny - in pursuit of free love can be applied to Watson's experience. The couple were an accepted fixture in the Toronto social scene and commonly referred to as "Loring-Wyles."[20] In the colonial context of Watson's work, Florence Wyle played a monumental role being the only woman juror and exhibiting work in the Canadian Exhibition for the *British Empire Exhibition* in 1924 in Wembley.[21] This is important to consider as a celebration of empire - a heightened colonial moment - and for Wyle as a white woman breaking into previously denied circles. Cameron also considers the context of the expanding role of women into political life with suffrage extended to include women on 24 May 1918.[22] These parallels of the experiences of Loring-Wyles in traveling to Canada, employing the rural setting, and working in a colonial and masculine dominated realm can be applied to Watson to provide contexts for consideration.

Although extremely contemporary, Stone's analysis of the small town lesbian experience from a case study of a small Newfoundland outpost reveals insights that can perhaps transcend across geography and history to the setting of Watson. Stone found there is a fear in small

centres to be publicly identified because of backlash. In comparison, "coming out" in urban spaces means the entire population can never be knowledgeable of your sexuality and this will not hinder opportunities like employment.[23] Perhaps the secluded environment functions with more truth and liberalism than the urban environment. In the secluded "wilderness," pursuing a non-settled/pseudo-nomadic lifestyle one does not have to remain "closeted" and hide within a massive population, but quite contrarily this environment may allow for an openness of character. It is then important to consider, especially with Watson's extensive travel history that she was able to manipulate her class status and wealth in travel, which allowed for the pursuit of this voyageur and queer lifestyle. It was exotic destinations and rural seclusion that would become the sites of sexual freedom. The means of achieving this travel was through upper class privilege and availability to social circles in the broad colonial world.

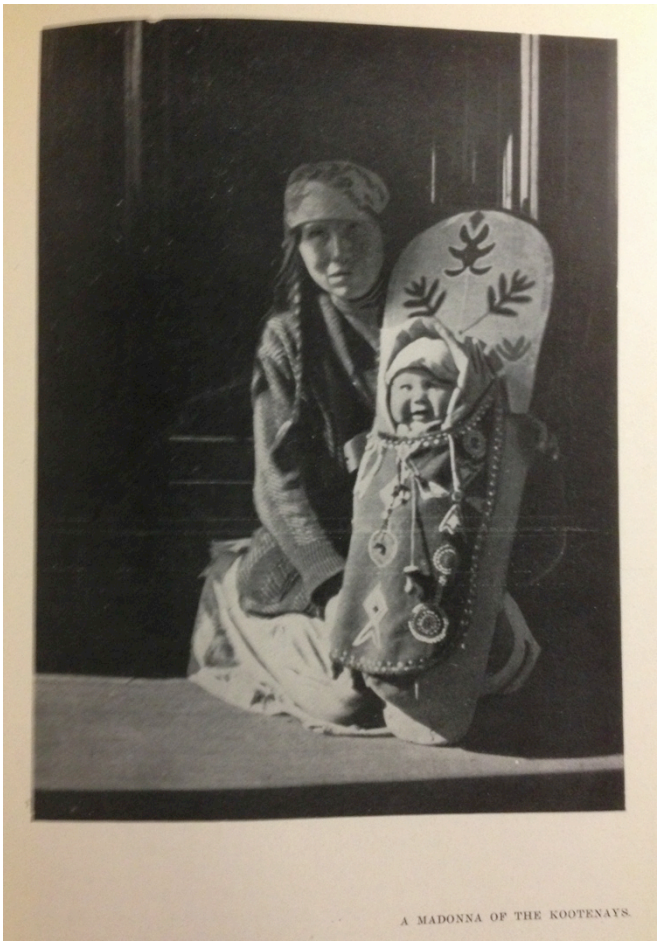


Fig. 8: Edith Watson A Madonna of the Kootenays (ca. 1922), photograph, 15.5 x 12cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 216.

To begin to address Watson, she was born in Connecticut in 1861 and pursued watercolour with her sister Amelia.[24] But it would not be until 1890 when she was exposed to photography learning from her uncle Sereno Watson, an instructor at Harvard.[25] Here, one can see Watson's accessibility to the medium of photography stemming from her class status. Her class status became increasingly important when she travelled extensively as a freelance writer, journalist and photographer. Rooney discovered that Watson's travels were numerous, wintering in Bermuda early on since 1898.[26] In a clear illustration of class privilege in the pursuit of a non-conforming lifestyle, in 1911 it is through friends made in Bermuda that she meets her future partner Victoria Hayward.[27] This history of white upper class privilege and the pursuit of publishing from traveling experiences are numerous and well documented, and it is here that we can place Watson within this colonial tradition. The choice of Canada for subject matter is interesting given the colonial context of both Watson - being American born - and Hayward being a white Bermudian.[28] Rooney speculates it was both loyalist fascination and restricted European travel in 1914 from the outbreak of war that had the two change plans.[29] The "ease" of Canadian travel and

knowledge of Natives and "immigrant groups" in Nova Scotia, the Plains, and the west coast were of "interest" according to Rooney.[30] This is important to consider since the two would have preconceived notions about the groups of people they would encounter. It appears the Canadian travels from 1914-1925 were not completed all at once, but rather in stages. Rooney documents the two summering with Mennonites in Manitoba and Doukhobors in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia.[31] It was through the network of friends made in Bermuda they were able to stay in Victoria and observe Natives trading by canoe. [32] It is important to note that the two boarded with families they encountered when available, but otherwise camped in the "wilderness."[33] The last piece of contextual information to provide was that the post-war period was difficult. Men back from the war effort resumed work in freelance areas and travel became expensive as the Canadian Pacific Railway cancelled their program to exchange work for train passes.[34] It would be in 1921 when the work Romantic Canada (1922) was compiled retrospectively from the documentation of their travels.[35]

However, as it is apparent in the introduction to Romantic Canada (1922) by Edward J. O'Brien, the book is largely about a celebration of racial "others" and diversity contrary to the US where "the passions for conformity...have crushed them."[36] These representations already need to be called into question on the grounds of intended morality and racialized representation. Interesting to note, in this work Hayward coins the term "Canadian mosaic" [37] later to become iconic, then questioned by postcolonial and critical whiteness studies. Watson and Hayward's notions of racial diversity are exclusively limited to white and Native representations and deny the existence of other racial groups like Chinese descendants in B.C. or citizens from the African Diaspora. This representation of the exclusive interplay of white and indigenous in the colonial moment is a decision that cannot be ignored, especially with the background of moral superiority implied through American comparisons in racial diversity as


Fig. 13: Edith Watson An Eskimo Grandmother (ca. 1922), photograph, 15 x 11.5cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 53.

noted by O'Brien in the introduction. The images focus on human subjects, but a few landscapes are included and cannot be viewed outside of the colonial and racial celebration. They appear as a continuation of *terra nullius* quoting conquered land with structures and evidence of settlement. When viewed in the colonial context of nation-building, they read as shared pride with nationalistic connotations limited between the chosen group of predominately European immigrants from a system that favoured and policed who could settle Canada.[38] [fig. 1]

The choice of photography has already been noted as being available through class privilege. However, it is important to note that there is also a *democratization* inherent in the medium. Watson is able to capture images that are important to her as a non-conformative white woman. In this democratization and what could be defined as a "queer lens," Watson seems to have a focus on lower class female subjects labouring beyond the domestic sphere. [fig. 2-6] In the context of Watson's upper class background and the changing socio and political role of women these images become noteworthy of a rebellion of bourgeois conformity as Watson had her class background and ideas of labour. These female subjects labour to support themselves and family in the rural context, Watson then perhaps identifies with these women as she is now subsisting off her own labours in a male dominated world. Male subjects are present, but compositionally are usually displaced from the frame and thus displaced from importance in Watson's eye [fig. 4]. One image of special consideration in this queer context is an image of an androgynous looking girl defined by the gender neutral and labour connotative term "angler." [fig. 7] On the topic of female subjects, an image dubbed Madonna of the Kootenaya (1922) [fig. 8] is of significance. It is interesting to ask what this image means when coming from the queer lens and the moralistic and racialized colonial context. The work employs the problematic use of geography in naming - done to other Native and white subjects - as markers of identity in the absence of a name. Images of this subject matter have already been noted extensively in history as purposely representing alterity from traditional white motherhood and an implied evolutionary scale of morality through motherhood.[39] How then do we reconcile this representation of motherhood from a woman seemingly not interested in procreation, but simultaneously a woman who seems to use race and class privilege as a means of empowerment at the expense of others? This image is a bizarre intersection of colonial contexts and the "normative biological role"[40] for women to function as mothers in Watson's context as a non-conforming female.

The majority of the photographic works included in Romantic Canada (1922) are an interesting collection of ethnographically charged photo-portraits that are presented and function inherently as anonymous and generic genre scenes. [fig. 2-7, 9-11, 18] This raises issues about the anonymization of the sitters within the titles and the business of portraiture since these subjects have not commissioned the work, and one could assume they will not see any royalties from the reproductions.[41] Even within Hayward's writings and Watson's practise of naming, most of the subjects (even those drawn from Eurocentric ideals of whiteness) are not identified by name and therefore become anonymous. A very small number of people are given specific names in the text provided by Hayward. In this case the relationship Watson had with her subjects was purely extractive for capitalistic means, refusing them specific identity in her

works, which were later to be published for profit. At the same time, Watson is commendable in breaking into exploratory subject matter, a previously male dominated area in visual arts in the context of the Group of Seven. Regardless, there is an inherent "othering" in the treatment of all subjects. More overt examples of this practise can be seen in what is dubbed the "Abenaki Basket-Makers" in the text or "Pour Madame's Boudoir" (1922) [fig. 12] and An Eskimo Grandmother (1922) [fig. 13] in Labrador. For these two subjects in the absence of their names their race, age and form of labour in the souvenir industry function as their tags of identity for viewers. Noteworthy is the fact that the British Columbia chapter has the highest concentration of photographs with Native subject matter. [fig. 8,14,15] One should consider the context of Emily Carr's early work and later the landmark exhibition to come in 1927: The Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art Native and Modern.[42] This portrayal of the West coast as the site of Native populous is a larger question in the identity of Canada with a tradition of searching for cultural symbols and an overall fascination with this region. This fixation seems manifested even in the representations of foreign-born artists in Canada.

An issue of canonicity arises when coming across a strange image of a boy at a window blowing a bubble. [fig. 16] The only way to reconcile the unnatural subject matter is to wonder if the scene was staged. This nod to the master Chardin [fig. 17] surfaces issues of quotation as a means to assert legitimacy for canonization. Within the patriarchal society and era of relative female empowerment of the twenties this quotation to art from an institutional and sexist structure is of considerable attention. We could consider that previously Watson had engaged in watercolour, which was accepted as a ladies endeavour while deemed unimportant in the canonical hierarchy of genres. Could this be an overt comment on the issues raised by Linda Nochlin of the patriarchal nature of the artistic tradition and institutions that marginalized women,[43] or what Griselda Pollock called the "masculine narcissism"[44] of the canon? In the post war context of male dominance being reasserted onto Watson's field, is this an attempt to legitimate her work for consideration of canonicity? What also could be made of this quotation from a queer woman? The homo-social circles of the bygone eras that birthed the canon could also be called into question

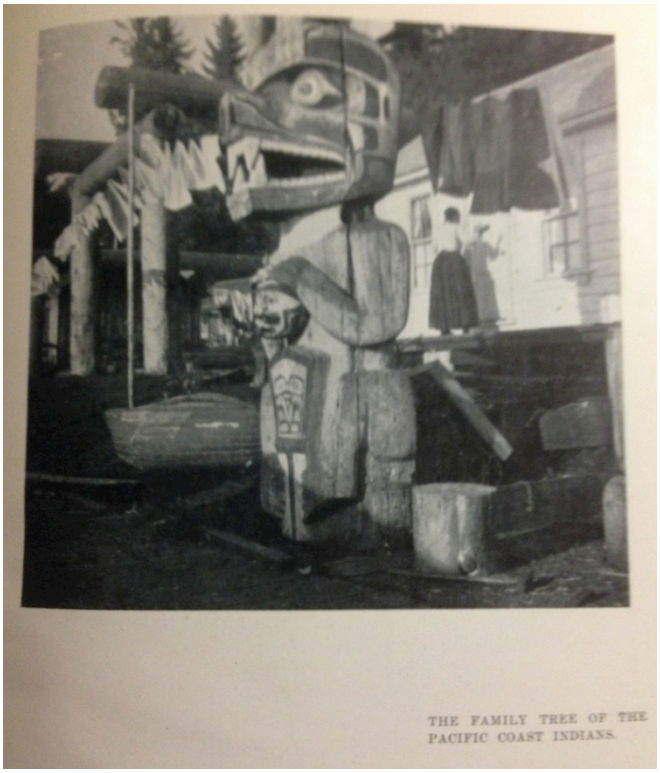


Fig. 14: Edith Watson The Family Tree of the Pacific Coast Indians (ca. 1922), photograph, 11 x 11.5cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 248.

from this quotation. This canonical nod in the masculine post-war context can be read as interplay of both the gendered and policed queer experience from the social circumstances and artist's tradition.

Certain images of Watson's contain a certain aesthetic of the *low-picturesque* defined by the romanticism of poverty and low class rural life [fig. 18]. This becomes noteworthy given Watson's context of class privilege and also when considering the question "at whose cost comes the empowerment of the white, Western woman?"[45] The picturesque was about a cruel pleasure and delight in the "graceful decay" and suffering of others.[46] This also could be interpreted as a canonical nod to the picturesque aesthetic of the eighteenth century like J.T. Smith [fig. 19]. Interesting to note, the aesthetic of the picturesque developed over inter-Britannic tourism as the French Revolution made broad European travel to the Mediterranean impossible.[47] Given the "othering" noted, as well as the devotion of labour subjects in under developed rural scenes this parallel would not be a stretch. This critical scope on Watson as a white American with class privilege reveals issues of romanticization of a rural class near poverty.

Rural Canadian subjects allowed Watson to venture into their secluded setting away from scrutiny to pursue a definitively non-normative lifestyle and subsist off the arts. These were drastic departures from the "appropriate" roles for a woman of the era, and this intersection of critical social analysis of the work becomes important to see where this power is gained. Overall, it would appear that the empowerment of the queer white female came at the expense of racially marginalizing depictions of Natives, the deliberate absence of other races in limited representations of diversity, embedded colonial and canonical connotations, portraiture malpractice turned into anonymous genre scenes and many assertions of class privilege over impoverished rural life. At the same time Watson is commendable for democratizing the field of art through a queer woman's lens and breaking into the inherently masculine realm of exploratory subject matter. The ability through class privilege to pursue travel for photography seems to have allowed Watson to escape from normative gendered life and urban sexual scrutiny into a remote and nomadic lifestyle with her partner. Watson and her work provide an interesting intersection of the queer woman into a colonial heritage in a competing realm of masculine dominated art and more broadly, masculine dominated society.

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**Notes:**

[1] Charmaine A. Nelson, "Dismembering the Flock: Difference and the 'Lady-Artists'," The Color of Stone: Sculpting the Black Female Subject in Nineteenth-Century America (Minneapolis: University Minnesota Press, 2007).

[2] I will chose to respect the spectrum of sexuality and refer to Watson and Hayward's relationship as *non-normative* or under the general term *queer*, instead of imposing a more restrictive definition onto their relationship or their individual sexualities. My decision is contrary to scholarship I encountered which chooses to employ the very restrictive defining label of lesbian onto these early female relationships.

[3] Kristina Huneault, "Placing Frances Anne Hopkins: A British-born artist in colonial Canada" Local/Global: Women Artists in the Nineteenth Century, eds. Deborah Cherry and Janice Helland (Aldershot: Ashgate, Oxford, 2006), p. 9.

[4] Helen Farris and Virginia Moore, Girls Who Did: Stories of Real Girls and Their Careers (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1927), pp. 199-209.

[5] Frances Rooney, Working Light: The Wandering Life of Photographer Edith S. Watson (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1996), p. 10.
[6] Cameron Duder, Awfully Devoted Women: Lesbian Lives in Canada, 1900-65 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), pp. 84-86.
[7] Lillian Faderman, Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women form the Renaissance to the Present. (New York: William Morrow and Company Inc., 1981), p. 156.
[8] Duder, Awfully Devoted Women, p. 91.
[9] Sharon Marcus, Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 43
[10] Sharon Marcus, Between Women, p. 43
[11] Faderman, Surpassing the Love of Men, p. 328.
[12] Marcus, Between Women, p. 29.
[13] Nelson, The Color of Stone, p. 7.
[14] Nelson, The Color of Stone, p. 10.
[15] Nelson, The Color of Stone, p. 31.
[16] Rebecca Sisler, The Girls: A Biography of Frances Loring and Florence Wyle (Toronto and Vancouver: Clark, Irwin & Company Limited, 1972), p. 20.
[17] Sisler, The Girls, p. 20.
[18] Sisler, The Girls, p. 22.
[19] Elspeth Cameron, And Beauty Answers: The Life of Frances Loring and Florence Wyle (Toronto: Cormorant Books, 2007), p. 64.
[20] Cameron, And Beauty Answers, p. 160.
[21] Cameron, And Beauty Answers, pp. 138-145
[22] Cameron, And Beauty Answers, p. 145.
[23] Sharon Dale Stone and the Women's Survey Group, "Lesbian Life in a Small Center: The Case of St. John's," Lesbians in Canada, ed. Sharon Dale Stone (Toronto: Between the Lines: 1990), p. 96.
[24] "WATSON, Edith," Canadian Women Artists History Initiative, http://cwahi.concordia.ca/sources/artists/nameSearch.php?artist=watson (date of last access November 25 2013)
[25] "WATSON, Edith," Canadian Women Artists History Initiative (date of last access November 25 2013)
[26] Frances Rooney, Working Light: The Wandering Life of Photographer Edith S. Watson (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1996), p. 10.
[27] Rooney, Working Light, p. 8.
[28] "WATSON, Edith," Canadian Women Artists History Initiative (date of last access November 25 2013)
[29] Rooney, Working Light, p. 14.
[30] Rooney, Working Light, p. 15.
[31] Rooney, Working Light, p. 16.
[32] Rooney, Working Light, p. 16.
[33] Rooney, Working Light, p. 16.
[34] Rooney, Working Light, p. 17.
[35] Rooney, Working Light, p. 17.
[36] Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson, Romantic Canada (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922), p. xiii
[37] Rooney, Working Light, p. 17.
[38] Eva Mackey "Introduction: Unsettling Differences: Origins, Methods, Frameworks," and "Setting Differences: Managing and Representing People and Land in the Canadian National Project," The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), pp. 29-32.
[39] Anna January, "Savage Motherhood: Discourse on Canadian Motherhood, Nationalism and Race in the late Nineteenth Century," Oh Canada!: Nation, Art and Cultural Politics, McGill University, Department of Art History and Communication Studies, Montreal, Canada, 19 November 2013.
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[42] Gerta Moray, " 'T'Other Emily': Emily Carr, Modern Woman Artist and Dilemmas of Gender," Canadian Art Review/ Revue d'art canadienne, XXVI, 1-2 (1999) pp. 73-87.

[43] Linda Nochlin, "Why have there been no Great Women Artists?," Women, Art and Power and Other Essays (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), pp. 145-175.
[44] Griselda Pollock, "About the Canons and Culture Wars," Differencing the Canon: Feminism and the Writing of Art Histories (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 13.
[45] Kristina Huneault, "Placing Frances Anne Hopkins," p. 9.
[46] Matthew C. Hunter, "The Picturesque Radicalized: Constable and Turner," Introduction to Eighteenth Century Art and Architecture, McGill University, Department of Art History and Communication Studies, Montreal, Canada, 19 November 2013.
[47] Hunter, "The Picturesque Radicalized: Constable and Turner".

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**PLATE LIST:**

**Pictured**

Figure 1: Edith Watson Kalso After Rain (ca. 1922), photograph, 15 x 11.5cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 208.

Figure 2: Edith Watson The Water-Carrier (ca. 1922), photograph, 14 x 12cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 48.

Figure 4: Edith Watson Fit Subject For A Millet (ca. 1922), photograph, 11.5 x 11.5cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 40.

Figure 6: Edith Watson Pulling Flax (ca. 1922), photograph, 16 x 14cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 230.

Figure 7: Edith Watson A Little Angler (ca. 1922), photograph, 15.5 x 11.5cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 89.

Figure 8: Edith Watson A Madonna of the Kootenays (ca. 1922), photograph, 15.5 x 12cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 216.

Figure 13: Edith Watson An Eskimo Grandmother (ca. 1922), photograph, 15 x 11.5cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 53.

Figure 14: Edith Watson The Family Tree of the Pacific Coast Indians (ca. 1922), photograph, 11 x 11.5cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 248.

**Not Pictured**

Figure 3: Edith Watson In the Orchard (ca. 1922), photograph, 13.5 x 11.5cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 13.

Figure 5: Edith Watson Steady There! (ca. 1922), photograph, 15 x 12cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 185.

Figure 9: Edith Watson "The Stooker," as the Prairie Calls Him (ca. 1922), photograph, 15 x 12cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 188.

Figure 10: Edith Watson In a Convent Garden (ca. 1922), photograph, 15 x 11.5cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 104.

Figure 11: Edith Watson Door-way of the Lighthouse-keeper's Home at Cape Sharp, Nova Scotia (ca. 1922), photograph, 15 x 12cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 25.

Figure 12: Edith Watson "Pour Madame's Boudoir" (ca. 1922), photograph, 15.5 x 11.5cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 157.

Figure 15: Edith Watson Spirit of the Untamed (ca. 1922), photograph, 15.5 x 11.5cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 249.

Figure 16: Edith Watson At the Window (ca. 1922), photograph, 15.5 x 11.5cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 192.

Figure 17: Jean Simeon Chardin, Soap Bubbles (1733-4), oil on canvas, 61 x 63.2cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Fine Art, New York

Figure 18: Edith Watson Bad Roads, or no Roads at all never Betray the Ox into the Ditch (ca. 1922), photograph, 14.5 x 12cm, *In* Romantic Canada Victoria Hayward, illustrated by Edith S. Watson (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd.. 1922) p. 125.

Figure 19: J.T. Smith, Near Deptford Kent (1797), Pen and ink, British Museum, London

# PICTURING PERFORMANCE: GENDERED LABOUR PRACTICES IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY CANADIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

JEREMY KEYZER


Fig. 1: "Sewing room, Qu'Appelle Indian Industrial School," *In* Canada, Sessional Papers of the Dominion of Canada, Volume 10, Sixth session of the seventh Parliament, Session 1896 (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1896) Retrieved from: Library and Archives Canada, p. 14-200b.

## Introduction

In the nineteenth century, the Canadian Government implemented the Residential School System: a church-run, government-funded program aimed at educating and assimilating the country's indigenous peoples. For over one hundred years, this mandatory schooling system operated across Canada until the last residential school closed in 1996.[1] To monitor the program's performance, the government required an annual report for each residential school to be included within the Sessional Papers of the Dominion of Canada. By unpacking the representations, practices, and performances that establish and legitimize a political order concerning statecraft and indigenous peoples, I will argue that the imagery found within the 1896 and 1897 Sessional Papers helps to strengthen a colonial discourse in which gender was performed and secured through certain types of labour.

Two sets of residential school photographs will in part define the state- and missionary-led imposition of Anglo-European gender norms on indigenous peoples: (1) two respective scenes of young men and women engaging in sewing and carpentry, and (2) a before and after comparison of Thomas Moore, an indigenous boy groomed into a "civilized" body. These images worked to assimilate students according to Anglo-European societal norms through the displacement of indigenous values with capitalist ideologies of the productive, white family unit.

Within this framework, we may explore the Euro-Canadian naturalization of gendered labour divisions by examining the effects of repeated performance on both the body and space.

**The Sessional Papers of the Dominion of Canada**

As the working papers of Parliament, Sessional Papers are a regulatory tool containing draft legislation, reports, and financial accounts for industries relevant to the state.[2] Within the context of establishing and funding residential school operations, the papers informed government agents on matters such as building conditions, attendance, discipline, grading, and recreation. Discussions of males and females separately performing specific work are embedded in these reports, highlighting a narrative of gendered labour connected to state discipline.

The inclusion of visual imagery portraying indigenous cultures in the Sessional Papers became commonplace around 1890. The publications following this date provide a wealth of illustrations of both residential schools and reservations that coincide with a shift in Euro-Canadian attitudes toward indigenous people and a colonial interest in ethnographic displays.

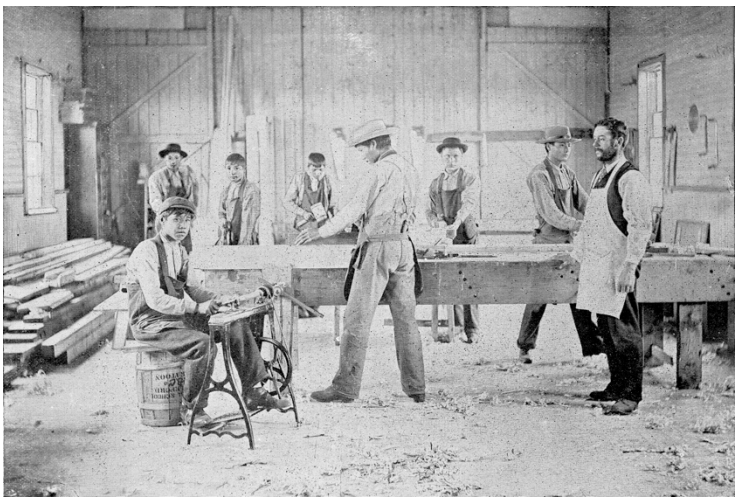

Fig. 2: "Carpenters shop, Battleford Indian Industrial School," *In* Canada, Sessional Papers, 1896, p. 14-124b.

Whereas before November 1885 when mounting Plains Cree resistance culminated in the largest mass hanging in Canadian history, "they were regarded as 'nuisances' but relatively harmless," afterwards indigenous people and women in particular were depicted in government publications and the popular press, "as a distinct threat to the property and lives of the white settlers."[3] Further, images of indigenous life within the Sessional Papers are often tacked alongside written reports and financial statements with little contextual information or in-text referencing. The haphazard insertion of these photographs into "scientific" reports reveals the imagery's power to operate relatively independently, suggesting that the photographs contain embedded meanings that dialectically informed the discourse found within the Sessional Papers.

**Indigenous Cultures and the British Middle Class**

> "There is no part of our work here that is more trying and yet more important than that connected with the young women of the place. They are exposed to particular temptations and up to this time there has been no restraint to their course of sin... They must be cared for, and in some cases the only way to save them is to take them to the mission house."[4]

Fusing British working class women with domestic disorder and by extension disease and immorality tethered Anglo-European gender norms to notions of male breadwinning and female passivity by the mid-nineteenth century.[5] Ann Laura Stoler contends that the value of the English lady to colonialism lies in her status as not only a defenseless victim but also a custodian of European morality and culture; any threat to the purity of white women represented an assault on European rule as a whole.[6] The "problem" of indigenous domesticity therefore emerged as Europeans were ethnographically observing and cataloguing the domestic arrangements of the non-western world. Indigenous cultures, exhibiting relatively fluid definitions of gender in relation to labour, were disturbing to white settlers, government agents, and missionaries.[7]

Guided by preconceived notions that held working class women responsible for disorder and moral decay, Carol Williams asserts that Anglo-Europeans, fearing that employment might "masculinize" women,[8] experienced a moral panic in response to female physical labour, community leadership, and sexual commerce that violated ideals of femininity.[9] Traders, travelers, Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) agents, and missionaries held the transgressive behaviour of indigenous women responsible for the compromised morality and purity of the indigenous home.[10] It then follows that the DIA deemed female participation in activities such as hunting, property ownership, and warfare a precursor to becoming "overworked drudges of their own society."[11]

Drawing selectively from discursive knowledge of the Christian faith, European Enlightenment, and social imperatives of industrializing Anglo-America, missionary schools were first established in the 1850's and 60's with a mandate to promote the domestic, conjugal, and labour roles falsely touted as natural.[12] Repressive and culturally biased models of respectable, metropolitan femininity would guide the state and missionary-led transformation of indigenous women as government publications and the popular press constructed indigenous women as likely to be promiscuous and immoral.[13] With the legislative support of the DIA's 1876 Indian Act, instilling stasis on populations displaying relative (female) mobility was possible through institutional disciplinary action that formed female spheres separate from the public realm.[14] Sewing Room, Qu'Appelle Indian Industrial School (1896) [fig. 1] and Carpenter's Shop, Battleford Indian Industrial School (1896) [fig. 2] illustrate the gendered performance of labour as girls and boys in distinct and contained environments endure procedural transformation into "civilized" bodies.

**Residential School Discipline and Gendered Labour Divisions**

With what is arguably a monopoly on violence, the apparatus of the state forms a particular spatial structure as it monitors, polices, and governs a population. Geography plays both a symbolic and imaginary role within its materialization as the state reifies power, conferring it upon people, (school principals, as well as object-institutions such as fences and landed property).[15] These everyday agents displace attention from the state, thereby removing it

as the source of discipline within the public's imagination. As residential school's doors concealed the disciplinary acts targeting indigenous peoples, punishment became increasingly abstracted as it was imagined rather than watched. This visualization stripped authorities of responsibility as state discipline was safely supplanted by the publicly internalized motive to "correct, cure, reclaim, and improve."[16]

Turning to a Marxist feminist methodology to read Anglo-European divisions of labour, one finds the (re)production and maintenance of labour as necessary conditions to the production of capital.[17] Considering the assumption that responsible motherhood entails forgoing physical labour, the domestic confinement of women serves to contain female sexuality and prop up the interests of the male capitalist with his need for legitimate heirs and the efficient (re)production of labour.[18] The disciplinary mandates of residential schools were therefore built around the restoration of female dependence and the socialization of indigenous peoples into appropriate labour roles that subscribed to European patriarchal systems of control. While the gendered division of labour found within residential schools is often perceived as "natural," foregrounding the containment of indigenous bodies within specific labour categories instead points to the particular economic conditions of early capitalist industrialization.[19] By confining indigenous women to the domestic sphere, government policy -and by extension the "public" - explicitly responded to the potential for widespread Plains Cree insubordination that threatened colonial rule by investing in the (re)productive units of man, wife, and children.[20]

Fig. 3: "Thomas Moore, as he appeared when admitted to the Regina Industrial School," *In* Canada, Sessional Papers of the Dominion of Canada, Volume 11, Second session of the eighth session of Parliament, Session 1897 (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1896) Retrieved from: Library and Archives Canada, p. 15f

Reproducing photographic scenes of residential school labour within normatively descriptive, "scientific" residential school reports validates such gender divisions as natural. For the government agents consuming images of women sewing and men sweating, the contributions of women to society's visible economy would in part be smothered by an educational focus that linked female domestic containment with morality. Similarly, N. Coccola, Principal of the Kootenay Industrial School, proclaimed the progress of industrial instruction within the 1897 Sessional Paper:

> "In the shoemaking department, as elsewhere, the efforts of the boys were well marked. A shoemaker was engaged last August, and under him three boys have learned the trade and are now able to make shoes fairly well. A good deal of shoe-mending and harness repairing have been done by them both for whites and Indians. The parents felt proud of the work done by their children... While the carpenters were repairing the school buildings, two of the boys assisted them, thus acquiring a valuable knowledge of carpentry, and at the same time expediting the work."[21]

Coccola continues, specifying the developments occurring in "girls' industrial work":

> "The girls are well trained in the different branches of housework. The three largest girls are able to compete with white girls of the same age at housekeeping...The others are doing well at the duties at which they are employed according to their age and strength. Almost all of them show great aptitude for sewing and other needle-work. Some of the girls of ten years of age can make their own dresses and knit their stockings."[22]

In demonstrating procedural conformation to Anglo-European norms, the production of knitted goods is appropriate. According to Adele Perry the significance of textiles and clothing in understanding women's work signals the "intelligence" of the maker, while simultaneously depicting her as childlike.[23] For the members of parliament consuming images of girls sewing, this gendered binary was displayed to highlight their feminine potential, evidently solidifying their soon-to-be successful conversion within the project.

**Thomas Moore**

The images of Thomas Moore construct a savage/civilized dichotomy while excluding the process of transformation.[24] Thomas Moore, as he appeared when admitted to the Regina Indian Industrial School (1897) [fig. 3] is depicted as emotional, feminine in desire for cloth and trinkets, and childlike.[25] Likely motivated by scientific, moral, and philosophical discourses that portrayed the colonial empire as "realistically" as possible, the photographer and/or commissioner selected elements such as a fur skin as a "natural" context for Thomas' portrait.[26] With contemporary Social Darwinist theories as a guide, this technique of scientific realism anchored the aforementioned characteristics to indigenous cultures, thereby geographically and socially situating the source of the domesticity "problem."[27]

Calling into question the objectivity of colonial photographers, Williams asserts that missionaries and school principals were in a continual state of dependence upon donors to "keep the sinner, or newly converted, within an ongoing spiritual embrace."[28] It was therefore necessary to convince supporters, including the federal government, of the success of educational measures.[29] And what better way than the visual evidence of the indigenous convert? Appearing in sharp contrast to his previously uncontained body, Thomas Moore, after tuition at the Regina Indian Industrial School (1897) [fig. 4] conveys the complete transformation of Thomas, and therefore the efficacy of residential schools. Scissors christened Thomas by shaving his hair to an

acceptable length. His stance and garb exudes confidence and neoclassical architecture confirms his appropriate environment. Anne Maxwell indicates that such photographic evidence was used to assert that these (male) subjects were deserving of citizenship as the viewer becomes aware of Thomas' newfound masculinity and suitability for public life.[30]

Within the ecology of the Sessional Papers, both the images of labour performance as well as the images of Thomas inspire the viewer with hope for the missionary project, albeit in differing ways. On one hand, performance demonstrates capability. On the other, Western clothing and composure imbue Anglo-European achievement. We may order the images in a temporally linear manner to explore the ramifications of residential school discipline for the lived experience of indigenous peoples. Considering performance as a transformative project in processing and fixing Thomas to both the beginning and endpoint allows us to see the indigenous body's actions grating against its corporeal and biological traits. Making this distinction supports a dual purpose: (1) allowing us to understand how performance shapes bodies by tending them toward certain objects, and (2) falsifying complete transformation by exposing it as something that can only be partial.

**The Permeation of Performance**

I turn to an object-oriented queer phenomenology to demonstrate how performance shapes bodies and space. Examining how certain (gendered) actions may appear natural, Judith Butler highlights the relationship between performance repetition and a precipitating norm:

> "What bodies 'tend to do' are effects of histories rather than being originary. We could say that history 'happens' in the very repetition of gestures, which is what gives bodies their tendencies. We might note here that the labour of such repetition disappears through labour: if we work hard at something, then it seems 'effortless' ".[31]

In other words, complete transformation masks procedural transformation. Continuously handing a mallet to a male will tend him toward that object in part through things like muscle memory. Similarly, as the needle increasingly takes residence in the hand of a woman, the tips of her fingers may harden and she may "naturally" excel at sewing. As Sara Ahmed simply states, what we "do do" expands certain capabilities and affects what we "can do."[32]

As the body is moulded to have certain tendencies, the space surrounding the body changes as objects are carried nearer or further. Within this assertion, relationships between actions and space are significant as bodies are not merely "an instrument but a form of expression, a making visible of our intentions."[33] Spatial relations between objects and others are constructed through actions, which make certain objects available within reach more so than others.[34] Objects in space thus concurrently orient the body, and take it in certain directions. Notably, understanding how bodies evolve in relation to action allows us to consider something greater than the tendency toward physical things like mallets or needles: our definition of object may expand to include language, attitudes, expressions, and aspirations. These are the layers in which gender and racial norms are embedded.

It is of course no accident that residential school efforts primarily targeted children. "Killing the Indian in the child" was perceived as an effective means of "civilizing" nearly all aspects of indigenous life through a ripple effect.[35] For example, as part of "civilizing" efforts that first focused on females, missionaries and school leaders hoped that indigenous girls would impart their newly acquired domestic skills to others upon return to their families and reserves.[36] When we visualize the body retrieving and repelling objects it becomes clear how state- and missionary-led discipline disruptively emanated from the classroom to the home and from young students to everyone else.

**Falsifying Complete Transformation**

It is reasonable to counter claims of colonial oppression and control with examples of personal resistance that destabilize imperial hegemonies. Considering the individual sites of indigenous struggle accounts for the unique agency of the oppressed and constructs a nuanced understanding of how colonization was navigated. For instance, as placement within white middle-class homes was at times an option for students following a residential school education, Thomas' adherence to middle-class behavioural principles may be a chosen strategy. The survival of Thomas and the other children undergoing transformation depended upon their ability to manoeuvre within this system, to perform in various ways and degrees as Anglo-European subjects.

Regardless of learned ability, a discursive environment of racial purity within the imposed capitalist mode of production continuously marginalized indigenous labourers post-education. While displaying newfound abilities such as sewing and carpentry may have marked their capacity for survival, the image of Thomas transformed speaks of the impossibility of containing corporeal and biological characteristics in their entirety. Regardless of his hairstyle, clothing, composure, or environment, Thomas' skin will never be white; his actions will forever be informed by the culture of his past. He remains a transplant. As a result, students were expected to enter employment and remain at the level of unskilled or semi-skilled labourers. This reveals a degree of partiality within residential school discipline; Thomas is repeatedly told to take up the mallet while at school, then he is stripped of its presence, but not its normalcy, even after he would have

Fig. 4: "Thomas Moore, after tuition at the Regina Industrial School," *In* Canada, Sessional Papers, 1897, p. 15g.

departed from the school. As his body and space are transformed, he may continue to tend toward that object as a subject within an increasingly market-based economic system, but the degree to which the mallet is reachable is in question. Even though the image of Thomas transformed may whisper promises of an indigenous bourgeois, colonial dreams of a white elite controlling a Canada from sea to sea would perpetually deny this possibility.

While complete transformation may at first appear attainable, it is only during the process itself that an ideal transformative endpoint is realistically imagined. In this light, the inability to completely contain indigenous identity is more damning for Thomas than the bodies pictured in action, because viewing performance leads us to believe that males might sweat away their skin colour and females may pale in the dim household light. Colonized bodies may therefore be represented with the capacity to become "civilized," but political and economic agendas dependent on exclusivity and the myth of racial purity continuously disadvantage them in relation to white heterosexual norms. In other words, the version of Thomas following an industrial school education - or complete transformation - is an illusion.

## Conclusion

Applying the notions of procedural conformation and complete transformation to the Sessional Paper's visual imagery highlights residential school discipline as a project that focused on the body to construct the domestic unit in service to the male capitalist. Throughout residential school education, indigenous peoples were imparted with the knowledge that certain objects are preferential within a capitalist mode of production; promoting tools such as mallets and needles in a gendered and ultimately racist manner furthered an exclusionary form of social mobility. The impossibility of complete transformation foregrounds the multiple layers of marginalization experienced by indigenous peoples as we see Thomas and his classmates struggling to grasp the objects they tend toward. A discursively racist economic environment that is in part nourished by the discourse found within the Sessional Papers continuously denies indigenous peoples as self-governing agents. By destabilizing normative notions of gender and revealing a degree of partiality within transformation we may be equipped with a critical repertoire when confronted with such practices.

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**Notes:**

[1] "A timeline of residential schools, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission," CBC News, 16 May 2008. http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/a-timeline-of-residential-ools-the-truth-and-schreconciliation-commision-1.724434 (accessed 27 November 2013).

[2] "Working with Sessional Papers," York University, accessed 27 November 2013, http://www.library.yorku.ca/cms/scottreference/govdocs/guides/sessional/

[3] This public spectacle occurred at the Northwest Mounted Police barracks in Battleford, Saskatchewan and included the hanging of eight Cree convicted of murder. For a further discussion on how the military was used to disarm, impoverish, and subjugate the Cree by depriving them of leadership see: Sarah Carter, Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), p. 19.

[4] Carol Williams, " 'She Was the Means of Leading into the Light': Photographic Portraits of Tsimshian Methodist Converts," In the Days of Our Grandmothers: A Reader in Aboriginal Women's History in Canada, eds. Mary-Ellen Kelm and Lorna Townsend (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), p. 127.
[5] Carter, Capturing Women, p. 13.; Adele Perry, "Metropolitan Knowledge, Colonial Practice, and Indigenous Womanhood: Missions in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia," Contact Zones: Aboriginal & Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past, eds. Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherford (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), p. 121.
[6] Ann Laura Stoler, "Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and the Cultural Politics of Exclusion in Colonial Southeast Asia," Society for Comparative Study of Society and History (1992), p. 91; also cited in Carter, Capturing Women, p. 14.
[7] Perry, "Metropolitan Knowledge," p. 114.
[8] Williams, "She was the Means," p. 142.
[9] Ann Oakley, Sex, Gender, and Society (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 152.
[10] Such danger was "confirmed" by the moral degradation that missionaries associated with women who, for instance, went to Victoria for the sex trade. For a discussion on indigenous female employment, see: Sherry Farrell Racette, "Sewing for a Living," Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past, eds. Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherford (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005). The moral panic experienced by Anglo-Europeans was, however, informed by a Social Darwinian methodology that hierarchically categorized racial groups and was therefore reserved for specific populations. For instance, a fear of moral degradation was not affixed to female labourers of African descent in the same manner.
[11] Robin Jarvis Brownlie, "Indian Affairs, Colonization, and the Regulation of Aboriginal Women's Sexuality," Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past, eds. Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherford (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), p. 162.
[12] Perry, "Metropolitan Knowledge," p. 111.
[13] Brownlie, "Indian Affairs," p. 163; Narratives of lewd and licentious indigenous woman particularly appeared following the Plains Cree resistance and mass hanging at Battleford, Saskatchewan. For more see: Carter, Capturing Women, p. 160.
[14] Williams, " 'She Was the Means of Leading into the Light'," p. 129; Perry, "Metropolitan Knowledge," p. 112.
[15] Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat, States of Imagination: Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001), p. 10.
[16] Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), p. 10
[17] Eva Gamarnikow, "Sexual Division of Labour: The Case of Nursing," Feminism and Materialism: Women and Modes of Production, eds. Annette Kuhn and AnnMarie Wolpe (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul (1978), p. 98.
[18] Oakley, Sex, Gender, and Society, p. 131;Robin McDonough and Rachel Harrison, "Patriarchy and Relations of Production," Feminism and Materialism: Women and Modes of Production, eds. Annette Kuhn and AnnMarie Wolpe (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 36.
[19] McDonough and Harrison, "Patriarchy and Relations of Production," p. 35.
[20] Carter, Capturing Women, p. 18; Perry, "Metropolitan Knowledge," p. 116.
[21] Canada, Sessional Papers, 1897, p. 385.
[22] Canada, Sessional Papers, 1897, p. 385.
[23] Perry, "Metropolitan Knowledge," p. 124.
[24] Anne Maxwell, Colonial Photography and Exhibitions: Representations of the 'Native' and the Making of European Identities (London: Leicester University Press, 1999), p. 76.
[25] Beth Fowkes Tobin, Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth-Century British Painting (London: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 59.
[26] Maxwell, Colonial Photography, p. 26.
[27] Maxwell, Colonial Photography, p. 15.
[28] Williams, " 'She Was the Means of Leading into the Light'," p. 122.
[29] Missionaries such as Charles Tate turned to touring with his eight-year "project," Sallosalton, who was often dressed up and put on display. See: Williams, "She Was the Means of Leading into the Light," p. 125.
[30] Maxwell, Colonial Photography, p. 121; Brownlie, "Indian Affairs," p. 165.
[31] Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitutions: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory, eds. Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); also cited in Sara Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology: objects orientations, others (London: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 56.
[32] Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology, p. 60.

[33] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception, translated by James M. Edie (Evanston, Ill,: Northwest University Press, 1964); also cited in Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology, p. 53.
[34] Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology, p. 52.
[35] Mark Abley, Conversations with a dead man: the legacy of Duncan Campbell Scott (Madeira Park, B.C.: Douglass & McIntyre, 2013), p. 47.
[36] Joan Sangster, "Domesticating Girls: The Sexual Regulation of Aboriginal and Working-Class Girls in Twentieth Century Canada," Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past, eds. Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherford (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), p. 186.

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**PLATE LIST:**

Figure 1: "Sewing room, Qu'Appelle Indian Industrial School," *In* Canada, Sessional Papers of the Dominion of Canada, Volume 10, Sixth session of the seventh Parliament, Session 1896 (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1896) Retrieved from: Library and Archives Canada, p. 14-200b

Figure 2: "Carpenters shop, Battleford Indian Industrial School," *In* Canada, Sessional Papers, 1896, p. 14-124b

Figure 3: "Thomas Moore, as he appeared when admitted to the Regina Industrial School," *In* Canada, Sessional Papers of the Dominion of Canada, Volume 11, Second session of the eighth session of Parliament, Session 1897 (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1896) Retrieved from: Library and Archives Canada, p. 15f

Figure 4: "Thomas Moore, after tuition at the Regina Industrial School," *In* Canada, Sessional Papers, 1897, p. 15g

# THE 'PICCANINNY TYPE': REPRODUCING COLONIAL DISCOURSE, BLACK CHILDREN AS SUBJECTS IN CANADIAN PAINTING

BLAIR MCFADDEN

Representations of race and childhood within cultural production have been intrinsically informed by colonial discourse. The visual construction of racialized child types by white Canadian artists has played a fundamental role in negotiating racist colonial discourse that has positioned the white body as the norm, and the black body as Other. In the early twentieth-century, the artwork of Canadian painter Dorothy Stevens functioned within a larger body of artistic production that reproduced previously existing derogatory discourse in visual culture. Stevens establishes her depictions of black children as "piccaninny types," a manifestation of stereotypes that operated as a colonial precursor to the materialization of the overtly sexualized black female type. Although the works of other Canadian artists reveal a similar interest in the black child as subject, Stevens' specification of the child as the piccaninny type is arguably amongst the most explicit propagation of colonialist trajectories. This discourse reveals itself not only through visual subject matter, but also within the literary titles that Stevens employed.

Fig. 1: Dorothy Stevens, Amy (c. 1930), Oil on canvas, 86.8 x 76.4 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada.

I will engage Homi K. Bhabha's writings on colonial discourse as a theoretical framework in order to explore the implications of Stevens' portrayals of the black child as type. Bhabha defines colonial discourse as an apparatus of power that strategically naturalizes stereotypical and racist language.[1] For Bhabha, the objective of colonial discourse is to "construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin" in order to administratively exercise power over these marginalized societies.[2] Stevens' insistence upon representing the black child as "piccaninny type" endorsee and normalized the racist ideologies of colonial discourse. Indebted to the methodologies of a feminist and post-colonial art historical

practice, I will additionally draw on the valuable research of Charmaine Nelson concerning the historical representations of the black female subject within Western art.

The piccaninny is a derogatory, stereotypical term used throughout slavery and well into the twentieth-century to denote a child of African descent.[3] The term itself fundamentally points to the uncared for status of the child, the absence of their parents, and their working class social standing. Piccaninny derives from the Portuguese word "pequenino" meaning "tiny".[4] The term therefore refers candidly to the small stature of black children (particularly within the context of Trans Atlantic Slavery), marking them as malnourished and consequently underdeveloped. The denotation of racially marginalized children through the construction of the piccaninny as type critically depended on various forms of cultural production. The piccaninny epitomized a form of commodity that circulated for white consumption, created to disavow the injury of these children and reduce their cultural presence to "cute domestic" and "tourist bric-a-brac".[5] The piccaninny was also a stereotypical emblem deployed by white artists in order to entertain their own racial curiosities.[6]

Amy [fig. 1], painted by Stevens in 1930, is a portrait of a young black girl dressed in her smart casuals. Alone and confined to an interior space, Amy is awkwardly posed on a chair. The staging of the chair within the room and the upright posture of the child as she sits in the chair, ankles neatly crossed, appear unnatural. Amy looks out at the viewer, yet her gaze seems indifferent. In her eyes we struggle to find a true or distinct emotion. Instead we uncover a sense of detachment, as if the young girl is drained from posing for the artist. Mimicking the positioning of her feet, her hands lay elegantly across her lap, paradoxically clasping a white doll.

Dolls operate as devices for identity formation, capturing what young girls believe they should look like and becoming a definitional model by which they should consider themselves.[7] The underlying notion here is that children's toys are not inconsequential objects of play.[8] Toys such as the doll in this image rather have problematic consequences, particularly for the black child who grasps the white doll.[9] Nelson describes Amy's embrace of the white doll as disturbing on multiple levels: it is suggestive of the notion of racial socialization as integrated within the process of play, it points to the unsettling practice of racial self-loathing by brainwashed black children, and it foresees the likely prospect of Amy's future as caregiver to white children.[10]

Amy (1930) does not immediately stand out as a representation of the piccaninny type. This image by Stevens is not of a child that fits the stereotypical mould of a piccaninny: Amy is poised, well groomed, seemingly well fed and cared for. Yet, the original title of this work was indeed, Piccaninny (n.d.). *The National Gallery of Canada* inaugurated the renaming of the painting, sometime after the purchase of the work in 1932. Stevens' initial naming of the work is significant on several fundamental levels: it unmistakably labels the young girl as a piccaninny, it refuses the privilege of personal identification at the level of the title, and it obliterates the individuality of the child to instead construct her as type.

Dorothy Stevens is a white Canadian artist, born and raised in the upper class Rosedale neighbourhood of Toronto.[11] Her elite status granted her the money to travel to the tropics in

Fig. 3: Prudence Heward, Clytie (1938), Oil on canvas, 101.8 x 66.6 cm, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, Canada.

search of so-called exotic subject matter.[12] Stevens traveled to paint in Haiti and other Caribbean islands, concentrating on figure studies mostly of local women and children.[13] A significant portion of her career was devoted to capturing the romanticized myth of black exoticism, her work thus contributing greatly to the problematic racial discourses of the time.[14]

Stevens exercised her accessibility to black subjects, particularly children, in Canada as well. Amy (1930) is an example of this. Stevens' interest in the black subject as an exoticized body was therefore not bound by geographical locale but rather manifested as a desire to depict a racial or ethnic Other.[15] As Nelson suggests, perhaps Stevens herself has most effectively articulated her own interest in the racialized child as the Other. While sketching at a *Simpson's Department Store* in Toronto during an exhibition in 1950, Stevens shouted at the management, "I'm sick and tired of all these dough-faced Aryan kids! Can't you get me some coloured kids? Negroes or Chinese kids? Kids with character and eloquence in their eyes."[16] Stevens' outburst reveals her association of black children with a kind of perceived exoticism made visible through their physical differences from the normalized white body.[17]

Stevens' artistic interest in the "othered" typing of black children exposes the roots of colonial discourse. Paintings by Stevens adhere to the theoretical issues considered by Bhabha as crucial to the construction and practice of this discourse: the conception of knowledge as a form of racial power, the fixation of knowledge through stereotyping, and the circulation of this power as knowledge through a synthesis of desire and pleasure.[18] The piccaninny type in Amy (1930) is most visibly reproduced in another one of Stevens' works entitled Piccaninny (n.d.) [fig. 2][19]. Stevens' Piccaninny (n.d.) sketch pictures a little black girl who appears strikingly similar to the young girl the National Gallery has named Amy. When comparing Piccaninny (n.d.) to Amy (1930), the physicality and facial detailing of the young child, the distant gaze, and the

unadorned compositional features of a child on a simple wooden chair suggest that the child in the two images is likely one and the same. Although there is no date attached to Stevens' Piccaninny (n.d.) drawing, I would argue that it is likely a preliminary sketch of the work now known as Amy (1930). Stevens further contrived the painting by turning the chair at an awkward angle, crafting the girl's unnatural head-tilt, and perhaps most significantly, by adding the white doll.

Stevens' Piccaninny (n.d.) sketch is not as neat and tidy: the little girl's hair is tousled and she slouches her shoulders, lacking the poise that Amy (1930) maintains. Assuming here that Piccaninny (n.d.) was completed prior to Amy (1930), it appears as though Stevens attempted to "clean up" the appearance of the child between constructing the two images. Yet, the title (of both works) remained Piccaninny (n.d.). In this way, Stevens ensured that the child, although well kept and cared for, remains at the bottom of the hierarchal ladder while simultaneously securing her own position as the dominant white body. At the level of the title prevails an important literal manifestation of the visual.[20] Regardless of whether or not Piccaninny (n.d.) and Amy (1930) are in fact representations of the same child, these images – both together and apart – become a complex articulation of Stevens' adherence to the tropes of colonial discourse. These images function as overarching expressions of Bhabha's conjecture of the narcissistic and aggressive nature of colonialism.[21] The power dynamics present in Stevens' portrayals of black children insist that through the typing of the black body, the identity of the white body remains distinguishable and somehow normal.

The critical examination of representations of black children within the context of historical Canadian art production requires the recognition of the central, universalizing position of the white body that actively marginalizes the "othered" black body.[22] The construction of the black child as subject matter is largely defined by its alliance to colonialist discourse, however Nelson urges that this construction must also be understood as intimately bound to the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade.[23] According to Nelson, slavery becomes the foundation upon which "the conception of childhood became racialized and black children were effectively marked off in biology, appearance, behaviour, and experience from white children."[24] As previously mentioned, the Canadian visual archive of black subjects, and specifically of children, is extensive. Through the work of Canadian painters such as Dorothy Stevens, the legacy of vulnerability of black children as racialized typologies is particularly evident. Stevens and her contemporaries did not forge a novel practice in representing so-called piccaninnies: Canadian artists working throughout the first half of the twentieth-century expanded upon a long-standing colonial tradition of portraying black children as types.

Montreal born artist Prudence Heward provides another relevant example of a white painter who took an explicit interest in capturing the black subject in art. Prudence Heward's Clytie [fig. 3] of 1938 depicts a small girl dressed in her "Sunday best" standing erect, frozen in position under the artist's gaze.[25] Clytie is pictured in a lovely ankle-length pink dress, with her hair neatly held off her face by a pink hair bow. Clytie's outfit is aptly completed with classy white gloves, white stockings, and fresh white shoes. Heward's Clytie (1938) contains a marked

tension: her stiff, immobile body language and enigmatic facial expression contradict the twentieth-century ideals of childhood.[26] In this way, Heward's work is comparable to the piccaninny type presented by Stevens with Amy (1930) and Piccaninny (n.d.). The young girls portrayed in these images by both artists seem detached and uncertain: the children stare out at the viewer, their gaze neither confrontational nor entirely submissive, but instead withdrawn and incomprehensible.

Clytie (1938) is "dolled-up," placed within an urban setting, presumably on her way to some kind of special occasion or event. Within this urban space, tropical-looking plants frame the background behind Clytie. Heward's inclusion of these plants becomes an immediate signifier of the child's racial "otherness," and therefore her exoticness. As suggested by Nelson, Clytie was likely a friend of the Heward family cook and thus this painting may have been completed in Montreal, and not in the tropics.[27] Regardless, the addition of these plants reveals Heward's explicit desire to picture the black female subject as exoticized, even in the absence of the lush tropical gardens and exposure of flesh characterizing many of her other works.[28] Illuminating trajectories consistent to those seen in Stevens' works, Heward's Clytie (1938) embodies a stereotyping of the black child as somehow more exotic, and inherently different from the white child. It is important to note here that I do not wish to suggest that Stevens nor Heward were consciously racist. Rather, their works became a reflection of the colonialist beliefs and racialized social constructions dominating Canadian society at this time.

Bhabha insists that the construction of colonized subjects throughout cultural production preys upon so-called inherent forms of racial and sexual difference in order for the colonizer to exercise their supremacy.[29] Racial demarcation, from the onset of the representation of children as types in art, functioned similarly to depictions of black women, who were differentiated on the basis of possessing some kind of overt sexuality. Like portraits of black girls, depictions of black women often exhibit detached and melancholic qualities almost identical to those expressed by the children.[30] Histories encompassing the representation of black children and girls in Canadian art parallel the portrayals of black adults and women: both are "othered" against the paradigmatic ideal of the white body in order to suit the hierarchal and marginalizing trajectories of colonization. As stated by Nelson, "Black Woman and her precursor Black Girl are a measure of white colonial fear and desire and the abject black female subject is revelatory of an imagined whiteness, equally fictive and reified through an incessant socio-cultural and racist collective narcissism".[31] The "piccaninny type" as label for black female children becomes a stepping-stone that allows for the evolution of types: for the little black girl to remain as type into adulthood. For example, the black female piccaninny child may later be visually labeled as the overtly sexualized "Jezebel type."[32]

Portraits of black female subjects represent a critical gap in term of the traditions of portraiture. Black subjects were most often refused the specificity of their name at the level of the title. This is true in Canada and across art globally. Portraits and figure paintings of black females, child and adult, insisted upon typology rather than individuality. More specifically, female black subjects were most often categorized in terms of their race and status.[33] Further

examples that explicitly illustrate the colonial marginalization that occurs at the level of the title in historical Canadian art production are Dorothy Stevens' High Yellow (n.d) and Coloured Nude (1933).

High Yellow (n.d.) [fig. 4] by Stevens is a portrait of a charming, well-dressed and composed young black woman. The unnamed woman is depicted amidst a lush tropical setting, yet another indication of her exotic "otherness". As Nelson argues, the traditions of naming black womanhood by terms such as high yellow, coloured, or dark, operated as a means of reinforcing stereotypical colonial discourse and racialized types: "the deliberate and repeated identification of the subject's [race] in the titles locates the process of representing racial/ethnic/colour 'otherness' as an integral part of these works".[34] Although Coloured Nude [fig. 5] painted by Stevens in 1933 is not a portrait, it oscillates between the artistic genres of the nude and the naked, crystallizing the process by which black subjects are constructed by racist typologies. This is arguably Stevens' most recognizable and highly praised work, yet it simultaneously locates the black woman as blatantly sexualized and licentious, indeed becoming an aggressive reproduction of colonialist aims.[35]

The legacy of representing black women and children through stereotypical appropriation and colonialist methodologies can similarly be traced through works produced by many other historical Canadian artists. Although painted over one hundred and fifty years apart, Yvonne McKague Housser's Negro Girl with Red Flower (1941) [fig. 6] and François Malépart de Beaucourt's Portrait of a Negro Slave (1786) [fig. 7] both exhibit trajectories that parallel typing based on identity markers such as race, sex, and social status. These paintings by Housser and Beaucourt thus resemble strategies exploited in works by Stevens and Heward as previously discussed.[36]

The artist Louis Muhlstock exists in a space outside the general body of Canadian paintings of black subjects, diverging from the explicit colonialist patterns that manifest in the construction of typologies. Born in Poland, Muhlstock came to Montreal with his family in 1911.[37] Unlike Stevens and Heward, Muhlstock was of a lower social status and subject to constant discrimination and displacement as a Jewish immigrant in Montreal.[38] Muhlstock's Evelyn Pleasant, St. Famille Street, Montreal (1937) [fig. 8] pictures a young girl gazing sorrowfully out a window, probably from the interior of her own home. The girl is both framed by the canvas and the structure of the window, which functions to physically barricade the viewer from Evelyn's inner world by a pane of glass. Evelyn's world does not appear childlike. Within her interior space she is overcome by the emptiness of darkness.[39] Evelyn Pleasant (1937) marks the binding of Muhlstock's interests in black subjects as well as prevalent issues such as poverty, unemployment, and the processes of social oppression.[40]

The young black girl in Muhlstock's portrait is thoroughly identified by her first and last name, her street, and her city. By naming his black subjects he individualized them. The individualization of Evelyn Pleasant (1937) serves to undercut the process of racial stereotyping, instead revealing Muhlstock's awareness of the marginalization of his subject. Both Stevens' and Heward's girls are known by their first name, which arguably creates a sense of familiarity

between subject and viewer. However, with Evelyn Pleasant (1937) Muhlstock defies colonialist ideals of race, "breeching the expected limits of representation in order to not succumb to the dominant expectations of racial and sexual marginalization."[41] Evelyn Pleasant (1937) thus also serves to disclose the extent to which Stevens and Heward remain comfortably within the confines of colonialism.

I wish to conclude by threading together my arguments concerning the colonial implications of child portraits to the constructed notion of childhood. Portraits of the white child took on a specific ideological and social function: they served to create the category of childhood within the imaginary. The Western conception of childhood is not a static idiom; it is a temporally specific designation of assumed human development and behaviour, repetitively marked by ideas of play, learning, affection, nurturing, and protection.[42] The equation of childhood with a period of carefree innocence and protection is a romanticized notion: according to this description, most children in Canada have never experienced a childhood.[43]

All three white Canadian artists produced paintings in which their child subjects are markedly distanced from this notion of childhood. Each of these young girls is distinctly un-childlike in their demeanour: portrayed as stoic and disengaged, none of them, even Amy with her doll, are remotely associated with the act of play.[44] Reproductions of black children in the works of Stevens and her contemporaries thus aid the construction of childhood as a normalized, universalizing culture.[45] In reality, the concept of childhood remains a Western myth of identification that artists should endeavour to critically unpack.

Images of black female subjects as represented by white Canadian artists in the early twentieth century specifically reveal an obsessive need to systematically create typologies by means of "exoticizing" and "othering" the black body.[46] These processes are intimately informed by colonial discourse, embodied and reproduced perhaps most forcefully by the works of the white female artist Dorothy Stevens. The study of white artistic representations of black subjects is a complex and multifaceted undertaking that demands more scholarly attention. In particular, the use of derogatory terms such as piccaninny in order to visually typify and denote the socially inferior body of the black child requires further exploration.

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**Notes:**

[1] Homi K. Bhabha, "The Other Question: Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism," Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures, eds. Russell Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-ha and Cornel West (New York: The New York Museum of Contemporary Art, 1990), p. 75.

[2] Bhabha, "The Other Question," p. 75.

[3] Doris Y. Wilkinson, "The Doll Exhibit: A Psycho-Cultural Analysis of Black Female Role Stereotypes," The Journal of Popular Culture, vol. 21, no. 2 (Fall 1987), p. 23.

[4] Liz Conor, "The 'piccaninny': Racialized Childhood, Disinheritance, Acquisition and Child Beauty," Postcolonial Studies, vol. 15, no. 1 (March 2012), p. 47.

[5] Conor, "The 'piccaninny'," p. 64.

[6] For more on stereotypes as reductive devices of race and gender see: Alice Jim, "Black Women in Canada: A Documentation and Analysis of the 1989 Exhibition 'Black Wimmin - When and Where We Enter'," (Montreal: MA, Art History Department, Concordia University, 1996), p. 67.

[7] Wilkinson, "The Doll Exhibit," p. 19.

[8] Wilkinson, "The Doll Exhibit," p. 20.

[9] Wilkinson points out that non-white dolls were also frequently labeled as piccaninny, see "The Doll Exhibit," p. 23.
[10] Charmaine A. Nelson, Representing The Black Female Subject in Western Art (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 58.
[11] Pearl McCarthy, "Dorothy Stevens: Toronto Artist Known for Work in Portraits," Toronto Globe and Mail, Thursday, 27 November 1952, p. 12.
[12] The following Canadian artists are named as travellers to various islands of the tropics: Yvonne McKague Housser, Cleeve Horne, Isabel McLaughlin, Leonard Brooks, York Wilson, Jack Bush, Gordon Macnamara, Walter Yarwood, Gladys Montgomery, and Pauline Harris.
See: Pearl McCarthy, "Canadian Painters Devoting More Attention to the Tropics," Toronto Globe and Mail, Thursday, 12 May 1951, p. 10.
[13] McCarthy, "Dorothy Stevens," p. 12.
[14] A well-established portraitist of her time, Stevens' work was publicly exhibited throughout Canada. She was represented at the *Toronto Art Gallery* (now the *Art Gallery of Ontario*) and the *National Art Gallery of Canada*, see "Stevens, Dorothy" Canadian Women Artists History Initiative, http://cwahi.concodia/ca/sources/artists/displayArtist.php?ID_artist=159 (date of last access 23 November 2013)
[15] Nelson, Representing, p. 24.
[16] See Lisa Ramsay, "You Splash Plenty of Colour Around," MacLean's Magazine ,1 July 1950, p. 48.
[17] Nelson, Representing, p 35.
[18] Bhabha, "The Other Question," p. 75.
[19] For a reproduction of the image see: D. G. W. McCrae, The Arts and Crafts of Canada (Toronto: The MacMillan Company of Canada Limited, 1944). No further information on the work was provided or found elsewhere in my research.
[20] See for example, another work by Stevens, Child in Banana Grove (n.d.), discussed in McCarthy, "Dorothy Stevens Exhibits Bright Haitian Studies," Toronto Globe and Mail, 24 November 1951. Research did not yield a reproduction of this image.
[21] Bhabha, "The Other Question," p. 81.
[22] Nelson, Representing, p. 38.
[23] Nelson, Representing, p. 38.
[24] Nelson, Representing, p. 39.
[25] Nelson, Representing, p. 32.
[26] Nelson, Representing, p. 32.
[27] As a source that suggests that Clytie was a friend of the Heward family cook see: Letter from Colonel R. S. McLaughlin to H.O McCurry, Director of the National Gallery of Canada, 19 July 1948.
[28] Situated within Heward's body of artistic production, Clytie operates as a very moderately exoticized image. Other images by Heward that portray overtly exoticized and sexualized black girls and women include Negress with Flower (n.d.), Dark Girl (1935), and Negress with Sunflowers (n.d.).
[29] Bhabha, "The Other Question," p. 72.
[30] Nelson, Representing, pp. 31-32.
[31] Nelson defines collective narcissism as a kind of "endemic self-love that becomes destructive" to the extent that it "impedes one's ability to see, engage with and to feel caring or love for that which is perceived to be different from the self". Nelson, Representing, p. 79,
[32] Nelson defines the Jezebel type as the black female body positioned within the realm of the sublime in order to be ably portrayed as overtly sexualized, well beyond the limits of artistic propriety.
See: Charmaine Nelson, " 'Coloured Nude': Fetishization, Disguise, Dichotomy," (Montreal: MA, Art History Department, Concordia University, 1995), p. 41.
[33] Nelson, Representing, p. 66.
[34] Charmaine Nelson, Through An-other's Eyes: White Canadian Artists - Black Female Subjects (Oshawa: Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 1998), p. 7. "High yellow" is described as a term for a light-skinned black person, but also indicates the upward shift in class and social status of the subject.
[35] For a thorough examination of Dorothy Stevens' Coloured Nude see: Nelson, " 'Coloured Nude'," p. 8
[36] Housser also constructed racial types of other marginalized populations in her artwork. See: Indian Girl (1936) reproduced in Paul Duval, A Vision of Canada (Toronto: Clark and Irwin, 1973), p. 154.
[37] Eliana Stratica-Mihail, Evelyn Pleasant, Clark Street, Montreal by Louis Muhlstock, p. 1.

[38] See Charles Hill's interview with Louis Muhlstock, Canadian Painting in the Thirties Exhibition Records, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, 15 September 1973, for Muhlstock's description of his financial struggles as an artist.
[39] Nelson, Representing, p. 58.
[40] Nelson, Representing, p. 32.
[41] Nelson, Representing, p. 182.
[42] Nelson, Representing, p. 37.
[43] Nelson, Representing, p. 37.
[44] Nelson, Representing, p. 59.
[45] For more on the culture of childhood see: Neil Sutherland, Growing Up: Children in English Canada from the Great War to the Age of Television (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).
[46] Christopher Hume, "How white artists treat Black Women as the 'other': Show Considers 200 years of Canadian Art" Toronto Star, issue 67, Thursday, 25 February 1999, p. 1.

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Interview, Charles Hill with Louis Muhlstock, Canadian Painting in the Thirties Exhibition Records, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, 15 September 1973.

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**PLATE LIST:**

**Pictured**

Figure 1: Dorothy Stevens, Amy (c. 1930), Oil on canvas, 86.8 x 76.4 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada.

Figure 3: Prudence Heward, Clytie (1938), Oil on canvas, 101.8 x 66.6 cm, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, Canada.

**Not Pictured**

Figure 2: Dorothy Stevens, Piccaninny (n.d.), print, The Arts and Crafts of Canada Toronto The MacMillan Company of Canada Limited, 1944

Figure 4: Dorothy Stevens, High Yellow (n.d.), Oil on canvas, 64.0 x 64.0 cm, Art Gallery of Hamilton, Hamilton, Canada.

Figure 5: Dorothy Stevens, Coloured Nude (c. 1933), Oil on canvas, 86.4 x 76.2 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada.

Figure 6: Yvonne McKague Housser, Negro Girl with Red Flower (1941), Oil on board, 32.7 x 40.5 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada.

Figure 7: François Malépart de Beaucourt, Portrait of a Negro Slave (1786), Oil on canvas, 72.7 x 58.5 cm, McCord Museum of Canadian History, Montreal, Canada.

Figure 8: Louis Muhlstock, Evelyn Pleasant, St. Famille Street, Montreal (1937), Oil on panel, 53.75 x 45.0 cm, Private collection, Montreal, Canada.

# LIFE IMITATING ART:
# PAULINE JOHNSON'S PERFORMANCE AND EMBODIMENT OF THE "AUTHENTIC INDIAN"

CERIAN PHILLIPS

E. Pauline Johnson, who would later go by the Mohawk name Tekahionwake, has been an interesting individual to study for both art historians and literary critics because of her many complicated dual relationships. Her ancestry, which is a mix of British and Mohawk descent, her career as poetess and performance artist, and her public reception as both an advocate for Native rights and Canadian nationalism, has caused scholars to discuss and continuously re-evaluate her identity and contribution to the literary, artistic, and socio-political world. This paper, however, will discuss the complex identity E. Pauline Johnson created for herself as a performance artist in the mid 1890's and the equally complex relationship towards her audience at that time. By addressing the visual and aesthetic components of her performances, her acceptance as an "authentic Indian" by her viewers, and Johnson's own compliance to take on this role, this paper will argue that the more Johnson performed and embodied the "authentic Indian," the more her performance became a reality. This led to a severe limitation in her actions and speeches henceforth forced to fit the model of the "authentic Indian," which she and her viewers had constructed. In the way that life imitated art, Pauline Johnson became the "romanticized Indian" she feigned to be, limited, restricted, and embodying the voice of a "dying race".

Fig. 1: Pauline Johnson, Pauline Johnson's Performance Costume (1892), Fabric, Museum of Vancouver Collection: AG 27a-b, Vancouver, Canada.

E. Pauline Johnson had an interesting and diverse career. Though most critics of her time and present-day historians would identify her as poetess or stage performer, Margaret Atwood recently designated her as "what would now be known as a performance-artist."[1] This reinterpretation of her work "for modern sensitivities'' is attributed to Johnson because she recited original work in a performative manner.[2] Though the term "performance artist" did not yet exist in her time, reviewers described her with the words "entertainer," "dramatic," and

"reciter" alongside "poet" in an attempt to differentiate her work solely from poetry.[3] It is this inability to categorize her work that has kept her audiences and present-day historians intrigued.

As a writer in the 1880's, Johnson wrote poetry for several different columns, including the Gems of Poetry (New York) and the Week (Toronto), as her popularity grew.[4] Historians Carole Gerson and Veronica Strong-Boag argue that, despite later claims to emphasize her "Nativeness,'' Johnson's early works "drew very lightly on her Native background" and very few of her poems suggested her ethnicity and race to her readers.[5] It was not until she took to the stage as a performance artist that her identity as half Mohawk and half English took on some more prominence. As Gerson and Boag suggest, her hesitancy to identify herself as Native to her public lasted until late 1892 when she "decided to emphasize the Indigenous content of her poems by assembling an Indian costume" to be worn during her performance [fig. 1].[6] In doing so, Johnson aligned herself with other Native performers who were familiar to many of her audiences and created an image for herself that focused on her Mohawk background all the while playing down her English roots.[7]

By adopting her new costume, Johnson also provided her audience with a visual stimulus that dramatized and sensationalized the exotic, the Native, the Other. Her costume, which was an amalgamation of various "Indian" pieces satisfied the audiences' notion of the "authentic Indian". In a letter addressed to editor W. D. Lighthall in Montreal on 18 September 1892, Johnson exclaims her urgency in acquiring a costume that will reflect her "Nativeness" for her performances. She wrote:

> "For my Indian poems, I am trying to get an Indian dress to recite in, and it is the most difficult thing in the world. Now I know you know what is feminine, so you can tell me if the 'Indian stores' in Montreal are real Indian stores, or is their stuff manufactured? I want a pair of moccasins, worked either in colored moose hair, porcupine quills, or very heavily with fine colored beads, have you ever seen any such there? I have written to Chief Jacks about getting some bead work done on my dress, and to several N. W. Reserves, for bears teeth necklaces, etc. (...) My season begins Oct 20th, so I must have my costume by that date, but I want one that is made up of feminine work.[8]

From this letter, it is clear that Johnson was self-aware of the constructed image she would be performing, borrowing from several different tribes and "Indian stores" in Montreal to create one generic image of a Native. While this constructed image seems evident considering the manner in which her costume was acquired, it may not have been so obvious to nineteenth-century white European audiences who harboured the imaginary ideal of the "authentic Indian". This constructed image appealed to white Europeans who either refused to or could not acknowledge the modern "*civilized* Aboriginals, (...) whose cultures and blood had, by this time, intermingled with that of the Europeans.'"[9] Despite the fact that Johnson, a Native nineteenth-century woman, did not own any Native clothing herself, white European audiences were more willing to accept her as a performer in Native attire rather than her non-Native evening dresses. One critic expressed his disappointment in seeing Johnson change half-way though her

performance from "the strikingly picturesque Indian dress (...) to modern evening costume" which he felt had been used to fulfill the "exigencies of a popular performance."[10] The constructed "Indian" dress was accepted by audiences as authentic, while the evening dress was interpreted as the real costume. By constructing a costume for herself, Johnson inadvertently limited how she would be henceforth visually perceived and received by the public.

Audiences preferred Johnson's performance of the Native because she was easily identified as such. While previous, costume-less recitals left her viewers uncertain about her identity, performances in which Johnson adopted her "Indian" costume not only confirmed audiences' pre-conceptions of the "authentic Indian" but also heightened their anxieties towards invisible minorities; non-whites who could pass for whites. Johnson's costume afforded her greater visibility as someone of mixed race, thus further titillating her audience. As Camille Nelson and Charmaine Nelson note in their introduction to Racism Eh?: A Critical Inter-Disciplinary Anthology of Race and Racism in Canada (2004), visual markers "which were used to differentiate bodies'' were an important concern in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[11] In order to identify people who were not of Western European descent, "the visibility of corporeal signs'' was crucial.[12] Johnson, being half-white and half-Native had no such visible corporeal signs that would differentiate her from other White Europeans as she was marked with European facial features and a light complexion [fig. 2]. Johnson's costume then, not only served as an assertion of her Native heritage, but also as a visual marker of "otherness" for her white viewers.

The "authentic Indian" costume performed an imitation or recreation of White European's perceptions of Native people. In his postcolonial text "Of Mimicry and Man,'' Homi K. Bhabha poses a theory on colonial mimicry and the colonizers' desire to recreate or mimic a representation of the colonized as "a reformed, recognizable Other'' and "*a subject of a difference, that is almost the same but not quite*.''[13] He goes on to argue that "the success of colonial appropriation depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure, so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace.''[14] As we have seen, Johnson's constructed costume did make use of various inappropriate objects as well as performed a "recognizable Other" which appealed to her audience. Furthermore, her visual representation was both similar enough to white Europeans - she had light skin and recited English poetry - as well as being different enough to create an "othering" of her person. As follows, her Native advocacy did not pose a threat because White Europeans felt she was under their control. Although Johnson may have felt like she had control and used this form of reverse mimicry as a way to resist the controls and limitations of the colonizer, her socio-political messages were not heard nor received by her contemporaries. For example, one of her performances titled Ojistoh tells the tale of a Mohawk wife, who feigns love for the Huron chief who plotted and killed her husband, in order to avenge the death of her husband; the revenge scene read as follows;

"He cut the cords; we ceased our maddened haste.
I wound my arms about his tawny waist;

My hand crept up the buckskin of his belt;
His knife hilt my burning palm I felt;
One hand caressed his cheek, the other drew
The weapon softly - 'I love you, love you,'
I whispered, 'love you as my life.'
And - buried in his back his scalping knife."

Since the narrative is of two Native groups, the Mohawk and the Huron, white audiences could not read this tale as anything other than "purely Indian."[15] As one critic noted, despite the reoccurring theme of "the mournful resentment against the dominant people" in other poems, which treat Native subjects, "In Ojistoh, however, the all-conquering pale-face has no part."[16] I would suggest, however, that Johnson presented this story as an "Indian" tale because reciting a narrative, which involved revenge on a white colonizer would involve too much political risk. Furthermore, the wife of "Ojistoh" feigning love for the Huron chief, mirrors Johnson feigning love for the "all-conquering pale-face'" which has murdered her people and usurped their land. Through the adoption of her costume and her performances, Johnson continues to feign her way into the acceptance of her mostly white audience. However, she continues to be limited by her audience's reception; the audience will continue to read her performances as they want to, in this way removing their guilt and responsibility, so as to continue to dominate Johnson and other Native performers.

Audiences were comforted by the fact that Johnson was visibly Native, that she was similar enough and spoke their language, and by the fact that she mirrored their portrayal of the "authentic Indian" mourning the inevitable fate of the "dying race". As read above, Johnson was not perceived as a vengeful Native who put blame on the colonizers but rather as one of the accepting and "sweet minstrels of Canada."[17] In the introduction to Johnson's text Shagganappi, Johnson is quoted by Ernest Thompson Seton as saying that Shagganappi tells the tale of "a proud race, conscious that it has been crushed by numbers, that its day is over and its heritage gone forever."[18] Johnson uses white understandings of the "dying race" which was "envisioned as a marker of Euro-Canadian history and progress" by nineteenth-century colonizers.[19] Although her voice is mournful and bitter, it is not vengeful but rather accepting of the inevitable fate of her people. As a Native woman, Johnson knew very well that her people were not "gone forever." She adopted, what Mary Louise Pratt has called "autoethnographic expression" to represent her Native heritage. The term "autoethnographic expression" is used by Pratt to express "instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that *engage with* the colonizer's own terms."[20] By representing her people as dying and gone, Johnson further played into her performance as an "authentic Indian" and garnered the sympathy of her audience.

Johnson's continuous compliance with comforting her audience led to limitations of her later work. Critics have argued that Johnson's primary aim was political action and that she utilized subtle forms of resistance in order to gain acceptance from her audience only to later confront them with socio-political issues. Gerson and Boag maintain that "whether the dramatic

effectiveness of Johnson's performance overrode her content" is ultimately an unanswerable question.[21] However, this essay aims to answer exactly that question by reviewing responses from her contemporaries. As art historian Mary Elizabeth Leighton has argued, her audience's and "reviewer's aesthetic acceptance of her work came at the cost of their political engagement."[22] Once Johnson tried to include a more explicit performance of socio-political inequalities of Native people, viewers felt confronted and unwilling to accept her message. Her political stances, in their view, did not match up with the construct and their perceived image of the "authentic Indian" or the last mourning voice of the "dying race". Following the insertion of more political messages into her performances, reviewers criticized her for turning "what should be dramatic into a melodrama, and what should be poetic into polemic."[23] Her audience was not interested in hearing what they deem a "melodrama" of Native injustices and in this way limited her voice.

Fig. 2: Edwards Bros., Pauline Johnson (1902), photograph: silver gelatine print, 14 x 10 cm, City of Vancouver Archives: AM54-S4-: Port P1633, Vancouver, Canada.

Furthermore, by taking on this image of the "authentic Indian" and creating one generic and stereotypical representation of Native people, Johnson negated the various complexities and heterogeneity of Native people. Having acquired an extensive amount of popularity from her white viewers, Johnson was, in the eyes of her viewers, the accepted representation of Native people as a whole. Therefore, not only did Johnson limit her own voice but also gave her viewer's the impression that by listening to her performance, they addressed the concerns of all Native people, thus "forestall[ing] the necessity to engage other Native voices."[24]

By feigning an identity as an "authentic Indian" Johnson comforted her white viewers and gained their acceptance. Although, this feigning of identity might have served as resistance to colonial pressures and control (an infiltration from within), Johnson still endured the limitations imposed on her by her colonial audience. She performed the act so often that, in her

dominantly white audience's eyes, she became the act she was performing. Limitations were made evident by the way in which audiences received or accepted her "Indian" dress as authentic and rejected her evening dresses as being too costume-like. Furthermore, audiences limited her advocacy of Native rights by accepting texts which seemingly displaced white colonial blame all the while rejecting those texts which they felt overly dramatized Native-European relationship. Her voice then, as a Native advocate was continuously drowned out by her audience reception. Any attempt to confront her audience with socio-political actualities left the viewers feeling threatened and defensive. Johnson's visual performance of the "authentic Indian" overshadowed the political context of the textual components in her performances. It is only through a postcolonial lens that her textual contributions to Native advocacy have been fully embraced and evaluated.

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**Notes:**

[1] Margaret Atwood, Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature (New York: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp.91-92.
[2] Carole Gerson and Veronica Strong-Boag, "Unique Figure on the Borderland: Literature, Performance, and Reception," Paddling her own Canoe: The Times and Texts of E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), pp. 105-106.
[3] Gerson and Strong-Boag, "Unique Figure," p. 105.
[4] Marylin J. Rose, "Johnson, Emily Pauline," Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/johnson_emily_pauline_14E.html. (date of last access 4 April 2014)
[5] Gerson and Strong-Boag, "Unique Figure," p. 101.
[6] Gerson and Strong-Boag, "Unique Figure," p. 109.
[77] Gerson and Strong-Boag, "Unique Figure," p. 109.
[8] Letter, Pauline Johnson to W.D. Lighthall, 18 September 1892, MURBSC, Lighthall Papers.
[9] Kent Monkman, "Trapper of Men," Information Plaque, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal, 2006.
[10] Hector Charlesworth, "Baton and Buckskin," VP, issue 486, 6 October 1894.
[11] Camille A. Nelson and Charmaine A. Nelson, "Introduction," Racism Eh?: A Critical Inter-Disciplinary Anthology of Race and Racism in Canada (Concord, Ontario: Captus Press/ Captus University Publications, 2004), p. 9.
[12] Nelson and Nelson, "Introduction," p. 9.
[13] Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," October, vol. 28, Spring 1984, p. 126.
[14] Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man," p.127.
[15] Anonymous, "Pauline Johnson's Poems," The Globe (1844-1936), 3 August 1895.
[16] "Pauline Johnson Poems".
[17] "Pauline Johnson Poems".
[18] Pauline, Johnson, The Shagganappi, intro by Ernest Thompson Seton, (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1913), p. 9.
[19] Rachelle Dickenson, "The Stories Told: Indigenous Art Collections, Museums, and National Identities," Montreal: MA, Department of Art History and Communication Studies, McGill University, 2005), pp. 20-21.
[20] Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes (London; New York: Routledge, 1992), p.7.
[21] Gerson and Boag, "Paddling her Own Canoe," p. 115.
[22] Mary Elizabeth Leighton, "Performing Pauline Johnson: Representations of the 'Indian Poetess' in the Periodical Press, 1892-1895," Essays on Canadian Writing, vol. 65, Fall 1998, p. 157.
[23] Hector Charlesworth, "Review of 'The White Wampun'," Canadian Magazine, p. 479.
[24] Leighton, "Performing Pauline Johnson," p.143.

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**PLATE LIST:**

Figure 1: Pauline Johnson, Pauline Johnson's Performance Costume (1892), Fabric, Museum of Vancouver Collection: AG 27a-b, Vancouver, Canada.

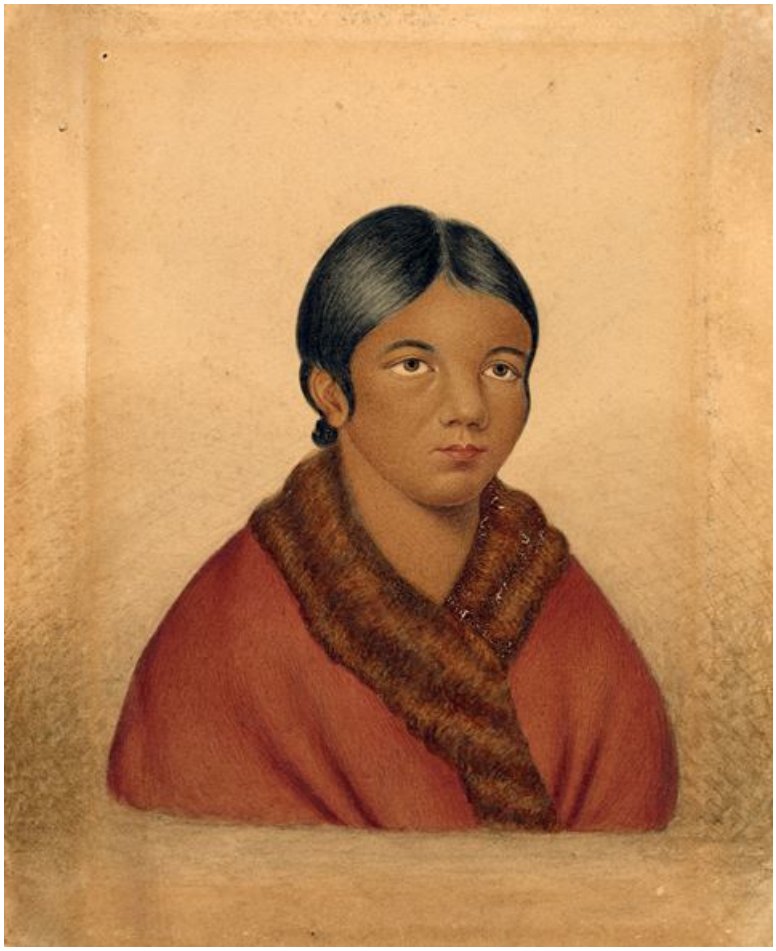
Figure 2: Edwards Bros., Pauline Johnson (1902), photograph: silver gelatine print, 14 x 10 cm, City of Vancouver Archives: AM54-S4-: Port P1633, Vancouver, Canada.

# WILLIAM GOSSE'S SHANAWDITHIT: ETHNOGRAPHIC OBJECT *AND* MARGINALIZED SUBJECT

JESSICA WALSH

This paper examines William Gosse's paintings of Shanawdithit, an aboriginal woman widely believed to be the last of the Beothuk people who inhabited the island of Newfoundland [fig. 1]. Picking up from Matthew Sparke's postcolonial analysis of Shanawdithit's maps,[1] this paper asks whether the colonial refusal to endorse Shanawdithit's Native cartography as accurate was part of a broader colonial attitude that also objectified Shanawdithit through visual representation. The paper follows a postcolonial feminist methodology[2] to answer this larger question by way of several focused research questions: "Who was Shanawdithit?"; "Under what conditions were the Gosse paintings produced?"; "Are the paintings works of ethnography or portraiture?"; "How do they relate to other portraits of marginalized subjects?"; and "What do the paintings reveal and/or hide about Shanawdithit?".

Fig. 1: William Gosse, Lady Henrietta Martha Hamilton, Demasduit (Mary March) (1819), paint on paper, 7.7 x 6.5 cm, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, ON, Canada



Research into these questions suggests that rather than absolute portraits, Gosse's paintings of Shanawdithit are a hybrid between an ethnographic sketch and a portrait of a marginalized female subject. Moreover, Gosse objectifies Shanawdithit through his artistic approach, continuing the tradition described by Sparke of treating Shanawdithit, as well as her words and drawings, as a disembodied ethnographic object. To prove this, the paper will begin with a brief history of the Beothuk and situate Shanawdithit as a marginalized female within it. Next, the paper will address the history of the paintings. From here, I will explain why the paintings should be categorized as straddling ethnography and portraiture. Finally, I will demonstrate how the paintings resemble portraits of

other marginalized female subjects and help to produce Shanawdithit's marginalization, preventing the viewer from gaining a deep appreciation of Shanawdithit as a subject of visual representation.

**The Beothuk**

The Beothuk resided on the island of Newfoundland for over a thousand years. They lived a nomadic lifestyle, moving seasonally to fish, hunt and gather.[3] Europeans called them "Red Indians" because they covered themselves with red ochre for protection from the weather.[4]

Beginning in the sixteenth century, fishing ships from Spain, France, Portugal, and England visited Newfoundland yearly as part of the European migratory fishery.[5] Over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, increasing numbers of English and French settled in Newfoundland as the seasonal fishery gradually gave way to permanent settlements. During this time, other aboriginal groups also lived on the island.[6] Yet despite the presence of Europeans and other aboriginal inhabitants, the Beothuk kept a mostly isolated and traditional existence.[7] There were no formalized trade agreements between the Beothuk and Europeans.[8]

The Beothuk began to retreat in the 1700's to the areas around Notre Dame Bay, the Exploits River, and Red Indian Lake in response to English encroachment on Beothuk territory. Violence between the English and Beothuk became common as the English expanded hunting, trapping, and fishing activities, threatening Beothuk sources of livelihood. These encounters were inequitable: the English greatly outnumbered the Beothuk, who also lacked guns to protect themselves.[9] Cyclical violence and murder by the English combined with starvation and suffering from European diseases such as tuberculosis, caused mass deaths of Beothuk.[10] By the early 1800's, very few Beothuk remained.

**Shanawdithit**

Shanawdithit was born around 1801. The many hardships she endured in her youth reveal her status as a marginalized aboriginal female within the context of colonial Newfoundland. Shanawdithit was shot on more than one occasion: once in the back by a MicMac[11] man and another time by the English in her hand and leg.[12] She also witnessed the capture of her aunt, Demasduit, by a group led by John Peyton Jr., justice of the peace for the Bay of Exploits. In that same incident, she helplessly watched the murder of Demasduit's husband, who had tried to prevent his wife's capture, and saw the English abandon the couple's baby to perish.[13] Tragically, Shanawdithit also reported having a lover who froze to death while gathering food.[14]

Paradoxically, colonists became interested in protecting and documenting what remained of Beothuk culture once they realized the impending total decimation of the Beothuk population. A Scottish anthropologist called William Cormack led this mission. As part of this mission, two English furriers captured Shanawdithit, her mother, and her sister in 1823.[15] Colonists gave her the nickname "Nancy April" after the month of her capture.[16] The government originally asked John Peyton Jr. to return the women to the interior. However, Shanawdithit's mother and sister died of consumption soon after a failed attempt to return.[17]

Shanawdithit then worked as an unpaid servant in Peyton's home for six years in Twillingate. Peyton's motive was not completely altruistic. He charged the government for her upkeep.[18] While Shanawdithit worked in exchange for board, features of her living situation imply that she would not have chosen to remain. Peyton's house had been the gathering site for Beothuk killing sprees, including the one that resulted in the death of Demasduit's husband.[19] As well, the traditional nomadism of the Beothuk suggests that living for six years in the Peyton house could have felt like "bodily imprisonment."[20] Moreover, while no overt evidence exists that Shanawdithit was subjected to sexual violence at the Peyton house, Sparke importantly highlights that there is equally no refutation of this possibility.[21]

The anthropologist Cormack sent for Shanawdithit to come live with him in St. John's in the fall of 1828.[22] He interviewed Shanawdithit about her people while she lived there and she sketched multiple drawings of Beothuk traditions for him. Again, Shanawdithit's liberty was restricted in this living arrangement. She was Cormack's object of study and his treatment of her may have been contemptuous. On almost all of Shanawdithit's sketches Cormack wrote, "Nancy is a bad girl."[23] Shanawdithit was also very sick while she lived with Cormack. She died of consumption on 6 June 1829 in hospital in St. John's.

As with other oppressed subjects,[24] Shanawdithit's death was treated as an ethnographic event. For the colonial mind, races existed in a hierarchy that celebrated whiteness and devalued other races as subhuman and as objects of scientific inquiry.[25] In the case of Shanawdithit's death, a doctor studied her skull and found it contained "certain peculiarities."[26] The doctor presented Shanawdithit's skull to the *Royal College of Physicians* in London, who then transferred it to the *Royal College of Surgeons* in 1838.[27] The skull was destroyed in the World War II bombings of London. Thus, Shanawdithit was treated as devalued and subhuman even after her death.

**William Gosse's Paintings of Shanawdithit**

William Gosse came to Newfoundland in 1822 from England to join his uncle's firm Gosse & Ledgard.[28] He worked as a professional artist from sometime in the 1830's until 1845. In 1841, he painted two watercolour miniature paintings of a Beothuk woman. The paintings portray an unsmiling Beothuk woman dressed in a traditional robe against a neutral background. The two watercolours are identical aside from a slight variation in the lower left side.[29] Both are inscribed on the back. One reads: "A female Red Indian of Nfld. 'Mary March' that was captured in the Month of March 1819. - Painted by W. Gosse at St Johns Nfld. July '41. Fm an original by Lady Hamilton, May 1821."[30] The other reads: "A female Red Indian named Mary March, painted by W. Gosse, July 1841, from an original by Lady Hamilton, May 1821."[31]

Whether Gosse's paintings actually depict Shanawdithit is disputed. We know that Cormack asked for a likeness of Shanawdithit to be made once she arrived in St. John's in 1828.[32] However, there is no evidence of earlier portraits of Shanawdithit being made, and Gosse's portraits were created in 1841, twelve years after Shanawdithit's death. Nonetheless, it is

possible that Gosse may have seen Shanawdithit and even sketched her while she lived in St. John's, especially given the great interest in recording Shanawdithit's life at the time.[33]

The inscriptions prove that Gosse modeled his paintings after Lady Hamilton's painting of Demasduit, also known as Mary March [fig. 1].[34] It is obvious that Gosse employs the same clothing, hairstyle and "angle of portrayal" as Lady Hamilton did in her depiction of Demasduit.[35] Yet historians have noted differences between the Hamilton and Gosse paintings that support the assertion that Gosse painted Shanawdithit. As historian Ingeborg Marshall describes,

> "Though the settings of all three miniatures are alike, Lady Hamilton portrayed Demasduit as a sensitive young woman with a mild and pleasing expression and a spark of liveliness, while the Beothuk woman in Gosse's watercolours is more stolid and slightly older, with broader facial features, her mouth is firmly closed."[36]

Despite the reference to Mary March in the inscriptions, it is believed that Gosse intentionally painted the features of the woman in his paintings differently from the Hamilton painting, suggesting that he painted Shanawdithit.[37] As well, after his return to England, Gosse may have told publishers that the paintings were of Shanawdithit - the English magazine Mission Field published a reproduction of one of the paintings in 1856 and described the subject as the last surviving Beothuk.[38] From this point, the paper will assume that Shanawdithit was Gosse's subject to provide a deeper art historical analysis.

## Gosse's Shanawdithit: Ethnographic Object *and* Marginalized Subject

Analyzing Gosse's paintings in light of their historical and social context as well as their colour and form suggest that they are a cross between the genres of portraiture and ethnography. Portraits seek to depict a veritable likeness of a real person, the subject, and to portray that person in his/her particular social and historical setting.[39] Ethnographic images, on the other hand, aim to scientifically document an object for the purpose of gathering information about a culture. Similar to Paul Kane's mixed ethnographic and artistic mission in rendering aboriginal subjects,[40] Gosse's portraits of Shanawdithit fall somewhere between these genres.

## Ethnographic Features of Gosse's Paintings

The paintings have many ethnographic qualities. This is not surprising considering the hype around studying the Beothuk to urgently document how they looked and lived before contact.[41] Gosse chose a plain background for both paintings, removed of context and reminiscent of a plain shelf upon which an object could be laid. This background thus demonstrates the ethnographic backdrop of the paintings; if Gosse wanted to convey Shanawdithit's personality, he could have chosen to situate her within her Beothuk landscape or another meaningful setting.

As well, Gosse painted Shanawdithit in historically specific traditional clothing. The Beothuk needed warm clothing as protection from extreme weather and wore caribou hide fur-side down for extra warmth.[42] Beothuk women wore robes that were crossed at the chest and trimmed with beaver and otter fur.[43] In Gosse's paintings we see the fur-trimmed robe crossed at

the front, visual documentation of Beothuk clothing. As well, Gosse tints the robe and fur a reddish colour, documentation of the Beothuk practice of covering clothing with red ochre.[44] Finally, Shanawdithit's clothing is not a mix of aboriginal and colonial dress, a feature of some colonial-era portraits of aboriginal subjects.[45] The focus on traditional dress alone suggests that Gosse aimed to represent Shanawdithit as a relic rather than a subject capable of modernizing and donning European garments.[46]

Another indication that Gosse may have had an ethnographic objective is his decision to model his works on Lady Hamilton's portrait. Did Gosse assume that all Beothuk or aboriginal women looked alike? This would not have been an outlandish suggestion considering that aboriginals only saw themselves as a collective after the arrival of Europeans.[47] Gosse also painted one of Shanawdithit's eyes as drooping. It is unclear whether this was a failing of his level of skill, to reflect the likeness of the sitter or to document the "oddities" of aboriginal bodies.

**A Portrait of Shanawdithit: Marginalized Beothuk Woman**

Notwithstanding these ethnographic features, Gosse's paintings equally share qualities with portraits of other marginalized female subjects. These subjects generally lacked control over their image and were depicted based on stereotypes.[48] Shanawdithit's "lifeless" expression in the painting fits with a quote from an 1836 magazine that described Shanawdithit as the Native "who never laughed".[49] The artist's rendering of Shanawdithit's supposed personality suggests this work may have attempted to be a true likeness. However, Euro-Canadians had widely-held beliefs that aboriginals had no sense of humour, making it possible that the artist may have just added this expression based on his own ignorance.[50]

Still, there were multiple reasons for Shanawdithit to appear sorrowful through her facial expression and distant gaze. Shanawdithit lived through epistemic violence, so common to Native spaces.[51] She witnessed murders of family members and mass deaths of her people, was captured by the English, suffered from consumption, had questionable freedom as an unpaid servant for a white family, and may have been subjected to sexual violence. As well, if Gosse did sketch Shanawdithit, it would likely have been when she was living as Cormack's ethnographical case study. Therefore, her expression may reflect her true feelings about being in this marginalized position.

It was also common for marginalized female subjects of portraits to be depicted in poses or in clothing that were not self-representative. It is possible that Shanawdithit wore the outfit painted by Gosse. However, it is ironic that when Shanawdithit drew a Beothuk woman for Cormack, she drew a lively woman dancing in fringed clothing that evoked pride and movement [fig. 3]. Shanawdithit was an artist and her drawing hints that she saw her fellow women as joyful. Yet Gosse's subdued paintings hide these realities. Similar to how Shanawdithit's maps were ignored by the English as inaccurate according to European Cartesian standards and treated as artefacts of a dying race, Gosse failed to capture Shanawdithit's artistry and humanity.

Another characteristic of portraits of marginalized subjects is the failure to include the names of sitters of colour and female subjects in portrait titles.[52] Gosse's paintings form part of this tradition. Both engravings make note of the gender and race of the sitter—"female" and "Red Indian"—before anything else. While a name is mentioned, that of "Mary March," this is Demasduit's European nickname that refers to her capture by the English. Thus, this is not the true name of either Beothuk woman and the portrait hides Shanawdithit's true identity.

## Conclusion

Taken collectively, these observations show how Gosse's paintings offer both an ethnographic reading of Shanawdithit as well as a portrait of her as a marginalized subject. Moreover, they demonstrate how the paintings extend the contemptuous treatment directed toward Shanawdithit's maps to her visual representation through Gosse's male colonial eyes. By arriving at these findings through questions rooted in postcolonial feminist methodology, this paper was able to look beyond Gosse's image to begin uncovering a clearer image of Shanawdithit as a true subject rather than passive sitter/object. Certainly, as Sparke instructs, we can never replace an authentic Beothuk voice.[53] However, asking these questions is a start toward piecing together a fairer representation of this important Beothuk woman.

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**Notes:**

[1] Matthew Sparke ,"Mapped Bodies and Disembodied Maps: (Dis)Placing Cartographic Struggle in Colonial Canada," Places through the Body, eds. Heidi J. Nast and Steve Pile (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 305. Sparke argues that Shanawdithit's maps, which depict bodies moving through space, challenge the abstract mapping of Newfoundland by colonists with a Native reinscription of history. His essay discusses how colonists dismissed Shanawdithit's maps for inaccuracy and how they treated her body as a passive object of imperial male gaze (p. 307).

[2] A postcolonial feminist art historical analysis considers the effects of the intersectionality of sex, gender, and race on art and looks beyond an artist's biography to assess works within their social and historical contexts. See Griselda Pollock, "About Canons /and Culture Wars," Differencing the Canon: Feminism and the Writing of Art's Histories (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 3.

[3] Ingeborg Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), p. 3.

[4] Sparke, "Mapped Bodies and Disembodied Maps," p. 306.

[5] "European Migratory Fishery," Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Web Site, Memorial University of Newfoundland, http://www.heritage.nf.ca/exploration/efishery.html (date of last access 21 February 2014). However, the first Europeans to arrive in Newfoundland were the Norse, who arrived circa 1000 CE. The next known European arrival was in 1497 when John Cabot landed in Bonavista, Newfoundland on behalf of England.

[6] Micmac from Cape Breton settled on the southern coast of the island and Montagnais from Labrador came to the north and west coasts to hunt and trap. Montagnais was a European name given by French colonists to describe members of the Innu people of the Quebec-Labrador peninsula. Since 1990, the Naskapi Montagnais Innu have chosen to identify with the name "Innu". Mark Nutall ed., "Innu," Encyclopedia of the Arctic, vols. 1, 2 and 3 (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 976; Innu Nation, Innu.ca (date of last access 25 September 2014)

[7] Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk, p. 3.

[8] Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk, p. 3.

[9] Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk, p. 3.

[10] Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk, p. 3; Sparke, "Mapped Bodies and Disembodied Maps," p. 306.

[11] "MicMac" was a European name given to the Mi'kmaq people indigenous to parts of present-day Atlantic Canada. "Mi'kmaq" is now the preferred name. Daniel Paul, We Were Not the Savages: A Mi'kmaq Perspective on the Collision between European and Native American Civilizations (Halifax, N.S.: Fernwood, 2000), p. 10

[12]Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk, p. 190.
[13] Winter, Shananditti: The Last of the Beothucks (North Vancouver: J.J. Douglas Ltd., 1975), p. 43; Sparke, "Mapped Bodies and Disembodied Maps," p. 317.
[14] Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk, p. 190.
[15] Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk, p. 185.
[16] Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk, p. 189.
[17] Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk, p. 187; Sparke, "Mapped Bodies and Disembodied Maps," p. 317. "Consumption" was the word used to describe tuberculosis in the nineteenth century. The disease was often fatal and symptoms included spitting, coughing, and fever. In 1882, a German bacteriologist named Robert Koch established the cause of "consumption" and renamed it "TB," short for the medical title for tuberculosis, *Tubercle Bacillus*. Helen Bynum, Spitting Blood: The History of Tuberculosis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 95-96.
[18] Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk, p. 189.
[19] Sparke, "Mapped Bodies and Disembodied Maps," p. 317.
[20] Sparke, "Mapped Bodies and Disembodied Maps," p. 317.
[21] Sparke, "Mapped Bodies and Disembodied Maps," p. 317.
[22] Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk, p. 20.
[23] Fiona Polack, "Reading Shanawdithit's Drawings: Transcultural Texts in the North American Colonial World," Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History, vol. 14, no. 3 (Winter 2013), Project MUSE database (date of last access 27 November 2013).
[24] Saartje Baartman, a young South African woman known by Europeans as the "Hottentot Venus," was put on display because Europeans were intrigued by her large buttocks and sexualized body. Following her premature death, a French doctor dissected her body and her genitalia were put on display in the *Museé de l'Homme*. See Lisa E. Farrington, "Reinventing Herself: The Black Female Nude," Woman's Art Journal, vol. 24, no. 2 (Autumn 2003-Winter 2004), pp. 184-185.
[25] Camille A. Nelson and Charmaine A. Nelson, "Introduction," Racism Eh? A Critical Inter-Disciplinary Anthology of Race and Racism in Canada, eds. Camille A. Nelson and Charmaine A. Nelson (Concord, Ontario: Captus Press/Captus University Publications, April 2004), pp. 8-9.
[26] Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk, p. 220. Dr. William Carson, a St. John's doctor who cared for Shanawdithit in her final days, conducted an autopsy on her body. After determining that her skull had "peculiarities," he sent it to the *Royal College of Physicians* in London for further study. The skull was then sent to the *Royal College of Surgeons* in 1938, but was soon after destroyed by a bomb during World War II. Ingeborg Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), p. 220.
[27] Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk, p. 220.
[28] Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk, p. 204.
[29] E-mail, Wade Greeley, History Collection Manager, Provincial Museum Division, The Rooms Corporation of Newfoundland and Labrador, to author, 25 November 2013.
[30] Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk, p. 205. Marshall notes that the year "1821" in the engravings should be 1819.
[31] Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk, p. 206.
[32] Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk, p. 204.
[33] Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk, p. 204.
[34] Lady Hamilton, the wife of the governor of Newfoundland at the time (Sir Charles Hamilton, 1818-23), painted Demasduit in 1819. See B.D. Fardy, Demasduit: Native Newfoundlander (St. John's: Robinson-Blackmore, 1988), pp. 73-76.
[35] Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk, p. 205.
[36] Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk, p. 205.
[37] Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk, p. 205.
[38] Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk, p. 205.
[39] Definition based on lectures notes from Charmaine Nelson, "Portraiture," Departmental Lecture Series, McGill University, Art History Department, Montreal, Canada 15 October 2013. However, the author notes that portraiture is not an easily defined term. See "Portraiture" Oxford Art Online,

http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T068853?q=portraiture&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit (date of last access 26 November 2013).

[40] An example of Paul Kane's blending of ethnography and portraiture is Paul Kane, Flathead woman with child (Caw-Wacham) (about 1848), oil on canvas, 75.7 x 63.2 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal, Canada. In this painting, Kane turns the subject's head to document her flattened forehead.

[41] Daniel Francis, The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992), pp. 23-24.

[42] Ingeborg Marshall, The Beothuk of Newfoundland: A Vanished People (St. John's: Breakwater, 1989), p. 30.

[43] Marshall, The Beothuk of Newfoundland, p. 30.

[44] Marshall, The Beothuk of Newfoundland, p. 30.

[45] Beth Fowkes Tobin, "Cultural Cross-Dressing in British America: Portraits of British Officers and Mohawk Warriors," Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth-Century British Painting (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 81.

[46] Francis, The Imaginary Indian, p. 59.

[47] Francis, The Imaginary Indian, p. 5.

[48] Farrington, "Reinventing Herself," p. 183.

[49] Marshall, A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk, p. 205.

[50] Francis, The Imaginary Indian, p. 85.

[51] Sparke, "Mapped Bodies and Disembodied Maps," p. 305.

[52] Charmaine Nelson, "Slavery, Portraiture and the Colonial Limits of Canadian Art History," Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 74.

[53] Sparke, "Mapped Bodies and Disembodied Maps," p. 310.

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**PLATE LIST:**

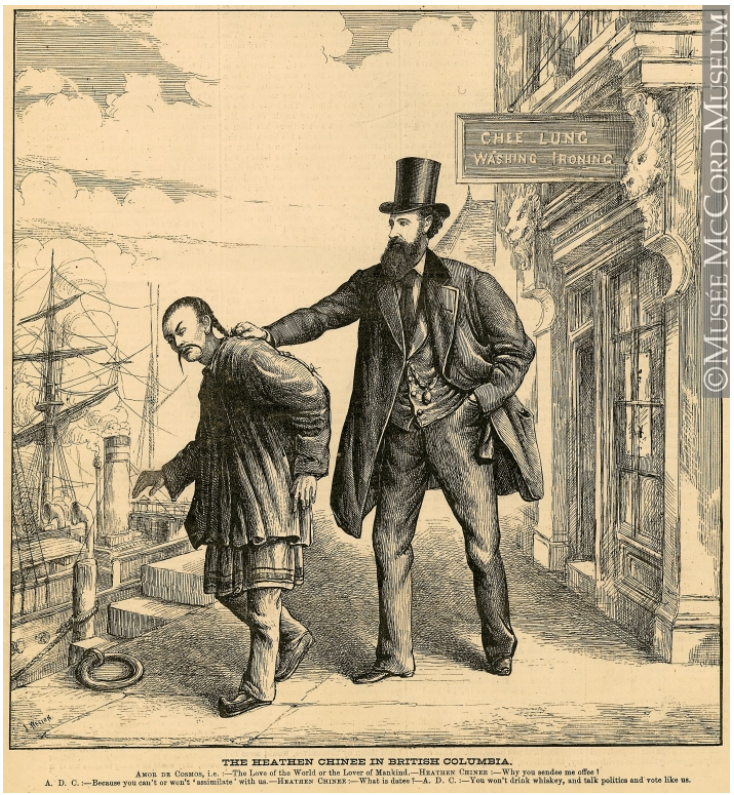
Figure 1: William Gosse, Lady Henrietta Martha Hamilton, Demasduit (Mary March) (1819), paint on paper, 7.7 x 6.5 cm, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, ON, Canada

# On Different Sides of the Studio: Chinese Male and Female Sitters in Montreal's Photographic Portraiture, Pre Exclusion Era (1885-1923)

Emily Wing

Photographic portraiture of Chinese women and men testifies to the precarious state of the Chinese family unit in Montreal long before the draconian Chinese Immigration Act of 1923. With the implementation of said act, no longer would the Head Tax be exclusively reserved for Chinese migrants, but rather the Canadian government rendered its message devoid of ambivalence. Through the prohibition of Chinese immigration to Canada, a perception of the Chinese as productive "agricultural implements"[1] - of use only for its construction and undesirable following its completion – was disseminated within and outside of the nation. Accordingly, after 1923, wives and family in China were debarred from settling in Canada, physically divorced from their husbands until the repeal of the act in 1947.[2] Although the narratives accounting for Chinese immigration to Canada almost unanimously ascribes the most brutal familial implications to the Exclusion Act, I argue that the familial portrait in photography from 1885-1923 - following the construction of the railway, yet preceding the Chinese Immigration Act - betrays a strident visual disunity between husband and wife. Unpacking this disunity entails going beyond formal analysis towards the politics of the Chinese populace as photography sitters in Montreal during the time frame under analysis.

Fig. 1: James Weston, The Heathen Chinee in British Columbia (1879), Ink on newsprint – photolithography, 39.5 x 27.9 cm, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal, Canada.




Although both male and female Chinese sitters would have physically inhabited common space in the context of getting their individual, conjugal or familial photographic portraits taken, they would have nevertheless constituted disparate embodiments of Other to Canada's predominantly white population. I offer a case study that examines studio photographs of the Chinese Canadian female, male and couple in Montreal's pre-exclusion era, which multifariously yet consistently imply familial discord within the Montreal Chinese community. I will map seven photographs onto the broader backdrop of nineteenth-century Canadian visual culture. The conflation of a specific


Fig. 2: Rostep (pseudonym of Owen Stapes), The Heathen Chinee (1900), Ink on paper, 24.5 x 15cm, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal, Canada.

type of masculinity and Chinese-ness within a plethora of pejorative cartoons offers an entry point into said visual culture, and furthermore exposes the lack of visual representations of Chinese women. With recourse to literary sources, which compensate for this lack by visual tropes to Chinese women, I will extrapolate the discourses at work within their photographic representations. The disparate visual histories attached to both Chinese women and men circumscribed their practices as sitters, yielding polarized performances between husband and wife - palpable dissonance preceding the implementation of the Exclusion Act.

It is beyond question that the constructions of the Chinese male in Canadian popular imagery constituted the backdrop or perhaps pretext for its living counterparts, the production of photographic portraits within studios.[3] Although Chinese male immigration to Canada began in 1858 in response to the gold rush in Fraser Valley, a singular influx occurred in the 1870's and 1880's owing to the construction of the *Canadian Pacific Railway* in 1885.[4] Canada not only exhibited anxiety toward this copious migration via policy, namely through the increasingly severe Head Tax, but also pictorially through the emergence of illustrated stereotypes, always "in excess of what can be empirically proved or logically construed."[5] These ruthless, reductive caricatures gave rise to instable Chinese types and thus somewhat quelled white Canadian anxiety by meeting their expectations for the Chinese Other. As G. Bruce Retallack cogently states in "Jack Canuck Meets John Chinaman," (2004) the majority of these images "presented Chinese subjects by contrasting normative white manhood with its perceived Chinese variant, using markers of difference that revolved around matter of size, posture, clothing and grooming."[6]

A few early examples include James Weston's Heathen Chinee in British Columbia (1889) [fig.1] and Rostap's (pseudonym of Owen Staples) similarly titled Heathen Chinee (1890) [fig.2].[7] Both pieces evoke yet trouble a stereotypical tradition founded on the conflation of gender and race: the Chinese male as always already a "bachelor," or "Chinaman". The power of this stereotype, however, is paradoxically born out of the incongruity between visual and linguistic traditions: cartoons depict the "Chinaman" as almost everything but male. Madge Pon and G. Bruce Retallack postulate a particularly feminized and childish "Chinaman," respectively, which although productive, proves equally reductive on account of the loaded and often


Fig. 3: Wm. Notman & Son, Henry Y. Lee (1920), Silver salts on glass - Gelatin dry plate process, 15 x 10 cm, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal, Canada.

contradictory visual iconographies of these cartoons. For instance, Weston and Rostap's images are both somewhat feminized, yet relate differently to the strategy of infantilization. Indeed, Weston's "Chinee" is significantly smaller in stature compared to the white man, further elongated by his top hat signifying heteronormative masculinity.[8] Conversely, Rostap's "Chinaman" is significantly taller than the white cowboy type facing him. Both figures possess long braided hair that would have presumably been coded as feminine in Canadian patriarchal culture, but that depicted in Rostap's cartoon is virile and robust in stature, gendered as male, and moreover, mature. Admittedly, Pon's feminized "Chinaman" elicits further questions in that it is culturally and scholastically acknowledged that the "Chinaman" was typified for its supposedly uncontrollable, perverse sexuality, a threat to women.[9] The simultaneous embodiment of - and threat to - the same identity elicits a theoretical cul-de-sac, which ultimately obscures Pon and Retallack's proposed stereotypes of the Chinese within the nineteenth-century Canadian imaginary.

Comparing Weston and Rostap's "Chinaman" reveals the lack of consistency intrinsic to the act of Othering, namely within the profusion of cartoons that seek to construct Chinese presence in Canada. Nevertheless, after analyzing dozens of these caricatures produced prior to the Exclusion Act, I must call attention to one recurring and thus remarkable feature: the illustration of Oriental - and in some cases - Chinese garb.[10] Although literally superficial, this trend is significant in a consideration of the colorless printing, which would have sought non-coloristic means as an alternative for "yellow face." It is thus productive to consider the ontology of skin within these cartoons as displaced from the epidermal membrane to its textile counterpart. In both Weston and Rostap's cartoons, the "Chinaman" wears an Orientalist rendition of traditional Chinese clothing: at the very least, a loose tunic with low-heeled banner shoes.[11] Accordingly, the "Chinaman's" "skin" evoked through exotic garb remains a forceful visual strategy of Othering amidst less coherent visual tropes. In light of the pervasiveness of these images, I claim that the stereotype of the "Chinaman" disseminated visually by rendering him oftentimes infantile and feminine, but predominantly *enveloped* differently, exceeding gender and developmental discourses.

With the advent of photographic portraiture in Montreal, particularly by virtue of the inexpensive cabinet card, Chinese males would have had the opportunity to exercise varying degrees of agency in their representations.[12] Regardless, as sitters, Chinese men would have carried the burden of their ascribed "selves," fervently interpolated by the plethora of racializing cartoons. Henry Y. Lee (1920) [fig.3] recalls these stereotypes to the extent that its namesake subject resists them. Indeed, Lee exhibits white norms, specifically via clothing, as black and white photography would have repressed "yellow peril" in the same way as


Fig. 4: Anonymous, Mrs. Wing Sing (1895), Gift of Miss Alice Lighthall Silver salts on paper mounted on card - Albumen process, 17 x 12 cm, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal, Canada.


Fig. 5: Eugénie Gagné, Mrs. Wing Sing and Son (1896), Gift of Miss Alice Lighthall, Silver salts on paper mounted on card - Albumen process, 17 x 12 cm, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal, Canada.

engravings, lithographs, and print culture of the time.[13] Lee's hair is short and parted to the side in Western fashion; he sports a fitted suit, tie and collar, a pronounced white by virtue of the strong tonal contrast fundamental to black and white photography. Moreover, Lee enacts the "Anglophone tradition of the closed erect profile" as opposed to the "legs-spread-out frontal pose" typical of Chinese portraiture.[14] Regardless of Mr. Lee's intentions behind his Western performance, noticeably through his "skin," we can deem Henry Y. Lee (1920) a subversive piece insofar as it circulated publicly[15] and thus offered a visual intervention of the Chinese male in the (pre-exclusion) years fraught with anxiety around


Fig. 6: William Notman, McDonald's Nursemaid and Children, (1867), Silver salts on paper mounted on paper – albumen process 8.5 x 5.6 cm, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal, Canada.

Chinese immigration to Canada.[16]

The circumstances regulating Chinese women in Montreal pre-exclusion era greatly differ from their male counterparts. Due to the increasing Head Tax, it was rare for the male labourer to be able to afford the sea passage to bring his non-lucrative wife and family along with him.[17] According to sociologist Denise Helly's rigorous study of the Chinese population in Montreal from 1877-1955, the rarity of Chinese women crystalized the male-dominated Chinese populace as a "bachelor society,"[18] which naturally produced a blind spot within Canadian visual culture. Indeed, while Chinese men entered the studio with a history of obscene portrayals and connotations attached, the Chinese female body did not experience the same burden. Since a labour (male-gendered) discourse regulated both literary and visual portrayals of Chinese presence in Canada, Chinese Canadian women are scarcely alluded to let alone depicted in pre-exclusion culture. [19] A rare document, The Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration (1885) nevertheless lays bear a salient trope ascribed to Chinese women in the following and only reference to them: "all Chinese women are looked upon as prostitutes; as a rule, they are. There are few [Chinese] women here, but it would be a great blessing if there were a great many more for the use of the Chinaman."[20] Chinese women were perceived as alleviators to the threatening sexuality embedded in the "Chinaman's" *yellow peril*, yet also signified the multiplication of the Chinese population. Chinese women therefore served as obliterator and fuel for two distinct white Canadian anxieties. Along with the plausible regulation of these women through surveillance,[21] it is unlikely that Chinese women, already transgressing domestic confinement through the act of travel to the photography studio, would have had much agency therein. This suggests that the uniform tradition of Chinese Canadian women garbed in Oriental or Chinese dress in the photography studio - unlike their contemporaneous male counterparts - was likely not a collective, cultural intervention, nor an individual display of agency.[22] Rather, this tradition is best understood as a manifestation of internalized Otherness, which further gestures toward the isolation and limited cultural access available to Chinese women in Montreal's pre-exclusion era.

Mrs. Wing Sing (1895) [fig.4] and Mrs. Wing Sing and Son (1896) [fig.5] uphold my proposal of a Chinese, female performance of otherness in Montreal. In both photographs, Mrs.

Wing Sing sports an Orientalist skin, which resonates with the tropes outlined in The Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration (1895). Moreover, in reference to Helly's figures, there would have been between two and four Chinese women in Montreal in 1895-96,[23] converting Mrs. Wing Sing into an *objet de luxe*: objectified due to her supposed nature as a fallen woman; luxurious on account of her rarity.[24] A comparison between the two images further verifies the exotic status imposed by the local white gaze upon Montreal Chinese women in the 1890s: Mrs. Wing Sing and Son (1896) presents the sitter in informal yet traditional dress; as indicated by the cabinet inscription, the portrait was taken at Mme Gagné's studio. In the photograph from the previous year, Mrs. Wing Sing appears alone, surrounded by Chinoiserie accessories, garbed in decadent costume and thoroughly made up. Although no source traces the latter photograph to any particular photographer, the chances of it being taken in a male-run studio are high, given Gagné's unique position as a female photographer in Montreal's late nineteenth century.[25] We can thus speculate that Mrs. Wing Sing (1895) was not taken primarily for the sitter herself, but for a white, male gaze, or more broadly for a population craving dramatized depictions of a novel Other. In fact, Alice Lighthall, a white Canadian woman, donated both photographs of Mrs. Wing Sing to the *McCord Museum* (Montreal). This record testifies to the dissemination of Mrs. Wing Sing (1895) into a sphere of white ownership.[26] Moreover, in view of a photograph displaying the interior of the exemplary Topley studio, it was likely to have studio works hung on the wall - a western marketing ploy.[27] It is thus plausible that Chinese female sitters would have gladly been received by a population conditioned by Eurocentric practices of collecting and exhibiting, which underpins to the politics of photographing acutely marginal individuals, such as Mrs. Wing Sing.[28]


Fig. 7: William Notman, McDonald's Nursemaid (1867), Silver salts on paper mounted on paper – albumen process, 8.5 x 5.6 cm, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal, Canada.

Two other Montreal photographs from the late nineteenth century uphold the notion of pre-exclusion Chinese women in Montreal as *objets de luxe*. Although the majority of them were not owned by masters in the same way as black female (and male) slaves less than a century earlier, they could still be "owned" as a commodity by virtue of the replicative properties of the photographic medium. McDonald's Nursemaid (1867) [fig.8] suggests that Chinese women were fashionable before the time frame under analysis. Indeed, this photograph was likely apart of the same photo-shoot as McDonald's Nursemaid and Children (1867) [fig.9] on account of its

matching date and props, as well as the similitude in the sitter's hairstyle and demeanour. Regarding the former photograph, however, the unidentified "nursemaid" is unaccompanied by her own child, or that of the McDonalds, which stresses the Orientalist motivation behind the photograph. Since it is very unlikely that a female immigrant fulfilling the role of nursemaid would not have had the means to get her photograph taken at the distinguished Notman studio - however democratized the medium had become - we can conjecture that these photographs were not requested by the nursemaid herself, and were further prone to circulation within the white, middle class sphere of ownership; at the very least, within that of the McDonalds.[29]

Unlike men such as Henry Lee, who entered the studio carrying the burden of pictorial stigmata, tropes reserved for Chinese women would have plausibly achieved visual articulation at the studio. In consideration of this fracturing of photographic practices (as sitters) along gender lines, the Montreal Chinese conjugal portrait of the pre-exclusion era deviates from the expected affect of viewing a married couple, namely one of unity. In Mr. and Mrs. Lee (1920) [fig.9], Henry Lee wears a western skin anew, the tuxedo-look in its completion: lapel, top hat, neckwear, shirt, vest and cufflinks. In contrast, the bride is enveloped in a Chinese skin comprising the traditional skirt and jacket ensemble of the *qipao*.[30] Given the agency potentially afforded to them by the male (Mr. Lee's) presence and marital context, one is inclined to assume that Mr. and Mrs. Lee would have presented themselves according to their so-called desires. One must question, however, how much of their desires hinged upon past representations and performances of their racialized and thus reified identities, which as I propose, depended largely on visual scripts formulated by members of the white Canadian populace. Receiving the precise answer to this critical question is near impossible. We can nevertheless identify a tension between the Chinese women dressed in traditional garb and the groom's pristine performance of normative (white) masculinity. This visual clash is also present in Mr. H. Song and Family (1913) [fig.10]. Here, Mr. H. Song is clothed in Western business attire, while his presumable wife, adjacent to him, displays an informal Chinese traditional "skin," testifying to both domestic confinement and Orientalist exoticism. Indeed, it is not the mere formal markers of hybridity within this family that

Fig. 8: William Notman & Son, Mr. and Mrs. Lee (1920), Silver salts on glass – Gelatin dry plate process, 25 x 20 cm, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal, Canada.

constitute the photograph's disunity, but the very complex histories and politics of the skins that envelope them - representation that exceeds the desire(s) of one or two individuals.

Analyzing these photographs means unearthing the Orientalist gaze that fervently constructed Chinese identities in Montreal between 1885-1923, exposing the limited agency of male and female Chinese sitters subject to the supposed "objective nature of photography."[31] In the context of this case study, Bazin's notion of the objective would have been conflated not only with the conceivably white photographers accredited to each of the pieces under analysis - Eugénie Gagné, the staff of the Wm. Notman & Son studio - but to the countless white Canadians and caricaturists like James Weston, Owen Staples, and John Walker in their constructions of enduring, performative stereotypes. These stereotypes are consistently at work in the way Chinese Canadian men and women represent themselves at the studio. Although it appears Henry Lee undermined these representations - the "Chinaman" as childish, feminized, enrobed in his yellow skin - his enactment of Western masculinity as well as that of Mr. H. Song seven years earlier, attest to the solidification of these discourses precisely through their subversions. Although Montreal Chinese women would have been less haunted by pervasive, Orientalist pictorial representations - and would likely have had less access to such images - the photography studio inaugurated their representations within visual culture. This produced a generative photographic practice versus the chiefly subversive practice of their male counterparts. To come to terms with the lack of transparency that characterizes these photographs is arduous and demands courage. It involves encountering the "Chinaman," as depicted within Canadian visual culture as well as the trope of fallen women ascribed to Canadian Chinese women. It also requires unpacking transgressive male performances and the circulation of the "exotic" and rare Chinese woman within a suspect white sphere of ownership. In doing so, one bears witness to palpable dissonance that is political just as it is personal: husband and wife inhabiting common spaces of country and studio alike, always already forbidden from sharing the same skin.

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**Notes:**

[1] From a speech given by Prime Minister John A. Macdonald (date known); Tamara Lynch and Karen Cho, In the Shadow of Gold Mountain, (Toronto, Canada: National Film Board of Canada, 2004), 43 mins.

[2] Peter S. Li, The Chinese in Canada, (Toronto: Oxford University Press), pp.59-60.

[3] I acknowledge that this would not have been the case for all Chinese immigrants, some of whom were likely coerced like other marginalized racial populations into getting their photographs taken at the photographic studio as ethnographic pieces.

[4] Li, The Chinese in Canada, pp. 11, 28.

[5] Homi Bhabha, "The Other Question …. Homi K. Bhabha Reconsiders the Stereotype and Colonial Discourse," Screen, vol. 24 no. 6 (1983), p. 18.

[6] G. Bruce Retallack, "Jack Canuck Meets John Chinaman," Racism, Eh?: A critical Inter-Disciplinary Anthology of Race and Race in Canada, eds. Camille A. Nelson, Charmaine A. Nelson, (Concord, Ontario, Canada: Captus Press Inc., 2004), p. 264.

[7] Although these examples are from British Columbia, they would have presumably been in wide circulation. Indeed, their provenance from the *McCord Museum* archives attest to their dissemination in Montreal. Furthermore, Montreal colonialist cartoons were common; "Walker, John Henry," McCord Museum: Our People, Our Stories, http://www.mccord museum.qc.ca/scripts/explore.php?Lang=1&tableid=1&tablename=artist&elementid=0028__true (date of last access November 25 2013).

[8] Retallack, "Jack," p. 264.

[9] Although miscegenation laws did not exist in Canada during the period under analysis, there were nevertheless laws prohibiting white women from working with Chinese men. See: Stranger Intimacy Contesting Race, Sexuality, and the Law in the North American West (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).
[10] Between the McCord archives and the references attributed to Karen Cho, Denise Helly, G. Bruce Retallack and Richard Wright, I have consulted roughly forty cartoons of Chinese men depicted by predominantly white Canadian caricaturists from before 1923.
[11] Shaorong Yang, Traditional Chinese Clothing, Costumes, and Adornments (Shanghai, Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House, 2004), p. 28.
[12] Lecture, Michelle MacLeod, "Mme Gagné: In Her Shoes, Through Her Lens," ARTH 400/4, Art History, Concordia University, Montreal, April 2009.
[13] Madge Pon, "Like a Chinese Puzzle: The Construction of Chinese Masculinity in Jack Canuck," Gender and History in Canada, eds. Parr, Joy and Mark Rosenfeld (Toronto: Copp Clark Ltd., 1996), p. 93.
[14] Retallack, "Jack," p. 270.
[15] According to coordinator of the McCord archives (Nora Hague), Yee worked at the *Royal Bank of Canada*. We can thus speculate that this photograph would have circulated at the very least within Lee's professional sphere; Email, Emily Wing to Nora Hague, coordinator of the *McCord Museum* archive and documentations centre, 19 November 2013.
[16] In 1889, a Gazette article stated, "There are too many Chinamen". See: Denise Helly, Les Chinois à Montréal: 1877 1951 (Québec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1987), p. 138.
[17] The Head Tax increased from 50% in 1885, one hundred dollars in 1900, and five hundred dollars in 1903. See: Li, The Chinese in Canada, p. 59.
[18] Faith Moonsang, First Son: Portraits by C.D. Hoy (Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1999), p. 84.
[19] Throughout my research, I encountered only one caricature depicting a Chinese woman. See: Richard Wright, In a Strange Land: a Pictorial Record of the Chinese in Canada 1888-1923, (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1988), p. 30.
[20] Chinese merchants "quickly realized that profits could be made from the sexual needs of Chinese workers and the curiosity of white pleasure seekers…numerous Chinese women were [thus] recruited to Canada for prostitution". Sandra Ka Hon Chu, "Reparation as Narrative Resistance: Displacing Orientalism and Recording Harm for Chinese Women of the Exclusion Era," Canadian Journal of Women and Law, vol. 18, no. 2 (2006), p. 416.
[21] Living in New York's 1890s, Louis J. Beck claimed that no virtuous or respectful Chinese woman should leave the house without male surveillance. Although this indeed pertains to an American city, it is likely that similar measures were taken in Canada, also in an early phase of national construction. Helly, Les Chinois, p. 125.
[22] Between the McCord archives and sources ascribed to Denise Helly, Faith Moonsang, Bruce G. Retallack, Richard Wright, I have analyzed approximately thirty photographs of Chinese women in Canada's pre-exclusion era. This figure seems small, but in comparison to the disproportionately male populace, such photographs are rare.
[23] Helly, Les Chinois, p. 128.
[24] I employ *objet de luxe* in a similar was as Charmaine Nelson who used the term to discuss the experience and perception of the small population of enslaved black women in Montreal. See: Charmaine A. Nelson, "Slavery Portraiture and the Colonial Limits of Canadian Art History," Representing the Black Female Subject in western Art (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 70.
[25] Kristina Huneault, "Part One, Introduction: Professionalism as critical concept and Historical Process for Women and Art in Canada," Rethinking Professionalism: Women and Art in Canada, 1850-1970, eds. Kristina Huneault and Janice Anderson (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 2012), p. 22.
[26] "Mrs. Wing Sing and Son, Montreal, QC, 1890-95," McCord Museum: Our People, Our Stories, http://www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/en/collection/artifacts/MP-1984.44.1.2 (date of last access November 25 2013).
[27] "The Topley Studio," Urbsite, http://urbsite.blogspot.ca/2012/12/the-topley-studio.html (date of last access November 25 2013).
[28] Anonymous, "Picture Collecting in Canada," The Burlington Magazine, vol. 96, no. 618 (September 1954), pp. 269-270.
[29] On account of the popularity of the name McDonald, it was difficult to identify the McDonalds referenced in the title of these photographs. However, according to Nora Hague, the McDonalds in Montreal's mid-late 19th c. were predominantly of Scottish or Irish descent, and thus presumably white. Email, Emily Wing to Nora Hague, coordinator of the McCord Museum archive and documentations center, 19 November 2013.

[30] The dress that Mrs. Lee wears roughly corresponds with that worn a decade earlier in China's Guangxu period; Shaorong Yang, Traditional Clothing, Costumes, and Adornments (Shanghai, Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House, 2004), p. 24.
[31] André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," What is Cinema?, vol. 1 (1967), pp. 9-16.

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**PLATE LIST:**

**Pictured**

Figure 1: James Weston, The Heathen Chinee in British Columbia (1879), Ink on newsprint – photolithography, 39.5 x 27.9 cm, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal, Canada.

Figure 2: Rostep (pseudonym of Owen Stapes), The Heathen Chinee (1900), Ink on paper, 24.5 x 15cm, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal, Canada.

Figure 3: Wm. Notman & Son, Henry Y. Lee (1920), Silver salts on glass - Gelatin dry plate process, 15 x 10 cm, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal, Canada.

Figure 4: Anonymous, Mrs. Wing Sing (1895), Gift of Miss Alice Lighthall Silver salts on paper mounted on card - Albumen process, 17 x 12 cm, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal, Canada.

Figure 5: Eugénie Gagné, Mrs. Wing Sing and Son (1896), Gift of Miss Alice Lighthall, Silver salts on paper mounted on card - Albumen process, 17 x 12 cm, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal, Canada.

Figure 6: William Notman, McDonald's Nursemaid and Children, (1867), Silver salts on paper mounted on paper – albumen process 8.5 x 5.6 cm, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal, Canada.

Figure 7: William Notman, McDonald's Nursemaid (1867), Silver salts on paper mounted on paper – albumen process, 8.5 x 5.6 cm, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal, Canada.

Figure 8: Wm. Notman & Son, Mr. and Mrs. Lee (1920), Silver salts on glass – Gelatin dry plate process, 25 x 20 cm, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal, Canada.

**Not Pictured**

Figure 9: Wm. Notman & Son, Mr. H Song and family, Montreal (1913), Silver salts on glass – gelatin dry plate process, 17 x 12 cm, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal, Canada.

# THE WORK OF LOUIS MUHLSTOCK: A COMPASSIONATE DEPICTION OF DEPRESSION-ERA SUBJECTS

LAUREN WISEMAN

The Great Depression, sparked by the American stock market crash of 1929, brought an end to a thirty-year period of prosperity that had begun in Canada in 1896.[1] While most of the western world was hit extremely hard by this economic collapse, Canada's suffering was particularly notable, as the country had always relied on its extensive international export network for economic sustainability.[2] With the onset of the Great Depression, this was no longer an option. As explained by Sean Mills, "Countries scrambled to alleviate the effects of the collapse. They resorted to isolationist policies that they believed would protect their native industries."[3] Additionally, prior to the Great Depression, Canada had already been the victim of terrible seasonal unemployment as a result of the harsh climate.[4] As explained in 1925 by the Canadian Forum, "more than ten percent of our working force has been kept in enforced idleness for one-quarter of the year at least."[5] Unfortunately, this percentage worsened in the 1930's as Canadian unemployment went from 13% in 1930, to 26% in 1933.[6] While Canada as a whole felt the terrible effects of the Depression, Montreal was markedly affected by the event.[7] As an urbanized hub for maritime and railroad traffic, Montreal was very susceptible to the effects of economic fallout.[8] From 1933 to 1934, upwards of 28% of the population was living on government assistance.[9] This fact is even more impactful when considering that, "those on relief in Depression-era Montreal received less per capita than the residents of any other city in Canada."[10] Needless to say, it was a terrible time to be living in the city of Montreal. While

Fig.1: Louis Muhlstock, Empty Rooms (1938), Oil on Canvas, Art Gallery of Alberta Collection (Gift of Mr. H.S. Southam, 1945), Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Montreal was an industrialized city affected harshly by the Great Depression, the majority of art at the time did not reflect this fact. Urban subject matter was largely absent from conventional Quebec painting, as many artists sought to portray the idealized rural lifestyle promoted by the church.[11] Despite this fact, in the city of Montreal, some painters during the Depression sought to move away from the nationalistic focus on the genre of (rural) landscape, towards something more current and internationalized. When it came to these Depression-era urban subjects, "Jewish artists were especially sensitive to the oppression and sufferings about them."[12] One such artist was Louis Muhlstock. Muhlstock realistically portrayed disenfranchised urban individuals and their surroundings in Depression Era Montreal, and did so in such a way as to represent them with a sense of compassion and respect. This is evident in his work in urban landscape as well as his work in portraiture or figure painting.

Muhlstock's early life offers insight into his ability to empathize so deeply with his subjects, allowing him to capture their unfortunate circumstances with a sense of quiet dignity. Louis Muhlstock was born in 1904 in Galicia, a former territory of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.[13] Life in Galicia was difficult for many Jewish communities, and the situation for Muhlstock's family was no exception.[14] As a child, he lived with his parents and extended family in a small two-room home.[15] Muhlstock's father left for Montreal in 1908 and found work selling fruit with the hopes of ultimately having his family join him in Canada.[16] In 1911, Muhlstock left Galicia to join his father in Montreal, accompanied by his mother, grandmother, and three siblings. This represented quite the culture shock for Muhlstock, who had been fairly isolated from industrial and urban life throughout his early childhood in Eastern Europe.[17] In fact, recalling his arrival in Montreal, Muhlstock explains, "Almost immediately at school I discovered the pencil, which we didn't know in the old country."[18] From this point on, art became a central part of Muhlstock's life.

Muhlstock's life in Montreal was hardly one of luxury, but for the young boy coming from such humble beginnings, it was more than he could hope for. As he explains, "Father made us feel rich. We had food on the table, clean beds, a roof over our heads."[19] Despite this impression, the Muhlstock family was far from affluent. The family lived in a small basement apartment on St. Dominique Street, where many Eastern European Jews settled at the time. As Muhlstock recounted, "We first lived in a 14 dollar-a-month unheated house on St. Dominique, in the slum part of the city...we lived in the basement, where no sunlight ever shone in."[20] Through these insights, one gets a sense of the artist's realistic outlook, but also the optimism that accompanied it.

In 1918, at the age of fourteen, Muhlstock began taking art lessons in Montreal, studying at the *Monument National* under the tutelage of Edmond Dyonnet.[21] In 1925, remaining in Montreal, he continued these studies at the *École des Beaux-Arts*.[22] While Muhlstock spent as much time as possible engaged in his art, his unfortunate economic status prevented him from pursuing it full time. When not studying art, Muhlstock worked, saving money with the hope of one day continuing his artistic studies in Paris.[23] In 1928, with only $2400 to his name, Muhlstock finally left for Paris to pursue his dream.[24] Unfortunately, his time there was short

lived, as in 1931 he was forced to return to Montreal to attend to his sick mother. While he had planned to return to Europe as soon as possible, and had even purchased a return ticket to Paris, he was ultimately never able to afford the trip.[25] Despite this ill-fated occurrence, Muhlstock's return to Montreal, at the onset of the Great Depression, would allow him to become inspired and create the works for which he is known today.

Muhlstock's work in urban landscape serves as an excellent example of his unique ability to present otherwise dilapidated subjects in such a way as to convey a glimmer of hope. Urban landscape began surfacing as a genre in the United States toward the beginning of the twentieth century. While rising to prominence in the US, this genre saw little interest in Canada, particularly among French Canadian painters.[26] As explained by Monique Nadeau- Saumier, "Contemporary Canadian paintings show a marked reluctance towards such new subject matter… Canadian art was almost uniquely concerned with unspoiled landscape vistas."[27] Jewish painters, however, served as an exception to this rule, taking note of the dire economic conditions that surrounded them. Muhlstock was no exception but his difficult background allowed him to imbue his work not only with environmental observation, but also with genuine understanding. As Nadeau-Saumier writes, "a childhood spent in the slums of Montreal had made Louis Muhlstock aware of these particular problems, even before the Depression."[28] While evident in many of his urban landscape pieces, this understanding is well exemplified in his work entitled Empty Room (1938). [fig. 1]

Empty Room, completed by Muhlstock in 1938, is part of a series of empty room studies conducted by Muhlstock in the late 1930's when the impact of the Great Depression was still prevalent throughout the city of Montreal.[29] In this piece, Muhlstock effectively communicates the haunting sadness of this time, during which many working-class families were forced out of their homes, their breadwinners having fallen victim to unemployment. As reported by the Montreal Gazette in 1935, "Montreal's unemployed already are menaced with wholesale eviction, and the spectre of families in the street on May first rises once more."[30]

The painting is done from the perspective of an individual standing in the doorway to an empty apartment, devoid of physical human presence. The room is dark and dirty, the floor marked with dust. One wall is covered in wallpaper, which appears to have a flower print, hinting at the fact that someone was once inclined to decorate this desolate space with cheerful accents. These details challenge the viewer to question the emptiness of the space in the otherwise bustling urban environment within the city of Montreal. The painting leaves the viewer wondering how this room became empty and who might have inhabited it previously. In this way, Muhlstock manages to convey human presence without the inclusion of physical beings, paying homage to those who have been forcibly evicted from their homes.

While exemplifying the prevalence of eviction in Depression-era Montreal, the piece is not totally pessimistic. The neutral tones and shadow in the foreground draw the viewers' attention to the back of the room, where more brightly coloured foliage can be seen through a window. In including this brighter element, Muhlstock leaves the viewer with a sense of optimism. While we are initially confronted with sadness, we are ultimately left feeling that

despite this sadness, all hope is not lost. In this way, Muhlstock effectively communicates the plight of those suffering during the Great Depression, without rendering them completely hopeless.

In examining the work of another urban landscape artist painting during the Depression, Muhlstock's understanding and compassion for his surroundings becomes clearer. Adrien Hebert was a French Canadian artist painting in Montreal around the same time as Muhlstock. While Hebert is an exception because he did not confine himself to traditional rural or religious scenes (as many Quebecois painters did at the time),[31] his work in urban landscape nonetheless stands in stark opposition to that of Muhlstock.[32] In his painting Hyman's Tobacco Store (1937), Hebert portrays a busy commercial street in the middle of winter. [fig. 2] The scene is active and cheerful, complete with individuals who appear to be doing their holiday shopping. However, it is hardly what comes to mind when imagining Montreal during the Great Depression. Instead of the realism provided by Muhlstock, this scene, bordering on fiction, serves as an idealized portrayal of Depression era Montreal. While Hebert's work is not without artistic merit, it lacks the compassionate realism qualities for which Muhlstock should be praised.

While Muhlstock worked extensively within the genre of urban landscape, he also worked in figure painting and portraiture, having studied the genre in Paris.[33] Upon his return to Montreal at the onset of the Great Depression, Muhlstock, unable to afford traditional models, sought out individuals who would sit for a modest fee.[34] Consequently, his Depression-Era portraiture focuses on those disenfranchised by society, including the homeless and unemployed. As Muhlstock explained, "I would pick up people in the street and get them to sit for me, and didn't have to pay very much at the time. They were happy to have a room to come into and sit and be warm… we'd prepare a bowl of soup."[35] Louis Muhlstock's identification and respect for his disenfranchised subjects is evident in his work. Unlike his urban landscape paintings, largely devoid of human presence, Muhlstock's portraiture evokes empathy and compassion through his representation of physical beings. This can be seen in two of his most celebrated works: William O'Brien, Unemployed (1935) and Evelyn Pleasant, Clark Street (1936).

William O'Brien, Unemployed (1935) is a painting drawn using charcoal on craft paper [fig. 3].[36] These materials, which would have been obtained for free, are indicative of the socio-economic status of the artist, who, at the time, was unable to afford oil paints and canvas. The painting is undeniably depressing, portraying this unemployed man as hunched over, with his arms folded over his stomach, exemplifying hunger. He may very well have sat for this portrait at the mere prospect of a warm meal, much like the meagre offerings Muhlstock describes above. William's face, wrinkled and gaunt, is indicative of a man that has been worn down by the harsh conditions in which he barely survives. Despite this fact, one thing is clear: he is still surviving. Looking out pensively, despite this man's unemployed status, William's honour is maintained. As described by Saint-Denys Garneau, "The faces that are most deeply marked by misery and destitution always have some undesirably sympathetic quality that does not emanate from them but from this compassionate artist." [37]

This compassion is not only seen in Muhlstock's representation of the subject, but in the title of the work. The convention of portraiture is to name the painting for its subject. However, this was often reserved for upper class subjects.[38] In this case, rather than titling the painting "Man, Unemployed" Muhlstock allows William the dignity of his name, ensuring that despite his difficulties at the time, William would be remembered not as a type, but as an individual.

Another portrait that serves as an example of Muhlstock's connection to those "othered" by society is his work entitled Evelyn Pleasant, Clark Street (1936) [fig. 4]. The painting depicts a young black child, looking out of a dirty and stained window in her home. There is a handprint on the window to the right of the child, as though her hand was pressed against the glass in her longing to remove herself from her ill-fated surroundings.[39] The child's eyes are dark and emotive, her sadness undeniable. All is not well with this child for whom, living on Clark street in the 1930's was likely not in a positive economic state. Her position in society was no doubt made worse by the fact that she is black and thus seen as lesser in 1930's Montreal. While undeniably gloomy, this painting exemplifies Muhlstock's ability to take those in vulnerable positions and bestow upon them a sense of self-worth. Despite living in squalor, Evelyn appears well fed and kempt, wearing brightly coloured clothing and a beret in her hair. This is unique in itself as many artists at the time subscribed to racial stereotypes like the picaninny/pickaninny, which positioned black children as neglected.[40] She looks irrepressibly at the viewer, indicating that despite her unfortunate socio-economic circumstances, she is still strong and perseverant. While indicative of sadness, the emotive and expressive look in her eyes is one of a child wise beyond her years, something not uncommon for those growing up in difficult conditions. In this way, Evelyn is made to be, not a vulnerable peasant, but a strong survivor.

Fig.5: Prudence Heward, Negress with Flower (n.d.), Oil on Canvas, 86.3 x 91.4 cm, Collection of the Robert McLaughlin Gallery (Gift of Isabel McLaughlin, 1989), Ontario, Canada.

Outside of her physical depiction, much like the case with William O'Brien, Muhlstock shows respect for his subject in the way that he titles the piece. While slavery was abolished in Canada in the early nineteenth century, many white Canadians living in the 1930's had not yet shed the negative stereotypes held in regards to their black fellow citizens.[41] While blacks were

officially positioned as equal, they were nonetheless viewed as being lesser beings, a fact evidenced in the portrait and figure paintings of the time. As explained by Nelson, "In Canadian portraits and figure painting, like western art generally, black subjects were often refused the specificity of the individual's name within the titles."[42] This can be seen in the work of many respected white artists of the time including Prudence Heward and Dorothy Stevens, who produced racially charged works such as Negress with Sunflowers (n.d.) [fig. 5] and Coloured Nude (1933) [fig. 6] respectively. Both paintings portray specific individuals and yet both are denied this individuality through the omission of their names in the titles. Instead, they are diminished to nothing more than a racial epithet/type. Muhlstock refused to commit the same egregious crime. This choice might be attributed to the artist's difficult upbringing, impoverished adulthood or perhaps his own marginalization as a Jew, an often-persecuted group. Regardless of the reasoning, Muhlstock chose to depict Evelyn as a unique individual in time rather than reducing her to the color of her skin. By including her name in the title, Muhlstock allowed her the same human dignity as William O'Brien, opting to celebrate her individuality, rather than her typography.

In conclusion, having examined Muhlstock's work within the genres of urban landscape and portraiture, Muhlstock's unique ability to capture his bleak surroundings without rendering them devoid of optimism becomes evident. Owing to his Jewish heritage and difficult upbringing, Muhlstock chose to work with subjects that were largely dismissed by not only mainstream artists of the time, but society as a whole. While most Canadian Depression-era artists either ignored or belittled more disenfranchised subjects, Muhlstock chose to focus on such subjects in a manner that allowed the viewer to empathize with their dire circumstances. This feat becomes all the more impressive when considering the lack of art patronage at the time, as well as the general leanings of the artistic community toward more rural and religious subject matter. [43] One cannot help but recognize the dedication of an artist, who despite these facts, chose to expose his viewers to the realities of his community, managing to convey the hope that lay beneath a surface of despair.

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**Notes:**

[1] Sean Mills and Brian Young, "The Great Depression," McCord Museum, http://www.musee-mccord.qc.ca/scripts/explore.php?Lang=1&elementid=9 true&tableid=11&contentlong (date of last access 25 November 2013)

[2] Mills and Young, "The Great Depression," (date of last access 25 November 2013)

[3] Mills and Young, "The Great Depression," (date of last access 25 November 2013)

[4] Anne Shea and Suzanne Morton, "Keeping Men out of "Public or Semi Public" Places: The Montreal Day Shelter for Unemployed Men, 1931-34," Negotiating Identities in 19th Century Montreal: A Collection of Essays by the Montreal History Group, eds. Bettina Bradbury and Tamara Myers (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2005), p. 80.

[5] Shea and Morton, "Keeping Men Out," p.80.

[6] Mills and Young, "The Great Depression," (date of last access 25 November 2013)

[7] Paul André Linteau and Peter McCambridge, History of Montreal: The Story of a Great North American City (Montreal, QC: Baraka Books, 2013), p.129.

[8] Shea and Morton, "Keeping Men Out," p.81.

[9] Shea and Morton, "Keeping Men Out," p.81.

[10] Shea and Morton, "Keeping Men Out," p.81.

[11]Monique Nadeau- Saumier, "Louis Muhlstock: The Urban Landscape, 1930-1950," (Montreal: MA, Art History Department, Concordia University, 1989), p.12.
[12] Charles C. Hill, Canadian Painting in the Thirties (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1975), p.16.
[13] "Biography: Louis Muhlstock," National Gallery of Canada, http://www.gallery.ca/cybermuse/enthusiast /thirties/artist_e.jsp?iartistid=3890 (date of last access 25 November 2013)
[14] Nadeau-Saumier, "The Urban Landscape," p. 19.
[15] Nadeau-Saumier, "The Urban Landscape," p. 19.
[16] Nadeau-Saumier, "The Urban Landscape," p. 19.
[17] Nadeau-Saumier, "The Urban Landscape," p. 20.
[18] Interview, Louis Muhlstock interviewed by Charles Hill, 15 September 1973, 1 hour 36 minutes. http://cybermuse.gallery.ca/cybermuse/enthusiast/thirties/artist_interview_e.jsp?iartistid=3890 (date of last access 19 September 2014)
[19] Nadeau-Saumier, "The Urban Landscape," p. 20.
[20] Nadeau-Saumier, "The Urban Landscape," p. 20.
[21] Hill, Canadian Painting, p.129.
[22] Hill, Canadian Painting, p.129.
[23] Hill, Canadian Painting, p.129.
[24] Nadeau-Saumier, "The Urban Landscape," p. 23.
[25] Nadeau-Saumier, "The Urban Landscape," p. 23.
[26] Nadeau-Saumier, "The Urban Landscape," p. 4.
[27] Nadeau-Saumier, "The Urban Landscape," p. 4.
[28] Nadeau-Saumier, "The Urban Landscape," p. 27.
[29] Nadeau-Saumier, "The Urban Landscape," p. 66.
[30] Anonymous, "Some Landlords Cracked Down in Depths of Great Depression," The Gazette (Montreal, QC), 17 January 1991, A2.
[31] Nadeau-Saumier, "The Urban Landscape," p. 16.
[32] Hill, Canadian Painting, p.115.
[33] Nadeau-Saumier, "The Urban Landscape," p. 24.
[34] Interview, Muhlstock by Hill.
[35] Interview, Muhlstock by Hill.
[36] Collections: William O'Brien Unemployed, C. 1935," National Gallery of Canada, http://www.gallery.ca/en/see/collections/artwork.php?mkey=1272 (date of last access 13 October 2013)
[37] Collections: William O'Brien Unemployed, C. 1935," (date of last access 13 October 2013)
[38] Charmaine Nelson, "Slavery, Portraiture and the Colonial Limits of Canadian Art History," Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 74.
[39] Charmaine A. Nelson, "Racing Childhood: Representations of Black Girls in Canadian Art," Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 60.
[40] Nelson, "Racing Childhood," p. 60.
[41] Nelson, "Racing Childhood," p.57.
[42] Nelson, "Slavery," p. 74.
[43] Hill, Canadian Painting, p.14.

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**PLATE LIST:**

**Pictured**

Fig.1 Louis Muhlstock, Empty Rooms (1938), Oil on Canvas, Art Gallery of Alberta Collection (Gift of Mr. H.S. Southam, 1945), Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Fig.5 Prudence Heward, Negress with Flower (n.d.), Oil on Canvas, 86.3 x 91.4 cm, Collection of the Robert McLaughlin Gallery (Gift of Isabel McLaughlin, 1989), Ontario, Canada.

**Not Pictured**

Fig.2 Adrien Hebert, Hyman's Tobacco Store(1937), Oil on Canvas, 81.3 x 100.96 cm, Quebec and Canadian Art Collection, Montreal Museum of Fine Art, Montreal, Canada.

Fig.3 Louis Muhlstock, William O'Brien, Unemployed (c.1935), Charcoal and brown on buff wove paper, 68 x 51 cm irregular, Collections, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada.

Fig.4 Louis Muhlstock, Evelyn Pleasant, Clark Street, Montreal (1936), Oil on cardboard, 55.1 x 48.8, Private Collection.

Fig.6 Dorothy Stevens, Coloured Nude (1933), Oil on Canvas, 86.4 x 76.2 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada.