

Slavery, Portraiture and the

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Cet article inspiré de la méthodologie féministe post-colonialiste du « Portrait of a Negro Slave » (1786) ainsi que des représentations des esclaves noires Européennes et Américaines

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rapporte que ce furent des lieux où s'est formée l'identification raciale et sexuelle et où la communauté noire s'est déployée et confirmée.

"Portrait of a Negro Slave" (1786), painted by François Malépart de Beaucourt, is a rare, early oil painting of a black female slave. Its significance is multi-fold: 1) it represents an historic individual as opposed to an idealized type; (2) it is possibly the only preserved and almost undoubtedly the most thorough and professionally rendered representation of a black slave in Canada at this historical juncture; (3) it offers an unparalleled opportunity to explore the specific colonial context of slavery in eighteenth-century North America (New France); and (4) it confirms the visibility and legibility of the racialized body as the means of identifying a slave.

The traditional disciplinarity of art history has actively denied the relevance of issues of race and racial identity, and as such has foreclosed crucial considerations about the nature, context and function of art. Informed by a post-colonial feminist methodology, this paper will discuss "Portrait of a Negro Slave" (1786) and other western (European and American) representations of black female slaves as sites where racial and sexual identification was produced and where the black slave body as commodity was confirmed and deployed.

Introduction: The Democratization of Portraiture

Writing in 1796, the English Earl of Fife remarked of portraiture:

... before this century, very few people presented

themselves to a painter, except those who were of *great families*, or remarkable for their *actions* in service to the country, or some other extraordinary circumstance ... as lately ... every body almost who can afford twenty pounds, has the portraits of himself, wife and children painted. (qtd. in Pointon 2)

The Earl's analysis, tinged with elitism and regret, is useful in its revelation of the remarkable shifts in the production of portraiture in late eighteenth-century England. In noting the usual subjects of portraiture as people of *great families* or considerable *action*, Fife knowledgeably conveyed the historical function of portraiture as an aristocratic and bourgeois cultural tool of social distinction, which itself was largely inaccessible to the masses through the function of its cost. His concern locates an anxiety over the democratization of the genre which points up the dismantling of its traditionally exclusive class and racial affiliations. The *everybody* whom Fife lamented were the lower classes, previously barred from such cultural participation and aspiration, who now threatened to pollute the previously exclusive art form with their supposedly unworthy subjects. Fife's distress locates a particular social anxiety over the reordering of a prestigious visual practice which had for centuries relied upon the *hierarchization* of human subjects through class and racial identifications.

Up until the latter part of the eighteenth-century, the practice of portraiture (especially that of oil painting) in England and across Europe had remained the secure cultural domain of the considerably wealthy, the genealogically privileged, the noteworthy or the notorious. In all cases, however, the portrait subjects or the commissioning body needed the economic resources to be able to contract the portraitist. Whereas those who patronized portraitists in England were generally of the aristocratic and bourgeois classes, in Canada, still a young settler colony, the clientele of what few portraitists existed in the period were dominantly of the burgeoning mercantile classes, often French, English or otherwise European by birth, whose cultural traditions and aspirations were very much tied to the ideals of their homelands. England is a particularly relevant and rich resource for a study in the (im)possibilities of race and class identity in eighteenth-century Canadian portraiture for several reasons. Firstly, Canada's earliest immigrants were dominantly Europeans

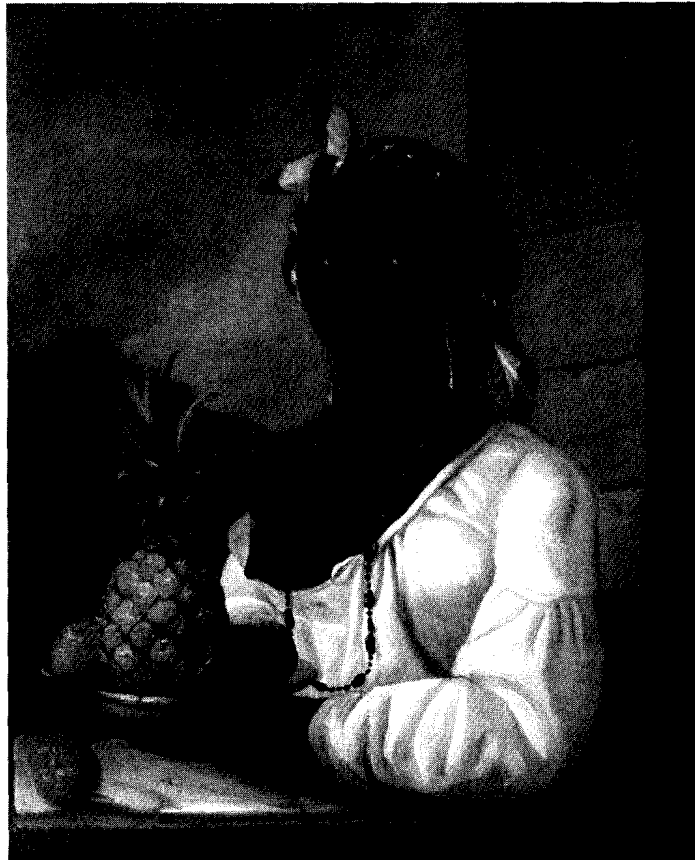
Colonial Limits of Canadian Art History

of French and English origins, fulfilling the colonial governments mandate for the racial ideal of desirable populations. As Eva Mackey has described, Canada's nation-building project depended upon the management of diverse populations and specifically the regulation of racial identity within a contest of competing desires which often posed contradictory claims of tolerance, equality and opportunity. Secondly and culturally speaking, Canadian art practices of this period were directly borrowed from established European models, mainly English and French. The extent of this cultural debt extended for decades into the nineteenth-century when Canadian art was dominated by European immigrants or by Canadian-born white artists who nevertheless knew training in London and Paris to be essential to their art education and professional futures. The discursive structure of eighteenth-century English portraiture was accordingly not only known to Canadian portraitists through tradition, but often through direct contact and practice. And lastly, the eighteenth-century English democratization of portraiture which was unequivocally a key aspect of its decided dominance over other more traditionally revered genres of history and landscape painting, was a cultural shift which could not have failed to impact the developing art practices in Canada (Pointon).¹

Canonical Exclusions: Canadian Art History, Portraiture and Race

Little scholarly attention has been paid to the historical practice of portraiture in Canadian art and even less to a social consideration of the obvious implications of race and class identity within such a traditionally exclusive and inaccessible art form. The absence of scholarship is in part due to a general slowness of an application of the ideologies and strategies of New Art History to historical Canadian subjects. But it is also clearly an outcome of the eurocentric disciplinarity of art history itself.

Art historical discourse has traditionally suppressed race as a valid topic of scholarly inquiry, through the exclusionary deployment of methodologies which privileged biographical, connoisseurship and formalistic inquiries. These socially-detached and/or culturally-exclusive predominantly aesthetic histories supported the (re)constitution of materially and ideologically exclusive canons and successions of



François Malepart de Beaucort, "Portrait of a Negro Slave," 1786, oil on canvas laid on canvas, 72.7 x 58.5 cm. Courtesy of the McCord Museum of Canadian History, Montreal. Reprinted with permission.

white male masters. This colonial bias has affected every aspect of the discipline, from what cultural objects are deemed significant enough to be researched or written about, the accessibility or preservation of a cultural object (which is directly connected to its canonical value and acquisition by an institutional collection), the access to documentation to facilitate research (the archives and libraries are not neutral), how one frames one's research, which questions are validated and therefore posed in the face of an art object and last but surely not least, the very identities—the sex and race etc.—of the art historians themselves.

A poignant example of the art historical devaluation and suppression of issues of race exists in the Canadian historiography of a celebrated eighteenth-century portrait painting of a black female slave. Within the annals of

Canadian art history, François Malépart de Beaucourt's (1740-94) "Portrait of a Negro Slave" (1786), a rare visual document of a slave in early New France, has traditionally been discussed almost entirely in terms of its stylistic and tonal properties, the location represented in the portrait and the status and oeuvre of the painter. For example, Dennis Reid, author of the canonical text *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* (1988), described it as an object which de Beaucourt painted possibly, "... while sojourning in Guadeloupe" (40).²

This disavowal of the racial implications of this unique portrait has occurred despite the artist's obvious desire to foreground the slave's sexual and reproductive utility

de Beaucourt's sexual relationship with this female slave is diffused through the deployment of the term "mistress" to describe a polarized, miscegenating, colonial "union."

through the exposed breast over the plate of tropical fruit, despite the known historical documents which record the slave as the legal property of the artist and despite the circulating title of the work which indexes both the significance of the race (*Negro*) and the subordinate legal status of the sitter (*slave*) and even despite the obvious opportunities to address the circumstances of production, the function and circulation of a unique portrait whose commission was likely (and unusually) not instigated by its sitter herself (for how many slaves had the agency or the wealth to commission portraits?). Instead, de Beaucourt has been regularly and problematically lauded as Canada's first native artist and the inherently coercive nature of his (potential) sexual relationship with this female slave diffused through the deployment of the term "mistress" to describe what would have been a polarized, miscegenating, colonial "union" (Morisset; Curatorial File M12067 McCord Museum of Canadian History Library Archives, Montreal, Quebec, Canada).

This paper seeks a post-colonial feminist intervention into the eurocentric art historiography of this portrait. The reassessment of this portrait is informed by the practice and function of portraiture in European traditions, the social and historical relevance of its position within Canadian art, the history of slavery and the specificity of black female enslavement within Trans Atlantic Slavery generally and colonial New France (Quebec) in particular. Positioned within the predominant patriarchal ideologies of sexual difference, the femaleness of this black slave must be acknowledged as the source of a particularly prolific and incessant vulnerability to sexual and physical violence, abuse, and exploitation. Most significantly, this examination of the representation of the female slave

subject considers the western tradition of portraiture as a colonial site of visual commodification which enacted the transformation of the black body into the slave body—a shift from human to property and commodity.

Slavery in New France

Slavery was an inherent part of the earliest colonizing process of Canada. In the early sixteenth century the Portuguese initially targeted the Native populations for slave labour and by the beginning of the seventeenth century the French followed suit (Winks). Olivier Le Jeune as he was renamed, was the first documented black slave in New France (now the province of Quebec) (Winks).³ But more importantly his passage directly from Africa and his sale at auction in New France locates the institution of slavery as an accepted part of the reality of the new settlement (Winks).⁴ Colonization was not the immediate strategy of the new settlement. Rather, since resource extraction, primarily in the form of the fur trade dominated the efforts of the early French colonialists, the gang-labour to which slaves were committed in agricultural economies was not needed (Winks). However, as the colony's role shifted from extraction to settlement in the early eighteenth century, successive colonial administrators petitioned the French crown for the right to import slaves (Winks).

It was not until control of New France shifted from company (Compagnie des Cent-Associés) to royal control in 1663, that slavery was seen as a means of increasing manpower within an aggressive new strategy of colony-building. With the simultaneous exploitation of trade, mining, fisheries and agriculture, there was more labour than labourers and in 1688 the colonial administrator Jean-Baptiste de Lagny (Sieur des Bringandières) petitioned the governor, Jacques-René de Brisay, Marquis de Denonville) to appeal to France for slaves. The petition explicitly cited the extraordinary expense of labour in the colony as a hindrance to enterprise which could be remedied through slave labour. The already established trade routes between New France and the French holding in the Caribbean were cited as evidence of the feasibility of transportation. Although the need for large numbers of slaves was again disrupted by the dramatic reversal in France's designation of colonies as mere service posts for the "mother land", by the early eighteenth-century slavery continued to grow slowly to service the demand for domestics and field hands of the wealthier classes (Winks).

The legal regulation of slavery which emerged in this period demonstrates the need to formally distinguish free from enslaved which was a consequence of the growth of the slave population.⁵ Although slavery in New France appears to have been at least officially regulated under a series of French laws entitled *Le Code Noir*, the extent to which the code was actually adhered to is unclear (Winks).⁶ Initially instituted to police the traffic in slaves between French African and Caribbean holdings in March 1685,

it became applicable to Louisiana and to an undetermined extent New France in March 1724 (see Winks; Elgersman).⁷ The code established laws which regulated the lives and bodies of slaves. Many of the allowances for punishments were acts which scarred, marked or otherwise mutilated slave's bodies creating highly visible corporeal signs of possession (see Riddell).⁸ Under *Le Code Noir*, slaves were *meubles*, moveable personal property, holding no legal autonomy and being governed by laws of personal property (Riddell). Slaves could not sue or be sued, but could be criminally prosecuted. Their testimony in court was only used to aid the judge in the comprehension of other testimony. In New France, this chattel status was secured through the process of sale when slaves were publicly sold alongside livestock (Winks). While Winks cites the largest sale as five slaves in 1743, the conditions of auction of the female slave who de Beaucourt painted were likely much different since she was most probably purchased in the French West Indies where many more slaves were needed to maintain the plantation economy.

As another part of the psychic and social transformation of Africans into French property, the code made provisions for the necessary Catholicization of slaves who were prohibited from labour on the Sabbath and holy days (Riddell). But the code also policed mainly female slave sexuality, discouraging cross-racial and cross-class reproduction by regulating relations between slave women and free men (see Winks).

My interpretation of the code's ability to discourage miscegenation between black women and white men hinges on the fact that most free men accessible to black female slaves would most likely, in French colonies, have been white. Specifically, if a free man had children with a slave, both he and the owner were each fined two thousand pounds of sugar. If the free man and master were one in the same, the children born of the union were to be confiscated and doomed to perpetual slavery. The absence of any mention of race in the code seems to imply the possibility of same or inter-racial relations and to prioritize social status or class over race in these interactions. The only way such a cross-status relationships could go unpunished was for the free man to marry the slave, an act which required the permission of the Church. If permitted both the slave and her children would become free. Since this clause effectively allowed for the manumission of slaves, it is not unreasonable to assume that slave owners may have taken steps to block such unions and prohibit the contact which lead to them. For the free man, who was not necessarily a rich man, the sugar fine may have been enough of a deterrent to make him wary of contact with female slaves. And while sugar was a suitable fine for a plantation economy, it is unclear what substitute would be made in the context of New France. Officially at least, the only way that a slave master's holdings could be legally increased under the code was through the reproduction of two slaves, whose children became the property of the

woman's master. In cases of children born of unions between free and slave, the child's status followed that of the mother. It is interesting to note however, that the incidents of inter-racial marriage between French settlers and their slaves in New France fracture across race and sex lines. Marcel Trudel (1960, cited in Winks) has noted that while the majority of such unions were between white men and *panis*⁹ women, when it came to black slaves the couples were more frequently white women and black men. However, as Winks has noted the majority of children born to slaves were born outside of marriage and I would speculate further that this would have applied whether the child was of two black parents or inter-racial.

The femaleness of this black slave must be acknowledged as the source of a particularly prolific and incessant vulnerability to sexual and physical violence, abuse, and exploitation.

The code also rewarded masters with the ownership of their female slave's children, if they were fathered by another slave. Although the code seemed to discourage miscegenation and inter-racial marriage, the prolific normalization of miscegenation and its evidence (inter-racial children) within colonial societies of this period generally, raises questions about its effectiveness and enforcement. While the code was sometimes antagonistic to the accumulation of wealth by the slave holders through breeding, it was most certainly concerned with the exploitation of female slave fertility. While Elgersman, citing Winks, has argued that the code allowed black female slaves to use marriage to European males as a means of manumission, her conclusion may be based upon a misreading of the code. While the original code as outlined by Riddell claims that female slaves could be manumitted if married by a free man, the code did not specify race. Further, the new code issued in March 1724 held that whites of either sex were not to intermarry with blacks and that priests were not to marry them. Winks, clearly concurs with the illegality of intermarriage under the new code. Finally, an additional provision of the new code punished white masters for fathering a child with their female slaves through the loss of both slave and child. Manumission became possible for the female slave and the inter-racial child only if she was married to a freeborn or freed black male. This may have been rare however since it meant that the black man would have to have been willing to overlook the parentage of the child (see Riddell). What is missing from the code is a concern for the purely sexual exploitation of black women, since all of the safeguards problematically hinged solely upon pregnancy. Under the code it would appear that while to impregnate a black female slave

was often sanctionable, to rape, sexually assault or even have consensual sex with one was not.

The pioneering research of Marcel Trudel (1960, 1963) has determined that by 1759, 3,604 slaves of both Native (*panis*) and black origin lived in New France, with 52.3 per cent residing in or near Montreal (see, also, Elgersman). Of the almost 4,000 slaves, 1,132 were classified as Negroes (Trudel 1960, 1963 cited in Winks). More than a quarter (1,068) were owned by the merchant class, but the gentry, governors, notaries, doctors, military and clergy also held slaves (Winks). Differences between the population, labour and value of the colony's *panis* and the black slaves becomes important to a knowledgeable reading of the significance of the black female subject in "Portrait of a Negro Slave" (1786). While Robin Winks observation that the French preferred *panis* and, the English, particularly after the British conquest of the colony in 1760, preferred blacks suggests a connection between the desirability of slaves and the ethnicity of their owner (Winks), Maureen G. Elgersman has suggested that the split was more-economically driven. Elgersman argues that, "... Blacks constituted the slave minority, and, as "*objet de luxe*," they served as symbols of wealth more than generators of wealth or stabilizers of wealth as were the *Panis*" (5-6). The wealthy colonists preference for black slaves seems to be supported in the price disparities between the two groups. While Black slaves could cost as much as 900 livres, the price ceiling for *panis* was 400 (Elgersman).

Blacks and *panis* also seemed to have been distinguished by labour. While slaves were generally sought after for agriculture, mining and fishing, most black slaves in New France appear to have served primarily as domestics (Winks). Of the almost 4,000 slaves, reportedly 22.8 per cent performed field labour, only 192 of which were Negroes. This may partially account for differences in life expectancy between the *panis* at 17.7 years and blacks at 25.2 (see Winks).¹⁰ Yet another important distinction is the male to female ratio of slaves within the black population. Primary records indicate a likely imbalance of considerably more black men than women (Elgersman).¹¹ This imbalance, combined with the already existing equation of the black slave with luxury, likely made black female slaves particularly fashionable and noteworthy possessions.

Marie-Thérèse-Zémire?

While the artist, François Malépart de Beaucourt (son of a French soldier and amateur painter), was a part of the early colony's bourgeois class, the black woman he portrayed was a part of its slave class ["Self-Portrait" c. 1770 oil] (Webster).¹² Detailed records compiled by Trudel (1990) reveal the likely sitter as Marie-Thérèse-Zémire, one of two slaves documented as the property of the artist's wife, Benoite Gaétant.¹³ Marie may have been purchased

by the couple in Guadeloupe or another Caribbean colony between their time in Europe (from at least 1773 to 1784)¹⁴ and their sojourn in Philadelphia in 1792 (Reid).¹⁵ In any event, François's access to his model was likely through his wife and the portrait seems to have been painted outside of Canada since it dates from 1786 and an announcement in the Montreal Gazette advertising François' artistic services did not appear until June 1792 (Reid).¹⁶

Without a doubt, "Portrait of a Negro Slave" is *the* most reproduced work by de Beaucourt and also his most revered. As noted earlier, the artist's special place in the Canadian art canon is due in most part to his reputation as the first native-born painter of European descent to achieve a significant professional status. However, the art historical record of de Beaucourt's most famous portrait has done much to obfuscate the centrality of slavery and to erase the particular social relevance of the unique sitter. By focussing upon issues of style, location and influence under the authority of the historically dominant methodologies of biography, formalism and connoisseurship, art historical writings have effectively ignored the portrait's obvious participation in the contemporaneous colonial discourses of racial identity and slavery.¹⁷

It can hardly be overstated that portraits of slaves, servants or generally lower class sitters were a decided rarity within eighteenth-century western painting. Since portraiture functioned dominantly as a genre through which patrons commissioned representations of their likeness or that of family members or institutional colleagues as commemorations and declarations of wealth, privilege and status, it was also the almost exclusive domain of aristocratic and the bourgeois classes who alone could afford them. In the context of early Québec art, Barry Lord has noted,

The people who actually did the productive work in Québec were obviously not in a position to pay the rates of \$100 to \$200 ... Scratching out a living as habitants, or cutting trees and hauling lumber to British-owned ships for transport to factories in England, they were lucky if they could meet the basic cost of living at the best of times. (43)¹⁹

Rare portraits of servants were also usually commissioned and paid for by the masters or mistresses who used the portraits as a further indication of their own status and the hanging of such portraits, often in less grand areas of the family estates and houses echoed the diminished significance of the sitter [Maurice La Tour "Portrait of a Black Servant" 1741, pastel/ Wayan Adams "New Orleans Mammy" c. 1920, oil]. A servant and more so a slave, would not have been paid like any professional artist's model and would have had no true agency in the commission process with the artist and particularly in rare cases like de Beaucourt's when artist and patron were one. The

origins of Malépart de Beaucourt's portrait of Marie likely corresponds to the same tradition since, as a slave, she was doubtless without the economic means and cultural knowledge to commission such a work and would have had no private residence of her own in which to install it. The lack of autonomy in her case makes the exposure of her breast even more problematic. Barry Lord concurs with this conclusion, adding that the visual exploitation of the female slave in this portrait was likely intended as an advertisement of the artist's European-honed talents for prospective Canadian clients. And furthermore the Malépart Beaucourt's possession of such fashionable and exotic help would have symbolized their own class status which would have established the rightness of the suitably bourgeois prices for paying sitters like: "Madame de Sabrevois de Bleury" c. 1780 oil; "Jean-Clement de Sabrevois de Bleury" and "Mme. Daniel Sutherland (Margaret Robertson)" 1792 oil (Lorde).

By the eighteenth century, black slaves and non-white servants from Europe's colonial territories regularly appeared in upperclass family portraits [Peter Lely "Lady Charlotte Fitzroy with an Indian Servant" c. 1674 oil; Johann Zoffany "Family of Sir William Young" c. 1770 oil; Anthony van Dyck "Marchesa Elena Grimaldi, Wife of Marchese Nicola Catta"; Eglog van der Neer "Lady Attended by Negro Page and Maid-servant" nd oil; Joseph Wright of Derby "Two Girls and Negro Servant" 1769 oil; Peter Lely "Lady Charlotte Fitzroy and Indian Servant" c. 1674, oil]. But their racial, class and social difference was clearly conveyed through their actions, attitudes and compositional strategies which placed them on a lower visual register than the ones they served. Slaves and servants often assumed postures of near genuflection in the act of servicing their masters and mistresses desires. Visually they acted as appendages or trophies whose exoticism, often measured in their racial difference and costume, connected their owners to the colonial exploitation of the New World that the servant bodies recalled.

Different from what is known in art historical discourse as genre painting, portraits were visual documentation of a precise historically-specific individual as opposed to an idealized or allegorical representation of a generic person. This distinction is critical since for the upper classes the point of portraiture was to capture a flattering likeness which would assume a familial and possibly social value precisely due to the intended audience's knowledge of the sitters and their exploits. Portraits relied upon recognition and legibility. The paradox of portraits of supposedly lesser subjects is that, unlike their upperclass counterparts, the individuality and historical evidence of the subject represented by a name, was often unrecorded in the title. In Canadian portraits and figure painting, like western art generally, black subjects were often refused the specificity of the individual's name within the titles. Long after François Malépart de Beaucourt's painted the portrait of his wife's

black female slave, race would continue to dominate the titles and play significant roles in the colonial racial discourses of other white-produced paintings of black female subjects like: Dorothy Stevens' "Coloured Nude" (1932) and "High Yellow" nd; Prudence Heward's "Dark Girl" (1935); Lawren Harris's "Negress" (1937); and John Lyman's "Negress" (1945) (Nelson).

New Questions or What Postcolonial/Black Feminism Can do for Art History

The impact of a postcolonial feminist approach approach extends beyond questions of representation to a consideration of the contexts of production and the implications for cultural dissemination and consumption. Did Marie have any agency or choice in posing for this portrait and if so, how much and where if anywhere are its signs visible? Did François intend for his slave portrait to have a specific audience and role in his professionalization? Where was it hung and for whose gaze was it available? What was Benoite Gaétant's opinion of this portrait and the relationship between her husband and her female slave? Did Marie have access to her likeness, in what capacity and in the context of her service to her owners and their social circle, was she forced to negotiate the gap between her sexualized image likely accessible to many of them, and her own experience of her identity? New questions have become possible, among them questions about the identity and subjectivity of the sitter and her role in the production of the portrait. Questions which no longer hinge exclusively upon issues of formalism, biography or connoisseurship.

Portraits of slaves and servants are rare within the annals of western art and even more so in historical Canadian art. The tension that occurs in such portraits is that between the visual specificity of a particularized human subject and the erasure of that specificity that occurred with the traditional excision or suppression of the sitter's name. Likewise, the central paradox of this painting is that a slave, owned by the portraitist, was refused her individual identity within the title. Although this erasure is indicative of the genre itself and locates the diminished class and racial status of the sitter, the title of this portrait is distinct for its insistence upon the race (Negro) and status (slave) of the sitter. Although property under Code Noir, the historical evidence of slavery in New France indicates that Marie was particularly valuable property which undeniably added to the status, esteem and distinction of her owners. Considering the disparities in the panis to black and male to female ratio of slaves, as a black woman, Marie would have been hyper-visible in eighteenth-century New France. The nexus of her race and sex made her the most rare and potentially fashionable type of slave in the colony, properties which added to her value as a luxury object - properties which detracted from her value as a human being.

A reading of this black female sitter—Marie-Thérèse-Zémire—which is attentive to her blackness and femaleness and able to assess her representation within the dominantly white and eurocentric cultural practice of eighteenth-century western portraiture, has been possible through a post-colonial feminist methodology which has accommodated the simultaneous analysis of race/colour and sex/gender. Class too is a critical factor which cannot be overlooked within the historical analysis of western portraiture; a field arguably more than others which was created by and through class privilege. This embedded exclusion stands as the testament to the historical colonial function of portraiture as a bastion of the rich, wealthy, elite and mainly white subjects on whose behalf the Earl of Fife lamented the “demise” of its inaccessibility. As a largely inaccessible genre, historical examples of western portraiture are not the obvious place to look for representations of black female subjects. The nexus of racial, sexual and class oppression in western colonial societies has effectively removed black women from the social and political positions through which access to portraiture was a normalized cultural ritual. However, it is the very rarity of a portrait of a slave and the (in)visibility of black female sitters generally, which makes this portrait so compelling and worthy of serious scholarly contemplation. The practice of Canadian art history should at least in part be capable of addressing the sitter as a black woman, a female slave, whose blackness and femaleness did not solely predate the portrait, but instead can be seen as a part of what was produced through the process of creating it.

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¹By dominance I am referring to the sheer primacy of production and exhibition as has been charted by Marica Pointon through an analysis of works exhibited at the Royal Academy, the undisputed centre of London artistic life in the eighteenth-century. Pointon's research reveals portraiture as the dominant submission to Academy exhibitions between 1781 and 1785. Portraits made up 44.67

per cent of the exhibits of 1783, excluding miniatures.

²Reid's speculation was predated by Gérard Morisset who proposed that the fruits and the landscape were suggestive of experience in the West Indies. John Bentley Mays went even further claiming that François had travelled on sugar boats from France to Guadeloupe.

³The first black resident is generally thought to have been Mattieu da Costa, a young boy who was a part of an expedition either to Port Royal or which founded Port Royal in 1605 or 1606. Although his non-African name locates a staple of slave practice, the renaming of blacks within a European tradition which was meant to strip slaves of personal identification and its suggestion of cultural heritage and autonomy, most scholars agree that he was most likely not a slave in the strictest application of chattel slavery which would later be introduced in the region. Rather, da Costa was valuable as a translator between the French and Micmac - a fact which may indicate that he had visited the region before. One scholar claims he also visited Nova Scotia in 1606, became a charter member of The Order of Good Cheer and when he died was buried on the grounds of the habitation. Da Costa burial location is significant since it would indicate he had been baptized (see Bertley; Hill; Elgersman).

⁴Le Jeune was apparently brought to New France from Madagascar by the English and initially ended up as the property of David Kirke. His last owner was Guillaume Couillard who apparently granted his freedom at least by the time of his death around the age of thirty in 1654.

⁵It would also appear that many an *ordonnance* was in response to the problem of fugitive slaves.

⁶Winks asserts that black slaves enjoyed privileges normally reserved for whites such as acting as witnesses at religious ceremonies and serving petitions against free persons.

⁷The code was mainly introduced to discourage slave revolt and violence by slaves against whites. Although scholars have speculated on the enforcement of Le Code Noir in New France, as early as 1689 the governor of New France Jacques-Réne de Brisay, Marquis de Denonville aided by the incumbent Attorney-General, Charles-François-Marie Ruette d'Auteuil petitioned the King that both slavery and the Code should be adopted in New France.

⁸For instance, thefts of cheep, pigs and sugar cane could be punished with branding. Fugitives in absence for a month were to have their ears cut off and be branded on one shoulder. Violence against the master or his family, especially if blood had been spilled, was punishable by death. Even in death the slave's body could act as a sign of ultimate commodification and possession since such death sentences were often carried out as spectacular public displays.

⁹The term *panis* evolved from the tribal name Pawnee from which the indigenous slave populations were at least initially culled.

¹⁰Another key factor in the differences between *panis* and Black slave life expectancies was the Native susceptibility to European diseases like small pox. Winks documents the death of 58 Natives and only two Negroes to an epidemic in 1733 and later 56 Natives and six Negroes in 1755.

¹¹Since early census records in the colony are not a reliable source since they did not distinguish the slaves by race. An examination of some 20 advertisements about the sale or escape of slaves in the *Quebec Gazette* between 1778 and 1794, reveal a twelve-to-eight male to female ratio. Notarized documents about the appraisal and sale of slaves reveal a similar imbalance of two-to-one.

¹²Although most accounts claim that François's father Paul Beaucourt (1700-1756) was a French military man, they disagree as to whether he was in naval or army service. Posted to New France in 1720, he eventually settled in La Prairie (near Montreal) where his son was to be born. Taking up painting after his discharge, Paul was his son's first art teacher but would later encourage him to pursue formal training which he did in Bordeaux. Barry Lord has indicated that the addition of the *de* by François to his late name, was an aristocratic pretension which reveals the painter's class aspirations (see Lord).

¹³Trudel (1990) lists the other slave as a male, Jean-Baptiste-François, who was reportedly baptised on April 14, 1791 at the approximate age of 14. A contradictory account problematizes the validity of Marie as the model for the portrait. Benoite Camagne mentions a "Catherine Cora negresse" as the woman represented in the portrait (Archives judiciaires de Montréal, Greffe de Patrice Lacombe, acte numéro 70 [le 5 juillet 1832] cited in Major-Frégeau 60).

¹⁴There is much disagreement over the precise dates of de Beaucourt's departure from Europe. Barry Lord puts de Beaucourt's European dates even longer at 1771 to 1786. Meanwhile, Michael Measures places him in France from possibly 1763 and claims that the December 1784 Minutes of the Bordeaux Academy, to which de Beaucourt had been elected in 1783, recorded his plans to depart for America and his leave of the Academy (see Lord; Measures).

¹⁵While studying art abroad in Bordeaux under Joseph-Gaétant Camag(n)e, François met and married his daughter in 1773 (see Webster; Harper). Since Trudel lists Benoite Gaétant as the slave owner, another possibility is of course that Marie had resided with her mistress in Europe before the marriage to François.

¹⁶Other scholars concur with Reid's assessment that the portrait was not produced in Canada (see Major-Frégeau).

¹⁷The earliest post-colonial reading of this painting is an excellent contemplation of the composition, its commission, function and audience within the specific colonial context of production by Barry Lord.

¹⁸Lord's reference to the rates for portraits pertains to the Canadian portraitist Théophile Hamel (1817-70), born near Québec City (see Reid).

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