THE LAKE IS HISTORY:

PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVES AND THE BLACK ATLANTIC IN ESSEX COUNTY

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Abstract

This dissertation situates Lake Erie and its environs as part of the Black Atlantic. Specifically, it maps the complex portrait of those environs as they emerge within the photographic archive of the Alvin D. McCurdy fonds. This dissertation follows the flow of vernacular photographs across Lake Erie to map transnational networks of kinship and highlight the affective labour that sustained these bonds. I argue that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Essex County was a microcosm of global colonial power relationships structured with racial and gender-based hierarchies. I therefore extend Paul Gilroy's (1993) Black Atlantic paradigm to the world of marine fluidity that is the Great Lakes. I propose that attention to this particular site allows us to unsteady tidy national histories of Black struggle refreshing and transforming our understanding of notions of kinship and resistance speaking to the circulatory and hybrid nature of ideas, activists, and the movement of key cultural and political artifacts. I demonstrate both the richness of cultural struggle in relation to ideas about race and nation, and also the dimensions of oppositional practice which are not reducible to narrow ideas about resistance. I position the work of performing, producing, and displaying vernacular photographs as a form of gendered labour and care work that created practices of affiliation and opposition against the enclosures brought on by the formation of racialized space. Threaded through each chapter is an exploration of what a transnational vision might offer our understanding of the relationship between labour and cultural production. The narratives disclosed by the photographs within the McCurdy fonds recover some of the lost history of communities that were essential to the formation of a global system of racial capital, and the reproduction of its oppositional cultures.

Dedication

To my family.

Acknowledgments

This dissertation is about family and connection, and so my thanks begin with my parents, Maria and Joseph Lobo, and my siblings Jack, Jessica and Juno. Thank you for looking out for me over the long course of this dissertation.

Thank you to my partner Danny (*the only face in the crowd that I know*) for always providing the necessary care, laughs and distractions.

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This dissertation would not be possible without the labour of Alvin D. McCurdy. My research was guided by his words: "Friends… you or I cannot build a bridge back over the years to retrace certain instances of life, but a bridge of memory can be constructed within our minds and souls, to span the years and grasp, out of the past, certain accomplishments that may be utilized for the betterment of ourselves and for all mankind as a whole..."

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Introduction: Black Atlantic Currents and the Great Lakes

Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?
Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,
in that grey vault. The sea. The sea
has locked them up. The sea is History.

First, there was the heaving oil,
heavy as chaos;
then, like a light at the end of a tunnel,

the lantern of a caravel,
and that was Genesis.
Then there were the packed cries,
the shit, the moaning:

Exodus.
Bone soldered by coral to bone,
mosaics
mantled by the benediction of the shark's shadow,

that was the Ark of the Covenant.
Then came from the plucked wires
of sunlight on the sea floor

the plangent harps of the Babylonian bondage,
as the white cowries clustered like manacles
on the drowned women,

and those were the ivory bracelets
of the Song of Solomon,
but the ocean kept turning blank pages

looking for History.
Then came the men with eyes heavy as anchors
who sank without tombs,

brigands who barbecued cattle,
leaving their charred ribs like palm leaves on the shore,
then the foaming, rabid maw

of the tidal wave swallowing Port Royal,
and that was Jonah,
but where is your Renaissance?

Sir, it is locked in them sea-sands
out there past the reef's moiling shelf,
where the men-o'-war floated down;

strop on these goggles, I'll guide you there myself.
It's all subtle and submarine,
through colonnades of coral,

past the gothic windows of sea-fans
to where the crusty grouper, onyx-eyed,
blinks, weighted by its jewels, like a bald queen;

and these groined caves with barnacles
pitted like stone
are our cathedrals,

and the furnace before the hurricanes:
Gomorrah. Bones ground by windmills
into marl and cornmeal,

and that was Lamentations—
that was just Lamentations,
it was not History;

then came, like scum on the river's drying lip,
the brown reeds of villages
mantling and congealing into towns,

and at evening, the midges' choirs,
and above them, the spires
lancing the side of God

as His son set, and that was the New Testament.

Then came the white sisters clapping
to the waves' progress,
and that was Emancipation—

jubilation, O jubilation—
vanishing swiftly
as the sea's lace dries in the sun,

but that was not History,

that was only faith,
and then each rock broke into its own nation;

then came the synod of flies,
then came the secretarial heron,
then came the bullfrog bellowing for a vote,

fireflies with bright ideas
and bats like jetting ambassadors
and the mantis, like khaki police,

and the furred caterpillars of judges
examining each case closely,
and then in the dark ears of ferns

and in the salt chuckle of rocks
with their sea pools, there was the sound
like a rumour without any echo
of History, really beginning.

--Derek Walcott, “The Sea Is History” (1978)

How do we reorient our view of history as inert or static, to a dynamic, fluid conceptualization? In "The Sea is History" Derek Walcott (1978) offers an imaginative way of knowing that charts a path through the rough terrain of colonial history and alerts us to the ways in which the sea holds memories of decolonization and emancipation. The sea is a "grey vault", but unlike canonical histories held by archives and monuments, Walcott tells us that "the ocean kept turning blank pages." More than unseating historical authority from rulers and conquerers, here he offers us a long view of the ebb and flow of the desire for freedom, its connection to nature, its inscription in the earth.

The question posed at the beginning of Walcott's poem (*Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?*) has profound resonance in our current moment. This dissertation was written during a time of a global felling of statues and monuments that celebrate colonial histories—part of a wider movement of protests against police brutality and systemic racism. Reflecting on this moment Dionne Brand (2020) writes: "Everything is up in the air, all narratives for the moment have been blown open — the statues are falling — all the metrics are off, if only briefly. To paraphrase Trouillot, we want 'a life that no narrative could provide, even the best fiction.' The reckoning might be now." Brand's words remind us that history books alone cannot hold our stories, but rather these stories are still unfolding in the lessons we learn at home, in poetry, and "in what is left of history when we close the history books with verifiable facts" (Trouillot 2015, 70).Walcott concludes his poem by offering the sea as a possible metaphor for memory, released from the locus of institutional history and its closures. By invoking bodies of water Walcott also evokes the memory of the terror of Middle Passage and the struggle to find freedom from it. Like many artists and scholars that came before and after

him—he is plumbing the fluid, the dynamic, searching out a history that is different from those that impose stasis and closure.

In keeping with the provocations of Walcott and Brand, this dissertation asks what "the subtle, the submarine" and alternative geographical framings might offer in unsteadying "closed books" and tidy frameworks that silo history and culture into national terms. In doing so, I situate Lake Erie and its environs as part of the Black Atlantic. Specifically, this dissertation maps the complex portrait of those environs as they emerge within the photographic archive of the Alvin D. McCurdy fonds. Through a reading of vernacular photographs, I argue that the fonds documents complex and fluid transnational networks of kinship and resistance. This network is based in Amherstburg, Ontario, but it spans: the Six Nations Reserve in Ohsweken; the metropoles of Michigan; and, goes as far as Honduras. I argue that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Amherstburg was a microcosm of global colonial power relationships structured with racial, class, and gender-based hierarchies. Given the geographic and cultural position of Amherstburg, it cannot easily accommodate existing historiographic models that are predicated on a distinct national border and culture. I therefore use the Black Atlantic paradigm as the conceptual starting point for this dissertation. Against monocultural and ethnocentric accounts of Black cultural history, Paul Gilroy's (1993, 3) *Black Atlantic* is "the stereophonic, bilingual, or bifocal cultural forms originated by, but no longer the exclusive property of blacks dispersed within the structures of feelings, producing, communicating, and remembering". I extend the Black Atlantic paradigm to the world of marine fluidity that is the Great Lakes. I propose that attention to this particular site allows us to unsteady tidy national histories of Black struggle refreshing and transforming our understanding of notions of kinship

and resistance speaking to the circulatory and hybrid nature of ideas, activists, and the movement of key cultural and political artifacts. The vernacular photographic archive within the McCurdy fonds offers expressions of lived histories giving updated meaning to the imagined worlds of interlinked and scattered communities that exceed nationalist framing.

This project began unexpectedly. I was curious about the relationship between archives and social movements at a moment when I was engaged in struggles myself. Inspired by histories written "from below" (Galeano 2009; Prashad 2008; Zinn 2003) I was less interested in how state and corporate archival institutions remembered and historicized movement-based knowledge, but I wondered what the memory practices of activists themselves looked like. At this time I was participating in Black Lives Matter Toronto's Tent City, and so I began wondering how histories of Black struggle in Canada had been archived, in particular how were confrontations with the state ideologically framed within collections? The grassroots archives that I was most familiar with did not house materials from these histories. Rather it was the Archives of Ontario where I found a trove of sources in a variety of forms that spoke to these struggles—Mary A. Shadd fonds, F 1409; Prieto-McTair Productions fonds, F 4585; Daniel G. Hill fonds, F 2130, among others. As I scrolled through their online Visual Database, I encountered the photographs of the Alvin D. McCurdy fonds.

Initially it was the tintype portraits and cabinet cards that got my attention, but then I stumbled upon a photograph of an Emancipation Day parade from 1 August 1894 (Figure 1), and then a class photograph of the King Street School from 1890 (Figure 2). I learned that the King Street School was a segregated school established by local parents and teachers who continually struggled to provide their students with basic necessities.

These photographs of struggle and Alvin McCurdy's drive to collect these materials, challenged my understanding of what agency within an archive looked like. This prompted me to ask: If the lived experience of space has a racial dimension, and archives are spaces where racist, colonial histories become "actualized", then how does a state-institution inscribe meaning on a collection of movement-based documents? None of my readings in photographic history, nor in archival practice prepared me for this. This encounter with the McCurdy fonds hinted at cultural tensions and ambiguities surrounding the politics of archival representation.

This dissertation has provided me an opportunity to reflect on how my family's experiences with racism in the United Kingdom necessitated our migration to Canada. British imperialism dictated that my Indian father and Irish mother were permanent outsiders. This status along with their working-class backgrounds meant that they intimately felt the effects of racism and were severely limited in their opportunities. Drawn to the romantic glow of multiculturalist discourse in the late 1980s, we immigrated to Canada. My pathway to anti-racist activism and scholarship was shaped by these early experiences. Later on, my formal education as an archivist laid bare the whiteness of Canadian historical production and archival practice: at no point was race, gender or class discussed in relation to archives. Though I encountered people tirelessly working to broaden the scope of archival collecting to include histories that had been marginalized, this work was very much peripheral to my formal education. I learned about the mechanics of settler-colonialism and racism within Canada through movement-based knowledge gained through participation in struggles such as Idle No More, Black Lives Matter

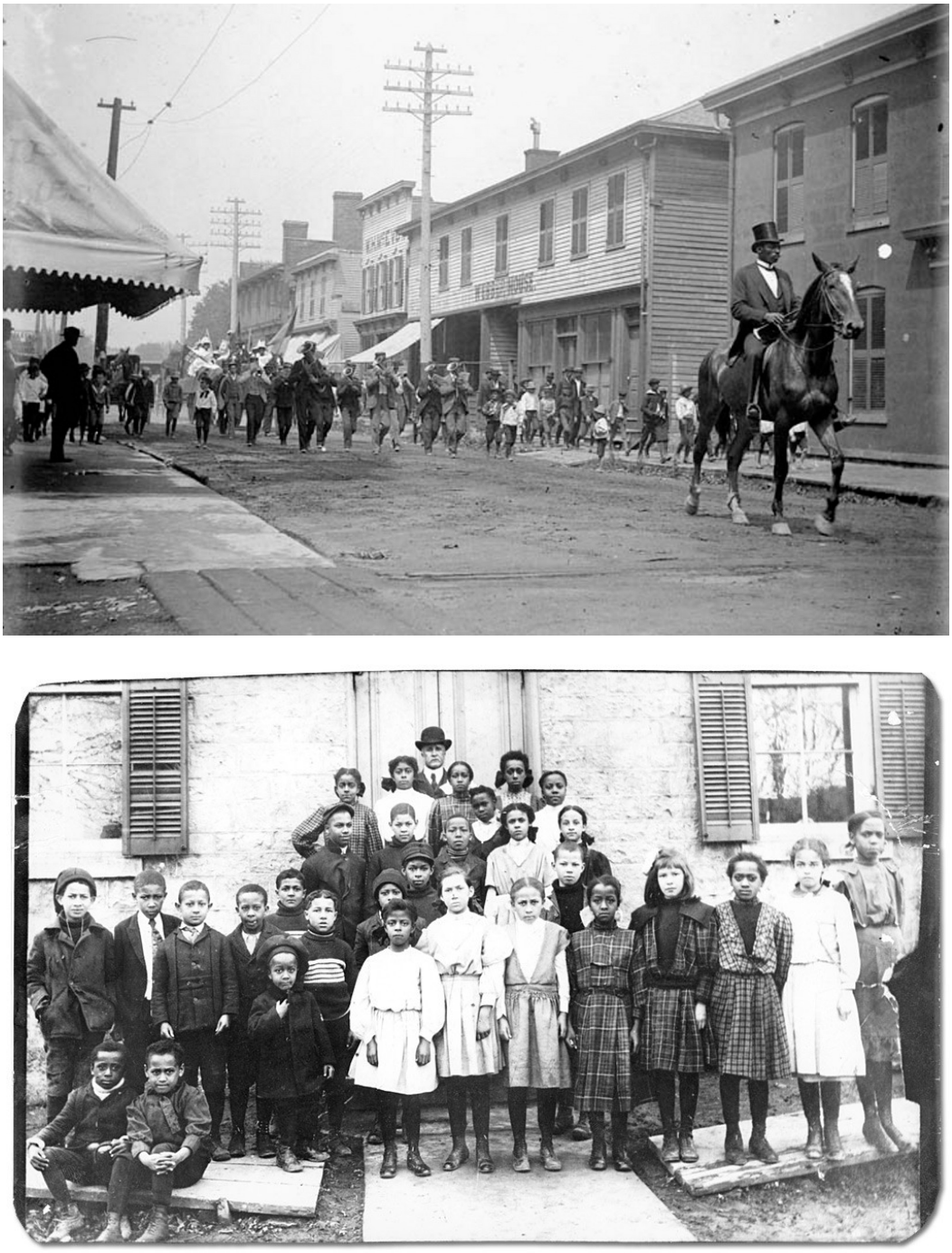


FIGURE 1-2: Emancipation Day in Amherstburg, Ontario in 1894, Alvin D. McCurdy fonds. Students of King Street School in Amherstburg, Ontario, [ca. 1890S]. Gelatin Silver Prints.

Toronto, No One is Illegal and the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty. In this way I see this dissertation as bridging the two different social worlds in which I have worked through an engagement with how activism is memorialized in the archive.

In my first visit to the Archives of Ontario to view the McCurdy collection I was confronted by how this fonds unsettled my previous understanding of Canada's photographic histories, but also how it visually situated a historic Black presence and struggle within Canada. Katherine McKittrick (2006, 97) argues that "If black Canada is assumed to be nonexistent and/ or recent, the work of scholars and writers investigating black Canada requires an engagement with wonder". The experiences of surprise and wonder disclose the processes of concealment inherent in crafting colonial histories that erase, bury, relocate and forget "Other" histories. McKittrick (idem., 96) describes the visual component of these processes; practices that landscape blackness out of sight "privilege a transparent Canada/nation by rendering the landscape a 'truthful' visual purveyor of past and present social patterns". Visual knowledge regulates and normalizes how Canada is seen. My encounters with the McCurdy fonds are aptly described by such terms

My encounter with the archive allowed me to see how the stories told of Canada's historical production is deeply inscribed by settler colonialism. Within the context of Ontario's history, photographs have been used to document the development of the colonial state and its administration through visual representations of white settlers and their role in the development of industry, agriculture, and Eurocentric cultural activities. In this narrative Black, Indigenous and other racialized communities are rendered invisible through these signifying absences. This dissertation is therefore a methodological project that seeks to examine the archive and historical

production on multiple levels to both expose and destabilize the colonial and nation bound discourse invested in Black history.

Transnational historical approaches look across and beyond national and geographical specificities. Victoria Haskins' (2017) study on transnational perspectives on archives argues that a more nuanced comparative analyses of historical phenomena at multiple sites attends to the fluid and constructed nature of identities, including that of the nation itself. Because settler nations often refigure colonial archives that are in essence transnational into repositories where "our" national story might be found—we need to consider the mobility of colonial knowledge and the role of archives in empire-building. Within the context of settler nations like Canada this is especially true, as national archives of settler nations are essentially transnational in and of themselves, given that such nations are founded on migration, conquest and coloniality. At the same time Haskins cautions us to be cognizant of the role of the settler colonial nation-state's foundation on an Indigenous country, perpetuating an exclusion of Indigenous people from the national citizenry. Haskins calls for historians to undermine the archive's nationalist aims by incorporating our archival confrontations and encounters in our writing and research practices (Ibid.). Practically speaking, in order to align with these aims, this study imports theories and practices from different locations including the United States and Britain.

The inherent ambivalence of the term archive—both semantically and spatially—can be attributed to these disciplinary interrogations of historical production. This shift acknowledges that archives cannot be understood solely as sites for the safekeeping of knowledge, but establishes their relationship to that knowledge. Michel-Rolph Trouillot (2015, 2) traces a similar phenomenon in the semantic ambiguity of the word "history": an irreducible overlap and

an equally irreducible distinction between the sociohistorical process ("what happened"), and our knowledge of that process ("what is said to have happened"). History and archives are entangled with exercises in power—they produce silences, but also champion colonial mythologies. In order to understand the implications of these inequalities on historical narratives Trouillot argues that we must interrogate history as a process. In describing the production of silences Trouillot identifies four crucial moments: fact creation (the making of sources); fact assembly (the making of archives); fact retrieval (the making of narratives); and retrospective significance (the making of history). Applying this methodology, I study the genealogy of Black history in the Great Lakes region at four stages in historical production: the creation of the photographic object; its arrangement and description in the archive; its use or disuse in the construction of colonial narratives; and, its significance in the formation of oppositional knowledge.

Critical perspectives on imperialism and the archive examine how archival formations and processes generate information and fashioned bodies out of European knowledge systems (Reid and Paisley 2017). Specifically for theoreticians like Said (2014) and Foucault (1972) the role of the imperial archive has been revealed not only in gathering and accumulating data or information about subject populations, but in actively constructing and reconstructing specific sets of Indigenous populations as degenerate or primitive. As Said (2014, 36) describes, this "knowledge" of subject races is what makes their management easy and profitable; knowledge gives power, more power requires more knowledge, and so in an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control. Thus the contents of the archives reveal as much—if not more—

about the colonizer than the colonized, as well as their mutual construction as colonial subjectivities (Ibid.).

Influenced by this work, scholars (Burton 2006; Harris 2007; Stoler 2010) have argued convincingly that the archive participates in the ongoing reiteration of a seemingly stabilized past because archives are sites of meaning production and codification. As such the power of the archive has been identified as both a shaping and controlling force in nineteenth century imperial projects. Ann Laura Stoler (2010) maintains that colonial states were first and foremost information-hungry machines in which power accrued from the massive accumulation of knowledge rather than from the quality of it. Stoler implicates the archive as a monument of the colonial state and a cultural agent of fact production and state authority. For Stoler in order to disrupt the colonial order of things historians must look at the content of the archive as well as the form. So rather than searching "against the grain" for historically marginalized voices, Stoler suggests "moving along the grain" in order to understand the codified beliefs of the archive.

Engaging with these histories involves destabilizing colonial nation building archival practices and reading them differently. Therefore in documenting the histories of Afrodiasporic communities that are within Canada, but also represented as marginal to Canada, a critical reading practice is needed to address how the archive installs and ascribes social identities delimited by the discourses of Eurocentric intellectual frameworks. I believe vernacular cultural production offers a materially grounded and conceptually expansive medium with which to study counter-hegemonic reworkings of history. This is not to say that vernaculars are always already subversive, but rather that they shed light on how their subjects enact and embody certain social and cultural rituals outside of politically bounded entities like nations. This aligns

with Diana Taylor's (2003) idea of the repertoire which positions embodied memory—performance, gestures, orality, movement—as capable of transmitting knowledge. The photographs within this archive capture non-verbal repertoires and embodied ways of returning the gaze. In this way they have the potential to break with the linear, progressive, fixed narrative structures of traditional histories. Metaphors of the aquatic allow us to discover the circular transmission of human experience, highlighting the continuities between people's movements and struggles.

The Alvin D. McCurdy Fonds

The main site of this investigation is the Alvin D. McCurdy fonds at the Archives of Ontario, a collection of vernacular photographs of communities in Amherstburg, Ontario—a major terminus of the Underground Railroad. In safeguarding the locally derived experiences of Black life in Southwestern Ontario, the Alvin D. McCurdy fonds plays a recuperative role in mapping the development of networks of resistance, and communal memory. The photographic archive within this fonds helps to form a deeper understanding of the importance of photography in telling the broader history of the Black Atlantic.

Alvin D. McCurdy was born in 1916 in Amherstburg, Essex County, Ontario (Figure 3-4). Like many Black communities formed at the borderlands of Southwestern Ontario, McCurdy's family history is linked to the processes of migration that defined the African Diaspora in the nineteenth century. McCurdy's paternal great-grandfather was Nathan (Nasa) McCurdy Sr., a man born into slavery in Greene County, Pennsylvania, who was later manumitted in 1795 and resettled in Ohio (Figure 5). On his maternal side, Alvin McCurdy's

grandmother had been enslaved in Kentucky, and following her manumission made her way to Canada (Crooks 2019, 77) (Figure 6). Heading north, Nasa McCurdy Jr., a freeman, settled with his wife Permelia and their children in Amherstburg in the 1830s and assisted a succession of fugitive slaves across the border into Canada (Ibid.) (Figure 7). Nasa Jr. was instrumental in designing and building the Nazery African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1848, a terminus of the Underground Railroad, which later became a National Historic Site, and is now part of the Amherstburg Freedom Museum complex (Kilgallin 1976). “He was also a lover of history,” reflects Alvin McCurdy of Nasa Jr., “I think its from him that I got my interest in history” (Boyd 1986).

Interested in his family’s genealogy and the broader history of Black settlement in Southwestern, Ontario, Alvin McCurdy collected material throughout his life in order to preserve his community’s heritage (Crooks 2019). McCurdy believed this archival labour necessary, as these histories were largely ignored by traditional cultural institutions and were in danger of erasure. Through donations and voracious collecting, his personal collection blossomed into one of the richest sources of African-Canadian archival material in Ontario, containing roughly 3000 photographic objects, as well as textual files, oral history interviews, and literary works, with materials that pre-date the founding of the province in 1791, and extend through the mid-twentieth century. The McCurdy fonds is unrivaled in the scope of its visual materials, roughly 3000 objects. Perhaps closest in content to the McCurdy fonds is the Richard Bell Family fonds at the Brock University Archives in St. Catharines, Ontario which contains materials relating to the Bell family and associated family members (Richard Bell Family Fonds, 1844–2009). This fonds include roughly 350 photographic objects including nineteenth





FIGURE 3-7: Alvin D. McCurdy, Michigan 1938. [Recto and Verso]. Gelatin Silver Print: Nasa McCurdy Jr. (1814-1886). Tintype; Permelia A. Bailey McCurdy [.18-?-1893]. Albumen Print; Mary Jane McCurdy. ca. 1850] Cabinet Card.

century tintypes, as well as cabinet cards and gelatin silver prints. In 2021 the McCurdy fonds was listed as part of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's Memory of the World Programme, an international initiative which aims to safeguard and showcase the most historically valuable documents in humanity's heritage and history (Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 2021).

McCurdy worked professionally as a carpenter and was a long-time member of the Carpenters and Joiners Union, as well as a Freemason and active member of local anti-discrimination groups. In 1963 Alvin and his brother George—who later served as the Executive Director of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission (1971-83)—with other members of the South Essex Coloured Community Association fought vigorously to close segregated school S.S. #11 which had a contaminated well. As historian Funké Aladejebi (2012, 146) notes, the successful closing of S.S. #11 stands "as a small but powerful representation of Black activism throughout Canada." Though McCurdy was adamant that he was not a historian or archivist, his authoring hand is visible throughout the collection—annotating images with genealogical information, identifying local landmarks and organizing images by family name (Crooks 2019). His personal collection was purchased by the Archives of Ontario in 1990, a year after McCurdy's death, and has been an instrumental source that researchers have drawn from in order to illustrate histories of Black settlement in Canada.

In keeping with Alvin McCurdy's interest in mapping the genealogical history of Amherstburg, his archival fonds is organized (where possible) by family surname. This organizational strategy highlights what Nora Faires (2006) describes as the development of a transnational Black community in the Great Lakes region, knit together by formal institutions

such as religious organizations; by networks of information such as newspapers; by regular participation in celebrations such as Emancipation Day held each August; and by less structured, more intimate ties of kin and friendship, reinforced by visits undertaken within this borderland. This repeated crossing and recrossing of the Detroit River border is an understudied migration that problematizes the national histories of both Canada and the United States (idem., 29). Not surprisingly, several of these family folders include photographs that list photographic studios or postage stamps from both sides of the Detroit River. The circulation of photographic portraits over this waterway helps to enunciate these histories of diaspora and dwelling. Attempts to fix the border between what is now the United States and Canada began with the Treaty of Paris of 1783, and were continually developed until the formation of the International Boundary Commission of 1925[1]. Against the backdrop of these geopolitical disputes over the hardening of this boundary line, during this period the photographs within the McCurdy fonds position this region as amorphous, sharing common cultural traits and networks of kinship.

Research Questions

This dissertation borrows its title from Walcott's 1979 poem "The Sea is History". It is particularly concerned with the final verse in which the reader is invited to move beyond the Eurocentric binaries of culture and nature, space and time: "and in the salt chuckle of rocks /

1 The formation of the Commission in 1909 called for Canada and the United States to assign their own geographers and surveyors to accurately define the boundary between the two countries. In 1925 the Commission was made a permanent organization, which exists to this day. In spite of these attempts to fix the border, people living on both sides of the Detroit River boundary continue to cross the border for a variety of reasons. As Karolyn Smardz Frost (2016, 19) explains: "Despite the pervasive security measures imposed by Homeland Security in the wake of 9/11, the border between Canada and the United States remains the longest undefended border in the world. People live in Windsor and work in Detroit and vice versa. Many families shop at favourite stores on either side of the river; others cross to attend sporting and cultural events and to share in religious services".

with their sea pools, there was the sound like a rumour without any echo / of History, really beginning". I hope then to refine our understanding of both labour and cultural production within this region by examining the influences that Lake Erie and Black geographies exert on the historical process. I use the concept of the Black Atlantic as a conceptual device that opens up two analytical pathways for studying life in Amherstburg, Ontario: first, it allows me to examine how this region has been defined in and against constricting national boundaries, and the emergence of new trade routes and broader capitalist development; and, second, it allows me to position vernacular photographs as key sites in uncovering transnational networks of kinship and resistance that impacted the political, cultural and social life of this region. Drawing from feminist social reproduction theory and knowledge generated from its attendant movements (James 2012; Bhattacharya and Vogel 2017; Trotz 2020) the following chapters unpack the social relations that produce and reproduce these struggles and oppositional practices. The photographic objects I read take an aesthetic approach to representing the world: they portray how Lake Erie feeds into the Atlantic system materially by utilizing the indexical nature of photography to document the experience of the Black struggle, but also metaphorically by facilitating creative imaginations, foregrounding the importance of imagination entangled with history. Pressing the theoretical tools supplied by Black Atlanticism to an analysis of the Great Lakes Basin, I ask: *How does Lake Erie and its conduits literally and metaphorically feed into the Black Atlantic system? In what ways does it alter the topographical and discursive boundaries of Gilroy's paradigm? How are practices of resistance and remembering socially organized and reproduced within the photographic frame? What are the spatial implications of these practices?*

Unpacking a Historical Transnational Network

Amherstburg cannot easily accommodate existing historiographic models that are predicated on nation-bound paradigms because it is positioned on the borderlands of the United States and Canada. Rather, the McCurdy fonds suggests that life in this borderland was less determined by a distinct national border, and more on a relationship to the rhythms of Lake Erie. The fonds reveals that Lake Erie was a microcosm of transnational politics—the connective tissue which sustained continental kinship networks, the site of a cross-border industry, and the topography on which ideas and cultural texts circulated. I therefore use the aquatic as the conceptual starting point for this dissertation. My work is guided by Grewal and Kaplan's (2006) approach to transnationalism. The method of analysis that they propose not only moves across national boundaries and unpacks how boundaries are politically and socially constructed, but it also attends to the inequalities and differences that arise within transnational networks. Overall, the following chapters show how Gilroy's vision of the Black Atlantic can be used to analyze Black life in Amherstburg in order to challenge how this region is subsumed within the larger, more pervasive myth of Canada as a "finished emancipatory location" in national discourse. An examination of the continental and transatlantic racial formation projects reconstructed in this photographic archive reveals deeply gendered transnational networks of kinship and labour and these networks, when mobilized, transform static notions of the concept "resistance". In what follows, I sketch the conceptual terrain of Black Atlantic thought, and discuss what is at stake in broadening its frontiers both physically, by including places such as Canada and spaces such as lakes, and conceptually, by extending it to women.



FIGURE 8: Laura Holton Adams, grandmother of Alvin McCurdy, ca. 1900. Gelatin Silver Print.

Lineages of the Black Atlantic

Diasporic histories are often expressed through metaphors of the aquatic or submarine (Walcott 1978; Glissant 1990; Benitez-Rojo 1992; Brodber 2020). In their allusions to errant movements that resist time, these emblems are rich discursive ground for formulating ideas about displacement, belonging, contact zones, and imaginative epistemologies. Kamau Brathwaite (1974) envisioned the fragmentation of the Caribbean islands as a matter of perspective, or a lack of imagination; though above ground the island archipelago appears distinct, underwater it formed a vast, webbed chain of mountain ranges. In "Caribbean Man in Space and Time" he writes: "The unity is submarine breathing air, our problem is how to study the fragments/whole" (idem., 1). This idea is elaborated in Brathwaite's *Mother Poem* (1988), in which he questions what is hidden by what is present. Specifically the islands are fed by the hidden resources of water that flow beneath them and form connective pathways. The imagery that Brathwaite evokes functions as a metaphor for colonial politics, where Afrodiasporic cultures and intellectual traditions are hidden or forced underground by the weight of a highly visible colonial power. For Brathwaite the "submarine unity" was a methodological provocation that unseats histories underwritten by fragments, borders, and bifurcation in favour of unfixed flows of underlying unity. In a similar way Brathwaite (1999) proposes "tidalectics" as a means of re-working the idea of dialectics as theorized by Western philosophical traditions. Chiefly, this idea moves beyond our "obsession for fixity, assuredness, and appropriation" toward a more rhythmic, or transitory analytical method (idem. 34). The intervening logic of fluidity and cyclic movement enables us to form a spatial imaginary that divests from static and fragmentary colonial mappings of space. For Amherstburg, a place deeply inscribed by the architecture of

settler-colonialism and border fortification this conceptual framing allows us to break from nation-bound epistemes and forge a more dynamic understanding of racial formation.

Arguably the vastest and most expansively theorized spatial imaginary of the oceanic is Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic.* Occupying the space between the "two great cultural assemblages" of Africa and Britain, the Atlantic is a syncretic space of cultural intermixture that exceeds ethnic particularism and nationalism. Against monocultural and ethnocentric accounts of Black cultural history, the Black Atlantic[2] is "the stereophonic, bilingual, or bifocal cultural forms originated by, but no longer the exclusive property of blacks dispersed within the structures of feelings, producing, communicating, and remembering" (1993, 3). The poetics of the Black Atlantic world disrupt the deep shadow cast by nation-bound cultural histories and highlight the fissures in Western constructions of modernity. In doing so, the Black Atlantic redresses the long-neglected involvement of the African diaspora in various modernization projects. In particular, Gilroy's (1993) chronotype of the ship attests to the metaphorical weight of the submarine. As the central organizing symbol of the Black Atlantic the ship is a "living micro-cultural system in motion" that draws our attention to cataclysmic dislocations of the Middle Passage, redemptive returns to Africa, and the movement of ideas and art (idem., 4). The Black Atlantic is an exercise in breaking the logjam of cultural history's longstanding investment in discrete nationalistic framings. This paradigm offers a methodological pathway to unsteady tidy national histories of Black struggle and cultural histories. It speaks to the circulatory and hybrid nature of ideas, activists, and the movement of key cultural and political artefacts. But there are

2 The term "Black Atlantic" was first coined by American historian Robert Farris Thompson in his 1983 book *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy.*

shortcomings and absences in Gilroy's the *Black Atlantic* which I hope to animate and address in this research; the first of these concerns gender.

Gender and the Black Atlantic

The stories of migration and settlement that are evidenced within the McCurdy fonds press the Black Atlantic to its conceptual limits. Reclamation and recovery resonate deeply in the task of tracing the lives of women within Atlantic histories. In particular, the photographic travelogues of Ethel Alexander and her journeys to the Ohsweken Indian Reserve, and Honduras cannot be accounted for in Gilroy's theories of mobility. Specifically, Ethel's movements are errant and tied to the contradictory and complex demands of the colonial education system. While aspects of Alexander's mobility overlap with the Black Atlantic travellers that Gilroy describes, her overall experiences highlight the gendered nature of nationalisms in ways that exceed the Black Atlantic paradigm.

Critics have argued convincingly that the Black Atlantic unfolds as a gendered landscape, charted by the journeys of Frederick Douglass (1962), W.E.B. Du Bois (1962) and Richard Wright (1940). However, the topography of this landscape was also traversed and reflected upon by Mary Seacole (1857), Amy Ashwood Garvey, Paule Marshall (1959), and Rosa Guy (1985), among many others. These women were travelling subjects that moved across multiple nodes of the Black Atlantic, reworking our understanding of this landscape by disclosing their own unique experience of this world.

Dionne Brand's (2000; 2012) work in particular provides a corrective to this masculinist framing by offering a gendered perspective of the Black Atlantic. Both *In Another Place, Not*

Here (1996) and *At the Full and Change of the Moon* (2000) position women as Black Atlantic subjects that engage in resistance to gender-based violence, but also form intimate relationships with other women. As Mathilde Mergeai argues *A Map to the Door of No Return* (2012) and *At the Full and Change of the Moon* (2000) chart the Atlantic by not only representing the ocean as a feminine space, but also because "her heroines display a more enhanced flexibility and resourcefulness than their male counterparts" (2014, 73). This thread is woven through much of Carole Boyce Davies work in *Black Women Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject* (1994), where like Brand the focus is on the unexplored areas of Black women's subjectivities produced through biographic art forms. Among feminist scholars in particular there has been a sustained engagement centred on the indeterminacy of the topographical and discursive dimensions of Gilroy's analytic. Principally, this work argues that important personal components of the migration experiences of Black women are not examined. Gilroy only makes passing reference to the writing and political activity of Phyllis Wheatley, Ida B. Wells, Lucy Parsons, and Nella Larsen, among a handful of others. Otherwise, *The Black Atlantic* does not take up women writers, and completely omits the literary traditions of women working throughout the Caribbean and the larger African Atlantic world. Melissa Schindler (2014) takes issue with Gilroy's elision of Toni Morrison's travels. Schindler argues that despite Morrison having travelled a great deal as a public figure, Gilroy focuses on the way Morrison's *work* travels, rather than her "physical movement". In doing so feminist critics assert that the Black Atlantic reinforces a binary of unfettered mobility as masculine, and stasis as feminine. This dichotomy mirrors imperial representations of time as a natural division of gender wherein women are represented as inert and backward-looking, while men represent the progressive

agent of national modernity (McClintock 1995). Through such avoidances, the Black Atlantic privileges masculinist notions of travel, at the expense of the complexity that Black feminist perspectives can offer the paradigm.

For this reason Carole Boyce Davies' (1994) concept of "migratory subjectivity" offers a complement to Gilroy's analytic. Boyce Davies provides an analysis of how Black women's subjectivity can be read as a "series of boundary crossings... not as fixed, geographically, ethnically or nationally", it exists "in multiple locations, [traversing] geographical/national boundaries" (idem.,3). Like Gilroy, Boyce Davies offers a diasporic framework that moves beyond home and away to encompasses circuitous or errant movements. In Boyce Davies words, the "dismantling of received geography" is essential to mapping Black cultural production (idem.,16). Because people, ideas and cultural artefacts journey between different relations of power, we must engage in different modes of knowing. Subjectivity is then relational and while informed by constructs such as nation, racial capital, and feminisms, it exceeds these theories. In this way Boyce Davies resists mechanical applications of theory—for her they are "meta-narratives", for Gilroy "absolutisms"—supplied by theory. Both Gilroy and Boyce Davies present a postmodern suspicion or disruption of theory in favour of what Boyce Davies calls "critical relationality" wherein singular, monochromatic approaches to any work of writing are replaced by complex, integrated and relational theories. Discourses operate in a "braid-like" motion—weaving together multiple theories without creating a flattened out and hierarchical organization of theory in which one narrative dominates over the others. This strategy reads similarly to Gilroy's description of the Black Atlantic as a "webbed-network" that challenges "the coherence of narrow nationalist perspectives". Like the Black Atlantic, as a

conceptual framework critical relationality is "inherently migratory" articulated by movements across multiple discourses (idem.,41). This is particularly useful to my discussion in Chapter Six of the co-constitutive relationship between nationalisms and gender that emerges across Black Atlantic nodes.

The Black Atlantic in Canada

Though premised on intercultural positionality, Gilroy's analytic never journeys beyond his "two great cultural assemblages". The Black Atlantic does not sufficiently acknowledge the Caribbean, or Canada despite the rich literary engagement with the submarine in both regions (Edwards 1994; Piot 2001).[3] As mentioned, within Caribbean poetic tradition the sea functions both literally and metaphorically as an expression of creolization, and a travelogue of world making. Likewise, in Canada the work of Dionne Brand (2012) and M. NourbeSe Philip (2011) confronts the historical and continuing signification of oceanic imagery as a means of deepening our understanding of the transnational textures of colonial histories. In "Zong!" NourbeSe Philip (2011) explores the history of the Middle Passage by revisiting the massacre on the Zong slave ship, wherein the violent logic of maritime law is submerged under the surface of the Atlantic. In its fragmentary construction the reader is confronted with what is irrevocably lost in Atlantic crossings. At the same time the poem broadens our understanding of how documents hold silences, and how these silences impact the historical process.

3 Gilroy acknowledges in the first chapter of *The Black Atlantic* that the Caribbean is discussed in his earlier work (*There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*), in which he argues that "the styles and forms of the Caribbean, the United States, and Africa have been reworked and re-inscribed in the novel context of modern Britain's own untidy ensemble of regional and class-oriented conflicts" (Gilroy 1993, 3). Within *The Black Atlantic* the Caribbean is briefly discussed in his chapter "'Jewels Brought from Bondage': Black Music and the Politics of Authenticity" through a reading of the musics of the Black Atlantic world, hip hop and reggae in particular.

In a similar way Brand (2012) engages with the sea as a repository of memory in her mediations on ancestry and displacement in *A Map to the Door of No Return.* Brand (idem., 1) remaps the Atlantic by positioning doorframes—at Elmira Castle in Ghana or Gorée Island in Senegal—as key gateways of both rupture and creation: "But to the Door of No Return which is illuminated in the consciousness of blacks in the Diaspora, there are no maps. The door is not mere physicality. It is a spiritual location. It is also perhaps a psychic destination. Since leaving was never voluntary, return was, and still may be, an intention, however deeply buried. There is as it says no way in; no return". Both NourbeSe Philip and Brand describe the sea as a liminal space of physical and mythical crossing (through the surface of the water, and doorframes, respectively). In doing so, they enrich the discourses of the Black Atlantic by offering the sea as a site of disruption and displacement. These characteristics encompass Christina Sharpe's (2016) theory of "wake work" as described in *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being.* The wake as the fluid track left after the passing of a ship is only one part of Sharpe's metaphor, which in its entirety also comprises "keeping watch with the dead, a consequence of something, in the line of flight and/or sight, awakening, and consciousness" (idem.,17). For Sharpe, Black expressive cultures depict aesthetically the impossibilities of representing the paradoxes of Blackness during and in slavery's afterlives. Wake work entails a twofold process of: archiving quotidian experiences of Black death; and, resisting these historical and ongoing experiences aesthetically and materially. The language of the oceanic is invoked to describe responses to the ontological elements of Black exclusion mediated through literature, performance, and visual culture. Where Gilroy offers the ocean as a space of cultural community and hybridization, NourbeSe Philip, Brand and Sharpe render visible the Atlantic as a space to reflect on relational understandings of

re-creation, loss, violence, rupture and disorientation. They also position the quotidian experiences of Black women as capable of performing the histories of the Black Atlantic and cross-border journeys to North America. In doing so they move beyond Gilroy's Black Atlantic canvas in many directions. Their writing alerts us to the ways in which the aquatic signals disconnection and rupture, but also re-creation—it is not solely a site of connection or hybridization. While the photographs in the McCurdy fonds mediated forms of belonging and affiliation across Lake Erie, NourbeSe Philip, Brand and Sharpe remind me that what is held within the absences of this archive are all the connections that are lost.

Like Boyce-Davies and Gilroy, Rinaldo Walcott in *Black Like Who?* (2018) applies the metaphor of travel to frame his discussion of the Black Atlantic in Canada. Walcott argues that for too long Canada as a Black transnational space has been a source of critical ambivalence. Borrowing the language of "routes and roots" from Stuart Hall (1990; 1992), Walcott (idem., 32) describes his treatment of Canada as a "detour" that requires us to reroute traditional mappings: "I use detour as a method for thinking through the circuitous routes of black diasporic cultures, their connectedness and difference. Detours are the (un)acknowledged routes and roots of black expressive cultures". This device might also be read as a critique of the boundaries of Gilroy's spatial imaginary and its narrow focus on Europe and Black Britain. For Walcott discussions of Canada's place in the Black Atlantic and Black cultural studies more broadly has been hampered by its proximity to and influence of the United States. This has resulted not only in an Americanization of Black cultural studies in Canada, but also a retreat into discourses of nationalism. Walcott argues that Black history in Canada is overdetermined by the narratives of the Underground Railroad. Viewed as a space of inclusion in relation to the United States, these

discourses withdraw into nationalistic framing that ultimately undermine our understanding of transnational histories. For Walcott, the anti-slavery activism of Martin Robinson Delany and Mary Ann Shadd that necessitated their frequent criss-crossing of the Canadian-American border has been appropriated by popular narratives and national discourses to deny the almost five-hundred year presence of Black people in Canada. Rather, the travels of Delaney and Shadd should be understood not as a source of nationalistic celebration, but as evidence of a rich transnational culture of *resistance to* nation-bound projects. This is similarly echoed by Naomi Pabst (2006) who argues that Canada's symbolic position as a place of liberation elides the myriad forms of oppression that overlap with but do not replicate forms present in the United States. To counter such configurations Pabst approaches Black subjectivity from a geopolitical standpoint, "meandering to and fro, in and out of Canada" (idem., 26). Alissa Trotz (2011, 59) argues that approaches that are premised on a wider spectrum of movements disrupt the binaries of "origin"/ "home"/ "departure" and "destination"/ "away"/ "settlement" societies. Therefore by accounting for the ways in which people move freely between different locations in routinized modes of travel while remaining a transnational community, we make visible the complexity of transnational practices (Ibid.). Historicizing and spatially locating these movements allows us to move beyond dyads that collapse convoluted, varied, and complicated histories of migration. For Walcott and Pabst the history of Black people in Canada needs to be situated within the processes of migration that defined the African Diaspora from the eighteenth to twentieth century. Because Canada's colonial history straddles multiple empires, it is best understood as imbricated in a historic transnational network.

By circumventing the nation Walcott and Pabst move beyond models of inclusion, and national policies of multiculturalism that plague earlier writings on Blackness in Canada. The tension between approaches that foreground diasporic connectedness versus explicit national address are laid out by Walcott (2018) in the "Introduction" to the second edition of *Black Like Who?* wherein he responds directly to George Elliot Clarke's (2012) *Directions Home.* In an attempt to recover a long-standing African-Canadian literary tradition Clarke's sets an older and rural Black Canada against "an inauthentic newer and urban Black Canada" (idem., 16). Walcott (2018, 19) reads this mapping as an attempt to legitimate the nation-state: "Clarke attentions to position blackness not as a potential challenge to normative narratives of the nation, but rather as sutured into the normative narrative". The kinds of expressive culture that Walcott, Brand and NourbeSe are concerned with cannot be tethered to ethnocentric approaches. Like Gilroy, Walcott re-charts Blackness in Canada by demonstrating how the music of The Dream Warriors, Stephen Williams's film *Soul Survivor* (2003), and the poetry of NourbeSe Philip and Dionne Brand vacillates between national borders and influences—"a bubbling brew of desires for elsewhere, disappointments in the nation and the pleasures of exile" (Walcott 2018, 27). In this way Walcott, like Gilroy, offers a postmodern account of diaspora that resists the "inside/outside" axis of nation-bound discourses. For both, expressive culture is of great import in telling the story of the Black Atlantic; it not only produces its own knowledge about diasporic sensibilities, but in their tenacious movements across space they demonstrate the limitations of confining cultural studies to nation-bound discourses.

The above approaches foreground the highly transnational nature of life in Canada, by investigating both the colonial and continental continuities between regions. However, if

situating the Black Atlantic in Canada requires us to look at the cross-border politics of the United States-Canadian border, then it also requires us to look beyond the oceanic toward inland contact zones. For this reason I believe the Great Lakes borderlands have been undertheorized as sites of transnational contact. The conceptual clearing that oceanic imagery provides studies of transnationalism and cultural mediation have not been transplanted to discussions of lakes. This dissertation addresses this critical oversight by positioning the Great Lakes as a dynamic site of linkage, exchange and mobility.

Black Geographies

Where Amherstburg exceeds aquatic metaphors, I look to the field of Black Geographies. In some ways Black Atlantic can be understood as a vast, supranational conceptualization of Black geographic space; both theorizations offer methodological tools for subverting ontologies and epistemologies grounded in Eurocentric paradigms. It is through this paradigm shift that they redraw the contours of traditional approaches to geography by foregrounding diverse sources of Black geographic knowledge. In Essex County, Black geographies are evident in the role the community played in shaping the history of this land, and how this story is situated in the larger nation-wide practice of segregation and territorial dispossession. At the same time one could argue that migration to borderland towns in Canada in the aftermath of the passing in the United States of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was predicated on the ability of Black settlers to secure property. For instance, as I argue in Chapter 3 the residents of the Marble Village and Anderdon were decidedly middle-class land owners—they used the commonalities of race *and* class as the basis for building their pan-neighbourhood alliances. This struggle was ultimately

for a stake in the educational system, and pathways to upward mobility. For this reason, it is essential to examine Black Geographies alongside their attendant class-making projects.

Black Geographies builds on critiques of geography's imperial origins made by Marxist scholars such as Neil Smith and Anne Godlewska (1994) and Anne McClintock (1995), among many others. These scholars argued that the traditional canon of geography rested on colonial understandings of race and racism, and as a result did not develop the theoretical tools for engaging with the ongoing production of colonialism via the production of space. Black Geographies builds on these discussions of geography's entanglement with colonialism and racial capital, and highlights alternative spatial practices that are obscured by these prevailing models of geographic knowledge. Principally, this work moves beyond the colonial idea of space as stable and fixed, to an understanding of space as relational. Katherine McKittrick (2006, p. xiii) aptly summarizes the impetus for the development of the field in *Demonic Grounds*: "black lives are necessarily geographic, but also struggle with discourses that erase and despatialize their sense of place". By foregrounding resistance and countering attempts to systematically exclude Black thought in questions of space, Black Geographies asserts the inherent spatiality of Black life by arguing that all social relations are grounded in spatial relations. Though Black Geographies is an emerging field in academia, the genealogy of Black geographic thought has existed for centuries in the everyday practices of Black space-making, political struggle and artistic production. Black Geographies therefore invests in vernacular forms of knowledge, something that Gilroy overlooks in his theorization. By acknowledging that vernacular forms disclose geographic knowledge, this field destabilizes methodologies that

champion institutionalized forms of knowledge. In doing so, Black Geographies recognizes everyday practices and working-class communities as contributing to spatial relations.

McKittrick and Woods (2007) argue that many geographic investigations of Black cultures use empirical evidence based on ethnographic, demographic, or quantitative research. This argument is echoed by Édouard Glissant (1989,14) when he describes the "terrible implications of the ethnographic approach is the insistence on fixing the object of scrutiny in static time, thereby removing the tangled nature of lived experience and promoting the idea of uncontaminated survival." By simply identifying the "where" in Blackness in positivist terms these studies reduce Black lives to essential measurable "facts" rather than presenting communities that have struggled, resisted, and significantly contributed to the production of space. In describing blues epistemology Clyde Woods (2007) argues that imperial disciplinary boundaries of existing geographic and sociological research operate to fragment and conceal interdisciplinary epistemological movements of subaltern subjects. Countering this, Woods offers his blues epistemologies as a means to recuperate the geographic knowledge produced by working-class organic intellectuals. In this geography "families, events, venues, work sites, travel, neighbourhoods, households and prisons become critical sites in the construction and revision of theory, method and praxis" (idem., 60). This pedagogy relies heavily on performance, including songs, poetry, sermons, music, and the visual and plastic arts. More so than the Black Atlantic, this approach also positions vernacular forms as capable of recuperating geographic knowledge. Where Gilroy maps different Black Atlantic nodes through the travels of Garvey, Du Bois and Wright, the work of Black Geographies value vernacular forms of artistic expression.

Black Geographies engages with radically interdisciplinary modes of study. So, while Gilroy charts the Black Atlantic exclusively through music and literature, the toolkit that Black Geographies draws from is far more expansive. Further, where Gilroy's focus is on "countercultures of modernity" Black Geographies is concerned with challenging a broad range of Eurocentric geographies of inequality, its most prominent thematics being racial capitalism, carceral geographies, and plantation relations. Black Geographies is also deeply invested in anti-colonial scholarship, unearthing the insidious relationship between processes of racialization and colonialism and exploring how these processes are embedded in material landscapes.

Following these approaches I remap Lake Erie and its environs as one, discrete unit of analysis—taking into account continental continuities, and transatlantic flows. Transnationalism is a useful interpretive tool for understanding cultural traits and organizational structures shared between communities on both sides of the Detroit River. Nation-states are powerful oversimplifications of space, the impacts of which are materially grounded in ongoing dispossessions of land. Sustaining their determinacy can only benefit the project of settler-colonialism and the binaries it inscribes and institutes. These approaches also serve to undermine projects of Indigenous resurgence that propose a different kind of nationhood—based on reciprocal relations with the land, rather than coercive and extractive relations. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017, 8) communicates the philosophical tenets of the Indigenous nation from which she belongs, Kina Gchi Nishnaabeg-ogmig, through the Nishnaabeg word *kobade,* which means a link in a chain: "It is a long kobade, cycling through time. It is a web of connections to each other, to the plant nations, the animal nations, the rivers and lakes, the cosmos, and our neighbouring Indigenous nations". Practices of Indigenous resurgence and

nationhood are not only informed by connectivity and an ecology of relationships, but also require a generative refusal of colonial recognition. By unseating settler-colonial understandings of space we signal the ways in which the colonization of diverse Indigenous groups in Canada underscored how racial formation projects were spatially understood and resisted. The journeys evidenced by the photographic record in the McCurdy fonds are based within and across multiple Black Atlantic zones, disclosing the transnational dimensions of British imperialism and the ambiguity of such formations. By documenting how British imperialism travelled across the Atlantic and in-land to lakes these photographs reorient the Black Atlantic's concept of modernity to account for settler-colonialisms multi-textured articulations. Mignolo's (2008, 1741) idea of modern-capital is more instructive as it weds "the philosophical and political European concept of modernity", with "dissenting histories that place coloniality as the missing half of the story." This concept, more so than Gilroy's idea of modernity, accounts for the co-constitutive or the relationality between capitalist Western empire and its knowledge systems, and coloniality. A relational understanding of these concepts is needed to place the visual culture of the Black Atlantic in their proper historical context. Without accounting for Indigenous histories within the Black Atlantic world we reproduce the idea of Canada as a *terra nullius*.

Great Lakes Transnationalisms

Borderland histories of Black communities in the Great Lakes Basin have predominantly been shaped by studies that position Canada as a refuge from slavery. Focusing on the decades after the enactment of the United States' Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 this body of literature overlooks both the catalysts that contributed to later migrations, but also the phenomenon of on-

going or circuitous movements across these borders. Despite their lack of historical treatment, these later migrations played a significant role in the development of a transnational network of communication among Black communities on both sides of the border. Transnational histories of this region illuminate the complex series of choices that kept borderland populations in motion, including warfare, slavery, and the pursuit of land, and employment. However, these histories have largely been inflected by hegemonic narratives of nation-states: the triumphalism of the United States' settlers in the face British imperialism; and the benevolence of British North America in the face of slavery in the republic. In studies where the Great Lakes are positioned as amorphous and beyond the scope of national paradigms this work does little to explain how their fluidity impacted the development of racial formation projects.

For the past three centuries the Great Lakes region is an exemplary illustration of how understandings of borders are shaped by the entanglements of imperialist and capitalist forces, but also by memory, texts, subjects, and social relations. What is now known as the Detroit River served as a natural border between the various First Nations groups that first settled within the Great Lakes region including the Fox, the Ojibway, the Pottowatami, and the Ottawa (Cooper 2014). However these boundaries and locations were by no means fixed—Indigenous peoples plied these waterborne routes through and between their lands. Algonquin-speaking peoples inhabited the circumference of the region, while Iroquoian-speaking peoples made up the core of the circle, with hunting and fishing, trade, agricultural conditions and warfare causing both short and long term movements within the region. Historian John Bukowczyk (2005, 13) argues that before the 1600s Great Lakes population movements "was not so much a flow from one area to another as a circulation of people around the region". Thereafter this

geopolitical continuity was violently disrupted by French colonization in the St. Lawrence region in the early 1600s.

French incursions into the region produced several immediate outcomes of which I broadly sketch here. Propelled by demands of the fur trade the French advanced the geopolitical importance of those Indigenous nations who controlled different trade routes. These incursions had the effect of making access to trade routes necessary for survival. Bonita Lawrence (2002, 27) explains that as European disease began to decimate populations, as animal life was affected, and as missionaries began to make inroads on traditional practices the pressures to survive resulted in extreme levels of competition between Indigenous nations that "an escalation into continuous warfare was almost inevitable". The early 1600s was characterized by protracted struggles between regional actors for control of resources and self-determination. However by 1667 French colonial policy and mercantilism had consolidated their strategic position, and soon reorganized into a royal colony and garrisoned. Of principal importance was the establishment of a trading-post and fort at Michilimackinac, Detroit in 1701. Despite so-called "French triumph" frontier settlement and migration was always in a state of flux, making the area much less the demarcated territory of warring camps than a borderland zone (idem., 18). Afua Cooper (2014) reminds us that under the French regime, both sides of the Detroit River were considered units of the same polity, the colony of New France.

When New France fell to Britain in 1760, the British continued to maintain the geopolitical integrity of the Detroit River. However as the nineteenth century unfolded the region became the principal theatre of action in North America. Following British defeat in the United States' Revolutionary War, the negotiators of the 1783 Treaty of Paris handed over the

vast area west of the Detroit River and south to the Ohio River to the United States government. An international boundary line dividing the lands of the United States from those of the British was drawn down the middle of the Detroit River and through all of the Great Lakes (Cowan 1929). The treaty also established a boundary between the United States and Indigenous territory along the Fort Stanwix Treaty line, granting sovereignty of the region to the former group. Though these military incursions established a formal boundary this region was defined by the "functional integration" between the British territory, the United States and Indigenous communities.

During this "long period" from the 1780s to 1920s people crisscrossed the border with little oversight. In the late eighteenth century migrants flowed into British North America, with Loyalists fleeing the republic in the period between the United States' Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. During this period as many as 80,000 of Upper Canada's total population of 100,000 to 130,000 were "Americans" by birth or descent (Faires 2006). The pendulum swung in the opposite direction during the remainder of the eighteenth century and most of the nineteenth century with great outflows of migrants spawned by the Rebellion of 1837. Along with those settling in British North America after the passing of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850, hundreds of thousands of immigrants from northwestern Europe traveled across the Atlantic Ocean during the mid-nineteenth century. The Great Lakes region attracted a significant share of these newcomers.

Historian Nora Faires (2006) provides the most comprehensive analysis of Great Lakes transnationalism among Afrodiasporic peoples. In particular Faires argues that between 1870 and 1900, immigrants from Canada made up between a fifth and a quarter of Detroit's growing

foreign-born working-class population. Of those moving within this transnational labor market during the nineteenth century were hundreds of Black Canadians. These migrants comprised about 15 per cent of the city's small Black population, which numbered 1,400 in 1860, doubled by 1880 and totalled more than 4,000 by the turn of the century (idem.,117). Writing in 2006, Faires (Ibid.) maintains that little is known about the influx of Black people from Canada, "whether immigrants of Canadian ancestry or American re-migrants (including former slaves and free Black people) and their Canadian-born children, and even less about the ways in which this migration shaped the contours of Black life in border cities in the period before the Great Migration".

In an effort to remedy this gap Faires studied the lives of "impoverished Black migrants from Canada" through the applicant files of the Detroit Association of Charities. Founded in 1879, the Detroit Association of Charities was established to address the rise in the numbers and visibility of the poor that accompanied the city's economic expansion. This research uncovers the ways in which race inflected patterns of migration in the Great Lakes basin and describes the intense gender and racial segregation of the labour market. However, it does so through the paternalistic lens of a charity organization. The archive that this study references cannot account for more dynamic migrations that were made to build and consolidate social and family ties, and renew traditions.

More recently *Fluid Frontier* (2016), edited by Karolyn Smardz Frost and Veta Smith Tucker, is perhaps the most thorough and nuanced treatment of these migrations, exploring the Great Lakes through the lens of transnationalism and borderlands studies. Offering a revisionist history of the Underground Railroad the book foreground the agency of Black North Americans

by drawing from records of antislavery activism on both sides of the border and autobiographies of those who escaped enslavement. In its "Sources and Resources" chapter we see that these histories are largely developed from the papers of prominent abolitionists and clergymen, but also land registries, county clerks' official records and census data. Both this volume and Nora Faires' study have made significant contributions to historical understandings of Black life and agency in the Great Lakes borderlands. However, the materials that these studies draw from are inscribed by relations of archival power—chiefly they do not draw from archives of imaginative texts produced by Black working-class subjects.

The paucity of social information on Black working-class communities in these borderlands is often cited as the reason these later migrations have been understudied. Historians argue that beyond statistical data from manuscript censuses and land registries, there is not enough evidence within primary sources to confirm or establish significant generalizations and patterns of migration or cultural configurations. While conventional archival sources like the nominal census and marriage records allow us to confirm residency, and establish dates of birth, governments did not track transnational presence or journeys; the United States' and Canadian census forms have never had questions about temporary residence in another country. Thus the archival record only contains data on patterns of permanent residency, and not on the frequent visits. Within this historiographical context, the circulation of vernacular photographs in the Detroit River borderlands is an understudied phenomenon that unsteadies traditional transnational histories of this region, and foregrounds the experiences and situated knowledge of everyday people. Investigating these border crossings through the photographic archive allows us to recast our understanding of the relationship between geographic knowledge and cultural

texts, and the extent to which each shaped the other.

Visual Registers of the Black Atlantic

The McCurdy fonds offers a unique opportunity to challenge such national paradigms because of its transnational portrait of local life. To unsettle these imperial and geographical bound histories, I use Gilroy's (1993) transnational analytic arguing that visual culture like all expressive culture exceeds national histories. This dissertation thus intervenes in Gilroy's paradigm by foregrounding visual modes of Black Atlantic cultural production. Contemporary visual artists have applied the concept of the Black Atlantic from the world of music and literature into the realm of the visual, fostering a more broad-ranging cross-disciplinary application (Erickson 2009). The work of artists like Isaac Julien (2004), Maksaens Denis (2017), Kara Walker (2019) and Camille Turner (2022) have opened up new insights and possibilities for Gilroy's analytic—enhancing our understanding of this framework by situating it within larger geographical and temporal contexts through a variety of mediums. Following this artistic body of work, my reading complicates the notion of the Black Atlantic as Gilroy imagined it, probing the visuality of this conceptualization through a discussion of vernacular photography.

Gilroy's account of the Black Atlantic actually begins with a discussion of a visual image: J.M.W Turner's *Slave Ship* (1840). Gilroy (1993, 14) positions the painting as "offering a powerful protest against... the moral tone of English politics". Further, in describing the painting's provenance and its movement between North America and Europe, Gilroy cites it as an example of "the Atlantic as a system of cultural exchanges." Within his opening chapter, he

introduces his model by inviting his readers to visualize ‘‘the image of ships in motion across the spaces between Europe, America, Africa, and the Caribbean’’ (idem., 4). Though not the focus of his study, Gilroy’s treatment of *Slave Ship* affirms the visual as capable of transcending ideas of “ethnicity” and “nationality”, positioning it as a terrain of struggle. Next, I demonstrate that histories of photography would benefit greatly from a more transnational lens or diasporic framework.

Critical interventions in photography’s historiography since the turn of the twenty-first century have pushed for re-framing photography as a global and highly differentiated practice (Batchen 2002; Pinney 2003;Warner Marien 2002). This scholarship challenged national historiographies and paradigms of colonial histories of photography to project lived and imaginative geographies of space and cultural belonging (Carville 2015). As Carville (2015, 16) explains:

> writing the history of photography needs to be exposed as an imperial exercise through its formulation within private and institutional collections; we must also examine how its early organizations, distribution, and articulation of historical knowledge have been established and maintained spatial relations between European, American, and non-Western photographies.

This tendency is striking within Canadian historiography. In Canada the arrival in the mid 1860s of the first widespread, publicly accessible photographic process in the *cartes-de-visite* coincides with confederation. From this point on we can begin to chronicle the development of a national identity photographically. These practices materialized mostly through geographical survey photographs, architectural photographs, and images that documented the development of Eurocentric cultural activities. A typical example of this is the career of Samuel McLaughlin

who, in 1861 became the official government photographer, commissioned to photograph the construction of the Parliament Buildings (Figure 9). More than 100 years later, photo-historian Ralph Greenhill publishes *Early Photography in Canada* (1965) and *Canadian photography, 1839-1920* (1979). Widely viewed as seminal texts in the field these monographs document the medium's history in Canada through the lens of national infrastructure projects, vast, empty wilderness, Victorian leisure activities, portraits of politicians, and industrial development. The history of photography in Canada is rhetorically organized to highlight colonial nation-building projects, urging a coherently Canadian national history of the medium. These practices have both overshadowed the vernacular uses of the medium, but more significantly they work in step with the mechanics of settler-colonialism and white supremacy by championing Anglo-Canadian narratives of *terra nullius* and industrious pioneers.



FIGURE 9: Samuel McLaughlin (1826-1914). *Centre Block, Parliament Buildings under construction, Ottawa* c. 1865. Albumen Print. Library and Archives Canada / C-003039.

Challenging these paradigms is the work of Deborah Willis (1997), Tina Campt (2012), Julie Crooks (2019) and Charmaine Nelson (2019), among others. These scholars argue that vernacular photographs can become objects from which different histories can be explored, able to challenge nationalistic and ethnocentric models that frame photographic practices. Their work draws from understudied archives of vernacular photography and attends to the pictorial conventions and social uses of these objects. Moreover, vernacular objects are foregrounded as "powerful storytelling devices and instruments of memory" (Willis 2003, 20). Willis explains that photography's (auto)biographic function is foundational to exploring the cultural values, traditions, and perceptions in Black communities. Identity if formed "through its connection to community and ideas that are fully imagined through the art-making process" (idem., 22). In their colloquial uses and ability to capture intimate family and community interactions vernacular photographs become productive interpretive tools for histories marginalized by photography's engagement with nationalistic paradigms.

In the context of diasporic histories vernacular photography is a site of articulation and aspiration, a personal and social statement of self expression and collective respectability, and a means of capturing and preserving these articulations for the future. Tina Campt (2012) argues that photography plays a key role in documenting and enunciating identities in flux. Vernacular photographs therefore have the ability to visualize creative forms of family produced over and against the disparate geographies and temporalities that constitute diasporic migration, settlement, and dwelling. Within the context of the emergence of Black people as European subjects in post-World War II society, photographic portraiture offered a site for "exploring the contours of diasporic formation and of the constitution of racial and gendered subject formation"

(idem.,23). As with the broader cultural trends in portrait photography among white, middle-class subjects, Campt (2012, 48) argues that among Black Germans, there were carefully followed sets of scripts referenced in these portraits that cite a fiction rather than facts of identity. Portrait photography in both of these cases is therefore a performative practice that actively materializes both race and diasporic formation through gendered and class-specific enactments that contest and affirm national belonging. Challenging John Tagg's (1988) claim that portraiture is tied to preexisting power relations of cultural practices, Campt (2012, 191) believes that though these subjects were not only "paying customers" but also agential subjects that used the photographic studio as a space to resignify race, class, gender and empire in creative and collaborative ways. My approach to the McCurdy fonds is therefore premised on foregrounding the situated knowledge and self-activity that vernacular photography discloses.

The methodologies supplied by these studies allow me to start with a historical materialist analysis of Black life in Amherstburg, Ontario, and from there tease out the interrelated struggles constituted in these social relations. Within this theoretical space struggle becomes entangled with an entire corpus of social relations and this approach has implications for the spatial scope my research. I therefore move beyond the chronotype of the ship as the key site of Black Atlanticism to account for how struggles emerge across different spaces, including lakes, and domestic spaces. The goal here is to expand the topographical and discursive contours of the Black Atlantic. Applying this methodological approach to photographic discourse has ramifications in terms of the conceptualization of family photography, not least because it shifts the emphasis away from these objects as tied exclusively to the private realm. I position the photograph's dichotomous role as an object both caught up in the topographical

narratives of modernity and nation, but also enabling fissures and ambivalences in the spatial relations of modernity. It is for this reason that this dissertation charts the topography of the Black Atlantic world in the Great Lakes region through a close reading of vernacular photographs. Visuality is uniquely positioned to disclose the spatial dimension of these racial formation projects in that photographic objects gesture to both subjective experience, but also historical context within the photographic frame.

Summary of Chapters

This dissertation follows the flow of photographs across Lake Erie to map transnational networks of kinship and highlight the affective labour that sustained these bonds. Threaded through each chapter is an exploration of what a transnational vision might offer our understanding of the relationship between labour and cultural production. For the purposes of enunciating my methodological choices, "Chapter Two: Black Radicalism, Vernacular Visual Culture and the Labour of Resistance" maps the relationship between Gilroy (1993) and Cedric Robinson's (2000) theories of how race/racism is mediated by cultural forms and struggle. Through this discussion I demonstrate both the richness of cultural struggle in relation to ideas about race and nation, and also the dimensions of oppositional practice which are not reducible to narrow ideas about resistance. Chiefly, using social reproduction theory, I position vernacular cultural production as a form of labour that carries with it oppositional ideas, and philosophies. In this way I see cultural production as capable of bridging the ideological divide between base and superstructure. "Chapter Three: Producing a Fluid Frontier: The Black Atlantic in Essex County" unfolds in three parts: 1) Against border formation projects and the visual culture of

minstrelsy this section is concerned with how photographs of the Davis family helped to produce the idea of the fluid frontier and a distinctive transnational regionality that fed into the Black Atlantic world; 2) I then argue that the Goodrich family's cabinet cards offer reflections on the plural nature of modernity, its variances, ambivalences and discontinuities. I argue that doubleness is enacted in the photographic frame, unsteadying the conventions, assumptions, and aesthetic rules which distinguish and periodize modernity; 3) Dealing with captions on the verso of photographs sent to a local woman named Mae Stokes, in the final section of this chapter I analyze the work of performing, producing, and displaying these objects as a form of gendered labour and care work that created sustainable practices of affiliation against the enclosures brought on by the formation of racialized space.

Building on the re-conceptualizations of space established in the previous chapter, "Chapter Four: (Un)Mapping the Marble Village: Vernacular Photography and Racialized Space" provides a comparative analysis of cartographic documents and vernacular photographs of the segregated community of Marble Village in Anderdon, Essex County. In this chapter I untangle the philosophical underpinnings of each mapping practice to unseat normative geographic approaches premised on settler colonialism and the formation of the nation state. I offer the vernacular photographs within the Jones and Stokes family folders as a visible archive of struggles and experiences of racialized space within the Marble Village. Specifically, I argue that school photographs become a meaningful site for documenting the creation of a Black spatial imaginary, as theorized by George Lipsitz (2011). In the final section of this chapter, the gendered nature of traditional mappings is interrogated, looking specifically at how these practices invisibilize the ideas, experiences, and struggles of women in the region.

"Chapter Five: Shifting Spaces, and Fixed Places: Black Mariners on Lake Erie" focuses on photographs of Black mariners within the nexus of Great Lakes shipping channels, and situates them in the broader rubric of Atlantic history. I craft my argument based on my reading of late nineteenth and early twentieth century representations of Black marine cooks and stewards in identification photographs, formally staged group portraits, and snapshot photographs. This collection was amassed by George McCurdy Jr., father of Alvin D. McCurdy, during his tenure as a marine cook working onboard commercial and leisure lake ships that traversed Lake Erie. I argue that marine workers were engaged in the interplay between boundary maintenance and struggles for egalitarian practices onboard the lake ship. In particular they organized themselves and their lives with and against the social order of the lake ship, cooperating in dangerous environments, and fostering a solidarity necessary for survival.

"Chapter Six: Gender and the Black Atlantic: The Travelogues of Ethel Alexander" continues my focus on labour migrations. I critique the Black Atlantic's discursive and topographical boundaries, by demonstrating some of its conceptual blindspots: gendered practices of travel, and practices of settler-colonialism within the Black Atlantic. This analysis is developed through a close reading of the travel photographs of Ethel Alexander, a woman of Black and Cherokee descent who travelled across several Black Atlantic nodes to teach in Amherstburg, Ohsweken Reserve in Brantford, and Honduras. Ethel's story uncovers tensions between inclusionary ideologies and exclusionary practices—class distinctions, gender divisions, and racial membership were filled with different meanings depending on her location.

Throughout this research I have argued the possibilities of applying a sea-based interrogation of history to the Great Lakes through a reading of vernacular photographic

practices. I conclude the dissertation by considering how other reworkings of transnational cultural production might help us map the spatial dimensions of struggle that exceed nationalist framing. In particular, I consider how the public display of vernacular visual culture within the Black Atlantic world provides an opportunity to further expand the topography of this schema. Locating my own family's migrations, I then contemplate other modes with which this fluid or marine line of thinking could be grafted beyond the temporal and spatial boundaries of the Black Atlantic world.

Conclusion

This introduction highlighted the various interdisciplinary approaches to transnational cultural production that refigure our understanding of the ways in which people struggle toward political, economic, and social self-determination. The scholars I have reviewed argue that in order to understand the possibilities and trajectories of Black Atlantic exchanges, we must not only approach these journeys with a constellated or geopolitical view, but also reconsider the historical source materials we use to map these journeys. The narratives disclosed by the photographs within the McCurdy fonds recover some of the lost history of communities that were essential to the formation of a global system of racial capital, and the reproduction of its oppositional cultures. Their experiences correspond to Atlantic currents described by Gilroy, but also Walcott's vision of history. Modern European history relegates the sea as merely a transit zone, but Walcott offers it as a paradigm that accommodates the historical experience of transnational contact zones. Routing Black Atlantic history through the Great Lakes allows us to trace these communities' struggles directly to colonial histories. The stories of the Davis family,

the Goodrich family, Mae Stokes, George McCurdy, and Ethel Alexander demonstrate that the history of the Great Lakes is woven within the history of the ocean, rather than parallel to it.

Chapter Two: Black Radicalism, Vernacular Visual Culture and the Labour of Resistance

This dissertation argues that alternative modes of connection are shaped and reproduced through vernacular photographs. By mapping how photographs offer insight into the Canadian coordinates of the Black Atlantic world, I move beyond forms of analysis premised on the separation of cultural systems into discrete national units. However, these objects cannot be read as external to or estranged from constructions like settler colonial nation-states. Rather fragmented diaspora histories of racial subjectivity combine in unforeseen ways with both transnational and state discourses and create complex relationships in different ways alongside the expansion of capital. The political dimensions of expressive cultures must reckon with their position within these networks. For this reason it is important to locate expressive culture as produced in a series of political and ideological struggles. In this chapter I trace the methodological approaches that examine the extent to which cultural production helps us to intervene in political economy. I am looking for a way to analyze a vernacular archive so as to take into account what is excluded in the photographs of Black subjects, conscious of political economy, gender, and racial formation projects.

The central theme I encountered in mapping these approaches was a tension between levels of determinacy via the economic and the cultural realm. These debates are characterized by mechanistic applications that give priority to the economic, at odds with approaches that grant relative autonomy to ideology and culture. This tension manifested in debates through attempts to update and complicate Marxian models in which social production articulates ideological relations. In these models race/racism was variably emphasized as a distinctive feature of economic development, and as an ideological category determined by struggle. These

theories gesture to how race is understood as a construction that has been politically mobilized or enshrined through plantation slavery and migrant labour, but also how elaborate ideological work is done in the cultural realm to secure, maintain, and challenge ideas about race. The larger methodological goal of this dissertation is to analyze how vernacular cultural forms fit into these struggles at both the economic and ideological level. In doing so I demonstrate both the richness of cultural struggle in relation to ideas about race, gender and nation-state, and also the dimensions of oppositional practice which are not reducible to narrow ideas about resistance. Chiefly I position cultural production as a form of labour that carries with it oppositional ideas, and philosophies. In this way I see cultural production as capable of bridging the ideological divide between base and superstructure.

I map the methodological routes of these debates largely through a comparative analysis of Cedric Robinson's *Black Marxism* (2000) and Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* (1993). Robinson (2000) sees capitalism as organized by racial formations that predate industrialization and the rise of the modern nation-state. Whereas, Gilroy sees ideas about race forged primarily through slavery's memory, and challenged through the syncretic expressive cultures of the Black Atlantic. Gilroy charts Black Atlantic history through expressive cultures or countercultures of modernity in response to the conditions of slavery's memory, Robinson charts the Black Radical Tradition through the imaginative epistemologies produced by the Black working-class in response to racial capital. These differences can be partially explained by the divergent theories of power that each scholar uses. Where Robinson relies on Marx's notion of power as working through differentiated structures (base-superstructure), Gilroy relies on Foucault's (1991) idea of power as a diffuse network of threads that produces identities through discourses. What unites

these perspectives is a concern with how the *power* of ideas about nation-states and race are mediated through cultural forms. In this way this methodology is concerned with how power operates in the cultural terrain and the influence economics exert on these practices and processes. For this reason, I broaden the scope of what is considered labour in a traditional sense. Building from social reproduction movements, I re-conceptualize labour beyond capital accumulation, to account for creative, embodied work, and oppositional tactics formed in struggle. This usage allows us to account for labour as inclusive of cultural production, affective labour in all their attendant forms—including photographic practices.

By conceiving of cultural production as a form of labour that emerges in response to slavery's afterlives we are able to bridge the conceptual gap between Gilroy and Robinson. Both scholars argue convincingly that nation-state formations are ill-equipped to encompass the intellectual traditions of the Black Atlantic world. In both schemas the focus is on the counter epistemologies *produced* through the *labour* of a dispersed and countercultural Black subject. What these theories offer my methodology is a pathway with which to route my analysis of vernacular photography. The vernacular photograph is a highly mobile artefact and mode of communication and performance that is *produced* as a means to link dispersed kin and communities across the Black Atlantic nodes of Lake Erie. In this way it is both a crucial form of labour and a signifier of world-making practices.

I see the theoretical threads mapped in this chapter as connected in their focus on how communities develop grounded epistemologies formed through the labour of resistance and cultural production. Underpinning these epistemologies is a collective critique of, or "counternarrative" to, the Western Enlightenment tradition, including racial capital. In order to

trace how these practices challenge such relations it is necessary to interrogate how capital is used to advance relations of dominance. What these approaches share is the belief that Marxism should be considered paradigmatic rather than prescriptive—historical materialism becomes a framework to understand social relations and eventually change them. In this way they challenge Western Marxist historiography by supplementing and adapting historical materialism to meet the analytical needs of the struggles their work is grounded in. It may be worth asking if these categories of analysis we have inherited are worth reproducing as we struggle to envision alternatives. However, my emphasis on labour and racial capital are appropriate tools in relation to the historical moment this dissertation examines chiefly because of labour's importance to the formation of the settler nation-state. Tracing the tributaries of these thinkers allows us to theorize a more expansive definition of resistance that accounts for cultural production and the labour required to produce it.

Culturalist vs. Economic Perspectives

This exercise in mapping the thrust of Gilroy and Robinson's theories gestures to a key debate between culturalist/sociological and economic perspectives. For the purposes of enunciating my choice in methodology, I sketch these approaches. One of the key political projects of early thinkers in Cultural Studies was to unsettle mechanical applications of a base-superstructure model to an analysis of the production of literature and of cultural artifacts as well (Hall 2016, 20). In this model both politics and ideology (superstructure) were fully determined by the relations of capitalist modes of production (base). Raymond Williams for instance argued that such a practice brought "a rather crude machine to bear on every text", one incapable of accounting for the complexity of the cultural realm (idem., 20). It is on this strong

determinist position that Cultural Studies engages in Marxism. So, in the culturalist perspective, characterized by the work of Williams, a greater measure of determinacy is given to culture. Stuart Hall (2016, 32) argues that this tradition identifies culture very closely with the ways in which a historical experience is understood and defined: "practices are not simply the result of an individual having been placed in a physical, economic, or material space, but of the attempt to live socially in ways which reflect how we understand and experience our circumstances." By denying the primacy of the economic level, this approach argues that cultural life is always present and impacts the formation of economic life. While Williams acknowledges the exploitative nature of industrial capitalism, in his conceptualization human practice—rather than economic production—stands at the "determining centre" (2016, 39). Cultural analysis proceeds by identifying the underlying patterns that structure different spheres of human practice and material activity. The view that all of history is human practices, without primacy assigned to any determining level, is built upon a conception of totality grounded in philosophical humanism. Hall identifies the "human" at the centre of this analysis as Hegel's Promethean Man, who does not exist apart from his activity. The key objection is that this "Man" [sic] is undifferentiated—no power dynamics or struggle are accounted for in this formulation. This was the production of human/ Man that Sylvia Wynter (2003, 260) describes as overrepresenting itself "as if it were human itself, and that of securing the well-being, and therefore full cognitive and behavioural autonomy of the human species itself/ourselves". For Wynter this ontological construction of Man [sic] and his Others has a genealogy that spans from roughly 1492 to the present. Like Hall, Wynter is arguing that though this construction empties out relations of power and struggle, in fact "all our struggles" are differing facets of the central ethnoclass Man

vs. Human struggle (idem., 261). So while the humanism of these culturalist theories is productive in one sense in that it reaffirms lived experience and complex textures of human lives, it proceeds from a vantage point that privileges the perspective of the undifferentiated historical actor—the Western bourgeois man.

Structuralist approaches to cultural studies on the other hand understand language as the primary symbolic system from which to give social reality an intelligible form. The mode of production functions like a language, it gives reality its operative function. Applying the model of structural linguistics to the study of culture proponents of this methodology displace the Promethean Man, meaning and innovation arise only from observance of the rules that govern the structure. Against the lived experiences of everyday life, the structural approach gives analytical primacy to the mode of production. In this paradigm human life operates unconsciously by adhering to the rules of those systems and structures—they are not making history of their own choosing. Althusser's (2014) main theoretical contribution to this model in "Ideology and the State Apparatuses" was his acknowledgment that sometimes the way in which the base functions is to assign dominance to other levels (religion, legal and political systems, philosophy etc.). Althusser offers a model of the totality that abandons the philosophical abstraction "Man", and is irreducible to humanism or historical process, rather it is complexly structured through "levels". Just as in semiotics where language is composed of formal structures and actual speech, the totality is composed of the base and phenomenal appearances. To this model Althusser adds levels of economic, political, ideological and theoretical formations. While he complicates base-superstructure models, in the end there is a firm, functional correspondence between the realm of social relations to the mode of production that

guarantees this system's reproduction (2014, 108). Just as in purely culturalist theories, there is no place for the possibility of struggle.

It is necessary to address Foucault's contribution to discussions of power operates. Unlike Marx who positions the state as an arbiter of power, Foucault (1977) believes that power operates in more diffuse ways—at both the individual (disciplinary power) and collective level (bio-power). Conceived in this way power is a relation rather than a resource owned by the ruling class. While Foucault (1977) believed that the state gave rise to a specific modality of disciplinary power, such a narrow notion of power was not sufficient for analyzing all the ways in which power operates. The old mechanisms of state power could not exert its influence in the same way during the demographic explosions and industrialization of the late nineteenth century. Rather, a more complex system of coordination and centralization was needed to address the phenomenon of population. In contrast to Marx's state controlled by a unified ruling class, Foucault believes the state to be multidimensional operating at different sites (institutions). While the state has distinct tendencies to control, it ultimately has different modes of action depending on a range of political discourses necessary for the transmission and transformation of power. These aims are not always seated in the political domain, but may also rest at the site of the family, education, and, local life etc. Foucault's model is more expansive than determinist or culturalist approaches in that he offers a notion of power that is multitudinous and diffuse, and operating at multiple levels. However, for Foucault (1977) contesting these relations of power occurs as "counter-conduct"—where resistance is co-produced within and through the functioning of state power and its apparatuses, and not emanating from outside sources. In this way Foucault's notion of resistance does not account for

modes of prefigurative struggle; though this mode of struggle does not operate wholly outside of the state, it works to challenge the organizing logic of the state and its power relations. So while Foucault provides the tools to analyze the conceptual practice of power, he does not account for the political effectiveness of social movements and solidarities. What about movements that are decentralized and form non-hierarchical modes of organization? While movements are always entangled with and reproduce power relations, by offering a model that allows power to be contested only through the modalities of the state and its apparatuses we are left with a notion of resistance that is very limited in scope. How do we account for the labour of cultural production, and its counter-hegemonic possibilities? Overall, like Althusser and other proponents of the culturalist approach, Foucault offers very little room for multitudinous forms of political and other forms of struggle and resistance to hegemonic power. In this way his notion of struggle is vastly limited and cannot account for resistance to take place within the cultural realm.

What are the implications of these conceptualizations on notions of difference? Like Foucault, Hall argues effectively that social forces such as classes, political movements, et cetera are not in fact first constituted by objective economic conditions which then give rise to a unified ideology (idem.,145). Rather, the relationship between social forces and ideology is dialectical. Using Rastafarians in Britain as an example, Hall (1986, 145) argues:

> The Rastafarians were, Marx would say, as a group themselves, the poor. But they don't constitute a unified political force because they are poor. In fact, the dominant ideology makes sense of them, not as "the poor" but as the feckless, the layabouts, the underclass. They only constitute a political force, that is, they become a historical force insofar as they are constituted as new political subjects.

Hall concludes that it is the articulation, or link between the political force and the ideology, which makes visible the processes in which this group forms a new social or political position or subjecthood. In this example Rastafarianism is caught in a classification system inscribed by colonial discourses that forms the mode in which economic position is articulated. This position is best summed up in Hall's (1978, 394) oft quoted argument that "race is the modality in which class is lived". It is necessary to point out that Hall does not account for Indigenous dispossession and the implications this has for analyses of labour. Nevertheless, Hall provides a pathway to mobilize theories of settler colonial state formation through his approach to articulation, accounting for both Indigenous and diasporic histories, roots and routes.

The culturalist approach can be broadly characterized by a belief in the autonomy, the non-reductiveness, of race as a social feature. Proponents of the latter position argue that what is often experienced and analyzed as racial conflicts are really manifestations of deeper, economic structures and processes. Gilroy's Black Atlantic might uncomfortably sit in the first camp; cultural production in all its hybrid forms cannot be reduced to plantation labour, or linked to the development of and resistance to a world system of capitalism. While Gilroy acknowledges the weight of "slavery's memory" the conditions of its reproduction and the struggles it engendered do not play a determining role in expressive cultures beyond giving them their hybrid forms. Robinson's analytic might be understood as a bridge between pluralistic approaches like Gilroy's and the economic determinism of "classical Marxism". Put differently, Black Marxism's application of historical materialism is representative of approaches that followed the "Althussian break" from classical Marxism. Stuart Hall (1980, 193) argues that in his

characterization of "articulation" Althusser provided a critical link between culturalist and economic theories:

> articulation of different modes of production begins to deliver certain pertinent theoretical effects for an analysis of racism at the social, political, and ideological levels. It begins to deliver such effects—and this is the crucial point—not by deserting the level of analysis of economic relations (i.e., mode of production) but by posing it in its correct, necessarily complex, form.

The terrain of articulation expresses all that can not be reduced to economics alone, and so this is where notions of race, gender, etc., might operate. This conceptualization calls out the vulgarity of the base-superstructure model, by arguing that these systems alone cannot account for all struggles. For Hall, Gramsci's model of hegemony connects these two theorizations; capitalist social relations are coupled with the development and elaboration at the "non-economic" levels of politics, civil society, and culture, through moral, intellectual, and ideological leadership (1980, 207). This conceptual clearing allowed Hall to craft his own ideological configuration: race is the modality in which class is lived. Or in Althussian terms, capitalist relations are articulated through race in distinct ways at each of the levels of the social formation—economic, political, ideological. Articulation is then a method that is epistemologically informed by the play of correspondences, and non-correspondences that form the "totality" (Hall 1996, 125). It is bound up in the plays of power that are entailed in processes of domination and subordination; it is not just about connecting processes but of creating connections between them (Ibid.).

Gramsci is concerned with the concrete, organic historical levels on which struggles play out, where Marx's *Capital* concentrated on developing his ideas at the highest level of application. In this way Gramsci conceptualized levels that Marx's theoretical work only applied

a “sketchy and incomplete” treatment—the specific historical conjunctures, or the political and ideological aspects of social formations. It is for this reason that Hall believes that though Gramsci did not write about racism, his concepts are useful in developing an analysis of racism that conceives it as part of a complex relation of forces (Hall 1996, 125). So while the economic reductionism of structural analysis has no room for levels of articulation that account for political or ideological dimensions, Gramsci’s model lends itself to a theory of other types of social differentiation; from one-way determinations to a relation of forces. This work does not do away with the economic but assigns it the role of “[creating] a terrain more favourable to the dissemination of certain modes of thought, and certain ways of posing and resolving questions involving the entire subsequent development of national life” (idem., 184) By positioning social forces, and the ebb and flow of everyday struggles, Gramsci argues that the mode of production only structures and determines in the sense that it defines the terrain on which historical forces move—what Hall (1996, 422) describes as “[defining] the horizon of possibilities.” In its place Gramsci’s concept of hegemony asserts that we must acknowledge the multi-dimensional, multi-arena character of power. Against structuralist accounts that maintain that power is held and sustained on one front of struggle (the economic), in his model historical blocs do not necessarily form along class lines as unified historical actors. Rather: “the actual forms of the political struggle will have a wider social character—dividing society not simply along ‘class versus class’ lines, but rather polarizing it along the broadest front of antagonism (‘the majority of the working population’)” (idem., 425). This wider social character is not ideologically informed by economic processes alone, but popular thought or common sense are inter-discursive, products of the “spontaneous, vivid but not coherent or philosophically elaborated,

instinctive understandings of its basic conditions of life" (idem., 432). This conceptualization allows us to understand ideology as collective and lived, rather than individual. Against the culturalist approaches that centre the undifferentiated Promethean Man, or structuralist approaches that do away with the subject altogether, Hall foregrounds a multi-faceted nature of consciousness. This conceptual clearing allows Hall to conclude that a Gramsciean perspective is productive for reworking existing paradigms to the task of analyzing questions of racism. This analysis occurs in several ways, but of primary importance to my methodology is Gramsci's use of the function of state/civil society. Gramsci's conceptualization is extremely flexible, it breaks with an analysis that positions the state as the sole institution for structuring domination or providing influence. Rather it allows for formations like the family, churches, and cultural organizations to play a "vital role in giving, sustaining and reproducing different societies." In his model of hegemony Gramsci assigns importance to cultural forms in the development of social formations. This model is drawn directly from his analysis of his political surroundings, positioning Catholicism as providing a crucial alternative to a secular Italian state and national culture (Hall 1996). Hall argues that this analysis could be transferred to conditions wherein race carries powerful cultural and national connotations. As Hall demonstrates, Gramsci's work disrupts and complicates the direction of flows of traditional models of determination, by advancing a method that accounts for how social formations and ideological constructions through a grounded historical analysis attentive to struggle. In doing so Gramsci adopts the most productive elements of culturalist and structuralist approaches. While doing away with the culturalists' Promethean Man, Gramsci shares their belief in models that examine how social conditions shape the lived experiences of historical subjects. In relation to structuralist

approaches, Gramsci offers a model that is complexly structured through "levels", but argues that their influence is not structural and rule-based, but forms through organic, complex and often contradictory ways.

Robinson's theory of racial capital works in step with these theoretical reworkings of Marx by Gramsci. Moving beyond a monocausal relationship between race and class, racial capitalism uncovers how racialism permeates social structures that precede capitalism. This conceptualization is developed in Black Marxism through a historical analysis of the emergence of the racial order in feudal Europe, and how these ideologies impacted the organization of labour under capitalism. The term also refers to historical agency that developed in response to this structure—the Black radical tradition is thus a manifestation of this agency, or in Gramsci's terms the formation of popular consciousness. Ideological formations are developed through the complex and multi-directional processes in which race and capitalism are co-constituted. In its flexibility Gramsci's analysis of dispersed power allows forms of struggle to be take place at multiple levels and not just through state power or through nation-based geographies. Because the terrain of struggle is vast, it can accommodate various forms such as cultural products and expressive culture, and can be transnationally dispersed. This conceptualization provides a critical bridge between the Black Radical Tradition, and Black Atlantic forms of expressive culture. It opens up the possibility for cultural artefacts to be produced by the labour of struggle.

Black Radicalism and the Black Atlantic: Labour and Oppositional Practices

In addressing the significance of Black Atlantic sociality and expressive cultures, I work to address what has been described as a crucial absence in Gilroy's work: a sustained engagement with labour—its relationship to the Black radical tradition, and its opposition to the

mechanics of capitalist modernity. Though Gilroy moves to position Black Atlanticism alongside Marxism through his critique of "bourgeois ideology", he continually abstracts the relationship between slavery and capitalism. Black Atlanticism proceeds by positing slavery's significance to the construction of modernity without a sustained analysis of how a global system of capitalism played a determining role in structuring modernity. Gilroy (1993, 40) explains:

> where lived crisis and systemic crisis come together, Marxism allocates priority to the latter while memory of slavery insists on the priority of the former. Their convergence is also undercut by the simple fact that in critical thought of Blacks in the West, social self-creation through labour is not the centre-piece of emancipatory hopes. For descendants of slaves, work signifies only servitude, misery and subordination.

My methodology then exceeds Gilroy's analytic in the sense that I do not see slavery's memory (Atlanticism) and the origins of the Black radical tradition (working-class consciousness) as discrete spaces of analysis, rather they are relational—entangled through geographies of racial capital. I believe Cedric Robinson's contribution in *Black Marxism* provides a critical bridge between these schools of thought. Robinson offers a "withering critique" of Western Marxism's inability to comprehend the racial character of capitalism but does not discount— as Gilroy does —labour (slavery, indentureship, wage labour) as a key site for the emergence of radical thought and practice.

Gilroy's earlier text *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (1987) provides a clearer and more sustained critique of Marxist approaches to cultural studies, that allows us to see more clearly why he made such analytical decisions in *The Black Atlantic*. Gilroy speaks directly to materialist approaches that analytically separate race and class, arguing that these studies reduce race to the inherent effects of various structures – relations of production and markets. In their

structural approach these theories overlook "the active, dynamic aspects of cultural life" that are shaped by complex processes of social and political subordination and de-subordination, resistance and negotiation (idem., 4). Gilroy's critique of existing class analyses is grounded in their inability to accommodate the nuances of contemporary configurations of struggle. This text asks: "The immediate issues raised by the presence of women, blacks and other subordinate groups in the political institutions of the working class carry with them profound theoretical questions which reach into the heart of Marxian explanation. What is the working class today? What gender is it? What colour is it? How, in the light of its obvious segmentation, is it to be unified? Is this unification still possible or even desirable?" (idem., 6). Gilroy proceeds to demonstrate how the language and culture of Black radicalism in Britain is more complex in its relation to class than existing schemas suggest. These schemas cannot be characterized or "measure[d] by Eurocentric yardsticks" (idem.,15). For instance in discussing the connections between Black and white youth cultures, Gilroy displaces "work" as the only site from which political consciousness can emerge. Moving toward a more Foucauldian analysis, Gilroy argues that the political characters of these expressive cultures emerge in contradictory and unruly ways that do not find equivalencies in the "epistemological repertoire of contemporary Marxism" (idem., 210). Gilroy's critique of nation-states is similarly based on an applied analysis of existing theories which ultimately underscores their inadequacies in grasping real world oppositional ideologies and actions. Gilroy takes aim at how nationalist terms are invoked within certain anti-racist struggles. In particular, these movements depend "on a positive evaluation of the capacity of state institutions to act as an agent for the elimination of racism" (idem., 16). The organizing logic of this approach "reduces the construction of anti-racist

politics to the development of those forms of democracy which are congruent with a pluralist national identity" (Ibid.) Gilroy advances a revised understanding of the relationship between class movements and racism, but also the national and transnational dimensions of these struggles. In Gilroy's estimation—grounded in case studies of contemporary political struggles and their expressive cultures —these ideas need to be understood as complex, discontinuous and relational processes. The book concludes by arguing that an analysis of Black Britain must be able to address both structural aspects of movements, but also diachronic, historical dimensions and symbolic or cultural dimensions. One should not gain primacy over the other, or be locked in a one-way flow of determination. Given the attributes of racial capitalism: "the evident autonomy of racism from production relations demands that the re-appropriation of production is not pursued independently of the transformation of capitalist social relations as whole" (idem., 320). It is for the above stated reasons that Gilroy departs from a sustained analysis of labour in *The Black Atlantic*; it offers very little to the study of anti-racist struggles. In Gilroy's estimation, the tactics of newer "urban social movements" provide a more productive set of tools from which to challenge the neoliberal political structures that were unfolding at the time he was writing *There Ain't No Black*. This is primarily because these groups were advocating for collective control over socio-economic development as a whole. For Gilroy (1987, 305) this involved "the transformation of new modes of subordination located outside the immediate processes of production and consequently require the re-appropriation of space, time, and of relationships between individuals in their day to day lives". These modes of struggle move beyond the particularistic interests of industrial workers "employed full time in work that produces surplus value", and rest their potential on universalizing the issue of emancipation

(idem., 306). For Gilroy, because the accumulation of capital depends increasing on manipulation of complex cultural politics and racial formation projects, it is no is longer "fed by the mere exploitation of the labour force" (idem., 307). The forms of consciousness which have emerged with the rejection of racism by urban social movements provide strong foundations for radical collective action, because they move beyond a narrowly class-based politics. This explains why Gilroy positions labour as a site of subordination in *The Black Atlantic*—struggles that solely speak in the language of class and socialism cannot account for the dynamism and cultural vitality of the anti-racist social movements that he witnessed at the time of writing.

Robinson on the other hand positions labour as a site of struggle. For Robinson (2000, 121), "African labor brought the past with it, a past that had produced it and settled on it the first elements of consciousness and comprehension." Robinson's language is instructive, and speaks to the genealogical or archeological differences between Black Atlantic and the Black radical tradition; rather than naming transatlantic slavery as his starting point, he names "African labour". Citing Du Bois' argument in *Black Reconstruction* (1962) Robinson argues that slavery was a subsystem of world capitalism, and that though slavery was the specific historical institution through which the Black worker had been introduced into the modern world system, it was not as slaves that one could come to understand the significance that the Black worker had for American development. It was labour. Labour then becomes a more far-reaching and productive lens that takes into account the multitude of forms of exploitation that are related to but not identical to slavery. Robinson's genealogy begins with racial capital and the imaginative epistemologies that emerged from these struggles against capitalist exploitation in all its

attendant forms. The Black radical tradition did not emerge from a theory of Black radicalism but rather through the work and study of mass movements of Black people.

These theories share a critique of Western Marxism and European historiography and their failure to understand the racial character of forced labour, the conditions and movements of Black people and expressive cultures in Africa and the diaspora. Robinson disrupts these methodological tendencies by tracing the threads of socialism beyond Marx's analytic, arguing that the roots of Western racism preceded the advent of capital. Labour is not excised from his analysis but is adapted to address his historiographical concerns. Gilroy on the other hand explains his positioning by arguing that the expressive cultures of the Black Atlantic exceed Marxist or anti-capitalist framing. For Gilroy, Marxism's statist tendencies distort the transnational character of Transatlantic slavery. Citing these reasons, an engagement with labour is omitted from Gilroy's analytic.

W.E.B Du Bois and Black Labourers

These differences become most apparent in their respective treatment of Du Bois' (1962; 2018) scholarship and biography. In particular the choice of texts that they route their analysis of Du Bois through are instructive: Robinson (2000) articulates the racial character of labour and the beginnings of the Black radical tradition using *Black Reconstruction* (1962); and, *The Soul of Black Folks* (2018) supplies Gilroy (1993) with the theory of double consciousness that informs the fractal, multitudinous character of his Black Atlanticism.

Robinson positions Du Bois' *Black Reconstruction* as pioneering in its analysis of the intersections between the Black radical tradition and historical materialism. Robinson sketches

the relationship between Du Bois' radical historiography and Marxist theories of revolution through a narration of the historical conditions that informed Du Bois' worldview. The ideas represented in *Black Reconstruction* were the result of Du Bois' assessment of the failures of the Left in the United States, the Communist Party of the United States of America in particular. In their narrow conceptualizations of "the vanguard" and their inability to identify the material force of racism, Du Bois felt these groups championed the "exceptionalism" of the United States at the expense of an ideology grounded in mass praxis and class consciousness. These theoretical blindspots contributed to their inability to understand the revolutionary significance of the Black masses. Du Bois posits that the reason the Left in the United States was so ill-equipped to deal with the Black worker was because their economic theory was abstracted from history. For this reason Du Bois' foregrounds the Black worker in his genealogy, developing a historical analysis of transatlantic slavery and establishing its relationship to the development of world capitalism. Robinson (2000, 228) characterizes Du Bois contributions to Marxist theory in *Black Reconstruction* as threefold: he insists on "the significance of American slavery in the emergence of modern capitalism and imperialism"; he demonstrate[d], historically, the revolutionary force of slave and peasant labourers—in opposition to the industrial-working class; and, he questioned the presumed roles of the vanguard and the masses in the development of revolutionary consciousness and action.

In this text Du Bois draws from the vocabulary of Marx, but disrupting its narrow nationalism and Eurocentrism. The focus of Du Bois' argument is not on the American intelligentsia, the Communist Party of the United States of America, the Black petit bourgeoisie, or European labour movements, his focus is on the revolutionary significance of the Black

masses. For Robinson (2000, 185-186) this fact alone establishes Du Bois not only as "one of the finest historians developed in the United States" and "one of the two most sophisticated Marxist theorists in America", but it establishes him as the first historian of the Black radical tradition.

Robinson uses Du Bois to chart the development of revolutionary consciousness that flows from the historical conditions of Black labour. Drawing from Du Bois' historical framing, Robinson (2000, 238) argues: "The slaves had produced their own culture and their own consciousness by adapting the forms of the non-Black society to the conceptualizations derived from their own historical roots and social conditions. In some instances, indeed, elements produced by the slave culture had become the dominant ones in white southern culture". In its nod to "doubleness" and hybridity this assessment comes closest to Gilroy's position. Ironically this is also the site at which these two thinkers diverge. Robinson concludes that it was the human experience of labour and exploitation from which rebellion rose: "It was the tradition critical to the framing of the survival of these new people" (Ibid.).

For Gilroy there is nothing particular about this setting in the formation of a consciousness, for Robinson this setting is everything. Gilroy's critique of the term "Black radical tradition" cites Du Bois's "complex and shifting positions" to dispute the radical elements of the Black radical tradition as its most dominant feature (1993,122). For Gilroy tradition is "too closed" a term to represent the subaltern experience of modernity. Charting the transnational textures of Du Bois' life through a reading of *The Souls of Black Folk*, Gilroy argues that the dominant characteristic of Black political theory is its multiplicity, not labour which he sees as nothing but the setting of exploitation. Though Gilroy concedes that double-

consciousness is "forged out of the experiences of racial subordination", he believes Black Atlanticism is more aptly defined as responses to successive displacements, migrations, and journeys (idem., 110). Overall, tradition is inadequate in describing the chaotic and fractal nature of diaspora: "If it can be called a tradition at all, it is a tradition in ceaseless motion" (idem., 122). For Robinson mobility is only one possible characteristic of the Black working class, it is by no means the *defining* feature.

Black Ontologies: Framing Slavery's Memory

These differences in genealogy are not only methodologically important but they also provide the scaffolding for a key debate surrounding ontology. At this point I make a detour into this debate as a means of further conceptualizing the distinctions and overlaps between the methodologies I draw from. Gilroy's argument against ontological points of view is constructed in his broader review of what he describes as the dichotomy between essentialist (ontological) and pluralistic (strategic) standpoints. It is in his critique of ontological-essentialism that Gilroy calls out Robinson by name, arguing that the Black radical tradition allows for an erasure of slavery. For Gilroy the Black radical tradition positions itself as the "polar alternative" to modernity, with its proponents unable to grasp the position of Black people in the modern world (Ibid.). Gilroy believes then that this tradition crafts a revisionist history of slavery because it is a moment of "Black victimage" and does not fit nicely into the tradition's focus on "Afrocentricity and African genius" (idem., 188). For Gilroy "continuities, subcultural conversations, intertextual and intercultural cross-fertilizations" of a distinct Black culture are integral to challenging racisms that work insidiously to deny historicity and cultural integrity to

Black life (Ibid.). However he believes this notion of tradition is "locked in a defensive posture against the unjust powers of white supremacy" (Ibid.). Gilroy conflates this defensive position with the diverse forms of resistance that make up the archeology and futures of the Black radical tradition. Robinson's ontology is not grounded on an unchanged, linear narrative of an African past, but rather in the ideological connectivity between the work of resistance and liberation throughout the African diaspora. Robinson explains (2000, xxxiii): "the shared past is precious, not for itself, but because it is the basis of consciousness of knowing, of being." Therefore Robinson's work evokes the ontological but links this metaphysical status to material histories of struggle rather than a shared African past. Whereas for Gilroy (1993, 191) proponents of this "Africentrism" struggle to place their histories onto a bigger diaspora web, in this way they render obscure all notions of "double consciousness". However Robinson's critique of placing working-class resistance within narrow, nationalistic frameworks opens up space in his genealogy for struggles across multiple geographies and temporal landscapes. Speaking to the subject of time, Robinson argues that "time is only a sort of catchment for events... it rarely match[es] the rhythms of human action" (2000, 80).

These conceptual tensions speak to a broader debate on the subject of ontology that unfolds within the discourses of Afro-pessimism. Proponents (Wilderson 2020; Sexton 2016) argue that the ways in which Black bodies have been situated at the ontological level are informed by the spectacle of Black death. The historical ontology of slavery is conceptualized by an "afterlife of slavery" (Hartman 2006) best characterized as a "social death" (Patterson 1985). Wilderson (2018, 18) claim that "slaveness is something that has consumed Blackness and Africanness, making it impossible to divide slavery from Blackness". For proponents of

Afro-pessimism this ontological condition is crucial to understanding Black political histories and futures. Robinson's racial capital is then a powerful refutation of this logic, as its genealogy untangles the conflation of slave and African as one and the same. Like Eric Williams (1944) before him, one of Robinson's *Black Marxism*'s key historical interventions is that some early Europeans were racialized and victims of dispossession and colonialism *before* the transatlantic slave trade. Afro-pessimism's model might then be described as Eurocentric in its framing, in that it invokes a conflation of African and slave that sits comfortably within European historical prejudices.

Stuart Hall's (1980, 174) assertions that "difference of theoretical analysis and approach have real effects for the strategies of political transformation in such societies" provokes the question: what kinds of struggle does Afro-pessimism make possible? It is important to locate Afro-pessimism within the discourses of African-American academic thought. It is on this positioning that Afro-pessimism constructs its histories. We can see that the blindspot of this position is its lack of engagement with the African worldviews, cultures, and knowledge systems. An understanding of African history and scholarship uncouples "slaveness" from "Blackness". Returning to ontological essentialist vs. pluralistic debate, crudely sketching this strain of thought makes clear some of the weaknesses in Gilroy's critique of "Africentricity"; Afro-pessimism's lack of engagement brings Gilroy's critique to its logical conclusion—that Blackness begins and ends in the diaspora, and is divorced from an African past. This may account for why *Black Atlantic* does not engage with Caribbean traditions of Pan-Africanism or with African countercultures of modernity. But also, while in centring the Atlantic it also ignores Indigenous presence, land, and ways of knowing and being,

Against this logic, the ontological imprint of slavery is not Robinson's focus, rather it is the "ontological totality" formed through a pervasive radical consciousness grounded. In keeping with his historiographical focus on pre-capitalist forms of racialism and resistance, Robinson and the Black radical tradition more broadly do not erase slavery, but reorient their notion of Black positionality to focus on forms of radicalism—*enlivened* by African worldviews, cultures, and knowledge systems—that emerged from it.

So while slavery's memory supplies the canvas on which Gilroy formulates his Black Atlantic, it is not slavery as a form of exploitation that was also a site of struggle toward emancipation or revolutionary consciousness, but the fractal, untidy movements engendered by slavery that supply the inhabitants of the Black Atlantic worldview. Slavery is emptied of its relationship to the development of world capital and coloniality, it is emptied of as a site of revolutionary potential—as it was for example in Haiti. In many respects Robinson is also arguing that the historical contours of Black radicalism "exceed" Marx. But rather than prematurely close labour, he couches his critique of Eurocentrism through Marx while also acknowledging how Marx's theory is productive in framing exploitation. Gilroy is explicit in his rejection of Marxist theory of history—calling for "new analytical languages and procedures", and "different political and philosophical vocabularies" (1993, 114). Gilroy sees Du Bois' output as instructive; writing like *The Souls of Black Folk* (2018) and *Darkwater* (2016) express a dissatisfaction with the available scholarly languages, favouring a decidedly polyphonic form. Though Gilroy concedes that historical materialism supplied Du Bois with a well-tuned sense of history, he ultimately believes that "Marxism fared badly in the translation into the black idiom" (Ibid.).

Visual Registers of the Black Atlantic and Black Radical Tradition

Placing Gilroy and Robinson's conceptualizations within these debates demonstrates not only their divergences but also how they are theoretically connected. In crafting my methodology I wed Robinson's materialist application of history to track the development of transnational flows facilitated by the circulation of cultural products (photographs) as theorized by Gilroy. I argue that race cannot be understood outside of economic relations, while also acknowledging that countercultures of modernity cannot always be accounted for within the theoretical confines of Marxism.

What do photographs offer such theories? Like all cultural artefacts or expressive cultures, photographs cannot exist outside the relations of capital and labour. What makes them an important tool for understanding social formations is that they can communicate a person's experience within these relations in a non-reductionist or deterministic way. Photographs cannot be read outside of their historical context, but they cannot be determined by this context alone, in this way they offer a bridge between social formations and individual experience. This is echoed by John Berger (2012, 102) in his analysis of the photograph "A Red Hussar Leaving, June 1919, Budapest." by André Kertesz.: "If we are looking at an image from the past and we want to relate it to ourselves, we need to know something of the history of that past... Yet the photograph—or rather, the way this photograph demands to be read cannot be limited to the historical... And yet it also concerns a resistance to history: an opposition". Against the "deep violence" done to subjective experience at the hands of reductionist, positivist approaches to history, this photograph offers an oppositional narrative to rigid principles of historical progress

(Ibid.). In describing the parting look between the photograph's two subjects, Berger (idem., 103) asserts:

> This look, which crosses before our eyes, is holding in place what *is* not specifically what is there around them outside the station, but what *is* their life, what *are* their lives. The woman and the soldier are looking at each other so that the image of what *is* now shall remain for them. In this look their being *is* opposed to their history, even if we assume that this history is one they accept or have chosen.

Similar to culturalist approaches Berger's reading acknowledges the individual, lived experiences of the photograph's subjects—a part of, but not reducible to history alone. At the same time, in the preceding paragraphs Berger offers the photograph's historical context, or the terrain on which this people's lives move—1919 Hungary-Romanian war. Such analysis is positioned against a crude positivist approach to a photograph's content—it gestures to information outside of the frame, but also allows for tensions, and struggles to exist between what is inside and outside of the frame. The photograph then becomes a site to read people's complicated relationships to historical circumstance. It also allows for a reading of struggle. Berger comments (idem.,105): "Revolutionary actions are rare. Feelings of opposition to history, however, are constant, even if unarticulated. They often find their expression in what is called private life." It is for this reason that vernacular or domestic photography are fruitful objects in recovering moments of opposition that are quieter. This approach restores subjectivity against methods that position people as "passive objects of history" (idem., 108). For Berger what makes Kertesz's photograph paradigmatic is that it contributes to history, but breaks the monopoly which history has over time (idem.,108). Berger's method is well suited to crafting Black Atlantic histories. Ultimately, Gilroy's conceptualization is a postmodern and

postpositivist geographical construction that foregrounds subjective experiences against monocausal, empirical approaches to history. Similar to Gilroy's rejection of nation-bound and economic reductionist modes of thinking through Black Atlantic cultural forms, Berger's method addresses multiple levels of articulation (political, social, cultural), but does not assign a hierarchy to such levels. Berger (2012, 111) describes these levels in terms of their "uses": "An ideological use, which treats the positivist evidence of a photograph as if it represented the ultimate and only truth. And in contrast, a popular but private use which cherishes a photograph to substantiate a subjective feeling." Structuralist approaches apply semiological tools to understand historical phenomenon, these same systems are used to read images. In his critique of Barthes' structuralism, Berger's (idem.,112) formulation dovetails Hall's: "The sum total of these systems cannot exhaust, does not begin to cover, all that can be read in appearances." What happens in the photographic frame cannot constitute a language, it cannot be resolved by semiological structures. To assume such would be to grant that their are unities and totalities that govern all phenomenon. Berger asserts that we read our surroundings according to our circumstances, in different ways. What motivates a reading is highly subjective, and cannot be understood monolithically. Rather, as Hall (1978) explains our experiences and positionings are the modalities in which we experience, struggle and oppose, historical phenomenon. Ultimately, Berger (2012,124) concludes that the photograph oscillates between two poles; "Two legibilities. Two illegibilities". So while photographs approach a language, their expressiveness can contain ambiguity of meaning. For this reason Berger describes this as a "half-language". The language of images offers the power to define not only our own experiences more precisely, but also the essential historical experience of our relation to the past (Berger 1977). In creating

space for illegibilities, quiet oppositions, and everyday experience Berger's method of "half language" is suitable to the task of exploring Black Atlantic subjectivity.

Resistance, Opposition, and Labour

Such methodological discussions trouble simple accounts of resistance, opposition, and labour. While drafting my methodology I hold close Stuart Hall's (1980, 174-175) quote: "difference of theoretical analysis and approach have real effects for the strategies of political transformation in such societies." This call occasions a consideration of what the absences in Gilroy and Robinson's analytics, prompting me to ask: What counts as "labour"? What counts as "cultural production"? Who produces the ideas and cultural artefacts that circulate in the Black Atlantic? Whose labour is required to reproduce the conditions of both exploitation, and resistance? A methodology appropriate to the task of framing the Black Atlantic in Canada then requires a broader application of the term labour, and a gendered analysis of diasporic movement.

These questions and debates represent some of the main projects of cultural studies and feminist theory. In particular how the study of lived experiences necessitates a redefinition of politics from its structural moorings toward sophisticated understandings of the political and cultural terrain of struggle that takes place in day-to-day life. In light of these critiques that aim to unsettle rigid flows of determination that often frame discussions of struggle and consciousness, my methodology adopts a more expansive definition of resistance attune to the everyday, unorganized, and spontaneous forms of struggle that emerge outside of established organizations and institutions. This conceptualization of resistance is supplied by Robin D.G Kelley's *Race Rebels* (1994) wherein he offers a more dynamic lens from which to recover and

study working-class struggle. Kelley argues (idem., 4): “A lot of black working people struggled and survived without direct links to the kinds of organizations that dominate historical accounts of African American or U.S. working-class resistance... I’m referring here to evasive, day-to-day strategies: from footdragging to sabotage, theft at the workplace to absenteeism, cursing to graffiti.” I believe this conceptual clearing subverts base-superstructure modes in two ways. Firstly, by focusing on quotidian forms of struggle that exist outside of (or in spite of) traditional or “mainstream” movements draws attention to how power operates innocuously—in ways that are more dynamic or complex than structural frameworks claim. In exploring the tactics people use to respond to existing power relations and the powerful we are able to unearth how these relations shape everyday experiences and social relationships. Secondly, rigid base-superstructure models position workers as passive products of economic exploitation and dislocation, and passive recipients of ideology, placed firmly in the receiving end of one-way flows of determination. However, attending to the cumulative effects of quotidian forms of struggle illuminates forms of agency that occur outside structural paradigms—resistances that occur in more subtle or nuanced forms (Ibid.). Kelley’s methodological model resists the dichotomization of “formal politics” and lived experiences or “the imaginary world of what is possible”, allowing issues of safety, pleasure, cultural expression, sexuality, and freedom of mobility to become sites of struggle (idem.,10). In connecting creative strategies of resistance Kelley’s treatment of struggle also refuses to privilege race, class or gender, and other formulaic interpretations that deny the complexity of lived experiences. Against essentialism this methodology favours the complexity of resistance, and the hybridity of identity. However, Kelley is cautious not to suggest that cultural expression and other leisure pursuits were merely

guises of political events, or that these practices are clear acts of resistance. Rather these practices should be characterized as *alternative* rather than *oppositional* to the servitude of wage labour. These forms of expressive culture were created for pleasure, recovery and recuperation, not merely to challenge or explain domination. Kelley's key contribution to my methodology is the recognition that everyday life and organized resistance are not two distinct "realms of opposition" to be studied separately, rather it is their mutually constituted relationship that makes up the history of working-class resistance (idem.,33).

Because these practices occur not only at work, but across the many social spaces that working-class people occupy, Kelley's methodology carries important spatial implications in that it broadens the geographic scope of terrains of struggle. So just as the Black Atlantic paradigm unseats borders, Kelley's methodology unseats the workplace as the sole location of both production and struggle. The family, and community become key institutions for sustaining solidarity and shaping consciousness. This reworking opens us possibilities for rethinking how capital-labour relations extend into the home and community, but also how these institutions shape the labour process.

Social Reproduction Theory

In attending to situated, class-based resistance my methodology is also drawn from the knowledge developed from feminist theories of social reproduction. Selma James (2012) and Andaiye (2020) among others break from an economic analysis of capitalist society that begins and ends in the factory and narrowly conflates all labour with wage labour. They draw our attention to the interactions between unpaid and paid labour, but also the life-sustaining role of caring labour. This intellectual tradition is therefore generative in framing the reproductive role

that the unpaid labour of vernacular photographs play in sustaining the transnational linkages of the Black Atlantic world.

The genealogy of social reproduction theory is imprinted by many schools of thought and struggles. It primarily draws from and complicates Marx's insights in *Capital* (chapter 23 on 'Simple Reproduction,') where he argues that "every social process of production is, at the same time, a process of reproduction" (1977, 711). Social reproduction theory enriches Marx's description of social relations by directing our attention to the ways in which the daily and generational reproduction of human life and human labour power is absolutely essential to tenacity of capitalism (Ferguson 2020). Social reproduction theory is also inscribed by the contributions of Althusser and Gramsci and the belief that this system of social relations is ideologically inscribed. An analysis of how these ideologies are put to work and co-constituted is supplied by Black feminist scholarship. Specifically, social reproduction theory interrogates how categories of oppression (gender, race, ableism) are coproduced in simultaneity with the production of surplus value. Gender, race, and sexuality are structurally relational to and shaped by capitalist production, and cannot be situated as "add-ons" to a deeper and more vital economic process.

Reconceptualizing Marx, the theory and struggle of social reproduction begins with unwaged women—housewives, mothers, carers—who produce and reproduce all the workers of the world. Broadly speaking James (2012) argues that these movements begin by uniting what capital has divided, positioning these struggles an essential component of working-class unity, and not an independent entity. Moving beyond the factory floor allows labour to encompass work produced within the home and the community, making visible hidden capitalist

exploitation and sources of surplus labour. This work also foregrounds the social relations required to sustain capitalist production, referring not only to the relations between classes but also the relations between individuals. These relations rely on the hierarchical organization: The existence of movements confirms that the hierarchy does not cease at the factory gates. Born from the need to subordinate the will of the working class to the will of capital, the hierarchy extends up to stratify managements and bureaucracies and down to stratify factories and farms and families. The whole society is involved in the division of labour and in this hierarchy.

What feminist political economy demonstrates is that though Marx described hierarchy as integral to this system, he does not tease out the effects of these hierarchies. Through her experiences with the Working People's Alliance in Grenada, Andaiye (Trotz 2020, xxiv) observed first-hand how class and gender within the movement "privilege[d] middle-class and male leadership over working-class and the women's leadership". This drove Andaiye's perspective away from understandings of power and hierarchy derived from "isms" toward understandings intimately embedded in real life. For Andaiye confronting hierarchical forms of organizing is only possible from a base that recognizes that such hierarchies exist, and reflects this by having sectors with different levels of power organize autonomously. Flowing from this methodology, my explorations of the social production and reproduction of labour map the experience of Black women—sketching out how hierarchies were formed and resisted within the photographic frame. Andaiye's (2020) work, and the social reproduction theory echo within the economic determinist vs. pluralist debates—while Marx describes the conditions in general, his theory of history does not supply the tools for understanding differences that precede and emerge from this system.

A commitment to the entanglement of patriarchal, racial, and capitalist dynamics shapes this theoretical space. Susan Ferguson (2020) describes the two methodological characteristics of this work: First, it is an *historical materialist* analysis; and, it then moves beyond describing what capitalism looks like and how it changes, through its *analysis* of the relationship between processes of producing human labour power, and processes of producing value. Ferguson addresses a fundamental gap in Marx's *Capital—the* very principle of the "self-activity of workers", in particular in opposition to capital. Selma James describes "working-class self activity": those many and various and often invisible things the working-class, broadly defined, does for itself in the quest for emancipation (2012, xii). What is produced and reproduced is not simply labour-power, but the labourers themselves, a historical being, placed within a network of social relations and social activities (Ibid.). Social reproduction theory foregrounds this abstracted and invisibilized labour. They assert that this labourer / producer is a gendered and racialized person, with ideas, history, social relations, skills, and culture. Grounded in context and the material conditions of people and communities, social reproduction scholarship and struggle interrogates and challenges the hierarchies of power within these social relations and their function within the broader system as a whole.

This conceptual clearing also allows us to broaden the scope of what is considered labour in a traditional sense. If social reproduction movements ask us to interrogate the hierarchies formed across spaces, then labour inevitably takes different forms than that which occurs on the factory floor. Proceeding from Andaiye's assertion of "justice in caring", labour must be re-contextualized to account for creative, embodied work, and oppositional tactics formed in struggle. For my purposes this conceptualization allows us to account for labour as

inclusive of cultural production, affective labour in all their attendant forms—including photographic practices. Gilroy (1993, 16) argues that cultural production "created a new topography of loyalty and identity in which the structures and presuppositions of the nation state have been left behind... These traditions have supported countercultures of modernity that touched the workers' movement but are not reducible to it". Despite these claims of the importance of affective labour and "ties of affiliation", Gilroy's view of labour and work is quite limited. Uncovering the relational tensions is generative: my methodology then draws from Gilroy and is attentive to the "structures of feeling" that underpin expressive cultures, but adapts his analytic to address, as Robinson points, how Atlantic economies formed the historical context for working-class consciousness. Centring feminist theories of hierarchy and co-constitutive struggles, the spaces that form this consciousness are broadened to address the multitudinous forms of care work. This conceptual clearing allows me to theorize a more expansive definition of resistance that accounts for cultural production and the labour required to produce it. Specifically, the set of photographic practices that I discuss in the next chapters become a form of caring labour that reproduces the connections and networks of kinship throughout this borderland region.

Vernacular/ Family Photographs

> "After all, the places of rest, relaxation, recreation, and restoration rarely maintained archives or recorded the everyday conversations and noises that filled bars, dance halls, blues clubs, barber shops, beauty salons, and street corners..." (Kelley 1994, 44)

Recuperating these histories often requires drawing from a different set of archival spaces and materials. Photographic archives have the ability to transform the visual imagination

of historical knowledge, not only through their presences but also by reading what they occlude (Thompson 2011). Therefore, this research positions vernacular, familial photography as a generative social practice for identifying new sites of historical inquiry. These objects render legible not only historical subjects and their signified practices of world-making, but they also make present forms of labour invisible within the photographic frame. In her "In Our Glory: Photography and Black Life" bell hooks (1998, 63) positions the family photograph as a powerful tool for place-making and documenting cultural memory: "Those pictorial genealogies... provided a necessary narrative, a way for us to enter history without words. The walls of pictures were indeed maps guiding us through diverse journeys". Driven by the discourse of visual ethnography there has been a body of interdisciplinary work that asserts that thinking about photographs as visual objects embedded in practices demands careful research. The push to recognize family photography as a social practice is responsive to the marginalization of vernacular photography as a whole. This dissertation follows the logic that if photographs are considered to be social objects, dismissing vernaculars is akin to an archaeologist overlooking pottery shards— crucial evidence in understanding the cultural practices that allow communities to claim presence is lost.

Despite constituting the vast majority of photographs taken, vernaculars have been marginalized by the medium's history in part because of their lack of aesthetic ambition— existing outside of a formalist art-historical narrative (Batchen 2000). Therefore, much of the critical literature on family photographs dismisses these objects based on their lack of visual innovation. As Rose (2016, 11) outlines in her review of such literature family photographs have

been described as: “redundant”; “predictable”; “cloying sentimental”; and, in perhaps the harshest terms “generally regarded as a great wasteland of trite and banal self-representation”.

The most critical response to family photographs comes from within the realm of feminist scholarship (Evans 2007; Chambers 2001; Spence 1986; Walkerdine 1990; Kuhn 2002), where it is argued that family albums in “their erasure of domestic labor, and the restricted emotional tones they convey, are complicit with women’s physical and emotional exploitation” (Rose 2016, 8). While these critiques cite the limited terrain of signifying possibility dictated by the tropes of the genre and the seemingly artificial representations of familial life, they overlook the fact that all photographic practices are a mediated form of communication rather than an objective truth. We must then reorient our understanding of family photography towards an understanding that though it is an ambivalent practice, nonetheless it may work as a powerful and complex resource in reconstructing historically marginalized subject positions and social relations.

This echoes an ethnographic approach to visual research in that we must understand that these images are not representations in the sense of a screen onto which meaning is projected, instead they are compressed performances (Pinney 2012). I position family photographs as generative texts for reading representational practices, but also for mapping the diverse forms of social reproduction and care work. These forms of labour are frequently described as “invisibilized”, and so this archive of family photography helps to visibilize these practices.

Methods

Archival Research

This dissertation merges a postpositivist approach (descriptive, explanatory representations) with hermaneutic methods that emphasize photographs as texts tied to institutions and agents (power relations) that define them and set them to work. Bridging these fields is responsive to the earlier methodological approaches that unite culturalist versus economic models of interpretation within the field of cultural studies. Since the focus of this dissertation is social relations of labour, I sought methods that are attentive to how photographic objects participate in these processes. John Tagg (1988, 37) argues that portraiture is "the production of significations in which contending social classes claim presence in representation, and the production of things which may be possessed and for which there is a socially defined demand". Following this materialist approach to photographic histories, my methods reflect the interpretive goals of: 1) examining how vernacular photographs represented cultures of resistance; and, 2) how their material components facilitated social relations that allowed these ideas to circulate.

To facilitate a postpositivist approach, the selection of photographs used for this study were divided in three categories based on photographic process: picture postcards; mounted albumen prints; and, gelatin silver prints. Organizing by process allows a more focused analysis attune to the physical particularities of each medium, as well as the conventions in staging associated with them. In keeping with the ethnographic work that family photograph performs, I position photographs as three-dimensional objects that exist temporally and spatially and thus in social and cultural experience. Thinking materially about photography translates the abstract

and representational into the elemental fact of real physical photographic objects—encompassing processes of intention, making, distributing, consuming, using, discarding and recycling (Edwards and Hart 2010). Taking up Edwards and Hart (2010), the materiality of photographs takes two broad and interrelated forms: the plasticity of the image, ie. its chemistry, paper support, toning, and surface; and presentational forms, its mounts, frames, and albums.

In order to make a photograph comprehensible, postpositivist photographic researchers believe that the image and its contextual information contain data such as where, how, by whom, when, and why the images were produced. They also believe this information can be used to infer embedded representations within the images (Margolis and Rowe 2011). Following these roadmaps for research I broadly adapted Jeremy Rowe's (2002) three-part strategy for photo research:

1) Evidence—objective, factual, documentary information provided by the photograph or its context. This is its provenance, or context (for example, format, content within the photograph, attribution to photographic studio based on imprint or printed identification from the period, etc.); the focus is on primary source information.

2) Interpretation—where we have little documentation and must rely on deductions built on circumstantial evidence and context that can be clearly verified to and by others. Interpretation builds on the factual evidence with explanatory or derived information that can be clearly verified to and by others (for example, dating from format or image content, contextual comparisons with companion or other known images, verified period or more recent written identification, etc.); includes secondary source material.

3) Speculation—subjective inferences not necessarily based on evidence provided by the photograph. It is the information that can augment the factual information that may range from attribution by later generations based on family legends, to hearsay or creative interpretation to 'leaps of faith' based on desire to fit the image into a specific hypothesis or intellectual framework without sufficient factual basis.

Following the first step, while processing the McCurdy fonds I noted: date; photographic process; caption; condition of object; identifiable subjects or landmarks; geographic location; and, organization within the fonds. Where this data was missing or where there were interpretive challenges I drew from histories of photographic processes to identify mediums or consulted the small caches of textual documents within each archival folder. This research was supplemented with vital records and census data, as well as reports from the local newspaper the *Amherstburg Echo* from the late nineteenth century until the 1930s.

An emphasis on the iconic and symbolic life of photographs is the basis that the materialist approach insists on for meaning—photographs are defined by their social and cultural contexts and, as a result, can never be either ethically or aesthetically neutral. I am guided by Hall (1984, 158): "What 'signified' is not the photographic text in isolation but the text, caught in the network of the chains of signification which overprint it, its inscription into the currency of other discourses, its intcrtextuality". Photographs belong to a distinct moment, summoning up complex historical iconography and elaborate codes of presentation that reflect the socio-historical context from which they exist. In delineating the discourses or composite of signs gathered within the photographic frame, I coded each image with both geographic information but also thematically into categories such as: *care work; kinship; industrial labour;*

leisure and play; and, community organizing. In doing so I was able to make sense of the ideological existence of each photographic object and their relationship to social practices.

Census Data

In order to discern the nature of labour across within Amherstburg, I studied the occupational information of the Black population in Amherstburg taken from the manuscript census rolls from 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911 and 1921. Because this data is notoriously fraught with administrative errors, this information was used to trace broader trends, rather than offer a complete picture. Enumerators were inconsistent in how they recorded information in a variety of areas, including occupations: for instance, translation issues were also compounded by nature of the fact that enumerations were handwritten, and then often later rewritten and revised. In respect to race, in the censuses I consulted, subjects were asked to identify their "ethnic origins." For my purposes I identified all those who claimed "African" origins in the nominal roll. However, "Black" individuals were often assigned the race of their fathers, and there is evidence that African Americans listed "American" as their origin. The sometimes transient nature of mariners's lives—moving between the Northern Canadian shores of Lake Erie, and the Southern American shores—further compounds issues of reliability. In general data on women's work is often unrecorded. In cases where women worked multiple jobs, only one was recorded on the nominal roll. The labour of Black women was concentrated into a few low paying jobs: charwomen, laundress, labourers, seamstresses, and servants. Compared to their white counterparts their job opportunities were narrower, and their remuneration much lower. Despite the limitations associated with the use of nineteenth century census data, broadly speaking, it proved invaluable in situating both the marine economy within Amherstburg, and

theorizing the production and reproduction necessary for labour power.

Conclusion

The individuals and communities the Alvin D. McCurdy fonds represents are embodied as a living presence in this material, raising significant ethical questions about my role as an archival researcher. Andaiye (2000, 93) argues that struggle requires "a digging and willingness to dig" into one's experience as oppressor and oppressed. At this point it is necessary to recognize my position as an outsider of these histories. As a mixed-race person, my position has been subsidized by white supremacy (Lipsitz 1995). While I do not embrace the white spatial imaginary, I continue to work to understand the benefits and privileges I continue to accrue from past and ongoing discrimination (Ibid.). Mckee and Porter (2012) argue that a part of honouring the persons in the archive is to consult with as many other stakeholders as possible so as to build as detailed and layered a perspective as possible. Practically this means consulting with others, asking questions, and listening carefully and respectfully to a variety of interested parties. In order to facilitate ethical decision making in the research process, they refer to an Afrafeminist methodology for which "attention to ethical action" is one of the four "sites of critical regard". They believe the research process is both linear and recursive: the research process proceeds linearly from initial project conception to project design to data collection and analysis through to write-up and presentation of results; and it is also recursive as researchers continually look ahead and anticipate questions and issues that may arise, and as they move through a project, they also continually look backward to rethink and maybe even revisit and revise earlier stages (Ibid.). In keeping with this methodology I plan to share my research and present my findings to

the Essex County Black Historical Research Society, Ontario Black History Association and the Amherstburg Freedom Museum, but also create a document for the Archives of Ontario that can be used to update or better contextualize records within the Alvin D. McCurdy fonds.

This chapter grappled with multiple disciplinary tools in order to illuminate the ways in which discourses of race, gender and the political dimensions of expressive culture are implemented and signified within vernacular photography. My methodology engages with the tensions between approaches that centre political economy versus those that foreground cultural production. This dissertation works to bridge this divide by positioning cultural production as a form of labour that carries with it oppositional ideas, and philosophies. In my next chapter I analyze the vernacular photographs representing the community of the Marble Village. Foregrounding issues of mapping and unmapping, I argue that vernacular photographs are caught up in a complex web of life-sustaining, and capital sustaining systems —simultaneously working within and against their defining logics. In doing so these photographs help us to map the spatial dimensions of the Black Atlantic in Essex County, and the labour that produces this world.

Chapter Three: Producing a Fluid Frontier: The Circulation of Cabinet Card Photographs

> "The round centre-table in my grandmother's living-room in a tiny country village in Old Harbour in rural Jamaica was crammed with them; one formal pose (my grandfather, resplendent in his gold watch-chain and three-piece suit) jostling for a place behind another (my wistful fading great-grandmother, grey hair in a bun, with a Victorian tortoiseshell comb resolutely stuck through it). Our family history was constructed through these representations." (Hall 1984, 257)

Introduction

In this chapter I position vernacular cabinet card photographs as a key site from which to explore how specific and ambivalent Black subjectivity is emerging in relation to space and the formation of the liberal nation-state. I argue that the movements of Black families back and forth across the fluid frontier acts as a circuit, exceeding the binary of departure and destination. The photographs within the family folders of the McCurdy fonds represent a particular instance of a much more common pattern of circular migration in the Great Lakes region. Chiefly, the family folders offer key insights into the transnational character of local life in Amherstburg. Of the 1118 vernacular photographs of local families studied for this research roughly 200 had their geographic location clearly indicated by stamps, studio locations or captions. The location breakdown is as follows: Essex County (Amherstburg; Anderdon) (43%); United States (32%); Canada (outside of Essex County) (15%); International (Germany; Honduras; England) (5%); and on Lake Erie (4%). This data connects with broader trends in intercontinental kinship networks noted by Faires and Bukowczyk (2005), who argue that these movements were a result of the changing availability of work opportunities in the cities ringing Lake Erie. My research demonstrates that the circulation of people and photographic objects sustained local ties of kinship and affiliation (43%), almost as much as ties across the border (32%). Photographs

move across borders because people do, which challenges the coherence of narrow nationalist perspectives of not only photography's history but also frameworks that foreground Canada as "terminus". The conclusions Gilroy (1993) draws about musical recordings in the Black Atlantic world can then be applied to the photographic object: they enacted ties of affiliation and affect which articulated the discontinuous histories of Black communities. Where census data fails to encapsulate later migrations and circuitous movements in the region, the circulation of cabinet cards—like the record and musical performance—uncovers "a new topography of loyalty and identity" in which the structures and presuppositions of the nation state have been left behind because they are seen to be outmoded (Ibid.).

This chapter argues that beyond challenging nationalistic paradigms the staging, captioning, circulation and display of vernacular cabinet card photographs within this region formed what Clyde Woods (2007) describes as Black geographic knowledge. Responding to inadequate understandings of the spatial histories emphasized within the discipline of human geography, Black Geographies offers a methodological curative. For instance, Woods positions blues as a knowledge system indigenous to the Southern United States that can be understood through an "ever-expanding" variety of cultural, political and social traditions. As such, it has been defined as a form of entertainment, an ontology, musical genre, and an aesthetic movement (Ibid.). Woods traces the genealogy of this tradition by arguing that working-class African Americans in nineteenth century rural southern states developed an approach to equitable sustainable development informed by their own philosophical tradition. Like proponents of Black Atlanticism, the blues philosophy was fostered by Black musicians who circled the globe repeatedly—uniting working-class communities across different spatial scales. The core of this

tradition revolves around proceeding from a particular social position—those marginalized by the plantocracy based on "their culture, race, class, gender and regional position" (idem., 74). Black Geographies enables these subjects to code their experiences and "reach beyond enforced boundaries in order to unite with other demonized communities—the 'wretched' of the earth" (idem., 75). In this way Black Geographies not only unsettle but also *produce* an alternative epistemology. This approach unites Woods' blues epistemology with the broader field of Black Geographies. In her discussion of Black geographies in Canada McKittrick writes (2006, 98): "The geographies of black Canada... are not simply de-centering colonial and national geographies; rather these black geographies cite a spatial terrain that makes available a place to produce varied responses to geographic domination". In keeping with this approach, this chapter focuses on local knowledges and affective loyalties formed within the Great Lakes borderlands through the vernacular photograph in the context of two racial projects: border formation, and the visual culture of minstrelsy. In essence the Black Atlantic is a supranational mapping of a vast Black Geography which maps the material and imagined spatiality of diasporic politics. For Gilroy what defines and sustains this spatiality and the vitality of Black Atlantic cultural production is the circulation of ideas and the movement of key cultural and political artifacts. Extending this model to the Detroit River borderlands, I position the production and circulation of cabinet cards photographs as a mode of transnational communication capable of disclosing Black geographic knowledge—an integral form Black Atlantic cultural production. Because the Black Atlantic world is also concerned with structures of feeling I argue that the circulation of and performances within the family photograph and the affective labour they require merits close examination.

The performative function of the early photographic portrait has been the subject of scholarly treatment for decades. Patented in 1854 by A.A.E Disderi the *carte-de-visite* and its later iteration the cabinet card had an important social and cultural influence. Its modest cost (from fifty cents to ten dollars) meant that the medium could accommodate middle- and lower-middle class subjects as well as members of the bourgeoisie. Photo-historians argue that the use of props, backdrops and pose in staging a portrait articulates the personal and social aspirations of the sitter, confirming their membership in the middle-class body politic. The cultural significance of the cabinet card is its enfranchisement of a wider constituency into the realm of photographic portraiture because it is relatively inexpensive in comparison to previous photographic portrait formats (Hacking 2010). The newfound accessibility of portraiture caused a rise not only in formal studios but also in booths and open-air businesses. With few exceptions these studios were fashioned as ready-made Victorian drawing rooms, complete with stately parlour furniture creating a mock-domestic scene. In keeping with this aesthetic, sitters typically dressed in an ordinary afternoon visiting outfit – that which would have been worn for daytime social occasions. This attire denoted an association with middle-class values, which signalled a subject's belonging to the privileged class of industrious settlers. The level of standardization and determined range of representations that this aesthetic produced contributed to what scholars have called the "repetitive visual language of the cabinet card" (Batchen 2005). Geoffrey Batchen (2005) suggests that cabinet card photographs actually functioned through their derivative nature, offering a visual register of emerging notions of equality in citizenship for the bourgeois body politic which emerged in the nineteenth century. As mobile forms of communication with a stable visual vocabulary the *carte-de-visite* and cabinet card are uniquely

positioned to disclose transnational networks, and the performance of subjectivities. In such context their value is two-fold: cabinet cards functioned as a mobile form of communication designed to sustain disparate networks of affiliation; and, cabinet cards offered a site from which to stage performances of personal and collective representation, an embodiment of the sender. They are performances of normativity and respectability that have particular meanings when members of aggrieved groups deploy them.

The aspirational function of the cabinet card is repeated in various degrees throughout histories of the medium. The portrait was more than just a record of physical likeness, it was intended to reveal the moral character or "permanent nature" of a subject rather than their fleeting appearance (McCauley 1988, 138). Moreover the portrait formed a sign whose purpose was both the description of an individual and the inscription of a social identity. As John Tagg (1988) explains: the production of portraits is at once the production of contending social classes claim presence in representation, and the production of things which may be possessed and for which there is a socially defined demand. The cabinet card portrait is therefore a performative and participatory object; through adherence to genre conventions the photographer and subject collaborate to inflect the representation with socially constructed understandings of middle-class gentility and self-reliance.

I argue that the circulation and preservation of cabinet cards in the Great Lakes borderlands helped to produce Black geographic knowledge within the problem space of border formation and the visual culture of minstrelsy. I chart the spatialization of these projects through the story of three families: the Davis', the Goodriches, and the Stokes. Alongside the photographic archive, I pieced together the genealogies and journeys of these families by

consulting the decennial censuses from 1851 to 1921, and birth and death registries of Canada and the United States, local newspapers including the *Amherstburg Echo,* and oral histories compiled by the Amherstburg Freedom Museum. This chapter unfolds in three parts. Against imperial geographies and border formation projects this section is concerned with how photographs of the Davis family helped to produce the idea of the fluid frontier and a distinctive transnational regionality that fed into the Black Atlantic world. Fitting into the larger Black Atlantic system, the movements made visible through the Davis family folder form a webbed network that challenge "tidy flows of cultural output" (Gilroy 1993, 29). Against the coterminous visual culture of minstrelsy, the Davis' portraits embody forms of self- and collective representation analogous to the Black Atlantic autobiographical traditions of formerly enslaved individuals. The Goodrich family cabinet cards offer reflections on the plural nature of modernity, its variances, ambivalences and discontinuities. Of particular interest is how doubleness is enacted in the photographic frame, and what this doubleness offers in unsteadying the conventions, assumptions, and aesthetic rules which distinguish and periodize modernity. The social-spatial and temporal dynamics and exigencies of migration are analyzed within the photographic frame as a site to contemplate the meaning of double consciousness. Dealing with captions on the verso of photographs sent to a local woman named Mae Stokes, I analyze the work of performing, producing, and displaying these objects as a form of gendered labour and care work that created sustainable practices of affiliation against the enclosures brought on by the formation of racialized space. In each section I map how these histories of the kinship and friendship can be framed materially and imaginatively both through and beyond imperial projects like the nation.

The Davis Family: Fluidity and Black Atlantic Representation

AMHERSTBURG, 1913—Bertha Gertrude Davis poses at the edge of her parents' property on Sandwich Street in Amherstburg in 1913 (Figure 10). The sun filters through the maples that border the Davis' gable-front house giving the scene a soft glow. With her arms akimbo—one hand on her hip and the other on the picket-fence—Bertha stands confidently in a classic Edwardian period day outfit of pressed blouse and gored skirt with large plumes and floral pieces adorning a wide-brimmed hat.

Flipping this photograph over reveals it to be a postcard. However instead of a postmark and a personalized message, the verso contains only Alvin D. McCurdy's caption: "Bertha Davis in front of her mother and fathers [sic] home on Sandwich St. A'burg". The black and brown markings seem to be leftover paper transferred from the album it was likely contained within. This photograph was printed on pre-made photographic postcard paper, meaning that this object was designed to move. Despite this, all material indications—absence of printed address or postage stamps—lead us to conclude that it remained close to its place of production.

The compositional structure of this photographs is such that both Bertha and the entire front of her home are fully rendered within the frame, suggesting that home was just as much a subject as Bertha. The house front was a popular setting for staging photographs in the early twentieth century. Marianne Hirsch (1997, 48) commenting on this thematic argues that: "Entire houses, house fronts, and stoops in varying scales and proportion, show us the family's territory, symbolic of its place in the world." Just as backdrops used in commercial portrait studios contribute to the meanings produced in photographic space, within *plein air* vernacular photographs the background plays an equally important role in elevating and animating its

subjects. The house front functions within these snapshots as a declaration of property, a suggestion of spatial mastery.

Bertha's posture and dress certainly support such a reading. Given Amherstburg's place within the mythology of the Underground Railroad one might conclude that this photograph and those like it within the fonds were meant to suggest rootedness, stasis, or settlement. This reading sits nicely within histories that confirm Canada as a "finished emancipatory location". However when properly situated within its archival context and framed within the transnational histories from which it emerges, this photograph become a contradictory object.



FIGURE 10: "Bertha Davis in front of her mother and fathers home on Sandwich St. A'burg" 1913. Albumen Print.

The Davis family history was shaped by the exigencies of migration back and forth over the Detroit River. Opening up the Davis family file within the McCurdy fonds reveals cabinet card portraits stamped by studios in Ontario as well as Michigan. One such example is a portrait of Bertha Davis taken at the Imrie Photography studio in Detroit, which was operational from 1887 to 1910 (Figure 11). Davis, of the prominent Essex County family, was born in 1877 and was the granddaughter of James

Davis Sr., a man born into slavery in Oldtown, Virginia on March 3rd, 1818. Davis Sr.'s portrait was taken across the Detroit River at the studio of W. W Davidson in Amherstburg (Figure 12). Davis Sr. escaped enslavement in 1849 and during the following year, made the journey back to Virginia to rescue his family from the plantation where they remained following his escape. Davis Sr. and his family arrived in Amherstburg 1850, and after purchasing a plot of land in the county, he remained there for the rest of his life. With the hope of building a better life in Essex County, Davis Sr., along with other parents in Amherstburg hired a private teacher to instruct local children, establishing what would become the first school in the area. His son, Delos Rogest Davis—Bertha's father—would go on to become not only the third Black lawyer in Canada, but also the first Underground Railroad freedom seeker to become a lawyer in Canada. Fred Homer Alphonso Davis, the son of Delos, followed in his father's footsteps and studied Law at Osgoode Hall (Figure 13). Fred Homer graduated in 1900 and became the second Black lawyer to be called to the Ontario bar. He practiced law alongside his father in Amherstburg; the law firm of Davis and Davis was located on Gore Street in Amherstburg but also had offices in Windsor (Amherstburg Freedom Museum, 2019) (Figure 14). Delos' sister Harriet married Griffith Booth, who famously escaped a violent mob of white settlers who tried to attack him for



FIGURE 11: Bertha Davis, ca. 1897. Detroit. Cabinet Card Photograph.

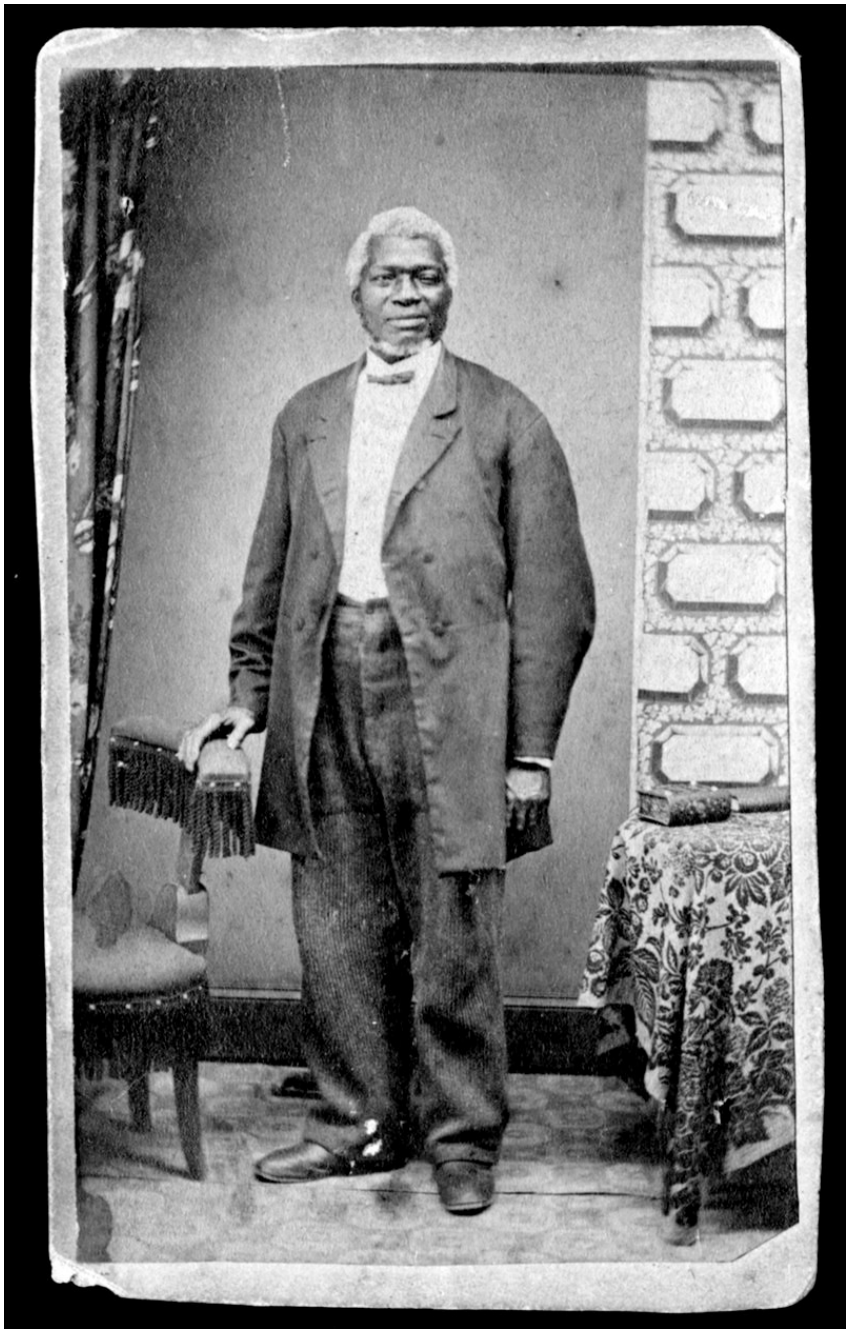


FIGURE 12: James Davis Sr., ca. 1890. Amherstburg. Cabinet Card Photograph.

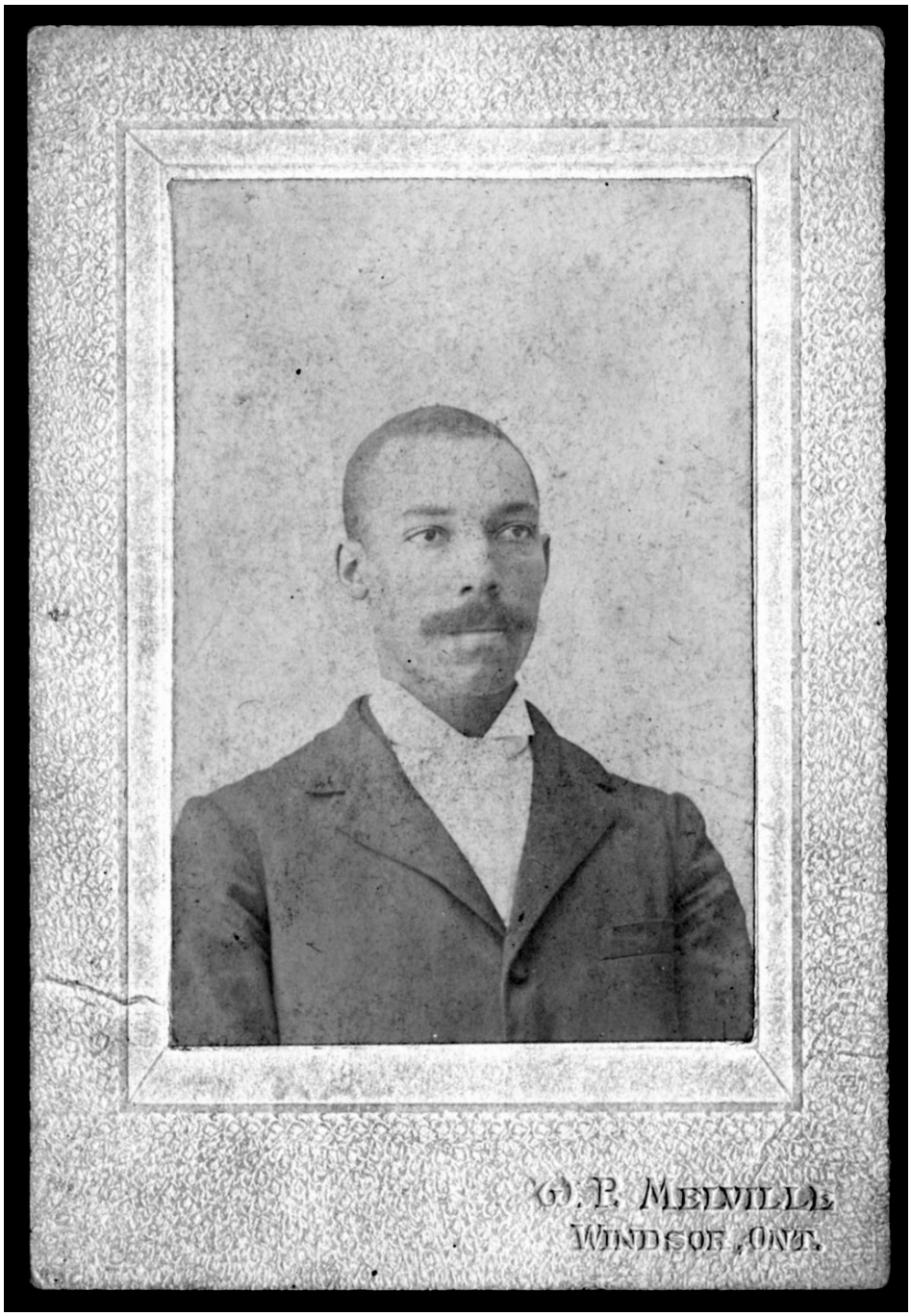


FIGURE 13: Fred H.A. Davis, ca. 1900. Windsor. Cabinet Card Photograph.



FIGURE 14: Frederick H. A. Davis' law office, 1914. Gelatin Silver Print.

his role in helping enslaved people escape north via the Underground Railroad. After meeting in Essex County, Harriet and Griffith eventually settled in Kalamazoo Michigan (Ibid.). Like many families on the borderlands the Davis' is a history of multiple settlements and migrations beginning with Davis Sr's initial escape to freedom, and ending with migrations across the "fluid frontier" to the newly industrialized metropoles of Michigan.

The Davis family history initiates a change in our reading of Bertha Davis' postcard and complicates the narrative function of Canada as a finished emancipatory location or promised land. The photographs within family folders like the Davis' attests to the transnational textures of life in the borderlands visualizing family bonds against disparate geographies and

temporalities, and unsettling our sense of bounded national histories. Read together this collection of photographs captures the formation of Black Geographies in this region, organized not from empirical data, but through portraiture and imaginative geographies. For example, while Bertha appears on the Canadian census for 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911 (she died in 1915) there is no record of her visits to Detroit. The "hard" data offers no insight into how transnational relationships were sustained, or how affective labour supported the development of this borderland region.

Similar to the portrait of her taken in front of her parent's home, in her studio portrait Bertha dons an elaborate hat with ribboned and feathered trimmings (Figure 11). Matching this formality is her choice of a walking suit with a high-collared blouse, a fashionable day outfit of the era that signalled moral rectitude. She wears a stern expression, and her head and shoulders take up most of the compositional frame of this—newly fashionable—bust pose. Contained tightly in an oval vignette there is a poignant discrepancy between this portrait of Bertha and the one staged outdoors; she is removed from space. The large size of the cabinet photograph, in addition to a new vogue of bust poses, encouraged photographers and later viewers to focus on the appearance of an individual's face and expression, on what identified them as an individual, more than the earlier *cartes* had done (Smith 2005). Ann McCauley (1988) argues that one of the unexpected consequences of the "carte mania" or the rise in popularity in cabinet card portraiture was a renewed interest in physiognomy, or the interpretation of facial features, but also in corporeal expression or body language. The viewer is directed to Bertha's use of iconography, particularly her fashionable costume, and her slightly turned head. Illuminated by daylight, the standard source of lighting in the era, Bertha is positioned at a slight angle to the

camera, her shoulders filling the photographic frame. Her gaze is directed just off to the side of the photographic frame, she wears a lofty gaze of contemplation.

Though staged differently James Davis Sr.'s (Figure 12) portrait also conforms to the traditions of the cabinet card era. In the early years of the medium's history the full length portrait was the preferred pose. James Davis Sr. is dressed in his Sunday best and stands in a ready-made parlour room. Framed by drapery and a faux wallpapered partition, he looks off to his left and stands in a three-quarter pose leaning slightly on a fringed chair, the right side of the frame includes a book perched on an elaborately patterned table cloth. The inclusion of the entire body within the photographic frame borrowed from the iconography of portrait painting where it became an expression of the aspirations of the upwardly mobile bourgeoisie (idem., 35). This trend was in turn inspired by earlier representations of holy figures and adopted to wealthy and powerful patrons. In early *carte-de-visite* portraits the full-length poses were typically reserved for high-ranking officials and celebrities and were seen as inappropriate for members of the "lower classes". However with the "democratization" of portraiture the imaging practices of the upper classes soon became the standard by which all portraits were staged. For James Davis Sr., a man who escaped enslavement his performance is inflected by a possessive individualism and propriety. James wears a smile, but is imposing in his tall stature and rigid stance, commandeering a strategic narration that foregrounds his control over the space. The aspirational or performative aspects of the cabinet card functions through its formulaic scripts of middle class values.

Bertha and James Davis Sr.'s portraits should not be read as photographic texts in isolation, but rather caught in network of the chains of signification which overprint them. These

photographs were produced in a contested visual culture shaped by the predominant racial formation projects within Canada but also the United States and the British empire more broadly. Specifically, they were staged during the heyday of Blackface minstrelsy. Speaking to the cultural landscape of the United States, Eric Lott (1992, 23) describes minstrelsy as the first public or institutional acknowledgement by whites of Black culture by way of an efficient expropriation of the cultural commodity of "Blackness". These performances thus staged and constructed racial boundaries in response to "small but significant crimes against ideas of racial demarcation" (Ibid.). The maintenance of this racial economy through the minstrel performance was also underwritten by white fascination with Black men. This language aimed to reinforce a racial structure whose ideological and psychological precarity required boundaries to continuously be staged (idem., 27). Though not as ubiquitous as the tradition in the United States, there was a significant visual culture of Blackface minstrel shows in Canada during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. While minstrelsy was a theatrical form in the United States that purported to represent African Americans during the plantocracy it gained widespread popularity in Canada. Cheryl Thompson (2019) argues that Canada's introduction to blackface minstrelsy occurred not only through traveling circuses, troupes and vaudeville acts from the United States, but also in localized forms. Digitized copies of the *Amherstburg Echo* confirm that a local minstrel troupe named Minstrel Flashes! was active in Amherstburg from the late 1870s until the 1940s. For most of its history this troupe was sponsored by the Fort Malden Canadian Legion and a large number of Amherstburg businesses and religious organizations (*Amherstburg Echo,* January 31, 1879). Amherstburg hosted its first minstrel show in 1879 as part of the community's annual St. Patrick's Day celebration. The event is described

in the March 21, 1879 issue of the *Amherstburg Echo*: "Maxime Coshway [sic] gave an exceedingly good Banjo Solo and comic negro minstrel performance which was most loudly applauded and encored". A marriage license confirms that Maxim Cushway lived in Essex County and worked locally as a carpenter (Ontario Marriages, 1869-1927). All-female iterations of blackface minstrel shows were also routinely organized and performed in Amherstburg, as well as performances by larger traveling troupes like Butler & Kenny. Reports in the *Amherstburg Echo* indicate that these performances occurred regularly and were well attended. Though white actors primarily depicted Black characters, these local minstrel shows also portrayed Irish characters as part of their act. Based on reports in the *Echo* the standard repertoire of local minstrelsy largely followed the scripts of their counterparts in the United States, with Black and Irish characters depicted as helpless servants and simpletons making comical errors (*Amherstburg Echo,* March 21 1879).

These genre conventions speak to the role of visual culture in trafficking notions of Western imperialism. Cheryl Thompson (2019, 110) argues that "the fact that minstrelsy found a colonial audience in other parts of the world speaks to the power of empire". Minstrelsy and its popularity throughout North America across the British empire therefore became a cultural expression of Western imperialism that circulated ideas of racial difference around the world. In Canada, both spheres of influence from the United States and Britain played a role in shaping the repertoire of minstrelsy; it nourished racial differences based on Canadian nativist and Anglo-Saxon superiority, but also Southern racial ideology. Minstrelsy's ideological origins can be traced to nineteenth century anthropological or colonial ordering. Proliferating in direct relation to colonial expansion, conventional anthropology was so visually oriented that the

ability to "visualize" a culture or society almost becomes synonymous for understanding it (Mirzeoff 2002, 282). This idea rested on the Enlightenment conception of the primacy of observational science and John Locke's system of "visualism" which argues that "The perception of the mind [is] most aptly explained by words relating to the sight" (Ibid.). Put in service of nineteenth century anthropological or colonial ordering, visual culture reinforced the three central tenants of what Timothy Mitchell (1998) calls "Orientalist reality": essentialism (unchanging racial and cultural essences); otherness (these essences as polar opposites to the West); and absence (of movement, reason, order and meaning). In their attempt to destroy the singular and embodied colonial subject, the practices of minstrelsy employed a visual paradigm that reinforced Mitchell's trio of tenants. These performances attest to how the visual culture of imperialism is a powerful site from which narratives of racial belonging are produced and resonate in evolving forms. Returning to Gilroy (1993), minstrelsy affirms his argument that the ineffable terrors of slavery were kept alive in ritualized social forms—that its residual traces still contribute to historical memories at the core of Afro-Atlantic cultural creation.

Against these memories of slavery and the local backdrop of minstrelsy, control of self-representation becomes a key sight of subject formation. Though these narratives exceed the framing of these portraits, they allow the performative aspects of portraiture to resonate more deeply. In their seriality, lack of spontaneity and artifice the Davis studio portraits might be read as banal enactments of middle-class culture. E.P. Thompson argues in *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) that as a unifying identity, class was best understood as a shared perception rather than an entirely economic definition. For instance, the cultivated asymmetries of aristocratic posture, or the third quarter pose, countered the rigid frontality which signified

the bluntness of a culturally unsophisticated class. Dress was a significant signifier of the discursive formations of class in this period, as C. Breward (1999, 55) explains, "fashionable ideals promoted by the clothing trade shared a common language with more imaginative texts, in which the identification and assessment of urban 'types' through visual coding was of central importance". Coming up against these discourses is the notion of the Atlantic as a system of cultural exchange, or the idea that cultures are not hermetically sealed off from one another. Gilroy's argument that Britain's Black settler communities have forged a compound culture from disparate cultures, moving beyond the binary opposition between national and diasporic perspectives, could be applied the Davis portraits. The conceptual clearing brought on by Gilroy's work allows us to look at the vernacular photography as a practice that enabled control of self-representation, while also referring to a discursive system with a limited terrain of signifying practices. In this sense these sitters are agential subjects—not outside the realm of politics but reworking and re-inscribing our ideas about culture and nation.

These practices align with readings of postcolonial ambivalence, or the idea that subversion is not necessarily an oppositional act of political intention, nor is it the simple negation or the exclusion of the "content" of another culture, as difference once perceived, but the effect of an ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate signs of cultural difference (Bhabha 1997). Applying this interpretation to the Davis family folder we can read their portraits beyond the scope of respectability—as a series of practices that visualize a performative mimicry. Within the conflictual cultural landscape of the Black Atlantic the colonial desire for stasis and fixity and its counterculture of fluidity and hybridity, mimicry represents "an *ironic* compromise" (idem., 153). Writing in the context of the

colonial literary canon, Bhabha writes: "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as *a subject of a difference that is almost the same*, but not quite. Which is to say that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (Ibid.). The figure of the mimic is located within the incommensurability of empire and nation as naturalized entities. Just as minstrelsy was predicated on the maintenance of racial hierarchies through the performance of a derogatory slippage, within the photographic portrait ambivalence can be made subversive through a reversal of this logic. Where minstrelsy is about solidifying a racial economy by naturalizing difference through parody, the photographic encounter *loosens* or mocks the so-called monumentality of colonial authority. The photographic language of nation (a colonial structure *par excellence*) visualized through the performance of middle-class values might then be interpreted not as move toward respectability, but through a produced ambivalence that undermines the split between a nation-state's subjects and its Others. In its elusiveness and evasiveness the cabinet card becomes an object of strategic confusion, rather than a document that can placed neatly within the existing racial order.

In challenging representational scripts of national discourses of belonging and difference, the portrait is an act of subversive self-fashioning. These representational practices dovetail with another founding motif of Black Atlantic culture Gilroy (1993, 69) describes in his account of abolitionist autobiography: "they express in the most powerful way a tradition of writing in which autobiography becomes an act or process of simultaneous self-creation and self-emancipation." The cultural production of diasporic subjects becomes a powerful site of strategic self-fashioning. Both Bertha and James Sr., display a high level of personal

involvement in developing their appearance—through fashion, props and pose. For Gilroy (Ibid.), the presentation, and in our case representation, of a public persona "thus becomes a founding motif within the expressive culture of the African diaspora." Despite their being staged in a mock domestic scene, the cabinet card very much has a public life; it is produced in a private studio, it adheres to publicly defined visual codes, and it lives within a public archive. According to Ariella Azoulay (2008), photography allows photographers and subjects to forge a civil contract of mutual recognition in which citizenship is claimed and authorized through participation in a photographic encounter, rather than by the dictates of the state. Given his life history, this resonates more deeply in the case of James Sr., and points to a key tension that Gilroy addresses within the autobiographical tradition. Gilroy (1993, 69) describes: "this new discursive economy emerges with the refusal to subordinate the particularity of the slave experience to the totalizing power of universal reason held exclusively by white hands, pens, or publishing houses." Because of this positioning Gilroy (Ibid.) describes the abolitionist autobiography as "dissident space within the bourgeoisie public sphere." Similarly Davis Sr.'s photographic encounter occurs in a white space, likely taken by W.W. Davidson the white proprietor of the local photography studio. However Davis Sr., like all patrons, had a high level of control in his representation. In this way the photographic studio, like the publishing house is a contradictory space.

What allows Gilroy to link autobiographical writing and the project of self-liberation is the fact that the authority and autonomy of the abolitionist autobiography emerges from the "deliberately personal tone of this history" (70). Citing Frederick Douglass in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) Gilroy (1993, 70) argues: "its fundamental importance lies in

the clarity of its announcement that truth to the self takes priority over what the reader may think is acceptable or appropriate to introduce into an abolitionist discourse". Gilroy describes the role of the audience, and forms an analysis applicable to the cabinet card portrait; regardless of the reader or viewer, in a contested visual culture what emerges as oppositional is the process or performance of self-creation. These forms of self-creation are then laden with claims of truth and reason—they join a moral and political gesture to an act of cultural creation and affirmation.

Frederick Douglass' writing on photography is instructive. In particular, his speeches from the period of 1859 to 1865 "The Age of Pictures", "Lecture in Pictures", "Pictures and Progress", and "Life Pictures" reflect on the social and epistemological potential of photography. Douglass stressed that photography's power was in its ability to empirically demonstrate the humanity of Africans—a powerful tool that for him was a symbol of human progress. In his "Pictures and Progress" Douglass explains: "It is evident that the great cheapness, and universality of pictures, must exert a powerful though silent influence, upon the ideas and sentiment of [the time] present [and] future generations" (as cited in Wexler 2012, 8). While Douglass' contemporaries were writing about photography's ability to reflect and cement existing social relations, he saw photography as an agent of radical social change (Ibid.). In this way Douglass' writing on photography demonstrates his contribution to theories of modernity. So while science was used to legitimate and justify racial terror, Douglass believed that empiricism and scientific progress would be the mechanisms that would put an end to the institutions of racism, and slavery. In Douglass' mind photography would address the problem of "moral stagnation… and dissolve the granite barriers of arbitrary power, bring the world into peace and unity, and at last crown the world with just[ice], Liberty, and brotherly kindness"

(idem., 24). Douglass' convictions about photography are illustrated best in the many portraits he commissioned throughout his lifetime. Douglass exploited portrait photography to form a specific public identity. Douglass believed projecting an image of veracity and respectability was the foundation upon which any person could claim citizenship and the protective natural rights attached to that legal designation (Hill 2012). Ginger Hill (2012) links Douglass' attitudes toward portraiture to eighteenth century ideas about liberal citizenship; mainly that political rights can only be claimed by the autonomous, self-contained citizen, whose status relies upon property ownership, self-sovereignty, and the law. In the context of racial slavery Blackness was considered irreconcilable with self restraint— and therefore ineligible for full claims to humanity and the protections of citizenship. For Douglass the portrait was a site where this self-containment could be performed, establishing subjects as worthy of political recognition. In keeping with this conviction, in all of the portraits Douglass sat for during his lifetime, he is dressed in gentlemanly fashion, and appears stoic and stately—a self-fashioned reconstruction of Black identity and a public document of citizenship. Similar arguments about the aspirational quality of vernacular photography, for Douglass portraiture was a means to project the status he wished to be granted in his public life.

Like the autobiography, portrait photography is in a unique position to recast and revise notions of liberal-humanist subjectivity. Douglass' "Self-Made Man" discusses the merits of individualism: "self-made men...[sic] are entitled to a certain measure of respect for their success and for proving to the world the grandest possibilities of human nature, of whatever variety of race or color." This success is thus granted to an autonomous, self-possessed individual, a person that relies on property ownership, self-sovereignty, and the laws of "man".

However this overlooks the racial logic of liberal philosophy, namely that conceptions of the individual subject were not only class-based, but also racialized, and gendered. Charles Mill's (2017) work recasts our understanding of such liberal democratic perspectives, arguing that the "whiteness" and centrality of racial exploitation to the polity of the United States and liberalism by extension must be exposed. Racial liberalism is infant white liberalism, restricting full personhood to white men, and relegating everyone else to an inferior category. An abstracted liberalism obscures how race has underpinned this framework from its very beginnings, "embedding a particular model of rights-bearers, dictating a certain historical narrative, and providing an overall theoretical orientation for normative discussions" (idem., 30). Douglass (1872) does speak to these inequalities when he states: "The natural laws for the government, well-being and progress of mankind [sic], seem to be equal and are equal; but the subjects of these laws everywhere abound in inequalities, discords, and contrast." Ultimately, his theory of the "self-made man" rests on the idea of individual labour (whether physical, mental, moral or spiritual) as the means through which a sturdy manhood can be achieved. Douglass' writing and the autobiographical form in general conceive of the self as a subject with history and with aspirations, expanding the notion of subjectivity to include all citizens. However for Mills this cannot be reconciled within the framework of liberalism, because throughout its history this theory has been "*complicit with* rather than *condemnatory of*" group subordination (Mills 2017, 209).

Douglass' beliefs about photography were firmly invested in these ideas. In analyzing the inconsistencies between his celebration of the political potential of photography, Ginger Hill (44) argues: "Douglass' use of photography... though attempting to secure possessive

individualism, actually divulges the contingency and failures of such a conception of selfhood". Like James Davis Sr., through the iconography of portraiture Douglass intended to confirm his free status, and showcase his individual propriety. However this social standing remains in question because of the ways in which racialization structures claims to citizenship (Hill 2012). The United States, like Canada, was founded on Indigenous expropriation and genocide, and African slavery, as such racialization was integral to the emergence, development and transformations of the modern nation-state (Mills 2017). It is for this reason that Mills offers a "Black radical liberalism" as a means of corrective justice to these formations. Rather than offering a subjectivity invested in self-emancipation and propriety alone, social transformation is achieved through the mobilization of group interests and political alliances. So while portraits of Douglass and James Davis Sr. work to complicate binaries of personhood and property, citizen and Other, they cannot fully escape the limits of liberal ideas of selfhood and possession. Where ambivalence and slippage are created is in the audiencing or gaze: "By making himself an object of the photographic gaze, Douglass' numerous portraits tacitly underscore that all standings as citizen-subject depend upon the affirmation of others" (Hill 2012, 50). Likewise Davis Sr.'s image, when considered collectively with his family's portraits, foreground the entanglements of Black subjectivity and community; one is "self-made" only through recognition from others. In this way the Davis family photographs cannot self-embed in liberal frameworks of nation, rather they stress the importance of collectivity beyond the nation-state. In their ambivalent relationship to these frameworks portraiture, like autobiography, is attentive to the Black diasporic experiences of modernity—they are both performative and participatory.

For Gilroy (1993) writers like Douglass were both grappling with the antimonies of modernity with its social relations of racial subordination and also legitimating their strategies for its overcoming. Like his autobiographical work, Douglass' convictions about photography are prefigurative in nature—they form ethical practice which contests domination while directly constructing alternatives. These ideas are illustrated best in the many portraits he commissioned throughout his lifetime. In a strategically assembled portrait confirmed Douglass' free status, and projected an image of respectability which rested on liberal ideas about citizenship and the protective natural rights attached to that legal designation (Hill 2012). As described earlier these poetics are also at work in Davis Sr.'s portrait. Against visual histories of enslavement, segregation and mimicry, the cabinet card forms part of an archive that articulates the philosophical and emancipatory potential of collective representation. They share a central theme in Black Atlantic expressive culture—the reproduction of a distinctive political perspective that articulate through poetics to form "a stance, a style, and a philosophical mood" (1993, 70). The scripts of these portraits are entangled with epistemic ideals rooted in photo self- and collective fashioning. In this way the photographic portrait connects to broader trends in Black Atlantic cultural production both metaphorically but also literally; it is linked to both the memory of slavery—with its attendant transnational migrations, and liberatory cultural responses to these histories; and, it moves across a webbed network of Black geographic space.

Therefore in the context of diasporic or borderlands imaging practices strategically assembled portraiture performs a secondary function: it communicates across distances the adherence or maintenance of family values. Just as it allows for self-representation, it also involves community. Tina Campt (2017) describes this function as "aspirational harmonics",

gesturing to the images' multiple registers of meaning as coordinated performances that beckon and respond to one another. The production and circulation of portraits are then a "call and response of indexical and performative citations that hail the affective attachments of members of their community... and abroad, while creating their own visions and versions of themselves in the diaspora." (idem.,164-165). Stuart Hall (1984, 258) offers a similar reading of the performance of diasporic self-making through portraiture: "The photos were what you sent home as 'evidence' that you had arrived safely, landed on your feet, were getting somewhere, surviving, doing all right." Portraits are then an individual part of a collective performance of affiliation that hinges on a shared understanding of values. To drive home this point Campt argues that thinking about images through music deepens our understanding of the performative and affective registers of family photography. Applying this metaphor to the Davis portraits, we might read Bertha and James Sr.'s individual portraits as solo performances that share an organizing structure made possible through the tropes of respectability. Values are performed within the confines of these imaging practices, much like musical notes adhere to the temporal language of the musical bar to form a whole composition. This composition is communicated across the banks of the Detroit River; Bertha metaphorically tips her hat to her grandfather, who responds in his *contrapposto* pose. In their affective registers and communicative abilities the cabinet card portrait is inflected with the syncretic complexity that Gilroy posits as formative attribute of Black expressive cultures. Photographs are a site of performance between subject and viewer, between participant and community. While this section has grappled with how notions of ambivalence are performed within the photographic frame, the proceeding section engages with doubleness as a mode of Black Atlanticism that unfolded in the fluid frontier.

The Goodrich Family: Double-Consciousness and the Making of Borderlands

DETROIT ~1870—If we traced the contours of Martha Goodrich's life based on the historical data available to us the following narrative unfolds: Martha Goodrich was born in Anderdon, Essex County in roughly 1865 to Phillip Goodrich and Ellen Goodrich. According to the 1871 and 1881 censuses for Anderdon, Essex County she lived in a household that included her parents and her siblings Candice, Henry, Ellen, Anna, Albert, Norris and Emmie. Her father Philip is described as African, while her mother Ellen is described as Irish. Following their father, Martha and her siblings are described as African. Martha died on 23 June 1888 of typhoid fever in St. Clair, Michigan where she worked as domestic servant (Michigan Deaths and Burials, 1800-1995). Martha was buried in Essex County. Martha poses for her cabinet card portrait at Millard photography studio on Woodward Avenue in Detroit (Figure 15). The Millard studio was located at its Woodward Ave address from roughly 1870 to 1877, meaning that Martha was at most twelve years old when she sat for this portrait (*Directory of Early Michigan Photographers,* 2013). Where does her portrait fit into this broad sketch? It was taken in between the time the census was recorded, and so it troubles the neat linear narrative of migration that the historical data offers. When placed in context with the rest of photographs in the Goodrich family folder similar stories of migration and settlement unfold, shifting our reading of the portrait.

Ellen Goodrich, Martha's mother, wears a stern expression in a similarly staged cabinet card portrait taken at D.H. Terry's studio in Amherstburg (Figure 16). The caption on the verso of the photograph reads "Mrs. Philip Goodrich". Despite this description and its patriarchal framing, there is surprising amount of historical information about Ellen before and after her

marriage to Philip. Ellen was born on 26 April 1837 in Liverpool, England to John and Ellen Potter (Ohio Deaths, 1908-1953; *Amherstburg Echo,* June 11, 1909). She came with her family to the United States when she was seven years old. Ellen married Phillip Goodrich in Detroit, and the couple eventually settled on the 1st concession of Anderdon near the stone quarry in the Marble Village. Ellen raised nine children, and worked at home, while Phillip worked at both the quarry and did "light" agricultural work. Ellen was an active member of the Cottam Women's Institute, as well as the local Baptist church where she was an organist (*Amherstburg Echo,* June 11, 1909). Phillip was also a community-minded individual, serving as the Deputy Marshall for the local Emancipation Day Parade every August (*Amherstburg Echo,* July 18, 1879). Ellen died on 10 June 1909 in Cleveland, Ohio where she was visiting her daughter Aime Bryant.

In the last cabinet card from the Goodrich folder, Ellen and Phillip's eldest son Henry poses for his portrait at Arthur & Philbric studio on Woodward Avenue in Detroit (Figure 17). Henry was born in Essex County in 1861. He is listed as a member of the Goodrich household on both the 1871 and 1891 census rolls for Anderdon. However in 1905 when he was 45 he moved to Vancouver via the ship *Ramona*. In his mother's obituary from 1909 it states that he settled in Mexico (Canada Passenger Lists, 1881-1922). The partnership between Arthur & Philbric began in 1883 and lasted 8 years, meaning Henry sat for this portrait when he was between 22 and 30 years old (*Directory of Early Michigan Photographers,* 2013). The final photograph within the Goodrich family folder is a gelatin silver snapshot photograph captioned "Aime Goodrich (Bryant)" (Figure 18). It features Aime seated on a piano chair with her back to the piano. She is dressed smartly in evening wear—wrap dress that has gauzy sleeves with velvet cuffs and bodice. She wears a slight smile and looks off camera. The photograph was



FIGURE 15: Martha Gooderich, ca. 1870. Detroit. Cabinet Card.



FIGURE 16: Ellen Goodrich, Amherstburg. ca. 1900. Cabinet Card Photograph.

staged in a domestic space, there is a crystal vase set on top of the piano on an embroidered and tasselled runner, with a large oval portrait and a landscape painting hanging above piano. The sheet music for a song titled "When I was a Dreamer" is perched behind Aime. Emma Goodrich (who went by Emmie or Aime) the youngest of the Goodrich children was born on 19 February 1880 in Anderdon. She worked locally as a school teacher at the S.S. No. 1 (*Amherstburg Echo*, January 5, 1894). Aime was also a member and secretary of the local chapter of the Frederick Douglass Self Improvement Club. According to the *Amherstburg Echo* the "young ladies" club "consisted of activities such as singing and instrumental music, recitation, composition and debate on topics such as Which is the most attractive to the eye, paint and powder or human nature?". On 25 June 1903, when she was 23, Aime married William I. Bryant in Cuyahoga, Ohio (Ohio Marriages, 1800-1942). The 1910 census for Cleveland finds Aime living with her husband, and her older brother Norrie (Albert Norris). The 1920 and 1930 censuses find William and Aime living together alone. However, by the time the census was taken in 1930 Aime's brother Albert returned to live with the couple.

Without looking at their portraits the sketch of the Goodrich family history made possible through census data, birth, marriage and death records, and the local newspaper indicates that this was an itinerant family. This is consistent with larger migration trends documented by Faires and Bukowczyk (2005). In particular, working-class Black Canadians like the Goodrich's often crossed this international divide in response to the ebb and flow of economic opportunity. Beyond hinting at migrations that did not appear on the "official record" these portraits offer us insight into how cross border connections were sustained over time.

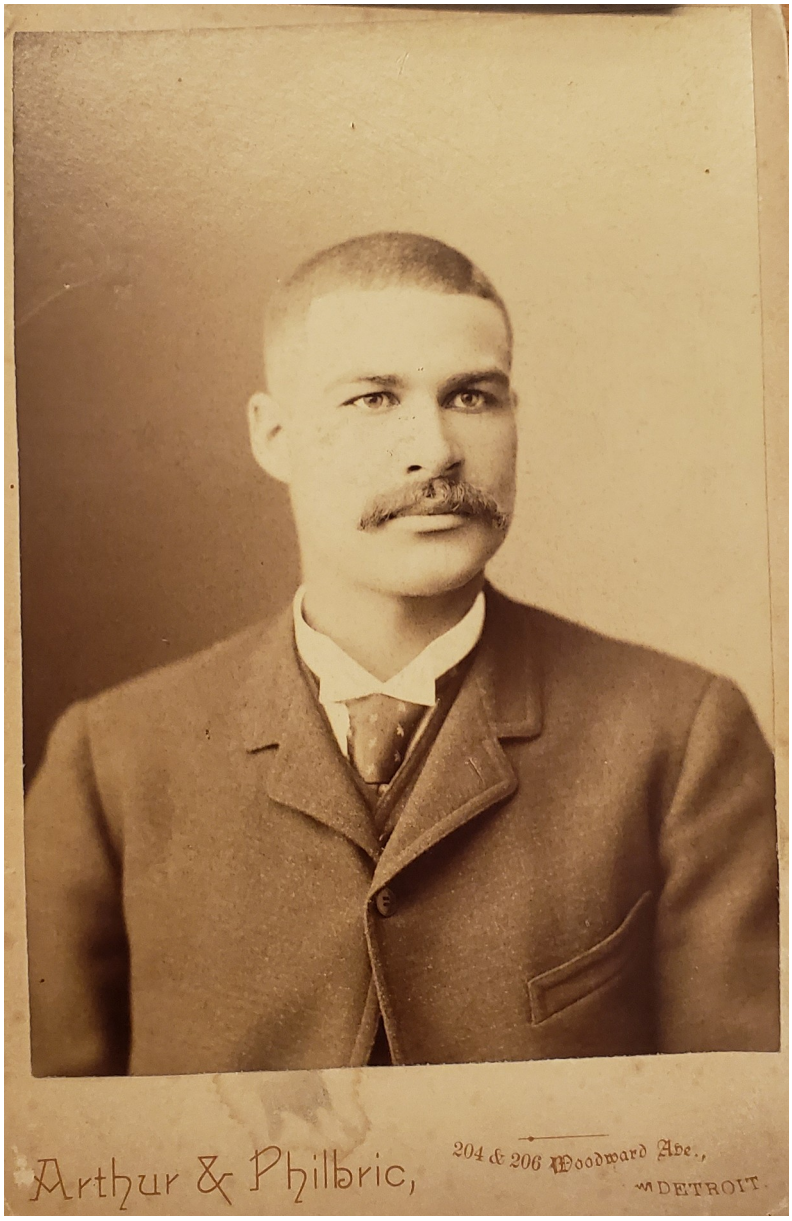


FIGURE 17: Henry Goodrich, Detroit. ca. 1880. Cabinet Card Photograph.



FIGURE 18: Aime Goodrich (Bryant). ca. 1900. Gelatin Silver Photograph.

As discussed earlier the repeated visual language of this genre gives the illusion that these portraits were staged during the same sitting at the same studio. Studied together as a serial collection—whether grouped together in an album, or catalogued in a family file in the archive —time and space seems to collapses between them. This is particularly true of the cabinet cards described above. This reading is consistent with Hall's (1984, 257) description of studio portraits and their relationship to space and time:

> the formality and sense of occasion of these photographs are inscribed in the ways in which the figures are formally posed, frozen, in the way they have been suspended in formal space and time. They are certainly not 'at home'. They are not at work either. In fact, they arc not represented as being in any human or social environment. They exist only in and for studio time, studio space. They are the bearers of the professional, smalltime photographer's aspiration to 'art'. They have been transferred directly under his rules of construction.

In describing the power dynamics at play within these photographic encounters, Hall's analysis also points to a key feature of Black Atlantic cultural production at play: double consciousness. The main theoretical thrust of Gilroy's analysis of modernity's is two-fold: it focuses on the modernity's pernicious history, its ties to the transatlantic slavery and European imperial conquest; but also how diasporic populations offer a unique body of reflections on modernity based on its plural nature, its variances, ambivalences and discontinuities. These latter features —what are described as "a doubleness, their unsteady location simultaneously inside and outside the conventions, assumptions, and aesthetic rules which distinguish and periodise modernity" (1993, 73).

In *The Soul of Black Folks* W.E.B. Du Bois (2018, 8) describes double-consciousness as being "born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the

other world... the sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of the others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity". This conceptualization registers at the psychological level as "two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals" (idem., 8-9). Photographic historians in the United States describe this process as inherently visual—marking a division between a white supremacist gaze and images produced and maintained by African Americans (Smith 2000). Doubleness also forms part of the Fanonian lexicon, particularly in *Black Skin, White Masks*, wherein Fanon (2017, 257–258) describes: "the colonized Black subjects two frames of reference within which to place himself". Fanon's work in *The Wretched of the Earth* engages with the multiplicity of consciousness, bringing into the fold the concept of nation: "stumbling over the need to assume two nationalities, two determinations" (2017, 155). Both Du Bois and Fanon's notions of doubleness—two masks, frames, warring ideals—embody the tensions and separation of the subject's interiority and the phenotype. These conceptualizations are then a productive lens from which to critically engage with the entanglements the psychological and visual dynamics of race that take place within the photographic frame.

Gilroy's description of Du Bois' double-consciousness allows it to register more clearly in his chronotype of the Black Atlantic. For Gilroy Du Bois produced this concept to illuminate the experience of "post-slave populations" (African American particularity) but also animate a dream of "global co-operation among peoples of colour" (subaltern experience). Gilroy (1993, 127) describes it as emerging from the "unhappy symbiosis between three modes of thinking, being, and seeing": 1) racial particularistic; 2) nationalistic; and, 3) diasporic or hemispheric. For Gilroy the doubleness of Black Atlantic subjectivity then exceeds essentialist appeals to

racial unity, and nation-based understandings of historical currents, and is therefore at its core a diasporic. However by acknowledging how these three modes of thinking, being and seeing coalesce to form the experience of the Black Atlantic Gilroy acknowledges that cultural production works within the problem space of racial particularity and nationalism. Gilroy unites Du Bois with other Black Atlantic writers to argue modernity promotes the fragmentation (doubling, splitting) of the self. These ideas are shared by Stuart Hall (2018, 140) in his memoir *Familiar Stranger: A Life Between Two Islands* where he describes the diasporic experience as a "variant" of double consciousness, "that of belonging to more than one world, of being both 'here' and 'there', of thinking about 'there' from 'here' and vice versa; of being 'at home' – but never wholly – in both places; neither fundamentally the same, nor totally different." This variant thus requires different conceptions of identity's relation to cultural traditions from that of conventional notions.

Borrowing from David Scott's (2004, 122) description of Toussaint L'Ouverture, Stuart Hall describes himself as a "conscript of modernity". Hall argues that Toussaint could principally "think" freedom within the problem space and the limits of such concepts drawn from France and the French revolutionary tradition. In a similar way, while bell hooks (1998) and others have described the camera as the central instrument by which colonized subjects could challenge representational practices, this technology is tied to both the Enlightenment project and the discursive formation of the anthropological gaze. Therefore in discussing the cabinet card and the photographic studio as sites that comment on modernity's ambivalences, it is more profitably argued that the discourses of doubleness took place within "the problem space" of the photographic frame and studio. The cabinet card was a sturdy photographic object

mounted on thick card stock and so it was particularly well suited to travel. The cabinet card "mania" of the late nineteenth century was linked to modernity through expansions in national and international postal services but also the streamlining and industrializing of photographic processes. Industrialization and the expansion of national institutions (such as the postal service) were deeply entangled with the colonial project. Historians of postal innovations argue that such developments contributed to a larger communication revolution which has "figured conspicuously in the making of the modern world" (John 1994, 99). As distances were traversed with greater speed and ease because of innovations in steam technology (rail, and steamboats) objects like the cabinet card and the postcard became a mode of communication.

The cabinet card is an expressively modern form of cultural production, tied to the industrialization and streamlining of photographic processes and expanding consumer markets. Moreover, like their predecessor the *carte-de-visite,* the cabinet card was produced with the intention that they be circulated across distances. At the same time they extend a philosophical critique of modernity by unsteadying conventional understandings of aesthetic practices. As argued earlier, against the shadow archive of segregation and minstrelsy, the cabinet card portrait offered a colloquial space for subjects to control the means of their representation. When we think of both photography's entanglement with anthropology and domestic ideology this doubleness comes into stark relief. Against such histories, the cabinet card portrait with all of its racially inflected notions of middle-class respectability can be profitably understood as a genre that both advances the modern project while also exceeding it. In this way the cabinet card complicates conventional geographic and temporal understandings of modernity.

Traditional understandings of the relationship between space and time rest on an ability to order and locate positions, things and events within that space through precise measurement (Harvey 2012). These practices undervalue how the diffusion of cultural forms and networks of communication (among other diverse elements like water flows, diseases, ideas, academic contacts etc.) become integral to our understanding of how phenomena are distributed and how processes work through and across space over time (idem., 223). The concept of space-time or spatio-temporality implies that all geography is historical geography—that understandings of space and time are actively produced through personal and political subjectivities. Applying this conceptualization to his blues epistemology Clyde Woods (2007, 70) argues that the socio-spatial dynamic of blues geography allows us to understand "how marginalized people in marginalized places" are central to our understanding of this origins and evolution of neoliberalism. This is most recognizable in the naming of periods in United States' history according to the blues based intellectual movements (Jazz Era, Rag Times). This practice captures shifts in consciousness developed from "local" knowledges linking periodization with social relations.

Photographs like those of the Goodrich family help extend the geographic range of reflections of modernity and its discontents by speaking to how these critiques unfolded in response to imperial configurations of space (migrations) and time. Mythologies or national stories are about a nation's origins and history (Razack 2002). Within Canada the narrative of the land as shared and developed by enterprising and industrious settlers is manifestly a racial story. In this narrative Indigenous peoples are consigned to an earlier space and time, while people of colour are scripted as late arrivals, coming to North America after much of the

national development projects has occurred. McClintock (1995, 30) describes these imperial temporalities as condemning their others to "anachronistic space and time". According to this trope colonized people do not inhabit history proper but exist in a permanently anterior time within the geographic space of the modern empire as anachronistic humans, atavistic, irrational, bereft of human agency.

McClintock (1995) argues that colonial travellers entering African countries believed they were exploring the past by travelling back in time. The colonies were therefore believed to be not only socially or culturally different, but also temporally different. McClintock concludes that: geographical difference across space is figured as a historical difference across time. This conceptualization is a productive lens from which to examine how Canada is spatially produced. The Goodrich's family folder—existing both within private and public space, across borders, and possessing "doubleness"—can be investigated for this crucial relation between space and time. The borderlands that the Goodrich family photographs travelled across are thought of spatially as a demarcation of sovereign zones. When we consider the mythologies of Canadian history—the arrivant narrative, the finished emancipatory location—the border also functions temporally. The historiographical tendency to uncritically describe the Canadian border as marking the space between freedom and enslavement has both spatial but also temporal implications. Within this historical narrative to traverse the border Northward meant to abandon all forms of slavery, segregation, and race-based oppression. Subjects therefore exist within a linear narrative where space and time collapse, in which time is configured as a progressive accumulation of freedom. The United States is then associated with barbarism and cruelty, temporally regressive within industrial modernity compared to the Canadian narrative of

freedom and an enlightened national progress. In sum, crossing the border is historiographically conceived as inhabiting a different temporal zone.

The concurrent or recursive movements across the border that are animated by the Goodrich family portraits trouble notions of anachronistic space. Against narratives that foreclose borderland or bifocal histories the production and circulation of these cultural products unsettle the idea of the border as a temporal before and after. Within empirical investigations in the social sciences such binaries—origin/ home/ departure and destination—restrict our comprehension of the complexity of transnational practices that connect people (Trotz 2011). The Goodrich family photographs described above attest to transmigration as a circuit, exceeding the binary of departure and destination. Taken during the close years of the nineteenth century, the photographs represent a particular instance of a much more common pattern of circular migration in the Great Lakes region. Nora Faires (2006, 117) scholarship tells us that in the late nineteenth century Black Canadian migrants to Detroit comprised about 15 % of the city's small Black population, which numbered 1400 in 1860, doubled by 1880 and totalled more than 4000 by the turn of the century. Over the next two decades the city's population swelled due in part to The Great Migration, which brought African American communities from the farms, hamlets and cities of the southern United States. In 1920 Detroit's Black population reached 40,000. The Goodrich's pattern of migration exemplifies much of the economic activity that characterized the transnational Great lakes region during the mid to late nineteenth century. Like many families the Goodrichs pursued a complicated itinerary of migration. During the course of their lives the Goodrich family's occupations ranged across a spectrum of agricultural, education, and domestic enterprises that they undertook in rural and urban locations on both

sides of the border. Their movements illustrate not only the region's nineteenth century economic transformation, but also the negotiation of continental racial formation projects of the era.

The latter decades of the nineteenth century ushered in the rapid and aggressive advance of industrial capitalism in the United States prompting historians to describe this era as "the second industrial revolution". As Faires describes (2005, 110) "the formation of large, heavily financed corporations led by capitalists of unprecedented wealth marked the beginning of this age, while the vast expansion of national and international markets, the refinement and elaboration of existing products, and the introduction of new goods, especially the automobile, signals its triumph". This economic transformation created a larger industrial working class, expanded urban growth, and saw a rapid influx of newcomers to fill new industrial jobs. Many of these newcomers came from Canada—approximately 70,000 to 1.2 million Canadians migrated to the Upper Midwest between 1880 and the turn of the century (idem. 11). Like Aime Goodrich Bryant a portion of these migrants journeyed to recently industrialized ports in Ohio, such as Cleveland and Toledo. Between 1870 and 1930 the African American population of Cleveland increased 56 times (Winks 2008, 300). Given their proximity to Essex County—a short steamer trip across Lake Erie—photographs taken in Ohioan metropoles represent a quarter of the photographs taken in the United States within the family folders of the McCurdy fonds.

At the same time, across the border Ontario's cities such as Hamilton (the province's industrial centre), and Toronto (the province's financial, mercantile and political capital), participated in a similar demographic and economic expansion that led to Detroit and the Upper

Midwest's rise (Faires 2006). These Great Lakes cities had become integrated into a single transnational economic region and migration system drawing migrants from their own hinterlands and from across the Atlantic (Bukowczyk and Faires, 2005). The working-class Black Canadians like the Goodrichs who crossed this international divide often did so in response to economic opportunity. Their circuitous migrations were often a negotiation of the racialized nature of the labour market and the larger social and economic conditions of this time. A continued feature of the so-called Gilded Age in Detroit was wide-spread racial discrimination in housing, public accommodations and employment throughout the late nineteenth century. Even with strengthened networks of Black resistances studies indicate, "that the city established enduring patterns of discrimination and segregation that thousands of southern migrants would encounter during and after World War I" (Thomas 2005, 14–15).

As has been documented by artists and scholars, white Canadians during the late nineteenth century systematically organized around a discourse of race through the establishment of a colour line, codifying clear social, political, and economic demarcations between Black and white Canadians (Mathieu 2010, 6). Canadian racial discourse was often formed in dialogue or response with ideologies from the United States. Saje Mathieu (idem., 6) summarizes,

> where Americans pointed to African Americans' alleged criminality, Canadians said that Blacks were "climatically unsuitable" for the full responsibilities of citizenship. When accused of bigotry, Canadians consistently countered that, in actuality, their "negrophobia" was a concern over American expansionist zeal. They explained away Canada's colour line as a form of protection against American invasion, tapping into well-worn anti-American fears and resentments and adding a transnational dimension to white-supremacist discourse.

Ultimately the establishment of a colour line through race-based exclusions was used to "guard" Canadian civility, modernity and democracy. The spatial imaginary of Canada as "rational, white and cohesive" was an evolution of segregationist and xenophobic thinking, indicating that Jim Crow took on broader transnational dimensions in the late nineteenth century,

Patterns of inclusion and exclusion attempted to regulate identities in the Great Lakes region. However the movement of families like the Goodrich's work to reconfigure our understanding of both these unsatisfactory boundaries and the ambivalences of modernity. The Black Atlantic and the broader field of Black Geographies argue that the production of space/place involves both material and imaginary texts, that "minds, imaginations, travels, legacies and histories prohibit containment" (McKittrick and Woods 2007, 28). The discourses of doubleness at work through the creation and use of the cabinet card portrait rework dominant temporal and spatial configurations of the region.

As Du Bois (2018) describes it double-consciousness is an encounter with the colour line. For the Goodrichs this is a symbiosis of being Black (race/culture), Canadian (citizenship), and diasporic (slavery's memory). Du Bois believed in both the possibilities and the limitations of photography in its ability to represent Black subjectivity past the colour line. In a contested visual culture Martha, Henry and Aime are caught between two socially ascribed zones, one of middle-class subject and the other of the phenotype or object. Using Fanon's (2017) language this position is intrinsically based on two frames of references, two masks through which to be viewed. At the turn of the century modernity in Canada was a project that worked to consolidate a vision of white middle-class privilege. This project's visual registers and cultural discourses worked to consolidate white middle-class privilege in opposition to a counter-image of an

imagined criminal Other. Pressing this imagined binary to the question of diasporic formation, Tina Campt (2012, 38) asks: to what extent does the presumed legibility of race provide the governing logic of the photographic archive of the African diaspora? As a follow up, she questions, on what basis is inclusion or exclusion ruled? The Goodrich photographs document both inclusion and exclusion. They perform scripts of middle-class recognition (in pose, in dress, and in setting), but in ways that contest hegemonic scripts of national belonging that assume a fiction of Anglo-Saxon racial purity. In general biracial individuals test a racial taxonomy of identifiable "Otherness", a white supremacist investment in separating the races that simultaneously signals an undeniable history of physical union between them. Throughout North America at the turn of the century, the hysteria of the threat of racial passing spurred an increased fervour in racial surveillance. Reading the photograph of Ellen Goodrich, of Irish descent, alongside the portraits of her children challenges the visual codes of racial distinction, showing a racial taxonomy founded in visual paradigms of the phenotype to be a powerful fiction.

Borders are a principal mechanism for articulating and implementing immigration, economic development, and nation-building policies while on a symbolic level, the embodiment of national identity and sovereignty. The Goodrich family photographs point not only to vicissitudes of borderland life, but also the role of imaginary texts in unsettling colonial configurations of space. Campt (2012, 55) describes images of biracial Black German families pushing us to "recognize the extent to which the intergenerational politics of diasporic formation depend on—in powerful ways, are constituted through—an aspiration to national belonging, inclusion, and/or subjecthood, as well as being part and parcel of their transcendence. In doing

so they ask us to consider the spontaneity of belonging and unbelonging that structures the nation, the family, the diaspora". Campt's work is united with Du Bois and Gilroy in pointing to the ambivalence produced by standing between and inhabiting the liminal zone of "two cultural assemblages" of two modern nations in becoming. In wrestling with these questions Stuart Hall asked "could there be many modernities?" For Hall (2018, 221) modernity was one of the resources which allowed him to assemble another life, one removed from the immediate dictates of the colonial order, as he experienced them. However this was "not without contradictions and the occasional *cul de sac*, of course" (Ibid.) The Goodrich family photograph's middle-class scripts displace racial difference in ways that provided family members a means of staking claim to "normativity", while simultaneously producing alternatively racialized diasporic subjects who depart radically from the normative ideal of Anglo-Saxon Canadianess. At the same time the Goodrich family was also inscribed by movements across these liminal zones state creating an ambiguity in citizenship. In essence as an archive they speak to the striking doubleness, the complicated symbiosis of not only race, nation, and diaspora, but also borderland life. The diasporic experience made visible through the archive is then a privileged, fruitful site for explaining the spatial and temporal antimonies of modernity. Like all Black Atlantic expressive cultures these photographs unsettle discrete political or territorial entities—nation-states and other—gesturing to the less clearly bounded units of territory temporality and space.

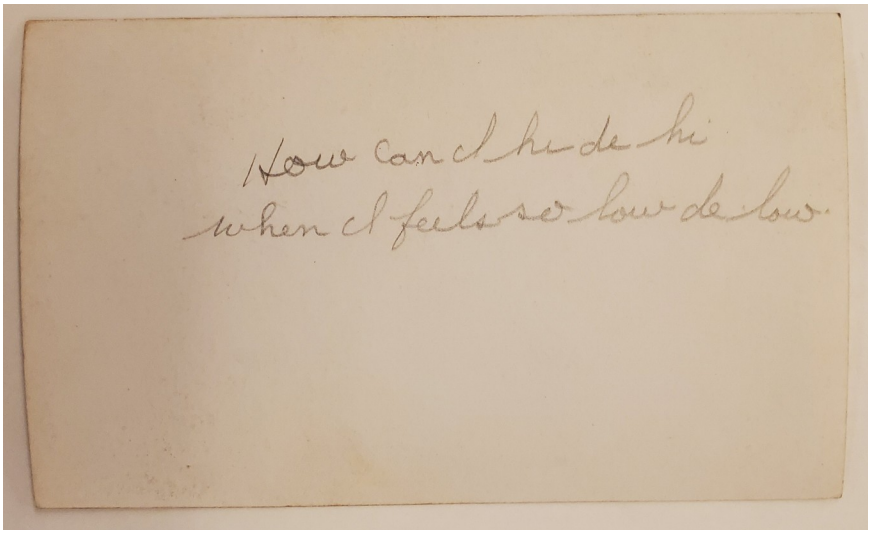
Mae Stokes: Vernacular Practices as Care Work

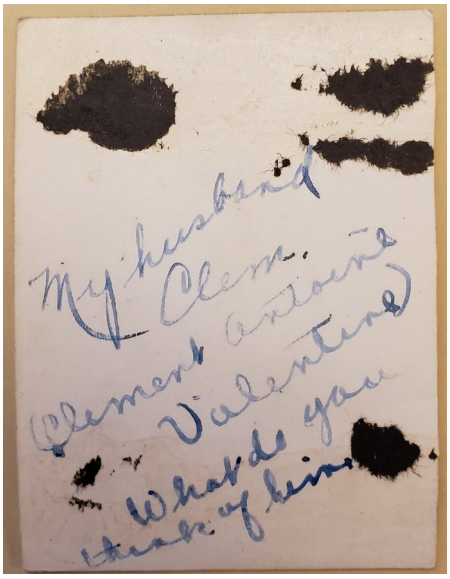
While the bulk of this chapter is concerned with the recto of photographs, the following line of questioning was prompted by the verso. One woman's name repeatedly came up in

processing the thousands of vernacular photographs within the McCurdy fonds: Mae Stokes. Many of inscriptions on the verso of these photographs warmly address Mae, and include short tongue-and-cheek captions (Figures 19-21). Mae Stokes was born in 1895 the only child of Peter Stokes Jr. and Sarah Estella (King) Stokes, early settlers of the Marble Village. Mae Elizabeth worked as a cook, before completing her training at the Chicago School of Nursing. From there Mae lived in Ann Arbor, Michigan, before returning to Essex County ("Alexander Family," Amherstburg Freedom Museum). She never married, and had no children. Despite her name frequently appearing, there are only two identifiable photographs of Mae in the entire fonds. Mae's partial absence within the photographic frame, compared to her presence on the verso prompted me to consider the production and circulation of photographic objects as an invisibilized form of care work, a labour that reproduces communities across disparate spaces. Representational practices have thus formed the bulk of my analysis. However I focus on the photographic object as a communicative and value-laden text.

The dispersal of kin throughout the borderlands reflects capitalism's ability to radically disrupt people's relationship to work and life. In response this social fragmentation, Harvey (2012, 227) argues that "all societies develop means to evaluate, appreciate, represent, and live within their surrounding environments." In Harvey's view the question of how people understand their relationship to nature and the environment is integral to the formation of geographical knowledge. In Woods' blues geography this manifests through an environmental ethic hinged on creating sustainable communities and regions within a political economy built on enclosure. Specifically Woods' geography discloses the creation and preservation of stable and sustainable Black working-class communities; violent enclosure and family separation lead

to “a broad definition of community and a desire to be intimately intertwined with sacred communal spaces” (idem.,73). Woods argues that “the process of making communities sacred and significant beyond their values as commodities is a key aspect of [geographic knowledge]” (idem.,72). For Woods the history of African American support for cooperative rural and urban land reform is testament of a blues tradition of a “sustainability ethic” (idem.,73). Though Harvey claims that these structural supports have a wide-ranging presence across institutional sites, both he and Woods conceptualize this strictly in ecological terms. Inspired by this work, I argue that all labour that reproduces communities should be considered a practice of sustainability and thus a form of geographic knowledge. Where capitalism enforces fixed physical and social environments to match its needs, care work becomes a method crucial to addressing these destructive models of environmental or social organization. While these practices take many forms, the remainder of this chapter positions the production and circulation of vernacular photography as a form of care work that reproduces affective networks of communication and thus sustains Black geographic knowledge. By positioning the staging of vernacular photography as a form of care work—a practice largely undertaken by women within domestic spaces—this section also reworks masculinist understandings of Black Atlantic labour. It presses Gilroy’s analytic by asking a series of questions: If Black Atlanticism is made possible through mobility, what of those who are granted less mobility because of gendered practices of exclusion? Can objects travel in their place? Can Black Atlanticism be sustained through rootedness rather than routes? Whose labour reproduces routedness and routes?





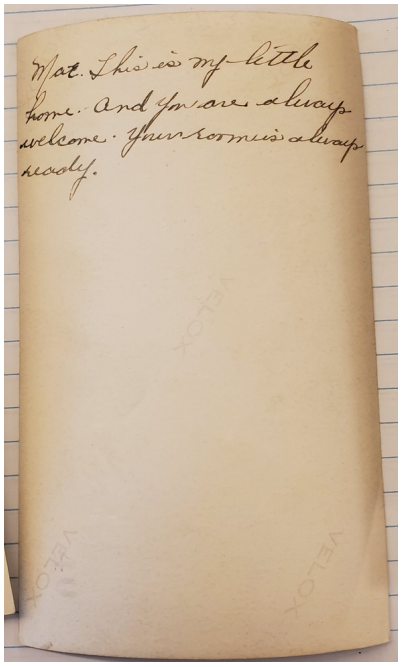


FIGURE 19-21: Captions of images addressed to Mae Stokes. ca. 1900. Gelatin Silver Photographs.

Viewing vernacular photography through the lens of care work allows us to see its gendered dynamics, but also how the workings of racial capital inform and give weight to these practices. Taking a social reproduction approach to family photographs allows us to unearth the relational dynamic between this socially productive labour and market-based activity in three ways: First, this labour was necessitated by dispersals brought on by race-based labour practices and their attendant forced and voluntary migrations (non-sustainable); second, in the face of these absences photographs helped communities perform togetherness, a survival and life-making strategy (sustainability); and, third, in doing so this unpaid domestic labour was capitalistically "productive", sustaining societies dominated by capital, and reproducing its workers.

Unlike the Davis', or Goodrichs, there is no photographic record of Mae's labour migrations or travels. Despite this, the captioning of Mae's photographs gestures to a similar dynamic of reciprocity that is characteristic of the maintenance of social networks. Because photographs are a mobile, public and performative mode of communication, interpersonal relationship in the context of enclosure become mediated through these networked public social channels. As the previous section outlines, photographs initiate, maintain, and transform social relationships, and they also augment ideas about temporal and spatial boundaries. They offer a space from which to perform acts of self-fashioning—constructing and reconstructing identities through their staging, public dissemination, and private engagement. At the same time they accumulate meaning and affective weight through circulation and display. All this is to say, they perform a crucial and widespread social function that requires sustained labour. Annie Rudd (2016, 201) raises an additional point about the obligatory nature of these photographic

practices: “the social uses of the photograph also hinge on expectations of reciprocal exchange.” This draws our attention to an unstudied dimension of this labour: through its reciprocal nature this is an implicit social obligation, requiring individuals to participate or face fragmentation or exclusion. As Rudd explains (Ibid.): “to violate the tacit expectation of reciprocity can be problematic: among social network users, unequal practices of looking or approbation are often considered embarrassing.” In this way, the scholarly focus purely on the talismatic nature of family photographs invisibilizes their connection to labour. Put simply it obscures how these practices are tempered by social expectations that delimit the appropriate degrees of interaction. For this reason, I shift away from what or who they enact or symbolize representationally to how they function in relation to the institutions in which they participate.

Mae’s photographs exist in response to presences and absences in her social network. They mark relationships of both love and obligation and are thus value-laden objects. I am not interested here in their commodity value—the realm of markets—but the socially productive labour that is bound up in the practices of their staging and circulation. Susan Ferguson (2020, 17) argues that: “[work] is life activity. And because it is shaped in and through people’s relationships with each other, work changes in accordance with changes in those relationships... [work’s] social form—how work is organized—matters to how freely, or not, people create their worlds, their societies, their lives.” By routing her analysis of work through human relationships, this passage allows us to conceptualize work as both a form of oppression but also a mode of freedom. In the feminist imagination work is expansive, encompassing a mode of critique but also a pathway for prefiguring more equitable futures. It is something done for a wage, and something done for love and justice. This was the grounds on which movements like

the International Wages for Housework struggled. On this basis, as Andaiye (2020, 18) explains "my goal is a work which values caring labour because... it values caring as the essence of the relationships among people." Aligning vernacular photography practices with care work allows us to move beyond an iconographic analysis that further undermines their value as social objects. It enables us to see these as everyday modes of sustainability practiced mostly at home.

As discussed earlier, vernaculars have a long history of dismissal. Their so-called triviality is both based on their existence outside modes of formalist Art Historical critique, but more crucially to my point on their assignment as a form of women's work. As Rose (2016) argues, family photography is often conceptualized as a feminine space, as it is the women in a household who have the responsibility for doing most things with family photography—taking, displaying, preserving and circulating. The clearest articulation of this ideology can be seen in the strategic turn of the century marketing campaign by Kodak of the "Kodak Girl"; as one ad reads "Gay as seventeen… feminine as Eve…smart as an Easter hat…is this exquisite Eastman creation. Paris inspired, it reflects the mode of Spring. Aptly named, Kodak Petite is a lovely little camera no larger than your hand….." (idem., 57). This feminization of family photography persists. In her interview with white, middle-class British women about family photographs and the maintenance of family togetherness, Rose concludes that these practices are an important part of motherhood. The audiencing of family photographs is also central to the togetherness that they articulate: "recalling when they were taken, who took them and especially discussing who is in them, is central to how family snaps are looked at in domestic contexts" (idem., 43). For many of the interviewees this recognizing people and remembering people and events, and its enactment is another way of performing family togetherness. These photographs and the

performances that they elicit reiterate the idea that certain objects are central to the production of domestic space. For these scholars, family photographs are critical to achieving the state of being at home.

Enacting proximity through the exchange of photographs is an important form of care labour that strengthens and perpetuates existing bonds and enacts private memory. Domestic space thus becomes a site that binds and memorializes bonds between disperses family members and friends. Mae's collection of photographs represent a rootedness, or a stasis. In the context of postcolonial studies home has been positioned as a source of political history. Using literary examples such as No.124 Bluestone in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Antoinette Burton argues (2006, 5): "the memories of home that each woman enshrined in narrative act—for us—as an archive from which a variety of counterhistories of colonial modernity can be discerned. I want to emphasize, in other words, the importance of home as both as material archive for history and a very real political figure in an extended moment of historical crisis." For Burton the forced and voluntary migrations that characterize people's lives thus accounts for the privileged position of the home in diasporic historical imagination (idem., 7). bell hooks (2015) similarly describes home in relation to social and political relationship by stressing "homeplace" practices as having a radical political dimension. Because the construction by Black women of domestic households as spaces of care and nuturance occurs "in the face of the brutal harsh reality of racist oppression, and sexist domination", then this labour is oppositional in nature (idem., 42). Ungirding these dedicated practices of renewal is an ethic of care, thus at its philosophical core maintaining "homeplace" is an act of justice.

Conclusion

In their seriality and strategic self-fashioning the Davis and Goodrich family portraits and Mae Stokes' archive perform a diasporic intimacy that is a marked feature of transnational Black Atlantic expressive culture—a culture located in an unstudied place, the Great Lakes. For Gilroy (1993,16) the contemporary Black arts movement articulates the discontinuous history of Black settlers creating "a new topography of loyalty and identity" that exceeds the outmoded structures of the nation-state. Within the diasporic family archive seriality is integral to producing, communicating, and remembering family members separated by the imposition of borders. The repeated tropes that form the iconography of the cabinet card portrait become a key mode of performing affiliation beyond state lines. In their continuities and linkages the cultural work that these photographs perform challenge the coherence of the border. Through a shared photographic culture, and in their transnational circulation as tactile and affective objects the very use of photography among internationally dispersed family members across national and colonial borders is an example of the porousness of empires and states. The Black Atlantic emphasizes the ocean as a space of connection, though a highly fragmented space, the Atlantic brought peoples, goods, languages, expressive culture and ideas into dialogue. As Raiford (2006, 212) says of Black Atlanticism, "diaspora is then an 'imagined community' that must be forged, constantly made and remade; diaspora not as a priori essence but diaspora as labour and practice." When we account for the labour bound up in these objects we deepen or understanding of their co-operative function. Early photography in the Great Lakes borderlands manifests these linkages and ambivalences across the whole field of portraiture: the dress and

performances of its subjects, the staging of the photographic studio, the circulation across the Detroit River, and their existence in the archive.

Chapter Four: (Un)Mapping the Marble Village: Vernacular Photography and Racialized Space

"Those pictorial genealogies... provided a necessary narrative, a way for us to enter history without words. The walls of pictures were indeed maps guiding us through diverse journeys."
(bell hooks 1998, 63)

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight how vernacular photographic practices unsettle colonial understandings of space, but also how this labour is a key form of Black Atlantic space making. So far I have argued that the McCurdy fonds challenges national paradigms of the Detroit River borderlands by documenting the circuitous movement of people and photographs across the fluid frontier. I use this chapter to document the struggle over racialized space in Anderdon, Ontario in the nineteenth century, considering the particular dynamics that were central to segregation practices within the community. Using state-produced maps and cartographic material, I chart racialized land-use practices and the unfair gains made possible by these spatial relations (Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1836; Ontario Government Record, 1839; Illustrated Atlas of the Dominion of Canada, 1881). Sherene Razack (2002) argues that just as mapping colonized lands enabled Europeans to imagine and legally claim that they had discovered and therefore owned the lands of the "New World," *unmapping* is intended to undermine the idea of white settler innocence and to uncover the ideologies and practices of conquest and domination. In keeping with this strategy, I argue that the earliest maps of the region from the 1830s document encroaching European settlement and the containment and confinement of Huron-Wyandotte communities by colonial officials. A later map from 1881 that records land parcels and property lines evidences the development of a segregated community, known locally as the Marble Village. I untangle the philosophical

underpinnings of each of these mapping practices in order to unseat normative geographic approaches premised on settler colonialism and the formation of the nation state. This chapter uses the language of George Lipsitz in *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness* (2006) and *How Racism Takes Place* (2011) to argue that these practices created a "white spatial imaginary" that structured power in the region. It then offers the vernacular photographs within the Jones and Stokes family folders as a visible archive of struggles and experiences of racialized space within the Marble Village. Specifically, in documenting the movement against segregated schooling in the region, I argue that school photographs become a meaningful site for documenting the creation of a Black spatial imaginary. In the final section of this chapter, the gendered nature of traditional mappings is interrogated, looking specifically at how these practices invisibilize the ideas, experiences, and struggles of women in the region. This chapter also builds on Lipsitz's theories of racialized space by considering how class functions within his imaginary. The photographs that I use throughout this dissertation document life for mostly middle-class families in Essex County. I attend to how Black middle-class families claimed a stake in spatial imaginaries in order to address the problems that white supremacy posed for their community. I therefore consider the racialization of space as tied to various class-making projects.

Citing historical and ongoing racial projects in the United States, Lipsitz argues in both *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness* (2006) and *How Racism Takes Place* (2011) that white privilege has clear spatial dimensions. Specifically he argues that society is structured by a white spatial imaginary propelled by "hostile privatism and defensive localism" that produces rewards for whiteness (2011,13). This spatial logic imposes unjust forms of exploitation and exclusion for racialized communities, and creates grossly unequal access to education, employment,

transportation, and shelter. Lipsitz (2006, 2) argues these relations evidence a "possessive investment in whiteness" that institutionalizes group identity not just through the dissemination of cultural stories, but also through the creation of social structures that generate economic advantages for "European Americans". Though the possessive investment in whiteness manifests in new forms throughout history, its origins are located in racialized histories—the legacy of transatlantic slavery, segregation, conquest and colonialism (Lipsitz 2006). On the other hand, the Black spatial imaginary opposes land-use philosophies that invest in white supremacy through strategic realignments of space based on democratic and inclusive ideals. Lipsitz documents the development of these projects by exploring the expressive culture of people who have resisted racial segregation and dispossession. I see the Black Atlantic as one manifestation of this spatial imaginary. It not only foregrounds expressive culture as a site of struggle against colonial modernity, but it also radically reworks spatial understandings of the Atlantic world. I put these two conceptualizations of space in conversation in order to account for the centrality of land in the racial arrangements of segregation. While marine metaphors are central to the Black Atlantic paradigm, Lipsitz's spatial imaginaries allow us to chart how "slavery's memory" and struggles toward emancipation are articulated in territorial spaces. Crucially, it also allows us to situate Indigenous territorial dispossession and racial segregation as part of a same project in the white spatial imagination. Without accounting for Indigenous histories within the Black Atlantic world we reproduce the idea of Canada as a *terra nullius*.

The White Spatial Imaginary in Marble Village

David Harvey (2012) argues that cartography and map-making are the central structural pillars of all forms of geographic knowledge. These operations are principally concerned with "locating, positioning, individuating, identifying, and bounding", playing a key role in the formation of personal and political subjectivities. Historically these practices were inseparable from imperialist exercises of military power and capitalistic territorial rights. Principally, cartographic definitions aided state formation processes and the exercise of state powers (idem., 220). Similarly, in her introductory chapter to *Demonic Grounds* McKittrick (2006, x) describes how "white masculine European mapping explorations, conquests, [are] interlaced with a different sense of place, those populations and their attendant geographies that are concealed by what might be called rational spatial colonization and domination: the profitable erasure and objectification of subaltern subjectivities stories, and lands." Therefore to engage the cartographic function of photographs is to attend to geography, and by extension the active production of spatial knowledge. The history of the Marble Village made possible through traditional cartographic documents is framed by settler colonialism, and white abolitionism, obscuring efforts made by Black communities to shape their spatial relations. Despite these ambiguities of meaning, these portraits also contain an alternative mapping of Anderdon—alternative to the Euro-centric state mappings, which now construct most histories of Anderdon. Read against these projects the vernacular photographs I analyze document responses to racialized space, disclosing the imaginative knowledge of Marble Village's Black communities.



FIGURE 22: Children in front of the Marble Village Coloured School, [ca. 1900]. Albumen Print.

ANDERDON, TEXAS ROAD, WINTER c. 1900—Seven young students stand in front of the small chimneyed clapboard building that served as the Marble Village Coloured School, known locally as “the Quarry school”: Homer Brantford, Charles Jones, Chancellor Naul, Charles Carter, Thomas Jones, Lewis Jones, Johnny Brown, Benjamin Smith. The boys are arranged by height and pose in their matching coats and hats on what appears to be cold morning (Figure 22). Four of the boys adopt a rigid posture and face the camera head on, fully engaged in the process. While the remaining three subjects gaze in different directions, their movement belies their performance to the photographer. Without the commanding presence of a teacher the students’ pose betray the disciplinary function of the camera. The barely discernible faces of the

children suggest that this photograph was staged to emphasize not only its subjects but also the entirety of the schoolhouse. Flanked by bare elm trees the front gabled building appears austere, with loose shingles and an exposed foundation. Despite this, the background situates its subjects as members of an institution with symbolic importance, projecting attributes of learnedness and denoting their membership into the larger body of educated national subjects.

Histories of the Marble Village and its school are scant, and what has been recorded has largely been based on a short article published on April 11, 1941 in the *Amherstburg Echo* titled "Colored People of District Had to Start Their Own School". The article starts:

> Announcement that the Board of Trustees of School Section No. 1 was endeavoring to sell the property on the second concession of Anderdon, north of the Texas Road brought back a flood of memories to the colored folk of Amherstburg and district. For it was on this small parcel of land that the colored people, over 80 years ago, established their own school which they maintained until 1907, according to records kept by Peter Stokes, King Street, Amherstburg... Racial prejudice, forced them to break with the whites and Indians at the Sloane School and after many hardships which culminated in a court battle, the colored people of Marble Village won recognition by the Government and the school was officially known as S. S. No. 1... Previous to 1850, all races which included whites, colored and Indians attended the Sloane School... Before long, narrow-minded people raised the racial issue which continued to grow and in time forced the colored people of the district to apply to Ottawa for a permission to form a colored Separate School.

Peter Stokes Jr.'s father was an original member of the Marble Village, a man who escaped enslavement in Loudon Co., Virginia in 1846 and settled in Essex County. Despite the article being told through the reminisces of Stokes, racial prejudice is discussed in the past tense. What is ironic is that an article describing a recently performed local minstrel show sits two columns over from the Marble Village's story on the front page of the paper.

The article goes on to highlight the role that so-called white abolitionist Roland Winfield played in the development of the Marble Village school: "About this time a friend appeared in the person of Roland Winfield, a man of wealth with a desire to assist the colored people. Little is known of Mr. Winfield's background, but according to Mr. Stokes he was thought to be a Southerner, who owned a block of land north of Texas Road west of the second concession known as Marble Village." This is the narrative parroted in the histories that follow. What these later histories overlook is a key part of Stokes' account: "Mr. Winfield was looked upon as a philanthropist eight or nine decades ago, he would be classed today as a shrewd real estate dealer. With the view in mind of assisting the colored folk, Mr. Winfield divided his property into small parcels of two, five and ten acres and sold them on an installment plan." The article is quick to editorialize and save the image of Winfield: "Regardless of the price, Mr. Winfield received for his land, he was the one who made it possible for the colored people to own their own school."

I quote the article at length because as one of the only surviving records of the Marble Village it perpetuates a paternalist narrative of the Black community of Anderdon and downplays both the role this community played in shaping the history of this land, and how this story is situated in the larger nation-wide practice of segregation and territorial dispossession. Before turning my attention to the local struggle over segregated schools and the Black spatial imaginary, I work to unmap the region through a reading of its earliest cartographic materials.

Map 1: Map of the Western District of the Huron Reserve

The first known map of Anderdon was drafted in 1836 and is titled "Plan of Huron Reserve". At this point it is necessary to sketch the history of the Wyandatte in Anderdon

(Figure 23). Unfortunately Figure 23 was removed from this dissertation because of copyright restrictions. To view the full citation and an image of the map please find a link to the image in this dissertation's "List of Figures" (viii). The Huron-Wyandotte history in this region began in the early seventeenth century when Antoine de Lamonthe Cadillac, the French Commandant at Fort Michilimackinac established a French-Huron settlement in the Detroit-Essex region to ward off British colonies (Teasdale 2019). The defeat of the French in the Seven Years' War (1756-1763)[4] resulted in the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which transferred this land to the British. Not long after the signing of the Treaty of Paris and the close of the Revolutionary War in the United States the region experienced an influx of British Loyalists. These settlers were given generous allotments of Crown wastelands—these developments resulted in the Huron-Wyandottes being surrounded by growing European settlements. Soon after British officers of the Indian Department illegally procured a seven square miles tract of land on which they established a quasi-military settlement. Forced to legally acquire this land, Alexander McKee, a British agent of the Indian department, had to officially obtain a native land cession for Southwestern Ontario. With the establishment of the McKee Treaty of 1790 a massive tract of land was ceded by the Ottawa, Chippewa, Potawatomie, and Hurons, and two reserves were established in the Detroit region for the Huron-Wyandotte. The largest reserve became known as Anderdon (Rivière aux Canards) and was highly populated, while the smaller Huron Church reserve was sparsely populated.

4 The Seven Years War took place between imperial rivals Britain and France; a struggle for supremacy and annexation of territory. This was a continuation of a series of European battles that had begun earlier in the 18th century, in Canada it resulted in a massive loss of territory for the French. With the Treaty of Paris of 1763, France formally ceded Canada to the British. The Seven Years' War therefore laid the bicultural foundations of modern Canada.

By the 1830s Lieutenant-Governor John Colborne drafted a treaty of surrender with the Wyandottes of Anderdon based on a new approach of cultural imperialism, persuading the Wyandottes to surrender their land for individualized 200 acre plots of land on which they could farm. Money for seed, agricultural equipment, housing and education would come from annuities established from sales of excess reserve lands. This financial support was intended to assimilate the Wyandotte, making it possible for the government to build European style houses and schools. Wyandotte chiefs Splitlog and Warrow fiercely contested this expansion, maintaining that the band should control the entirely of the reserve. As the map indicates, Splitlog's name appears on several tracts of land on the eastern portion of the map, while Warrow and his descendants' titles are indicated on a few of the western tracts. Colborne was replaced by Francis Bond Head, who rejected his predecessor's idea of assimilation, arguing that the Wyandotte should be segregated from white society, where they could "live out the twilight of their civilization" (Teasdale 2019, 40). These negotiations with Head marked factioning between Splitlog and Warrow. While Splitlog maintained his position against settler encroachment, Warrow and his family felt Colborne's and Head's proposals more reasonable. Facilitated by the latter group, after much pressure, on February 2, 1836 the Wyandottes surrendered 9,674 acres of their lands (Leclair 1962). Splitlog refused to sign the treaty, and in response Head ordered to stop the payment of monies owed to the Wyandotte. The Warrow party eventually signed Head's treaty, after he agreed to allow the Wyandotte to have exclusive rights to the local quarry. Splitlog died in 1838 and shortly after the land was surveyed and parceled off to bidders.

Map 2: "Sold for the benefit of the Wyandotte Indians"

The second map from June 1839 was drawn up a year after Splitlog's death. It was drafted to mark the land "Sold for the benefit of the Wyandotte Indians" deducting from that tract of land the area needed for a "military base" (Figure 24). Unfortunately Figure 24 was removed from this dissertation because of copyright restrictions. To view the full citation and an image of the map please find a link to the image in this dissertation's "List of Figures" (viii). The boundary of the Anderdon reserve is indicated by the thin red line that runs down the western most part of the map. As the map indicates, the Anderdon reserve was a narrow, triangular tract of the land of 1,078 acres. The tenure of the land has radically changed to reflect the violent expulsion of Wyandotte peoples. It is in this context that Rowland Winfield's name and initials appear between the harbour and the stone quarry. This is the land he "donated" to the community to be turned into the Marble Village. Winfield is described as an abolitionist in many local histories, but upon close examination of his life history, a different story emerges.

Winfield was born in 1775, the son of a clergyman and a nephew of Lord Bagot, a British courtier and Conservative politician. Winfield immigrated to Canada from Shrewsbury, England in 1830, and initially settled in Guelph. He acquired 800 acres of land, on which he imported the first cattle and horses into the region. After an unsuccessful and costly bid for candidacy for the House of Assembly of Gore's district, he sold his land and left the district. Winfield settled in Anderdon in 1837, and "purchased a large and valuable tract of land at the Government sale of Indian reserves." A letter Winfield wrote to the editor of the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* (1838) provides his account of his time in Canada. The letter was drafted as a defence

against claims that Winfield was a sympathizer of the Upper Canada Rebellion.[5] Winfield describes how rumours circulated in Amherstburg that he had plans not only to help insurrectionists overthrow the colonial government, but also capture those formerly enslaved and "deliver them over to their old task-masters". Winfield (1838) believed these claims to be "diabolical" and feared that Amherstburg's Black community would try to assassinate him, he describes the situation as follows:

> To impose on these degenerate sons of Nature, to arouse their savage and blood-thirsty feelings under any circumstances, can be no honor to the white man, for when we consider that these men have escaped from slavery, and that certain punishment awaits their return, we know that the word freedom thrills though every nerve of their system; and to tell them that an intended attack on that freedom is threatened by any person, is sure to arouse in them the baser passions, and to endanger the life of the individual so designated... Poor deluded creatures.

Winfield concludes his letter by claiming that he much preferred his treatment in Detroit and the "institutions of the Republic":

> Thankful I feel that there is such a country, and such easy access, to protect me against the scalping-knife of the Indian, and the still more to be dreaded assassin attack of the unprincipled, run-away slave, for although England may boast she has given liberty to the black, America has done more! She has emancipated the white man!!" (Ibid.)

This letter casts doubt on claims of Winfield's abolitionist sentiment, and points more to the narrative that he was a "shrewd real estate dealer". Given Winfield's frustration with colonial institutions it might be more apt to describe his sale of his farm to residents of Marble Village less an act of charity, and more an opportunity to offload land he no longer wished to tend.

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5 The leaders of the 1837 rebellion in Upper Canada, including William Lyon Mackenzie, wanted democratic reform and an end to oligarchic rule by an elite clique of politicians and officials known as the Family Compact. This group not only controlled the system of patronage throughout the colony, they also used political office and influence to further their own business interests. Though the rebellion failed, it helped to modify the political climate of British North America. Changes included the union of Upper and Lower Canada into the Province of Canada and the eventual introduction of responsible government.

There exists no record of Winfield in the region after 1861, suggesting that after he sold his land he left Essex County for good.

Map 3: "Map of Anderdon Township"

The final map of Anderdon Township looks much more official than its predecessors, the lines are cleaner, the handwriting neater, and more points of reference (Figure 25). Created in 1881 for the *Illustrated Atlas of the Dominion of Canada* it reflects the further institutionalization of cartographic practices and state formation. The parcels of land owned by Winfield now feature the names of their new title owners: Leander Jones; Stokes; Harris; and H.H. Cunningham—members of Anderdon's Black community. Compared to the early map, this map paints a clearer picture of the land which Winfield sold, and lends support to the theory that the sale of his land had less to do with a concern for abolition; bounded on the west by a dock, on the south by a train track and quarry, and on the north by wet lands, the map of the land that became the Marble Village marks a clear case of environmental racism. This is supported by soil surveys of the county from 1949 which indicate that these tracts of land were composed of poorly drained heavily-textured clays (Clarke 1978). The lots closer to the Detroit River were comprised of good quality soil, which is likely one reason the Huron-Wyandotte were systematically pushed off of these valuable farm lands.

Though Anderdon did not have racially specific restrictive covenants, the history of land-use in the region correspond fully with the white spatial imaginary. As Lipsitz (2006, 33) argues, the value of whiteness stems directly from "patterns of resistance, refusal, and renegotiation that white individuals and their elected representatives have fashioned in response



FIGURE 25: H. Belden & Co."Map of Anderdon Township from the 1881." *Illustrated Historical Atlas of Essex & Kent Counties.* [Lots of Stokes and Jones family].

to anti-discrimination legislation". The land-use patterns in Anderdon evidence a coordinated effort among the colonial state, land owners and planners to protect their gains and pass them to succeeding generations through the exclusion of the Huron-Wyandotte and Black residents of the region. For instance, according to abolitionist newspapers, the primary goal of many African Americans migrating to Upper Canada, both independently and under the guidance of various organizations was to purchase land and to clear it for farming (Jenson 1966). "Blessed with fertility of soil, aided and accentuated by a mild and favourable climate" Essex Country was known as "The Sun Parlour of the Dominion of Canada", because of its comparatively higher crop yields to states in the United States, and neighbouring counties (Essex County Council 1912, 5). Boasting "good drainage and excellent roads" Essex County was known for its thriving agricultural economy with staple crops of grain, tobacco and fruits (Ibid.). Within the pages of *Voice of the Fugitive* (March 12, 1865) articles consistently refer to the quality of farm land in Canada:

> the climate is very little colder here than it is in the norther part of Kentucky. In proof of this, we have good crops of tobacco raised here every year for market, and sweet potatoes, a root which requires a warm climate, grow and do well, in the southern part of Canada West. In addition to this, all kinds of grain and vegetation that grows in the North Western States is raised here, as the soil is of a superior quality and the climate favourable.

Since 1844, in neighbouring Colchester Village two-thirds of land under cultivation had been cleared by African American refugees. However, the farms ringing Lake Erie were almost entirely owned by white settlers, with only an occasional farm owned by a Black family. In most cases, refugees leased small portions of forested land for six or seven years. However, by the time this land was cleared for cultivation the lease had expired and the Black settlers were

turned off the land and forced to move further into the woods. David Grier who arrived in Essex County in 1831 cleared between 70 and 80 acres of lease-land from which he derived no benefit (Jenson 1966). Grier was of the opinion that white landowners took advantage of the refugee in order to have their land cleared.

Read alongside maps of Anderdon, this history demonstrates how white landowners benefited tremendously from the privileged access they enjoyed from discriminatory land practices. Yet, as Lipsitz describes, instead of being recognized accurately as recipients of collective public largesse, white landowners are mythologized as groups whose wealth grew out of success in acquiring property on the "free market" (2011, 27). This is strikingly clear in the narrative of Winfield's so-called generous donation of land for the Marble Village. Winfield is positioned as a smart businessman, rather than the beneficiary of intergenerational advancement through his connections to Lord Bagot. At the same time, the Black community members who pooled resources to purchase undesirable land for the Marble Village from Winfield are portrayed as the *recipients* of Winfield's largesse. A similar logic was at work when Lieutenant-Governor John Colborne used annuities established from sales of excess reserve lands for the purpose of assimilating the Wyandottes of Anderdon. By packaging these imperialist tactics as upgrades to education and shelter, he was able to steal 200 acre plots of land from the Wyandotte. These practices and the historical narratives that they produce function in step with broader histories of racialized space in that they enable advocates of the white spatial imaginary to disavow any racial intent. Specifically, "they speak on behalf of whiteness and its accumulated privileges and immunities, but rather than having to speak *as* whites, they present themselves as racially unmarked homeowners, citizens, and taxpayers whose preferred policies

just happen to sustain white privilege and power" (Lipsitz 2011, 35). These coercive approaches to space are couched in the language of benevolence and lawful secession obscuring or rendering invisible any racial intent.

The Black Spatial Imaginary in Marble Village

With these traditional cartographic descriptions in mind, I return to the photograph of the Marble Village Coloured School. Charles, Thomas, and Louis, the Jones boys pictured in this school photograph, were the sons of Leander and Nancy Jones—some of the first inhabitants of Marble Village. Like this school photograph the Jones' family folder includes several photographs documenting life in the Marble Village, but also life beyond its borders/limits. In this way the Jones family photographs map the Marble Village. By charting these locally derived experiences, the life histories disclosed within the Jones family photographs also unmap imperial or Eurocentric understandings of this region. I now turn my attention to the establishment of segregated schools in the area, and delineate how class photographs within these family folders document local struggles over racialized space. Against formal mapping practices that maintain, overlook, erase or segregate, these objects are more than just "certificates of presence" (Barthes 1982, 87), they spatialize experiences that unfolded within the shadow of slavery, segregation and dispossession.

If as Patrick Wolfe (2016, 14) argues, "racialization represents a response to the crisis occasioned when colonizers are threatened with the requirement to share social space with the colonized", then ensuring the supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon state and the creation of a Canadian national identity required the enforced confinement of racialized populations to

particular spaces. This colour line was established through practices of racial segregation, which existed de facto as part of early settlement patterns in Canada, and extended to major community institutions such as schools and churches (Reynolds 2016). It follows that the spatial configurations of racism operated within public education by mechanizing white supremacy, excluding Black students and assigning them subpar tools and sites for learning. Though counter to the policy described in the Common School Act of 1843, which maintained that it was illegal for school board officials to refuse access to education, Black children were routinely turned away from attending schools. As Natasha Henry (2019) explains:

> In Ontario, school segregation took different forms. In instances where African Canadian children were permitted to attend a local public school, they were kept apart from the White students and forced to sit on separate benches, along with keeping their bags, coats, and lunches separate. Even when taking class pictures, some Black children were made to stand apart from their White classmates.

Practices of exclusion became more widespread as Canada's Black population grew in response to the Fugitive Slave Act passed by the United States Congress in 1850, which required that formerly enslaved people be returned to their "owners", even if they were in a free state. This influx gave rise to more organized efforts among white people to lobby for legislation to legalize racial segregation in public schools (Ibid.). Complying with their demands, Egerton Ryerson, who served as superintendent of schools for Canada West from 1844 to 1876, sanctioned racially segregated schools through the Common Schools Act of 1850. This act revised the Common Schools Act of 1843 by adding a provision that allowed for separate schools based on race and religion. It was amended to read: "It shall be the duty of the Municipal Council of any Township, and of the Board of School Trustees of any City, Town or incorporated Village, on the application, in writing, of twelve, or more, resident heads of families, to authorize the

establishment of one, or more, Separate schools for Protestants, Roman Catholics, or Coloured people" (Charbonnel 1983, 213). Segregated schooling was then an attempt to fix the meaning of space, reflecting the white spatial imaginary. Under these circumstances schoolhouses become sites bound up in processes of contestation, regulation and resistance.

Map 4: Class photographs of The Marble Village Coloured School and The King Street School

By 1846 Black children in Amherstburg were prohibited from attending the local school by white parents and administrators. With little to no financial support, Black parents across Canada struggled for their children to receive adequate education. In Amherstburg the superintendent of schools for the region Robert Peden complained that the Black community, "seemed bent on having their children on the same footing with the whites" (Ontario Department of Education, 1846). Finally in 1851, a separate school for Black children was opened in a small log building on King Street under the Common Schools Act. When abolitionist Benjamin Drew (1856, 348) of the United States visited the school in 1856, he reported: "The school house is a small, low building and contains neither blackboard not chair... The whole interior is comfortless and repulsive."

In a worn class photograph taken in the closing years of the nineteenth century, students, and their principal and teacher J. H. Alexander, pose outside of the King Street School in Amherstburg—the first segregated school in the area (Figure 26). The single adult represented in this photograph stands slightly above the children over whom he presides. Positioned in a relaxed and commanding pose, the photograph has been orchestrated to emphasize Alexander's authority; he stands at the apex with his students arranged in a triangular formation, cascading outward from the school steps to wooden slabs positioned in the mud.



FIGURE 26: Students of King Street School in Amherstburg, Ontario with their teacher, John H. Alexander. Amherstburg. ca 1890.

Facing eastward, the facade of the schoolhouse and its students are clearly rendered in the morning sun. The heavy fabrics worn by the subjects and the bare trees reflected in the shuttered window panes of the schoolhouse suggest a brisk fall morning. The gleaming white expanse of the limestone schoolhouse spills over the edge of the photographic frame, creating a crisp background able to contain the photograph's numerous subjects.

The students' obedience to Alexander is evident in their uniform and unflinching attention to the camera, rendering their features in sharp detail. As the authority figure of the photograph, John Henry Alexander stands tall reflecting both his disciplinary presence and his status as a highly respected community member. Son of Thomas Alexander, a man who escaped enslavement in Germantown, Kentucky and migrated to Anderdon in 1848, John Henry

Alexander was born in 1857 in Anderdon, where he also attended public school. After receiving his teaching certificate from the Normal School, he taught at various local schools throughout his lifetime. John Henry began his tenure at the King Street School in 1879, where he remained for 30 years. In addition to his position at the King Street School, Alexander was elected as an Amherstburg Town Councillor and was later appointed Town Assessor, a title he held until his death on 31 August 1934. Alexander also acted as town auditor and was Superintendent of the African Methodist Episcopal Sunday School for 20 years. Known as an excellent orator his presence was in demand at many public gatherings including annual Emancipation Day Celebrations every August. At the 1928 celebration, Alexander "stressed the hospitality of the town [Amherstburg] and the unique and fitting feature that it was here Eliza and George Harris made famous by Harriet Beecher Stowe found refuge in the early days" (Amherstburg Freedom Museum). Alexander's pedagogical work and civic service is characteristic of many of the long-standing Black community members in Amherstburg who resisted anti-Black racism through active participation in community organizations and public life. Or, as Afua Cooper (2014, 197) explains, "at the core of the praxes of these Promised Land settlers is agency."

The King Street School was eventually relocated and replaced by a limestone structure in 1875, pictured here. By the late nineteenth century the schoolhouse served as a multipurpose community center and meeting place for Amherstburg's Black residents, playing host to Sunday School classes, literary society meetings as well as debates, dances, boxing matches and concerts. Similar to the Nazery African Methodist Episcopal Church, which over time was re-purposed to meet the evolving needs of the community, the King Street School serves as a monument to intergenerational resistance to the white spatial imaginary. Though the structure

exists today as the Mount Beulah Church of God in Christ, this class photograph attests to the structure's original function, historical evidence that brings into view relations of power, and struggle highlighting the ways in which physical geographies are bound up in social processes.

A similar pattern of segregation occurred in neighbouring Anderdon. Barred from attending the local school, some 125 families of Marble Village purchased from Mr. Winfield a small tract of land with a log house in order to build the Marble Village Coloured School. In order to maintain the schoolhouse the children were required to pay twenty-five cents a month to attend. Later a school attended solely by white students was erected further down Texas Road. The families attending this school petitioned to have it made the official common school for that school section, which would deprive the Marble Village Coloured School of its small government stipend. A legal battle ensued and the Marble Village Coloured School eventually secured their funding. These actions align with Lipsitz's (2006, 28) arguments about the powerful role of white resistance, refusal and political leadership in forming the possessive investment in whiteness: "White resistance and refusal in housing and education works to deprive minority children of both intergenerational transfers of wealth and the tools to better their own conditions". Therefore, in education the highest level of judicial power in Canada worked to raise barriers to education and asset accumulation for members of racialized groups. Ironically, when the Texas Road school burned down, its students were welcomed to join the Marble Village Coloured School to continue their education. In 1917 the land on which the schoolhouse stood was sold to Brunner Mond Canada Limited who began a large-scale soda ash plant operation of the nearby quarry. The school was eventually closed and all of the students in the area were transferred to the new Public School Section No. 1. There today exists no

archeological record of this schoolhouse, what remains beyond oral testimonies and brief sketches in local histories is the weathered photograph that opens this chapter.

In her study of school portrait photographs in early twentieth-century rural Nova Scotia, Sara Spike (2012) argues that though only subject to passing scholarly attention, school photographs are avidly collected by local historians. These collecting practices gesture to the school photograph's function as a key tool in imagining community history. In rural areas, school photographs from the early twentieth century are in some cases the only visual representation of a group larger than a family. In this way they make visible the social networks and processes that drew people together. Beyond their local importance Spike suggests that school photographs should be integrated into our understanding of the political history of education, a field that has often been narrated from an urban perspective. In the context of provincially legislated segregation, the photograph of the Marble Village Coloured School contributes to our understanding of the implications of segregation, but also positions education as a terrain of struggle.

Returning to Lipsitz, segregation produces cumulative disadvantages of racialized communities, and provides "locked in" advantages for white students (2011,12). In particular "housing and school segregation function to channel white children into well equipped classrooms with experienced teachers while crowding Black children into ill-equipped buildings" (idem., 6). Living in segregated neighbourhoods imposes what Lipsitz (idem., 7) describes as a the equivalent of a "racial tax on people of colour". In this way, students of the Marble Village School and the King Street School were taxed twice; even though all schools in Essex County were funded by tax money collected from *every* resident, schools remained

reserved for white students. At the same time these photographs demonstrate the necessity of turning segregation into congregation to produce a Black spatial imaginary that counters this hostile privatism with more democratic and inclusive approaches to space (2011). This was practiced through the creation of multi-racial spaces, and the later repurposing of these community spaces to facilitate various mutual aid programs. The Marble Village Coloured School and King Street School were built through a community participation in racial solidarity. In essence this history is a struggle over space—securing the freedom to enter, inhabit, use, control and own a physical place. Lipsitz (idem., 52) describes the Black spatial imaginary in such terms: "African American battles for resources, rights and recognition not only have 'taken place', but also have required blacks literally to 'take places'". The existing class photographs constitute an archive of oppositional consciousness based on a shared understanding of the importance of these schools and their power to create new opportunities and life chances.

At the same time, one could argue that the Black spatial imaginary as it manifested in Anderdon was also a class-making project. The residents of the Marble Village and Amherstburg were decidedly middle-class land owners—they used the commonalities of race *and* class as the basis for building their pan-neighbourhood alliances. This struggle was ultimately for a stake in the educational system, and pathways to upward mobility. The photographs discussed here were taken at a time of increasing educational bureaucratization in Upper Canada. Until the mid 1800s, education was primarily a local matter, the concern only of the subscribers to that school and the trustees they elected (Goldberg 2011). However, state supremacy in education was consolidated by a series of school acts passed in the 1840s and 1850s, which created a larger educational administrative framework, mandated property taxation for education funding and

enforced school attendance (Ibid.). These changes were largely instituted during Egerton Ryerson's tenure as superintendent. Prior to the so-called Ryerson era, in Upper Canada and throughout the western world, early nineteenth century education was characteristically "voluntary" and informal—typically taking place within the household, workshop and field (Prentice 2004, 16). Any supplements to this informal education came in the form of sermons, Sunday schools and camp meetings.

The mid-nineteenth century transformations in educational practices and institutions were a result of immense change in the political sphere. In 1841 Upper Canada united with Lower Canada to form the Province of Canada and, then, with Confederation in 1867, became the Province of Ontario. Pedagogical activities came to mirror the ideological goals of the state, in particular a growing belief in the ultimate perfectibility of human nature based on the evangelical credence that despite the persistence of sin in the world all people were capable of being saved (Prentice 2004). Educational reformers also promoted formal schooling as an avenue to upward mobility, a sign and symbol of success. Prentice (2004) argues that the relationship between education and class reflected changing perceptions of the social structure which occurred in most western countries during the nineteenth century. Primarily, this was characterized by a "transition from society perceived as a multi-level, hierarchical and rather static structure of interdependent ranks, to the idea that increasingly the community was made up of two great classes only, classes that were potentially if not actually hostile to one another" (idem., 66). While the former view of social relations was representative of a basically agricultural economy, geographically organized in small villages and towns, the latter emerged with the development of the modern industrial nation and large cities. Couched in the language

of Eurocentrism the dualism inherent in Victorian educators' and reformers ideas about human nature "carried over into a world view in which fundamental distinctions were made not only between 'civilized' and 'savage' societies, but also within any given society, between the respectable classes and the lower orders" (Ibid.).

Though a small school-house with seven students, the Marble Village school is an institutional portrait and its production constitutes a particular nexus of political and education apparatus. The staging of an annual class photograph began in the late nineteenth century—an outcome in the modernization of education. This entrenchment of schooling to everyday life enforced the school as a disciplinary institution essential to social reproduction. As an arm of the colonial state, the schoolhouse became crucial to gender role assignment, racial and class segregation, the enforcement of behavioural norms, and the reproduction of ideological belief systems (Spike 2012). Notably the Marble Village school's students are boys—fusing ideas of nation and masculinity. It reflects the aspirations of the young subjects but also their parent's aspirations for their sons to become a certain kind of subject. If school is a site of social reproduction, then what does this photograph of the Marble Village school reproduce? Like all institutional photographs, the school photograph performs a disciplinary function and is compositionally organized to reflect this function. The boys photographed are organized by descending height and are more or less centred in the frame, in this way this assemblage adheres to the tropes of the genre. The repetitive visual language of the class photograph is meant to signal the subjects' membership in the body politic: the composition is less about individual identity and more about the group. These formulaic representations and the ideologies that they reflect conform to the larger national matrixes in which a school is embedded, demonstrating an

acquiescence to a group identity imposed through membership in a particular school grade or class (Hirsch and Spitzer 2014). In their uniform appearance, arrangement and attempts at rigid posture the boys both literally and metaphorically look like foot soldiers. In this way they convey a kind of masculinity in becoming, dutifully embodying national belonging integrated into a larger social narrative of nationalized masculinity.

Like other forms of commercial portraiture which function through ritual and recurrence in their production, the school photograph exists in relation to others of its kind. All school photographs are then informed by a documentary impulse, they are meant to record an individual's membership within an institution. In its familiar and ritualized form, these photographs perform school as a stabilizing force assuring the continuity of Victorian moral values through a public institution. Schooling became a powerful institution propagating notions of respectability and the modernization of European society through secular laws.

The entrenchment of segregated learning speaks to the racially inflected notions of modernization that these definitions of progress rested on. In their struggles to provide education for their children the people of the Marble Village were invested in the social and political promise of the Canadian state. In this way they contributed to a counterculture of modernity—demanding that bourgeoisie civil society live up to its promises of egalitarian, universal values. Modernity promotes such splitting. If modernity inscribes itself spatially through the formation on institutions, then the Marble Village School allows us to unsettle both statist understanding of space, but also reflect on countercultures of modernity.

Map 5: Nancy Jones at her home on Texas Road, Anderdon

ANDERDON, TEXAS ROAD, SUMMER c. 1900—Like those before it, the final map described reflects the gendering of space, as only men can hold title to land (Figure 27). While the previous photograph examined modernity through the study of an institution, this photograph articulates modernity through the discourses of domesticity. A photograph taken further down Texas Road from the Marble Village allows us to map how gender registers within the frame. "Mrs. Jones"--Nancy Jones, stands with a companion in front of her home on Texas Road. Nancy poses in a white blouse with a loose string of beads around her neck, her right arm is extended to prevent an encroaching piece of foliage from obscuring the camera's view of her. Nancy's companion, a woman her senior—perhaps her sister Mary Jane Davis, wears a high-collared dress closed with a brooch, she clasps a book in her right hand. The women stand behind a neatly trimmed hedge and in front of the home's wrap-around porch. The climbers that creep along the porch posts are blurred from motion, suggesting that the photograph was likely staged on a windy day. There is no date on the photograph, but the silvering out suggests that it is a silver gelatin print, and so it was likely taken in the late 1890s or early years of the 1900s. The photograph is staged similarly to Bertha Davis' portrait outside of her parents' home, the expanse of the property and breadth of the garden dwarf the sitters, performs a role in projecting mastery within domestic space. The caption of the photograph re-inscribes gendered understandings of space, it reads: "Leander Jones' home on Texas Rd. In picture Mrs. Jones and...". Nancy Jones is thus identified by her status as Leander's wife, living under Leander's roof.



FIGURE 27: Nancy Jones, stands with a companion in front of her home on Texas Road. c. 1900. Gelatin Silver Print.

Nancy Jones (born Nancy Harriet Lewis) was born on 14 February 1859 in Glen Run, Ohio to Berry and Lucy Lewis (Ohio Births and Christenings, 1821-1962). The Lewis family migrated to Canada sometime between 1859 and 1862, and settled in Colchester in Essex County. Nancy married Leander Jones (b. 1849) on 25 November 1886 in Salem, Washtenaw, Michigan (Michigan, County Marriages, 1820-1940). Leander was born in Virginia to Jefferson and Mary Jones, the family lived in Ohio before migrating to Marble Village in 1856. The couple had three sons Charles (b. 1888), Thomas (b. 1891) and Louis (b. 1894), all born in Essex, County (Amherstburg Freedom Museum). Leander worked as a farmer and was a trustee of the Marble Village School, he died in Ann, Arbor, Michigan in 1907. When the census was taken in 1911, Nancy was farming and heading a household that included her three sons (Canada census, Essex South, 1911). The family continued to live on the original lot featured in the "Map of Anderdon Township". Nancy died five years later in 1916 in Anderdon. Nancy's obituary gives some detail on the lives of her sons: "Thomas who sails on the steamer Shenango; Charles, a teacher at Beaverton, Ont., and Louis, who died a year ago." (*Amherstburg Echo*, July 21, 1916). It also informs us that she had a brother living in Salem, Michigan. This is the information the state archives and local newspapers offers us about the Jones' family. This information forms a chronology of interactions with the state—census enumerations, marriage records, and birth records. It paints a picture of the life of the Jones family in broad strokes: in the years after the passing of the United States' Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, and the close of their Civil War, like many Black families Nancy and Leander's family migrated across the border; they settled in a community formed by white abolitionists; and, after settling they sustained

familial ties across the Detroit River. This account maps their lives but tells us nothing of their relationships to the spaces they inhabited: the Marble Village, Texas Road, Ashtabula, Detroit.

The history of the tenure of Marble Village that unfolds in the successive maps of Anderdon reflects patriarchal understandings of land. Parcels of land and titles are inscribed with the names of men—erasing women's contributions to our understanding of this space. The caption Alvin McCurdy assigns to this photograph of Nancy Jones and her friend is also marked by masculinist framings. Unlike the previous photograph that features its subjects within public space, the women in this photograph are positioned in domestic space. During the Victorian era the home became a space for the display of imperial spectacle and exhibiting the cult of domesticity (McClintock 1995). Domestic space is therefore both a "space (a geographical and architectural alignment) and a social relation to power" (idem., 34). This is echoed by Lipsitz (2011, 13): "the white spatial imaginary portrays the properly gendered prosperous suburban home as the privileged moral geography of the nation." The relations and behaviours enacted in the poses, postures, and setting of this photograph stage a certain reading of family life. Though we are unsure of the relation between these two women, we know that Nancy Jones had no daughters and so the woman next to her may have been her mother. Read together, the photographs of the Jones family are divided between two realms: the boys Charles, Thomas and Lewis inhabit public space; while the women Nancy and friend are positioned in the private realm. However the family, like the school, is also an institution. McClintock (1995, 44) argues that photography was one of the central technologies that gave the family figure an "institutional shape": The family image came to figure hierarchy within unity as an organic element of historical progress, and thus became indispensable for legitimizing exclusion and hierarchy

within nonfamilial social forms such as nationalism, liberal individualism, and imperialism. Women's relegation to private space was crucial in preserving the health and wealth of the white spatial imaginary, functioning to control women's sexuality, by exalting maternity, and breeding a virile race of empire builders. Portraiture then required a codification of the body as a map of interior essences to assert their superiority to cultural Others. Ideas about racial superiority and purity were often described in gendered terms—equating the domesticity and gentility of the middle-class woman with notions of "pure" blood lines where heredity could be charted. Likewise the portrait and its placement in a family album provided a site where practices of national belonging could be displayed. The performance of feminine virtues in portrait photography functioned metonymically—through visual tropes the white, middle-class female body became a symbol of national belonging. Biological racism as Stuart Hall (2017, 17) remarked "sneaks back into the discussion through the pantry"; with the rise of nineteenth century eugenics, the white female body became the locus for white propagation. The centrality of race to the Canadian nation building project is clearly articulated in dominant ideologies of motherhood of the era. The concept of motherhood gained increased importance in Canada at the turn of the century. Faced with a declining British-Canadian birthrate, an influx in immigration, and the loss of the nation's men during the Great War, the Canadian state turned to women of British background to act as the saviours of the race through their position as mothers (Green 2017). However, while emphasizing domesticity and motherhood as ideal roles for white women, dominant ideologies and institutions within Canada located racialized women as workers first and foremost even when this worker status was achieved at the expense of separation from family and children.

Framed by the stature of the home and the breadth of the garden this photograph might be read as a means of associating its sitters with interior space—the house provides the scale from which to glean their importance. Their dress and posture revolve around notions of middle-class identity, powerfully inscribed by codes of Victorian portraiture. For instance, holding a book became a powerful visual trope in the Victorian era, signifying to its viewer symbolic entry into the orbit of middle-class learnedness and respectability. But at the same time these photographs demonstrate their sitters' ability to not only represent themselves, but represent their spatial relations. In his study of photographs of post-war Black settlement in England, Stuart Hall (1984, 257) argues that it is wrong to "read these portraits as exclusively the result of the imposition of the codes of formal (white) portrait photography on an alien (black) subject for that simplification would be precisely to collude... with the construction of West Indians as objects, always 'outside time', outside history". Resisting Manichean readings of this image allows us to contemplate the ambiguities or ambivalences—or as Hall describes the "astonishing plenitude"—of colonial mappings of space (Ibid.). Lipsitz (2011, 181) describes the "desire for property as a kind of idolatry" where communities can "acquire the full fruits and benefits of citizenship and social membership". Though this desire elevates property rights over more equitable distribution of land, it also represents a collective will to overcome obstacles and resist subordination. This is particularly true of the Marble Village where struggles for state education and property should be ambiguously positioned.

Photographs are a collection of presences and absences, it is worthy to note that there are no men present within this particular photographic frame. The framing of the photograph might be read as enclosing the women within the boundary of the home, its subjects could also

be read as symbolically liaising between public and private space, positioned between the home and its fenced border. There is a haptic element to this photograph—Nancy Jones appears to be holding on to unruly climbing vine, a demonstration of her quite literally controlling her property. In this way the photograph challenges the normative gender roles replicated and normalized by the hierarchies on which the white spatial imaginary depends. This reading works to redeploy what could be understood as the iconography of domesticity by resisting the closures and containments of being home bound. Based on its compositional unity this photograph looks to be taken by an itinerant professional photographer, perhaps from the local studio of W.W. Davidson in Amherstburg. That it was taken by a professional photographer inflects the photograph with a certain intentionality. In their dress, positioning, and use of props, these women, though mediated through the gaze of the photographer, were in control of their representation. This photograph then emanates from the experience of Nancy Jones, creating a visible archive of her presence in the Marble Village. Lipsitz (2011) argues that when people are bound up in physical places they cannot control they respond by constructing discursive spaces as sites of agency, affiliation, and imagination. This photograph of Nancy Jones alongside the other photographs in the family folder functions not only as a repository of collective memory, but also memorializes her negotiations with both public and domestic space. It promotes a new understanding of the stakes of racialized space in Marble Village.

Conclusion

For Gilroy the Black Atlantic model understands diaspora through transnational connections firmly rooted in shared racialized experiences and routed through expressive

cultures that address divergent forms of oppressions and resistance. In the Marble Village these relationships are expressed through segregation practices and masculinist framings of space, offering material evidence of racialized space. By foregrounding issues of mapping and unmapping, I have argued that vernacular photographs are similarly caught up in a complex web of life-sustaining, and capital sustaining systems—simultaneously working within and against their defining logics. If as Gilroy describes, modernity is understood as a distinct configuration with its own spatial and temporal characteristics, as an archive of their own making the Jones and Stokes family photographs offer us an imaginative topography of this space. In doing so they help us to map the spatial dimensions of the Black Atlantic in Essex County, and the labour that produces this world.

Chapter Five: Shifting Spaces, and Fixed Places: Black Mariners on Lake Erie

Introduction

This chapter argues that vernacular photographs enable us to visualize forms of oppositional practice that align with Black Atlantic modes of resistance. I craft my argument based on my reading of late nineteenth and early twentieth century representations of Black marine cooks and stewards in identification photographs, formally staged group portraits, and snapshot photographs. This collection was amassed by George McCurdy Jr., father of Alvin D. McCurdy, during his tenure as a marine cook working onboard commercial and leisure lake ships that traversed Lake Erie.

Based on this reading of George McCurdy's collection with the McCurdy fonds the political landscape of the lake ship functions in alignment with broader trends taking place in the Black Atlantic world. So far I have argued that positioning the Great Lakes as nodes in the Black Atlantic enables us to see the transnational character of racial formation projects, and resistance to these projects. In this chapter I argue that racial hierarchies and shipboard orders created to manage and surveil multi-racial crews travelled inland from the Atlantic ocean and were transplanted to the Great Lakes. At the same time throughout the Atlantic world people who found themselves on ships, in a variety of circumstances, were forced to form social ties invented for the sake of solidarity and support, and to challenge the structured inequality of these vessels. Therefore this chapter asserts that marine workers were engaged in the interplay between boundary maintenance and struggles for egalitarian practices onboard the lake ship. In particular they organized themselves and their lives with and against the social order of the lake ship, cooperating in dangerous environments, and fostering a solidarity necessary for survival.

In *The Black Atlantic* (1993) Paul Gilroy uses the ship as a chronotype representing transatlantic slavery, characterizing it as a "micro-system of linguistic and political hybridity". Forced labour emerges as a key site of sociality but also a diverse corpus of oppositional cultural forms. Gilroy's chronotype of the ship also symbolizes transnationalism and hybridity—it is not held by national boundaries, rather its primary function is to focus attention on motion and the circulation of ideas across space. McKittrick (2006, x) echoes this sentiment in her *Demonic Grounds* where she outlines the ways in which "progress and exploitation are entwined with a different sense of (black) place". Using the example of the ships of transatlantic slavery moving across the Middle Passage, she argues that these vessels "transporting humans for free labour into 'new worlds' do not only site modern technological progression, which materially moves diasporic subjects through space… these vessels also expose a very meaningful struggle for freedom in place" (Ibid.). The slave ship like the lake ship—while materially and ideologically enclosing Black subjects, also contributes to the formation of an oppositional geography. The vernacular archive of Black marine cooks and stewards depict both the everyday or more quotidian practices of subjugation and exploitation, but also modes of oppositional culture. The photographs analyzed within this chapter not only disorder hegemonic understandings of Lake Erie, they also demonstrate how oppositional practices are enacted aesthetically through the photographic archive.

This chapter opens with a description of George McCurdy's tenure working within the nexus of Great Lakes shipping channels, connecting his experience to broader transnational trends in marine work. I then explain my rationale for placing vernacular photographs within the field of struggle, routing my analysis through critical histories of informal and everyday forms

of oppositional culture. In order to unpack how historically specific racial hierarchies were opposed within the photographic frame this chapter is divided into sections based on genre of photographs: identification; group portrait; and. snapshot photograph. Firstly, I examine George McCurdy's identification photographs attached to his "Certificate of Service" and Continuous Discharge Book. I argue that McCurdy reworked the scripts of honorific and repressive portraiture by engaging with the politics of respectability, and reversing the visual iconography of the colonial Other that flourished in the Atlantic world. This section also unpacks how marine workers navigated new forms of management and surveillance imposed by stricter patrolling of the United States-Canada border in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Secondly, in my discussion of formal group portraits staged onboard lake ships I argue that difference was spatialized onboard through practices of segregation. Though group portraits were intended to reinforce these hierarchies, in my reading of these objects diverse practices of refusal are performed by Black marine cooks and stewards. Lastly, I argue that McCurdy's snapshot photographs attempt to collapse shipboard hierarchies by capturing the intimacy between workers. In this way these snapshots reinforce the idea of the ship as a place that both produced categories of race, but also where formal boundaries could flex to accommodate human relationships. I also consider how these photographs were displayed and circulated, connecting the audiencing of vernacular photographs to bell hook's (1998) concept of an "oppositional black aesthetic".

Situating the Black Mariner in the Atlantic World

LAKE ERIE c.1908- A diptych—two round portraits face each other like two halves of an open locket. In the image on the left a smartly dressed man is seated in a wooden chair with a glossy oak paneled wall serving as the backdrop (Figure 28). With his hands on his lap, his gaze does not meet the camera directly, rather he holds his head back and to the right expressing a look of quiet contemplation. The image on the right gives off a studied air of self-assuredness, except in this rendering the man is standing outdoors against a stark overcast sky. McCurdy stands beneath what appears to be the overhang of a ship's deck affixed with hooks, the horizon line stripes the bottom of the frame, giving away the photograph's setting. Once again he is not positioned squarely in front of the camera, but stands in the right side of the frame gazing off to the left, the slightest hint of a smile is present on his face. To the casual viewer he might appear to be a passenger on this particular steamboat, perhaps one of the middle class patrons onboard a leisure boat cruise. However the caption betrays this reading, and reveals a performance—George McCurdy was not a passenger but rather a member of the steamboat's crew. Though he gives us no indication of it, most of McCurdy's time onboard lake ships was spent working as a cook or steward, clad in chef's whites. McCurdy's dresses with formality, in a deep coloured suit, with a crisp white shirt and a bowtie.

Within the entire McCurdy fonds, these are the only photographs of McCurdy onboard a lake ship in which he is not dressed in his cook's uniform. The photograph on the right is crudely and tightly cropped, and both photographs are mounted on black cardboard, suggesting that they were presented in a frame. I read this as an indication that McCurdy wanted to memorialize his tenure onboard the lake ship on his own terms, outfitted in his Sunday best, and

outside of the galley or dining room. The formality of these portraits gesture to the intervention of a professionalized photographic gaze. However the circular format was typical of the earliest amateur Kodak cameras. George McCurdy alone set the terms of this portrait. His aspirations are made possible through the camera's lens.



FIGURE 28: "Early photographs of George D. McCurdy, Jr. (father of Alvin McCurdy) taken on the lake ship where he was member of the crew," [ca. 1908].Gelatin Silver Print.

Moving beyond the frame, in the January 5, 1906 issue of the *Amherstburg Echo* a marine report reads: "George McCurdy of the steamer *Sahara* was home for a week after an unusually successful season. In appearance he is more robust than ever and wears a prosperous air with becoming modesty. He has gone to Conneaut for a few weeks." The *Sahara*, like many of the lake freighters that traversed Lake Erie, was a large steel freighter that transported goods back and forth between ports in Ontario, Michigan and Ohio. These enterprises were crucial to sustaining the economies of Southern, Ontario but also the rustbelt to the South.

McCurdy's work life exemplifies much of this economic activity that characterized the transnational Great Lakes region during the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth century. In late nineteenth century Amherstburg, a city dependent for its livelihood on lake transportation, men (and a small number of women) found ready employment in the lake freighter and pleasure boat industries. The federal censuses of 1871 and 1881 reveal that between 25 to 30% of men employed in maritime work in Amherstburg listed their descent as "African". So while the nominal census data indicates that people of "African" descent represented 15% of Amherstburg's total population, "African" men were overrepresented in the field of marine work.

Throughout the Atlantic world Black men working aboard freighters, cargo and leisure boats frequently filled special billets as cooks and stewards. In keeping with this pattern, the majority of photographs taken of marine workers in the Great Lakes region feature Black men dressed in cooks uniforms—reinforcing their distinction from the seamen proper. Though they identified as "mariners" on the decennial census, in the highly stratified hierarchy of work aboard the ship, their status as cooks and stewards meant that they were among the lowest ranked on the steamer, with their wages reflecting this scale. Men like McCurdy were positioned in a hierarchy that arrived inland from the Atlantic ocean via British imperial channels. Jeffrey Bolster (2009) argues that race was incorporated into the social structure of the early modern Atlantic world in order to maintain white supremacy. Onboard sailing vessels white colonial culture superimposed racial meanings on labour organization through the ranking system. The shipboard order in which late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Black and white sailors found themselves was maintained through a precise "distinction of role and status" (idem., 75).

Boundary maintenance was the essence of life aboard ships, as boundaries delineated privileges, prerequisites, and punishments. Therefore no matter their level of skill or relevant expertise, white crew members expected Black mariners' to sail as cooks or stewards. These were then service-oriented positions—even "feminine" jobs in the mind of some white seafarers—not defined by nautical skills and physical courage.

Since the eighteenth century, free and enslaved Black mariners established a visible presence in every North Atlantic port. This phenomenon has been the focus of scholarly attention for researchers in the United Kingdom and North America (Buchanan 2004; Bolster 2009; Nassy Brown 2009). These histories often focus on the level of mobility this work afforded Black men during the eras of transatlantic slavery and post-emancipatory modes of surveillance and segregation. These scholars argue that whereas white seamen were among the most marginalized men in white society, Black seamen found access to privileges, worldliness, and wealth denied to most slaves (Bolster 2009). Nothing conveys this phenomenon more strikingly than the fact that sailors wrote the first six autobiographies of Black people published in English before 1800: Hammon, (1760); James Ukawsaw Gronniosaw (1770); Olaudah Equiano (1789); John Marrant, (1785); Venture Smith (1798); and, Boston King (1798). In Canada however, there exists no focused account of the role of Black men in marine work aside from studies on the Maritime provinces, and Richard Reid's (2015) chapter on African Canadian employment in the British Navy during the American Civil War. This is in part due to the lack of records, biographies and oral histories, and the unreliability of census data. Against this historiographical landscape, the photographs in the McCurdy fonds allow us to establish

historical links between local lake faring employment in Amherstburg and wider Atlantic trends, drawing out the ways in which resistance materialized within these settings.

This historical framing initiates a subtle shift in the reading of George McCurdy's portraits—the script that he writes for us is in tension with the circumstances of his representation. His averted gaze, formal attire and stoic composure might be in service of the appearance of higher mental preoccupation, or participation in a middle-class leisure activity. However it might also be read as a refusal to be brought into visibility as part of a racially structured economic system that positioned him fit only to work below deck. These photographs work together with the details of McCurdy's biography to shift our focus to how racism structures the labour force, class relations and class struggles. How should we situate photographs of the Black mariner with or against its historical context? What do they offer to the Black Atlantic paradigm?

Framing Resistance Onboard the Lake Ship

In foregrounding the subversive potential of vernacular photographic practices this chapter draws on models of resistance that highlight everyday and individualized acts of opposition. Broadly speaking, these theories engage with narratives of resistance that rework understandings of struggle at the level of practice, but also space. These perspectives are premised on the idea that, as James Scott (1985, xv) argues, "most subordinate classes throughout history have rarely been afforded the luxury of open, organized, political activity". These struggles require little or no coordination or planning and are usually realized through informal networks or individual actions—they typically avoid any direct confrontation with

authority. This corpus of techniques (foot-dragging, desertion, false compliance, sabotage, etc.) was particularly well suited to the social structure of Black marine cooks and stewards—a group scattered across Lake Erie, and lacking formal labour representation throughout most of this history. Robin D.G. Kelley (1996) comes to similar conclusions in examining everyday forms of resistance and survival for the urban Black working class during the twentieth century. Kelley moves outside of formal sites of organized resistance and looks to social spaces where "unorganized, clandestine, and evasive" actions take place (idem., 57). In doing so Kelley describes segregated busses and streetcars as "moving theatres", with theatre signaling a site of public performance (talking loudly, cursing, spitting, making jokes), but also a site of violent conflict (clashes with white riders). By expanding the terrain of struggle to include quotidian spaces like buses, streetcars or lake ships this reframing highlights the influence exercised by working-class people in unorganized ways.

These theories of resistance allow us to read the lake ship as both a site of oppression and possibility. As a liminal space like the slave ship, these vehicles were spaces of exploitation that also played host to meaningful struggles. As such, the oppositional practices that take place onboard the lake ship cannot be interpreted through narrow frameworks of resistance. The language of cultural resistance helps to refine our understanding beyond dualistic readings of resistance that either exist outside or inside the political system. In her study of the performances of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) Honor Ford- Smith (2004, 21) argues that "anticolonial performance… as a site of analysis moves us beyond the pure binary of resistance versus accommodation because performances are productive in multiple ways, often simultaneously resisting and accommodating the social

structure". In particular UNIA parades mobilized contradictions and reversed the iconography of colonial discourses to develop critiques of gender and race based hierarchies. Performance is thus invested in shifting strategies of resistance (parody, critique, accommodation, or conformity) that are attune to the social landscape they occupy. In a similar way performances that take place within the photographic frame are invested in both colonial scripts of representation and respectability, but also engage in practices of refusal and defiance.

Threaded through these models of resistance is the argument that engaging with diverse, dispersed and contradictory modes of struggle is a practical way of tapping into knowledge that is unauthorized by dominant systems. Everyday models of resistance are thus underwritten by an ideological struggle—they also challenge the erasure and objectification of subaltern subjects, stories and spaces. Thus, similar to anticolonial performance, vernacular photographs are capable of placing people both historically and socially by communicating aspirations for radical futures. These cultural artifacts "document such articulations not only through the factual evidence they record, but, more provocatively through the ways they stage intentions, aspirations, and performances" (Campt 2012, 9). Like Gilroy (1993), Tina Campt (2012) believes vernacular cultural forms to be capable of enunciating and registering complex processes of affiliation and improvisation. Gilroy's (1993) application of improvisation is singularly grounded in study of Black musical traditions, for Campt both music and photographs share a "fundamental form of organization as a pattern that structures our perceptions of both the sonic and the visual" (2012, 136). By listening to "complex musics of the photograph" and how photography operates in excess of vision and sight we can begin to understand how photographic practices and the performances articulate the social relations of diaspora and

dwelling (idem., 135). Therefore I argue that the conceptual tools and the distinctive aesthetic components that Gilroy describes in his analysis of music are a productive means by which to listen to the communicative aspects of performance within the photographic frame.

Moving outside the photographic frame of the McCurdy collection supports this reading. Throughout the Atlantic, marine workers have long been considered by labour historians to be the more radical of workers (Costello 2014). The very term "strike" originated from nautical parlance in 1768, when the collective decision of London seamen to strike the sails of their ships led to a halt in the flow of commerce (Ibid.). Given Amherstburg's history of activism and social engagement not surprisingly there was a high level of participation among local Black mariners in the Marine Cooks' and Stewards' Union. A marine report in the *Amherstburg Echo* from 1906 states that the Marine Cooks' and Stewards' Union held regular meetings in "their hall", on the corner of Murray and George Streets (*Echo Soundings VI,* 1906). Attendees discussed disputes with their employers and held elections for delegates to the cooks' convention. On May 1, 1908 —perhaps not coincidentally May Day—John H. Secord, secretary of the Marine Cooks and Stewards' Union, and Mr. Jenkins of the Seamen's Union paid an unexpected visit to Amherstburg to hold a meeting of marine cooks, seamen and firemen. J.H Kirtley, a steward and the only Black union delegate, succeeded in gathering 30 local men on an hours notice. An article published in 1909 in the *Amherstburg Echos* local marine report describes the involvement of Black marine cooks engaging in direct action (*Echo Soundings,* 1909). The article reads:

> Moses Brantford a marine cook and staunch union man, received a telegram from Cleveland asking him to join a crew as it went by Amherstburg. "Will ship" Brantford responded, but he never intended to set foot on the vessel so long as she shipped with a non-union crew. When the boat arrived late

> that night Brantford paddled out in a row boat with two friends. A ladder was lowered for them. Then Brantford and his friends took off and regaled the crew with cries of SCABs. Brantford alleges that a member of the crew fired three shots over his head.

I believe these more organized modes of resistance gesture to a shared tradition or implicit understanding among many of the men working in this field. My reading of this photographic archive as oppositional is thus underwritten by the knowledge that these workers engaged in higher-profile techniques. What is clear however is that photography is capable of producing and reproducing these social relations—its subjects constituted in and through the images. It is then an important aesthetic component in communicating ideas and challenging the traditional power structures embedded within the political nexus of Lake Erie.

Historical Context: Sovereignty and Transportation

Lake tourism and shipping channels play a central role in the livelihoods of Amherstburg's Black residents. It was also a workplace with a system of structured inequality that flowed inland from the Atlantic. Or, as Cedric Robinson (2000, 80) more eloquently describes: "the racial mist of European civilization had settled over the social topography of the English colonies." The archive of photographs of Black mariners then allows us to dwell on the fatal coupling of capital and racism, and how these co-constituting relations work to enshrine an underclass of workers. Just as Cedric Robinson argues that African labour was being drawn into the orbit of a world system through transatlantic slavery, lake faring drew Black mariners into the Atlantic system of exchange. Given the transnational nature of this work, in order to understand how processes of racialization operated and were challenged both onboard the lake ship and within port communities we must look beyond national borders and spheres of

influence. Rather what is needed is a constellated or geopolitical view, interrogating how different ideologies entangled within these contact zones; neither political nor economic structures of domination are simply co-extensive with national borders. If cultural notions of place and localness from Britain and the United States have shaped aspects of racial politics in Canada, understandings of race and resistance then circulate. Patrick Wolfe (2016, 16) explains, "locality recapitulates the myriad historical migrations whose convergence makes up the settler present, patchily reconfiguring imperialism's global complexity at the local level." As outlined in the previous chapters, Amherstburg's geographical location has made it a site of transnational contact for centuries. The areas on either side of the Detroit River were considered a single polity dating back to Indigenous histories of the land. Though borders were solidified in response to the American Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 migration became more commonplace, but more regulated. Rapid industrialization was facilitated not only by frequent circulatory migrations of people and capital, but also greatly intensified imperialist bids between Upper Canada and the United States for territorial control of Lake Erie. In such a porous setting, discourses of race, gender and class were ferried across waterways, modifying the political economy of the lake.

Sovereignty and transportation are intimately entangled. Prior to the advent of steam travel Upper Canada had established only thin beachheads of colonization ringing the Great Lakes. Canada's enrapture with modernity was predicated upon racialized and gendered constructions that enabled technology in the first place. Saje Mathieu (2010, 4) argues that railway technology and the Canadian Pacific Railroad in particular helped Canadians lay claim to their place as guardians of the British Empire's North American interests: "measured against

the Caribbean, imagined as a source of black brawn and raw goods, decidedly modern white Canadians crafted their national image as one of Anglo-Saxon industry". Mathieu's assessment is applicable to the steam-powered transport vessels that plied the Great Lakes region during the nineteenth century; technological advancement and the appearance of British steamboats on the Great Lakes was imagined to materially and metaphorically represent Anglo-Saxon dominance, a response to the aggressive colonization projects of early America.

Steam power was inseparable from the forces of nationalism and nation-making, it was also entwined with imperial formations that underwent developments of their own in the mid-nineteenth century. The appearance of steamboats on the Great Lakes ushered in a new era of economic and social development in Upper Canada. Travel of goods (primarily steel, coal, timber, grain and iron) and people was no longer entirely dependent on wind and wave. Alongside the construction of canal systems (the Rideau Canal and the Welland Canal[6]), steamboat transportation became an integral technology in the Dominion's quest for dominance over the Republic to the south. While sailing vessels and canoes had traversed the natural highway of lakes and rivers into the interior of the province for centuries, the steamboat introduced the idea of regularity in transportation, overcoming limited maneuverability of earlier vessels (Smith 2005).

Canadian statesmen looked at steam technology as the nation's guaranteed path to modernity, wedding technology, race, nationalism and empire (Mathieu 2010). Classic studies of the steam revolution often centre on the cooperation between "visionaries" of private capital, pragmatic government officials, and industrious settlers. This narrative comes at the expense of

6 Members of the Colored Corps Black military volunteers helped to keep the peace between differing factions of Irish men working on the Welland Canal. In particular they made arrests in the murder of constables during a riot, and warded off an attack upon customs officers who were trying to stop smuggling.

on an analysis that positions Indigenous and racialized subjects as historical actors central to modernization and state formation processes. At the same time if we begin with the premise that "capitalist modernity is a tautology" (Shapiro 2006, 118), these populations experienced and resisted the devastating effects of racial capital—negotiating a geographic landscape that is upheld by a legacy of exploitation, exploration, and conquest. Domestically steam transport greatly accelerated the conquest and colonization of North American continent by white settlers at the expense of Indigenous peoples. What's more, North America remained Britain's greatest financial market throughout the nineteenth century—representing 34% of its overseas investments between 1865-1914 (Sexton 2017). The conquest and colonization of the North American continent can be seen as a variation of the global process in which technology facilitated the expansion of European imperialism in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America—buttressing nineteenth century hierarchies of racial, cultural, and political power (idem., 631).

The British had lost a large portion of North America in 1776, and with the recent War of 1812 in the United States the threat of invasion still lingered. The opening of a lucrative commercial passage across the border was enough to accelerate the implementation of infrastructure plans. The British were thus determined to give a boost to colonial trade and colonization and ensure their recovery. As such, three major projects were undertaken: the construction of the Rideau Canal to bypass the shores of the St. Lawrence River in the United States' territory; improving the St. Lawrence River system of canals and locks to overcome the rapids; and building the Welland Canal to lift ships up more than 300 feet from Lake Ontario to

Lake Erie. All these projects made it easier to populate the province, bring in manufactured goods, and develop an export trade across the Atlantic Ocean.

Alongside government policy and infrastructure, steamship companies played a key role in solidifying national borders within the Great Lakes region. Over the decades, the steamship companies, which evolved from uncomplicated sole proprietorships or partnerships to limited liability companies to, finally, huge conglomerates at the beginning of the twentieth century, were important organizational ventures that moved in step with technological progress and access to investment capital (Sexton 2017). The competition between the United States and Britain's companies for control over new markets ushered in an era of rapid technological innovation. An investment in these technologies, was then also an investment in border fortification. Paradoxically, the emerging technologies of steam and canal systems required a highly mobile workforce, able to migrate across borders alongside flows of capital.

Identification Photographs: Border Politics of Surveillance and Control

In order to surveil the cross-border movements of labourers, the United States required by law their marine workers to carry with them identity documents issued by the state, which formed a full record of a worker's lake service, career experience and certification. Upon discharge of any marine worker and the payment of their wages, the shipping commissioner or master of the vessel had to enter in their book the name of the vessel, the nature of the voyage (foreign or coastwise), the class to which the vessel belonged (steam, motor, sail, or barge), and the date and place of the shipment and the ranking they held onboard. This practice began on the Great Lakes in 1917 and by 1937, the United States Government issued approximately 12,000

books. An identification photograph was required for all books—playing an important biometric role in attempts to stabilize identity. Like a passport, alongside its textual counterparts the identification photograph functions to differentiate between national subjects and "others". These documents reflect wider efforts through the nineteenth and twentieth century in Atlantic ports to manage and surveil labourers who frequently crossed borders for work. In 1892, the *Buffalo Times* reported that a largely attended meeting of steamboat employees from the United States gathered to protest against Canadian workers employed on lake vessels in violation of the law. It had long been the practice of many vessel owners and captains sailing from United States ports to employ Canadians, and many vessels from the United States on the lakes were in fact commanded by Canadian residents. One inspector remarked "If aliens were prohibited from infesting ports, the American sailor would be enabled to demand just compensation for his labor and thereby provide better for this family and his comforts" (*Buffalo Times* 1892). The Treasury Department ruled that only in the case when a vessel from the United States while in a Canadian port is deprived of its crew by desertion or otherwise can aliens be employed, and then only temporarily (*Echo Soundings VIII*, 1892). A similar yet more racially determined practice took place in Britain in the form of the Coloured Alien Seaman Order of 1925, which excluded racialized men without British subject status from work in British ports. The passing of the Order rendered all non-white seamen de facto aliens, and by extension aliens. It was therefore mandated that they must carry "document of identity", which was to be produced at their British ports of call and registered with local police (Nassy Brown 2009). Further to this point, the Seamen's unions representing British sailors strongly opposed the use of colonial labour because their constituents were white British sailors whose labour was being "undersold" (idem., 20).



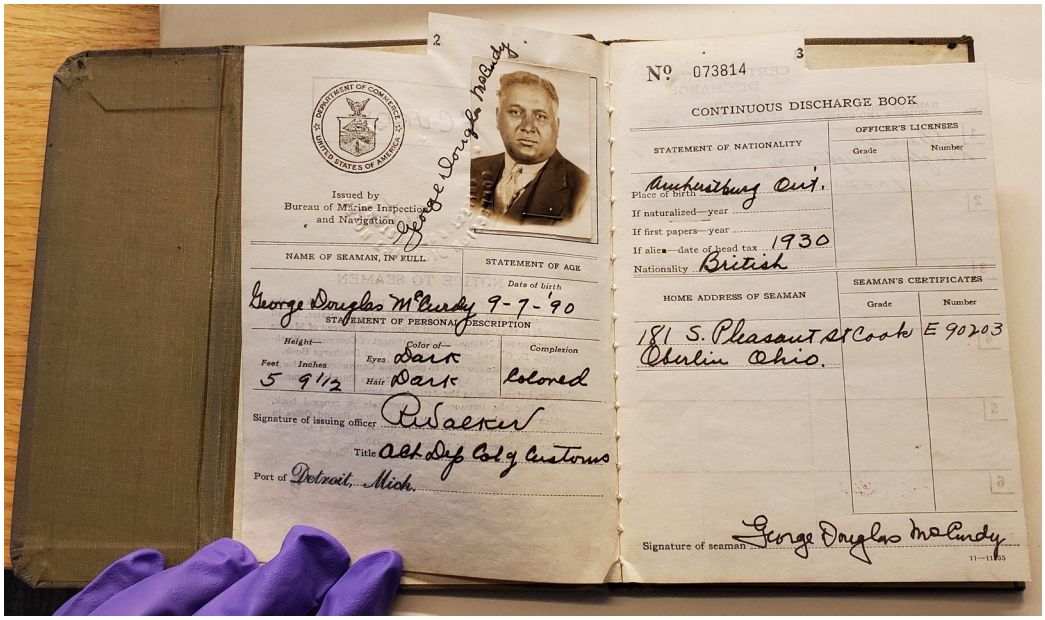

FIGURE 29- 30: George D. McCurdy's Certificate of Services with the United States Department of Commerce, 16 March 1937; George D. McCurdy's Continuous Discharge Book, 1930.

The relationship between white sailors and racialized sailors was antagonistic, coming to a head during the 1919 riots that occurred across British ports wherein Black sailors were mobbed and randomly attacked by roving gangs of white men (idem., 21).

These circumstances help to frame how the photographs affixed to George D. McCurdy's "Certificate of Service" and Continuous Discharge Book make visible the structures through which Black labour is reproduced (Figure 28-29). I proceed with Stuart Hall's (2018, 215) words in mind: "Race is the modality in which class is lived, the medium through which class relations are experienced, the form in which it is appropriated and fought through." Ruminating on the latter, these photographs reveal how racism is intrinsic to the manner in which the Black labouring classes are complexly constituted at the level of the economic, the political, and the ideological class struggle.

Issued by the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation under the United States Department of Commerce, and signed by a member of the Board of Inspectors, McCurdy's certificate lists his rank and includes his fingerprint on the verso. His Continuous Discharge Book includes the same information, but also lists his "Complexion", "Color of Eye", "Color of Hair", and his nationality which he listed as British despite his "Place of Birth" being listed as Amherstburg. Similar to the photograph that opens this chapter, McCurdy dons a three piece suit, and a patterned satin tie—attributes of middle-class masculine respectability. His hair is neatly parted to the side, and with a slightly raised eyebrow and closed mouth his countenance reads once again as self-assured. Beyond these slight affectations, his features communicate very little; his neutral expression forecloses emotion, highlighting the security and biometric function of the photograph.

Listening to these images allows us to register the "often minuscule chinks and crevices of what appears to be the inescapable web of capture" (Campt 2017, 16). When stripped of their textual counterparts these images suggest the permeability of strict categories of repressive and honorific photographs—transforming an inhibitory visual practice into an "occasion for self-representation" (Ibid.). Resisting a reading that reduces identification photographs to their instrumental function, Tina Campt (2017) in her *Listening to Images* engages with the forms of subjectivity enacted through these imaging practices. Focusing on instances of rupture and refusal Campt (2017, 5) advocates a method of listening attune to the "paradoxical capacity of identity photos to rupture the sovereign gaze of the regimes that created them by refusing the terms of photographic subjection they were engineered to produce". For Campt though these photographs in their mundane performances of everyday life appear as "quiet photographs", their frequency resonates just below the surface. Applying this method to found passport photos of Black British men in postwar Birmingham, she reads these images are both "instrumental and affective conduits of the aspirations of thousands of new Commonwealth migrants" registering quiet insistences of forms of diasporic dwelling (Ibid.).

In a similar way in McCurdy's dress and demeanor, and in the photographs' warm tone, these photographs appear more suited to an album or frame rather than haphazardly pasted and crudely stapled to travel documents. This tension is in part due to identification photographs simultaneously referencing two familiar scripts: the honorific middle-class portrait, and the repressive mug shot (idem., 25). Identification photographs then slide between two archives of images, requiring very specific performances dictated by "crown and country and their subjects and citizens" (idem., 26). At the same time these images are also invested with the power to

create lives and histories, transmitting the sitters' hopes and dreams prior to travel, as well as the journeys these documents make possible. Though highly regulated by regimes of borders and surveillance, these tensions and ambivalences are evident in McCurdy's identification portraits.

On the one hand, McCurdy's subversion occurs within the narrow frame of bourgeoisie representational practices. McCurdy's performs modern citizenship that the state never intended him to receive or be granted under Canada's discriminatory immigration policy. In this way his representation relies on the unfulfilled promises of modernity in its framing, making it more normative than utopian. Frantz Fanon (2017, 110) is called to mind in his assertion that "bourgeois ideology that proclaims all men to be essentially equal, manages to remain consistent with itself by urging the subhuman to rise to the level of Western humanity that it embodies". Fanon continues by describing how in practice the Western bourgeois is fundamentally "incapable of implementing a program with even a minimum humanist content" (idem., 109). Fanon reminds us that inequality is structured into these ideologies, it is at their foundation. Because these ideologies rely on closed, fixed systems there is no space for the colonial Other outside of where this subject has been placed.

To resist tidy discursive explanations of expressive culture—the vitality and complexity of musical culture offers a means to get beyond such totalizing conceptions of tradition, modernity and post modernity. In its affective and performative excesses McCurdy's photographs refuses an easy reading. Because opposition occurs under the noses of the overseer it must be quieter, it cannot be communicated loudly as in text or literature. Though more difficult to "hear", these facts make the images no less transformative. Registering McCurdy's performance requires us to listen closely to the photograph. There is a general injunction against

expressing emotion in identification documents, its formal demands dictated by the goal of seriality and recognition. McCurdy challenged the identification photograph's biometric function. The asymmetries of his expression and three-quarter pose coupled with his dress suggest that he intended this photograph to be honorific, conveying dignity and respectability. Affect is not foreclosed, we can read McCurdy's expression as self-assured and composed, and ultimately in control—actively participating in his representation. Lily Cho (2009,165) argues that this closure of emotion in the passport photograph "telegraphs the way in which the ideal citizen, in the eyes of the state, is an emotionally neutral one." The repressive or instrumental portrait uses the power of the camera to capture its subject for scientific or criminalizing purposes, and so this subject must be rendered powerless (idem.,168). So while in itself, McCurdy's dress, and styling are not direct political statements, within the context of the display they are rendered so. McCurdy subverts such attempts to be fixed, both metaphorically through the photographic frame and figuratively by traversing borders.

The ruling that prohibited Canadian citizens to work aboard vessels based in the United States could explain why McCurdy, a lifelong resident of Amherstburg had paperwork from the United States. Similarly in his Continuous Discharge Book he lists his address as Oberlin, Ohio. Perhaps these documents were prepared to flout these strict immigration policies. This information augments our reading of McCurdy's identification photograph, foregrounding performance as taking place both textually but also visually. These excesses—in representation, and in mobility—disorder the strict terms of visuality imposed by the identification photograph, and attest to the permeability of borders and the floating nature of identity.

When we consider these portraits' historical framing and the racial structures imposed on Black labour, McCurdy's subversion can be read as transcendent. Prefiguring a future without borders and regimes of representation that proceed from an ontologization of those deemed Others. While one could argue that white seamen were required to be in possession of identifying documents, this argument sidesteps the racial dynamics of labour organization. Stuart Hall (1996, 28) asserts that we should "never overlook the political compromise between the white capitalist and the white working classes, and the consequent 'supervising and policing' functions which white labour exerts over Black." To assume that Black marine cooks and stewards were simultaneously relegated to the galley through segregation practices, but also afforded the same level of policing as their white counterparts ignores the structurally different position in which "white and Black labour stand in relation to capital" (Ibid.) What did McCurdy want the issuer, the employer, the security to see? When we consider the hierarchies that were enforced onboard the lake steamer, and the surveillance of so-called "aliens" within Atlantic culture it is not surprising then that in his identification photograph he performs middle-class notions of masculine respectability. His status in a "feminized" or service-oriented field can no longer be indexed by his cook uniforms, rather his dress perhaps reflects his desire to subvert preconceived notions of Blackness reinforced in lake faring and seafaring culture. This identification photograph thus reiterates how portrait photography is a performative practice that actively materializes both race and diasporic formation through gendered and class-specific enactments that contest and affirm national belonging.

Against the porous borders of the Great Lakes, McCurdy's photograph confirms his citizenship in one state, while he spent most of his life traversing both sides of the fluid frontier.

These conflicts highlight how the mobility of the Black mariner exceeds nationalistic framing. Work onboard lake ships from both Canada and the United States was limited to their respective citizens, and was policed as such. At this time "aliens" are constructed in opposition to national subjects. Like Campt's (2012, 32) men in Birmingham, McCurdy and other Black marine workers' "fugitivity consisted of the temerity to pursue fractal and planar lines of mobility that rerouted imperial migration". For those migrating—for labour or otherwise, the meaning of the status of the sojourner, or the degree of hospitality extended to all persons-on-the-move, cannot be equated. Thobani (2007, 72) argues that "it is the racialization of persons-on-the-move that is central to their ontologization as aliens by exalted citizens". At the same time, ship owners from Canada and the United States similarly organized the workers onboard their vessels through gendered and race-based hierarchies that were supplied by British imperial discourses. Black workers sit in opposition to white workers. On land however, Black mariners are cast out as "authentic" national subjects in Canada and the United States. Thus Black mariners from both sides of the border straddle multiple racial formation projects, inflected with nation-bound projects, and British imperialism's racial structures. The ships function in a liminal space between nations, outside of land. This liminality shadows the formation of Canadian nation state. Onboard a ship traversing Lake Erie, Black mariners are thus constituted by varying and dovetailing national, cultural and political parameters. Within Lake Erie, race functioned: 1) in opposition to the interests of the United States by attempting to undermine their economic activities; and, 2) by assigning Black workers and white workers into a hierarchical classification based on race, undermining the formation of coalitions that would undermine the desires of the capitalist class. The politics of racial differentiation are thus shaped by competing

discourses in complex patterns. This liminality shaped the experiences of Black mariners. For this reasons George McCurdy's photograph was likely scrutinized much more than his white colleagues. His movement and its visual representation can be read as prefigurative, performing a citizenship and mobility he had yet to receive, and so they are multidirectional and multi-referential in nature.

Professional Portraits: Domesticity on the Great Lakes

Moving onboard the ship, the more formally staged photographs within the fonds demonstrate how the interlocking dynamics of race and capital were mechanized onboard the lake ship to form hierarchies that were at times rigid and more difficult to flout. These formal photographs were staged through the logic of racially determined shipboard hierarchy. White crew members and guest performed leisure, while Black crew members performed servitude. Despite these instructions, acts of refusal are enacted through displays that subvert and sabotage these binaries. The quiet refusals documented in the photographs below embody Gilroy's insistence on the irreducible hybridity of Black Atlanticism and modernity over essentialist or unidirectional accounts of expressive culture. This is then an epistemological concern; while what is knowable can be reduced to universalisms, what is obscure can draw out situated knowledges.

In a mounted albumen print two young Black men—Benjamin Young, chief steward, stands on the right—flank a table of six white diners in an oak paneled dining room (Figure 31). Based on their dress of double-breasted sailor's jackets the seated men appear to be sailors or engineers of similar ranking, with the two aproned men standing waiting to serve them. The subjects appear entombed in the dining room of the ship, the large, decorated ceiling joists and

glossy walls border the frame making the room appear crowded and cavernous. There is an overwhelming stiffness to this photograph; it appears staged to stifle any dynamism or happenstance. Though meant to perform a leisurely air—attesting to the comforts and quality of this dining experience—the seated men look no more delighted to be photographed than the men standing. This photograph has been carefully orchestrated with the chandelier centred at the top of the frame, and the centre axis of the table parted with bottles and a flower arrangement, the missing diner on the left of the image betrays this symmetry. The downturned faces and sullen expressions of all the eight subjects might attest to such a meticulous staging. These men—accustomed to the laborious work of the steam ship had little time or patience for the lengthy curation of these aesthetic choices. There are seemingly no willing participants in this photograph and varying levels of engagement in its production. This staging was likely curated by a professional photographer hired for the day by the steam liner company to be used for advertising or as a personal memento for investors. The audience of this photograph is intended to relate to the white diners, allowing them to imagine themselves being catered to. The performance of subordination by the chief steward Benjamin Young and his colleague is then crucial to this reading—their presence is meant to elevate the status of the white sitters.

In a second mounted albumen print, three Black stewards—Clifford Turner at centre—stand at the head of the set dining table in an otherwise empty oak paneled dining room (Figure 32). Turner and the colleague to his left don white coats and shirts with deep coloured vests underneath, a typical steward's uniform. In contrast, the man standing to Turner's left wears chefs' whites and was likely part of the galley crew. The mount is stamped with the logo for Caflisch photography studio in Buffalo, with the words "Home Sitting" printed at the centre of





FIGURE 31-32: “Benjamin Young on right of picture. He was chief steward on this boat”. ca. 1870s. Albumen Print; “Clifford Turner in centre with two porters on lake steamer”. ca. 1900s. Albumen Print.

the mount between the logo and the business' address. "Home Sitting" typically denotes that a photographer worked remotely, rather than within the studio, commissioned by various sitters to visit their home or place of work. Like the previous example, the formality and professional nature of this portrait indicates that the owner's of the lake steamer requested this particular shot.

In the last of these formal portraits, a twenty-man crew stands on the deck of a docked ship (Figure 33). There are three Black subjects within this albumen print, two men, and one child stand in their cooks' uniforms flanked on either side by white crew members. Similar to the previous example wherein the subject's position as cook reinforces their social status, against the deep colours of their crew mates' uniforms, their cooking uniforms index their subordination within the lake industry hierarchy.

In her study of documentary surveys of slums taken by "social reformers", Saidiya Hartman (2019, 21) describes the process by which Black people become "clients, types, and examples" transformed into social documents and statistical persons. In this way the staging of social documentary photography and the photographs of Black stewards coerce their Black subjects into visibility as a condition of policing, charity or employment, "making those *bound to appear* suffer the burden of representation" (Ibid.). Like the staged photographs onboard the lake ship, "these photographs extend an optic of visibility and surveillance that had its origins in slavery and the administered logic of the plantation (To be visible was to be targeted for uplift or punishment, confinement or violence)" (Ibid.). These photographs then reflect the "official picture" of Black servitude and demonstrate white supremacy at work. These formal representations attempt to reinforce embedded boundaries and hierarchies.



FIGURE 33: Untitled and uncaptioned photograph of lake steamer crew. Date unknown. Albumen Print.

Throughout the Atlantic world difference was spatialized on the lake steamers through practices of segregation, restricting employment for marginalized crew members below deck in the engine room as stokers and firemen, or in other lower quarters of the ship as cooks and stewards. The spatial configurations of racism operated onboard the lake ship by mechanizing the Atlantic occupational ranking system, segregating Black workers through the assignment of specific service-oriented roles. Outside of the galley segregation was a common practice aboard vessels from the United States where all white crews were frequently exchanged at ports for all Black crews, and vice versa. Captains from the United States disliked “mixed crews”, and often

employed the so-called “chequerboard” system with white crew members on the starboard watch while Black crew members worked the larboard watch, in hopes that the competition would be beneficial (Costello 2014, 90). These examples support Robinson (2000) and later Wilson Gilmore’s (2020) analysis that racism nourished capitalism. By grafting systems of racial division onto labour practices and enflaming antagonisms, the ruling class of ship owners and industry titans worked to undermine the possibility of a united, multi-racial workers struggle that challenged their authority. In order to understand why the galley became a space where racial and gendered segregation was commonplace, the position of the ship cook needs to be situated in Atlantic history.

A “slave advertisement” from 1757 indicates that the practice of hiring enslaved African men as cooks and stewards was common practice for many captains of slave ships in ports like Liverpool, London and Bristol. One such advertisement offered: “For sale immediately, ONE stout NEGRO young fellow, about 20 years of age, that has been employed for 12 months on board a ship, and is a very serviceable hand. And a NEGRO boy, about 12 years old, that has been used since Sept. last to wait at a table…” (Costello 2014, 11). Therefore throughout much of the eighteenth century, when most racialized mariners were slaves, racial stereotyping defined Black men’s roles aboard ships as tied to service-oriented work. Black mariners frequently filled special billets as cooks, officers’ servants, or musicians, reinforcing their distinction from the seamen proper. The desire for privilege led white steam boat owners and captains to incorporate race into the social structure of the early modern Atlantic world—it follows then that Eurocentric colonial culture superimposed racial meanings on this form of labour organization.

The rise of the domesticity ideology within the British Empire translated inland to the Great Lakes where steamers provided three course meals in austere dining rooms on white table linens. Domesticity which rested on notions of racial superiority and purity was often described in gendered terms—equating the gentility of the middle-class woman with notions of "pure" blood lines. This ideology was fundamentally structured by a set of binary oppositions between so-called civilization and savagery. Paradoxically then despite their status as "Other" within this binary, Black cooks and stewards were forced to perform what was typically domestic labour. A similar phenomenon is outlined by Sage Mathieu in her *North of the Colour Line* (2010), wherein she describes how sleeping car porting became the exclusive province of Black men. Rich, "civilized" white men were served by Black men doing "women's work", thereby "reinforcing black manhood's incompleteness" (idem., 11). This so-called feminization is supported by census data from the Amherstburg region, wherein white women reported their occupations as "Sailoress". Further within the marine reports from the *Amherstburg Echo* there are multiple references to women cooks. The case of both sleeping car porters and marine cooks and stewards affirmed a gendered and racialized colonial order transplanted by the British empire, but also the segregation practices of Jim Crow America.

In Britain since the days of sail the work of cooks and stewards was traditionally seen as women's work and was commonly carried out by Black seafarers (Figure 34). Unfortunately Figure 34 was removed from this dissertation because of copyright restrictions. To view the full citation and an image of the map please find a link to the image in this dissertation's "List of Figures" (ix). Historian Alan Cobley (2007) gathered data from the UK census of 1901 which reveals that over a third of West Indian seafarers found aboard British ships were deckhands

(596), another third (463) were stewards and cooks (including four women), with the remainder (271) working as firemen and trimmers in the engine room. Further there is evidence that queer seafarers took on the role of catering staff on some passenger ships (Baker 2016). Atlantic marine scholarship (Foy 2012) also indicates that throughout the British imperial maritime world disabled and elderly men were employed as cooks because the job was less physically demanding than hauling lines and unfurling sails. In particular, musters of naval ships throughout the Atlantic contain entries indicating that naval seamen who lost limbs were typically kept in service as cooks. Likewise "older" men (forty and older) frequently served as cooks on all types of ships. Officers and deck crew believed themselves to be the only "seamen proper"—facing the elements, and steering and keeping look-out. During the eighteenth century Black cooks were often the subject of racist caricatures depicted as slow, foolish and inefficient in their work (Figure 35). Unfortunately Figure 35 was removed from this dissertation because of copyright restrictions. To view the full citation and an image of the map please find a link to the image in this dissertation's "List of Figures" (ix). In reality cooks and stewards were the "fixers and organizers", with unrivaled access to desirable goods on board merchant and passenger vessels (Costello 2014, 113).

Technical proficiency was needed to prepare and cook meals for dozens to hundreds of people—marine cooks and stewards were responsible for serving entire crews, and on leisure steam boats, for commercial passengers as well. On pleasure boats, which advertised a fine dining experience, the level of fare was often gourmet. Gordon Shaw, a young white server aboard the *SS Manitoulin* described the meals served aboard as "of good Ontario quality": Breakfast consisted of juices and cereals and, to most, cheese or jam omelets; luncheons and

dinners were both three-course meals starting with soup or juice; a main course of at least one roast, local fish, or cold cuts, to be finished with a choice of about four types of freshly baked pies. Friday dinners featured baked "North Channel trout" and "Roast Manitoulin Tom Turkey" (Smith 2005, 45). There were fine tapestries, marble tables, white tablecloths, well- polished silver, and flowers on each table in an elegant walnut-paneled dining room. Throughout the Atlantic between the 1820s and 1850s, the introduction of iron stoves into the galley, and the rising emphasis on domestication on shore, cooks were expected to demonstrate a high level of culinary skill (Bolster 2009, 168).

For all ranks, work aboard steamers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was unsafe work—requiring specialized knowledge of the lakes and the mechanics of the boat. This ideology is broadly in line Victorian conceptions of empire which pitted "divinely inspired ingenuity against untamed nature" (Mathieu 2010, 8). Marine reports within the *Amherstburg Echo* from the turn of the century help to illustrate the dangers of work on board lake ships. In these reports occupational hazards range from slippery decks, and food shortages to fatalities from drowning or in the case of steward Nelson Chambers being "roasted alive" by an explosion in the engine room (*Echo Soundings* VIV, 1893). Lake Erie in particular was known to be the most treacherous of lakes for crew; the Canadian shore of the lake is described by marine scholars as "a graveyard for ships" because of the lack of visibility (Smith 2005, 35). The shallowest of the Great Lakes, steamships and schooners on Lake Erie were often overcome by winds and heaving waves, ran up on the sandy shores of these points every season. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, residents of Amherstburg were regularly subjected to the sounds of explosions, as dredging crews were sent to blast the ledge of

limestone which crosses under the Detroit River. The Lime Kilns, or "Hell's Gate" as they were known are often mentioned in the "Marine News" column of the *Amherstburg Echo*, wherein the crews frequently appealed to the Lake Carriers Association to further dredge the river for safer passage. Despite the courage required to work in such conditions, and the fact that marine cooks and stewards were responsible for crucial elements in both the crews' and passenger's lives, patterns of employment demonstrate that this rank and position was regarded throughout the Atlantic as a form of work designated for those marginalized by the political landscape of British colonial world.

Robin D.G. Kelley (1996) argues that determining the social and political character of work remains essential for an understanding of Black working-class struggle. When the division of labour is racialized it has the effect of turning "dirty, physically difficult, and potentially dangerous work into *humiliating* work" (idem., 31). Once this derogatory meaning is ascribed upon this work, it works to undermine its potential for dignity and worth. Under these circumstances institutional and more quotidian, day-to-day modes of resistance are enacted to challenge and reinscribe these meanings. While some Black mariners staged these struggles within organized labour movements, this archive of photographs also offers glimpses into how more evasive tactics might be read in the photographic frame. In his exploration of more elusive forms of resistance Kelley (1996, 7) says: "the mask of "grins and lies" enhanced black people's invisibility and enabled them to wage a kind of underground "guerrilla" battle with their employers.

The staged group photographs described above showcase how these ideologies operated within the lake ship. They also become a site from which forms of refusal are practiced. In the

photograph featuring Young and his colleague refusal is enacted through denying the terms of visibility imposed by the photographer and the owners of the ship (Figure 31). Young is not rendered completely, but rather blurred as if he moved as the photographer pressed the flash button. Young averts his gaze left of the frame, and does not conform to the instructions given by the photographer. In his own way, Young's colleague stares down the lens of the camera making clear his disgruntled expression—refusing the rosy collegiality that this picture is suppose to transmit to its audience. Veijola and Valtonen (2007) argue that for decades affective labour has been central in tourism work. They posit that this work blurs the spatial and temporal separation of work and home, and so resort owners "appropriate embodied presences and personalities and especially feminine skills" (idem., 85). Because these skills are associated with femininity, women are commonly not compensated for them, while male employees who learn how to perform affective labour are compensated for "what are perceived to as special skills" (Baldwin 2012, 214). As domesticity ideology migrated to lake faring culture, the performance of friendliness, caring and servitude would have been an essential component of the marine cook and steward's job. Because their position within the labour market embodies ongoing trajectories of slavery and performing servility the relationship between Young and his colleagues is then thick with meaning. The relational dynamics of lake faring culture—like tourism—strongly evokes memories of servitude. If through the frame Young and his colleague are required by their supervisors and the photographer to perform obedience to their prescribed roles onboard the lake ship, in their disengagement from this process they refuse such reductions. As described above hierarchy maintenance was crucial to life onboard the lake ship, with race being an articulating factor in the construction of such boundaries.

Building on Du Bois' concept of double consciousness, Gilroy (1993, 117) extends his argument that the cultures of Afrodiasporic peoples can be profitably interpreted as expressions of and commentaries upon ambivilances generated by modernity and their locations within it. Speaking to the concept of mobility Gilroy identifies two traditionally understood types of travel experiences: the geographical and cultural dislocation of slavery and the Middle Passage; and, the touristic, freely chosen journeys to Europe described by Du Bois' and James Weldon Johnson. Based on these authors' work, Gilroy (1993, 133) posits a third more ambivalent form of movement, characterized by the Pullman porter: "who benefits from the enhanced mobility provided by modern technologies but does so in a subordinate role, managing the travel experiences of others and servicing their needs at the expense of those of his own family." Like marine cooks and stewards, the porters' work continued patterns of exploitation established during slavery and anticipated novel forms of debasement associated with modern service work (Ibid.). For Du Bois and Johnson the Pullman porter is an important symbol of the new opportunities and new constraints that fell upon Black people in the late nineteenth century.

Beginning with Gilroy's (1993, 73) claim that "slavery was kept alive-carefully cultivated-in ritualized, social forms", we can begin to understand how the conditions of the lake ship were shaped by imperial formations. Visual economies become crucial technologies in stabilizing such hierarchies or classificatory systems; in service of scientific racism photography functioned as a method to further articulate and visualize difference in order to consolidate colonial power. Allan Sekula's (1986) conception of a "shadow archive" is useful to the discussion of photography and physiognomic and phrenologic analysis. A "shadow archive" is described as a visual corpus that encompasses an entire social terrain while positioning

individuals within that terrain (idem., 9). Scientific racial photography can be seen as a means of grappling with the incommensurability of subjects, and constructing a hierarchy within the "shadow archive" creating an immutable demarcation between a subject/human and its Other. The use of photography to the project of scientific racism attempted to impose "order" to the bodies within the "shadow archive" forming an ideological project that was crucial to racial formation in the mid-nineteenth century. The very institution of the photographic archive received its most thorough early articulation in precise conjunction with an increasingly professionalized and technological mode of police work and an emerging social science of criminology during the 1880s and 1890s. As Sekula (idem.,6) asserts, "photography came to establish and delimit the terrain of the other, to define both the generalized look—the typology —and the contingent instance of deviance and social pathology." The photography of scientific racism codified a way of looking or a visual paradigm by which racial difference could be sustained.

In referencing such archives the commissioned group portraits of Black mariners disclose how photography's taxonomical capabilities attempted to reinforce these systems. Brian Wallis (1995, 57) argues that "the typological photograph is a form of representational colonialism. Fundamentally nonreciprocal, it masks the subjective distortions in the guise of logic and organization." Following this I see Young and his fellow stewards performance of these "subjective distortions" as a practice of refusal: denying the indexical quality of photography by causing blur or, refusing the affective labour of smiling and appeasing the photographer. The desire to "capture" the Black mariner within the frame is an attempt to fix these men within the gendered and racialized colonial order of Atlantic culture—it is an attempt

to collapse difference in favour of a colonial classificatory project. In their refusals to adhere to these impositions, Young and his colleagues are not "enclosed within an impenetrable autarchy" but "subsist within an irreducible singularity" (idem., 190). Against the typological archive, Young and his colleagues transgress the so-called immutable logic and organizing of the colonial order by emphatically asserting their subjectivity. Against vectors of ideology that normalize claims to truth, in their refusals they claim a fluctuant space within the frame, moving against coercive forces.

Snapshots: Upsetting Shipboard Hierarchies

Upsetting hierarchies is a fundamental feature of refusal. The terms or methods by which refusal is enacted cannot be reduced and are therefore multitudinous. By viewing a different collection of photographs within the McCurdy fonds we can reframe and complicate our understanding of opacity. George McCurdy and a white crew member pose with their arms around each other's shoulders (Figure 36). While the man is unidentified on the verso of the print, he reappears in a photograph of the crew of the *Erie Isle,* which based on their attire, was likely taken on the same day (Figure 37). Between 1938 and 1941, the *Erie Isle* took passengers from Sandusky, Ohio to Canada. Dated to the 1940s these photographs are indicative of the evolution of the gelatin silver photographic process. A stamp on the verso of the photograph reads "Grob Camera Shop, July 27, 1940, Freemont, Ohio". This business was operational from 1875 to 1973, and an early advertisement of theirs states that they developed photographs for as low as 7 cents a print. These photographs were likely captured by the Kodak 35, the most popular camera of the 1940s and one of the first manufactured 35mm cameras. Prior to the

1940s cameras had a waist level view finder, in the 1940s cameras became more portable and conducive to candid or snapshot photography. The Kodak 35 was priced at $33.50 USD and so it was affordable for a crew member. Based on the number of prints taken with this camera within the fonds, it is safe to say that it belonged to George McCurdy. Unlike the photographs taken by a visiting photographer, McCurdy alone decided what was captured. In one case McCurdy photographs two white sailors, decked out in crisp navy and white (Figure 38). The fact that he made the choice to remember these men, and hold on to their portraits tells us that there were at least moments in his tenure on lake steamers where race and rank were a less determining factor. While these subjects stand in different relations to capital, labour becomes the means through which these social bonds are produced and sustained. The snapshot photograph becomes a tool through which these bonds are memorialized.

Snapshots can be taken with any sort of camera, and a snapshot camera can take a variety of kinds of picture. Therefore what makes a snapshot a snapshot is its function, not its pictorial qualities, and this function is determined by the network of social relationships of which it is a part. Echoing this idea Batchen (2008) argues that snapshots are odes to conformist individualism. Specifically, "visual conformity makes these sorts of photographs comfortingly familiar… they stitch both photographer and subject into a larger community of shared values and aspirations. Snapshots thereby work to reconcile personal and mass identity" (idem., 133). Though rank is indexed through uniform, McCurdy's snapshots attempt to collapse hierarchies by capturing the intimacy between workers. In this way these photographs upset the hierarchy of scale imposed by Western thought and deposited within lake faring culture. Returning to Gilroy, these snapshots reinforce the idea of the ship as a "micro-system of linguistic and political



FIGURE 36-38: George D. McCurdy and the crew of the Erie Isle, ca. 1938-40. Gelatin Silver Photographs.

hybridity" (1993, 12). So while hierarchies never fully broke down on board the ship, these photographs paint a picture that is consistent with Bolster's (2009) account of early Atlantic seafaring, wherein formal boundaries could flex to accommodate human relationships. Overall they present evidence that despite rigid hierarchies imposed by the lake steamer companies, at times friendships were sustained across lines of rank.

These snapshots capture a fleeting moment, wherein the social relations of the lake ship are signified through playful exchange between crew members. While McCurdy's "costume" is dictated by the racial politics of economic relations onboard the ship, it invites a reflection on oppositional practice. Read against the formal portraits described earlier on, McCurdy's chef's whites are intended to situate him below deck. McCurdy flouts the shipboard hierarchy and poses congenially with fellow crew members. As shown in the earlier example, commissioned group portraits of crews are often taken on the deck, the only space that can contain the ships many workers. Within these photographs marine workers of all ranks—in corresponding uniforms—stand rigidly onboard the deck—usually wearing grim expressions. When read against the archive of professional photographs this difference in comfort is in broad relief—he is brought into representation on his own terms. The snapshot unsettles the conventional scripts of photographic postures and patterns that we recognize in formal portraiture.

"Oppositional Black Aesthetic": The Politics of Presentation

Roy Banks, Henry Banks Jr., Ara Wilson and Freemont Nelson are dressed in cook uniforms and stand in front of a large Born stove in the galley (Figure 39). While three of the men stand facing the camera, one man is turned slightly away from the photographer carving a

roast on a thick wooden block. None of the men appear eager to be photographed, perhaps deflated by the intensity of work in the hot kitchen of the steamer. While the seasonal work of the marine cook ended in late December, many of these men found work on land during the winter season. According to a local description of a Christmas dinner served at the Lakeview Hotel Rotary Club in Amherstburg in 1933, Henry Banks Jr. is listed as the Lakeview Hotel's chef, who "carried in a flaming Christmas pudding" to a dining room of festive patrons (Marsh 1995, 111). With the working season lasting from March to December, these men were away from their families for most of the year. Ara Wilson, like many men, frequently worked for entire seasons on the lake, returning home in late December (*Echo Soundings* VIX, 1911-1912). These long seasonal absences were likely a strain on relationships, and the few months on land were cherished. Not surprisingly Wilson married Belle Adams on December 29, 1909, likely only days after his steamer docked in Amherstburg (*Echo Soundings* VII, 1907-1909). The return of marine workers was celebrated by the local community, most notably through special services for sailors held in the African Methodist Episcopal church by pastor Reverend I.F Williams in early January (*Echo Soundings* VI 1905-1906).

There are similar representational codes and practices between this photograph and the archive of occupational portraits of the nineteenth century. Within this genre, posing in one's uniform alongside machinery and tools had a symbolic importance, asserting the sitters competence and industry. While these portraits, popularized in the mid-nineteenth century, were exclusively staged in a photographer's studio, the photograph of Banks and company was taken with a handheld amateur camera. The postmarks on the verso as well as their dimensions of 5.5×3.5 inches indicate that they were printed as picture postcards. At the turn of the century,



FIGURE 39: Ara Wilson, Henry Banks Jr., Roy Banks, Fremont Nelson: cooks aboard a steamboat, [ca 1890]. Gelatin Silver Print.

amateur photographers could buy sensitized cards on which to print their own postcards, and in 1903, Kodak introduced a popular folding camera designed to take postcard-sized prints. The most popular of these cameras was the No. 3A Folding Pocket Kodak camera, which used 3 ¼" x 5 ½" exposures on 122 roll film, with the purchasing option of four, six or ten " x 5 ½" exposures on 122 roll film, with the purchasing option of four, six or ten " exposures on 122 roll film, with the purchasing option of four, six or ten exposures. The advertised price of this model in 1908 is $20.00—an exorbitant amount for many amateur photographers. This photograph captures the quotidian experiences of marine work, indicating that it was likely taken by a crew member. Given their monthly salary of between $25 to 30, the relative cost of this camera, and

the limited amount of exposures per pack, the choice to take these cameras onboard was a very costly one—each shot needed to be thoughtfully rendered. There is no correspondence or postmarks on either of these cards, indicating that they were kept with the photographer, and not circulated. What is more, there appears to be paper fibres attached to hardened adhesive over the area where correspondence would be placed indicating that this object was placed in an album or mounted within a frame.

Historians of photographic practices position the album as a thoroughly modern collecting practice which played an important role in the construction of identity (Di Bello 2007). The same could be argued about all colloquial forms of curated display. The act of collecting, juxtaposing, holding and turning pages are tactile practices that help to re-contextualize photographs. These practices discern the importance of a photographic object, whether tied to sentimentality or their conformity to formal portrait standards or decorating habits. These practices takes on a different meaning against histories of derogatory and stereotypical representations of racialized people. In her "In Our Glory: Photography and Black Life" bell hooks (1998) argues that all colonized and subjugated people create oppositional subcultures. Speaking specifically to the "oppositional black aesthetic" hooks maintains that (idem., 59):

> the walls of images in Southern black homes were sites of resistance. They constituted private, black-owned and -operated gallery space where images could be displayed, shown to friends and strangers. These walls were a space where, in the midst of segregation, the hardship of apartheid, dehumanization could be countered. Images could be critically considered, subjects positioned according to individual desire.

I quote this passage at length because it allows us to consider the politics of image making and presentation within the domestic space and through vernacular practices. For hooks (idem., 61) the camera is a political instrument, and walls were "essential to the process of decolonization." The album and the wall are then a powerful vehicle for storytelling, roughly chronological, their narratives usually locate its principal actor within a web of familial and social—or in this case occupational—events and settings (Batchen 2008). For Black marine workers, segregated within the galley and holding low rank, these photographs challenged white perceptions of Blackness, re-inscribing colonial ways of looking.

I see the image of Banks and company and its presentation as connecting labour to the domestic, possessing a two-pronged epistemological function: it begins as an artefact that documents the work life and consciousness of Black mariners, and becomes an object displayed within the home, forming within this new context, what hook's describes as an oppositional Black aesthetic. In their circulation from lake, to home, to archive the photographs described above disclose both metaphorically and materially routes (labour) and roots (domestic) and the oppositional practices entangled across these spaces. These photographs document what the system of racial capital does to its "excess peoples", and how oppositional practices work to undo this system that is constantly producing and reproducing itself.

Conclusion

The lake ships traversing Lake Erie were enmeshed in the imperial organization and control of maritime space during the formative years of North American nation building. Throughout the Atlantic ports and inland on lakes naval policies managed bodies of water for the accumulation of capital. Marine workers were similarly organized to fit the needs of this

global system. The classification of Black marine cooks and stewards was a process of placing them within a broader system of servitude, one deeply marked by histories of enslavement. This system evidences the ways in which Black transnational spaces like Amherstburg were "haunted *and* developed" by past models of humaness (McKittrick 2008, xvii).

Onboard laking faring and seafaring people were caught between harsh practices of discipline and control from above, and cultures of resistance that often exceeded formal organization. The photographs within the McCurdy fonds demonstrate how marine cooks and stewards in Amherstburg organized themselves and their lives in response to this social positioning. The identification photographs, formal group portraits, and snapshots make visible new and previously unacknowledged vernacular strategies of social struggle. Arguably the key contribution of the Black Atlantic paradigm is its argument that mobility practices not only unsettle previous understandings of nationality and locality, but also foster the creation of countercultures of modernity formed through this intercultural position. As this chapter demonstrates, the chronotype of the ship proves useful in positioning lake faring culture in Amherstburg as part of this vast geography. It does so first by contending that the lake ship like the slave ship is a technology of modernity that is liminal in nature, troubling narrow nationalistic understandings of how categories of race are produced, deployed and resisted. Secondly, it highlights the ambivalent nature of cultural resistance—sometimes simultaneously wresting on and challenging Eurocentric scripts of representation.

The following chapter dwells on how the dynamics of presence and movement on the Great Lakes raises questions of how gender might be understood in relation to diasporic and domestic space. Responding to critiques of Gilroy's (1993) use of the ship as the central

organizing symbol of diaspora, Jacqueline Nassy Brown (2009) argues against dismissing seafaring as too uniformly male to foster an understanding of women's agency in producing the Black Atlantic. Nassy Brown argues in contrast that unequal access to mobility—and the gendering of presence, location, and travel that further result from differential mobility—provides a window onto the power asymmetries at the heart of diasporic relations. The photographic practices of local women in Amherstburg discussed in the next chapter are positioned as a site to stage an intervention in Gilroy's analytic—foregrounding the gender politics of the Black Atlantic and how they unfolded within the environs of Lake Erie.

Chapter Six: Gender and the Black Atlantic: The Travelogues of Ethel Alexander

Introduction

In 1914 Ethel Alexander and her siblings Nina Mae and Arthur left their home in Anderdon to accept positions as school teachers with the Six Nations School Board on Ohsweken reserve in Brant County, Ontario. Five years later the Alexanders' suitability as teachers was challenged by the Indian Moral Association (IMA) on the basis of their mixed African, Indigenous and British ancestry. In the face of a year-long campaign by the IMA to remove them from Ohsweken, the Alexanders fought successfully to retain their positions. Despite their victory, the siblings relocated shortly thereafter. While Nina Mae and Arthur returned home to Essex County where they found positions in local schools, Ethel was recruited by the Anglican church to teach in Honduras. Ethel remained there until her retirement in 1950.

Ethel Alexander sat for this portrait sometime during her tenure as an educator in Honduras (Figure 40). To the best of our knowledge, Ethel had no children and was unmarried when she relocated to teach in the small village of Orange Walk. In 1931, nine years after her arrival, Ethel was promoted to Principal of the St. John's Cathedral Girls School in Belize District by Bishop Dunn of the Honduran diocese (*Amherstburg Echo*, Jan 1 1932). Ethel wears a lavallière bow collar, a style commonly associated with women's workwear—the feminine counterpart to the traditional suit and tie. The bow collar became a staple of women's professional attire in the 1910s, reinforcing wholesome femininity despite a woman's participation in the labour force. The cult of domesticity found expression through sartorial choices. Ethel's career as an educator was similarly marked by the regulatory power of domesticity and all of its ideological and institutional manifestations. Theses ideas travelled with



FIGURE 40: Ethel Alexander, an Anglican Missionary and schoolteacher in British Honduras [Belize]. [between 1920 and 1940]. Gelatin Silver Print.

her while she traversed across the Black Atlantic landscape, revealing the intimate interrelation of gender, race, and class structures that were defined by British colonialism. The record of Ethel's travels provided by the photographs she gathered during these years tells the story of multiple boundary crossings both literal and metaphorical. Due to her profession and her ability to conform to notions of so-called respectable womanhood, Ethel was afforded a level of mobility not granted to many Black women in the early twentieth century, allowing her to move back and fourth between Amherstburg, Ohsweken Reserve, and Honduras. Ethel's story uncovers tensions between inclusionary ideologies and exclusionary practices—class distinctions, gender divisions, and racial membership were filled with different meanings depending on her location. By circulating through a number of cultural environments and discursive registers Ethel's experiences gesture to the ambivalence of colonial modernity—a key trait of Black Atlantic cultural production.

Thus far I have argued that the photographs within the McCurdy fonds help to produce the idea of a fluid frontier and a distinctive transnational regionality that fed into the Black Atlantic world. In doing so the photographs unsteady traditional geographic mappings of this region, and draw our attention to the ways kinship networks were sustained through the staging and circulation of portraits. Continuing my discussion of labour migrations from the previous chapter, this chapter challenges the gendered boundaries of the Black Atlantic, moving beyond the masculinist tropes of migration and movement that are connected to the chronotype of the ship. The travellers of the nineteenth century Black Atlantic reworked traditional autobiographical forms to tell their own stories about the modern world—their movements set against the histories of transatlantic slavery and dispossession. In her study of blues

epistemologies Angela Davis (2011, 39) argues that spacial mobility, the need to move, the existence of places to go, and the ability to get there, constituted central motifs in Black song after emancipation. Davis cites theologian Howard Thurman who argues that “freedom of movement was for African Americans the most psychologically dramatic of all manifestations of freedom" (Ibid.). While there were important economic catalysts for undertaking journeys away from home, “even when jobs were not to be found and available employment was backbreaking and poorly compensated, the very process of traveling must have generated a feeling of exhilaration and freedom in individuals whose ancestors had been chained for centuries to geographical sites dictated by slave masters” (Ibid.). Throughout the Black Atlantic mobility appears as a crucial element not only for those individuals or groups that are subjected to displacement, but also for the configuration of social imaginaries across different regions—it allows ideas to travel as well. As Gilroy argues (1993, 110): “In the space and time between the separate Robert Johnson’s “Hellbound on My Trail”, the Wailers’ exhortation to “Keep on Moving” and the Soul II Soul piece with the same name, the expressive cultures of the Black Atlantic world have been dominated by a special mood of restlessness”. For Gilroy these songs evoke and affirm a condition in which the negative meanings given to enforced movement of Black people are somehow transposed—a curse (homelessness, exile) get repossessed. Writers like Olaudah Equiano (1789), Frederick Douglass (1845), and W.E.B. Du Bois (1962) wrote about their movements to give personal meaning to their journeys, create public identities for themselves, and provide comment on the worlds they inhabited. Sandra Gunning (2021, 6) argues that for the Atlantic African diaspora this “freedom to travel from place to place without threat of violence and capture would have been a crucial, constitutive element of personhood

and self-ownership". For Gunning (Ibid.) these conditions require a "redefinition of the world travel to include not just 'actions of traveling or journeying' but especially the term's original Middle English meaning of travail or work, as in 'labour, toil, suffering, trouble'". A similar redefinition is required to account for Ethel Alexander's journeys, as they articulate a complex set of relationships with the multiple worlds she inhabited when compared to the struggle of her male counterparts. She was a product of both the politics of respectability informed by the middle-class values of the Victorian age, but also her community's struggles for racial equality and access to education. At the same time Ethel deliberately set her path along the trajectories of the British empire. Ethel's itinerancy gestures to the classed and gendered dimensions of being simultaneously the index of her family's respectability, and a proponent of the colonial education system.

This chapter unfolds through a case study of the journeys of Ethel Alexander, a woman of African American, British and Cherokee ancestry born and raised in Amherstburg, who travelled as a missionary teacher to the Ohsweken Reserve in Brantford, Ontario and later to Belize. It takes as its focus concern the following questions: How might Black Altanticism be enriched or expanded to address the labour migrations of Ethel Alexander? What were the hierarchical arrangements required to allow Ethel Alexander a position of leadership within the colonial education system? How did these arrangements complicate understandings of gender and colonial cultures? I begin with a sketch of how notions of middle-class respectability structured Ethel's familial relations through a reading of a family portrait of the Alexander family. I then describe the circumstances that led Ethel to take a position at the No.2 School on Ohsweken Reserve, followed by a gendered analysis of British colonial education. This section

addresses patterns of governance that were particular to the histories of the Six Nations in Brant County, but also resonate with practices in the wider imperial world—including Belize. This chapter invites reflection on domains of overlap and difference between Black Atlantic nodes, speaking to how moral policies shaped the boundaries of race and gender. Ethel's journeys draw attention to parallel modes of governance not described in the Black Atlantic, particularly settler-colonialism and its pedagogical and religious institutions. In attending to the question of gender and coloniality, I put Boyce-Davies (1994) and Gilroy's (1993) work in conversation with Ann Laura Stoler (2006) and Anne McClintock (1995). Their gendered analysis of colonial culture, more so than Gilroy's idea of modernity, accounts for the co-constitutive or the relationality between capitalist Western empire and its knowledge systems, and coloniality. A relational understanding of these concepts is needed to place the visual culture of Ethel's journeys in their proper historical context.

"True Womanhood": The Cult of Domesticity and Familial Relations

In order to situate Ethel Alexander within her familial and social context, I start my discussion of her journeys with a family photograph of the Alexander family (Figure 41). The oldest photograph of Ethel within the McCurdy fonds is a family portrait taken with her parents and five siblings circa 1905. Dressed in their Sunday best, the Alexander family barely fit within the frame. Seated at the centre of the photograph in the front row are parents John Henry Alexander (1858) and Annie Louise Crawford (1860). They are flanked by Arthur Harding (1886) on the right and Ethel Landonia (1887) on the left. In the back row are Nina Mae (1885), Marjorie (1896), John Harold (1884), and Annie Louise (1890), nicknamed Totti.

The patriarch of the family John H. Alexander was the son of Thomas Alexander of Kentucky, and Catherine Harding of Buckingham, England. Thomas and his family escaped enslavement and immigrated to Canada in 1848, establishing themselves in the Marble Village in Anderdon ("Alexander Family", Amherstburg Freedom Museum). While the Harding family moved from England to Buffalo, New York when Catherine was nine years old. Catherine and Thomas eventually met in Ohio, and married on 5 June 1848 in Maumee, Ontario (Ontario, Marriages 1800-1910). They went on to raise three children; John, Philip and Martha. Ethel's mother Annie Louise Crawford was the daughter of George M. And Laura Crawford (nee Virginia) who settled in Amherstburg in roughly 1845. Annie's father George M. was of Cherokee descent, while her mother Laura was African American. Laura was born into slavery in Covington, Kentucky and escaped with her family to Amherstburg at 15 years old ("Alexander Family", Amherstburg Freedom Museum). Annie married John on 27 July 1883, and the couple settled on a large lot on Alma St. in Amherstburg where they raised their six children (Ontario, Marriages 1800-1910).

As mentioned in the Chapter 4 John Harding was the teacher and eventually the principal of the King Street School in Amherstburg. After receiving his teacher's certificate from London's Normal School in 1878 he taught in a number of schools throughout Essex County before beginning his tenure at the King Street School. John was active in his community throughout his life: in 1923 he was elected as an Amherstburg Town Councillor; in 1930 he was appointed as Town Assessor, a position he held until his death in 1934; he served as Superintendent of the local African Methodist Episcopal Church; and an organizer of the annual 1 August Emancipation Day parade (*Amherstburg Echo*, 4 August 1922). Annie Alexander was



FIGURE 41: The Alexander Family. [Front row L to R] Arthur, John Henry, Annie (Crawford), Ethel; [Back row L to R] Nina Mae, Marjorie, John Harold, and Annie. Gelatin Silver Print.

similarly civic minded, a life-long supporter of the local Baptist Church which her carpenter father helped to build. Working from home, Annie supported her husband's political aspirations and raised six children.

The Alexander family history helps to shape our understanding of their portrait. In their pose and dress they make claim to middle-class values of economic advancement and cultural privilege. Adhering to the tropes of the genre, the photograph centrally places John Alexander reenforcing a patriarchal structure of middle-class family norms that reproduces itself through direct lines of inheritance. Following this logic eldest son John Harold occupies a central position in the back row of the portrait, while Arthur mimics his father's pose in his posture and position of his hand. Ethel and her sisters mirror the composure of their mother Annie and perform gendered codes of "true womanhood". With the exception of the youngest daughter, all of the Alexander women wear their hair pinned back as containing the hair was a sign of modesty. Their high necklines, and long sleeves suggest female purity, complimenting their brother's performance of male continence. The overall picture of respectability is reinforced by signalling their middle-class status through shows of striving and conspicuous wealth; pressed three-piece suits, ruffled dresses, curly locks and stiff, noble posture. Though staged within a studio space the family's portrait represents signs of domestic interiority. As McClintock (1995, 5) argues "the cult of domesticity was not simply a trivial and fleeting irrelevance, belonging properly in the private "natural" realm of the family. Rather... [it] was a crucial, if concealed, dimension of male as well as female identities". At first glance one could argue that the Alexander's investment was no greater than any other family that posed for a portrait at the turn of the century. However a closer reading of the Alexander family history reveals that they were

both committed to advancing imperial enterprises through education, but also worked to resist such structures.

The lone prop in the portrait is a scroll prominently featured at the centre of the frame in John Alexander's hand. Books and scrolls often functioned within the photographic studio to signal a sitter's education and worldliness. This prop might be read as a symbol of both John Alexander's learnedness and the family's aspirations. All six of the Alexander children went on to succeed in their careers of choice: John Harold became a doctor, Marjorie a nurse, Annie a legal clerk, and Arthur, Nina Mae and Ethel had long careers in education (1921 Census of Canada). The scroll, like a diploma, may also represent that the family valued education and had the financial means with which to support their children's goals.

Moral Panic and Social Purity: The Indian Moral Association

Perhaps inspired by the success of their father, Ethel, Nina Mae and Arthur all began careers in education. After receiving their training the three taught in local institutions. Ethel began her career teaching at the S.S. 11 in Colchester, a segregated school that was founded in response to the large waves of immigration in the region due to the passage in the United States of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. However, Ethel's tenure at S.S. 11 ended when, during the opening year of World War One in 1914 she and Nina Mae responded to a posting for teachers by the Six Nations School Board in Grand River in Brant County Ontario. They were soon after hired to work at the No.2 school on Ohsweken Reserve. Two years later, they were joined by their brother Arthur who was hired by the school board for the No.7 school in 1916 (Norman 2017, 85). Research by Funké Aladejebi (2012), Dionne Brand (2022), and Afua Cooper (2014)

indicates that teaching was a traditional job of Black women during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, these women were restricted to working within segregated one-room schoolhouses in Black communities. It was not until the labour shortages brought on by World War Two that a small number Black educators found employment outside Black communities. Additionally, as a result of this growing teaching shortage, marriage bans that forbid married women from teaching were eliminated in Ontario during this time (Aladejebi 2012). However, oral history interviews conducted by Aladejebi (idem., 33) indicate that despite teacher shortages in the twentieth century Black educators were essentially barred from teaching positions outside of Black communities: "While it is difficult to know whether black educators were able to easily move from rural to urban centres as frequently as their white counterparts, since some black populations were rurally based, black teachers tended to stay in these communities for extended periods of time". The Alexander's labour migration to Brant County was somewhat of an anomaly, though influenced by a similar context; the primary reason Ohsweken was in need of teachers was because many of those already working on the reserve had enlisted in the army. I believe the two year gap between Ethel and Nina Mae's hiring and Arthur's was due in part to Arthur's desire to enlist. Three months after World War One began Arthur wrote to the Minister of Militia and Defense, Colonel Sam Hughes asking why Black men were not permitted to enlist in the army. Hughes responded that the selection of recruits was the decision of local officers, and that the headquarters did not interfere with such decisions ("Enlistment of Coloured Men in the Canadian Militia", 5 November 1914). Likely unsatisfied with this response Arthur with his wife Ethel Mae joined his sisters, lodging together in the teacher's residence on Ohsweken reserve.

The history of education at Six Nations at Grand River is unique in that it differs greatly from the history of education in other First Nations communities in Canada (Norman 2017, 43). Following the Revolutionary War in the United States in 1784 on the encouragement of the British, the leadership of Six Nations under Captain Joseph Brant or Thayendanegea relocated to Canada. Brant selected the Grand River Valley, and so the British negotiated a land cession from the Mississauga of 570,000 acres of land on either side of the Grand River from the tip of Lake Erie. Not long after, between 1785 and 1835 Brant sold off most of this land. However the remainder of land formed the Grand River Reserve in 1847–22,000 hectares located in the townships of Tuscarora, Oneida, and Onondaga (idem., 45). This area became the largest Iroquois reserve in Canada or the United States, and also the wealthiest. A council of hereditary chiefs from each nation, the war chiefs from the War of 1812, and the appointed non-hereditary Pine Tree chiefs made up the 50 person governing body of the reserve. By the time the Alexander siblings moved to Ohsweken the population of the reserve was 4,700. Known as the "capital of the territory" Ohsweken was the base of the Council House, the Agricultural Exhibition Hall, the Orange Lodge, churches and the No. 2 School (idem., 47).

Education on the reserve was overseen by the Six Nations School Board, the first Indigenous school board in the province. Founded in 1878 the board was formed after repeated disagreements between the Six Nations Council and the New England Company, made up of representatives of the Anglican Church. The Six Nations community was largely divided between Christians and Longhouse adherents (idem., 49). However by 1890 Anglicans made up 40% of the Grand River population; Baptists 24%; and, the remainder was divided up between Longhouse adherents and Methodists (Weaver 1978, 530). Weaver argues that though

Longhouse adherents resisted acculturative influences, by the late nineteenth century the Christian community slowly began to adopt middle-class values and beliefs. Between 1907 and 1924, eight new day schools and residential schools were set up in Grand River with the aim of violently assimilating Indigenous children into settler colonial culture.

There are two photographs taken during Ethel's tenure at the No.2 school. In the first photograph Ethel and Nina Mae pose with roughly 40 students in front of the imposing structure of the school (Figure 42). Unfortunately Figure 42 was removed from this dissertation because of copyright restrictions. To view the full citation please see this dissertation's "List of Figures" (ix). According to a statement on the "Indian Day Schools in the Dominion" part of the *Annual Report of Department of Indian Affair* from 1919, Ethel and Nina Mae were the sole teachers at "No.2 a undenominational school that had 93 students" ("Dominion of Canada Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs", 31 March 1919). Ethel and Nina Mae flank the group at both sides, though owing to the framing of the photograph it is impossible to identify each woman. The subjects of the photograph take up such little space within the frame that they almost blend into the light brick siding of the building. Based on this aesthetic choice, it would seem like the institution itself, and not its students or faculty are the subject of this photograph. In keeping with the colonial education practices of violent assimilation, the institution then takes precedent over the individuals who work and learn in its classrooms. This is reflected in the children's uniform dress; all of the girls wear white long sleeve and floor hemmed dresses, while the boys wear collared shirts tucked into pants. Similarly, boys and girls are grouped in smaller clusters throughout the photograph. Like most schools built in the early twentieth century, the No. 2 school has two entrances, one for boys and one for girls. As will be discussed later on, gender

segregation was a widely enforced ideological practice within the colonial school systems, reflecting ideas of Christian morality.

Unlike the premodern schoolhouses featured in the photographs in Chapter 4 the No. 2 is not a repurposed space. Rather, as architectural historian Dale Allen Gyure (2001) argues in addition to the implementation of compulsory education, organizational and curricular reforms, evolving attitudes towards education in society, and a greater concern for children's health and safety necessitated modernized school buildings. Schools were now multi-roomed buildings designed to accommodate a curriculum comprised of a variety of systemic, well-organized pedagogical activities, including assemblies and laboratories. Large windows replaced dark stuffy rooms, maximizing light and improving air circulation. Similar to the No. 2 school built in 1902, the construction of stately and monumental school buildings were tied to their so-called moral mission within society reflecting their goal of teaching values to their students. Educational historian William Cutler explains (1989, 20):

> For nearly a century, beginning in the 1830s, the one-room schoolhouse reminded farm children of the family home. Urban and suburban elementary schools often looked like large private residences, complete with friendly entrance porches. Like the family, the school was responsible for teaching values, an obligation which it has never eschewed. But a well-designed school would uplift students, too.

When we consider the colonial history of the No. 2 school this notion of "uplift" and improving the moral character of students takes on a wholly assimilationist tone. This photograph reflects wider changes in racial formation projects and colonial policy at work in Canada at the turn of the century. Before the arrival of European settlers, education in Six Nations was largely non-coercive and dictated by ideas of cooperation, coexistence and autonomy (Norman 2017). While the early nineteenth century was defined by thin beech-heads of colonization surveilled

and policed through military rule, in the early twentieth century the state focused more on educational projects. With the threat of military expansion by the United States having subsided, the decline of the fur trade and more aggressive encroachment by settlers on Indigenous land, the government of Upper Canada became increasingly concerned with how to deal with Indigenous communities (idem., 52). While the federal government gave the provinces control of education, the Indian Act of 1876 made education of First Nations peoples the responsibility of the Department of Indian Affairs. Nicholas Flood Davin, the main architect of the residential school system, based the Canadian model on Ulysses S. Grant's policy of "aggressive civilization" in the United States. Davin was particularly inspired by Captain Richard Pratt, the superintendent of Fort Marion, a military prison camp established in Florida in 1875. Pratt went on to open the Carlisle Industrial School in 1879, his student body made up of those men and women incarcerated at Fort Marion. In 1879 when Davin submitted his *Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Halfbreeds* to the Minister of the Interior he enthusiastically endorsed grafting the proposed system in the United States on the older missionary established schools in Canada. In the mid-nineteenth century, in partnership with missionaries, day and residential schools were established to assimilate Indigenous children. Norman (2017) points out that very little has been written about day schools. This is in part due to a lack of primary sources, with very few day school records being properly preserved. Despite the fact that two thirds of Indigenous children who were enrolled in the colonial education system were enrolled in days schools, there has been a lack of scholarly attention on these institutions.

There are several compositional similarities between the photograph of Ethel and Nina Mae and their class, and contemporaneous photographs taken at residential schools. In both

cases the photographs are meant to index the efficiency of the "civilizing mission" by demonstrating strict adherence to the rigid institutional structure. As Montez de Oca and Prado (2014, 150) explain in their study of photographs taken of students at American Indian boarding schools "the overwhelming theme in these pictures is individual identity replaced by a school group identity... that attempts to replace an individual and tribal identity with that of an undifferentiated citizen-worker". This is most clearly evidenced in the performance of obedience to gender roles. The process of gendering structured by day and residential schools is visualized both through gender segregation, but also through styling and uniforms. Based on the testimony of survivors Lerner (2009) explains that following the traumatic removal from their communities, children were stripped and scrubbed, had their hair cut or shaved, and were assigned either a number or a new name. Because hair in most First Nations community was an expression of personal beauty, community aesthetics, and cultural practice, haircutting upon arrival was often a terrifying experience. Within these photographs, the short hair of the boys, and the pulled back or cropped hair of the girls offer a visual testimony of both a symbolic and physical severing of cultural and familial ties. That these haircuts were worn by students in day schools tells us that though students returned to their families after class, they were still required to take part in this symbolic severing. In 1904 the Department of Indian Affairs stated the intended goal of instruction was to provide boys with the skills to farm on their reserves, and to "mold female students into excellent housekeepers who would make good wives for Indian farmers." In keeping with this goal, the young girls were carefully groomed and neatly dressed suggesting docility and neatness. Throughout the colonial experience, particular aspects of dress and presentation of the self became symbolic of the cult of domesticity. The social legibility of

dress became a means by which to regulate social boundaries of racially inflected notions of class. Fanon (1967, 35), noting the emotive politics of dress argued "it is by their apparel that types of society first become known". Girls and women in particular serve as boundary markers that visibly embody the iconography of race and gender purity. It is for this reason that the girls largely wear white dresses, a colour fetishized in Victorian England for its ties to ideas about purity.

The Six Nations School Board was committed to building schools that would match the quality of education of off-reserve schools which adhered to British imperial culture. Norman (2017, 6) outlines that when plans were made to build the No. 2 school, a committee was appointed by the school board to "visit school houses among the whites, to take a pattern of them, and return back to council". The No. 2 school where Ethel and Nina Mae taught was a replica of the local non-Native school Mount Pleasant—similar to other schools built in Ontario at the time it had two separate entrances for girls and boys. In 1906, a few years before the arrival of the Alexanders, the School Board aggressively lobbied to the Department of Indian Affairs to be able to use the Ontario Curriculum and the Regulations for the Management of Schools, which would appoint qualified teachers, and proper inspection by the county inspector. While in the early nineteenth century the first teachers in Grand River schools were white male missionaries, by the twentieth century Six Nations men and women made up half of the teachers working in the area (Norman 2017). Formal training requirements meant that most of these teachers had certification from either a Normal School or the local Mohawk Institute, an Anglican residential school. For those teachers matriculating from the latter institution, this meant being removal from family, gender segregation, and the devaluation or loss of traditional

culture, including language. According to historian Jennifer Pettit (2017, 68) the Indian Department praised the Mohawk Institute as a "pattern institution" dubbing it "the Indian Normal School".

In a second photograph taken between 1916 and 1920 Ethel and Nina Mae pose with roughly 50 students on a lawn with plush greenery serving as the backdrop (Figure 43). Unfortunately Figure 43 was removed from this dissertation because of copyright restrictions. To view the full citation please see this dissertation's "List of Figures" (ix). Other than the children being segregated by gender, the photograph's composition is relatively relaxed compared to the earlier photograph of the Alexanders and their students. The aesthetic of this photograph is seemingly governed less by state educational bureaucracy, and more by compositional structures favoured by professional photographers. For instance, this photograph adheres to "the rule of thirds" which dictates that the photographic frame should be divided three times both horizontally and vertically to create nine pieces and four gridlines. In order to create a balanced image key elements of the photograph should be positioned along these gridlines. This class photograph's subjects are contained within a third of the frame, with the heads of those subjects standing in the back row running along a gridline. Similarly, Ethel and Nina Mae are positioned along vertical lines marking their elevated status among the group. Similar to the effect of a studio backdrop the photographer has positioned their subjects in front of three large trees with a similar amount of negative space between them. The sun sits behind the trees producing long shadows ahead of the front row of children which contributes to a mirror like effect to the image. Despite this photographer's investment in a harmonious composition, they do allow for some idiosyncrasies—an individual pose, and a friendly touch

between students breaks this symmetry, creating a more dynamic image.

Compared to the early school photograph, this photograph is more lax and less disciplined in its composition. This more disorderly assemblage of students and teachers might speak to Ethel and Nina Mae's own interventions in colonial education practices. The minutes of a 1921 meeting of the Ohsweken Women's Institute describes an incident in which Ethel and Nina Mae advocated for better conditions for their students: "the need to have better sanitary conditions by which the pupils in the schools would be able to get a drink, was very forcibly put before the meeting by the teachers of the No 2. School" (idem., 293). The conditions of the No. 2 school are illuminated by an article in the *Amherstburg Echo* from October 4, 1918 which states that "Misses Ethel and N.M. Alexander of Ohsweken, Brant county are home on a visit, owing to the pupils of the school they are teaching having diphtheria. They return Monday." In addition to highlighting issues of sanitation, the Alexanders also asked the school board to provide cocoa and sugar to their pupils. Whether or not they were successful in their attempts to better the conditions of the No. 2 school is unknown. These actions might be read as oppositional when read in the context of both their family's history but also the broader community's history of advocating on behalf of marginalized students. There is a long history of activism among Black educators within the region, most famously documented by Afua Cooper (1994) in her study of Mary Bibb. Similarly Funké Aladejebi (2021) notes that during the nineteenth century where Black communities in Ontario were forced to open segregated schools, Black educators ensured that their classrooms were open to Indigenous and white students. Aladejebi (idem. 21) argues that this is evidence of Black educators vision of "a more expansive view of schooling...[serving] the broader purpose of facilitating racial integration and equality."

Ethel and Nina Mae both attended the segregated King Street School in Amherstburg, an institution where their father John Henry Alexander served as principal. As mentioned in Chapter 4 Alexander and other members of the Black community in Amherstburg continuously lobbied local officials for better resources for their students, oftentimes supplementing county funding out of their own pockets. It is also worth noting that the Alexanders likely had employment opportunities throughout Essex County, owing to both their formal education, but also the reputation of their father. Based on the records of the Six Nations School Board the Alexander sisters were the among only four teachers that issued complaints to the board about the conditions of the school. It is possible that this less rigid, *plein-air* school photograph reflects the Alexander's relationship with their students. As principal Nina Mae would certainly have had some say in the staging of this photograph. However despite these efforts to improve the conditions of the No. 2 School, Ethel and Nina Mae's students' experience of day school was harmful and oppressive, overdetermined by the colonial conditions that necessitated the school in the first place. As McClintock (1996, 68) explains: "Ambivalence may well be a critical aspect of subversion, but it is not a sufficient agent of colonial failure."

The Alexanders' teaching records were "universally favourable" so much so that according to Indian Affairs expenditure reports all three successfully requested raises of $150 in 1919 and 1920 ("Dominion of Canada Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs", 31 March 1919). However, in January 1919 Deputy Superintendent General Duncan Campbell Scott received a letter from Mrs. George D. Styres, the President of the Indian Moral Association (IMA) asking that the Alexanders be removed from their positions. Acting on behalf of the IMA's 160 members, who aimed to "uplift the moral and social life of the reserve", Styres

letter explained “we resent the appointment of negroes as teachers on our Reserve. We do not consider it uplifting to the Indian” (Norman 2017, 86-87). In defence of the Alexanders Superintendent Scott incorrectly clarified that the Alexanders were “mulatto” and not “negro” because their mother was white (Annie Alexander was half Cherokee, half Black). Scott went on to say that the Alexanders “are a highly respectable and well thought of [family], and they have a brother who is a doctor in Detroit.” (idem., 87). The IMA were ultimately unsuccessful in their formal attempts to remove the Alexanders. However, a year later, in 1920 Arthur left for a better paying position in Buxton, while Ethel and Nina Mae both left in 1922.

A letter from Indian Superintendent Gordon Smith in the “Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs” of 1909 describes the formation of the IMA:

> An organization was formed in December last by the Indians under the name of 'The Indian Moral Association of the Six Nations,' having for its object the moral advancement and uplifting of the social conditions on the reserve, and especially the safeguarding and directing the rising generation in the way of social morality and purity of life. Under the auspices of this association meetings have been held in every part of the reserve, addressed by the superintendent, medical officer, missionaries, Indians and outsiders. Good results, are already noticeable, particularly in more respect being shown for the marriage contract and purity of life.

The IMA was primarily a temperance society founded in 1907 by two Mohawk women Evelyn Johnson and Mary Smith Styres. The association’s goals were similar to both Indigenous and Anglo-Canadian reform groups of the time. The IMA took particular interest in education in Ohsweken with their aim of “safeguarding and directing the rising generation in the way of social morality and purity of life” (idem., 268). According to research Weaver (1978), the IMA’s membership was made up of housewives of upper tribesmen, the missionaries, the school teachers, and the superintendent, as well as influential settlers off the reserve. The organization

had close ties to the state, at its founding the IMA Styres and Johnson elected superintendent Major Gordon Smith as honorary president.

The Alexanders taught at Ohsweken for nearly five years before the campaign for their removal was initiated by the IMA. That the language of "racial uplift" was used by an organization led by Indigenous women to remove the Alexanders from their positions speaks to the convoluted nature of broader racial formation projects of the time. When the IMA was founded one of its stated concerns was the moral debasement of Six Nations girls, part of a larger moral panic about "fallen girls" that took place in the nineteenth century. The central ideology at work grew out of concern that the social impact of industrialization and urbanization would cause an increase in single women working—a phenomenon that could potentially erode family cohesion and sexual morality (Strange 1995). In a meeting of the IMA at the Six Nations School Board in 1915, President Styres explained:

> A girl should be taught that her honor is the most sacred thing entrusted to her and that if she does not safeguard her honor as she would her life, she loses the most precious gift that God has bestowed upon her, and in her fall becomes unfit to associate with pure right-living girls. She should therefore be instructed to scorn all insults that might be offered her. Girls should be warned and explanations made to them regarding the evils of the White Slave Traffic. Boys should be instructed to be respectful to girls and protect and guard them from all those whom they know would be evil associates (idem., 271).

Colonial ideologies of gender were deeply imbedded in the educational practices at Ohsweken. Throughout the British empire women and girls bore the brunt of "civilization" aims defined by governments and missionaries. In Canada Prime Minister John A. MacDonald commented: "of the greatest importance with a view to the future progress of the Indian race in the arts of civilization and in intelligence that every effort should be made to educate and train the young

Indian females as well as the male members of the different Bands of Indians throughout the Territories" (idem., 111). These racial policies were meant to disrupt the labour practices within Indigenous communities. In particular missionaries and settlers did not understand the gendered division of labour within some Indigenous cultures, believing it improper that women perform agricultural work or take part in hunting parties (Strange 1995). Schooling then became an important institution from which to "reform" these practices by indoctrinating students with ideals of Christian womanhood and female domesticity, a practice believed to educate Indigenous women to be virtuous mothers. These beliefs were also embedded in the wider Ontario Curriculum taught within and outside of residential and day schools. The curriculum instruction focused on: "Duties to oneself: Purity, health, nobility, self-control, self-reliance, generosity, truthfulness, good taste in dress, cultivation of will power, economy, moral value of work, etc." (idem., 113). As discussed earlier, these beliefs manifested in school photographs which visually demonstrated the rigid and "fanatical" gender segregation of schools (idem., 121).

Day-to-day instruction reinforced Anglo-Canadian gender roles, preparing girls for housework through domestic science courses, and boys for agricultural labour through long days of intense manual labour. These practices were consistent throughout residential and day schools within the British empire, a practice that was an indispensable free labour for these institutions. Along with education, agriculture was key to the "civilizing" Six Nations communities into Canadian society. Wedding these two areas of social control together, many day and residential schools enforced agricultural training. To support these pedagogical goals, Principal Nina Mae travelled to the Ontario Agricultural College at the University of Guelph in July 1920 for a

summer course in agriculture and horticulture (*Amherstburg Echo*, July 9, 1920).

The hiring practices of these institutions were also determined by Anglo-Canadian gender roles, with school boards believing that white Canadian women would be an "uplifting" influence for Indigenous girls. These practices were certainly present in the early years of residential schools in the late nineteenth century. However, the *Annual Reports from the Department of Indian Affairs* indicate that throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century an equal number of white woman and Indigenous women worked as teachers at Six Nations. According to Norman (Norman 2017, 89) while white women represented for womanhood proper, in certain cases "white Canadians considered churchgoing African Canadians and Native Canadians more respectable than their non-churchgoing counterparts... a complete adherence to dominant religious practices could never make African Canadians and Native Canadians [sic] fully respectable". The fashioning of these "moral" policies was thus shaped by the boundaries of race, yet social credentials and sensibilities had the potential to blur distinctions of colour and culture. The fixity and fluidity of racial taxonomies were therefore formed and refigured according to their usefulness to the management of colonial rule.

Shifting Colonial Discourses and Black Respectability

Ethel and Nina Mae's claim to respectability was tenuous. Ethel, Nina Mae and Arthur's hiring by the Six Nations School Board was likely based on an assessment of their employment records and their civility, weighed against critical, class-based racial thinking. Their respectability as middle-class, educated subjects trumped their position as mixed-race people toward the lower-end of the colonial racial hierarchy. Fellows and Razack (1998, 348) argue that

when women secure a toehold on respectability this is only made possible by their complicity in maintaining class, gender, and racial hierarchies that result in economic and sexual exploitation of other women. Hired to embody respectable womanhood the labour of women who worked as educators played an essential role in reproducing the conditions of settler-colonialism. Not only were teachers at day and residential schools advancing violent processes assimilation by teaching the state curriculum, they worked to undermine the gendered labour practices custom to some Indigenous communities. This ultimately had the effect of bolstering the project of racial capital in Canada by working to produce conditions where Indigenous children were trained for low-paying work, with boys disciplined to toil as agricultural labourers, and girls trained for domestic service. Ethel's labour, like all teachers in the colonial education system, was crucial in these national and transnational projects. Through their reliance on hierarchical notions of race, class and gender these educational project offer insight into how social categories co-constitute each other in unsteady and untidy ways. As McClintock (1996) argues, within imperial modernity these categories are not sequentially derivative in a chain of signification. Rather, they are articulated categories that converge and overdetermine each other in intimate and often contradictory ways. As a woman of mixed race ancestry Ethel Alexander's narratives of migration disclosed in the photographic object demonstrate the ways in which social categories come into being in historical relation to each other, emerging in dynamic and shifting interdependence.

The Alexanders' "mixed" ancestry and the eventual controversy at the No. 2 School are related to the colonial crisis of origins and boundary surveillance. Positioning a person within a social hierarchy becomes an important function of colonial ordering. As Hall (2018, 97)

explains, in locating a person within such systems the optimum solution is to be able to call upon a "code of differences" which is immediately visible; "visibility becomes a kind of truth." In this strategy of social reading, every individual becomes "mappable" with "race" or colour being the salient determining factor with gender cutting a path through these categories (Ibid.). In some colonial contexts mixedness was read as a threat to a state's racial taxonomies—throwing these categories into crisis. For Ann Laura Stoler (2006) mixedness is a moving and strategic category that, depending on the racial politics of a place and the historical moment, provided access to some privileges but sharply blocked others. This reading directs our attention to the historical specificity in which a social category's occurrences and the rules that govern its appearance produce a range of different political practices. The Alexanders' experiences also highlight the discrepancies between colonial ideologies and practices, the criteria by which the colonial state defined itself and the racialized regimes of truth that guided their governance were sometimes in flux. There were often disparities between broad-scale dynamics of colonial rule and its sites of implementation. Stoler (2006, 9) describes: "colonial categories were binding but unbound by those within them, were excessively rigid and exceeded their limits, had nuanced criteria for inclusion that were reworked by people who made them and by those they could not contain". The twisted calculus of this racial logic is brought into sharp relief in Ethel's story. All claims to respectability are claims to membership in the dominant group, against a degenerate Other. Ethel and Nine Mae claimed respectability on the basis of their formal education and middle-class status, placing them in a hierarchical relationship with women who have less formal education. In the eyes of the Six Nations School Board and the IMA, Ethel and Nina Mae attained respectability through education and cultural comportment despite their

mixedness. This social location allowed them to be in a position of dominance over the Six Nations students who made up the student body of the No.2 school. However, as Fellows and Razack (1998, 352) argue: "because subordinate groups that gain a measure of respectability do not by definition possess all of the attributes of respectability, they are in an inherently unstable position." Some five years after the Alexanders began their careers in Ohsweken their race was ultimately used to undervalue their accomplishments and their claims to a higher position within structures of dominance.

Like many Black Atlantic subjects the Alexanders inhabit an ambiguous position to hegemonic constructions of nation. However, unlike Gilroy's Black Atlantic subjects this ambiguity was not deployed solely to subvert colonial authority. As participants in the education system the Alexanders at times enhanced colonial authority. However their experiences as educators cannot be read through the lens of racial subordination alone; there is documentation of practices of opposition to such structures. At the same time their "mixed origins" afforded them a mobility, complicating attempts to visually "map" them within hierarchies of social difference. In this way they occupied a unique vantage point from which to comment on ambivalence and "modernity's failed promises" (Gilroy 1993, 119). In his discussion of the "Poetics of Displacement" Gilroy (idem., 111) argues that expressive cultures of the Black Atlantic have been "dominated by a mood of restlessness". Enforced movement becomes transposed as a privileged standpoint that makes possible "useful and critical perceptions" of the modern world. Gilroy's Black Atlantic subjectivity can be loosely categorized as a hybridity that is enacted by engaging in different ideas from disparate zones or nodes in the topography of the Black Atlantic. Hybridity is then constituted in opposition to national particularity, but it is also

a diasporic perspective an "intercultural positionality" (idem., 6). Gilroy's usage of hybridity is one that unsettles biological essentialist binaries. In a similar way Stuart Hall (2018, 98) cautions that hybridity "often seems to attribute entanglement to mixed blood rather than to the play of historical and cultural factors." The Alexander's "mixed" ancestry becomes a salient determining factor in their movements. Hall (idem., 97) explains that in the context of Jamaican society "the brown or creole middle and lower-middling strata, formed the intermediary class of the imperial system, the principle conscripts to the colonial order." The living matrix of social placing allows differing degrees of access to modernity and its attendant institutions of power and domination. In this way the narrative of the Alexanders extends the Black Atlantic paradigm to encompass questions of how contradictory "biological" and national notions of difference grant some Black Atlantic subject more mobility than others. For instance Ethel Alexander's travels that came after her tenure at Ohsweken open up questions of imperialism and settler-colonialism, something Gilroy does not address as an equally significant constituent of modernity.

Imperial Expansion, Domesticity and Colonial Education: Life in Belize

Though the IMA was unsuccessful in their attempts to dismiss the Alexanders, by 1922 the siblings resigned from their posts at Ohsweken and dispersed to work at different schools. After being denied a salary raise in Ohsweken, Arthur returned to the community of North Buxton where he taught prior to working at the No.7 school (*Amherstburg Echo,*7 January 1921). Nina Mae went home to Amherstburg beginning what would be a long tenure at a local school. Less than a week after her resignation Ethel travelled by boat to Belize via Montreal to

work as teacher and catechist at an Anglican missionary school, a position she held until her retirement in 1950 (*Amherstburg Echo,* 16 June 1922). She was recruited to work in Honduras through Archbishop Edward Arthur Dunn, who came regularly to Canada looking for workers and funds. Ethel's first appointment in the region was at the Anglican School in the Orange Walk District, where she served a rural community with a population of 1,000 (*Amherstburg Echo*, Sept 7, 1950). The Orange Walk District borders Mexico and Guatemala, and during the 1880s and 1890s it had a predominantly Mestizo population (Etheridge 2015, 12). When Ethel arrived the community was comprised of Mayan immigrants who were displaced after the Caste War of Yucatán. This conflict between various groups of Maya and the Spanish in the Yucatan broke out in 1847 and continued until 1901 (Bolland, 1988,102). Throughout the ongoing war, thousands of Mestizos and Maya refugees moved into primarily northern Belize, many settled in Orange Walk. Belize is originally home of the Mayan, however as a result of Spanish and later British colonial incursions it has a diverse makeup of inhabitants. Its earliest immigrants were: enslaved African peoples brought to labour in the forest industry often by way of Jamaica; the Garifuna, of both African and Arawak descent, originally from St. Vincent; and, various groups of Mayas, fleeing oppression in neighbouring countries (Etheridge 2015). Belize became a British colony in 1862 and was renamed British Honduras. It would then become a crown colony in 1871.

Between 1816 and 1892, similar to the Canadian system, education in Honduras was instituted as a partnership between church and state (Etheridge 2015, 33). The establishment and management of schools was part of a larger civilizing mission to convert pupils to Christianity and instil Christian values. For the forestocracy "imparting a sense of morality was critical given the impending emancipation of the slaves [sic] and the threat they seemingly

posed" (idem., 33) By instilling a set of Christian values the ruling class hoped education would align itself with social control. The church and state system was enacted into law in the Schools Act of 1850 which allowed for a Board of Education to be appoint by the Superintendent. By 1868 the Colonial Governor of British Honduras and his Executive Council were tasked with overseeing the colony's schools. By 1892 the hierarchy of the Board was restructured so that the Colonial Governor served as President of the Board, with members of the Executive Council and five other Governor-appointed members rounding out its membership (idem., 39). These appointed memberships were exclusively filled by denominational representatives. J.A. Bennet notes that a "tradition of authoritarianism was formally instantiated in the schools. The Board of Education authorized teachers and ministers to discipline and control students both inside and outside of schools" (quoted in Etheridge 2015, 40). The education system was a modified transplant of the British elementary system, but reformed based on recommendations of the local teachers to meet the needs of the colonial project.

The McCurdy fonds includes a small haphazardly framed snapshot photograph of Ethel and her pupils taken during her tenure at the Anglican school in Orange Walk (Figure 44). The photograph was taken outdoors in front of a wooden fence. Ethel stands to the right of her students, while here pupils are arranged in rows. Similar to the photographs taken in Ohsweken, Ethel has segregated the boys and girls into rows. The girls are positioned inside of the fence a leaning over its rail, while the boys stand on the ground the opposite side of the fence. The symmetry of the earlier photographs from Ohsweken is abandoned, with only half of the students looking at the photographer, and even fewer standing still. Ethel might be the only



FIGURE 44: “Ethel Alexander in Belize, between 1920 and 1940.” Gelatin Silver Print.

subject that is invested in this process. Because this photograph was taken with a mass-produced handheld camera, this was likely a personal photograph commissioned by Ethel for her own record. Despite the seeming disorder of this scene in comparison to the early photographs, signs of Ethel's instructions are visible in the positioning of some of her students—the boys all seem to be holding their hats in their hands, and there was likely an attempt to evenly space her pupils. This image might be read as an unsuccessful attempt to deliver the kind of rigid posturing of traditional school photographs. Rural schools like those in Orange Walk—with its large community of working-class Mayan refugees—were inferior to the school in Belize City—home of merchants, land owners, timber contractors and civil servants. Studies on the history of education in Belize argue that "the school system helped to perpetuate both social inequality and the geographical dominance of Belize City over the other areas of the country" (Rutheiser 1991, 86-87). Ethel's efforts to produce an orderly photograph were perhaps an attempt elevate the status of the school by conforming to the disciplinary structure she encountered at Ohsweken.

This photograph's similarities to the photographs taken at Ohsweken offer insight into the global reach of British imperialism and its educational components. Civilizing discourses are staged within this photograph through gender segregation, but also in the presentation of the children. While there appears to be no uniformity in the appearance of the boys in this photograph, the girls all sport high-necked dresses with their hair bowed and either cropped short or tied back. Domestic ideology is performed here through both the boundary maintenance between boys and girls, but also in how the young girls perform womanhood proper through their modest Victorian costume. Though the pupils are not positioned around a large institution —a referent of authority—the ideologies of imperialism are still gathered within the frame.

In 1931, nine years after her arrival, Ethel was promoted to Principal of the St. John's Cathedral Girls School in Belize District by Bishop Dunn of the Honduran diocese (*Amherstburg Echo*, Jan 1 1932). Colonial authorities either recognized Ethel's potential, and believed it to be wasted on a rural population. Or, by transferring her to the country's capital to serve a more affluent student body they were relieving her of the burden of teaching in an underfunded rural school. In 1934 the Anglican Bishop and Governor of British Honduras appointed Ethel to the Board of Education where she served as a representative for teachers. The Board was comprised of an Executive Council of the colony with the Governor serving as president (*Amherstburg Echo,* June 14, 1935). During her 28 years working in Belize Ethel also managed a book shop, served on the state's Library Board, was a member of both the Girl Guide Local Association and the Teachers Federation. Though she kept busy between her teaching assignments and her many appointments Ethel frequently returned home to visit Amherstburg. Of particular local interest was her travel companion, a talkative parrot named Joey. Joey became such a local celebrity that after his death in 1935 was stuffed by a taxidermist and is now part of the collection of the Fort Maiden Museum (*Amherstburg Echo,* May 17,1956). While at home Ethel often gave lectures to church congregations and women's societies about her experiences living in Belize, but also her teaching methods. In one instance she recounts the success of her use of the "looking and say method", a technique she picked up while discussing pedagogy with teachers in Amherstburg (*Amherstburg Echo,* February 2, 1940). When asked by a reporter from the *Amherstburg Echo* whether she preferred Canada or Belize Ethel diplomatically replied "my work lays in that land, but I wish it had some of the conveniences of home" (*Amherstburg Echo,* June 21, 1935). Ethel's dedication to education was informed by her

belief in its capacity to instill morality and uplift all children, but particularly girls, guiding them toward a life of deep spirituality. After her retirement Ethel returned to Amherstburg, and continued to lecture to local groups, showcasing the mahogany jewelry made in Honduras, and reading to children at the local library.

Archival evidence suggests that Ethel was invested in notions of "respectable" womanhood throughout her life. It was an ideology that informed her work in Amherstburg, Ohsweken, and later Belize. The McCurdy fonds includes the minutes of both the Busy Gleanors Club and Frederick Douglass Self Improvement Club of Amherstburg of which Ethel was an active member. The constitution of the latter organization lists the rules of the club, the first rule stating: "There shall be no one belong to this club, but respectable girls." Their motto: Lifting as we climb. These were local iterations of a network of faith-based women's social improvement clubs which provided an opportunity for local Black women to gather and offer spiritual guidance, fundraise for church events, and discuss literature. Ethel's family had a long history of participation in these civil society organizations. Along with the Busy Gleanors and Frederick Douglass Self Improvement Club, Ethel was also a member of the Cheerful Workers youth auxiliary. Ethel's father J.H. Alexander was an active member of the Baptist literary society the Cheerful Workers, a group that raised funds for the church and discussed literature. J.H. was a member of the Church of England he regularly provided vocal and instrumental music, recitations and speeches at their functions (Bridgen 2016, 166). J.H. was also a member of the Amherstburg Literary Association, and the Open Hand Society of the Methodist church. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, Amherstburg had several Black civil society organization including literary societies, fraternal orders, religious societies, and etiquette

groups. Lorene Bridgen (idem.,68) explains, "it was their belief that education would 'uplift' the community, not only by improving the lives of (formerly) illiterate Black individuals, but also by proving that they were worthy of citizenship." However, these efforts toward respectability should not be read as an attempt to mirror white residents. Rather, Bridgen believes these groups to be invested in racial justice—advocating for citizenship rights, and reshaping local politics to address the needs of their communities. C.L.R. James (2019, 8) argued that "respectability was not an ideal, it was an armour." James' formulation allows us to see the realm of respectability as an arena of negotiation and contestation. Karen Olwig (1990, 93-114) similarly argues that the role of respectability in Caribbean societies must be examined from the point of view of struggle between colonial and local interests:

> This struggle centred on attempts [by] colonial authorities, to control the Afro-Caribbean population by integrating them via social institutions of respectability, and, on the part of the Afro-Caribbean population... on the appropriation of these socially recognized institutions of respectability as a means of displaying their culture in a society that refused this culture and public recognition."

James' and Olwig's reworkings align with Gilroy's (1993) "politics of fulfillment" in that practices of respectability hinge on an investment in the unfulfilled promises of modernity—that bourgeoisie civil society live up to its promise of egalitarianism. Through participation in civil societies groups claimed the right to manipulate imperial notions of respectability in order to challenge the empire's race-based exclusions.

Tied to Ethel's ideas about respectable womanhood was her loyalty to the British Crown. Again, these beliefs originated with her parents. Both J.H. and Annie were monthly subscribers of the Canadian Patriotic fund, established to give financial and social assistance to soldiers'

families. J.H. was also the chairman of the annual 1 August Emancipation Day festival in Amherstburg, a celebration often described as wedding a public declaration of loyalty to Britain with memories of resistance to slavery (*Amherstburg Echo*, 5 January 1917). Ethel's personal opinions about British imperialism are outlined in great detail in an article that made the front page of the *Amherstburg Echo* titled "Local Lady Described British Honduras" (May 23, 1941). Published during the middle of World War Two in 1941, Ethel describes her amazement at the local support for the war effort, explaining: "They are keenly interested in the war there. Somehow I feel closer to England there than I do in Canada. Though geographically I am closer here." She explains that the "inhabitants of the colony have had to fight and struggle to remain a part of the British Empire. And from these hardships... has grown an ardent loyalty for the Mother Country" (Ibid.). In describing Canada's relationship to Britain she compares the colony to "the grown-up son who is keeping house for himself." The article then turns to Ethel's descriptions of the school system. She espouses the progress of the system in adopting the rigour of British schools. She explains that "in 1935 a trained director of education was sent out from England and he is doing a great deal to bring the system up to a high standard" (Ibid.). As reflected in the various photographs of Ethel with her students, striving toward a British ideal dictated much of Ethel's pedagogy.

A social reproductive analysis of education in colonial spaces suggests that the institutional structure of the school helps to reproduce hierarchies of inequality in the social and cultural orders of a society. Systematic features of language, culture, and political economy reflected in the organization of classrooms and curricula have a causal role in perpetuating linguistic, cultural, and economic inequalities. The colonial state thus assigns education a key

communicative role in reproducing its ideology. The school can be read as an agent of class domination, inculcating knowledging in class-differentiated social subjects, preparing them for dominant, or dominated places in the colonial economy and society. In the case of Ohsweken, and all day and residential schools, curricula and classroom organization transmitted knowledge and discipline to prepare Six Nations students for agricultural and domestic labour. However to assign education as a vehicle for colonial modernity such a totalizing effect overlooks the ways in which it also formed a site of struggle and possibility. Ethel's journeys certainly complicate such a mechanical application of base-superstructure models. They also help us to define the role of the state in articulating colonial power. Hall (1983, 163) argues that the domains of culture and ideology should be understood as much in relation to the state as to the mode of production: "the State is frequently what Gramsci would call the instance which organizes the terrain of civil society". The power of the ruling economic class is converted into political power: "it is where it becomes centralized and condensed, invested with the power and authority of the State itself" (Ibid.). The state is thus the primary agency through which cultural relations are organized and reorganized. One of its most potent ideological fields is the educational institution. Put more clearly Hall (idem., 164) explains: "It is sometimes through coercive measures, sometimes through educative and regulative measures, and most frequently through a combination of these, that the State attempts to mobilize cultural and ideological consent." This is brought into sharp relief in settings like Ohsweken and Orange Walk—where ideology (respectability, the promise of agricultural work, domesticity) is mobilized to reproduce a working class that through their labour transfers wealth to the ruling class. While the state is a powerful structuring force, like modernity, its impact is not totalizing—our understanding of its

power must account for opposition. Read alongside her family's involvement with local civic organizations Ethel's own education could be interpreted as a means for her to *overcome* racial hierarchies through advancement. Ethel's education granted her a mobility seldom women in her position were permitted. At the same time Ethel, like all teacher's within the colonial system, was crucial in reproducing British imperial discourse.

Throughout the Black Atlantic world, teachers like Ethel—mixed race, and middle class—occupied an ambiguous relationship to colonial authority. Robinson (2000, 177-178) argues that education was one form of colonial administration that Black middle and ruling classes performed in the decades following emancipation. For Robinson in the twentieth century, or the post-slavery world, Black people in the "New World" could no longer be casually pinioned by the curious as slaves or as freemen. The masses now assumed more diverse and diffuse positions in the economic order. Black labour's new mobility, organization, and adaptability also meant that the subcultures within which it had been historically enveloped were subject more often to intrusions of material and ideological elements from the agents of the economically determinative social order. Inevitably their societies and subcultures were steadily becoming less autonomous, no longer impervious to the penetrations of Western cultures (Ibid.). In particular, the middle tier—above the labouring classes, but beneath the operatives of capital and the state—formed as functionaries for the state. A crucial path leading to the privileges of this stratum took the form of missionary education. For the colonial administrators these schools embodied the flawed wedding of missionary work to imperialism. Robinson explains that since the fifteenth century missionary schools served as part of the rationale for European imperial aspirations. However there existed an incongruence between these two institutions. For one, "the

missionaries themselves, in the case of English imperialism, were often recruited from colonized peoples: that is, Scots, Irish, and Welsh. Such soldiers of Christ could be often quite ambivalent about colonial power" (idem.,179). By "civilizing natives" the colonial authorities ran into the problem of an educated class of "Black Europeans" that demanded social inequality and political rights. So while education might be understood as one form of indirect rule that socially reproduces colonial power, the lived experiences of teachers like Ethel gesture to the fractions and contradictions of European imperialism.

Borders are colonial, however it does not reason that journeys that complicate borders are not themselves imbricated in colonial histories. Ethel's journeys were labour migrations facilitated through the auspices of colonial education. In this way British imperialism granted her mobility not otherwise available to women in her social position. To use Boyce Davies' language, Ethel had to "quest within [the] closed boundaries" of British imperialism (1994, 96). However, Ethel like Gilroy's Black Atlantic subjects found ways to undermine the strictures of colonial modernity through both her practices of opposition within the classroom, but also in her very movements. In this way her journeys could be described as "routed" through British imperialism, but not overdetermined by it. By reconstructing Ethel's travels through her photographs we can begin to shed light on the limitations imposed on her by patriarchal nationalism and how she managed to transcend them through her movements. In particular her "migratory subjectivity" unseats tidy dichotomies of gender, and Manichean terminology. In crafting her theory of the gendered dynamics of colonized cultures McClintock (1996) divides women into two camps: colonized women, and colonial women. The former had to "negotiate not only imbalances of their relations with their own men but also the baroque and violent array

of hierarchical rules and restrictions that structured their new relations with imperial men and women" (idem., 6). The latter group McClintock (Ibid.) explains were often ambiguously placed with relations of colonial power: "barred from the corridors of formal power, they experienced the privileges and social contradictions of imperialism very differently from colonial men." So despite colonial women being conscripted into domestic servitude, serving in missionary schools or hospitals, or upholding the boundaries of empire and "bearing its sons and daughters", women's role in reproducing colonial authority "made none of the direct economic or military decisions of empire." This argument is useful in understanding the hierarchies of colonial power and its gendered relations. By naming the work that women do in bolstering colonial projects, McClintock is describing how the empire is socially reproduced. McClintock's theory of gender power then moves beyond a mechanical base-superstructure understanding toward one that recognizes the multitudinous forms of articulation. At the same time by dichotomizing her theory of gendered power McClintock's analytic hinges on a Manichean splitting. This theory does not account for women like Ethel, who straddled both positions as a women of mixed ancestry. This is in part because her identity is destabilized by her mobility: during her time in Ohsweken her "race" come into question through the discourses of domesticity; However, her status as a teacher emigrated to Belize from a so-called civilized country, whitens her through adherence to British notions of womanhood. In short, this theory does not account for doubleness. So while McClintock's theory does not account for bifocal perspectives and multilayered identities of the Black Atlantic, Gilroy's theory does not account for how women are ambiguously placed within relations of colonial power. Women like Ethel cannot be entirely understood by either purely gendered perspectives, or purely national

histories. We need to unite both perspectives to unpack Ethel's experiences of migration. To do so, we must reposition the Black Atlantic's temporal and spatial contours from transAtlantic slavery to the inception of colonial projects.

The Black Atlantic is concerned with how slavery's memory shaped the knowledge of those that traversed throughout these webbed networks that span oceans. But, would the Black Atlantic be a more topographically and discursively expansive analytic if its "inaugural moment" was global projects of empire? Ethel's experiences in education suggest that colonial genealogies were grounded in imperial concerns over the distinctions of race—though shifting and fluid in their prescription. Social relations of race which govern the primary antagonisms between settler and native carried with them the weight of colonial authority. This conceptualization is temporally congruent with the sequencing proposed by Robinson's (2000) racial capital. Robinson's historical analysis of the Black masses in the era of post-slavery, though broad, is applicable to Ethel Alexander and her family's aspirations. What do you gain by analytically untethering the inaugural moment from slavery? For one, as Ethel's journeys demonstrate, this reconceptualization allows us to see slavery as one in a series of mutations of colonialism and racial capital. Settler colonialism, and the later forms of "indirect rule" of Robinson's Black functionaries in the twentieth century can also be read as plots along a timeline of colonial authority. Slavery alone would not shape experience, but slavery as one node in a long trajectory of colonial projects.

This reading would also open up the Black Atlantic paradigm to account for Indigeneity. Without an analysis of settler colonialism and Indigenous resurgence the Black Atlantic paradigm cannot account for patterns of racial formation in Canada. Melanie Newton (2013)

advances a similar point within the context of Anglophone Caribbean anticolonial texts. By positioning the plantation as the Caribbeans's entry into modernity, she argues that this intellectual tradition reinscribes the foundational imperial myth of Indigenous disappearance. Similar to the Black Atlantic these decolonial histories provide a "closed dialogue" between the Caribbean and the colonizing West, wherein the plantation and enslavement mark the moment when certain people became historical actors. An unwillingness to account for Indigeneity within theses histories is an attempt to find "a shortcut through the entangled legacies of the past" (idem., 120). Black Atlantic subjectivity should then be interpreted as *one* dynamic out of many webbed accounts of colonial relations of power determined by the logic of a *global* imperialism. So, moving beyond the triangulated topography or "closed dialogue" that Gilroy offers (Africa-Britain-United States), his paradigm would become global in scope by accounting for how those movements and struggles were shaped by multiple nodes of colonial power. What would remain is Gilroy's rejection of the schematic segregation of diasporic and nationalist paradigms. This reorientation thus folds in Robinson's theory of racial capital. Because race nourished capitalism it necessarily *predates* transatlantic slavery, its inaugural moment is colonial in origin. This is demonstrated clearly when we consider how the legacy of racial taxonomies created by colonial regimes continue to come up within Ethel's life history. Settler colonialism should therefore be considered a node in the Black Atlantic, essential to positioning Canada within Gilroy's paradigm.

Conclusion

Ethel journeyed to Ohsweken and later Belize carrying her ideas about education in tow. The terrain in which she travelled was fraught with contradiction, collusion, and opposition. The discourses that informed her instructions were developed over time and across space: first formed through her education and involvement in civic organizations in Amherstburg; then adapted to meet the needs of colonial authority at the Six Nations school; and, later firmed through her position within the colonial state in Belize. It would be an error to assume that these ideas formed on a congruent, linear path. Rather, like her physical movements the ideologies that informed her pedagogy were recursive, contradictory and syncretic. What I have shown through the visual culture of Ethel's travels, is that absolutisms of race or national essences are ill-equipped to unpack her experiences of modernity. Like all Black Atlantic subjects these dynamics fail to address the "restless (dis)continuity" and "novel configurations" that produces its activists, ideas, and cultural artifacts.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

> "Of course, a 'sense of history' is never confined to the past: it is always a seizure by history of the present... But it does require a delicate excavation, an archaeology, a tracing of the contradictory imprints which previous discourses have stamped, through those old images, on the iconography of popular memory." (Hall 1984, 252)

The work of writing this dissertation was bookended by two movement-based actions: the splattering of paint on the statue of Egerton Ryerson at Toronto Metropolitan University as part of the larger wave of Black Lives Matter movements in 2020; and, the complete removal of Ryerson's statue in 2021 by Indigenous activists in response to the discovery of 1,000 unmarked graves of mostly children at former residential schools in Kamloops, B.C., Brandon, Manitoba, and Cowessess First Nation in Saskatchewan. These actions and the decades of intergenerational activism that proceeded them, force us to grapple with what is at stake in colonial scripts of history. How do "monuments, battles, and martyrs" enact closures that reproduce physical and epistemic violence (Walcott 1978)? In connecting these actions to my research questions, I wonder how these interventions might be remembered. After all the toppling of colonial monuments was a global phenomenon, a radical intervention of space that had transnational dimensions. In England the seventeenth century slave trader Edward Colston was plunged into Bristol Harbour. In Antwerp, Belgian in 2020 King Leopold II who brutalized Congo was burned and ultimately removed. In Barbados the statue of the British Imperial Admiral Horatio Nelson was removed from Bridgetown in November 2020. In the United States, more than a dozen statues have been toppled, including several Confederate figures.

The notion of the Black Atlantic helps us map the spatial dimensions of struggle that exceed nationalist framing. If we understand the felling of statues as a global practice, we learn

not only of the planetary grip of colonialism and racial capital, but also how linkages are developed through interrelated struggles that occur across space. Some have argued that these are largely symbolic actions that do little to redistribute resources and change material conditions (Dvorak 2020, Ravery 2020). However, I believe these actions territorially demarcate how history is structured by presences and absences that signal victories and defeats.

This dissertation was based primarily in the Archives of Ontario, a state archive where national enclosures are enshrined by mandate. In Ontario *The Archives and Recordskeeping Act of 1990* states: that the objects of the Archive [of Ontario] are a collection and preservation of information respecting the early settlers of Ontario, including pioneer experience, customs, mode of living, prices, wages, boundaries, areas cultivated, and home and social life." This document was not repealed until 2007. For 104 years the mandate of the Archive was underwritten by the logic of settler colonialism. It is also couched in the language of Canada as a beacon of freedom against the United States' violent practices of enslavement. This language that was often used to discuss the Alvin D. McCurdy fonds, reinforcing the idea that these were long-standing communities that settled, purchased homes, made "good use" of the land, in opposition to so-called troublesome newcomers to Upper Canada. The success of the communities of Amherstburg is based solely on their title to property rights, and their membership within the professional class. What is completely obscured are the ways in which working-class people struggled in everyday ways *after* they arrived in Canada. I was often confronted with what this framing produced. The work of this dissertation was to highlight the multitudinous ways in which this archival collection held within it freedom practices. This work involved operating against the organizational logic of the archive—for instance, eschewing

finding aids that siloed all activism into a series titled “Alvin D. McCurdy's papers of Black organizations.”

As I have laid out already, this dissertation was a practice in confronting colonial scripts and static conceptualizations and definitions. This also meant grappling with how strictly I adhered to Gilroy’s analytic; I was often working against a firm adherence to his conceptual framing. In working with and against the Black Atlantic I was able to map visual practices in Essex County in the McCurdy fonds onto a matrix of struggles that exceeded nationalistic and limited temporal boundaries. Though not the first to suggest the limits of national lenses for cultural analysis, or the analytical possibilities and mobility of music, and literature, Gilroy’s analytic offered a paradigmatic shift in both its sustained focus on non-Western experiences of modernity induced by the Middle Passage, but also the profound influence that cultural products exert on diasporic networks of communication. The primary goal of this dissertation was to plumb the Black Atlantic paradigm for what it might offer the study of Black history in Canada and beyond. It asked what photographs might offer a framework firmly invested in non-representational forms. By extending this analytic to Canada, this dissertation illuminated how Black Atlantic subjectivities circulated inland to Lake Erie’s environs therefore highlighting how this space straddled multiple empires and was imbricated in a historical transnational network. In doing so I move beyond national boundaries, and demonstrate how vernacular photographic practices work to decolonize the settler state.

The inclusion of Great Lakes subjects completely reorients the plain of collective experience in the Black Atlantic, requiring new questions, new analytical tools, and new archival practices. From a methodological point of view my approach engaged with multiple

disciplinary tools in order to illuminate the ways in which discourses of race and the political dimensions of expressive culture are implemented and signified within vernacular photography. Chiefly, my chapters engage with the tensions between approaches that centre political economy versus those that foreground cultural production. In order to bridge this divide, I positioned cultural production as a form of caring labour that carries with it oppositional ideas, and philosophies. My discussion of family photographs therefore combines a materialist approach (tracing the formation of racialized space), and a reading of representational practices (poses, props, framing), with an anthropological approach (processes of distribution, consumption, displaying) in order to argue that forms of oppositional culture are enacted within the photograph's frame and circulated throughout the Great Lakes region. By tracking the cultural and political discourses that arise around the production of vernacular photographic practices, this dissertation creates a more complex picture of Black transnational networks of kinship and affiliation within Essex County.

The third chapter of this dissertation argued that the movement of Black families back and forth across the fluid frontier acted as a circuit, exceeding the binary of departure and destination. I positioned the work of performing, producing, and displaying these objects as a form of gendered labour and care work that created sustainable practices of affiliation against the enclosures brought on by the formation of racialized space. This chapter also demonstrated that notions of family in this Black transnational space formed an expansive network that was adaptable to multiple migrations. In particular, the family photographs I analyzed worked against pathologized notions of the Black family documenting kinship both within and beyond notions of the Western nuclear family. The shared photographic culture within the Great Lakes

borderlands manifests these linkages and ambivalences across the whole field practice of portraiture: the dress and performances of its subjects, the staging of the photographic studio, the circulation across the Detroit River, and their existence in the archive.

In the fourth chapter I began by upmapping racialized space in Essex County, offering vernacular photographs as cultural artefacts that hold geographic knowledge. Using the concepts of spatial imaginaries provided by George Lipsitz, I argued that photographic practices illuminated how this area was part of a larger matrix of Black geographies known as the Black Atlantic. Against state-produced maps, the Jones and Stokes family photographs offer us an imaginative topography of the Marble Village. At the same time these family folders are caught up in a complex web of life-sustaining, and capital sustaining systems—simultaneously working within and against their defining logics.

Building from Gilroy's argument that sea service was foundational for the development of an internationalist radicalism among Black seafarers, my fifth chapter adapted the language Gilroy uses to describe Black Atlantic musical flows to photographic practices in the case of Black lake farers on Lake Erie. Specifically, this chapter argued that the lake ship like the slave ship is a technology of modernity that is liminal in nature, troubling narrow nationalistic understandings of how categories of race are produced, deployed and resisted. Secondly, it highlighted the ambivalent nature of cultural resistance—sometimes simultaneously wresting on and challenging Eurocentric scripts of representation. Overall, I argued that racial hierarchies produced in the world of Atlantic seafaring travelled inland to the Great Lakes. I then unpacked how diverse modes of opposition took place within the photographic frame against such hierarchies.

My final chapter offered a sustained critique of Gilroy's analytic. Through the case study of Ethel Alexander's travels, I unravelled the gendered limitations of Black Atlantic mobility practices, reworking the schema to account for her labour migrations to Ohsweken, Ontario and Honduras. This chapter positioned colonialism as central to the project of modernity, arguing that it cannot be abstracted from the Black Atlantic world. While Gilroy's genealogy begins with slavery, I remap his temporal framework to position colonialism as a connected and equally constituent part of modernity. In examining the visual culture of Ethel's travels, this chapter demonstrated that absolutisms of race or national essences are ill-equipped to unpack her experiences of modernity—like her physical movements the ideologies that informed her pedagogy were recursive, contradictory and syncretic.

The starting point of this dissertation was the idea that photographs and visuality are integral parts of Black Atlantic cultural production. The ramifications of this fact deserve careful attention because they disclose how the material structures of race and nation are visually contested through the labour of staging and circulating vernacular photographic objects. One further avenue of research in this regard might be the public display of vernacular visual culture within the Black Atlantic world. So far, the recent re-emergence of family photographs within public exhibitions has offered new insights into the role of vernacular culture in creating linkages across the Black Atlantic world. For instance, The Whitney Museum of American Art's exhibit *As We Rise: Photography from the Black Atlantic* (2021) brings together vernacular family photographs alongside works by James Van Der Zee, Carrie Mae Weems and Gordon Parks from within The Wedge Collection. In doing so, the exhibit traces the connections between different formats and practitioners working across multiple Black Atlantic nodes—the

United States, Canada, South America, the Caribbean and Great Britain. Within Canada *The Family Camera Network* (2019) project established a public archive of over 10,000 vernacular photographs that engaged with photography's role within stories of family migration. These objects have been displayed at The Royal Ontario Museum and the Art Gallery of Mississauga. In particular, this project engaged with the relationship between photography and ideas about family, questioning how family photographs reflect, shape, and expand queer forms of affective connection and kinship. The Art Gallery of Ontario's exhibition *Free Black North* (2017), which displayed vernacular photographs from the McCurdy fonds and the Richard Bell family fonds, similarly asked how photography provided a means of self-fashioning identities and claiming presence against a pervasively racialized environment. I believe that it is the political that will continue to ensure that family photographs remain a vital part of both Black Atlantic expressive culture, and broader discourses of migration. In the wake of multiple border crises, struggles over migrant labour, climate refugees, and the myriad forms of border imperialism, the ways in which dispersed peoples engage with diverse methods of fostering connection will continue to generate important questions surrounding community and practices of contestation and critique.

This dissertation set out to map the possibilities offered by visual culture in challenging historical and geographical tropes imposed on Black history in Canada. In doing so it called into question several ideological and definitional constraints that work to bound up these stories into tightly configured national narratives. Working on this dissertation challenged my understanding of historical productions, archives, labour, and resistance. What I interpreted in the archive and within the photographic frame rendered the coherence of strict definitions and disciplinary framing imaginary and obsolete. This set in motion an approach that was guided by Walcott's

(1978) “subtle, and submarine”. This task meant reworking or unlearning the so-called empirical tools that I had developed in my previous studies. Scholars continue to productively expand aquatic metaphors and tropes to provide a more relational understanding of diasporic histories. In doing so they illuminate not only the material histories of colonial violence, but also the richness and complexity of responses and refusals of these practices. Andrea Davis’ (2022) recently published book *Horizon, Sea, and Sound: Caribbean and African Women’s Cultural Critiques of Nation* uses the diasporic tropes of horizon, sea, and sound to map the radical futures offered by Caribbean and African women writers and artists. Engaging with the concept of *future now* Davis’ work intervenes in diasporic theories that perpetually delay more equitable futures and rest on the unfulfilled promises of the settler nation-state. This approach demonstrates the continued possibilities of routing analysis through aquatic metaphors. Firstly, they also us to move beyond binaries of departure and arrival, to account for more recursive, transgressive, or errant movements. Secondly, by foregrounding a relational approach they offer a pathway to track the interconnected nature of colonial histories of enslavement and Indigenous genocide. Lastly, by charting how ideas and people move beyond the neat siloes of settler nation-states, they illuminate collective refusals and imaginative practices of liberation.

Building off the argument I advanced throughout my dissertation, that the Atlantic is a network that circulated colonial discourses, an avenue for further development might involve tracing these networks beyond the realm of Black cultural histories. The work of Tiffany Lethabo King (2019) and Lisa Lowe (2015) offer a conceptual bridge to unite aquatic and land-based metaphors, linking colonial processes of settler state formations across different temporalities and spaces. Thinking through my own family’s history of travel across the Atlantic





FIGURE 45- 46: José Joaquim Alcantra Toetonio Lobo, my paternal grandfather [Top left] with the Goan Cricket Team. ca. 1950. Kampala, Uganda; Sylvia Lobo, my paternal grandmother on her wedding day. November 1956. Goa, India.





FIGURE 47-48: Maria Lobo (n. Dempsey), my mother [Bottom right], with her sister, cousins, and aunts. 1966. Skerries, Ireland; Maria Lobo (n. Dempsey) [right], with my aunt Caroline, and grandmother Tess. 1960. Skerries, Ireland.

made me question how British imperial networks develop across spaces including my mother's place of birth in Ireland, but also my father's Indian and Ugandan heritage (Figures 45-48). How were colonialism's institutional structures developed in these disparate contexts? How were colonial scripts of difference grafted onto the social structure of these places in similar and divergent ways?

This writing has taught me that raising questions is often equally as productive as answering them. Working with vernacular photographs is a practice of opening up a dialogue rather than an act of discovery or an excavation of the past. This dissertation is rife with terms like *floating*, *becoming*, *fluidity*, *mobility*, *circulatory,* a seemingly never-ending engagement with concepts that exceed easy characterization. Set against this landscape, for me this work opened a more subtle and complex understanding of photography and the knowledge it produces, especially in times of crises. The visual archive of Canada is overdetermined by photographs of industrious settlers, and *terra nullius* landscapes. The photographic archive of the McCurdy fonds offers an alternative history of this landscape that exceeds national moorings and its attendant codes and meanings. Stuart Hall (1984) among many others explains that his family's history was constructed through vernacular photographs. For many people they are therefore important tools set against the fractured landscape of the past, and the uncertainties of the moment. Or, as John Berger (1995, 108) asserts: "fragile images often carried next to the heart, or placed by the side of the bed, are used to refer to that which historical time has no right to destroy." My hope is that vernacular photographs might be seen as more than objects of sentimentality, but rather as a practice that arises from the consciousness of lost connections and an irrepressible desire to reconnect.

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