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**The Shadow of a Nation: Remembering the Black Woman
in the Nomadic Picture**

T. M. T. Provost

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Art History

**Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
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ABSTRACT**The Shadow of a Nation:
Remembering the Black Woman in the Nomadic Picture**
by T. M. T. Provost

François Malepart de Beaucourt (1740-1794), an artist of Parisian and French-Canadian heritage, allegedly painted *Portrait of a Negro Slave* in 1786. Also known as *La Nègresse*, or *The Negress*, the portrait has since become one of Canada's most famous historical paintings. After two centuries, it continues to circulate within the world of Canadian art history and history. Yet problems arise with the way the painting has been/is represented and remembered. Racism, sexism and subordination shadow this image. My thesis aims to historicise *Portrait of a Negro Slave* and to retrieve the obscured historical memory conjured by the enigmatic poser in the image. My analysis looks at, and problematises, both contemporary and historical discourses that use the metalanguage of colonialism and imperialism to re/present the painting. What types of discriminations are being condoned and continued through these c/overt discourses? Also, what are some of the discursive meanings overlooked in the image and its context?

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***For my family,
past and present***

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INTRODUCTION: MEMORY, METALANGUAGE AND METHODOLOGY

Tradition sets in place a history, a narrative that carries with it the authority of cultural continuity whilst also allowing (in fact, requiring) the possibilities of innovation.

Lynda Nead¹

It is now almost impossible, for example, to remember a time when people were *not* talking about a crisis in representation. And the more the crisis is analyzed and discussed, the earlier its origins seem to be.

Edward Said²

. . . it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the west. An idea whose cultural compulsion lies in the impossible unity of the nation as a symbolic force.

Homi Bhabha³

A besetment exists in the way the neoclassical painting *La Nègresse* (c.1786) has been re/presented in Canadian art history (Fig.1). Made during the Enlightenment, and now more commonly known as *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, the portrait continues to be promoted in the contemporary art world as one of Canada's earliest secular paintings. In fact, since the 1930s, *Portrait of a Negro Slave* has been exhibited across various continents. Some of these places include the Tate Gallery (London, England, 1938), the Albany Institute of History and Art (Albany, New York, 1946) and the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa, Ontario, 1953).⁴ Although attributed to Canadian artist François Malepart de Beaucourt (1740-1794), many continue to speculate that *Portrait of a Negro Slave* is not

¹Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality* (1992; New York: Routledge, 1994) 4.

²Edward W. Said, "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors," *Critical Inquiry* 15 (Winter 1989): 205.

³Cited from the introduction of Homi K. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (1990; London: Routledge, 1994) 1; hereafter cited as *Nation*.

⁴From these exhibitions, there are certain residual indicators left on the back of the frame; but for an itinerary of the exhibitions up to the 1960s that had included *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, see the bilingual catalogue R. H. Hubbard and J. R. Ostiguy, *Trois cents ans d'art canadien/Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1967) 30.

a Canadian painting, was not done by Beaucourt himself, and was possibly modelled after a woman from the Caribbean. Some nonetheless believe the poser to have been Beaucourt's actual slave.

These doubts arise from Beaucourt's travels abroad, which presumably took place between 1772 and 1784 or 1786,⁵ his whereabouts during this period not entirely known. Madeleine Major-Frégeau, who to date has done the most extensive research on Beaucourt, states that: "La peinture la plus populaire de Beaucourt au Canada, et la plus ancienne dont l'authenticité soit certaine, est son 'Portrait d'une esclave noire.'"⁶ Clearly Major-Frégeau's skepticism lies not with accepting the painting as a Beaucourt, but rather with the image's likeness being ascribed to Beaucourt's slave. Commenting on John Russell Harper's summary of the painting, Major-Frégeau says: "Russell Harper. . . . semble prendre pour acquis que la '...Catherine Cora negresse...' mentionnée par Benoîte Camagne [Beaucourt's widow] dans son testament le 5 juillet 1832, est la même personne que celle qui figure dans le portrait de Beaucourt en 1786. Aucun document ne vient confirmer une telle supposition."⁷

In addition, *Portrait of a Negro Slave* and the mysterious poser have generated numerous curatorial correspondence. For instance, a passage from Gerald Paget's letter, dated 1 November

⁵This last date, 1786, which appears on *Portrait of a Negro Slave* with Beaucourt's signature, implies that Beaucourt could have painted the portrait in- or outside of Canada. But Madeleine Major-Frégeau claims that, although Beaucourt had left France in 1784, the painting was not done in Canada. See Madeleine Major-Frégeau, *La Vie et L'Oeuvre de François Malepart de Beaucourt (1740-1794)* (Québec: Ministère des Affaires culturelles, 1979) 30. See also *A Dictionary of Canadian Artists*, 1st ed., vol. 2 (Ottawa: Canadian Paperbacks, 1967) 32; and *The Development of Painting in Canada 1665-1945/Le Développement de la Peinture au Canada 1665-1945* (Toronto: Ryerson P, 1945) 12.

⁶Major-Frégeau 59. (All English interpretations completed by myself are henceforth abbreviated as MT for "my translation.") MT: "The most popular painting in Canada by Beaucourt, and the oldest one of undoubted authenticity, is his 'Portrait of a Negro Slave.'"

⁷Major-Frégeau 60. MT: "Russell Harper. . . seems to take for granted that the '...Catherine Cora negress...' mentioned by Benoîte Camagne in the will of 5 July 1832 is the same person appearing in Beaucourt's portrait of 1786. No document has yet confirmed such a supposition."

1954, reads: "It would be interesting to know whether Beaucourt ever visited the West Indies, and whether the sitter for this portrait was in fact his Negro slave?"⁸ Robert Hamilton Hubbard's letter of response several days later only added to the riddle of the poser's identity. "A negress in Montreal must certainly have been rare," Hubbard assessed, "but I know nothing to substantiate the claim that it was painted in Montreal except that I seem to remember . . . the legend that the girl in his picture was his servant."⁹ On the contrary, slaves were neither a legend nor rare in Montreal. They were, however, marginal. Between 1759 and 1762, from a population of 6000,¹⁰ 1132 Blacks lived in New France as slaves, half of which resided within the Montreal vicinity.¹¹ In addition, Marcel Trudel affirms that, until the early 1800s, most of the Black slaves in Lower Canada resided in Montreal: ". . . il y avait beaucoup plus d'esclaves à Montréal qu'à Québec."¹² Hubbard's perspective of Black slaves being "rare" alludes to the "dying race" syndrome, (mis)used to characterise peoples supposedly on the verge of extinction.

Irrespective of whether or not Beaucourt painted the image, of who the model was, and of where the image was painted, my premise begins with how the painting and its alleged producer

⁸Gerald Paget, letter to H.O. McCurry, 1 Nov. 1954. File 5.2, correspondence re: *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, archives of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

⁹R. H. Hubbard, letter to Gerald Paget, 9 Nov. 1954. File 5.2, correspondence re: *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, archives of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

¹⁰Kenneth McNaught notes that "by 1762 the habitant population had grown to more than 6000," which included *les filles de roi*. However, McNaught does not specify if this count also includes the slave population. Kenneth McNaught, *The Penguin History of Canada*, rev. (1969; London: Penguin, 1989) 28.

¹¹Robin Winks, with the help of Marcel Trudel's findings, states that "local records reveal 3604 separate slaves by 1759; of these, 1132 were Negroes. In all, there probably were four thousand slaves in New France . . . Most of the slaves lived in or near Montreal, where 52.3 percent of the known total were found; 77.2 percent of all slaves lived in towns." See Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1997) 9-10.

¹²Marcel Trudel, *L'Esclavage au Canada français*, éd. abrégée (Ottawa: Presses Universitaires Laval, 1960) 26; hereafter abbreviated as *L'Esclavage*. MT: ". . . there were more slaves in Montreal than in Quebec."

have been/are presented in Canadian art history. The presentations in themselves have motivated me to examine various contemporary discourses of *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, and to see how they cross-reference to the actual history of Black women in eighteenth-century Franco-British colonies, which would unquestionably include Canada. With this study, I aim to put *Portrait of a Negro Slave* in a different light with a different engram--one that will dissipate some of the image's obscurity in mainstream epistemology, and be more readily remembered from the perspective of slave women of colour in colonial Canada.

For survival, histories require mnemonic retention. This is achieved through language, repetition and accessibility. Thus language systems within shared communal contexts influence the remembering of history. But more crucially, from the perspective of hegemonic imperialism, multiplicity of, and accessibility to, printed histories help to pasteurise certain types of knowledge. Textual omnipresence is therefore *partially* responsible for the commonplace discourses dominating a particular cultural or disciplinary context. Once internalised, such discourses as knowledge become practised, performed, articulated and mimicked in subsequent acts of Othering. Joseph Kess and Ronald Hoppe possess a similar point of view about the knowledge diffused and shared by specific collectives.¹³ Re/cognising the importance of effect, they write:

The question of bias, context, and shared knowledge enters the fields of both visual and speech perception, though bias seems more important to the visual questions, while context and shared knowledge may be ultimately more important to the speech perception area. One may be dealing with a superordinate set of perceptual strategies that finds exemplars in these two areas of cognition, and which may rely heavily on the cognitive residual effect of shared knowledge in general.¹⁴

¹³Joseph F. Kess and Ronald A. Hoppe, "Bias, Individual Differences, and 'Shared Knowledge' in Ambiguity," *Journal of Pragmatics* 9 (1985): 25-26.

¹⁴Kess and Hoppe 22.

Still, Kess and Hoppe maintain that not everyone will have the same meaning for a disambiguated sign: ". . . ambiguity perception also relates to biasing differences which depend upon individual differences within subject population."¹⁵

Shi-xu, on the other hand, sees ideology minced into effective language: "Most importantly of all, ideological discourses reproduce relations of dominance and effects of power."¹⁶ Certain forms of discourse are loaded with latent meanings--meanings that, when decyphered, sustain the colonial ordering of things. Shi-xu acknowledges that ideological thought "is really something *other than* discourse but is expressed through the transparent container of language."¹⁷ That language is key to incubating the collective memory or amnesia of a people's history becomes evident in George Elliott Clarke's observation. Although the count of the sample population is not furnished, of a survey carried out by the Canadian Civil Liberties Association in 1995, Clarke noted that "83 percent of Canadians did not know slavery had been practiced in pre-Confederation Canada."¹⁸

Yet slavery was customary here for nearly three hundred years. Whereas the exact date of commencement is difficult to discern, it is approximated that slavery in New France had already been in force by the 1500s. Lax during the nascent stage, it proliferated throughout colonial Canada by the late seventeenth century.¹⁹ Also, many accounts give 1807 as the date of abolition in Upper and Lower Canada. Conversely, with the Conquest of 1763, slavery was re-established in Canada

¹⁵Kess and Hoppe 28.

¹⁶Shi-xu, "Ideology: Strategies of Reason and Functions of Control in Accounts of the Non-Western Other," *Journal of Pragmatics* 21 (1994): 647.

¹⁷Shi-xu 647.

¹⁸George Elliott Clarke, "The Complex Face of Black Canada," *McGill News* 77.4 (Winter 1997) 27.

¹⁹Winks 1-3; Marcel Trudel, *L'Esclavage au Canada français: histoire et conditions de l'esclavage* (Ottawa: Presses Universitaires Laval, 1960) 19-23; hereafter cited as *Histoire et Conditions*.

by the British--some say leniently²⁰--and only became defunct in 1834 by the Imperial Parliament's Emancipation Act.²¹ The contemporary absence of knowledge about Panis²² and Black slavery in colonial Canada returns to the issue of the mnemonic accessibility of constructed memory as related to *Portrait of a Negro Slave*.

The repeated format of Beaucourt as the (con)textually praised maker and proprietor of the Black woman in the image has prompted me to explore some of the whys and what-ifs of Canadian colonial art and history. Why, for example, is the greater quantity of the art history regarding *Portrait of a Negro Slave* and Beaucourt written in a pro-colonial manner? Why is the artist frequently remembered through the mention of this "exotic" painting? And suppose the poser were to have been Canadian? Were she a free(d) subject, would she still continue to be represented as Beaucourt's exotic accessory?

Extensively deducing and pondering these points have reminded me firstly of my own temporal limited location as a contemporary looking back on a history I cannot possibly relive; and secondly, like other current scholars, of my power and privilege in mnemonically re/constructing it. Why certain histories are regenerated and Others suppressed within the matrix of power and privilege in collective memory is doubtless a political matter of representation. Deborah McDowell purports

²⁰Winks 23; Carol Agocs, "Race and Ethnic Relations," *Introduction to Sociology: A Canadian Focus*, 4th ed., ed. James J. Teevan (Scarborough, ON: Prentice-Hall, 1992) 272.

²¹See the excerpt, Daniel G. Hill, "Negroes in Toronto, 1793-1865," qtd. in *Some Missing Pages: The Black Community in the History of Québec and Canada* ([Québec]: Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, 1995) 74; hereafter cited as *Some Missing Pages*; and also William A. Green, *British Slave Emancipation: The Sugar Colonies and the Great Experiment 1830-1865* (1976; Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985) 121.

²²"Panis" was an historical generic term used for aboriginal peoples who were enslaved and/or servants. See Trudel *Histoire et Conditions* 60, 63-64; and Winks 2, 9.

that "remembering is political, and inextricably bound to culturally contested issues."²³ She also urges that types of knowledge and histories, especially those produced by dominant culture, should be looked at critically.²⁴ This is another goal in my thesis--to look more critically at discourses that feign 'objective' epistemology. It follows that, inasmuch as each chapter focuses on a specific theme, political memory is key to my analytical development and is interwoven throughout as a subtext.

Teasing out the knots in representation with *Portrait of a Negro Slave* involves looking at certain aspects of imperialist culture and conceding that, transcontinentally, past cultural contexts were founded on more overtly prejudicial institutions which catalysed problematic artistic representations of Blacks. Slavery, colonisation and European usurpation were some of Canada's historical events that provided certain artists (like Paul Kane) with ample material for "new" artistic themes.²⁵ However, what has occurred in tracing the fragmented history of *Portrait of a Negro Slave* and the aspects of representation concomitantly concerning race, gender, class, ethnicity and sexuality, is an unveiling, and hence a bridging, of a particular polysemy between contemporary and historical times. The patrimonial rhetoric of *Portrait of a Negro Slave* demonstrates that the polysemy, or ambiguity, which shoulders colonial art history by restraining or policing alterity has been kept well intact.

Also well-preserved through the centuries is the way the Other is (mis)represented and re-colonised in visuo-textual discourses arrested by colonial ambiguity. Given the exercise of

²³Deborah McDowell, "Transferences: Black Feminist Discourse: The 'Practice' of 'Theory'" *Feminism Beside Itself*, eds. Diane Elam and Robyn Wiegman (New York: Routledge, 1995) 93.

²⁴McDowell 94.

²⁵See a critique of Paul Kane and his art in Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (1992; Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp P, 1995) 16-23.

backtracking, of examining a segment of Canadian art history, and of de-allegorising its conventions, my discussion contains both synchronic and diachronic aspects. The synchronic aspects are period-specific and deal mostly with Beaucourt's conventions. I look at how these conventions, as applied in *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, affect and effect subjecthood. The diachronic elements are historically borderless, fluid and auto-regenerative in their capacity to reproduce ambivalence and politico-mnenomic languor in relation to oppressive histories. I thus treat *Portrait of a Negro Slave* from a temporal perspective in which connexions and contrasts are made between the construction of the Other in the colonial past and its ascendant present.

A study of *Portrait of a Negro Slave* doubtless entails a study of the politics and ideologies of hegemonic imperialism in Europe, North America and the Caribbean, and the cross-cultural metalanguage used to construct the Other as the sociopolitically subordinate in art and culture. *Portrait of a Negro Slave* is therefore used as a point of similarity, or of convergence, in the way colonial Canada conceptualised the Other, but also as a point where difference exists and proliferates, seeing that the conceptualisation in itself is variegated. It is important to look at Canadian (art) history along racial(ised) and gender(ed) lines to see how greatly these *discriminating* perspectives affected subject location in historical ideology, and how they influenced past realities. Moreover, Tzvetan Todorov claims that it was especially during the eighteenth century that occidental cultures and those colonised by them began to see social order in a more racialised manner--"le racialisme est un mouvement d'idées né en Europe occidentale, dont la grande période va du milieu du XVIIIe au milieu du XXe siècle."²⁶

²⁶Tzvetan Todorov, *Nous et les Autres: La réflexion française sur la diversité humaine* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1989) 114. The translation of this passage reads: "racialism is a movement of ideas born in Western Europe whose period of flowering extends from the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth." Cited from Tzvetan Todorov, trans., *On Human Diversity: Nationalism, Racism, and Exoticism in French Thought*, by Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP,

All this said, my thesis especially aims to historicise *Portrait of a Negro Slave* from a counter-colonial angle and to comment on the nationalist Canadian art-historical discourses that act as mnemonic agents in (con)textually and visually reconfiguring subject identity. I have thus chosen postcolonial semiology to examine the complex issues of representational politics regarding *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, and to draw out the intricate modalities of colonist language as well as its reproduction in surveying the Other. In other words, I look at both the abstract and the concrete of representational alterity with Beaucourt's painting, the implicitness and explicitness of the imperialist metalanguage that constructs the Other. How was the Other in *Portrait of a Negro Slave* cognitively conceived and thereafter represented in the material culture of word and image?

Within a sociocultural framework, conventions in language are based on systems of differentiation, contested (dis)placement and circumvallations. The recoding of visual and discursive language implies a layering of meaning that, through generations of prelingual appropriation and historic severing from antecedent contexts, problemises interpretation and recollection by (re)constructing ambiguity. How does this ambiguity in Beaucourt's conventions speak of the Black female poser? Jean Baudrillard claims that, though individuals appropriate language and meaning to suit their own purposes, a conventional order used by a given collective generally defines the way products of material culture are made sense of. He says: "Il est certain que les objets sont porteurs de significations sociales indexées, porteurs d'une hiérarchie culturelle et sociale--et ceci dans le moindre de leurs détails: forme, matériau, couleur, durée, rangement dans l'espace, etc.--, bref, qu'ils

constituent un code."²⁷ With Baudrillard's words in mind, what then were Beaucourt's codes in *Portrait of a Negro Slave* imparting about the ethnographic Other in eighteenth-century western art, seeing that artistic conventions did not escape the signification of subject hierarchisation?

Portrait of a Negro Slave is a juncture in Canadian (art) history where ideological and artistic similarities between colonial cultures are articulated in the representation of alterity. Postcolonial semiology, a methodology common to Homi Bhabha, is expedient for studying such transcoded and recoded configurations of imperialist power. Says Bhabha: "Postcolonial perspectives. . . intervene in the ideological discourses of modernity that have attempted to give a hegemonic "normality" to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged, histories of nations, race, communities, and peoples."²⁸ Combining semiology with postcolonial theory provides greater insight into how thought and ideology about alterity become socially encoded, then translated into sign systems that impact on reality, memory, performatives, actions, knowing and perceiving within a given collectivity.

Also, with this combined methodology, a more complicated "picture" is presented, so to speak. This picture demonstrates how sign systems function in representing and *conserving* colonial social divisions, both vertically and laterally. Considering the importance of the sign, Bhabha states: "Cultural translation transforms the value of culture-as-sign: as the time-signature of the historical 'present' that is struggling to find its mode of narration. . . . Culture-as-sign articulates that in-between moment when the rule of language as semiotic system--linguistic difference, the

²⁷Jean Baudrillard, *Pour une critique de l'économie politique du signe* ([Paris]: Éditions Gallimard, 1972) 19. MT: "Assuredly, objects are conveyers of social and indexical signification, conveyers of a social and cultural hierarchy--this being so even in their slightest traces: form, material, colour, life span, and order in space. In brief, objects constitute a code."

²⁸Homi K. Bhabha, "Freedom's Basis in the Indeterminate," *October* 61 (Summer 1992): 46; hereafter cited as "Freedom's."

arbitrariness of the sign--turns into a struggle for the historical and ethical *right to signify*.²⁹ As shall be seen, *Portrait of a Negro Slave* is a sign of Otherness from colonist culture that has been "struggling to find its mode of narration" and its "right to signify."

Like Bhabha, Stuart Hall also considers the cultural transcoding of signs and their restructuring imperative to understanding the sociopolitical state of affairs in the then and the here and now: "The notion of 'translation' is close to 're-articulation', transcoding, transculturation, all of those concepts . . . used in other contexts. It is, of course, used in quotation marks because it doesn't mean that there is an original from which the 'translation' is a copy."³⁰ In colonial Canada, a country that boasted "two mother countries,"³¹ ideas of alterity were mostly replicated from European colonial dogmas. The translation of imperialist metalanguage from culture to culture indicates the translation of texts, visual queues, systems of thought and signs concerning the re/presentation of Otherness. Together, postcolonial theory and semiotics provide a methodological base for exploring the interconnected and divergent aspects of identity and/or subject making in portraiture.

The sign systems either obscuring or pronouncing alterity are also called ethnosemiotics. Dean MacCannell's examination of the signs normalising (White) dominant culture as the indigenously national and people of colour as outside of this national construct is a matter implicating Beaucourt and *Portrait of a Negro Slave*; for it is in this fashion that the two have been canonically

²⁹Bhabha "Freedom's" 49.

³⁰Stuart Hall, interview, "Cultural Studies and the Politics of Internationalisation," by Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, eds. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (New York: Routledge, 1996) 393.

³¹Oscar Douglas Skelton, *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfred Laurier (1896-1919)*, vol. 2, ed. David M. L. Farr (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965) 33.

cyphered. Deconstructing the location of White power, MacCannell ponders:

The ethnosemiotic question is this: In their interactions with others, how can groups in power manage to convey the impression that their own traits and qualities are merely correct, while the corresponding qualities of others are 'ethnic'? Similarly, and perhaps more important, how is consensus achieved on this matter, a consensus which extends to include both the groups in power and the ethnic peoples out of power?³²

In my analysis of postcolonial semiology, I rework MacCannell's notions of the consensus of the groups in power as the colonial hegemony or the nation-self, and the imagined ethnic outsider as the exotic Other(ed), observing how various articulations of colonialism in the forum of art-historical nationalism position Beaucourt, the painting and the woman portrayed.

Conversely, feminist and Marxist theory are problematic theoretical frameworks on their own because they tend to consider the premised subject as normatively White and western. On this topic, McDowell states: "The unexamined assumption that white feminist discourse bears a special responsibility to women of colour helps to maintain the perception that feminism equates with whiteness and relates maternalistically to women of color."³³ The myriad western feminist canons that mnemonically inscribe Mary Wollstonecraft as the "first" historical feminist and Simone de Beauvoir as the "first" feminist theorist are excluding, or forgetting, women of colour activists who were/are situated in the west, but outside of academia and White privilege.

In this manner, I see much of western feminism as having greatly inculcated discriminatory patriarchal ideologies about alterity. This feminism has paradoxically turned into a type of self-praising androcentric feminism, indirectly vaunting its monopoly on producing alternative

³²Cited from chapter 5 "White Culture" of Dean MacCannell, *Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers* (London: Routledge, 1992) 121-122.

³³McDowell 96.

epistemology. Says Chandra Talpade Mohanty: "Clearly Western feminist discourse and political practice is neither singular nor homogeneous in its goals, interests or analyses. However, it is possible to trace a coherence of *effects* resulting from the implicit assumption of 'the West' . . . as the primary referent in theory and praxis."³⁴ Conversely, Mary John does see a problem with homogenising experience, appropriating oppression, and ignoring difference and marginality. John asserts: "Speaking of and about women also runs the danger of presuming a set of common meanings and connections when such meanings are precisely what need to be explored. The danger grows when women become the subject of analysis in a universalizing way."³⁵

Additionally, western feminisms--by projecting occidental standards onto Other women and pointing out their supposed theoretical 'lacks'--are (in)directly contributing to the corpus of orientalist epistemology of the Other. Abbreviating Edward Said's concept of orientalism in relation to certain feminist discourses and alterity, Balmurli Natrajan and Radhika Parameswaran say that:

The power of Orientalism . . . derives from its complete control over "representation" especially the "cultural Other." The knowledge which arises from such representations establishes the Other as passive: as only something which is to be known, not something which knows; as something subsumed within social structures; and as part of a cultural order composed of a series of essences.³⁶

Just as how certain western feminisms take White women's experiences as the be-all and end-all, so too does Marxist theory position the western male context as the universal norm.

More problematically, certain streams of Marxism heavily emphasise material culture as the

³⁴Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (New York: Routledge, 1995) 259.

³⁵Mary E. John, *Discrepant Dislocations: Feminism, Theory, and Postcolonial Histories* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1996) 75.

³⁶Balmurli Natrajan and Radhika Parameswaran, "Contesting the Politics of Ethnography: Towards an Alternative Knowledge Production," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 21.1 (Spring 1997): 28.

primary inducer of different forms of thought and consciousness. Although, for Karl Marx, thought and material culture were interlinked, he nonetheless ranked the latter over the former, instead of avowing that the two could become independent forces on their own. In this respect, imperialist thought and its power to disenfranchise the Other through its material manifestations become subordinated or obscured as an ideation with a legitimately powerful agency. Moreover, in using a White androcentric model, and professing that consciousness is merely a product of one's social environment, Marx failed, in certain of his theories, to particularise different modes of colonist ideological thought, and overlooked their capacity to impact negatively on the socioeconomic material experiences of the Black diaspora, and particularly on the realities of Black women. Says Marx:

Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc.--real, active men, as they are conditioned by a determinate development of their productive forces, and of the intercourse which corresponds to these, up to its most extensive forms. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men in their actual life process (emphases mine).³⁷

Yet for the many Blacks, captured and brought into slavery as a unit of western capitalist utilitarianism, the determinate consciousness of complying with bourgeois ideology did not initially happen by western socialisation and conditioning, nor by an occidental "actual life process."³⁸ Rather, Black slavery was primarily an imperialist *idea* realised in colonist legislations and further mediated through *action* in the material world. Some of these subsequent colonist performatives were: the enslavement of Blacks, their forced geo-cultural displacement, and the use of brutality and

³⁷Karl Marx, trans., *Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy*, by T. B. Bottomore, eds. T.B. Bottomore and Maximilien (1956; London: Penguin, 1988) 89.

³⁸Concerning the construction of a White republic through the expropriation and representation of Black bodies, see for example Vincente L. Rafael, "Mimetic Subjects: Engendering Race at the Edge of Empire," *Difference: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 7.2 (1995): 133-134.

regimented coercion to subordinate them socially. Therefore, consciousness is not completely determinate; nor does it uniquely originate from material culture. It can be its own catalyst for creating or altering O/other material experiences and thought. Stuart Hall remarks likewise: ". . . ideological categories are developed, generated and transformed according to their own laws of development and evolution; though, of course, they are generated *out* of given materials."³⁹

Considering my use of semiology, the terms sign, signifier and signified appear throughout my analysis, and must therefore be explained. A sign comprises two halves:⁴⁰ the signifier or the referent, found in the material image⁴¹ and responsible for, as Jacques Derrida asserts, "sensory perception;"⁴² and the signified, which represents the concept or idea instigated or intended by the signifier.⁴³ Although visual codes can be interpreted multifariously (given the factor of subjective/individual comprehension), under the different layers of meaning is a basic context constructed to bias the primary cognition of the gaze. As Derridian semiotics stipulates, it is the interdependence and the inertia of the two halves--of the signifier and signified--that give the sign its strength in (re)producing meaning. Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson explain that: "Derrida argues for the dynamism of signs: that a sign is not (as in Saussure) the conjunction between a signifier and its single, univocal signified, but the movement from one signifier to another, the motion between

³⁹Stuart Hall, "The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees," *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, eds. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (New York: Routledge, 1996) 44-45.

⁴⁰Ferdinand de Saussure, "Course in General Linguistics (1916)," *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader*, eds. Antony Easthope and Kate McGowan (1992; Buckingham: Open UP, 1994) 9.

⁴¹de Saussure 9-10.

⁴²Jacques Derrida, trans., *Margins of Philosophy*, by Alan Bass (1982; Chicago: Chicago UP, 1986) 81; hereafter cited as *Margins*. In the source text, Derrida stated: "le signe unit une 'représentation indépendante' et une 'intuition', en d'autres termes un concept (signifié) et la perception sensible (d'un signifiant)." Cited from Jacques Derrida, *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1972) 94; hereafter cited as *Marges*.

⁴³Derrida *Margins* 81.

them."⁴⁴ In this regard, the sign--through inter-play, re/cognition and contingently developing contexts--becomes circulatory, meshed into an infinite process of signifying, as will be illustrated in certain sections of my analysis.

Regarding the format of this thesis, the first chapter takes a quantitative approach to looking at a small measure of Canadian art history and historiography as related to *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, Beaucourt and the poser. The goal, here, is to comment on the colonial and hegemonic textual discourses that continue to dominate mainstream history. The second chapter deals with the political tautology of naming. In this section, my analysis veers towards linguistics. I therefore examine the titles of the painting, the descriptives applied to the poser, their polysemy and their economy in naming the Other. Attention is given to (con)textual/visual language as well as to the way particular signs depend on, antagonise and complement each other. Stephen Levinson notes that metaphors as part of the process of naming "have more to do with the *contingent* factual (real-world) attributes of the referents of a metaphorical *focus* than with the semantic features that can be claimed to express its meaning."⁴⁵ I thus demonstrate how the derogatory names used for the Other act as metaphors for the "real-world" experiences of slave women in colonial Canada.

The third chapter concerns the construction of the exotic and the politics of display. In this chapter, I explore how Beaucourt's Euro-Canadian conventions portray the White female subjects differently from the Black poser in *Portrait of a Negro Slave*. Here, I play subtly on the psychoanalytic id of "identity," turning it into a marker of collective identity formation and indicating how, in terms of stereotyping, the exotic *qua* sexual is scopophilically displaced within a c/overt

⁴⁴Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson, "Semiotics and Art History," *The Art Bulletin* LXXIII.1 (Mar. 1991): 192.

⁴⁵Stephen C. Levinson, *Pragmatics* (1983; Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) 150.

colonial subject hierarchy, governed by the coloniser/nation-self. Unravelling Freudian theory to a more accessible level, Calvin Hall purports that, in identity development, the id is responsible for easing psychological and physical tension through pleasure.⁴⁶ These types of tension can be exacerbated as well through memory and perception. Says C. Hall: "The primary process attempts to discharge tension by establishing what Freud called 'an identity of perception.' By an identity of perception Freud meant that the id considers the memory image to be identical with the perception itself. For the id, the memory of food is exactly the same as food itself."⁴⁷ In this regard, what can be said about certain stereotypes? For the collective colonist id, how does the memory of the stereotype of a particular Other equate to what is perceived, enacted and experienced in reality?⁴⁸

Discussing sexuality, Sigmund Freud stated that the ego and id harmonise by a complex process of negotiation, transformation and erotic sublimation: "The transformation of object-libido into narcissistic libido which thus takes place obviously implies an abandonment of sexual aims--a desexualization--a kind of sublimation, therefore."⁴⁹ What will be explored, here, is the colonist sublimation of this repressed libido which manifests in the projection of the exotic onto the Other, hence the exotic as the lascivious Other.

Certain sections use dictionary definitions to elucidate a specific point. Insofar as additional unrecorded definitions may exist outside of dictionary terms (given the failure of lexicons to keep

⁴⁶Calvin S. Hall, *A Primer of Freudian Psychology* (New York: World Publishing Company, 1954) 22.

⁴⁷Hall 25.

⁴⁸"Reality" and "actual" are vague terms used throughout my analysis. As a critique, one could easily ask what is reality? What is real or actual? However, due to the space constraints of this thesis, I have chosen not to theorise on these definitions. I therefore intend these terms to be understood in a basic manner.

⁴⁹Sigmund Freud, trans., *The Ego and the Id*, by Joan Riviere, ed. Peter Gay, rev. ed. (1960; New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1989) 24-25.

abreast with the newness of oral meaning), the dictionary as an institutional convention should not be underestimated. In the late 1700s, the French encyclopedists set a precedent that was to have cross-cultural repercussions on the standardisation of meaning and language usage.⁵⁰ Benedict Anderson notes that "the Russian Academy, modelled on the Académie Française, produced a six-volume grammar in 1802."⁵¹ It was also during the turn of the nineteenth century that pseudo-scientific definitions about the Black woman proliferated; numerous have even been reprinted unchanged in several contemporary texts, revealing--according to Alan Petersen--how the ideologies behind certain traditional and authoritative canons, such as *Gray's Anatomy*, have stood "largely impervious to broader public debates on sexual inequalities and gender representations."⁵² The inclusion of certain dictionary terms are therefore intended to demonstrate how names, the calling of identity, and polysemy are mnemonically linked to national subject location in Canadian art history.

With *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, I also analyse the power of sublimation in words, word ordering and articulation, and their effect in subject construction. This colonist effect has so far, it seems, succeeded in imposing a continual nomadic identity not only on Beaucourt's image, but on the Black poser as well. The reiterated disavowal of the represented slave context as a Canadian one, the doubts about the place of making of the portrait, and the queries about the Black poser's nationality result in nomadising the image and its related themes. Seeing a need to question (re)constructed uncertainty and ambivalence, I have given focus to reading in between words and

⁵⁰*Dictionnaire de la révolution et de l'empire 1789-1815*, éd. 1899, xxiv.

⁵¹Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (1983; London: Verso, 1991) 73.

⁵²Alan Petersen, "Sexing the Body: Representations of Sex Differences in *Gray's Anatomy*, 1858 to the Present," *Body and Society* 4.1 (Mar. 1998): 13.

underlining the unobvious meanings in semantic structures dealing with Beaucourt's painting. Bhabha affirms that, in light of multifaceted ambivalence, "What emerges as an effect of such 'incomplete signification' is a turning of boundaries and limits into the in-between spaces through which the meanings of cultural and political authority are negotiated."⁵³ Which meanings are elided or negotiated through the discourses of *Portrait of a Negro Slave*? And how does this happen?

Because the regions of Canada underwent numerous name changes between 1760 and 1867,⁵⁴ for the sake of facility, I have employed historical modifiers in referring to Canada during the era of imperial colonialism. I have observed that numerous texts about Canadian history--such as *The Blacks in Canada: A History* by Robin Winks and *An Illustrated History of Canada* by editor Craig Brown--do likewise. Notwithstanding, at certain instances, I do resort to specific terms. Finally, the style of my analysis is not linear, but centripetal; therefore, some thematic overlapping occurs between chapters.⁵⁵

Linguistic imperialism is a primary component of cultural imperialism, though it must be remembered that cultural dissemination can also take non-linguistic forms (German music, Italian painting) and can occur in translation (ranging from highbrow works to Walt Disney comics).

Robert Phillipson⁵⁶

⁵³Bhabha *Nation* 4.

⁵⁴See for example "A Note on Terminology" in Winks xxi.

⁵⁵It should also be noted that, for greater accessibility, translations completed by myself (noted as MT) or taken from published texts are supplied in footnotes whenever possible. Certain historic data and definitions, due to their greater relevance, have been reprinted in an appendix segment. Some texts found in this section are antiquated; in certain passages, the archaic alphabet written as an f should be read instead as an s. Whenever pertinent, to place some of the artists and authors in a temporal framework, I have used certain reference sources for dates of birth and death. These sources are: Loren R. Lemer and Mary F. Williamson, *Art and Architecture in Canada: A Bibliography and Guide to the Literature to 1981/Art et Architecture au Canada: bibliographie et guide de la documentation jusqu'en 1981*, vol.2 (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1991); Blake McKendry, *A to Z of Canadian Art: Artists and Art Terms*, ed. Jennifer McKendry (Kingston, ON: Blake McKendry, 1997); and Peter Hastings Falk, ed. *Who Was Who in American Art (1887-1966)* (Madison, CT: Sound View P, 1985).

⁵⁶Robert Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992) 53.

CHAPTER 1
(UN)TRACEABLE S/PACES: THE HEGEMONIC MEMORY
OF CANADIAN (ART) HISTORY

... ideas, cultures, and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force, or more precisely their configurations of power, also being studied.

Edward Said¹

Discourse and practice are interdependent. Practice follows discourse, while discourse is generated by practice.

Masao Miyoshi²

Knowledge is in some manner a recollection of ideas.

Jean-Paul Sartre³

In 1998, *La Nègresse*, or *Portrait of a Negro Slave* (c.1786), turns 212 years old (Fig.1). This lengthy period of time is worth noting, for it signifies how long the historical memory of the represented context has been obscured. This nebulous history contrasts sharply to Beaucourt's epochally recited biography. Whereas he is oft-depicted in Canadian art history as subject and national artist, the (con)textual construction of the image--used just sufficiently to laud Beaucourt's artistic talents--confounds the fact of slavery and Beaucourt's role as slavemaster. Such historiographic obscuring produces a textual amnesia of the marginalised in art history and history whilst sustaining colonial narratives for long-term collective remembering. As a consequence, the history of slavery in Canada is porously written so as to be barely traceable or completely forgotten in the mainstream.

In this chapter, I shall problemise a portion of Canadian art history and compare it to a particular fragment of Canadian history. My objective is to look at the inherent sexism, racism and

¹Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (1978; New York: Vintage, 1994) 5; hereafter cited as *Orientalism*.

²Masao Miyoshi, "A Borderless World? From Colonialism to Transnationalism and the Decline of the Nation-State," *Critical Inquiry* 19 (Summer 1993): 726.

³Jean-Paul Sartre, "The Symbol," *Essays in Existentialism*, ed. Wade Baskin (1965; New York: Citadel P, 1993) 269.

patriarchal ethnocentrism present in the textual discourse that constructs an exclusive "colourless" national identity around *Portrait of a Negro Slave*. In the process, I shall also examine how this textual reproduction distorts the political remembering of Other actual histories. I will begin with those few art historians who have highlighted the image as a keepsake of Canadian slavery. Thereafter, I shall move towards ambiguous narratives, and finish with problematic colonial discourses. Most of the texts examined date from the 1800s to the present. But it is these two last categories--ambivalent and colonial discourses--that I am most concerned with; for they share the common thread of obscuring subaltern (art) history through mnemonic suppression, textual slippage or romanticisation.

The "whitewashed" identity set forth in certain Canadian art-historical discourses has tended to re-establish uneven us/Other binaries. It is this paradigm that continues to be popularised in the *s/p*ace of contemporary memory. I write *s/p*ace as such, because to have impact, persuasion and agency over an extended length of time, this art history *qua* active national memory must reappear in a particular sociopolitical **context** and **culture** (space), yet concurrently acquire in its textual reappearance and dissemination a certain **temporal regularity** and **periodicity** (pace) to maintain its primacy in mainstream recollection. McKenzie Wark calls the memory of space, time and media "transmitters," claiming that they have the capacity for "playing a double game with the signs and signifying practices of the revolutionary tradition and of a regime that has appropriated that tradition, reinterpreting those signs, turning them over upon themselves, sending them out into other space - and forward into the future."⁴

⁴Cited from McKenzie Wark, "Vectors of Memory ... Seeds of Fire: The Western Media and the Beijing Demonstrations," in *Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location*, eds. Erica Carter, James Donald and Judith Squires (London: Laurence and Wishart, 1993) 132.

Colonial memory as a transmitter indulges in this double game of meaning in presence. By virtue of its reinforcement in the s/pace of the here and now, it relies on the textual subordination, the remarginalisation and therefore the textual amnesia of alternative histories. Amnesia thus constructed may incite partial recall of Other histories--a trace, or manipulate mnemonic recollection so as to achieve full obliteration. Amnesia, then, has its degrees and ranges.⁵ Yet because the order and workings of memory remain for the most part unknown,⁶ texts manifest as mnemonic enhancers that facilitate the retainment of certain types of knowledge.

The preference of textually regraphing colonial history can be perennially rationalised; and the justifications by themselves signify new configurations of exclusion and power in nationalist discourses. These discourses must be looked at critically in order to understand their agency in knowledge production. Of this logic in reproducing hegemonic historiography, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak claims that, "[f]or the subaltern displacements, the reason for failure most often given is the much greater scope, organization, and strength of the colonial authorities."⁷ That colonial history is reprinted on a regular basis as "centre" denotes, likewise, the manufacturing of Other histories as possible "margins." Recognising a crisis in regurgitated and imitated colonial discourse, Anne McClintock queries:

If mimicry always betrays a slippage between identity and difference, doesn't one need to elaborate how colonial mimicry differs from anti-colonial mimicry; if colonial and anti-colonial mimicry are formally identical in their founding ambivalence, why

⁵See "Amnesia" in J. P. Chaplin, *Dictionary of Psychology*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Laurel, 1985) 22.

⁶Rudolf Arnheim, *Visual Thinking* (1969; Berkeley: U of California P, 1972) 97-98; Wayne Weiten, *Psychology: Themes and Variations* (Pacific Grove: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1989) 258.

⁷Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography," *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Methuen, 1987) 199.

did colonial mimicry succeed for so long? Indeed, if all discourses are ambivalent, what distinguishes the discourse of the empowered from the discourse of the disempowered?⁸

The redissemination of colonial paradigms in Canadian hegemonic art history and history brings with it certain advantages. The diffusion in itself turns into a heuristic barricade which impedes the potential for alternative narratives or counter-histories; guarantees the insular cultural ascendancy of colonialist ideologies; becomes naturalised as fact and authoritative epistemology; and thus fosters cognitive apathy instead of critical thinking. Edward Said asserts that: "The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them."⁹ The event of, and imperialist success in, obstructing counter-narratives means that Other histories, when finally disseminated, may be considered neoteric, secondary and even fictitious.

Counter-histories contextualising *Beaucourt* and *Portrait of a Negro Slave* in a critical manner do exist, but are atypical. These versions offer an alternative history for the painting that does not focus uniquely or reverentially on its presumed maker. For instance, in her exhibition catalogue, *Endless Summer* (1988), curator Elizabeth Cadiz Topp notes that:

The exoticism of the subject and its latent eroticism stand in marked contrast to work done by Beaucourt in . . . the late 18th century Beaucourt is mythologizing the slave woman, presenting her as a black goddess of fertility, in a paradise where to eat, one merely has to pick fruit off the trees. But it also conveys a more sinister message--an attitude to slave women as sexually available commodities. Female slaves were commonly seen on the auction block in varying stages of undress, and their bodies were handled by potential buyers to determine

⁸Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 64.

⁹Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993; New York: Vintage, 1994) xiii; hereafter cited as *Culture*.

their capacity for child-bearing. They were fair game for lecherous masters.¹⁰

Topp's perspective includes the artwork and the history it represents--namely the dynamics between Black female slave and White slavemaster in western colonies.¹¹

Likewise, Barry Lord's perspective in *The History of Painting in Canada* (1974) takes a deviative step outside of traditional Canadian art history. He writes:

. . . de Beaucourt's portrait of a black slave . . . reminds us that at the very lowest level of the social scale in the late 1700s was a relatively small number of black people working as domestic slaves

De Beaucourt's slave is certainly exploited to the full in his picture of her, painted in 1786.¹²

Lord offers a political, socioeconomic and historical explication for the painting, establishing Beaucourt as an artist *as well as* a slavemaster.

These interpretations of *Portrait of a Negro Slave* bring memory to the actual histories of Black women in relation to gender, racial and class location. Whilst certain contemporary scholars see these components as divisible or unrelated, they were not to the eighteenth-century western Establishment. Concerning the epistemology produced by European men at that time, Londa Schiebinger observes that:

Historians have tended to treat race and sex in separate studies. Yet, it is

¹⁰Elizabeth Cadiz Topp, *Endless Summer: Canadian Artists in the Caribbean* ([Kleinberg]: McMicheal Canadian Art Collection, 28 Feb. - 15 May, 1988) 11-12.

¹¹Although Topp consecrated several pages in her catalogue to the history of slavery by using Beaucourt's *Portrait of a Negro Slave* as a reference point, John Bentley Mays thought she should have focused more on the image per se. He remarks: "There could certainly be more attention of the straightforward sort given to Beaucourt's *Portrait of a Negro Slave* . . ." See John Bentley Mays, "From Pine Trees to Palm Trees," *The Globe and Mail* 5 Mar. 1988: C5.

¹²Barry Lord, *The History of Painting in Canada: Toward A People's Art* (Toronto: NC P, 1974) 43.

significant that many of the anatomists at this time who were interested in racial differences were also interested in sexual differences European men dominated academic science, holding a tight rein on what was recognized as legitimate knowledge and who could produce that knowledge.¹³

Moreover, during the Trans-Atlantic slavery era, race, gender and ethnicity were combined in colonial ideology and epistemology to justify the position of Blacks as slaves.

Especially in Christian discourse from the Renaissance onward, prejudicial rationalisations about Blackness, femaleness and non-Europeanness supported Euro-imperial domination.¹⁴ Alvin Thompson remarks that whilst slavers showed a preference for "darker slaves" and thought them more fit to withstand the brutality of slave acculturation, Blackness and Africanness continued to be associated with sexual corruption, evil, the underworld and death¹⁵--a sign system extant in contemporary secular cultures in the west. When assessing the location of Black women within a White androcentric socio-imperialist order, it becomes imperative to consider all aspects of alterity that comprise identity--aspects which, according to Patricia Hill Collins, revert to interlocking systems of oppression.¹⁶

To examine only class or only gender would not sufficiently explain how many free Africans (some of whom were high-ranking leaders, aristocrats and spiritualists) became relegated in the west

¹³Londa Schiebinger, "The Anatomy of Difference: Race and Sex in Eighteenth-Century Science," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 4 (Summer 1990): 388; hereafter cited as "Anatomy."

¹⁴Said *Orientalism* 100; Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992) 31-32; hereafter abbreviated as *White*; McNaught 20-22.

¹⁵Alvin O. Thompson, "Race and Colour Prejudices and the Origin of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade," *Caribbean Studies* 16.3-4 (Oct.1976 - Jan.1977): 51-53.

¹⁶Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (1990; New York: Routledge, 1991) 78.

to the level of slave by virtue of their Blackness.¹⁷ Nicholas Hudson asserts that: "[T]he process of shipping and marketing slaves literally stripped the signs of national differences from the bodies of Africans . . . Slavery subjected Africans to diverse cultures, languages, and levels of 'civilization' to a uniform system of debasement."¹⁸ The stripping away of "signs of national difference" and the consequent generic identity, evidenced in *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, implies that many non-western peoples forcibly displaced to occidental colonies became nomadic, identity-less and acronymised, whilst most Europeans retained their name and heritage.¹⁹ Such a cross-cultural dynamic Locksley Edmondson refers to as the internationalisation of race:

The enslavement of Africans in the New World was thus the factor crucial not only to the viability of the modern slave system but also to the formalization of white racism and its spread across national frontiers [I]t was through slavery that African peoples were first introduced to European and New World white racial subordination and oppression.²⁰

The existence of *Portrait of a Negro Slave* echoes these phenomena. The artist by himself is known, written about and the painting attributed to him. Conversely, the poser remains mysterious, without a proper name, birthplace or identity. Her enigma in the portrait as "Negro Slave" is hauntingly quasi-present, reminding spectators privy to Other histories of pre-confederate Canadian slavery. It is also quasi-amnesic, given that her identity, history and reality are misremembered. And

¹⁷See Pieterse *White* 28-29; Basil Davidson, *Africa in Modern History: The Search for a New Society* (1978; Middlesex: Penguin, 1987) 18-20; and Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Williamsburg, VA: U of North Carolina P, 1986) 12.

¹⁸Nicholas Hudson, "From 'Nation' to 'Race': The Origin of Racial Classification in Eighteenth-Century Thought," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29.3 (1996): 251.

¹⁹Justin Kaplan and Anne Bernays, *The Language of Names* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997) 38.

²⁰Locksley Edmondson, "Trans-Atlantic Slavery and the Internationalization of Races," *Caribbean Quarterly/CQ* 22.1 (Mar.1976): 12.

therein lies the paradox. It is through the imposed nomadisation of colonial history that this painting, nationally displaced and stereotypically (un)named, signifies the subject subordination of the Black female in eighteenth-century Canada. Yet by the same token, it is precisely because of these anonymities that *Portrait of a Negro Slave* can be used to critique and decypher the racism and androcentric (hetero)sexism in hegemonic Canadian art history and (neo)colonial history.

Nanette Salomon affirms that the selections entailed in constructing nationalist art histories are based on ethnocentric ideologies, and represent a "distorting notion of who has contributed to 'universal' ideas expressed through creativity and aesthetic effort."²¹ Therefore the omissions in texts are just as crucial to note as the inclusions. This vigilance of inclusion/exclusion becomes especially intriguing when taking heed of Lord's analogy--that "the painting of Québec" is "the art of a nation."²²

Some narratives are ambiguous in their presentation of Beaucourt and *Portrait of a Negro Slave*. They at once venerate Beaucourt as a Euro-Canadian artist whilst disclosing his role as slavemaster without critical contextualisation. For example, in the American catalogue *Painting in Canada: A Selective Historical Survey* (1946), the following appears in relation to the portrait:

The brilliant painting of the Negro with still life is supposed to have been painted in Montreal. Slaves in Canada were almost as common before 1800 as in the Upper Atlantic States of this country. The subject was a slave of the artist and is supposed to have been his mistress. The fruit and the landscape behind both suggest this picture to have been painted in, or from experience in, the West Indies.²³

²¹Nanette Salomon, "The Art Historical Canon: Sins of Omission," (*En*)*Gendering Knowledge: Feminists in Academe*, eds. Joan E. Hartman and Ellen Messer-Davidow (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1990) 222.

²²Lord 22.

²³*Painting in Canada: A Selective Historical Survey* (Albany: Albany Institute of History and Art, 10 Jan. - 10 Mar., 1946) 22; hereafter cited as *Selective Survey*.

Despite the disclosure of the model as Beaucourt's slave and probable "mistress," the painting is deemed "brilliant," and the Negro semantically collocated with the still life, with no further critical analysis offered.

Although in numerous Canadian art-historical texts, *Portrait of a Negro Slave* is presented with an unknown nationality, ironically, certain authors have indeed used it as an icon of Canadian slavery. The image, for instance, appeared on the March 1976 cover of *Actualité*, and is reprinted within, accompanying Jean-Claude Beaucaire's "L'Esclavage au Canada... Un fait que l'histoire préfère ignorer," an article treating Paris and Black slavery in New France.²⁴ It was also printed in *The Illustrated History of Canada* as a reference to slavery in colonial Canada.²⁵ Similarly, it graced the first-edition jacket cover of Marcel Trudel's *Dictionnaire des Esclaves et de leurs propriétaires au Canada français* (1990), a landmark itinerary of residential and obituary details about the slaves and slaveholders of historical Quebec (see Fig.2). In this same book, Beaucourt is listed as owner of two slaves--Jean-Baptiste-François, nègre, and Marie-Thérèse-Zémire, négresse (see Appendix A).

Though Trudel's meticulous work is a definite plus to mainstream and marginalised history, certain of his texts contain problematic premises concerning slavocrats' accountability within Canadian slavery. For example, in *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* (1960), Trudel writes: "Comme ces nègres d'Afrique qui servaient d'intermédiaires auprès des négriers, les indigènes d'Amérique

²⁴See Jean-Claude Beaucaire "L'Esclavage au Canada... Un fait que l'histoire préfère ignorer," *Actualité* mars 1976: 16-17.

²⁵The explication of the image reads: "Though painted in 1786, nearly three decades after the end of the French regime, this work reflects one of the accepted but rarely depicted realities of New France's hierarchical society: slavery. See Craig Brown, ed., *The Illustrated History of Canada* (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1987) n. pag.

sont grandement responsables de la mise en servitude de leurs congénères [emphasis mine].²⁶

Further in his analysis, Trudel again evades the issue of White colonisers' responsibility and agency concerning the institutionalisation of slavery by stating that:

certes, ces premiers sauvages (sic) ne paraissent pas, une fois acquis par les Français, être traités exactement en esclaves: ce qui compte ici, c'est que *des esclaves aient été présentés à des Français et que des Français les aient acceptés, au moins pour l'instant, en qualité d'esclaves* (emphasis mine).²⁷

Here, Trudel portrays French-Canadian colonisers as well-intentioned subjects, not having initiated slavery and not in the least interested in acquiring profit through the commodity of racial and gender exploitation made available to the White privileged classes in eighteenth-century Canada.

Moreover, Trudel's use of the passive tense--"aient été présentés à des Français"--is a revealing slippage; it mitigates the aspect of colonists' accountability and (con)textually suppresses the power positions of French-Canadian slavocrats as prejudicial rulers of Others. In this light, Trudel's textual reconfiguration has the effect of presenting slavery as a "natural" inevitable phenomenon, beyond the control of Euro-Canadian slavocrats. Yet colonisers, repeatedly presented with the opportunity to banish slavery after the British Conquest, deliberately chose to continue the institution. Robert Prévost notes that:

Une première tentative pour l'abolition de l'esclavage avait échoué en 1793. Six ans plus tard, Joseph Papineau, député du quartier et de Montréal, remit la question à l'ordre du jour, mais ne parvint pas à rallier suffisamment de suffrages: une

²⁶Trudel *L'Esclavage* 13. MT: "Just as how the Negroes of Africa served as intermediaries for the slavers, the Natives were largely responsible for the enslavement of their compatriots."

²⁷Trudel *L'Esclavage* 15. MT: "Admittedly, once acquired by the French, those first Natives did not seem to be treated exactly as slaves. What matters here is that slaves were presented to the French, and the French accepted them--at least provisionally--in that capacity."

requête signée par des citoyens de Montréal réclama le maintien des droits des maîtres sur les esclaves. On ne renonce pas si facilement à un droit de propriété! D'autres tentatives échouèrent en 1800, en 1801 et en 1803. C'est seulement en 1833 que l'esclavage fut définitivement aboli par une loi du gouvernement britannique.²⁸

Retrospectively sharing Prévost viewpoint is the parliamentary official Jacques Viger (1787-1858) who wrote in his *Memoires et documents relatifs à l'histoire du Canada* (1859)--a compendium of primary sources and political reflections--that slavery was begun, not primarily by Natives selling their own people to White settlers, but more fundamentally by the régime's imperialist demand for a cheap exploitable source of labour to assist with the developing of French Canada.²⁹ Cited within is a correspondence excerpt from 1688 by a military official, presumed to have been Jean Baptiste de Lagny, who wrote:

Les gens de travail et les domestiques sont d'une rareté et d'une cherté si extraordinaire . . . en Canada, qu'ils ruinent tous ceux qui font quelque entreprise. On croit que le meilleur moyen d'y remédier serait d'avoir des **Esclaves Negres**. Le Procureur-Général de Conseil qui est à Paris assure que si Sa Majesté agréé cette proposition, quelques uns des principaux habitants en feront *acheter aux Isles à l'arrivée des vaisseaux de Guinée* et il est lui-même dans cette résolution.³⁰

²⁸Robert Prévost, *Montréal...La Folle Entreprise* ([Montréal]: Éditions internationales Alain Stanké, 1991) 231-232. The translated version reads: "An initial attempt at abolishing slavery had failed in 1793. Six years later Joseph Papineau, member of the Assembly for Montréal's east ward, put the question back on the order paper, but did not get enough votes: a petition signed by the citizens of Montréal demanded that masters' rights over their slaves be maintained. People don't give up property rights lightly. Subsequent attempts failed in 1800, 1801 and 1803. It was only in 1833 that slavery was definitively abolished by an act of the British Parliament." Robert Prévost, trans., *Montréal: A History*, by Elizabeth Mueller and Robert Chodos (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993) 194.

²⁹Jacques Viger, *Memoires et documents relatif à l'histoire du Canada*, eds. Jacques Viger and Louis Lafontaine (Montréal: société historique, 1859) 2; Winks also alludes to slavery having started in New France to facilitate merchantilist expansionism. See Winks 23.

³⁰See under "L'Extrait de lettres des 10 Août, 31 Octobre et 6 Novembre 1688, de MM. de Denonville, Gouverneur, et De Champigny, Intendant du Canada, au Ministre Secrétaire d'État," qtd. in Viger 1-2. MT: "Working people and domestics are so very rare and expensive. . . in Canada that this shortage is destroying the growth of enterprise here. We believe the best solution for this problem is to obtain **Negro Slaves**. The Attorney General of Council in Paris, who himself agrees with this resolve, maintains that if His Majesty accepts this proposition, some of the chief inhabitants would

Yet another governmental document, entitled "Article XLVII," prepared in 1760 near the end of the Seven Years' War, dictates that:

The negroes and panis of both sexes shall remain, in their quality of slaves, in the possession of the French and Canadians to whom they belong; they shall be at liberty to keep them in their service in the colony, or to sell them; and they may also continue to bring them up in the Roman religion.³¹

The above three accounts challenge Trudel's perspective regarding the inception of slavery in colonial Canada--that it was proposed *to* rather than *by* Canadian colonisers--and the ideology behind its commencement.

As well, this cautious word ordering is reflected in John Russell Harper's descriptions of *Portrait of a Negro Slave* and *Beaucourt*. In *Painting in Canada: A History* of 1960, Harper (1914-1983) contextualised the image as "a sensual half-length portrait of his [Beaucourt's] coloured servant."³² Then two years, later in *Everyman's Canada*, Harper seemed careful to describe the model once more as "the artist's Negro servant."³³ In both instances, coloured and Negro servant act as euphemistic assuagers for "slave." Also, they effectively conceal Beaucourt's actual role as slavemaster through a textual dissociation. I draw attention to Trudel's and Harper's descriptions, not to continue the *cul-de-sac* discourse of who is at fault for institutionalising or prolonging slavery, but rather to show how they have textually restructured colonial responsibility and political power.

purchase slaves from the islands once the ships from Guinea touch land.

³¹See "Article XLVII," qtd. in *Some Missing Pages* 17.

³²J. Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada: A History* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1960) 56; hereafter cited as *Painting*.

³³J. Russell Harper, *Everyman's Canada: Paintings and Drawings from the McCord Museum of McGill University* (Ottawa: Roger Duhamel, 1962) 38; hereafter abbreviated as *Everyman's*.

In *L'Esclavage au Canada français: histoire et conditions de l'esclavage*, also of 1960, Trudel (1917-), talking about the dynamics between White male master and enslaved female of colour, perturbingly insinuates that certain slavocrats fell prey to the seductive powers of their female slaves:

L'introduction de sauvagesses (sic) dans la société canadienne posa constamment le problème délicat des relations de leurs maîtres ou des autres Canadiens avec elles. C'est un fait maintes fois vérifié dans notre histoire coloniale que le Canadien a éprouvé une grande passion pour les sauvagesses, alors que le sauvage n'était pas attiré par les Canadiennes.³⁴

Later, when referring to Black female slaves, Trudel writes: "Les négresses pouvaient aussi séduire les Canadiens."³⁵ In highlighting the failures of interracial attraction, Trudel deviates from the crucial issue at hand--namely race and gender oppression in Canadian patriarchal slavocracies. Trudel's textual sidetracking causes a mnemonic suppression which sustains colonial paradigms of women of colour as hyper-concupiscent seducers. Through such discourses underlining the supposed libidinal capacities of women of colour as slaves, the accountability of colonisers once again becomes (con)textually allegorised and displaced.

The colonial discourses regarding *Portrait of a Negro Slave* overshadow mainstream history; for the racialised sexual objectification so obvious in the image remains blurred in heuristic texts. Romanticising *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, Gérard Morisset's article of 1950, entitled "Le Peintre François Beaucourt," describes the poser as a "gentille négresse qui porte dans ses mains une

³⁴Trudel *Histoire et Conditions* 257. MT: "The introduction of Native women into French-Canadian society constantly created a problem in the relations between their masters or other Canadian men. It is a fact well proven in our colonial history that Canadian men had a strong desire for Native women, whereas Native men were not attracted to Canadian women."

³⁵Trudel *Histoire et Conditions* 258. MT: "Negresses could also seduce Canadian men."

nature morte de fruits."³⁶ The description by William Colgate (1882-1971) takes a similar turn, romanticising the image as well as ambivalently debasing the poser. In the 1943 edition of *Canadian Art*, Colgate wrote: "One of his few known canvases (it may or may not have been painted in Canada) . . . portrays a smiling negro wench with a bowl of exotic fruits. The whole composition is suffused with a soft mellow glow, whether due to age or the artist's intent, is impossible to say."³⁷ These accounts demonstrate the colonial semblance in Canadian history and Canadian art history; for both bear an oppressive perspectival likeness in sexualising and romanticising the Other in order to mitigate or detract from the disturbing aspects of slavery.

Another genre of allegorisation is reflected in certain descriptions of *Portrait of a Negro Slave*. In numerous mainstream texts, not only is Beaucourt idealised as Canadian artist, his portrait is glorified for its eroticism, exoticism and stylised aesthetics. The focus therefore shifts from Beaucourt as slavemaster to Beaucourt as accomplished Canadian painter. For example, in *La Vie et L'Oeuvre de François Malepart de Beaucourt (1740-1794)* from 1976, Madeleine Major-Frégeau, dismissing the portrait altogether as relative to eighteenth-century colonial Canada, describes the image as follows:

Ce qui étonne quand on voit cette toile pour la première fois, et surtout si on tient compte de la date d'exécution, c'est l'exotisme du sujet et ensuite l'audace du peintre. Même sans documents à l'appui, ces deux éléments seraient assez convaincants pour permettre de croire que la toile n'a pas été peinte dans le contexte canadien du dix-huitième siècle.³⁸

³⁶Gérard Morisset, "Le Peintre François Beaucourt," *La Patrie: Journal de Dimanche* 19 mars 1950: 26.

³⁷William Colgate, forward, *Canadian Art: Its Origin and Development*, by C. W. Jefferys (1943; Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1967) 107-108.

³⁸Major-Frégeau 60. MT: "What is astonishing about this painting when observing it for the first time, especially when considering the date of completion, is the exoticism of the subject and the audacity of the painter. Even without supporting documents, these are two sufficiently convincing factors which make it possible to assume that the painting was not made in an eighteenth-century Canadian context."

Major-Frégeau seemingly salutes Beaucourt by praising the exoticism of the portrait. Whilst the portrait may well have been painted in the French Antilles or France,³⁹ the context would be doubtless comparable to the political situation in Canada at that time. One translated decree from 1709, prepared by the intendant Jacques Raudot, read:

*All colonies must be treated equally, and the inhabitants of this country need the Panis nation to do agricultural work and other types of work as much as the inhabitants of the Islands need the Negroes . . . [I]n accordance with the wishes of His Majesty, we order that those who have bought or who will hereafter buy any Panis (sic) or Negro are to be granted complete ownership of that slave; that these Panis and Negroes are to be forbidden from leaving their Masters (emphases mine).*⁴⁰

Raudot's plea for colonial egalitarianism--"all colonies must be treated equally"--in terms of apportioning Native and Black slaves to Canada as a Franco-British territory throws doubt upon Major-Frégeau's dismissive claim. Moreover, discounting the painting as (con)textually non-Canadian results in a digression that obliterates the remembering of historical slavery as an institution of early colonial Canada.

Also, there exists a faction of Canadian art history which fetishises the discriminatory concept of national firstness. The concept falsely promotes the geo-racial and gendered identity of "Canadian" as exclusively first, elitist, purely White, masculinist, professional and "progressive"⁴¹--a profile Beaucourt iconicises. In his text *Canadian Art* of 1950, Graham Campbell McInnes (1912-

³⁹David Karel, *Dictionnaire des Artistes de Langue française en Amérique du Nord: Peintres, Sculpteurs, Dessinateurs, Graveurs, Photographes et Orfèvres* (Québec: Presses l'Université de Laval, 1992) 51.

⁴⁰See Jacques Raudot, "Decree Issued by Intendants, 1709: Decree Issued with Respect to Negroes and the Savages known as Panis," qtd. in *Some Missing Pages* 5.

⁴¹Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty, eds., *Canada and Its Provinces: A History of the Canadian People and Their Institutions by One Hundred Associates*, vol. XII (Toronto: Glasgow, Brook and Company, 1914) 596.

1970) alludes to this now-established now-challenged norm: "The history of the art in Canada," says McInnes, "begins with the unquestioning adaptation of the French settlers to the background of the Lower St. Lawrence[emphasis mine]."⁴² Yet another account from 1958 reads: "The cultural history of Quebec may be said to have begun shortly before 1680, with the arrival of Bishop Laval's craftsmen from France."⁴³ This concept of national firstness is also reiterated in phallogocentric Canadian history. The White male becomes the necessary presence that inseminates progress and development into a "degenerating" Canada. In 1942, George Parkin de Twenebroker Glazebrook (1899-1989) wrote, here quoted at length, that:

Before the coming of the Europeans there were the lands that now comprise Canada no organized states: only Indian tribes living under conditions of barbarism or semi-barbarism To this primitive scene the French, and after them the English, brought a culture that was utterly new and capable of revolutionizing the whole life of the region. The scientific knowledge of centuries was suddenly put before a people who know none of it: sails . . . horses and wheeled vehicles, flint and steel To these and other instruments were added the message of Christianity, borne by devoted missionaries; and the means of education, backed by the learning and culture of the most advanced society in Europe. The French brought above all a sympathetic attitude toward the savage, a readiness to teach, an aim not to destroy but to live in amity.⁴⁴

A similar paternalistic account in Donald Dickie's *The Great Adventure: An Illustrated History of Canada for Young Canadians* (1950) is straightforward in its discriminatory biases, and thus reads:

The greatest gift we owe the red men is our broad land which they allowed us to

⁴²Graham McInnes, *Canadian Art* (Toronto: MacMillan Company of Canada, 1950) 1.

⁴³F. St. George Spendlove, *The Face of Early Canada* (Toronto: Ryerson P, 1958) 1.

⁴⁴G. P. de T. Glazebrook, *A History of Canadian External Relations*, rev. ed., vol. 1 (1942; Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1966) 1.

take without making any general war against us⁴⁵ In those days, in spite of their many good points, The Canadian Indians were still nomads, wanderers, and uncivilised people⁴⁶ The first civilized men who came to America were white.⁴⁷

Such histories as Dickie's--which, incidentally, was acclaimed with the Governor's General Award the following year⁴⁸--rationalise the benefits of colonial domination by attempting to erase memorially Native peoples' history. What is being textually suppressed, here, is "first...since," the latter term opening onto a rich Native history.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, the Iroquois had already devised a system of confederacy, enabling Native communities to co-exist more compatibly and permitting a greater military force during periods of attacks. This confederacy was eventually appropriated by White male colonisers as a viable system of governance.⁴⁹ Also, matrilineal privileges and rights were recognised and integral to the Iroquois confederacy.⁵⁰ However, under White (hetero)patriarchal rule, Native women's sociopolitical power quickly eroded.⁵¹ Such aspects become buried under

⁴⁵Donalda Dickie, *The Great Adventure: An Illustrated History of Canada for Young Canadians* (1950; Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons (Canada), 1951) 18. On the first page of this text is written: "Authorized for use in the schools of Alberta" and "Approved for use in the schools of Ontario." The text was probably used at high-school level.

⁴⁶Dickie 19.

⁴⁷Dickie 21.

⁴⁸This information appears on the opening page of the reprinted version of Dickie's book, from June 1951.

⁴⁹Lindesey Brine, *The Ancient Earthworks and Temples of the American Indians* ([1894?]; Hertfordshire: Oracle, 1996) 154-156.

⁵⁰Sally Roesch Wagner, "The Iroquois Confederacy: A Native American Model for Non-Sexist Men," *Iroquois Women: An Anthology*, ed. W. G. Spittal (Ohsweken, ON: Iroqrafts, 1990) 218.

⁵¹Sylvia Van Kirk, "The Role of Native Women in The Fur Trade Society of Western Canada, 1670-1830," *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History*, eds. Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1991) 79. See contemporary analyses of the Indian Act from 1876 in Francis 200-203; and Patricia Monture-Angus, *Thunder in My Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1995) 163-164.

colonial narratives that use the terms "barbarism," "primitive" and "uncivilised" to describe the complexities of Native historical sociopolitics.

Evidently, numerous (White) women had either embraced or internalised patriarchal views of Others; for in certain historical situations, the power they wielded over Other women became just as paternalistic and prejudicially oppressive as their male counterparts. Certain of them who became part of the fraternal hegemony were either sole or joint owners of slaves in colonial Canada,⁵² this being the case with Beaucourt's spouse Benoîte Gaétant.⁵³ As owners, White women slavocrats, like Madame Perrault,⁵⁴ also sold and leased their female slaves as they pleased (see Appendix B). These factors present a historiographic crisis in the feminist epistemology wanting to memorialise women slavocrats' past in a positive manner.

Thus is it that in art history, mainstream history and feminist history, the White/European/Euro-Canadian/Canadian presence is (de)coded and praised as a *sine qua non* for the advancement of nationalist culture. These narratives (in)directly use the disarticulation of racially-motivated abuse, sexism and oppression to idealise the White colonialist presence, be it male or female. In order to maintain the naturalisation of the colonist presence as progressively first, the discriminatory "colourless" ideal of "Canadian" must be regularly actuated in art-historical discourses,

⁵²Trudel *Histoire et Conditions* 258; "A Vendre," *La Gazette de Québec* 18 mars 1784: n. pag.

⁵³Major-Frégeau 60; Karel 51; Marcel Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires au Canada français* (Montréal: Éditions Hurtubise HMH, 1990) 379; hereafter cited as *Dictionnaire*. In numerous instances, female slaves were willed to White female slavocrats by their spouses who had no regard for retaining the Black family as a cohesive unit. See, for example, Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incident in the Life of a Slave Girl* ed. Jean Fagan Yellin (1861; Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1987) 6-8; ed. L. Maria Child, 1861.

⁵⁴Trudel records Madame Perrault as owner of two Panis and one Negress, the latter being the one she sold in the ad (Appendix B). See *Dictionnaire* 396.

whether blatantly or subtly, consciously or subliminally.⁵⁵ Ergo, the start of Canadian firstness signifies a textually constructed, geo-mnemonic palimpsest through which are sustained the denial, the othering, the decentring and the forgetting of subaltern histories.

Contrariwise, Beaucourt has retained his own unique identity within the canons of Canadian art history. Selected through generations as a colonial artist not to be textually forgotten, he occupies textual centre-stage as a painter epitomised for having done his share to advance colonial art. The details of his biography as retold in print help(ed) to define, fix and normalise a seemingly de-ethnicised art-historical nationalism. Apart from being promoted as a talented portraitist, Beaucourt is said to have produced top-notch artworks from his contact with elite artists in France.

De Beaucourt (1740-1794), working in the rich golden tradition of eighteenth-century aristocratic portraiture, produced some fine studies of local dignitaries.⁵⁶

A Native Canadian, François Beaucourt . . . was the best of this group of Montreal portraitists, though he worked in Canada for only the last eight years of his life.⁵⁷

. . . he and his young wife visited Russia, Germany, and other European countries before settling in Paris where they mixed with Fragonard's pupils and admirers.⁵⁸

These accounts reconstruct a laudative memory of Beaucourt as the incipient, the best, of "developed" European heritage and influence, but simultaneously of the colonially indigenous nativism that was presumably "civilising" Canada at the time. In addition, the consistency in rewritten

⁵⁵About the disguise of Whiteness in popular media, see Isaac Julien and Kobena Mercer, "De Margin and De Centre" *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* eds., David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (New York: Routledge, 1996) 455-456.

⁵⁶McInnes 19.

⁵⁷Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, 2nd ed. (1973; Toronto: Oxford UP, 1988) 45.

⁵⁸Harper *Painting* 56.

biographical details enhance the notion of epistemological authority and "objective truth" in the s/pace of contemporary collective memory.

Furthermore, texts lauding Beaucourt as the first and the best do so by using *Portrait of a Negro Slave* as a mere, symbolically colonised appendage of his brilliance. For instance, Robert Hamilton Hubbard (1916-1989), a prolific writer, editor, curator and art historian who has produced a sizable corpus on colonial art history and its national identity, invariably positions *Portrait of a Negro Slave* as a (con)textual prop to model Beaucourt as an avant-garde colonial portraitist, partially responsible for the progress of Euro-Canadian art. Within various texts, dating between 1946 and 1963, Hubbard wrote:

François Baillairgé and François Beaucourt were the first to re-introduce European standards of technique and expression.⁵⁹

François Beaucourt, trained in the traditions of Fragonard and Chardin in France before the Revolution, was the first to raise the status of painting above the merely functional.⁶⁰

His *Negress* . . . is a unique example of 'pure' painting in which the texture of the paint, harmonies of colour, and the play of light are to be enjoyed for their own sakes. The picture carries with it an intriguing suggestion of Fragonard to *remind us that Beaucourt was the first Canadian-born painter to study in Europe* (emphasis mine).⁶¹

The *first* painter to be trained in Europe since Frère Luc was François Beaucourt who is said to have travelled as far as Russia before returning to Montreal about 1780. He was the *first* to introduce subject-matter other than the portrait and the

⁵⁹R. H. Hubbard, "Painting," *The Arts of French Canada, 1613-1870* ([Detroit]: City of Detroit Printing Division, 1946) 46.

⁶⁰See R. H. Hubbard's "Introduction," *Canadian Painting: An Exhibition Arranged by The National Gallery of Canada* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1950) 6; hereafter cited as *Canadian Painting*.

⁶¹R. H. Hubbard, *The Development of Canadian Art* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1963) 52; cited hereafter as *Development*.

religious picture. His *Portrait of a Negress* of 1786, with its exotic subject and intriguing suggestion of Fragonard's influence, is a rare example of secular painting. It must have shocked the clerical society of post-Conquest Canada (emphases mine).⁶²

Examining this last statement, Hubbard literally spares no detail in revealing what he meant by "subject-matter other than the portrait and the religious picture." Was he perhaps referring to the risqué aesthetics of the portrait, supposedly uncommon for a New-France artist to have produced in a society dominated by the patriarchal church? Or is something else being textually smothered, here? What of the labour and servitude that has become sexualised, racialised, gendered and class-stratified in this portrait? Evidently, these aspects are inseparable in the way they visually interrelate in the image to transform the Black female subject into the tropically enslaved. However, a mention of these allegorical conventions--conventions which lead to an/Other historical memory and actuality--has been surrendered to the textual s/pace which, instead, biographically idealises Beaucourt.

Morisset (1898-1970) positions the painting likewise. This is to say that *Portrait of a Negro Slave* becomes a subordinate textual motif that bolsters Beaucourt's avant-garde image. For example, in his 1941 publication, *Coup d'oeil sur les arts en Nouvelle-France*, Morisset states: "Le portrait d'une *Jeune Négrresse portant un plateau de fruits* . . . semble indiquer que Beaucourt a longuement étudié les oeuvres de Fragonard, tout au moins celles de ses disciples immédiats. Car Beaucourt est un peintre de son temps, le seul de cette époque qui ne retarde pas sur la mode."⁶³

Subsequently, Morisset's essay, integrated in the catalogue *Painting in Canada: A Selective*

⁶²R. H. Hubbard, ed., *An Anthology of Canadian Art* (Toronto: Oxford UP, 1960) 11; hereafter cited as *Anthology*.

⁶³Gérard Morisset, *Coup d'oeil sur les arts en Nouvelle-France* (Québec: Presses de Charrier et Dugal, 1944) 57; hereafter cited as *Coup d'oeil*. MT: "The portrait of a young Negress carrying a tray of fruit . . . seems to indicate that Beaucourt had studied the artworks of Fragonard for a long time, at least those of his immediate followers. Beaucourt was a painter of his days, the only one of that era who was not behind the times."

Survey, highlights Beaucourt as an artist who "re-invented painting."⁶⁴ Here, Beaucourt's national remembrance is a sign textually enabled by the repetitive erasure of the Other's history blatantly represented in the image. Recollecting the Derridian concept of movement in signification, it becomes apparent that Beaucourt's nationalist narrative circulates as an/Other historical amnesia, oscillating within degrees of memory, seen but not seen, there but sporadically, fluctuating in and out of mnemonic consciousness.

Additional aspects underscored with Beaucourt's national firstness are his European-acquired education, European work experience and professionalism. Harper reveals that Beaucourt "left for serious study in Paris after the Seven Years' War and then moved on to work with Joseph Camagne in Bordeaux."⁶⁵ Also, Harper stated that: "Beaucourt died in Montreal, having established a solid reputation as a professional painter, the first native-born Canadian to do so."⁶⁶ *Treasures from Quebec* (1965), a bilingual catalogue celebrating Quebec's national art, presents Beaucourt as a "native-born" artist who was a "professional trained abroad."⁶⁷ Similarly, Peter Mellen's *Landmarks of Canadian Art* of 1978, claims that Beaucourt and Baillairgé "went to France and returned to Canada as graduates of the French Academy. . . ."⁶⁸

Apparently, it is from Beaucourt's eulogising biographical redundancy that colonial art history derives its power. Doubtless, information on Beaucourt's travels, education, marital and familial life

⁶⁴Gérard Morisset, "An Essay on Canadian Painting" in *Selective Survey* 10.

⁶⁵Harper *Painting* 56.

⁶⁶Harper *Everyman's* 38.

⁶⁷*Treasures from Quebec: An Exhibition of Paintings Assembled from Quebec and its Environs/Tresors de Québec: Expositions de peintures provenant de Québec et des environs* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1965) 35.

⁶⁸Peter Mellen, *Landmarks of Canadian Art* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978) 28.

are necessary to recreate his textual memory; nonetheless, my point, here, is that a domination is recurring within the sites of textual memory. The question then pressing is, How to write an art history that is non-dichotomous, non-prejudicial, inclusively "balanced" and without national egotism?

Descriptive slippage and absences pertaining to *Portrait of a Negro Slave* are another form of mnemonic suppression. This is to say that a word or substantive indicator, followed by explanatory lacks, escapes the restraining bridle of historical reconstruction. These conventional indicators appear in textual epistemology as traces teasing out Other historical memories, long interred under the s/pace of reiterated hegemonic narratives. "To see emptiness," as claims Rudolf Arnheim, "means to place into a percept something that belongs there but is absent and to notice its absence as a property of the present."⁶⁹ Besides, the memory present in such texts is in itself a heuristic consciousness that possesses a certain politics--that of White hegemony. Regarding the knowledge manufactured by, or affiliated with, dominant culture, Rozena Maart asserts that: "After all, does the saying not go that knowledge is power! Whilst it may be so for those individuals and collectives who maintain this power, *knowledge* is also about *the power to assert the absence of knowledge . . .*"⁷⁰ The practice of producing knowledge ostensibly relies on refined systems of selective effacement and enhancement, depending on the subject chosen for study.

The disavowal of slavery and of racial apartheid in colonial Canada is a salient feature in numerous hegemonic narratives. Writing from skewed lens, François-Xavier Garneau (1809-1866), in *Histoire du Canada* of 1852, stated:

⁶⁹Arnheim 89.

⁷⁰Rozena Maart, "Consciousness, Knowledge and Morality: The Absence of the Knowledge of White Consciousness in Contemporary Feminist Theory," *A Reader in Feminist Ethics*, ed. Debra Shogan (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' P, 1993) 130.

Qu'on se rappelle aussi que c'est un pays où il n'y a point de ces malheureuses distinctions qui existent dans quelques-unes de nos autres colonies; il n'y a aucune distinction de castes, de maîtres et d'esclaves. Le peuple forme, pour ainsi dire, une seule famille, que les liens le plus forts attachent à la métropole.⁷¹

A more contemporary history by Carol Agocs, published 1992, claimed: "Although slavery *never* became an entrenched institution in Canada, it did thrive until . . . 1833 However, an all-encompassing system of racial segregation like that of the southern United States *never* became established in Canada [emphasis mine]."⁷² This statement as epistemology is misleading, especially since in the 1790s, Blacks were frequently relegated to remote segregated areas. James W. St. G. Walker asserts that:

They were settled, most of them, in segregated communities, they suffered from cruelty and injustice at the hands of officials who treated them differently in allocating lands and provisions, and even before the law. They attended segregated churches and schools, and they had their own social mores which were often at variance with those of the greater society.⁷³

Also, in the early nineteenth century, many were eventually transported to Sierra Leone, hoping still for a better life and a political/communal autonomy they were unable to find in Canada. These historical elements undermine Agocs' perspective of racial segregation *never* having existed in Canada. Yet her text as part of hegemonic mainstream discourse mnemonically distorts the remembering of slavery, racial violence and racialised oppression in Canada.

⁷¹F.-X. Gameau, *Histoire du Canada: depuis sa découverte jusqu'à nos jours*, 2e éd., tome 4 (Québec: John Lovell, 1852) 196. MT: "It should be remembered that this is a country where there is none of those wretched distinctions of caste, of master and of slave. The people form, so to speak, one single family whose strongest ties are to their homeland."

⁷²Agocs 272.

⁷³James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone 1783-1870* (London: Longman Group and Dalhousie UP, 1976) 86-87.

Again, this aberration is mirrored in the Canadian art history which stresses, as in the case of *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, that slavery hardly lasted in Canada, that it was abolished earlier than in most other colonies, and that the poser was one of the last slaves of colonial Canada--"She must have been one of the few last slaves left in Canada at that time; the practice was abolished in the British colonies in 1807."⁷⁴

From a heuristic point of view, the hegemonic Canadian art history that romanticises colonially-perpetuated racial/gendered/labour/sexual exploitations and that reconstructs Beaucourt as the first and the best of colonial Canadian artists is also (re)normalising cognitive apathy regarding the complex histories of alterity. Like a chain reaction that has circuitously lasted over two centuries, colonial ideas uncritically filtered through words become text, image, epistemology and ideology, sanitising the Canadian identity that redefines who/what is of enough importance to be recollected in hegemony's textual limelight, and who/what should be subordinated in national memory. In this regard, *Portrait of a Negro Slave* manifests as an image with a double-face: one side connected to a "colourless" nationally renowned artist, and the Other, trapped face-down in the shadow of an (un)forgettable (un)traceable history.

Like concepts, texts are complex products, effects of history, the intermingling of old and new, a complex of internal coherences or consistencies and external referents, of intension and extension, of thresholds and becomings. Texts, like concepts, do things, make things, perform actions, create connections, bring about new alignments. They are events--situated in social, institutional, and conceptual space.

Elizabeth Grosz⁷⁵

⁷⁴Harper *Everyman's* 38.

⁷⁵Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 126.

CHAPTER 2
THE IMAGI-NATION IN NAMING:
T/RACES OF NAMES, (CON)TEXTS AND (IN)VERSIONS

... the ideational elements of an imaginative consciousness are the same as those of the consciousness to which the name of thoughts is usually given.

Jean-Paul Sartre¹

The competing versions of narrative, memory and history in this conjuncture might be read symptomatically as a state of affairs that speaks of--articulates--conflicting identities within the 'imagined community' of the nation.

Isaac Julien and Kobena Mercer²

The shadow does not consist only of omissions. It shows up as often in an impulsive or inadvertent act.

M.-L. von Franz.³

This chapter deals with the naming of Beaucourt's portrait, and the euphemisms or descriptives attributed to the image and the poser. I shall magnify the meanings of these names to demonstrate how an economy which inherently taxonomises and stereotypes the Other is at play in the (con)textual appellation of *Portrait of a Negro Slave*. I will also explore the colonist's imagi-national naming of the Black woman as an ideological construct, a (mis)represented (in)version of alterity through which the Other *qua* subject turns into a non-national presence, emphatically racialised, gendered, corporealised and rendered sexually or servilely utilitarian within the material and symbolic economy of White patri-imperialism.

La Négrresse; L'Esclave à la nature morte; Jeune Négrresse portant un plateau de fruits;

¹Sartre 258.

²Julien and Mercer 450.

³Cited from M.-L. von Franz, "The Process of Individuation" in *Man and His Symbols*, ed. Carl G. Jung (1964; New York: Laurel, 1968) 174.

Portrait of a Black Slave; Portrait of a Negress; Portrait d'une Esclave noire; Portrait of a Slave Girl;⁴--Having existed for over a century without an official title, these are some of the contemporary names given to Beaucourt's painting, currently known as *Portrait of a Negro Slave*. Whether from an historical or contemporary perspective, the title of this portrait as a sign operates efficiently in its ability to condense, differentiate and situate alterity. Ostensibly, the act of naming, and the name-giver are inextricably linked to a system of language through which privilege, ideological representation of self, and power are contested. Supporting this point of view, Justin Kaplan and Anne Bernays ascertain that: "Like personal names, collective (or nonpersonal) names have an instrumental role. They reflect and shape social values, group self-regard, and historical understandings."⁵

Yet in the Fine Arts, the sign also needs the tautology or reiteration of itself within a visual narrative to acquire meaning. Disambiguated, the visuo-textual narrative of *Portrait of Negro Slave* eroticises, debases and subjugates Otherness. This is to say that the colonially narrated tautology within the titles of Beaucourt's painting articulate meaning by subsuming Blackness and femaleness with enslavement in the image. These titles, whether old or new, operate within a semiotic economy of colonially phantasised alterity in which race, class, gender, sexual "nature," moral disposition and ethnicity are at once, revealed, encoded and categorically fixed in their visual (dif)fusion.

The name as an old title becoming new, the synchronic becoming diachronic, partakes in

⁴Cited respectively from Pamela Miller et. al., *La Famille McCord: Une Vision passionnée/The McCord Family: A Passionate Vision* ([Montréal]: McCord Museum of Canadian History, 1992) 24; R. H. Hubbard, traduit, *L'Évolution de l'art au Canada*, par Pierre Daviault (Ottawa: Galerie Nationale du Canada, 1963) 52; hereafter cited as *L'Évolution*; Morisset *Coup d'oeil* 57; Reid 45; Major-Frégeau 141; Donald Blake Webster, Michael S. Cross and Irene Szylinger, *Georgian Canada: Conflict and Culture 1745-1820* (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1984) 141.

⁵Kaplan and Bernays.

the politics of hegemonic naming; for it signifies the appropriation of the coloniser's language to name or represent the Other. Homi Bhabha calls this psycho-mnemonic abyss the meanwhile of dominant culture: "The 'meanwhile' is the sign of the processual and performative, not a simple present continuous, but the present as succession without synchrony--the iteration of the sign of the modern nation-space."⁶ That the titles and (con)text of *Portrait of a Negro Slave* have remained largely unexplored in Canadian art history as a nationalist art history signifies an ongoing political nonchalance in historically retrieving and subjectifying the Other.

Returning to a previous quote, William Colgate described *Portrait of a Negro Slave* as a "smiling Negro wench with a bowl of exotic fruits,"⁷ an explication which refers to both the image and the poser. Although Colgate's description is of the twentieth century, the sign "Negro wench" has a rich colonial history of racism, sexism and class-strata subordination. This history, stretching back centuries, does not exclude Canada. Consequently, William Shakespeare (1564-1616) used "wench" in several of his plays, which were enjoyed mostly by the Elizabethan elite.⁸ In *The Tempest*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Sir Thomas More*, the word appears as either a sexualised pejoration, a pet name or a *double-entendre*.⁹ However, with slavery begun, a newly conventionalised nomenclature came into effect to call and name related slave experiences. "Wench" thus acquired

⁶Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994) 159; abbreviated hereafter as *Location*.

⁷Colgate 108.

⁸Charles Jasper Sisson, ed. *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (1954; Long Acre, London: Odhams P, 1960) ix-xiii. See also E. A. M. Colman, *The Dramatic use of Bawdy in Shakespeare* (London: Longman Group, 1974); and historical comments about Shakespearean literature by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women authors in Ann Thompson and Sasha Roberts, eds., *Women Reading Shakespeare 1660-1900: An Anthology of Criticism* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1997).

⁹See Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Sir Thomas More* in Sisson 3, 321, 1243 respectively. See also the adjective "wenchless" in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, Sisson 1224.

racialised connotations and was used as an equivalent for "Negro wench," which is defined as a young Black female slave or servant (see Appendix C). These euphemisms were commonplace throughout much of the English-speaking colonies. M. G. Lewis, an Englishman who resided in Jamaica from 1815 to 1817, described a Black slave woman in his memoir as "a fine stout black wench."¹⁰ Lewis made notes about another slave woman called Venus, Venus being a forename as well as a sexual pseudonym.¹¹ Carol Barash notes that, in the 1700s, "female slaves were given either common English names such as Sarah and Moll, or names from classical mythology (Psyche, Diana). . . . The names of slave women . . . suggest at once the familiar and the exotic, the common whore and the sexually potent woman of myth."¹² Such a problematic generic naming as "Negro wench" disintegrates personhood, transmogrifying the so named subject into a utility object of sex and labour.

However, the connexion here is that additional examples of this problematic appellation appear in *The Upper Canada Gazette* of 19 August 1795. The section reserved for saleable items--furniture, debts and land grants--contains two reprinted advertisements with the heading "Negro wench" (see Appendix D). Announcements for persons who were missing or escaped criminals generally appeared in this section too; but the wording of the announcements for Black women is different. The ad entitled "To be Sold" in *The Upper Canada Gazette* of 20 December 1800 concerns

¹⁰M. G. Lewis, *Journal of a West India Proprietor 1815-1817*, ed. Mona Wilson ([1845]; London: George Routledge and Sons, 1929) 113.

¹¹Lewis 113.

¹²Carol Barash, "The Character of Difference: The Creole Woman as Cultural Mediator in Narratives about Jamaica," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 4 (Summer 1990): 412. Regarding the use of classical names in colonial America, see also Kaplan and Bernays 77.

the auction of an anonymous Black woman,¹³ and resembles the announcement regarding the slave, Chloe (see Appendix E). With these particular announcements, youth as well as the sexual and physical vigour of the Black female are accentuated.

This is especially obvious in the blurb for Chloe. At a time when salutary nouns, such as Miss and Mister, were reinforced to create social distance and to indicate class location, the sole given name Chloe surfaces as a sign of the vulgar and the immediately intimate; but also one, as had explained Barash, of the mythical. An epithet for Demeter, Chloe is the deity of "fertility and agricultural productivity" in classical Greek myths.¹⁴ Notwithstanding the singularity of the name, its brevity should also be noted. Kaplan and Bernays remark that slavocrats "frequently gave their mules and their slaves identical names--usually clipped monosyllables, more nickname than first name. . . ."¹⁵ Moreover, in manifold circumstances, the surnames assigned to slaves were usually those of their previous or current owners, which further affirmed colonial power.

The absence of a surname in the ad emphasises Chloe's subordinate position as slave whilst her age--a nubile 23--becomes a signifier of her sexual and reproductive capabilities. Much like the announcement "To be Sold," the ad for Chloe reveals that she "understands washing, cooking, &c." Although for that period, the phrasing with "understands" was customary in these blurbs, given the context constructed, the verb textually communicates a colonial condescension that resultingly bestialises Black women, denoting that they must be trained and disciplined as animals in order to

¹³This ad was reprinted in subsequent editions of *The Upper Canada Gazette*. See the issues for 27 December 1800 and 10 January 1801.

¹⁴Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975) 13.

¹⁵Kaplan and Bernays 77.

"understand" how to perform the simplest of domestic tasks.

Yet of equal importance in Chloe's case is the target consumer group. Gentlemen are the ones encouraged to buy or lease Chloe "by the year or month." The frequent exchange of Black women by the hands of different slavemasters is an observation in accordance with certain of Marcel Trudel's findings. Noting a pattern in short-lived predominantly male proprietorship, Trudel reports, quoted here at length, that:

Trois négresses ont appartenu successivement à cinq propriétaires: Marie Bulkley se vend en 1785 à Elias Hall, en 1788 elle appartient à John Lagord qui la cède bientôt à Pierre Joinville au cours d'un échange, puis Joinville en fait don à son gendre Louis Olivier et, enfin, Olivier la vend à Joseph Gent qui la garde comme servante: elle avait eu cinq propriétaires en seulement 12 ans. La négresse Cynda passe de Katy Brons ou Broks à un nommé Balis, puis à John Lagord en 1787, ensuite à Pierre Joinville et de nouveau à Lagord: en 2 ans seulement, elle avait subi cinq propriétaires. La négresse Rose a elle aussi une carrière mouvementée: elle va de Samuel Mix à Louis Gaultier en 1787, elle appartient en 1791 à Lambert St-Omer qui l'a acquise dans un encan, en mars 1795 elle devient l'esclave du curé Louis Payet qui à l'automne de 1796 la fait vendre à Thomas Lée.¹⁶

The context explicitly constructed in the announcement for Chloe is, like the three cases above, the auctioning of Black women as servants to mostly (White) male buyers. Contrariwise, the implicit contexts allude to the pimping of the Black female body. Yet when considering the portion "wench" in the ad's heading, the allusion to solicitation and prostitution becomes less covert; for wench, of which is derived the verb to wench and other debasing locutions, also means to liaise with prostitutes

¹⁶Trudel *Histoire et Conditions* 111. MT: "Three negresses had successively belonged to five different slave-owners. Marie Bulkley was sold in 1785 to Elias Hall; in 1788, she belonged to John Lagord who shortly afterwards gave her away to Pierre Joinville to settle a trade. Then Joinville made a gift of her to his brother-in-law Louis Olivier; and finally, Olivier sold her to Joseph Gent who kept her as a servant. She had five masters in only twelve years. The negress Cynda went from Katy Brons or Broks to a one Balis, then to John Lagord in 1787, and after to Pierre Joinville, then once more to Lagord. In only two years, she had been subjected to five slave-owners. The negress Rose also had a frequently disrupted record as a worker: She went from Samuel Mix to Louis Gaultier in 1787; in 1791, she belonged to Lambert St-Omer who purchased her at an auction. In March 1795 she became the slave of curé Louis Payet who sold her to Thomas Lée in the fall of 1796.

or to fuck (see Appendices F & G).

In certain slavocracies, the coloniser's pimping of Black slave women was a commonplace occurrence--for slavemaster and slavemistress alike. William Green remarks that, in the early 1800s, in certain slavocracies, "white women deemed 'respectable' owned and mongered coloured and black prostitutes in the port towns."¹⁷ Within the semiotic colonial economy of naming, the Black woman as "Negro wench" reducibly reifies as (hetero)sexually exploitable, useable and disposable chattel.

From a synchronic perspective, the colonial imagi-national concept of sexuality as "dark" and "vulgar" has usually been constructed around B/blackness. Sander Gilman asserts that, for numerous eighteenth-century European theorists, darkness or B/blackness was considered "a negative force in the realm of perception."¹⁸ I write B/blackness to distinguish how sexual mores and practices, conceptualised in the abstract and deemed evil or "black" by the nation-self, become essentialised, coded and embodied in the racialised Black Other. Within the realm of polysemy, B/blackness surfaces as semiotically compressed--condensing the meaning of the non-self into a sign of the immoral, the "darkly" denationalised and the deviantly sexual. Says bell hooks: "Fucking is the Other. Displacing the notion of Otherness from race, ethnicity, skin-color, the body emerges as a site of contestation where sexuality is the metaphoric Other that threatens to take over, consume, transform *via* the experience of pleasure."¹⁹ Therefore, Chloe as a "Negro" and a "wench" becomes, through colonial naming and (con)textual (in)versions, a mere B/black body whose function and services to her owner revolve around labour, childbearing and sexual congress.

¹⁷Green 21.

¹⁸Sander L. Gilman, "The Figure of the Black in German Aesthetic Theory," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 4 (Summer 1975): 376; hereafter cited as "Figure."

¹⁹bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End P, 1992) 22.

Keeping in mind the historical polysemy of "Negro wench," Colgate's description of *Portrait of a Negro Slave* now appears crude, pornographic and even (con)textually onanistic. How is Colgate actually wanting to identify the B/black poser in Beaucourt's image? As a mistress, a prostitute, a slave, a maidservant, a domestic worker--or all of the said? Also, is he associating her race with the aspect of fornication, seeing that, from the term Negro wench, "wench" can be replaced by "prostitute" or "fuck"?

After all, on a certain level, the image mirrors Colgate's racist and (hetero)sexist descriptive. Spatially confined within what seems to be a verandah in the Caribbean, the poser appears as a domestic, standing with a breast revealed and momentarily caught in the act of serving. The smile mitigates as well as normalises the context of sexualised slavery--construing an individual agency for the poser who, by her pleasant expression, seems aware of, and even enjoying, her state of undress, objectification and enslavement. Conversely, this imperialist notion of Black women as subservient re/producers, available to White male colonists in surplus quantity, encumbered the realities of certain female slaves. For instance, an eighteenth-century record of demise taken from the St. George Anglican Church of Sydney, Nova Scotia reads:

Sept. 15th, 1792. Buried Diana Bustian, a negro girl belonging to Abraham Cuyler, Esq. in the 15th year of her age. She was deluded and ruined by George More, Esq. the naval Officer and one of Gov. MacCormick's Counsel, by whom she was pregnant with twins and delivered off, but one of them; she most earnestly implored the favor of Mr. More's brother Justice's to be admitted to her oath; concerning her pregnancy by him; but was refused that with every other assistance by him and them.²⁰

²⁰Cited from St. George Anglican Church Records, Sydney, Nova Scotia, reel 11911 PANS, from Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management. This passage was graciously sent to me by library technician Janice Fralic-Brown at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design Library in Halifax.

Such an experience of sexual exploitation and neglect became commonplace for numerous Black girls and Black women who were slaves, not only in colonial Canada, but in other colonised countries. Concerning the politics of race and gender in the United States which impacted on the realities of Black women, Patricia Hill Collins claims that: "African-American women inhabit a sex/gender hierarchy in which inequalities of race and social class have been sexualised. Privileged groups define their alleged sexual practices as the mythical norm and label sexual practices and groups who diverge from this norm as deviant and threatening."²¹ Supporting Collins' observation, Gilman asserts that, in artistic representations, Blackness as a sign of the labouring class usually denoted corrupt eroticism--"the black servant's central functions in the visual arts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was to sexualize the society in which he or she is found."²²

Beaucourt's image of the Black domestic unquestionably eroticises the racialised act of serving and the class location of slave. However, nearly one hundred years after Beaucourt, Jean-Léon Gérôme refined the aesthetic representation of sexualised work in his harem scenes through more precise, visually seductive detailing. For example, in *The Moorish Bath* of 1870 (Fig.3), a Black woman and her White homologue are portrayed in an opened extravagantly decorated bath area. The former tends to the latter who is modestly presented in a dorsal position, her back blocking the spectator's gaze. The turbaned Black woman, however, is frontally exhibited. Captured in great orientalist detail, her mien intrigues and entices the eye. *Naked* from the waist up, she tilts a basin of water, readying it as though to rinse the back of her *nude* mistress.

The allegorical dichotomy between the two women is worth noting. The unclothed woman,

²¹Collins 163.

²²Sander L. Gilman, "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature," *Critical Inquiry* 12 (Autumn 1985): 209; cited hereafter as "Black Bodies."

humbly seated and waiting to be bathed is situated within the realm of the nude which, according to Lynda Nead, "transcends. . . historical and social existence, and is a kind of social disguise."²³ Conversely, the racialisation of the woman servant as Black, clothed from the waist down, becomes transcoded as a naked rather than a nude. This happens because the aesthetic conflation of naked skin, semi-clothed corporeality and Blackness come closer to articulating visually the actual experience of numerous Black women. The codified discourse of the image nonetheless condones imperial proletarianism through enslavement. Thus collapses--with this allegorical constellation--the transcendental social disguise.

Through Gérôme's brush, the servant's Black body turns into a physique which highlights and sensualises the motions of work via the signs of well-formed musculature and unclothed Black skin. Although the representational formula of turbaned Black female slave tending to White mistress was not unusual in orientalist art,²⁴ it recounts an historical harem reality.²⁵ The painting's name, moreover, recalls racial subserviency and sensuality. Whilst *Bath* holds the promise of bodily exposure, scented ablutions and the contact of skin with water (sensuality), *Moorish* derived from Moor or Blackamoor, is yet another equivalent for the labouring Negro (subserviency).²⁶ In Gérôme's portrait, the Black female body is sexualised; and the synecdochical sign of Blackness labouring for White imperialist slavocracy becomes displaced in the overall sensuality of the

²³Nead 16.

²⁴Griselda Pollock, *Avant-Garde Gambits 1888-1893: Gender and the Colour of Art History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992) 21; Andrée Maubert, *L'Exoticisme dans la peinture française du XVIIIe siècle*, thèse de doctorat d'université, Université de Paris, 1943, 5; see also the brief commentary on this painting in Colin Rhodes, *Primitivism and Modern Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994) 90.

²⁵Alev Lytle Croutier, *Harem: The World Behind the Veil* (New York: Abbeville P, 1989) 87.

²⁶Also, see comments about these equivalents in Kaplan and Bernays 69.

voyeuristic depiction.

Even when *Portrait of a Negro Slave* is compared to Elizabeth-Louise Vigée-Lebrun's *Lady Folding a Letter* (c.1784) (Fig.4), it is evident that a different sign system is employed altogether to narrate Whiteness and bourgeois femininity. Vigée-Lebrun was known for her gynocentric, family-oriented portraits that sought to render the (White) female poser as important subject, instead of sexual object.²⁷ Yet when contrasting the two portraits within a western framework, the extent to which the body is clothed or unclothed, and the fabrics encasing the body become a signifier of class strata. Thought to be the Comtesse of Cères,²⁸ the poser in Vigée-Lebrun's portrait--a portrait seemingly not given a title proper by the artist herself²⁹--is wrapped in frills, lace and satin. With her plumed hat and ringed finger, she is a vision of delicacy, grace, hyper-femininity and luxe. Beaucourt's poser, on the other hand, wears a coloured turban and an easily manipulated or removable blouse.

Also, the manual activity of Vigée-Lebrun's subject, enhanced by the "still life of writing instruments,"³⁰ is telling of her class location and privilege to education. Concerning the letter writing, George Shackelford and Mary Taverer Holmes observe that "a seemingly innocent action, it often betokened an illicit love affair. In Vigée's portrait the gesture introduced motion into the

²⁷Paula Rea Radisich, "Que peut définir les femmes?: Vigée-Lebrun's Portraits of an Artist," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 25.4 (Summer 1992): 446-450.

²⁸George T. M. Shackelford and Mary Taverer Holmes, *A Magic Mirror: The Portrait in France 1700-1900* (Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, 12 Oct. 1986-25 Jan. 1987) 68.

²⁹Vigée-Lebrun appears not to have titled this portrait; nor was *Lady Folding a Letter* the initial name. Joseph Baillio had believed *Une Jeune fille qui écrit et que l'on surprend* a possible title for the portrait. But in his 1982 catalogue on Vigée-Lebrun, he explains that: "The subject is obviously not a girl but a mature woman." Cited from Joseph Baillio, *Elizabeth Louise Vigée Lebrun 1755-1842* (Fort Worth: Kimbell Art Museum, 1982) 54. It is possible, then, that the title *Lady Folding A Letter* only came into common usage during the nineteenth or twentieth century.

³⁰Baillio 54.

image, a graceful fluid movement as the lady begins to rise at the completion of her task and takes in our presence by the turn of her head.³¹ Contrariwise, in Beaucourt's image, the Black hands are seen, not engaged in lettered pursuits, but busy holding, carrying and serving tropical fruit. Again, in both incidents, the colonial titles contextualise and echo the visual narratives represented. Though also a generic euphemism, the title fragment *Lady* de-emphasises the race of the female subject, naturalising Whiteness and conflating it with aristocratic status and intellectual leisure.

The visual and textual signs of Vigée-Lebrun's portrait typify the encoding of White femininity favoured and idealised by the imperialist nation-self. Even Beaucourt applied this formula in *Madame Trottier dite Desrivères* (c.1793) (Fig.5) to represent the actual subject as a cultivated bourgeois.³² The seigneur Marguerite Trottier née Mailhot³³ sits sumptuously frocked and bonneted in an interior space. On the table next to her is the lavish samovar with tea set,³⁴ signifying her connexion to wealth.³⁵ Her hands, minimally jewelled and gesturally exaggerated, daintily open a small canister. That her proper name is used as the portrait title reinforces her personhood and subject identity, albeit through a patriarchal marital lineage.

The conventions used by Canadian artist François Baillargé in the engraving *Portrait de Femme* of 1795 (Fig.6) similarly point to the bourgeois ideal of White femininity. Irrespective of the

³¹Shackelford and Holmes 68.

³²Guy Robert, *La Peinture au Québec depuis ses origines*, 3e éd. (Montréal: France-Amérique, 1978) 21.

³³Lord 31. In certain museum dossiers, the name attributed to this painting is *Portrait de Marguerite Mailhot, épouse de Eustache Trottier dit Desrivères*. See File A837 at the McCord Museum and File 56.298 at Le Musée du Québec.

³⁴"La premier peintre canadien qui étudia en Europe," *La Presse*, 25 fev. 1967: 53.

³⁵These details were also observed by Lord: "Mrs Trottier dite D. plays hostess beside her expensive tea urn; she makes sure we see the golden box she is holding, and the miniature portrait in the locket she is wearing, to remind us of her own family connections." Cited from Lord 31.

generic naming, the signs of luxurious clothing and style--the bonnet, the ribbon, the coiffed hair and shawl--give an identity and an integrity to the constructed female subject. Also, the gaze of the woman, which looks back at the spectator, and her facial expression exude self-assurance. Gérard Morisset claims that specific conventions were standardised and thus sustained in portraiture due to the rigidity in the corporate guilds which dominated artistic training at the time.³⁶ He remarks that, from 1760 onward, "L'apprentissage est alors de règle dans tous les corps de métiers. Maçons, charpentiers, menuisiers, orfèvres, serruriers, ceramistes, taillandiers, sculpteurs, doreurs, potiers, étameurs et peintres sont astriés à l'apprentissage."³⁷ Analogously, Samuel Rocheblave posits that the art produced in eighteenth-century France was part of the marrow of "l'age classique" in which meaning, conventions, doctrines, rules and traditions were strictly imposed and upheld.³⁸ This satisfied a social need which Rocheblave describes as "un besoin d'ordre, de clarté, d'autorité aussi, voire de hiérarchie."³⁹ Like Beaucourt, as an artist educated in France, Baillargé would have learnt during his apprenticeship the conventions for depicting (White) femininity. Yet from his depiction, inasmuch as "Femme" becomes a generic name, it also operates as an abbreviation for "femme blanche" and "femme bourgeois."

Beaucourt's title and image of *Portrait of a Negro Slave* are likewise idealised signs of the imperialist imagi-nation, distortedly sieved from a reality of servitude. They manifest as a visuo-

³⁶About artistic training within guilds and the representation of women, see also Candace Clements "The Academy and the Other: *Les Grâces* and *Le Genre Galant*," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 4.25 (Summer 1992): 480-481.

³⁷Gérard Morisset, *La Peinture traditionnelle au Canada français* (Ottawa: Cercle du Livre de France, 1960) 50; hereafter abbreviated as *Peinture traditionnelle*. MT: "Apprenticeship was thus standard practice in all guilds. Builders, carpenters, joiners, silversmiths, locksmiths, ceramists, edge-tool makers, sculptors, gilders, potters, tinsmiths, and painters were obliged to undertake apprenticeships."

³⁸Samuel Rocheblave, *L'Age classique de l'art français* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1932) 4.

³⁹Rocheblave 5. MT: ". . . a need for order, for clarity, also for authority even for hierarchy."

textual (in)version of the nation-self that nomadises and erases the Othered subject identity through the performative of stereotypical naming. Rosena Maart affirms this point of view, contending that: "Naming and claiming the unclaimed consciousness of being White, is perhaps the best way to understand how White domination operates, for it is conscious in its attempts at subjugating Blackness."⁴⁰

The process of ethnicising and subjugating the Other begins with the title's articulation of "Negro," an ambiguous sign that condenses difference, class, servitude, ethnicity and race. The title, then, becomes a protean signifier of the non-self, the non-national, the exotic "Negro" who is hyper-libidinous but colonially controllable; the "Negro" who is also the wench, the mistress, the docile slave, the obedient domestic, the forever degenerating immoral Other, in need of the White parent coloniser as a model of moral and intellectual cultivation. These meanings are economically abbreviated and kinetic in the title portion *Negro Slave*. This dynamism returns to the Derridian notion of the sign as polysemous animation through which "intention unites itself and gives life."⁴¹

By the eighteenth century, "Negro" and "savage" were already markers tautologising non-White geo-racial difference. Apparently, these terms had racial and racist implications. For instance, in Alexandre de Batz's *Indiens de plusieurs nations* of 1735 (Fig.7), the racialised generic naming, juxtaposed with the people of colour, becomes a colonially machinated mirror, not only reflecting and (stereo)typing subject alterity through racial textual signifiers (see Fig.8), but also demarcating the power of the hegemonic constructor/name-giver and the named. Additionally, in colonial Quebec, not being able to see beyond race, numerous (White) inhabitants associated the calling of these

⁴⁰Maart 130.

⁴¹Derrida *Margins* 161; The source text states: ". . . la condition essentielle en est donc l'acte pur de l'intention animante et non le corps auquel, de façon mystérieuse, elle s'unit et donne vie." Cited from Derrida *Marges* 192-193.

colonial names with visibly dark-skinned peoples.

For instance, in his two-volume series *Travels through the Canadas* of 1807, George Heriot describes the aboriginals of Lower Canada interchangeably as Natives, Americans, native inhabitants and savages. But his contextualisation of them as a dark-skinned "tawny colour[ed]"⁴² people produces a sign of which the signified denotes nature and degeneracy. In his volume-one preface, Heriot, depicting the aboriginals of the Saint Lawrence region, says:

The natives of America seem to possess but little variety in their character or customs, and to be incapable of attaining any great degree of improvement. Their passions exhibit a resemblance to the vast inequalities of the climates to which their bodies are exposed. Like the elements, they are either lulled to stilness (sic), or roused into unrelenting fury.⁴³

From this description, Heriot debases Native peoples and their civilisations by equating them with nature and "climates." Another account from 1882 reads: "The French term 'Sauvage' is much more expressive than 'Indian,' but seems rather a misnomer when applied to some of the fair-complexioned, well-dressed and polished inhabitants of Lorette, among whom there is a great admixture of white blood."⁴⁴ In this statement, "sauvage" is implicitly defined as that opposite to "fair-complexioned," "well-dressed" and "polished." Furthermore, savage remained a term for people of colour well into the twentieth century.⁴⁵ They were not only called thus, but exhibited within the

⁴²George Heriot, *Travels Through the Canadas*, vol. 2 (1807; London: Richard Phillips; Toronto: Coles Publishing Company, 1971) 272.

⁴³George Heriot, *Travels Through the Canadas*, vol. 1 (1807; London: Richard Philips; Toronto: Coles Publishing Company, 1971) v.

⁴⁴George Monro Grant, ed., *Picturesque Canada: The Country it was and is*, vol. 1 (Toronto: Belden Bros., 1882) 89.

⁴⁵Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit* (1988; Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990) 176-177.

context of exotic barbarism, as shall be discussed in the following chapter. The apparent message, notwithstanding, is that racialised emphasis in naming is inappropriate, and even distasteful, for those who are, or "pass for," White.

Similarly, myriad Europeans and Euro-North Americans considered "Negro" a socio-racial signifier of subserviency within a presumably superior White nationhood. In their eighteenth-century dictionary, *Encyclopédie*, Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert defined Negroes or *Nègres* through African slavery and European colonisation. Under "Nègres," the following is found: "Les Européens font depuis quelques siècles commerce de ces nègres, qu'ils tirent de Guinée et des autres côtes de l'Afrique; pour soutenir les colonies qu'ils ont établies dans plusieurs endroits de l'Amérique et dans les îles Antilles."⁴⁶ Additionally, with Pays de Nègres, cap Nègres and Negroland mapped as substitute appellations for Africa in cartographical, heuristic and literary material (see Appendices H and I),⁴⁷ Negro and African were indeed promoted in the Euro-imperialist imagi-nation of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century as a national/racial sign of a people classed inferior and ergo essentialised as proletarian.⁴⁸ Patrick Brantlinger observes:

⁴⁶Qtd. in Alain Pons, éd., *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers 1751-1772* (Saint Amand: Bussière, 1963) 443. MT: "For the past few centuries, Europeans have been trading those Negroes that they have taken from Guinea and other African coasts. This trading is carried out so that the Europeans can maintain the colonies they have established in America and the Caribbean islands."

⁴⁷See maps 57, 58 and 67 in the collection Egon Klemp, ed., *Africa: On Maps Dating from the Twelfth to the Eighteenth Century* (Berlin: Edition Leipzig, 1968) 46, 47, 51; see Georges Louis Leclerc de Buffon, *Oeuvres Complètes de Buffon*, nouvelle éd. tome 5 (Paris: Rapet et Cie, 1818) 247; Paul Edwards and James Walvin, *Black Personalities in The Era of the Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1983) 4; and also a discussion about the effect of illustrative material in novels in Stephen C. Behrendt, "Sibling Rivalries: Author and Artist in the Earlier Illustrated Book," *Word and Image* 13.1 (Jan. - Mar. 1997): 28.

⁴⁸Stephen Jay Gould, *The Flamingo's Smile: Reflections in Natural History* (1985; New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1987) 286-288; hereafter cited as *Flamingo*; Patrick Brantlinger, "Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent," *Critical Inquiry* 12 (Autumn 1985): 181. For a discussion about the social purpose and merchantilist propaganda of Daniel Defoe's novel, *Robinson Crusoe*, see chapter III, "The Economic Meaning of Robinson Crusoe" in Maximilian E. Novak, *Economics and the Fiction of Daniel Defoe* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1962) 49-66. For a commentary on the propagandist art of New France, see Chapter 2 "Painting in Quebec: French and British

As in South Africa, the "conquered races" of the empire were often treated as a new proletariat--a proletariat much less distinct from slaves than the working class at home [in Europe]. Of course, the desire for and, in many places, creation of a new, subordinate underclass contradicted the abolitionist stance that all the explorers [to Africa] took. Nevertheless, it influenced all relations between Victorians and Africans. . . .⁴⁹

The semantic concept of the Negro as labourer, belonging to a "dark" inferior nation was so well pulverised in Euro-imperialist thought that it would manifest as an entrenched ideology in the abolitionist as well as the anti-abolitionist discourses of the nineteenth century.

As Angela Davis remarks, certain White female anti-slavery groups were not in the least interested in liberating Black slave women.⁵⁰ Instead, they appropriated the evils of slavery in their political rhetoric to advance their own causes within oppressive patriarchy. Says Davis: "The early feminists may well have described marriage as 'slavery' of the same sort Black people suffered primarily for the shock value of the comparison--fearing that the seriousness of their protest might otherwise be dismissed."⁵¹ Mary Wollstonecraft occasionally resorted to this slave/master analogy. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, published 1792, she claimed that: "Women. . . by practising or fostering vice, evidently lose the rank which reason would assign them, and they become abject slaves or capricious tyrants."⁵² This paralleling of underclass slave women with the privileged female bourgeoisie minimalises the oppression of the former for the sake of spotlighting the plights

Regimes" in Lord 22-26.

⁴⁹Brantlinger 182.

⁵⁰Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (1981; New York: Vintage, 1983) 57-58.

⁵¹Davis 33-34.

⁵²Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. Miriam Brody (1792; London: J. Johnson; London: Penguin, 1992) 133.

of the latter.

In spite of this uneven sociopolitical association, in certain socially tense situations, numerous White women (and also some of those who passed for White) immediately demonstrated where lied their political allegiances: Racial affiliation (with the White patri-imperialist Establishment) was ranked over gender affiliation (with dark-skinned women of colour, doubly underclassed because of racial and sexual prejudice). In a 1825 periodical dealing with abolition, a report is given of a woman denied passage onto a ship headed to New York because of her Blackness. Her attempts to reason with the ship's captain in granting her entry were unsuccessful.

. . . the captain objecting, she offered to take her meals at a separate table. This concession, however, was unavailing, for he refused to take her on any terms. On his mentioning this circumstance during the voyage, he was much applauded by the American passengers, particularly by the females, who so far from sympathizing with one of their own sex under such difficulty, rejoiced heartily at the captain's decision, and said that they would sound his praises in New York for it.⁵³

From the aforementioned, it becomes obvious that the universalising of "women's oppressive experiences" hides the factor of privilege in choosing identity and political solidarity.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty responds to this generalised claiming of Other women's oppression by averring that historical particularity must be acknowledged. Pinpointing the reductionism in the politics of differential experiences within numerous western feminist discourse that simplify the complex histories of the term "woman," Mohanty remarks:

What binds women together is a sociological notion of the 'sameness' of their oppression. It is at this point that an elision takes place between 'women' as a discursively constructed group and 'women' as material subjects of their own history

⁵³Qtd. in "On Emigration," *Westminster Review* VI (April 1825): 476.

. . . . The focus is not on uncovering the material and ideological specificities that constitute a particular group of women as 'powerless' in a particular context. It is rather on finding a variety of cases of 'powerless' groups of women to prove the general point that women as a group are powerless. . . .⁵⁴

Returning more specifically to anti-slavery agitation and the issue of naming, it can be surmised that abolitionist views and emancipation ideologies, intertwined as they were with Black and White feminist interests, were also a complicated matter. Even more, abolitionists' philosophies by themselves varied greatly.

Although certain abolitionists were for the disintegration of slavery as a legal institution, they nonetheless held strong views about maintaining class structures and social hierarchies within the framework of racial boundaries. In other words, certain thought Blacks should be free(d) but, as the nether race, prohibited the same rights and privileges as their White "superior" homologues. Like pro-slavery agitators convinced of abolition being an attack on slavocrats' power to rule, myriad abolitionists believed servitude a continued befitting social role for Blacks. This popular notion came from myths about Black people's inability to 'evolve,' and the imperialist Establishment's want for Whites to still govern. Thus, even in the aftermath of slave emancipation, the name "Negro" was still generally understood as "servile."

A theorist of pseudo-ethnology whose writings were widely disseminated, Georges Louis Leclerc de Buffon, said to have been an abolitionist, believed in the maintenance of a racialised societal hierarchy, with Whites ostensibly at the pinnacle. Stephen Gould remarks that: "Buffon himself, the greatest naturalist of eighteenth-century France, was a strong abolitionist and exponent of improvement for inferior races in appropriate environments. But he never doubted the inherent

⁵⁴Mohanty 262.

validity of a white standard."⁵⁵ In this way, certain abolitionist and anti-abolitionist discourses converged; for both conceptualised "the Negro" as socially and biologically secondary.

Imagining the context of post-emancipation with less colonial rule, Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), a prominent theorist and essayist of the Victorian era, wrote in his article "The Nigger Question:"

You are not 'slaves' now; nor do I wish, if it can be avoided, to see you slaves again: but decidedly you will have to be servants to those that are born *wiser* than you,--servants to the whites, if they *are* (as what mortal can doubt they are?) born wiser than you. That, you may depend on it, my obscure Black friends, is and was always the Law of the World, for you and for all men: To *be* servants, the more foolish of us to the more wise; and only sorrow, futility and disappointment will betide both, till both in some approximate degree get to conform to the same.⁵⁶

With Carlyle's Law of the "emancipated" World, and worded order of this Law remembered--servants to the Whites, the more foolish of us to the more wise, the epithets for the poser in *Portrait of a Negro Slave* are given greater signification. In fact, as previously demonstrated, these descriptives are still used in a certain branch of contemporary Canadian art history, and exist as historical t/races in colonial naming. This system of naming in visual texts reflects sociopolitical asymmetries in the concrete and ideological world of colonial domination. Says Norman Bryson: ". . . not only must the image submit before the Word, it must also take on, as a sign, the same kind of construction as the verbal sign. Speech derives its meanings from an articulated and systematic structure which is

⁵⁵Stephen J. Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, rev. (1981; New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1996) 71; hereafter cited as *Mismeasure*.

⁵⁶Thomas Carlyle, "The Nigger Question," rpt. from *Fraser's Magazine* 1849 as "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question," *Caribbean Review/CR* (April/May/June 1972) 22.

superimposed on a physical substratum."⁵⁷ Bryson's assertion calls attention to the mimetic interplay between naming, ideological thought and enacted reality.

Négresse or *Negress* are other problematic names given to Beaucourt's image. These appellations directly relate to the sociopolitical semiotic economy of alterity in imperialism. They were most likely the actual titles used for the portrait before 1930, the year David Ross McCord officially obtained the painting for his museum.⁵⁸ In addition to its description as "portrait, female, negress," which appears on the McCord Museum's worksheet,⁵⁹ the painting is given these names as portrait titles in the inaugural exhibition catalogue *The McCord Family: A Passionate Vision* of May 1992.⁶⁰ Yet *La Négresse* as well as *The Negress* are signs having amassed problematic meaning during the centuries. With European expansionism gaining force in the eighteenth century, the polysemy of "Negress" also increased to include in its definition a Black woman, an African woman, a Black female slave, a Black maidservant or female domestic.⁶¹ In its translated version *Négresse* as *Negro Slave* becomes explicitly apprehended as "slave," and not "free Black woman." Yet codified and by itself, this one-worded term transforms into a highly ambiguous title. Given the already uncertain history of the poser, what inferences can then be drawn from the image with the title left solely as *Negress/Négresse*?

⁵⁷Norman Bryson, *Word and Image: French Painting of the Ancien Régime* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981) 1; cited hereafter as *Word*.

⁵⁸McCord probably had the portrait much earlier than 1930, although this is the date appearing on the worksheet. See "Worksheet: Paintings, Prints and Drawings," McCord Museum, 2. File M12067; cited hereafter as "Worksheet."

⁵⁹"Worksheet" 1.

⁶⁰Miller et. al. 24.

⁶¹See "Negresse" in *Grand Larousse de la langue française en sept volumes*, éd. 1975; and in *Trésor de la langue française: Dictionnaire de la langue du XIXe et du XXe siècle (1789-1960)*, éd. 1986.

Similarly, Marie-Guilhelmine Benoist's portrait name *Portrait d'une Nègresse*, or *Portrait of a Negress*, renders ambivalent the interpretive context of the image, which was completed in 1800 (see Fig.9). A student of Jacques-Louis David and Elizabeth-Lousie Vigée-Lebrun, Benoist is said to have created this neoclassical portrait in celebration of the abolition decree of 1794.⁶² The painting itself has been praised as a masterpiece throughout time.⁶³ Nevertheless, like certain White female artists and their male counterparts who indulged in the production of orientalist depictions,⁶⁴ Benoist has created a stunning yet troublingly stereotypical image of a Black woman. Hugh Honour purports that the sitter was possibly Benoist's West Indian servant.⁶⁵ Conversely, his commentary on the painting creates dissonance.

. . . there is not the least suggestion of servitude in the painting. The black woman is completely at her ease in this warmly humane and *noble* image. With perfect poise and self-confidence she looks at us with a gaze of reciprocal equality. The painting is, moreover, a masterpiece of visual sensitivity, the soft black skin being exquisitely set off by the crisp white, freshly laundered cotton headdress and drapery. Few, if any, European images of non-Europeans are as calmly or clear-sightedly objective (emphasis mine).⁶⁶

Whilst Honour sees the image as "noble" and "objective," the title erodes the political significance of the portrait. Besides, Honour's chosen adjective "noble" is an historico-politically loaded term. When

⁶²Karen Peterson and J. J. Wilson, *Women Artists: Recognition and Reappraisal from the Early Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York UP, 1976) 60-61; Nancy G. Heller, *Women Artists: An Illustrated History* (New York: Abbeville P, 1987) 63-64.

⁶³E. Bénézit, *Dictionnaire des peintres, sculpteurs, dessinateurs et graveurs* nouvelle éd. tome 1 (Paris: Librairie Grund, 1976) 630.

⁶⁴See the analysis on Henriette Browne, her orientalist artworks and their racial/gendered stereotyping in Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (New York: Routledge, 1996) 111-112.

⁶⁵Hugh Honour, *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, vol. IV.2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1989) 7.

⁶⁶Honour, vol. IV.2, 7.

employed to certain peoples of colour, this euphemism harkens back to imagined colonial constructs of the mythical noble savage, considered docile, picturesque and dying.⁶⁷

Others have taken heed of Honour's commentary. For instance, James Smalls says Honour was "lured and brutally victimized by the aesthetic veneer given to the subject by the artist."⁶⁸ He goes on to explain that: "Benoist's portrait can be viewed as a throw-back to a time when blacks were simply one of many commodities to be dressed up or undressed and displayed in order to signal the wealth, prestige, or sympathy of the possessor."⁶⁹ This ricocheting of power also occurs in Beaucourt's situation; for although *Portrait of a Negro Slave* is an image of the slave-servant alone, its referencing is inextricably linked to Beaucourt as the prolific maker, slavemaster and previous possessor of the painting and the woman.

Granted, Benoist's model is seen draped in tricolour, a signifier of republicanist liberty; however, unlike Eugène Delacroix's allegory of 1830 (Fig.10), which was given the politicised title *La Liberté guidant le Peuple*, or *Le 28 juillet*,⁷⁰ and also recognised as an emblematic painting of modern French Republicanism,⁷¹ the context of Benoist's *Portrait d'une Négrresse* remains dissonantly ambiguous mostly due, once again, to the portrait's name. Moreover, the neoclassical realism of Benoist's B/black "Liberty" allegory plays up the semi-clothed racialised corporeality of the

⁶⁷Brantlinger 175-178; Francis 46; V. G. Kiernan, "Noble and Ignoble Savages," *Exoticism in the Enlightenment*, eds. G. S. Rousseau and Roy Porter (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1990) 109-110.

⁶⁸James Smalls, *Esclave, Nègre, Noir: The Representation of Blacks in Late 18th and 19th Century French Art*, diss. (Los Angeles: U of California, 1991) 71.

⁶⁹Smalls 83.

⁷⁰See titles in *Cenetaire d'Eugène Delacroix 1798-1863* (Paris: Musée du Louvre, mai - sept. 1963) 49; and René Huyghe, *Delacroix* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1963) 198.

⁷¹Maurice Agulhon, trans., *Marianne into Battle: Republican Imagery and Symbolism in France, 1789-1880*, by Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981) 38-39.

sitter, as does Beaucourt's *Portrait of a Negro Slave*. The concomitant underscoring of racialisation and carnality gives an added, and even an erotically tangential tautology to the portrait's name and image which Smalls assumes Benoist intended. Yet other portraits with this problematic generic naming came after Beaucourt and Benoist.

Two such portraits well known in North American art are Thomas Eakins' *Negress* (c.1867-1869)--an American version done under the tutelage of Gérôme,⁷² and Lawrence P. Harris' *Decorative Nude*, more popularly known as *Negress* (c.1937)--a contemporary Canadian image of an athletic-looking Black woman (see Figs.11-12). The commonality in these contemporary and historical "Negress" representations is that they underline the unclothed body of the Black woman, playing up the B/blackness of skin and the muscular shape of body as signifiers somehow related to physical labour. In Eakins' portrayal, the Black female body seems overabused by hard labour, whereas in Harris' depiction, contextualised simply as "Negress," the model's physique--the musculature enhanced by B/blackness--seems to have been developed by rigorous work. Says Homi Bhabha: "Skin as the key signifier of cultural and racial difference, is the most visible of fetishes, recognized as 'common knowledge' in a range of cultural, political and historical discourses, and plays a public part in the racial drama that is enacted every day in colonial societies."⁷³

B/black skin over a sinewy female body, tagged by the title *Negress*, may be interpreted as a sign of labouring alterity. Moreover, the intrinsic anonymity of the racialised title signifies to the colonial imagi-nation a subject unworthy of politico-individual identity. About Eakins' *Negress*, Francis Martin Jr. observes: "Eakins's choice of title, emphasizing the race of his sitter, shows that while

⁷²See the section concerning Thomas Eakins in *The Portrayal of The Negro in American Painting* (Brunswick: Bowdoin College of Museum of Fine Arts, 1964) n. pag.

⁷³Bhabha *Location* 78.

Eakins titled his portraits of black friends . . . his conception of the identity of this woman was nevertheless marked by the limited spectrum of attitudes towards race that held sway at the end of the nineteenth century.⁷⁴ Negress as a gendered and racialised title therefore leads to an empty characterisation, a stereotypical redundancy. Of this distortion, Carole Ann Tyler says: "Both naming and imaging involve violence, the violence of the 'cut' when signs cleave the continuum of 'real' differences into culturally significant identities. Names represent nothing of people's uniqueness; they categorise and therefore reduce specificities, alienating something of the 'real.'⁷⁵

Like in Europe, a similar system of naming the Other existed in Canada. The first name of the Black woman was usually followed by one or two adjectives that economically referred to her race, social status and function. This evinces with the "Negro wench" newspaper ads of 1792. But another example of this adaptation in naming can be found in Philippe Aubert de Gaspé's *Les Anciens Canadiens*. Published 1864, this story is a fictionalised version of de Gaspé's French-Canadian family history which unfolds during the Seven Years' War. In one passage, he identified an ex-slave, Lisette, simply as a Mulâtresse. In actuality, Lisette was passed down to de Gaspé through his father's estate.⁷⁶ "cette mulâtresse . . . achète à l'âge de quatre ans, était, malgré ses défauts, très attachée à la famille."⁷⁷ However, the euphemism mulâtresse could signify Lisette's position as the slavemaster's mistress and/or domestic. Even the noun mulâtresse possesses a perturbing history. Historically, the radical *mulate* stems from the Spanish nomenclature for

⁷⁴See Francis Martin Jr.'s description in Guy McElroy, *Facing History: The Black Image in American Art 1710-1940* (San Francisco: Bedford Arts in association with the Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1990) 87.

⁷⁵Carole-Ann Tyler, "Passing: Narcissism, Identity and Difference," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 6.2-3 (1994): 220.

⁷⁶Marcel Trudel has recorded Philippe Aubert de Gaspé as inheritor of Lisette. See *Dictionnaire* 272.

⁷⁷Philippe Aubert de Gaspé, *Les Anciens Canadiens* (1864; [Montréal]: Corporation des Éditions Fides 1988) 306.

husbandry, which was used to describe the colour of interbred mules.⁷⁸

Delacroix's painting of his presumed companion, who appears provocatively *deshabillée*, is named in like fashion--*Aline, La Mulâtresse* (see Fig.13).⁷⁹ In fact, in European, North American and Caribbean slavocracies, an entire caste/blood-ratio system existed for naming the enslaved, policing miscegenation and allotting them privilege (see Appendices J and K). de Buffon's (mis)informed opinion has it that the skin colour of Africans was directly related to geography, climate and blood: "c'est la chaleur excessive dans quelques contrées du globe qui donne cette couleur, ou, pour mieux dire, cette teinture au hommes; et cette teinture pénètre à l'intérieur, car le sang des Nègres est plus noir que celui des hommes blancs."⁸⁰

Skin colour and ethnicity were also signifiers that named class location. Marcel Trudel claims that, in New France, *domestique* existed as an epithet for Panis or Amerindian slaves as well as miscegenated Black slaves (who were African, Afro-Caribbean, Negro, Mulatto, et cetera).⁸¹ Whereas, Negro, deemed the lowest caste, allowed for minimal privilege--if any at all, at the opposite end of the spectrum was Octoroon, a category heavily miscegenated with Whiteness. This latter category, considered closer to White physically (in terms of skin colour) and socially (in terms of

⁷⁸See "Mulatto" in *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989, 2nd ed.; and William Dwight Whitney, ed., *The Century Dictionary*, vol. V, 1889, rpt. 1899 ed.

⁷⁹Delacroix did several paintings of this woman. It is noted that: "Ce modèle, célèbre dans les ateliers à une époque où l'Orient était à la mode, a été peint plusieurs fois par Delacroix" *Cenetaire* 28. With these different Delacroix versions circulating, the artwork has been frequently confused with *Aspasie, La Mauresque*, mauresque being another name for Moor. In fact, in his book, Honour has used the image *Aline, La Mulâtresse*, but labelled it *Portrait of a Aspasie, the Mulatto Woman*. See plate 20 in Honour, vol. IV.2, 37; and plate 43 for the notes on the discrepancies with *Aline, La Mulâtresse* in *Cenetaire* 27-28.

⁸⁰de Buffon 319. MT: "It is the excessive heat in certain countries of the world that gives this colour, or rather this colouring to men. And this colouring penetrates internally. As a result, the blood of Negroes is blacker than that of White men."

⁸¹Trudel *Dictionnaire* xiv-xv. Trudel's listings would also suggest that Negroes and mulattos were generically referred to as *domestiques*.

cultivation and morality) made manumission a strong possibility.⁸² The policing of biological blood ratio in miscegenation manifests socially in the sign of the name. This is how terms like "savage" become inappropriate for those predominantly mixed with "White" blood. Given that this system of naming and hierarchising privilege was cross-continentially adopted, *Négresse* or *Portrait of a Negro Slave* would have been understood accordingly in eighteenth-century Canada--which is to say as a geo-racial and bio-social signifier of subservient Otherness.

An interesting case regarding the politics of naming is Anne-Marie Girodet-Trioson's painting of Jean-Baptiste Belley from 1797 (Fig.14). A polemic supposedly ensued when the painting was to be exhibited under a changed name. Says Hugh Honour:

When shown in the Exposition de l'Elysée in 1797 it appears to have been entitled simply *Portrait de Nègre*. The following year it was exhibited in the Salon as *Portrait du C. Belley, ex-représentant des Colonies* (the C standing for *citoyen*). An attempt was made to exclude it from the Salon, though whether this was prompted by artistic or other motives is a mystery.⁸³

The reversal in naming signals a politicisation of the represented, an acknowledgment of the Other as subject, a process that begins to de-Other the subaltern.

Nonetheless, the satyric sexualisation of the image problemises Belley's characterisation. Even though represented as a high-ranking official, Belley's B/blackness, as underscored in the initial title *Portrait du Nègre*, made permissible the pronounced genitalic delineation and the manually suggestive masturbatory pose. Noticing the sexualisation of Belley's image, Richard Brilliant states that: "Despite the stylishness of his clothing, Belley is portrayed as an outsider whose pose

⁸²Arnold A. Sio, "Race, Colour, and Miscegenation: The Free Coloured of Jamaica and Barbados," *Caribbean Studies* (April 1976): 8.

⁸³Hugh Honour, *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, vol. IV.1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1989) 106.

recapitulates that of the *Capitoline Satyr*, a famous Roman copy of a statue of Praxiteles, well-known to the artist's public and traditionally interpreted as the image of an uncivilised being.⁸⁴ So again, although clothed, the Black subject has been emphatically played up as an illicit sex object.

As regards gender, Elizabeth Grosz says that: "The sex assigned to the body (and bodies are assigned a single sex, however inappropriate this may be) marks a great deal of difference to the kind of social subject, and indeed the mode of corporeality assigned to the subject."⁸⁵ But what Grosz overlooks with the focus solely set on gender is how the racialisation of the female body as Black materialises in a bi-gendering or a bisexualising of, as Grosz proposes, "a single sex." Through this imperialist bisexualising or symbolic hermaphroditism, the Black woman called "Negro" becomes corporeally masculinised, deemed able to work and labour as hard as her male counterpart, but labelled "wench" is located within the (hetero)sexual realm of "female" in which her sexual services and ability to reproduce remain exploitable commodities.

What I mean by symbolic hermaphroditism is a colonial merchantilist paradigm fixed in its conception of the Other as inferior, but fluid in its capacity to rework the identity of the subaltern in order to justify greater--if not maximal--exploitation or oppression. For the Black female body, as in Beaucourt's *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, this bisexualisation occurs by fragmenting and conflating gender with race through metaphors and names.

Whilst certain scholars purport that the virtues represented by certain White allegories were cross-gendered ("valeur,' which is feminine in French, is imaged as a man. Similarly 'feu,' which is

⁸⁴Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1991) 35. The image of Belley in Brilliant's text differs somewhat to that of Honour. Belley's sexual objectification, however, is unchanged. Also, the image seems to be a black and white illustration, as the description provided reads: "black chalk, graphite, ink and gouache on wove paper." See plate 7 in Brilliant 36, 189.

⁸⁵Grosz 84.

masculine in French and Latin, is depicted as a woman⁸⁶) and that they did have a more moralising heroic purpose in neoclassical portraiture,⁸⁷ the negrifying of the allegory through the process of spectating and calling reverses its signification. In this regard, the sexual difference of the Black woman/body/allegory splinters and becomes symbolically masculinised through the articulation of the name Negro or Négress(e). The feminised naming "Negresse" is itself a referent of biological non-maleness. Yet given that it signifies proletarianism, as tautologised in Beaucourt's image, neither can it be a sole referent for socially constructed "femininity" in the imperialist elitist sense of the word. Therefore, in this particular context of appellation, the Black woman turns into an interstitial sign, (con)fusing the categories of male-female biological sexual difference and feminine-masculine socially constructed genders. She becomes an in-between signifier of (re)productive feminisation and toiling masculinisation.

This construct, projected from the colonist imaginary, was articulated in literary narratives and imposed onto myriad Black women's realities. Examples as such can be drawn from two sources: the story *Paul and Virginia*, and the lived reality of Sojourner Truth.

In the renowned novel *Paul et Virginie* of 1786,⁸⁸ Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre scripted a Black female character as slave, but also as surrogate male spouse, responsible for performing for her widowed slavemistress the manual chores usually done by her husband, now

⁸⁶Londa Schiebinger, "Feminine Icons: The Face of Early Modern Science," *Critical Inquiry* 14 (Summer 1998): 672; hereafter abbreviated as "Feminine Icons."

⁸⁷See James A. Leith, *The Idea of Art as Propaganda in France 1750-1799: A Study in the History of Ideas* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1965) 109; and Gill Perry, "Women in Disguise: Likeness, the Grand Style and the Conventions of 'Feminine' Portraiture in the Work of Sir Joshua Reynolds," *Femininity and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century Art and Culture*, eds., Gill Perry and Michael Rossington (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1994) 24-27.

⁸⁸This novel was published and widely disseminated, oftentimes with illustrations, in Europe and North America in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. See the introduction of the translated version by John Donovan in J.-H. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, trans., *Paul and Virginia*, by John Donovan (London: Penguin, 1989) 9.

deceased. Contextualising the death of M. de la Tour and his widow's subsequent situation, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre wrote:

Sa femme, restée à l'Ile-de-France, se trouva, enceinte, et n'ayant pour tout bien au monde qu'une négresse, dans un pays où elle n'avait ni crédit, ni recommandation. Ne voulant rien solliciter auprès d'aucun homme, après la mort de celui qu'elle avait uniquement aimé, son malheur lui donna du courage. Elle résolut de cultiver avec son esclave un petit coin de terre, afin de se procurer de quoi vivre.⁸⁹

Here, the Black woman signified as Nègresse becomes an imperially constructed hermaphrodite, seen as both virile male and sturdy female. Examining the slave women of this narrative, John Donovan affirms that their function is "to embody the sexual powers that need to be excluded from the society" of Paul and Virginia's families.⁹⁰

Sojourner Truth (1797-1883) echoed in her famous speech "Ar'n't I a Woman" this paradigmatic exploitation of the Black female body as an imperialist source of masculinised labour production and feminised reproduction. Truth, known as a slave, ex-slave, visionary thinker, radical public speaker, political activist, community counsellor and African-American abolitionist,⁹¹ stated:

Look at me! Look at my arm! [And she bared her right arm to the shoulder,

⁸⁹Jacques-Henri (J.-H.) Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul et Virginie* (1786; Paris: Librairie de Paris, 1848) 16. The 1796 translated version of this passage reads: "and his wife, who was pregnant, found herself a widow in a country, where she had neither credit nor recommendation, and no earthly possession, or rather support, than one negro woman. Too delicate to solicit protection or relief from any other man after the death of him whom alone she loved, misfortune armed her with courage, and she resolved to cultivate with her slave a little spot of ground, and procure for herself the means of subsistence." J.-H. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, trans., *Paul and Virginia*, by Helen Maria Williams (1796; Oxford: Woodstock, 1989) 7.

⁹⁰See his introductory notes, Donovan 28.

⁹¹Wendy E. Chmielewski, "Sojourner Truth: Utopian Vision and Search for Community, 1797-1883," *Women in Spiritual and Communitarian Societies in the United States*, eds. Wendy E. Chmielewski, Louis J. Kern and Marilyn Klee-Hartzell (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1993) 35.

showing her tremendous muscular power.] I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ar'n't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man (when I could get it) and bear de lash as well--and ar'n't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen 'em mos' al sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, non but Jesus heard me! And ar'n't I a woman?⁹²

Because of her dark skin, Truth was assigned, even as a domestic, most of the physically taxing chores in the 'private' sphere.⁹³ This type of apportioning of work meant that a racial hierarchy was also adopted in the slavocratic household where dark-skinned women once more became the symbolic exploitable hermaphrodites of hard labour.

A similar bi-gendering occurs in *Portrait of a Negro Slave* in which the Black woman *qua* Negro slave is semantically hierarchised, seen semi-unclothed, labouring and thus outside the realm of clothed White bourgeois femininity. Yet the act itself--the performative of standing, lifting and carrying, rendered voyeuristically provocative by the poser's naked breast and complacent smile--expands the animated meaning of the sign of the name. The fruits, the smile, the quasi-nakedness and the B/blackness narrate an edenic temptation in which the poser's (hyper)sexuality and (hyper)fecundity are semiotically rendered virile, as a male's; but the name "Negro Slave," merging with the visual sign of the domestic, also connotes colonial female exploitation.

As shown, the titles *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, *La Nègresse* and *The Negress* visually tautologise the theme of the commodifiable corporealisation of the Black woman. Through the naming, the poser's individuality and subjecthood are reduced--flattened in the face of the image--to a stereotype, lowly hierarchised and multi-exploitable in its imperialist function(s). Dilemmatically,

⁹²Olive Gilbert, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth: A Bondswoman of Olden Time* (1878; Salem: Ayer Company, 1990) 134.

⁹³Chmielewski 27.

it is through the performative of naming and (in)versions of (re)defining the colonist nation-self that, from a synchronic perspective, the visuo-textual narrative of *Portrait of a Negro Slave* reverts to the eighteenth-century reality of Black women in slavery. Yet from a diachronic perspective, the naming becomes prelingually and subliminally appropriated, its inherent racism and sexism concealed by a nomenclature distanced from the historical memory of slavery.

This naming then poses an historical and contemporary crisis in representation. Surely, as Madeleine Major-Frégeau had suggested, Beaucourt's conventions mirror a European influence in representing the Other. Nonetheless, these conventions indicate a cross-cultural *sharing in the imperialist imagi-national politics of naming the Other*, a sharing indulged in by colonial Canada via the institutionalisation of slavery and its nomenclature. Within the s/p^{ace} of meaning and descriptives, *Portrait of a Negro Slave* re/calls a polysemous distance that, whether historical or contemporary, aims to separate out the ascending nation-self from the supposedly non-national Other.

Modern nations typically try to constitute themselves as an ethnos, or ethnic unit, in order to exclude others; but at the same time, the dominant ethnic group often adopts the strategy of concealing its own ethnic status and attributing ethnicity only to 'others'. . . . Such forms of cultural racism reaffirm the semantic chain which links and equates one nation, one culture, one 'race' and one ethnicity.

Marie Gillespie⁹⁴

⁹⁴Marie Gillespie, *Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change* (London: Routledge, 1995) 10.

**CHAPTER 3
RUPTURED ID/ENTITIES AND RACIAL (EX)TENSIONS
IN THE EXOTIC FACE(S) OF NATION(S)**

. . . Canadian cultural influences pale before the exoticism of the foreign. It views newcomers as exotics, and pretends that this is both proper and sufficient.

Neil Bissoondath¹

. . . the black body is seen as a source of desirability, the exotic promise of an extra-intense experience. This clearly marks out black identity as different, deviations from a white norm.

Anoop Nayak²

Erotic images would form again. Martinez saw the body of a woman, distended, headless, a woman with the breasts of a Balinese woman, the belly of an African woman, the buttocks of a Negress, all this confounded itself into an image of a mobile flesh, a flesh that seemed to be made of elastic.

Anaïs Nin³

How does the nation-self and the non-national Other get sorted out synecdochically or ruptured from each other in the visual and textual discursivity of representational art? As concerns *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, one way is by being labelled exotic. The painting is oft-contextualised as a foreign artefact, attributed in various ways to exotic alterity. One description claims that the image was made "in, or from experience in, the West Indies"⁴ whilst another asserts that: "[Beaucourt's] portrait . . . with its exotic subject . . . is a rare example of secular painting."⁵ Elizabeth Cadiz Topp called it an

¹Cited from his critique of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in Neil Bissoondath, *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada* (Toronto: Penguin, 1994) 43.

²Anoop Nayak, "Frozen Bodies: Disclosing Whiteness in Haagen-Dazs Advertising," *Body and Society* 3.3 (Sept. 1997): 52.

³Cited from patron-requested erotic fiction, Anaïs Nin, *Delta of Venus* (1969; New York: Pocket Books, 1990) 15.

⁴*Selective Survey* 22.

⁵Hubbard *Anthology* 11.

image of "exoticism and latent eroticism."⁶ And Madeleine Major-Frégeau states that what is astounding, "c'est l'exotisme du sujet et l'audace du peintre."⁷

Even contemporary scholars utilise the exotic ambivalently to discuss problematic representations of Blacks, especially those of Black women. Hans-Joachim Kunst claimed that: "Down to the nineteenth century the African was considered a picturesque and exotic phenomenon."⁸ Another account described Thomas Eakins' *Negress* as "both warmly exotic and brownly real."⁹ The issues thus pressing from a contemporary standpoint are *Portrait of a Negro Slave's* repeated description as exotic, and what the exotic meant to eighteenth-century westerners. Did it signify the same as it does today? And what are scholars--whether historical or contemporary--referring to when they tag the painting as such?

Given the quantitative discourse of alterity surrounding the image, in this chapter, I will analyse the signification of the exotic as related to the context of *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, first starting with definitions of the exotic, then discussing the politics of display of the Black female body. After, I shall look at the exotic as profane, then move to an analysis of the poser as exotic still life. In addition, I shall discuss a few of Jean-Honoré Fragonard's paintings to which *Portrait of a Negro Slave* are frequently compared.

The explications relating *Portrait of a Negro Slave* to exoticism mirror ongoing speculation about the painting's actual birthplace. But fuelling the skepticism is the fact that every sign

⁶Topp 11.

⁷Major-Frégeau 60. MT: ". . . is the exoticism of the subject and the audacity of the painter."

⁸Hans-Joachim Kunst, *The African in European Art* (Bad Godesberg: Internationes, 1967) 21.

⁹See Marvin S. Sadik's comment in the facsimiled version *The Portrayal of the Negro in American Painting* (Brunswick: Boudoin College Museum of Fine Arts, 1964) n. pag.

enhancing the Black poser communicates alterity. The volcano-like landscape in the background signifying tropical territory but also female sexuality, the verandah space physically and symbolically demarcating the exterior (freedom) from the interior (confinement), the sexualisation of the Black working body semi-naked with tropical fruits, and the models clothing all add up to geo-cultural alterity. I will later come back to the codification of the clothing. However, with the signs of *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, the poser becomes a metaphorical map of the colonist non-self. A geo-racial context of the tropics--perhaps of Africa or the Antilles--is scopophilically constructed and used as a ethno-national referent for the Black woman. Regarding the visual encoding and mapping of difference, Alan Bewell remarks that:

Human bodies . . . were seen as having a geographical dimension, making it possible for writers to draw parallels between the "geography of places" and the "geography of peoples." People were read as embodiments of the physical characteristics of places, and places were read as documents of the characters of the people who occupied them. In geographical texts, especially from the late eighteenth century onwards, this link was made the basis of social and political interpretation.¹⁰

Considering Bewell's viewpoint about people as geography and maps that possess sociopolitical meaning, Beaucourt's model, contextualised by the title *Negro Slave*, turns into a signified of the imperially purchased and territorially colonised. In fact, the signs that map difference in *Portrait of a Negro Slave* concurrently overproduce meaning. Together, they work as a semiotic excess that, in the visual discourse of exoticism, interpretively annul each other to ensure the reductionist stereotyping of the poser.

Even more, the signifiers of the exotic that negotiate meaning within the actual visual discourse of the image and with the viewer have the effect of creating a symbolic, psychically

¹⁰Alan Bewell, "Constructed Places, Constructed Peoples: Charting the Improvement of the Female Body in the Pacific," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 18.3 (Nov. 1994): 38.

imposed distance, fraught with signification. This psychical distance formed from the present simultaneously becoming the past and the future is what Homi Bhabha calls liminality. Within this threshold space of the nation-self, colonial polysemy expands, the increase thereby altering, weakening or severing Other past histories from contemporary memory. Discussing the act of (re)producing colonialist meaning within liminal temporality, Bhabha says:

The performative intervenes in the sovereignty of the nation's *self-generation* by casting a shadow *between* the people as 'image' and its signification as a differentiating sign of Self, distinct from the Other of the Outside. . . . The problem is not simply the 'selfhood' of the nation as opposed to the otherness of other nations. We are confronted with the nation split within itself, articulating the heterogeneity of its population.¹¹

Bhabha's statement returns to my inferences of what-ifs. What if the poser had been Canadian-born, a native of New-France? What if she had been Beaucourt's *Canadian* slave, but nonetheless referred to as a foreigner? From a diachronic and synchronic perspective, she has been constructed and (re)cognised throughout time as the "split" from the nation-self, as the exotic "Other of the Outside."

Similar to the locution "ethnic,"¹² "exotic" finds its earliest appropriation from the Greek word *exotikos*, which is defined as strange, foreign and not indigenously produced.¹³ Additional contemporary definitions read: "originating in a foreign country, esp. one in the tropics; introduced from abroad, but not fully naturalized or acclimatized; having a strange or bizarre allure, beauty or

¹¹Bhabha *Location* 147-148.

¹²Jan Nederveen Pieterse claims that the word *ethnikos*, meaning heathen or the Other, was a label applied to those not considered part of the nation-state of classical Greece. See Jan Nederveen Pieterse, "Deconstructing/Reconstructing Ethnicity," *Nations and Nationalism* 3.3 (1997): 365-366; hereafter cited as "Nations."

¹³"Exotic," *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989 ed.

quality; of, pertaining to, or involving strip-teasing; alien."¹⁴ Certain dictionaries dealing with historical lexicology claim that the word regained popular usage during the peak era of colonisation: "Le mot n'est usuel qu'à partir de la XVIIIe siècle; il s'applique à ce qui n'appartient pas à nos civilisations de l'Occident, qui est apporté de pays lointains."¹⁵ The radical *exo* means au dehors, external, turning out, without and indicated value or right, whilst the prefix *ex* pertains to a former position, place, title or status held by a person or a people.¹⁶

From these definitions, the exotic works to restructure meaning according to the egocentric notion of western culture as "normal," and non-Occidental, pre-westernised or pre-colonised cultures as odd, foreign and taboo. The idea of ethno-/egocentrism is key to this discursive perspective; for it is a means of conceptualising the "White" colonial nation-self as longtime inheritor of a territory. This viewpoint has the effect of indigenising western Whiteness so as to conceal its own alterity or exoticism within a given colonised boundary. On this topic, Jan Nederveen Pieterse maintains:

This relates to the question of 'Whiteness' as an absent centre' . . . --absent due to the denial of imperialism. A sizeable part of Western imperialism and colonisation can be interpreted in terms of ethnic or racial strategy--the White Man's Burden Generally, it is important to first problematise the dominant cultural ethos: to examine whiteness as a constructed identity.¹⁷

Sander Gilman similarly sees stereotypes and representations of Otherness as part of a discursive

¹⁴See definitions of "exotic" in *Collins Dictionary of the English Language*, 2nd ed., 1989; *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*, 1989 ed.; *Random House Unabridged Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1993.

¹⁵See "exotique" in *Le Robert: Dictionnaire québécoise d'aujourd'hui*, nouvelle éd., 1993. A similar definition appears in *Le Robert: Historique de la langue française*, éd 1992. MT: "The word only starts to become vernacular in the eighteenth century. It applies to that which does not belong to our western civilisation, which is brought from distant countries.

¹⁶See "Exo" and "ex" in William Dwight Whitney, *The Century Dictionary*, vol. II, 1889, rpt. 1899 ed.

¹⁷Pieterse "Nations" 371-372.

system of domination and differentiation. "Because there is no real line between the self and the other, an imaginary line must be drawn; and so that the illusion between self and Other is never troubled, this line is as dynamic in its ability to alter itself as is the self."¹⁸ The exotic therefore operates as an asymmetrical polariser on a discursive level, creating a signification that strives to categorically disenfranchise subjects once before in political primacy. The exotic articulates ruptures in the mnemonic psychological distance that produce re-ordered subject identity.

Whereas exotic was a term antecedently used to describe plants and animals, during the time of Euro-domination, it was later applied to colonised cultures and peoples. Pieterse states that: "Exhibits of non-western peoples were first organised by zoos, apparently on the grounds that with exotic animals went matching peoples . . ." ¹⁹ Gilman likewise observes that the modern concept of the ethnological museum was to exhibit representations of non-western peoples with animals, "placing living 'exotics' within the daily experience of the European."²⁰ In America, this trend lasted well into the twentieth century, with American Blacks used as "exotic" substitutes for African tribes people²¹ in museum-affiliated freak shows.²² Alvin Thompson recalls that, at various points in European history, "there was a more literal assimilation of blacks to lower animals."²³ Even more, G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter recollect that the exotic is not without its sub-hierarchies, which

¹⁸Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985) 17-18; hereafter cited as *Difference*.

¹⁹Pieterse *White* 95.

²⁰Gilman *Difference* 110.

²¹Bogdan 112-113, 183, 143.

²²About the museum politics and ideologies associated with freak shows, see Bogdan 30-31.

²³Thompson 43.

ranged from "the essence of purity" to "instinctual eroticism."²⁴ Thus, as adjective or noun, the term exotic has ambivalent implications within the social and sexual politics of imperialism.

It is crucial to remember that, in eighteenth-century representational art, the exotic racialised with colour and nationalised as non-European functioned differently than the exotic of constructed Whiteness. In the era of expansion and colonisation, western Whiteness, whether in- or outside of its own occidental context, signified the "civiliser" that the exotic of colour should bow to on a transnational scale. Thus occurred a new economy of differentiation with the labelling of exotic. Inasmuch as women were considered the exotic Other, race ostensibly introduced sub-stratum to the exotic alterity of femaleness. Says Londa Schiebinger:

As anatomists and physical anthropologists sought to characterize and classify the races and the sexes, they faced a critical dilemma: where to rank the black man (the dominant sex of an inferior race) vis-à-vis the white woman (the inferior sex of the dominant race). It was these two groups--and not African women--who were contenders for power in eighteenth-century Europe.²⁵

When compared to *Portrait of a Negro Slave, Madame de Sabrevois de Bleury* of 1780 (Fig.15) does indeed illustrate a type of visual female taxonomy in which the White subject is portrayed as the exotic, but of the "superior" race. The White poser (who seems interracially mixed) is seated and depicted in ostentatious garments. Like in *Madame de Trottier dite Desrivières*, de Sabrevois sports a large cap extravagantly decorated with ribbons and ruffles. Her heavily patterned frock is finished in a loosely pleated lace-trimmed collar. Adding to the grandiloquent attire is the decorative fan she holds. With this fan, de Sabrevois wears a bit of the Other. Her dress alone is

²⁴Cited from the introduction of G. S. Rousseau and Roy Porter, eds., *Exoticism in the Enlightenment* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1990) 7.

²⁵Schiebinger "Anatomy" 388.

a spectacle, denoting hierarchically differentiated wealth. Compared to the exposed body in *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, these signs historicise Madame Sabrevois as a member of the eighteenth-century French-Canadian elite in which Whiteness (or the presumption of it) as a visual signified of colonial nationalism and of national fixity becomes naturalised and encoded as an ideological aesthetic norm.

In her discussion about eighteenth-century British portraiture, Marcia Pointon asserts that codes constructing subjecthood were well deliberated to the smallest detail. Analysing Jonathan Richardson Sr.'s painting of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (c.1725) (Fig.16), Pointon says:

The body was a work of art in eighteenth-century ruling-class society: how one wore one's patches, how one held one's fan, the cut of one's clothes, the shape of one's wig--all these made of the body a mobile cluster of signifiers indicating party-political affiliation, class, gender, and sexuality. The body was strictly differentiated for indoor or outdoor wear, formal or informal court dress or attire.²⁶

Considering the purposiveness in planning portrait details, the Black slave boy on the dark side of the image--tucked behind his White mistress's skirts, but gazing up at her reverentially--is himself an encoded presence. Again, his presence vis-à-vis Montagu's symbolises the wearing of the Other, a *wearing* that demonstrates the cultural appropriation of, and control over, the Other. David Dabydeen ascertains that: "What emerges from such paintings is a sense of the loneliness and humiliation of blacks in white aristocratic company. The black existed merely to reflect upon the superiority of the white."²⁷ In Richardson's colonist-centric image, the Other dwindles down to the merely decorative of his female dominator, a secondary ornament in Montagu's portrait narrative.

Whereas the signs' visual discourse *qua* colonial ideogram constructs various literal and

²⁶Marcia Pointon, "Killing Pictures," *Painting and the Politics of Culture: New Essays on British Art 1700-1850*, ed. John Barrell (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992) 44.

²⁷David Dabydeen, *Hogarth's Blacks: Images of Blacks in Eighteenth Century English Art* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1987) 30.

symbolic (ex)tensions between the two subjects, it is through sharing the same space that they gain their meaning, function and identity: the boy, adjacent to the woman, becomes through her Whiteness recognisably Black, a slave-servant and the exotic Other, dwarfed physically and allegorically--an extension of Montagu's colonial power-over. Likewise, in order for her affluence to be further defined, Montagu *needs* the infantilised presence of the Black slave boy which inversely mirrors her identity as comely White female imperialist. Their juxtaposition as a sight/site of (e)mergence cleaves a racialised class-stratified distance between the two that separates out the national/imperialist hero from the exotic inferior object. As Pointon affirms, the westernisation of exotic space and dress, and Montagu's insinuated portrayal as slavocrat "serves to enhance her status as a woman of great wealth and power, for it was upon the traffic in blacks--the buying and selling of African peoples and their enforced labour--that eighteenth-century commerce was based."²⁸

Adding to the spatial demarcation of race, gender and class is the fact that the Black boy remains unnamed in the portrait title *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*. Therefore subject positioning, visual queues of Otherness and imperialism, and naming become signs with condensed meaning. Derek Gregory avers that spatial configurations which glorify the imperialist presence do so through several processes. Some of these are: *dispossession through othering*²⁹ in which non-Europeans are exoticised, colonised and--as in Montagu's portrait--made decorative and subservient to the colonial subject; *dispossession through spatializing*³⁰ in which a particular space becomes imperialist

²⁸Pointon 51.

²⁹Derek Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994) 169.

³⁰Gregory 173.

space, dominated and "founded" by the coloniser; and *dispossession through naming*³¹ in which the coloniser becomes name-giver, calling Others, but constantly remembering, as with Montagu's portrait title, to name self.

This formulaic juxtaposition of slavocrat with anonymous slave-servant recurs in numerous portraits from the eighteenth century. These images show European slavocrats being enhanced status-wise by the peripheral presence of their exotic "property." The rupturing of identities requires such a spatial mergence of subjects in which characters are read along focal and circumferential axes, and then accordingly hierarchised. Antoine Pesne's *Wilhelmine of Prussia and her brother Frederick* (c.1715), Angelica Kauffman's *Henry Loftus, Earl of Ely and Family* (c.1771)³² and John Rafael Smith's *A Lady and her Children Relieving a Cottager* (c.1782) all demonstrate such axial configurations of subject (dis)placement and power (Figs. 17-19). This (dis)placement in itself delineates the subject id/entity from the servile entity, the latter becoming encoded as latent memory, as oscillating amnesia.

The Black male servant in these three depictions is "midgetted" and peripherally isolated, seen waiting on his owner(s). Metaphorically, he becomes emasculated by both White male and female colonial power. Like *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, in these portrayals, the Black hands are forever occupied by work, continually in use--holding objects, parasols, or pieces of clothing. This manual/menial act translates into a synecdochal signifier of White nationhood's dominance over the exotic of colour, and the expropriation of Black bodies. Furthermore, in certain depictions, as with

³¹Gregory 171.

³²The other title provided for this portrait is *Henry Loftus, Earl of Ely, with Lady Ely and two Nieces*. See illus. 89 in the section "List of Illustrations" in Wendy Wassing Roworth, *Angelica Kauffman: A Continental Artist in Georgian England* (London: Reaktion and the Royal Pavilion, Art Gallery and Museum, Brighton, 1993) 211. Although Roworth used this latter title as a reference, for figure 18, I have attributed both titles to the portrait.

Pesne's, the Black servant is assimilated to the level of animal; for both the Black boy and the dog wear collars.³³ Dabydeen observes that: "The *London Advertiser* of 1756 carried a notice by Matthew Dyer informing the public that he made 'silver padlocks for Blacks or Dogs; collars, etc.'"³⁴ He goes on to say how certain slavocrats bought more expensive collars for their pets than for their slaves.³⁵

Kunst claims that, in profane art between the sixteenth and eighteenth century, Blacks were also displayed as exotic servile merry-makers.³⁶ As servants, Blacks were called upon to provide distraction for their slave-owners. They filled in as jugglers, performers and musicians. In New France, certain slavocrats likewise thought their slaves a source of exotic entertainment. In George Heriot's *Minuets of the Canadians* (c.1801) and its more popular replica by J. C. Stadler (c.1807) (see Figs.20-21), the Black slaves are peripheralised to the background, one playing a tambourine and seeming to perform antics.³⁷ Yet that they are situated outside the centric spotlight underlines their subjugated location in the seigneurial French-Canadian slavocracy. And this sociopolitical subjugation is referenced back to the White slave-owners whose subjecthood relies on the presence

³³Smalls 19-20.

³⁴Dabydeen 21-23.

³⁵Dabydeen 23.

³⁶Kunst 20-21.

³⁷Having extensively researched George Heriot and his works, Gerald E. Finley claims that J. C. Stadler made his *Minuets of the Canadians* several years after Heriot's. However, it is Stadler's copy that is featured in facsimiled prints of George Heriot's *Travels Through the Canadas*, published 1807 in London. See plate 15, check-list 97 and check-list 359 in Gerald E. Finley, *George Heriot: Postmaster-Painter of the Canadas* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1983) 53, 244, 290-291 respectively; and plate 24 in Gerald E. Finley, *George Heriot, 1759-1839* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada and National Museums of Canada, 1979) 24. Stadler's version also appears in Craig Brown's *The Illustrated History of Canada*, and is contextualised as follows: "George Heriot's comments on Lower Canada's climate suggest that, like their peasant counterparts, the bourgeoisie and the seigneurial class warded off the winter chill on the dance floor. The two blacks in the upper left would have been slaves; slavery remained legal until 1834;" Brown 249.

of the Other to be (de)cyphered as the dominant.

A similar situation happens with Beaucourt and *Portrait of a Negro Slave*. Although the poser is singularly portrayed, her exotic presence doubles back time and again to Beaucourt. Moreover, ownership and sex are recurring themes revealing the relationship between the poser, the image and their master. The allegorical rhetoric formulated of the two is that of White slavemaster, identified as artist, ruling over/owning Black enslaved exotic mistress.

The motif of exoticised subjection of the Black woman is thus foundational to Beaucourt's ethno-/egocentric historiography; for it further indigenises the construction of his Id/entity as well as his presence as part of the cultivated White presence and the nationally first since time immemorial.

Says Cynthia Willett:

By the very fact that the slave serves as an instrument of the master's desires the master gains a sense of self. For through the continual subordination of the slave the master reenacts the mastery of his desires or appetites. Therefore, the master is not only physically dependent upon the slave's labour; the master also depends upon the slave, with whom he struggles for a sense of self.³⁸

The Black poser thus turns into an outside object of possession that enters into the imperialist/nationalist context as exotic pawn.

The theme of possession of the exotic Other through display is similarly underscored with Benoist and *Portrait d'une Nègresse*. For although Benoist's skill of reconstructing the "foreign" Other was greatly acclaimed, her power as colonial artist is communicated through the anonymity and sexualisation of the Black woman on exhibition. The model's stance in *Portrait of a Negro Slave* bears a strong likeness to the sitter's position in *Portrait d'une Nègresse*. In fact, in both neoclassical paintings, the headwrap, the Black skin accentuated by white clothing, the looped earrings and the

³⁸Cynthia Willett, *Maternal Ethics and Other Slave Moralities* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 119.

exposed breasts are signs graphed onto the female posers to denote geo-racial and erotic exoticism. Beaucourt's model's clothing, however, not only alludes to the tropics, but its scantiness also situates the Black woman, who seems improperly dressed, in an inferior *socioeconomic* and *moral* class. In return, these categories becomes racialised, whether prescriptively or descriptively, by the sign of Blackness. And, as is the case with Benoit's and Eakins' portraits, the theme of work, impropriety and sex is further condensed and propagated by the polysemous title *Négress(e)*.

The headwrap, as well, is indicative of geo-cultural alterity. Numerous scholars have illustrated that, in many European and Euro-American contexts, the headtire was taken as a sign of exoticism, servitude or ethnicity.³⁹ Yet postulated, as well, is that the headwrap was itself a complicated sociopolitical signifier operating in a slavocratic hierarchy in which colour, size and style of wrap signified the free or enslaved position of the wearer.⁴⁰ Also, it is said that, in certain slave communities, ex-slave women wore white headdresses to distinguish their status as free subjects.⁴¹ Can Eakins' painting therefore be read as a portrait of a slave or a free(d) woman? About this image, Francis Martin Jr. comments that: "Painted at a time when Eakins had concentrated his art exclusively on portraiture, *Négress* follows the French tradition of highlighting the exotic nature of Black subjects. Eakins emphasizes his subject's multi-colored turban and coral earrings, as well as her sensuous plastic qualities--skin tone, physiognomy, proportion--to relate the mode of the sitter

³⁹See Pollock 21; Helen Bradley Griebel, "The West African Origin of the African-American Headwrap," *Dress and Ethnicity*, ed. Joanne B. Eicher (Oxford: Berg, 1995) 214; Patricia Hunt, "Swathed in Cloth: The Headwraps of Some African American Women in Georgia and South Carolina During the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *Dress* 21 (1994): 30; and Charlotte Jirousek, "More Than Oriental Splendor: Ottoman Headgear, 1380-1580," *Dress* 22 (1995): 24.

⁴⁰Hunt 31-32; Jirousek 29-30.

⁴¹Hunt 32.

to the viewer.⁴² The turban is thus paralleled to B/black skin, both being aesthetic accessories in the composition.

In *Portrait d'une Nègresse*, Benoist did indeed portray the poser in an elegantly wrapped white headdress. Nevertheless, the semiotic dilemma with this painting is that it partially succeeds--by the physiognomic expression and the stately colour-coded headtire--in visually situating the Black model as political subject; but also partly fails in that the exotic eroticisation of the poser's body overpowers the serious political theme of slave emancipation. Says James Smalls:

The painting, although aesthetically pleasing, is merely an extension of late 18th century thinking of black people as both exotic commodity and noble savage for public consumption. In addition, the portrait is a blatant indicator of the artist's class status and social aspirations and has very little to do with the black woman depicted . . . She is anonymous . . . intended as a symbol of all black women.⁴³

In this regard, the depicted exoticisation of the Black female signals a body also on sexual display, a body commodified, turned inside-out for full colonist exploitation and exploration.

Moreover, in *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, the theme of consumption--be it monetary, digustative, sexual or voyeuristic--positions the poser in a similar light as the exotic fruits. That the Black woman (un)recognisably becomes a diminished item of service condones slavery and her transmogrification as operating body, working entity and consumable exotic flesh. In this light, the painting idealises slavery and the Black woman's thrall. Patricia Hill Collins sees a multifaceted advantage in ideologising the Black woman as sub-human thing, as dead nature: "While the sexual and racial dimensions of being treated like an animal are important, the economic foundation

⁴²McElroy 87.

⁴³Smalls 71.

underlying this treatment is critical. Animals can be economically exploited, worked, sold, killed and consumed."⁴⁴

It was especially during the turn of the nineteenth century that the parading of Black women's bodies became vogue. Black female corporeality was visually consumed as exotic comm/oddy by Europeans. Many have documented the debasing display of Saartjie Baartman who was also known as the Hottentot Venus or *La Belle Hottentote* (Fig.22).⁴⁵ Because of her steatopygia⁴⁶ and supposedly excessive genitals, she was commonly featured at European soirées in a scanty loincloth. Upon her demise, she was genitally and gluteally dissected, and her parts put yet again on display for Europeans to see.⁴⁷ Regarding the interpretation of African bodies by colonists, Linda Merians notes that: "Representations of body parts established and emphasized the politics of the encounter always with the European as master."⁴⁸

Like Baartman, numerous Black women met with a similar fate of being paraded naked. The 1829 engraving *The Ball of the Duchesse du Barry* attests to this (Fig.23). It shows a steatopygous Black woman barely clothed at a du Barry masquerade.⁴⁹ As Gilman notes, the woman's

⁴⁴Collins 171.

⁴⁵See Gilman "Bodies" 213-216; Gould *Flamingo* 291-305; Collins 168-169; and Edwards and Walvin 171-182.

⁴⁶Steatopygia, or steatopyga, pertains to an excess of fat in the buttocks.

⁴⁷Gould *Flamingo* 291-292.

⁴⁸Linda E. Merians, "What They Are, Who We Are: Representations of the 'Hottentot' in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Eighteenth-Century Life* (1993): 24.

⁴⁹As the daughter of a mother who was employed as a domestic by one of Paris's most famous prostitutes, Jeanne, Comtesse du Barry (1743-1793) succeeded Madame de Pompadour in the late 1700s as King Louis XV's mistress. See Vern Bullough and Bonnie Bullough, *Women and Prostitution: A Social History* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1987) 166-167. du Barry and Louis XV were also two of Jean-Honoré Fragonard's patrons who did not always accept his work. Concerning commissions and legal altercations, see for example Georges Grappe, *Fragonard: La vie et l'oeuvre* (Paris: Éditions Pittoresques, 1929) 128-129; Jean Montague Massengale, *Jean-Honoré Fragonard* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1993) 52, 98, 126; Mary D. Sheriff, *Fragonard: Art and Eroticism* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990) 72, 94; and Dore

anatomical shape and Blackness were considered "the prize attraction" at the event.⁵⁰ Black steatopygous female bodies were as well a European visual fetish during this period. The psychological distance evoked through the gaze was a colonist assuager permitting the imperialist self to come into intrusive and intimate visual contact with the exotic Other--to even consummate with the Other via phantasy--whilst still safely controlling proximity.

In the late 1700s, however, Black women's sexuality was becoming increasingly emblematised by deformed hypersexual genitalia,⁵¹ a signified of lascivious exoticism. In J. Pafs' *The Female Hottentot with Natural Apron* of 1795 (Fig.24), an African woman is drawn frontally naked, wearing what seems to be a cape of animal skin. Her exaggerated labia are hairless, exposed, and accessible for viewer scrutiny. Contextualising Pafs' lithograph, Pieterse states: "The 'Hottentot apron', a late-eighteenth early-nineteenth century medical myth of grossly overdeveloped labia, is here represented as fact."⁵² Merians also observed a similar image, *A Hottentot Woman*, in François Le Vaillant's *Travels into the Interior Parts of Africa*, published 1790 (see Fig.25). She claims that illustrated books such as Le Vaillant's "became popular works and certainly played a rôle in educating the general population about the unique features of a soon-to-be-won territory."⁵³

Because Black women were considered subject to their "hyperactive" libido, and their genitalia perceived as pathologically oversized, in pseudo-scientific discourse, the Black female

Ashton, *Fragonard: In the Universe of Painting* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution P, 1988) 151-152, 224.

⁵⁰Gilman "Bodies" 213.

⁵¹See de Buffon 258, 318; and Gilman *Difference* 85-88.

⁵²Pieterse *White* 180.

⁵³Merians 18. Gilman also mentions François Le Vaillant's writings about the Hottentot apron. See *Difference* 85.

signified a prurient anomaly,⁵⁴ categorised as the "split" from normalcy and relegated outside of the western model of White female sexuality. The splitting testifies to a racialised sublimation in sexual desire, but also to a fear of its exorbitance, hence the difference in racialised sexual constructs dealing with the female. White female sexuality was idealised by patriarchy as passive and conceived as such, due partially to male phobia of the female body. However, Blackness or dark pigmentation mixed with femaleness further signified genitalic and thus sexual deviancy. Ergo, for the White androcentric cognoscenti of Europe, the dark-skinned female body gave new meaning to the word profane. As dark-skinned people, Native women did not escape this constructed negrotisation as the profanely or libidinally exotic.

Instrumental as peacemakers, traders, leaders, guiders and interpreters in the fur trade, many Native women were abandoned by their White spouses with the great influx of White European women to Lower Canada in the early 1800s.⁵⁵ As reported by Sylvia Van Kirk, Native women were

increasingly looked upon . . . as objects for temporary sexual gratification. The women . . . found themselves being judged according to strict British standards of female propriety. It was they, not the white men, who were to be held responsible for the perpetuation of immorality because of their supposedly promiscuous Indian heritage. The double standard tinged with racism had arrived with a vengeance.⁵⁶

Not surprisingly, the word "exotic" surfaces in Van Kirk's analysis. During the 1830s, when Native women's political power began to decline drastically in the fur trade, "It had been predicted," says Van Kirk, "that 'the lovely, tender exotics' (as they were dubbed) would languish in the harsh fur trade

⁵⁴Gilman *Difference* 83-85.

⁵⁵Le Collectif Clio, *L'Histoire des Femmes au Québec depuis quatre siècle* (Montréal: Quinze éditeur, 1982) 87-89.

⁵⁶Van Kirk 79.

environment, and indeed they did, partly because they had no useful social and economic role to play.⁵⁷ Here, the labelling of "exotic" has a direct and erosive impact on Native women's sociopolitical power. This labelling signals a switching of status from political subject to erotic object. This transposal in signification depoliticises Native women's agency, activism and social worth in exchange for sexual objectification.

Apart from observing that the European elite paralleled dark-skinned peoples to savages and "lower animals,"⁵⁸ Alvin Thompson adds that, to Christian explorers, Black women in Africa became the epitome of lasciviousness and filth;⁵⁹ they were considered abject, the material counter-embodiment of Euro-Christian civility. Also, it was during the European Enlightenment that the Black women were thought to fornicate with apes as a common practice.⁶⁰ Pieterse has asserted that engravings like *The Orang-Outang carrying off a Negro Girl* of 1795 stemmed from this rampant colonist fiction (Fig.26).⁶¹ Edward Long, the eighteenth-century pseudo-ethnographer, stated that:

the oran-outangs are said to make a kind of huts (sic), composed of boughs interlaced, which serve to guard them from the too great heat of the sun.

It is also averred, that they sometimes endeavour to surprise and carry off Negroe women in their woody retreats, in order to enjoy them.⁶²

But how might this myth of Black women as "naturally" hyper-concupiscent and bestial, possessing

⁵⁷Van Kirk 79.

⁵⁸Thompson 43.

⁵⁹Thompson 48.

⁶⁰Gilman *Difference* 83; Gould *Flamingo* 285-286; and Pieterse *White* 40-42.

⁶¹Pieterse *White* 40-42.

⁶²Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 3 (1774; London: Frank Cass and Co., 1970) 360.

copious over-sexed genitalia, have anything to do with Beaucourt's image? And what is its connexion to Fragonard?

In examining *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, it is possible that the model posed fully clothed. The physiognomy is sufficiently convincing to infer that the face was indeed replicated from that of a Black woman's. But the breasts are awkwardly and artificially illustrated, as Major-Frégeau has likewise noticed.⁶³ They were possibly sketched in after the face, and thus not drawn from an actual model. Whilst the naked breast might trigger various associations (Venus, lactation, female sexuality, maternity), it is the volcanic scape in the background, seen meekly vaporising, that iconicises exotic genitalic female sexuality. The volcano, usually found in tropical islands as part of the earth's stratum, becomes a signifier of geographical Otherness, an Otherness evidently associated with nature, essentialism, deviancy, prurience and excess. On a conceptual level, the signified of the volcano marks the unsoundness, instability and explosiveness of the "dark forces" of nature. Yet it is also the shape and its mechanism of erupting and egesting molten lava that places it on a metaphorical par with female sex organs and hypersexuality. Considering this erotic/exotic allegorisation, it becomes easier to apprehend how some scholars would want to compare this image to Jean-Honoré Fragonard's secular style; for Fragonard was known for his highly coded erotic images--which were intended to decorate private spaces, given their sexual thematisation.

As with *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, in numerous of Fragonard's secular paintings, there is the visual implication of eroticism, albeit more expressly genitalic. His famous painting *The Swing*, or *Les Hasards heureux de l'escarpolette* of 1767 (Fig.27) shows a woman being swayed in a garden, abundantly decorated with flowers and several statues. An *amant* has strategically placed himself

⁶³Major-Frégeau 60.

in the foliage so that, as the woman enters his vantage point, he is able to glimpse under her skirts. The statue of Cupid to the left makes a sign of secrecy, hinting at the illicit liaison taking place between the two. That the woman's slipper has flown off to reveal her stockinged foot indicates the act of undressing and of provocative exposure--a prelude, therefore, to sexual adventure. The nonchalant expression of the third character in the corner, who reins the swing and controls its momentum, becomes a mask of innocence for an accomplice privy to the unfolding event. Also, what is hidden by the woman's skirts is allegorically insinuated by the structure of the smaller statue of the couple in the background. Much like the woman's dress, its base is illustrated as layers of circular membraneous skin, with an opening frontally directed at the (male) viewer. Moreover, it is not uncoincidental that the woman appears in pink. The woman herself becomes a metaphor for what the reposing voyeur sees and the viewer cannot.⁶⁴ Additionally, the motion of the swing is mimictic of the sexual rhythm of penetrative intercourse.⁶⁵

This painting is said to have been commissioned by Baron de Saint-Julien, an affiliate of the French clergy. He was allegedly the person depicted as voyeur. And it is his real-life companion who was presumably portrayed in the swing, pushed by--as Saint-Julien had demanded--a bishop.⁶⁶

Dore Ashton notes that:

[Saint-Julien] wanted a boudoir painting not only to pay tribute to his mistress, but also to titillate his friends. It was the custom. In fact, many highly placed patrons, including the king's mistress, commissioned these conversation-piece paintings and even sculptures, which they often made more tantalizing by shielding them from

⁶⁴As a parallel, see Mary Sheriff's analysis of Fragonard's *The Wanderer* (c.1751) and the genitalic allegorisation of the female subject in Sheriff 104-107.

⁶⁵Massengale 88.

⁶⁶Massengale 88.

impudent eyes with colored satins.⁶⁷

The Bolt, or Le Verrou (c. 1776-1778) (Fig.28), is another erotic depiction that intimates (hetero)sexual congress. Locked in a furious embrace, and driven by the urgency of passion, the male character reaches up to secure the bolt of a boudoir. The blood-red canopied drapes and their arrangement across the bed, in conjunction with the peach resting on the table, visually articulate an allegorisation of female genitalic arousal. Presented as a taboo, moreover, is the crossing of class boundaries. The White male body seems muscular and tanned, perhaps from heavy outdoor labour. He is clothed in *culotte*, as one from the proletarian class. The woman, on the other hand, is represented in lavish gold and white fabrics. Her powder-w/White skin and hairstyle mark, as well as racialise, her class as bourgeois or aristocratic. Also, the couple seems to be in her bedroom, stealing a secret moment of intimacy--another taboo.

The action is *mouvementée*, agitated, articulating a lascivious immediacy. The lock itself, accentuated by the male's gestural "stretch," as well as by its constructed mechanisation allude literally and metaphorically to (hetero)sexual intercourse. About Fragonard's allegorical conventions of eroticism, Mary Sheriff says:

No symbolic object was truly effective unless its presence in a representation could also be justified at a more literal level. Part of the pleasure taken in the erotic symbol was the pleasure of deception; the beholders who decoded these images were pleased and amused because they could clearly perceive the sexual discourse hidden from innocent eyes.⁶⁸

Fragonard's depictions were usually classified into two categories, the sacred as mythical and

⁶⁷Ashton 12.

⁶⁸Sheriff 107.

religious, and the profane as decorative and c/overtly sexual.⁶⁹ Influenced, then, as he is said to have been, by Fragonardian conventions, how might Beaucourt have considered the sacred and the profane?

In a series of self-promoting newspaper ads published in the bilingual *Montreal Gazette* in 1792, it seems as though Beaucourt was aware of the risquéness of *Portrait of a Negro Slave*. From these ads, it can be deduced that Beaucourt perhaps did not initially exhibit the painting to his patrons, considering the popularity of religious themes in the art of early eighteenth-century New France.⁷⁰ He might, however, have later used the painting to his advantage under the guise of the profane. In all blurbs, Beaucourt is identified as a highly accomplished Canadian painter, a member of the Royal Academy of Paris and Bordeaux in painting, sculpture, civil and naval architecture. The ad, printed in the *Montreal Gazette* 4 June 1792 and reprinted 3 days later, gives a background of Beaucourt's scholastic achievements and suggests that he was recruiting students for instruction (Appendix L). In the advertisement of 14 June, the same message is conveyed. Beaucourt wants to begin, or has begun, a school and is in search of (more) students--"Il entreprendra à faire des élèves dans aucune branche de peinture" (Appendix M).⁷¹ Also, his skill for aesthetic ornamenting is highlighted here.

It appears that Beaucourt's forté was fundamentally in decorative art--"Il entend l'art d'orner...dans le goût le plus élégant, le plus nouveau et le plus riche. . . ."⁷²--and not in

⁶⁹Massengale 116.

⁷⁰See, for example, François-Marc Gagnon, *Premiers Peintres de la Nouvelle-France*, tome 2 ([Québec]: Ministère des Affaires culturelles, 1976); and Lord 22-28.

⁷¹MT: "He is beginning to take students in any branch of painting."

⁷²MT: "He understands decorative art. . . in the most elegant, the latest, and the richest style. . . ."

neoclassical portrait painting. However, the ad of 28 June 1792 shows a change in context. Beaucourt wants to attract amateur painters to his atelier, and continues to recruit students. Yet he also wants the readership to know of his artistic diversity and capacity to make religious as well as *profane* paintings--"il peint le portrait à l'huile, l'histoire sainte & profane" (see Appendix N).⁷³ By this time, it would seem that Beaucourt had placed *Portrait of a Negro Slave* on display. Also, it must have attracted favourable attention and approval from certain patrons for Beaucourt to have later publicised in the newspaper his knack for creating profane portraiture. Barry Lord entertains a like perspective, deducing that Beaucourt most likely exhibited the painting in his salon to impress visiting patrons of his own "race" and class.⁷⁴

The profane can indeed be a synonym for the secular or the non-religious; but there are nuances in its application to *Portrait of a Negro Slave*. Projected onto Beaucourt, "profane" signifies a liberal thinker, a non-conservative male painter who has no difficulty dealing with taboo subject-matter. In this regard, the construction of the Black domestic *qua* seductive Other is inversely a construct of Beaucourt's subject self as advanced and inventive. Lynda Nead claims that the artist's representation of the unclothed female body in particular images "functions as a sign of male sexuality and artistic avantgardism."⁷⁵ Yet when the profane is used to contextualise *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, and because it differs so markedly from Beaucourt's other female portraits, the

⁷³MT: "He paints portraits in oil, of saintly and profane historical subjects."

⁷⁴Regarding the display of *Portrait of a Negro Slave* and the seigneurial couple, Marguerite and Eustache-Ignace Trottier, who had matching portraits completed by Beaucourt, Lord says: "We can picture a patron of de Beaucourt, such as . . . Trottier dit Desrivières. . . ogling the young girl's body as he waited to arrange for his own portrait. The ageing seigneur might reflect that he was evidently dealing with an artist who could afford such fashionable and attractive help. If the tea-pouring Mme Trottier . . . saw the picture, she probably would have noticed the pineapple and other tropical fruits, expensive to import. So de Beaucourt effectively advertises that he shares the class outlook of his oppressor patrons, and that his price will be high." Cited from Lord 43.

⁷⁵Nead 44.

signification takes on a different, more sexually directed sense.

Although by the late eighteenth century, the White female allegory was considered a sign of the profane and the exotic,⁷⁶ as previously observed, the racialisation or greater eroticisation of the already Othered female body increased hierarchical sub-divisions. And in slavocracies where racism, gynophobia and negrophobia had been well interiorised,⁷⁷ these artistic conventions were a way of subjugating the Other so as to preserve the supposed integrity, purity, morality and social order of the nation-self. With *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, this subjugation happens by representing the Black woman as sub-human, as an allegorical protraction of the tropical still life she serves on the platter.

Granted, still life was devalued as a "feminine" vocation during the Enlightenment,⁷⁸ but as a device in representational art, it was considered the inferior decorative elements of an image, nugatory in terms of its visual and symbolic importance. Germaine Greer elaborates that: "The French call it 'nature morte' their own version of the pejorative name given by Pliny to still-life painting, 'rhyparagraphy' or the depiction of rubbish, low on the low list of *picturis minora*."⁷⁹ Norman Bryson reiterates that the still-life artist (rhyparographer) was considered in classical Greek a painter who reproduced in image dirt, discard and "things that are physically and morally

⁷⁶Clements 487.

⁷⁷See, for example, Gilman "Figure" 375-377.

⁷⁸Rosworth 22; Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981) 32-35. David G. Wilkins and Bernard Schultz, *Art Past/Art Present* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1990) 342.

⁷⁹Germaine Greer, *The Obstacle Race: The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1979) 227.

unclean."⁸⁰ Thus the appearance of still life intrinsically creates visual, moral and sociopolitical hierarchies or boundaries within a given depicted context.

In decyphering the allegorically abstract, both in textual and visual terms, it becomes obvious that the poser in Beaucourt's image is a metaphor for the adjacent exotic still life. The fruits as non-western and consumable mediate the signified presence of the Black slave, herself considered non-western and consumable. This paralleling is also achieved through semantics which subliminally facilitates her transformation as exotic "nature" or matter. This happens two ways--through the implicitness of semantic content which is grammaticalised in visual codes; and through semantic sequencing or word ordering. For example, John Russell Harper prefaces this painting as "a sensual half-length portrait," thereafter delving into meticulous detail about the surrounding still life. Says Harper: "The artist delights himself in the play of light and shadow on the white blouse and the contrast in tones when it is placed against *the red-brown flesh and brown skirt*, a red kerchief on the head echoes the pineapple's orange-red skin, and the cool blue sky makes the warm colours even richer (emphasis mine)."⁸¹ Within the framework of semantic content and visual grammar, Harper treats the Black poser as an exponent of the still life, reducing her to "red-brown flesh" and equating her in a contrastive manner with other peripheral objects and clothing of different "tones" and "warm colours."

Hugh Honour's remark of the model in Benoist's *Portrait d'une Négrresse* resemble that of Harper's in that it reduces and romanticises the Black woman and her presence to Black skin--"The painting is, moreover, a masterpiece of visual sensitivity, the soft black skin being exquisitely set off

⁸⁰Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1990) 136; hereafter abbreviated as *Looking*.

⁸¹Harper *Painting* 56.

by the crisp white, freshly laundered headdress and drapery.⁸² Furthermore, regarding Beaucourt's image, Madeleine Major-Frégeau says that: "Le 'Portrait d'une esclave noire' est une peinture surtout décorative, c'est l'art pour l'amour de l'art."⁸³ Ostensibly, "décorative" can be a referent for still life or ornamental "dead nature." These statements neutralise slave oppression, turning it into food for phantasy and aesthetic challenge. As inferred by Major-Frégeau, the "slave" context in Beaucourt's image should be interpreted as art for the sake of art--"l'art pour l'amour de l'art"--and nothing else.

But why the underscoring of a still-life context in visual discourse? With still-life portrayals, Bryson notes that: "*As enunciated by the image* the constative level becomes subordinate to a performative level in which the message is inverted, so that the profane is more important to the image than the sacred, the servants are a stronger presence than their master, and what is carnal drowns out what is spiritual."⁸⁴ This is indeed the unfolding discourse in *Portrait of a Negro Slave*. The image takes on a more visceral quality, rather than a spiritual or moral one. The visual amplification of carnality itself undersets the theme of servile perishable flesh.

Semantic sequencing, on the other hand, collapses the subjecthood of the poser. This is to say that, subliminally, subject erasure occurs through syntactical juxtaposition. For example, the translation of "Negro with still life" as "Esclave à la nature morte" is problematical in its referencing of the Black poser. Even more, it has different connotations in how it objectifies and subjectifies the Black woman. In the translated version of Robert Hamilton Hubbard's catalogue of 1963, *L'Évolution de l'art au Canada*, the following is said about Beaucourt's *Portrait of a Negro Slave*: "Son Esclave

⁸²Honour, vol. IV.2, 7.

⁸³Major-Frégeau 60.

⁸⁴Bryson *Looking* 150.

à la nature morte est un exemple remarquable de peinture pure où il est possible d'admirer, sans préoccupation étrangère à l'art, la belle facture, l'harmonie des couleurs et le jeu de la lumière.⁸⁵

Not only is focus given to the style of the artwork, the harmony of the colours and the play of light; the poser depicted with her breast suggestively revealed and webbed into the semantic context of *Esclave* and *nature morte* becomes naturalised as an aesthetic fixture. In this instance, the visual grammaticalisation of subordinate exoticism compliments the textual referents. Thus Hubbard's and Major-Frégeau's explications resemble each other. They both reduce the poser to naught by descriptively concentrating on other "decorative" aspects in the image.

But more crucially, prepositional queues also affect the meaning delivered through semantic sequencing. Whereas the preposition "with" connotes juxtaposition, adjacential demarcation or "side-by-sideness," "à la" has a more assimilatory implication, disrupting and dissolving the boundaries between human subject and inanimate object. With the latter preposition, the Black woman is not only a slave with fruits, but a slave who embodies the tropical still life she is seen serving. She, like them, can be easily devoured as an imperialist commodity. In this regard, these contemporary deictical elements--meaning the constituents constructing context--surface as vestiges of imperialist significations; for underneath the allegorisations is the theme of Black femaleness as working body, as dead nature, as tropical matter or exotic still life, the consumable of an atrophying race from a foreign exploitable land.

Subsequent to *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, Jean-Léon Gérôme created *Bashi-Bazouk* in 1869 (Fig.29), which indeed seems an artistic challenge. The portrayal represents an African soldier who

⁸⁵The translated version reads: "His Negress (McCord Museum, Montreal) is a unique example of 'pure' painting in which the texture of the paint, harmonies of colour, and the play of light are to be enjoyed for their own sakes." Hubbard *Development* 52. This quote also appears in chapter 1 as the reference for n58.

fought as an alliance with the Turkish army.⁸⁶ The Bashi-Bazouk were supposedly a violent militia group.⁸⁷ Gérôme, however, has used the image as an exercise in reproducing the Other. Even though the depiction seems to have constructed the poser as subject, the Black male model remains anonymous in more ways than one. The title name, first of all, denotes the name of an army, and not the name of the poser himself; secondly, he is portrayed in silhouette. His skin colour, racial traits, intricately ornate turban, brightly-coloured embroidered apparel, and weapons become visual spectacles of exoticism through a scopophilia fabricated to be visually intrusive, sensorial and prolonged. Lastly, the excess of signs construct an ethnic "type" of decoration. The male poser is only half-seen. His identity, face and name remain shadowed. He becomes, much like his exotic costume, an object of spectacle and curiosity. Hugh Honour observes:

. . . this portrait was probably painted in Paris from a professional model wearing the silk jacket and elaborate headdress in which Bashi-Bazouks were attired in several of Gérôme's other pictures. An illusion of reality is given by the artist's technical precision. His astonishing skill and apparent abnegation of artistic individuality . . . led one contemporary to call him "a scientific picture maker." Theophile Gautier praised him for "ethnographic veracity," remarking that his pictures would be of value to anthropologists . . .⁸⁸

Here, Gérôme is celebrated not only for his aesthetic dexterity, but also for his ability as a European/western artist to construct--albeit problematically--the ethnographic Other. The tension and interplay of these signs pendulate to position the soldier as an in-between subject-object of visual imperialist fascination.

In addition to this scopophilic fetishisation of dark-skinned peoples as the exotic decorative

⁸⁶Honour, vol. IV.2, 106.

⁸⁷Honour, vol. IV.2, 106.

⁸⁸Honour, vol. IV.2, 107-108.

Other was the imagining of Natives and Blacks as extinguishing species, with White people presumably being the stronger, more progressively generative "race." Says Daniel Francis of Victorian Canada: "Canadians believed firmly in progress, and progress demanded that the inferior civilization of the Indian had to give way to superior, White civilization. Progress had its price, and the Indian was expected to pay it."⁸⁹ In the late 1800s and early 1900s, other non-White peoples, fetishised as subject-matter for European and Euro-North American artists, were also expected to extinguish for the sake of White civilisation. In 1914, Adam Shortt and Arthur Doughty stated that the Crees and Blackfeet were "fast diminishing tribes."⁹⁰ And "the Hall of Man," a museum project of the 1930s headed by Malvina Hoffman (1887-1966), sought to capture the different "races" of humanity (Asians, Africans and so forth) who were categorised as annihilating: "Before the end of this century," stated Hoffman, "many of the primitive races which are now represented in bronze in this hall and modelled from living subjects will have disappeared into dim records of history."⁹¹ Retrospectively, the romanticised myth of "dying races" had remained popular in colonial dominant culture for over a hundred years; it thus signifies an imperialist wish fulfilment, "a repressed impulse"⁹² manifesting in the allegorically fascist discourses of the colonial nation-self.

Already, by the late 1700s, through observing slave miscegenation, colonisers knew the formula for racial extinction and regeneration. de Buffon had noted from his contemporary M. P. that:

⁸⁹Francis 59.

⁹⁰Shortt and Doughty 596.

⁹¹Cited from Malvina Hoffman, *Heads and Tales* (Garden City, NY: Garden City Publishing Co., [1943]) 11. This project was proposed and commissioned by the Field Museum of Chicago in 1930. And the African woman was on the museum's "death list" as the Venus Hottentot. Certain collaborators of the project demanded that Hoffman duplicate the African woman's "steatopygia development" in the bronze model, and even "insisted," says Hoffman, "on more exaggerated proportions." See Hoffman 155.

⁹²Peter Gay, ed., *The Freud Reader* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1989) 28.

"Il faut absolument. . . quatre générations pour faire disparaître [sic] entièrement la couleur des Nègres . . ." (Appendix K).⁹³ The myth unveils the ego of the White colonist nation-self wishing to be rid of civilisational degeneracy, represented by the dark exotic Other. Moreover, this pervasive want condoned interchangeable colonist stereotyping and racial reductionism. In other words, a dark-skinned Asian, sociopolitically subordinated, could come to represent a dark-skinned Black or a dark-skinned Native of the same status.⁹⁴ This racial/racist diminishment occurs with Beaucourt's painting.

That *Portrait of a Negro Slave* has been used as a thematic context for Black and Panis slavery in colonial Canada implies a redoubling in reductionist meaning. This is to say that, whilst Blackness becomes de-negotised as a sign attributed to aboriginals, Nativeness, too, becomes a sign of colour, negrified, losing its constructivist difference and specificity by its semiotic assimilation in colonial metalanguage. Moreover, in eighteenth-century Canada, "Negro" and "Panis" were used interchangeably by colonisers. Robin Winks notes that "Panis became a synonym for slave and was occasionally applied to Negroes as well."⁹⁵ Thus the polysemous effect of using *Portrait of a Negro Slave* as an icon of Panis and Black slavery works to maintain diachronically the imperialist binary of White/western/superior/coloniser as normative and colour/non-occidental/inferior/colonised as anomaly, as the prurient exotic.

But from a different, more dilemmic perspective, not to use Beaucourt's image as a sign of

⁹³MT: "It takes absolutely. . . four generations [of racial intermixing] for the pigmentation of the Negro to disappear." Qtd. from document in Appendix K.

⁹⁴See the situation with the Americans in the Philippines, in which the Filipinos are called "niggers" and "Injuns" in Rafael 134.

⁹⁵Winks 9.

Black/Native slavery is to falsely assume that, like Whiteness, these two categories remain racially "pure" and easily separable. For example, the ambiguous visual appearance of Maria Analina Restrepo (Fig.30) (c.1897), captured in photograph by Benjamin de la Calle, defies pristine classification and, more crucially, derides the colonially (patho)logical concept of sanitised racial divisions. Decyphering her identity--racially, ethnically or Other/wise--within the context of her proper name,⁹⁶ leads her beholder into a never-ending guessing game in which several responses, complimentary as well as paradoxical, arise.

Another dilemma with the miscegenation tolerated in colonial society is the urgency it must have created in numerous dark-skinned peoples to Whiten themselves and their ascending lineage. This ethno-racial self-annihilation would have congruently resulted in historical mnemonic obliteration. Winks remarks that several interracial marriages occurred in late eighteenth-century Lower Canada between Negroes or Panis and Whites. The children of these marriages themselves espoused people who were not dark-skinned; and their subsequent family lineage "through the generations," as Winks surmises, "must have 'passed' over to White."⁹⁷ Perhaps this "whitening out" of dark-skinned lineages was caused by marginality. Nonetheless, Vincente Rafael calls the colonist ideologies that sustain racist self-aversion "benevolent assimilation."⁹⁸ The ideologies of benevolent assimilation are based on instilling in the Other a self-destructive desire to mimic the coloniser culturally and racially. These maxims positively rationalise colonisation and locate the White subject

⁹⁶I have shown this image to several colleagues. Some immediately say that the poser is Black, some say First Nations, others see her as both. However, when her hispanic-sounding name is given as a context for her identity, certain could not place her, ethnically or racially.

⁹⁷Winks 11.

⁹⁸Rafael 128.

as emulative model. Rafael postulates that this phenomenon produces a colonist myth in which the people deemed racially degenerating are promised to be transformed into "modern political subjects" under colonial rule.⁹⁹ Also posited by Rafael is that the ambiguous rhetoric of benevolent assimilation works in favour of colonial power: "Articulated to and from the heart of darkness, whiteness is founded on a fundamental ambivalence."¹⁰⁰ In numerous instances, this ambiguity works to centralise Whiteness, allegorically anchoring it to sociopolitical power in representation.

The ambivalence in the discourse of exoticism surrounding *Portrait of a Negro Slave* also raises several questions. Is the portrait exotic to Canadian art historians because it was made outside of Canada and presumably in the Antilles? Is it that, due to the supposed early intervention of Canadian abolition, slavery by virtue of its presumed historical brevity was an institution "foreign" to Canada's eighteenth-century sociocultural context? Is it that the fruits, the landscape and the racialised sexual objectification of the Black subject are visual signs constructing a circumstance which translates into tropical, rather than western, alterity? Or, is it that Canadian art-historical discourse has adopted and naturalised discriminatory European ideologies about Others in artistic representation?

These hypotheses, posed here as questions, demonstrate the way in which abstruse discourses of exoticism work manifoldly to nationally (dis)locate and nomadise *Portrait of a Negro Slave*. Being labelled "exotic" signals the initial and ongoing process of colonial Othering. Within this Othering, which is at once glorifying and denigratory, every conceivable human and cultural difference--biological, behavioural, psychological, geographical, environmental, pigmentary, regional,

⁹⁹Rafael 128.

¹⁰⁰Rafael 134.

physiognomic, physical, religious, sexual, individual, collective and so forth--becomes classificatory and nationally hierarchised according to patri-imperialist ideologies about race, gender, class, ethnicity and religion.

However, the rupturing within the sight/site that constructs Black exoticism marks the continual control of the concept and face of nation(s). This face is reconstructed time and again in a language of (neo)imperialist national aesthetics. The exotic ergo acts as an (un)conscious politically-charged palimpsest in which reiterated ambiguity promotes, more than it deconstructs or challenges, (neo)colonial maxims regarding the representational selection of national subjects. And the mnemonic distancing from Other histories, the slow memorial mutilation from the past creates an interpretive latency, a failure in memory in relation to the exotic(ised)/Other(ed) that boosts the memorial primacy of the imperialist nation-self.

The desire to mnemonically efface the Other, to create a rupture, a distance and dominance between subjects is evident in the Canadian art history which is colonist-centred. The Other is then contingently seen in the s/p²ace of contemporary memory, not as an actual identity, but rather as a phantastically decorative entity, a phantom of the past, only quasi-there and not quite having been; a shadow disappearing into oblivion, only to reappear reconfigured, glued onto traces of colonist discourses that incite amnesic remembering.

To be obliged to forget--in the construction of the national present--is not a question of historical memory; it is the construction of a discourse on society that performs the problem of totalizing the people and unifying the nation will. That strange time--forgetting to remember--is a place of 'partial identification' inscribed in the daily plebiscite which represents the performative discourse of the people.

Homi Bhabha.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹Bhabha *Location* 160-161.

CONCLUSION: FACING THE SHADOW

Scientific imperialism, media imperialism, educational imperialism are all sub-types of cultural imperialism. So is linguistic imperialism. Linguistic imperialism also permeates all the other types of imperialism, since language is the means used to mediate and express them.

Richard Phillipson¹

Depuis toujours le mouvement de la présence perdue aura déjà engagé le processus de sa réappropriation.

Jacques Derrida²

M.-L. von Franz claims that the shadow represents a crises in Self, a disavowal in consciousness instigated by anxiety or phobia.³ *Portrait of a Negro Slave* is such a shadow. As illustrated with this painting, language and its cognitive imprinting constitutes remembrance. The numerous printed histories of the (neo)colonial western mainstream that compete with, and debase, subaltern/oral histories lead to a resurgence in colonising the process of knowing, especially that of knowing the Other. Ostensibly, imperial hegemony has a well-organised framework: its performatives extend to (re)writing history, creating "objective" epistemology, re-interpreting images, and thus re/producing colonist dominant culture and maxims. All this influences, in the contemporary, what will be most easily remembered and forgotten from the past.

With *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, the colonist metalanguage, begun synchronically within a specific era of imperialist domination, has been carried forth into the current mainstream memory by the repetition of problematic discourses, a repetition based on uncritical automatism. Moreover, the

¹Phillipson 65.

²Cited from Derrida *Margins* 82. The translation is: "Always, from the outset, the movement of lost presence already will have set in motion the process of its appropriation." Derrida *Margins* 72.

³von Franz 170-174.

colonial visuo-textual (in)versions aiming to (re)colonise memory do so through various means and reconfigured forms. To control or manipulate an enormous expanse of mnemonic territory, colonial/nationalist (art) histories must bombard, quantitatively and persistently, the phenomenon of knowing. These particular histories as authoritative discourses **perform, reform, deform** and **conform** mnemonically, reproducing colonist (di)visions in the representations dealing with the "indigenous" nation-self and the "exotic" Other(ed). Thus the (un)intentional colonial construction of textual amnesia is itself the shadow of an active memory.

Those seeing the shift of Other histories into a place of textual nothingness, or taking notice of them becoming, as Jacques Derrida suggests, a "présence perdue" may experience a sense of urgency in retrieving these politico-historical memories; for they become crucial to explaining ambiguous discriminatory discourses of alterity in contemporary western culture.

As I have demonstrated with *Portrait of a Negro Slave*, these discourses are nationalist, racist, (hetero)sexist and prejudicial in their ambiguous articulation and political de-subjectification of the Black poser. Also, these discourses feed from sign systems that (in)directly contextualise terms such as "slave," "negress," "exotic" and "wench" in a romanticised and nonchalant manner. As a consequence, political alterity and those (still) devastatingly affected by colonisation become trivialised and thus forgettable in mainstream collective memory. Fortunately, though, counter-narratives continue to emerge in Canadian art history. In addition to breathing mnemonic life into the voices that have been historically stifled, such counter-narratives are heuristically facing colonial history with its shadowed past.

My sentiment is that the Black poser did exist. She was real, most likely having lived the reality of a domestic, whether in colonial Canada or the Caribbean. In this regard, the image

functions as a biographical document, recording a moment of contact made over two centuries ago between the woman portrayed and a colonial artist. Yet it is through imperialist metalanguage--which encompasses the visual and the textual, which mediates colonist ideas into exploitative realities, and which favours the colonial subject as centre--that Beaucourt has presided in a particular branch of Canadian art history as a microcosm of the **re/called** nationalist/hegemonic self. Ergo, looking at this art history from an alter/native perspective and remembering the Black woman in Beaucourt's nomadic picture, a picture overshadowed for decades by various kinds of sanitised Canadian nationalist discourse, means remembering the Other histories of women of colour who experienced similar oppressive slave realities in imperialist Europe, the Caribbean, America and colonial Canada.

There is only one thing that seems to work; and that is to turn directly toward the approaching darkness . . . and to try to find out what its secret aim is and what it wants from you.

M.-L. von Franz⁴

⁴von Franz 170.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Marcel Trudel's record of François Malepart de Beaucourt's slaves.

MALEPART

Malepart de Beaucourt, François
peintre, époux de Benoîte Gaétant.

Jean-Baptiste-François, nègre
b 1791 à 14 ans, appartenant à la
veuve, Montréal.

Marie-Thérèse-Zémire, négresse
s 1800, appartenant à la veuve,
Montréal.

Source: Marcel Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires au Canada français* (Montréal: Éditions Hurtubise HMH, 1990) 379.

APPENDIX B

"A Vendre"--Advertisement for the sale of a Black woman.

A V E N D R E,
UNE NEGRESSE qui est présentement en ville. L'on pourra s'adres-
ser à Madame PERRAULT pour le prix.

Source: "A Vendre," *La Gazette de Québec* 18 mars 1784: n. pag.

APPENDIX C

Definitions of "Negro Wench" and "Wench."

Negro wench. A Negro girl or woman, especially one held as a slave. {1761-} — 1715 *Boston News-Letter* 23 May 2/2 A Likely Negro Wench aged about Eighteen Years, to be Sold by Mr. John Vrieling. 1746 *N.H. Hist. Soc. Coll.* IX. 141, [I] bought a negro wench of Capt Clough. 1835 BIRD *Hawks of Hawk-H.* I. 16 [She] had even obtained a little negro wench to dwell with Elsie as a domestic. 1866 KIRKLAND *Bk. Anecdotes* 421 The mail agent . . . said that Mr. Walker 'was no gentleman for traveling with a nigger wench.'

take some weltin' cord out of my pocket and go to fishin' for it.

* **Wench.** †A female Negro slave, servant, or girl. (See also NEGRO WENCH.) Now rare.

1717 *N.C. Col. Rec.* II. 310 A Wench for the House I want sore. 1760 WASHINGTON *Diaries* I. 118 Belinda, a Wench of mine, in Frederick. 1807 JANSON *Stranger in Amer.* 309 Female slaves, in this part of the world are uniformly called wenches. 1872 POWERS *Afoot & Alone* 30 The lazy swinging wenches, with buckets of water on their turbaned heads. 1909 *Dialect Notes* III. 393 *Buck*, . . . now applied almost exclusively to male negroes as the opposite of *wench*.

attrib. and *transf.* 1806 LEWIS in *L. & Clark Exped.* IV. (1905) 187, I think the most disgusting sight I have ever beheld is these dirty naked wenches [Indian squaws]. 1880 E. JAMES *Negro Minstrel's Guide* 10 The legs of wench dancers . . . are often padded.

Source: Sir William A. Craigie and James R. Helbert, eds. *A Dictionary of American English: On Historical Principles*, 1959 ed.

APPENDIX D

"A Negro Wench"--Announcements for the sale and reward of two Black slave women.

Ran away from the subscriber a few weeks ago,

A Negro Wench,
named SUE:--this is therefore to forewarn all manner of persons from harboring said wench under the penalties of the laws.

JAMES CLARK, senior.
Niagara, August 17, 1795.

For Sale,

Lot No 28, together with a convenient dwelling house, four rooms on the lower floor, a commodious kitchen adjoining and a good cellar;--the terms of sale may be known by applying to Elizabeth Thompson, on the premises.

Newark, June 24, 1795. [30th.]

For sale, for three years, from the 29th of this present month of July,

A Negro Wench,
Named Chloc, 23 years old, understands washing, cooking, &c. Any gentleman wishing to purchase, or employ her by the year or month, is requested to apply to
ROBERT FRANKLIN,
at the receiver general's,
Newark, July 25, 1795. 34th.

AN ASSORTMENT OF
BLANK
Summonses, Bills
of exchange, and Affidavits for sale at
this office

Source: "A Negro Wench," *The Upper Canada Gazette; or, The American Oracle* 19 Aug. 1795: 255.

APPENDIX E

"To be Sold"--Advertisement for the sale of a Black woman.

To be sold,
A Healthy, strong Negro WOMAN,
about 30 years of age; understands
Cookery, Laundry, and the taking
care of Poultry. N. B. She can Dress
Ladies Hair.—Enquire of the Printers.
York, Dec. 20, 1800.

Source: "To be Sold," *The Upper Canada Gazette; or, American Oracle* 20 December 1800: 2004.

APPENDIX F

The term "wench" and its derivative locutions.

1wench \ 'wench \ *n* -ES [ME *wenche*, short for *wenche* child, fr. OE *wencel*; akin to OHG *wanchal* unsteady, *wankōn* to stagger, totter, flicker — more at WINK] **1** *a* : a young woman : GIRL (good girl . . . you were the best-dressed ~ in the room —Sinclair Lewis) **b** *chiefly dial* : a female child **c** : a female servant : MAID **2** : a lewd woman **3** : a girl or woman of a socially low class (known as a female impersonator, and introduced the Negro ~ characterization to minstrelsy —C.F. Wittke)
2wench \ " \ *vi* -ED/-ING/-ES : to consort with lewd women; *esp* : to practice fornication
wench-er \ -chə(r) \ *n* -S : one that wenches

Source: Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, 1981 ed.

APPENDIX G

The term "wench" with its derivatives.

- WĒNCH, *n.* [A. S. *wencle*, a maid. *Skinner. Junius.* — A. S. *wincian*, to wink. *Tooke.*]
 1. A young woman; a girl. [R.] *Sidney.*
A wench told Jonathan and Ahimaaz. 2 Sam. xvii. 17.
 2. A young woman of ill-fame; a strumpet.
I am a gentlewoman, and no wench. Chaucer.
 3. A colored woman; negress. [U.S.] *Bartlett.*
- WĒNCH, *v. n.* [*i.* WENCHED; *pp.* WENCHING, WENCHED.] To frequent the company of loose women; to practise lewdness. [R.] *Addison.*
- WĒNCH'ER, *n.* A fornicator. *Grew.*
- WĒNCH'ING, *n.* The practice of frequenting the company of women of ill fame. [R.] *Dryden.*
- WĒNCH'-LĪKE, *a.* After the manner of, or resembling, wench. *Huloet.*

Source: Joseph E. Worcester, *Dictionary of the English Language*, vol.2, 1859 ed.

APPENDIX H

Negroland--Detail of the map printed in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, 4th ed., 1719.



Source: "The Map of the World which is Delineated the Voyages of Robinson Crusoe of York, Manier," Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner* (London: Oxford UP, 1972) xxxii.

APPENDIX I

Edward Long's descriptions of peoples in Negroland.

As we approach towards Abyssinia, the North East confine of Negro-land, we find the Blacks well shaped and featured, and for the most part having lank black hair instead of wool, though not very long. The Abyssinians are represented to be of a brown olive complexion, tall, of regular and well-proportioned features, large sparkling black eyes, elevated noses, small lips, and beautiful teeth; the character of their minds is equally favourable; they are sober, temperate, sensible, pious, and inoffensive.

The Red Sea divide these people from the Arabs, who, in complexion, person, and intellect, come still nearer to the Whites or Persians, their next neighbours, whose valour, quick parts, and humanity, are justly celebrated.

Having now completed this tour, we are struck with one very pertinent remark; the natives of the whole tract, comprised under the name of Negro-land, are all black, and have wool instead of hair; whereas the people in the most torrid regions of Libya and America, who have the sun vertical over them, have neither the same tincture of skin, nor woolly covering. As we recede from Negro-land, this blackness gradually decreases, and the wool as gradually changes to lank hair, which at first is of a short staple, but is found longer, the further we advance [1]. We observe the like gradations of the intellectual faculty, from the first rudiments perceived in the monkey kind, to the more advanced stages of it in apes, in the *oran-outang*, that type of man, and the Guiney Negroe; and ascending from the varieties of this class to the lighter casts, until we mark its utmost limit of perfection in the pure White.

Source: Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica* vol. 3 (1774; London: Frank Cass and Co., 1970) 374.

APPENDIX J

The caste system adopted by numerous slave colonies.

Negro:	child of Negro and Negro	Mustec:	child of white and quadroon
Sambo:	child of mulatto and Negro	Mustifino:	child of white and mustec
Mulatto:	child of white and Negro	Quintroon:	child of white and mustifino
Quadroon:	child of white and mulatto	Octoroon:	child of white and quintroon

Source: Arnold A. Sio, "Race, Colour, and Miscegenation: The Free Coloured of Jamaica and Barbados," *Caribbean Studies* 16.1 (April 1976): 8.

APPENDIX K

Georges Louis Leclerc de Buffon's appropriated categories of miscegenation and nation, as copied from his colleague M.P.

M. P. prononce affirmativement sur un grand nombre de choses sans citer ses garans ; cela seroit pourtant à désirer, surtout pour les faits importans.

« Il faut absolument, dit-il, quatre générations mêlées pour faire disparoitre entièrement la couleur des Nègres, et voici l'ordre que la Nature observe dans les quatre générations mêlées.

1°. D'un nègre et d'une femme blanche naît le mulâtre à demi blanc à longs cheveux.

2°. Du mulâtre et de la femme blanche provient le quarteron basané à cheveux longs.

3°. Du quarteron et d'une femme blanche sort l'octavon moins basané que le quarteron.

4°. De l'octavon et d'une femme blanche vient un enfant parfaitement blanc.

Il faut quatre filiations en sens inverse pour noircir les blancs.

1°. D'un blanc et d'une négresse sort le mulâtre à longs cheveux.

2°. Du mulâtre et de la négresse vient le quarteron, qui a trois quarts de noir et un quart de blanc.

3°. Du quarteron et d'une négresse provient l'octavon, qui a sept huitièmes de noir et un huitième de blanc.

4°. De cet octavon et de la négresse vient enfin le vrai nègre à cheveux entortillés.

Je ne veux pas contredire ces assertions de M. P. ; je voudrois seulement qu'il nous eût appris d'où il a tiré ces observations, d'autant que je n'ai pu m'en procurer d'aussi précises, quelques recherches que j'aie faites. On trouve dans l'*Histoire de l'Académie des Sciences*, année 1724, page 17, l'observation ou plutôt la notice suivante :

« Tout le monde sait que les enfans d'un blanc et d'une noire ou d'un noir et d'une blanche, ce qui est égal, sont d'une couleur jaune, et qu'ils ont des cheveux noirs, courts et frisés; on les appelle *mulâtres*. Les enfans d'un mulâtre et d'une noire, ou d'un noir et d'une mulâtresse, qu'on appelle *griffes*, sont d'un jaune plus noir, et ont les cheveux noirs; de sorte qu'il semble qu'une nation originaiement formée de noirs et de mulâtres retourneroit au noir parfait. Les enfans des mulâtres et des mulâtresses, qu'on nomme *casques*, sont d'un jaune plus clair que les griffes; et apparemment une nation qui en seroit originaiement formée retourneroit au blanc. »

Source: Georges Louis Leclerc de Buffon, *Oeuvres Complètes de Buffon*, nouvelle éd. tome 5 (Paris: Rapet et Cie, 1818) 320-321.

APPENDIX L

Reprinted advertisement regarding François Malepart de Beaucourt's artistic talents.

BEAUCOURT, Canadian Painter,
*Member of the Academy of Painting, Sculpture, and Civil and
 Naval Architecture of Bordeaux, aggregated to that of Paris.*

BEGS leave to inform the amateurs of those arts, that he paints Portraits
 in oil; also executes historical, and landscape painting. He under-
 takes to paint theatrical scenery. Having made geometrical and aerial
 perspective his particular study, he has met with considerable encourage-
 ment in several Cities of Europe, viz. Paris, Petersburg, Nantz, Bour-
 deaux, &c. in which he has followed his art as a profession. He under-
 stands the art of ornamenting, in the newest stile and taste, apartments,
 by painting to imitate either architecture, baso-relievos, flowers, or the
 arabesque stile. He will undertake to teach a few students in any branch
 of drawing agreeably to their wish and taste.

Apply at Mr. Belair, near St. Laurent's Gate, N^o 9.
 Montreal, June 4 1792.

Source: "Beaucourt, Canadian Painter," *The Montreal Gazette* 7 June 1792: 37.

APPENDIX M

Ad regarding Beaucourt's recruiting of amateur painters and students.

BEAUCOURT, Peintre Canadien,
*Membre de l'Académie de Peinture, Sculpture & Architecture de
 Bordeaux, associée à celle de Paris.*

PREND la liberté d'informer les amateurs de ces Arts, qu'il peint les portraits à l'huile, & exécute aussi les peintures d'histoires & les paysages. Il entreprend de peindre les scènes théâtrales, s'étant appliqué particulièrement aux paysages géométriques & aériens; il a trouvé un encouragement considérable dans plusieurs villes de l'Europe; savoir, Paris, Petersbourg, Nantes, Bordeaux, &c. où il a suivi ces Arts comme une profession; Il entend l'art d'orne les appartemens dans le goût le plus élégant, le plus nouveau & le plus riche, en les peignant à l'imitation de chaque architecture, bas-reliefs, ou selon le goût arabe. Il entreprendra à faire des élèves dans aucune branche de peinture qui leur paroitra la plus convenable suivant leur désir & leur goût.

* * Son adresse est, chez Mr. BELAIR, rue St. Jacques, proche la porte St. Laurent, N^o 9.

Source: "Beaucourt, Peintre Canadien," *The Montreal Gazette* 14 June 1792: n. pag.

APPENDIX N

Beaucourt's ad concerning saintly and profane portraiture.

BEAUCOURT, Peintre Canadien,
*Membre de l'Académie Royale de Peinture, Sculpture, Architecture
 Civile & Navale de Bourdeaux & associée à celle de Paris.*
VIENT d'arriver en sa patrie où il offre ses talens aux amateurs de son
 Art, il peint le portrait à l'huile, l'histoire sainte & profane, le
 paysage, l'Architecture, & généralement tous les genres de peinture.
 Les études particulières qu'il a faites de la perspective, & des décorations,
 tant pour les Eglises que pour les monumens théâtraux, l'ont mis à même
 de mériter les suffrages des différentes Capitales & Villes où il a exercé ses
 talens: il ne négligera rien pour les mériter dans son pays.
 * * * Son adresse est, chez Mr. BELAIR, rue St. Jacques, proche la
 porte St. Laurent, N^o 9.

-MONTREAL, chez F. MESPLET, rue Notre-Dame.

Source: "Beaucourt, Peintre Canadien," *The Montreal Gazette* 28 June 1792: n. pag.

FIGURES



Fig.1
Portrait of a Negro Slave or La Nègresse c.1786
François Malepart de Beaucourt

**Dictionnaire des esclaves
et de leurs propriétaires au Canada Français**
Marcel Trudel



Marcel Trudel



DICTIONNAIRE
des esclaves
et
de leurs propriétaires
au Canada français

HURTUBISE HMH CAHIERS DU QUÉBEC / HISTOIRE

Fig.2
Book sleeve of Marcel Trudel's
Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires au Canada français c.1990
Robert Casavant



Fig.3
The Moorish Bath c.1870
Jean-Léon Gérôme



Fig.4
Lady Folding a Letter c.1784
Elizabeth-Louise Vigée-Lebrun



Fig.5
Madame Trottier dite Desrivières c.1793
François Malepart de Beaucourt



Fig.6
Portrait de Femme c.1795
François Baillargé



Fig.7
Indiens de plusieurs Nations c.1732
Alexandre de Batz



Fig.8
Detail of *Indiens de plusieurs Nations*



Fig.9
Portrait d'une Nègresse
or *Portrait of a Negress* c.1800
Marie-Guilhelmine Benoist



Fig.10
La Liberté guidant le Peuple
or le 28 juillet c.1830
Eugène Delacroix

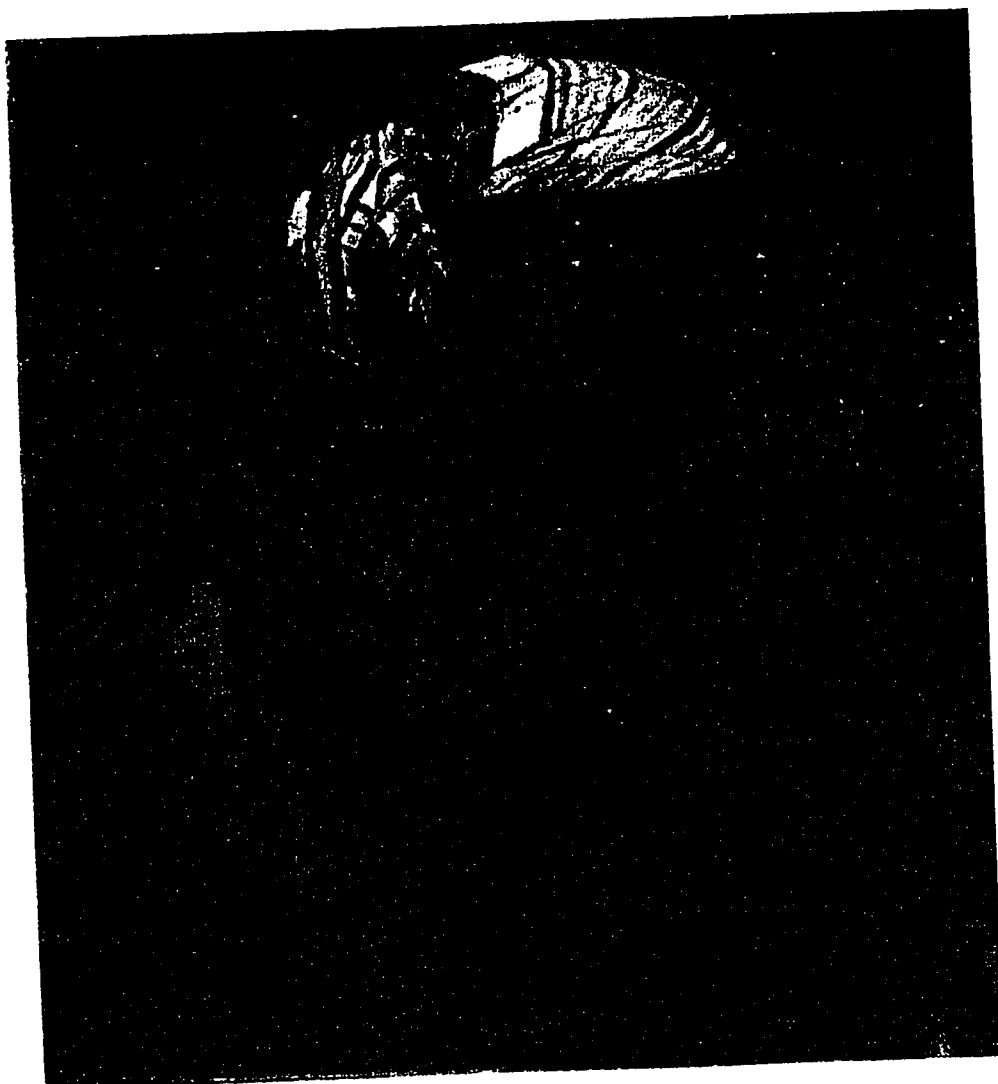


Fig.11
Negress c.1867-1869
Thomas Eakins



Fig.12
Decorative Nude or Negress c.1937
Lawrence P. Harris



Fig.13
Aline, La Mulâtresse c.1823
Eugène Delacroix



Fig.14
Portrait of Jean-Baptiste Belley,
or Portrait de Nègre c.1797
Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson



Fig.15
Madame de Sabrevois de Bleury c.1780
François Malepart de Beaucourt



Fig.16
Lady Mary Wortley Montagu c.1725
Jonathan Richardson Sr.



Fig.17
*Wilhelmine of Prussia and
her brother Frederick c.1715*
Antoine Pesne



Fig.18
Henry Loftus, Earl of Ely and Family,
or Henry Loftus, Earl of Ely, with Lady Ely and two Nieces c.1771
Angelica Kauffman



Fig.19
A Lady and her Children Relieving a Cottager c.1782
John Raphael Smith



Fig.20
Minuets of the Canadians,
or Minuets des Canadiens c.1801
George Heriot



Fig.21
Minuets of the Canadians c.1807
J. C. Stadler

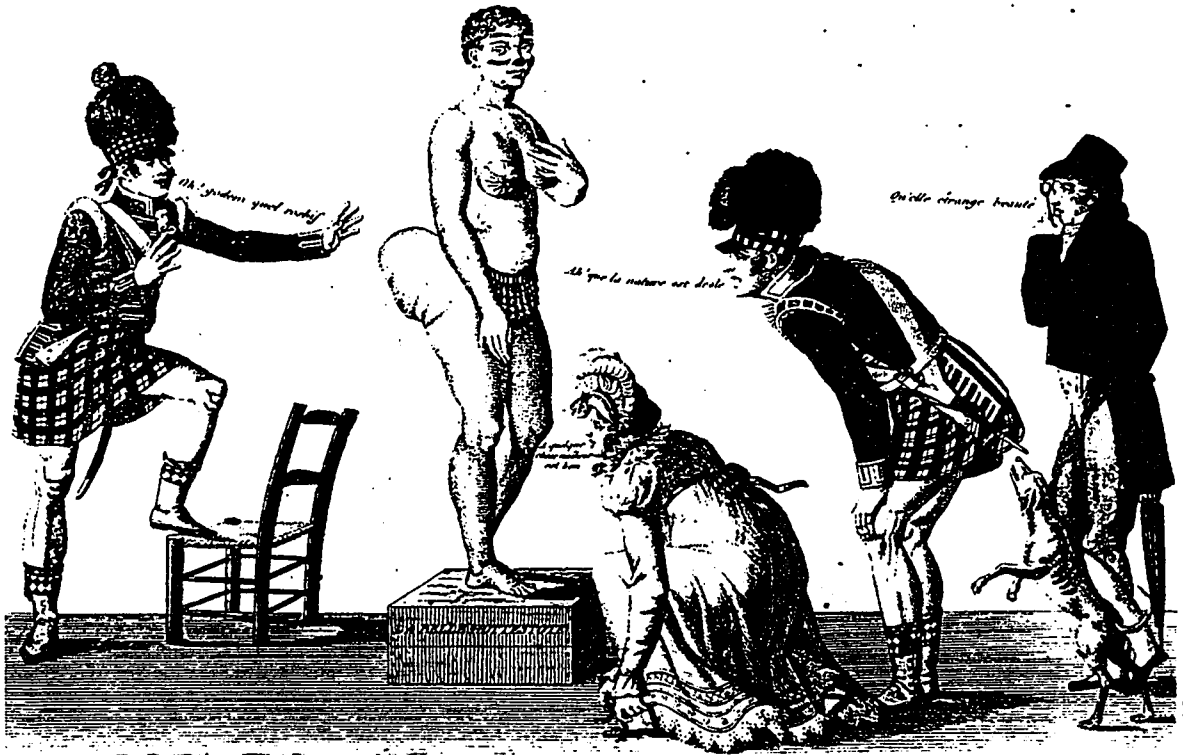


Fig.22
La Belle Hottentote c.1812



Fig.23
The Ball of the Duchesse du Barry c.1829



Fig.24
The Female Hottentot with Natural Apron c.1795
J. Pafis



Fig.25
A Hottentot Woman c.late 1700s



Fig.26
The Orang-Outang carrying off a Negro Girl c.1795



Fig.27
The Swing
or *Les Hasards heureux de l'escarpolette* c.1767
Jean-Honoré Fragonard



Fig.28
The Bolt or Le Verrou c.1776-1778
Jean-Honoré Fragonard



Fig.29
Bashi-Bazouk c.1869
Jean-Léon Gérôme



Fig.30
Maria Analina Restrepo c.1897
Benjamin de la Calle