

CARFAC SASK
Critical Art Writing Mentorship
2019-2020



CARFAC
SASKATCHEWAN

The Lot, Mentorship Program CARFAC
August 2020

CARFAC SASK launched an inaugural, 8 month Critical Art Writing (CAW) Mentorship program, pairing 5 emerging, Saskatchewan-based art writers with 5 established writers from Saskatchewan and across Canada. The pairs were: Hilarey Cowan with mentor Nasrin Himada, Jera MacPherson with mentor Blair Fornwald, Lillian O'Brien Davis with mentor Lindsay Nixon, Nic Wilson with mentor John Hampton, and Julie Yu with mentor Amy Fung. Sky Goodden of MOMUS acted as a guiding mentor, providing additional monthly writing prompts to the mentees to enrich their experience in the program.

Throughout the program, the mentorship pairs worked one-on-one towards each mentee's specific writing goals. Pairs were largely self-directed, with mentors offering expertise, encouragement, and advice as mentees evolved their writing practices. In December 2019, we met in a group gathering at a mini-symposium, which featured a series of mentor-led workshops over the course of a weekend in Regina. A second symposium in Regina had been planned for May 2020, however the pandemic lockdown meant that we had to present the remaining mentor workshops via Zoom.

Mentees were offered publishing opportunities, and successfully developed new writing for publication in BlackFlash Magazine, C Magazine, Canadian Art, Peripheral Review, and others.

CARFAC SASK has now produced this small chapbook of mentee writing to celebrate this successful first iteration of our new program.

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Hilarey Cowan

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Hannah Claus
Dunlop Art Gallery, Regina, SK
January 17 to March 13, 2020

In a thoughtful collection of work displayed together in “trade-treaty-territory,” artist Hannah Claus, of English and Kanien’kehà:ka/Mohawk ancestry, continued to explore the complexities of ongoing trade and treaty relationships. Through video, sculpture and two-dimensional pieces, she intertwines the roles of ceremony, mapping, memory and differing worldviews.

A video of sunlight shimmering and dancing on deep blue water was projected against a back wall, providing a mesmerizing backdrop for the exhibition. As the water gradually grew darker, glints of sunlight began to look more like stars in the night sky. *all this was once covered in water* (2017) captured ongoing natural cycles of the earth, throwing us back to a time before the imposition of borders and land titles.

Just to the right of this watery scene was *the route that ocicâhk preferred* (2017), a series of 10 works on paper based on a charcoal-and-birchbark map (originally drawn by a Cree guide in the 1750s) depicting a trade route linking Lake Winnipeg and Lake Superior. A delicate laser etching of the route is layered with various repeated and rotated details from the original map, and coloured with tea. Claus used a Japanese hole-punch to render the Pleiades constellation in copper leaf overtop of these geographical components, tying this example of Indigenous map-making to a journey underneath the stars. Each print, varyingly mottled from the tea-colouring process, exists as a different record of the same action; together, they are subtly dynamic, and reflect a world transformed since the arrival of European settlers.

Claus describes copper, a conductive and light-catching material, as the heartblood of the earth. The metal appears again in *trade is ceremony* (2019), a series of four large, grey woolen blankets. Here, irregular, thick, needle-like headpins are pinned in bands and rows that form geometric patterns based on wampum belt symbols. Each piece carries its own pattern and reflected subtitle: (*council*), (*pine*), (*sun*) and (*fire*), connecting Indigenous ceremonial practices and symbols. On the opposing wall hung three bright-red blankets, a stark contrast to the muted colour palette of the rest of the space. Here, instead of copper pins, Claus uses silver-plated steel ones to repeat a single pattern on each piece: one group of pins surrounded by another—a closed and encroaching group intent on imposition, self-serving and self-protecting. Silver too is a conductive material, but lacks the warmth of copper. This series is simply titled, *invaders* (2019). As a settler Canadian with Irish and Scottish heritage, I see myself and my lineage in these silver pins, reframed and renamed, in language that more accurately captures the violence and intention of the colonial agenda.

In the middle of the gallery stood five vitrines, each containing a single beeswax-cast teacup encircled by cedar leaves, rendered from the same deep yellow wax. The cups in this *studies* (2019) series are based on Claus's mother's inherited mismatched collection, here uniquely deformed, semi-melted from having boiling water poured in to them, as if the cedar tea, used in ceremonies and likely offered to some of the first settlers, had actually been served in these delicate wax vessels. The cups act as evidence of spillage and small-scale disaster of which we see only the remains, and point to fractured trust and broken agreements; deformed and unbalanced colonial results, stemming from a once-in-good-faith meeting over shared tea.

Claus poetically asks us to contemplate our existence on this land, and in relation to one another. As tuned in as I would like to think I am, there are gaps inherent in my settler worldview as I embody a privileged place in this country. Claus's work reveals how far this type

of long-term and wholistic engagement is from my own daily existence and thought patterns. Addressing these gaps feels urgent in light of the violent RCMP raids in Wet'suwet'en territory and the solidarity actions that spread quickly throughout the country. As settlers, this means seriously re-examining our roles and responsibilities, holding ourselves and others accountable—deep into the past, and far into the future, taking action toward long-lasting change and meaningful cultural shifts.

Marigold Santos *Malaginto*
Dunlop Art Gallery, Regina, SK
November 8, 2019 to January 12, 2020

8 Against a backdrop of deep golden-yellow walls and a faint blowing, droning soundscape, glints of gold and plant life draw viewers into *Malaginto* – a solo exhibition of recent work by Calgary-based artist Marigold Santos. With over 50 pieces on display and a 26 minute video, this show marks a shift in the artist’s practice from drawing and painting to small scale ceramics, while maintaining her thematic threads and explorations related to migration, fragmentation and self-hood.

Central to Santos’s work is the *asuang*, her re-interpretation of the vampiric, shape-shifting figures found in Filipino folklore, specifically the *manananggal*, who has the ability to self-sever. Having immigrated with her family to Canada from the Philippines as a child in the late 1980s, Santos uses this mix of personal history, memory, and cultural connection as point of departure. These female figures appear repeatedly, glazed on to her atypical ceramics: a mix of vessels, plates, bowls and asymmetrical upright slabs. Other recurring imagery includes severed hands, flowers, snakes, as well as other *asuang*. They are seen both alone and in multiples, donning at times plain or patterned shrouds, sometimes with marked and mottled skin. The *asuang* themselves become vessels and surfaces of expression, their variations and multiplicities offer a meditation and reflection of our own multiple selves, moving and changing over time.

Each piece is at a hand-held scale and the show is laid out in a way as to encourage the viewer to weave and circle. Nothing is behind glass, everything is up for grabs. I find myself bending, stooping and peering repeatedly from piece to piece, attempting to register every detail of the delicate and largely greyscale renderings. 22 karat gold rims and

occasionally drips from the mouths of vases and bowls. It appears on the edges of the small, upright slabs, and on the crowns of several small ceramic teeth, seemingly imbued with an uprooted life of their own. I become dizzy as these lines, borders and boundaries blend. Demarcation, a tracing between before and after, fused and fired together, a record of what is, and what was. All these gilded openings and edges keep catching the light as I move around. My eyes flick between the works, to the poem on the wall in Tagalog and English, and back to the large, low-contrast projection. The soundscape from the video, a collaboration with Mahmood Hussein pulls me in further, a layered mix of blowing wind, rising piano notes and murmuring speech. I watch flames lick away at the larger than life *GOLD WOMAN* (so titled). She continues to burn, arms and legs breaking off intermittently, smoldering and rolling away, bringing to life the self-severing *asuang*, translated to the big screen. As this unfolds, I’m left to stew in my own thoughts of self-narration, my armful of homes over the years, reminded of how moving and speaking in a foreign place slowly changes you, a constant eroding, building, negotiating and adapting.

Due to its physical location, range of resources and programming, the Central Library, home to the Dunlop Gallery, is one of the few places in the city that provides a context and space for people from different classes, backgrounds and generations to cross paths. I find *Malaginto* well suited to this setting, with the ability to be appreciated on multiple levels, and to me serves as a call to heighten our collective empathy. To become more in tune with not only our own fragmented and multiple selves, but to carry an awareness of personal stories both revealed and concealed in our surrounding community, experiences that mark and make who we are.

Nic Wilson

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What I Saw

“I saw what I saw very clearly. But I did not know what I was looking at.”

from *The Enigma of Arrival* by V.S. Naipaul, 1978.

I watch a bead of sweat drip from a golden chain and fall into my eye, blurring my vision by its salty sting. It pools again, gathering faster this time, and closes the gap between our bodies once more before you get up to shower and leave. As I lay there, holding the memory of your gaze meeting mine, it feels like all those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain, and I make a list of what I have seen: Two beatings by the light of fireworks; a pop star burst into flames; countless soundless explosions in the dead of space; the moon in all phases. I saw a crystal bowl slip from a trembling hand and split into a thousand pieces on impact.

I have seen black water spill over the sidewalk and shred fishing boats like cotton floss. I have seen a syringe pop the skin of Concord grape and pull its insides out. I have seen a dog eat its own afterbirth and an Icelandic man pull his arms apart on lifting stones. I have kissed your eyelids in the afternoon and asked you “What is the difference between looking at someone’s eyes and looking into someone’s eyes?” I once heard a comedian say: staring at something for a long time with other people is what makes something art.

I have seen bruised fruit piled up in a dark ally, waiting for sunrise in an ancient city. I have seen the raw clay of Arizona and New Mexico sifted and doused and strained and pressed into bricks to bake in the sun. On the same day I saw the horizon bend and quiver in the heat.

One spring I stood in a fjord under the midnight sun and watched a cruise ship on a pleasure voyage to the arctic circle pass slowly. I have seen a sinking ship snap in half and plunge into the North-Atlantic and another roll onto a rocky outcropping and accumulate two and a half years of Mediterranean sludge. I have seen the storm surge of a Tsunami in dusty, dark, low resolution.

In September I saw a person cry tears of their own blood and lay, prostrate, over a pile of cabbage. I’ve seen things you people wouldn’t believe.

I have seen a king decapitated—his head thrown into a cheering crowd and his fresh blood fed to a sickly child. I have seen a cow’s eye slit by a razor.

I still like to look at people in airports and I like to see boiled potatoes pushed through a very fine sieve. I like looking at a painting knowing that it is changing imperceptibly in front of me; on a different timeline but chaining none the less.

Small Fires

A white candle brings peace—black, protection; green, growth; red, strength.

A yellow candle brings the light of the sun, intelligence, and good memory.

A candle with a black flame, lit by a virgin, brings witches.

A candle can be cleansed by passing a knife through its flame, burying it in salt, or leaving it in moonlight. One can stare into a candle flame to see through deception—looking further can reveal the future. If you watch a candle burn itself out you will be granted one wish.

Between 1982 and 1983 Gerhard Richter made 23 paintings of candles. Two were later overpainted. The year I was born Sonic Youth put one of Richter's candles on the cover of *Daydream Nation*.

A Black Marriage candle has two wicks and is burnt at the separation of a couple to symbolize the dissolution of their union.

Soak the pith of an Elder branch in tallow to make a rushlight and burn it from both ends for maximum light. Keep several tapers on hand for emergencies and tea lights for fondue.

Candles make fires for the dead because after we accidentally killed her girlfriends clown fish, Claire and I lit a candle for it at the Marie, Queen of the World and St. James the Great Cathedral. We made sure to get the more expensive one.

Monument for a Dog

I spent an afternoon in the backyard of an acquaintance and she served mint tea in the shade of four varieties of flowering trees. In the back, close to the fence, there was a small piece of granite with an inscription on it that read: Here Lies Maddie/ Blind Since the Age of Two.

The Flush of Living Tissue

Arterial Fluid is a class of embalming chemical that gives dead skin the bounce and flush of living tissue.

It has the viscosity of nectar. It is hot pink. It is manufactured to preserve time, or at least stop it. This chemical (even its 'safer' formaldehyde-free version) is too toxic to be in the

open air. Some have a floral scent and other smell of clove oil—naturally anti-bacterial and used for centuries to ward off disease and decay.

There is a fringe religious sect that campaigns for the abolition of embalming practices called the Rest of Jesus Ministry. They terrorize funeral homes and threaten morticians. Their tactics are cruel and their paradigm is flawed, but I think their suspicion about the current culture of death is worth a moment of reflection.

The orifices of embalmed bodies are wired or glued shut and stuffed with wadding material so that this fluid does not leak out during viewing. It makes dead bodies hazardous and carcinogenic. When they are buried, a cement grave liner is usually installed. They are the size of a stone sarcophagus but instead of protecting a body from the outside world, they protect the earth and ground water from the body.

Ptolemy's Gaze

Before it was discovered that vision was the product of light traveling into the eye, seeing was conceived by the Roman scholar Ptolemy as a kind of radiation that extended out from a viewer. He posited that a physical substance called 'flux' was projected from an eye toward an object, like a lighthouse casting a beam into the ocean. Maybe this is why we look 'at' things rather than receive visions?

This Ptolemaic conception of looking makes the line between a viewer and what they are regarding, a line of sight. Perhaps this is why looking can feel so much like touching, of bridging some expanse of space between bodies as either ecstasy or violation.

Often, when I am looking at someone and trying to evade detection, I will look at a person's reflection in a window. This happens most on the bus, but I also remember looking at an attractive man in the reflection of an inactive T.V. in a hospital waiting room. After years of harassment from the men that I would find myself attracted to, this averted looking has been naturalized as a defence mechanism. In the past, when men have noticed my attention they have scoffed and turned away or even threatened me. It often feels like they are afraid that the attention of other men will implicate them in queerness, that they will be touched and infected by this queer Ptolemaic gaze.

I can only speculate because I never stick around to hash it out. All that I am left with is that when looking feels dangerous, when the subject of your desire so closely resembles past pain, the best way to look is by turning away.

Corrected Vision

When the first images came back from the Hubble Space Telescope—after thirty years of development, funding setbacks, engineering breakthroughs, and millions of years of light travelling from distant galaxies—their vision of the universe resembled the reflection one might see in a foggy bathroom mirror. The brilliant points of light at the edges of the observable universe were fuzzy dots hanging in clouds of pastel gases.

One of the advantages of putting the optical telescope like Hubble in orbit is that they bypass 300km of dense atmosphere that hamper earth-based telescopes. The density of our atmosphere causes blurriness, reducing the clarity of optical images.

The blurring of the Hubble images was the result of a minute flaw in the main mirror. To correct the flaw, NASA installed COSTAR (Corrective Optics Space Telescope Axial Replacement) which consisted of two corrective mirrors which amended the mirror's "much the same way a pair of glasses correct the vision of a near-sighted person."

Two Peonies

During a lonely research trip in the Low Countries, I slept on the second floor of a slim hotel that overlooked the Antwerp Cathedral of Our Lady. The two-storey stained glass windows felt like they were just an arm's length away, across a small cobblestone alley. At night I leaned out the window and drank single serving bottles of warm white wine, watching the other tourists bathe the sidewalk in their stickysweet Aperol cocktails.

I walked slowly through the narrow streets and stopped to sit for very long periods in the city's botanical garden. I ate every meal alone. I visited a small museum dedicated to the collection of Mayer van den Bergh, a Belgian aristocrat who never married, lived with his mother, and took great pleasure in thoroughbred horses and the cultivation of dahlias. After his death in the early 1900s, his mother Henriëtte van den Bergh built a new museum to house his collection.

Moving through most museums creates the illusion of time travel. I move between rooms—1400s to 1500s and so on—stepping from one time slice to another and back again, jumping whole centuries of objects. When I am alone I practically sprint through galleries, tracking the whole of the space over and over before settling in to particular works. In the landing of a staircase, amongst a salon of other works in guided frames was a small still life by the Belgian painter Clara Peeters.

Besides being one of the only works in the collection by a woman, it was exceptional; luminous and sharp. The two peonies looked exhausted, slouched in a heavy glass vase, their pedals beginning to collect on the table. There, they are joined by a frog, a grasshopper and several beads of water flecked with the reflected brightness of the sun.

When I looked at the painting I thought about the gulf between my body— my eyes, and the eyes that looked at these flowers in their moment of twilight, freezing them in oil. The fact that my eyes could see what those eyes saw felt like some sort of miracle, but I am still confused about where that body went and why I cannot meet Peeters, why our eyes cannot connect.

Many metaphors about the passage of time employ the language of distance. After an emotionally charged incident we often 'need distance' to process this event. When I fight with a loved one we often need to 'give each other space.'

As I walked the streets of Antwerp I thought about things that were made 'in' the past and imagine this place—the past—like a room I might wander into. As I traveled from one street to the next I thought about the phantom line I might cross to find Peeters at work in her studio.

When you look into the night sky in late autumn, close to midnight, a bright cluster of stars is visible high overhead. The Pleiades, sometimes called the Seven Sisters, is a star cluster located about 440 lightyears away from Earth. The nuclear wavelengths that are just now reaching your eyes were emitted by these stars in the late 1500's, a few years before Peeters' birth in the Spanish Netherlands.

Lillian O'Brien Davis

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Detail from *arriver avant moi, devant moi*, 2020 by Erika DeFreitas. Photo courtesy of the artist. Commissioned for and originally published in *C* magazine, Issue #144, "Deja Vu," Winter 2020, Toronto.

Witch Weather

There is a moment in a gust of wind that precedes a rumbling stormy sky, when I suddenly feel different. A sudden restlessness comes over me, a sense of longing for a place that does not exist, perhaps buried in the ashes of a village destroyed by merchants seeking to sell human flesh. The electric, tense change in that moment recalls magic to my skin, an embodiment of the magic of the Zabat, a Black woman's rite of passage. For a moment I feel ancient, powerful, and lonely—as if I've forgotten something important and I'm on the verge of remembering it.

Traces of the existence of Other lives are not deemed important enough to be included in the canon of Western art history and archaeology. Therefore, seeking evidence of these traces—of typically non-white histories—consists of looking for the smallest clues, unearthing the forgotten fragments preserved by sheer luck or chance from long-forgotten ancient empires. This piece of writing is about intuition; it's about delicately pressing my finger to my lips and allowing myself to listen and recall what is lost. It's about seeking out, holding onto, spending time with, and being in relation to, the traces that survive.



Image: Detail from *arriver avant moi, devant moi*, 2020 by Erika DeFreitas. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Recently, news of a treasure trove emerged from Regio V, a site in Pompeii (in present-day Italy), that had been destroyed in the now infamous volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius on October 24 in the year 79 AD. The description of the trove, also known as a “Sorceress’ Kit”, in recent accounts published about the find intrigued me. Here were stories about women, possible pasts that provided new detail into worlds previously unknown. There is limited information about the treasure trove as its discovery was only reported in the fall of 2019 and it is still under examination by archeologists on site. According to those archeologists,¹ the contents of the Kit includes: two mirrors; pieces of a necklace; decorative elements made of faience, bronze, bone and amber; a glass unguentarium (salve for soothing or healing); phallic amulets; a figure of Harpokrates; various gems; buttons made of bone; carved scarab beetles; and tiny skulls (possibly animal).

Interestingly, there are diverging accounts of the ‘Sorceress’ Kit’ published online. One account details that, due to the fact that no gold or precious objects were found in the kit, it is likely that it did not belong to the mistress of the house but it was likely owned by a servant or a slave who was not able to take the Kit with them in the apocalyptic panic.² Another account states that the high quality of the amber and engraving of the figurines

1 See Smithsonian article: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/sorceress-kit-was-discovered-ashes-pompeii-180972907/>

2 *ibid.*

in the box confirm the importance of the owner of the home in which the Kit was found.³ The box of small trinkets was likely used to perform fertility and love rituals and to look for omens related to birth and pregnancy. The Kit was also believed to be used for fortune telling and for protection against bad luck. This find marks a distinct and intriguing discovery since it reveals the presence of a female community that performed ceremonies to protect each other and support fertility and childbirth.

In several published articles, the items in the Kit were referred to as objects related to everyday life in the “female world”.⁴ These objects evaded the museological archive due to the fragmentary nature of their discovery—their materiality can be sourced, but the people who possessed them remain buried. Thus, the objects offer the possibility to unearth the lost subjectivities of the women who made up this “female world”, or rather feminine communities and lineages previously excluded from the historical narrative. This proposed protective knowledge and communal power of the women animate the objects, despite the fact they are not yet permanently preserved in a museum’s archives, where they can be viewed for years to come.

What may otherwise be understood as sorcery or witchcraft, the Kit proves how this female community would use ceremony and ritual to create worlds of feminine connectivity outside of the patriarchal Roman culture. The Sorceress’ Kit is also exemplative of the kind of feminine world-building contemporary artist Erika DeFreitas is concerned with. DeFreitas’ lens-based practice places an emphasis on the body, documentation, intuition and paranormal phenomena, and sometimes wades into aspects of the occult. DeFreitas’ recent photographic series *arriver avant moi devant moi* (2019) seeks to make a connection with two mixed-race women: the frequently painted artistic muse and former lover of French poet Charles Baudelaire, Jeanne Duval (1820-1871), and Maud Sulter (1960-2008) a Ghanian-Scottish contemporary artist who engaged with Duval through her own artistic practice, exploring the erasure of women of colour from art history. DeFreitas uses images and landmarks to trace connections and collapse time and space, bringing these women together into her own sphere, as captured in this series of photographs through maps, mirrors, excerpts of Baudelaire’s poems and the artist’s own notes. The series is made up of eight images, where the artist’s hands reach out and delicately hold photographic traces of both Duval and Sulter. In this body of work, DeFreitas traces the women’s relationships through ethos and time, seeking to hold them, spend time with them and be in relation to them.

3 A Press release from the Pompeii Archeological site: <http://pompeiiisites.org/en/press-releases/the-luck-and-the-protection-against-the-bad-fate-in-the-jewelry-of-regio-v/>

4 See Frieze article <https://www.frieze.com/article/pictures-miraculous-treasure-pompeii-sorceress> and also Smithsonian article, quote from Massimo Osanna director of Pompeii Archeological park: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/sorceress-kit-was-discovered-ashes-pompeii-180972907/>



Image: Detail from *arriver avant moi, devant moi*, 2020 by Erika DeFreitas. Photo courtesy of the artist.

The Sorceress' Kit can be traced through the fragmentary lineage of “lost” women just as Duval and Sulter are traced within DeFreitas’ work, by means of studying and reanimating distinctly feminine materials within archaeological remains. This found “feminist materialism” thus act as clues that together build the story of communities that were centered around a feminist network with a collective knowledge. In *arriver avant moi devant moi*, the artist’s hands are depicted forming connections between images of Duval, Sulter and other “lost” women, such as Laure, better known as the unknown servant who anchors the centre of Edouard Manet’s well known painting *Olympia* (1865).⁵ In other images, DeFreitas depicts herself observing Gustav Courbet’s painting, *The Painter’s Studio* (1855), positioning her body near the empty space where Duval had been painted out of the work. Some of the images feature maps, stones and blank pages—evidence of DeFreitas’ ongoing search for these “lost” women. In the final image of the series, DeFreitas is depicted drawing a line with black marker along her palm’s lifeline, which continues across a piece of blank grid paper, thus extending herself towards the traces she’s found. In this way, both the Kit and the tactility of DeFreitas’ work function as a means of channeling power and reasserting presence—reaching out to carefully sift through a history buried in ash.

⁵ See this Smithsonian article on the recent exhibition at the Musee D’Orsay in Paris: *Posing Modernity: The Black Model from Manet and Matisse to Today*. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/what-black-maid-manets-olympia-tells-us-about-modernisms-models-180970708/>



Image: Detail from *arriver avant moi, devant moi*, 2020 by Erika DeFreitas. Photo courtesy of the artist.

The Kit fills me with a sense of loss, an untethering, since what remains of the Kit is a faint palimpsest in the margins of history, not something easily read. Found in the Kit was the figure of Harpokrates, the Greek interpretation of the Egyptian god Harpa-Khruti (Horus the Child) who was usually depicted as a small boy with a finger held to his lips—an Egyptian gesture symbolising childhood, which the ancient Greeks mistook for a hush for silence. The presence of the god of Silence and secrecy (as understood by the Greeks) in the Kit seems especially significant, since what has been discovered was something private and powerful. Even though they are physically absent, the women are present within these objects, and the agency of the Sorceress is wrapped up in the objects that remain. The Kit represents their community, power, silence, secrecy and subversion. What makes this search so challenging is that we must construct their narrative from the fragments, in all it’s tiny, delicate pieces.

Jeanne Duval was erased from Gustav Courbet’s painting, *The Painter’s Studio* (1855) at the request of her lover Charles Baudelaire. In the painting, a careful viewer can just make out where she has been removed: a slight discolouration is the only remaining trace of Duval’s presence. Like the fragments of information that Sulter and DeFreitas have to work with, only fragmentary knowledge pertaining to the context of the Kit still linger. The lack of physical evidence lessens the significance of the discovery, and yet a scientific inquiry also feels inappropriately sterile, since it remains a practice that has long refuted femi-

nine knowledge, often marking it as hysterical. This piece of writing isn't about searching for evidence—who would believe me anyway? Just as ancient Greek colonizers misinterpreted and appropriated an Egyptian god, these women, the Sorceress, Jeanne Duval and Maud Sulter, are silent—they have been silenced. The traces of these lost women, what we know of Jeanne Duval, Maud Sulter and what we now know of the Sorceresses are examples of the continuing erasure of women and their agency from canonical history.

In the simplest terms, Sorceresses, or as they're more commonly known, witches, can be understood as women who possess agency over their own bodies. They have been known to use herbs and other means either to help with fertility or to act as contraceptives, thus making sex an act of pleasure rather than a contribution to the (read capitalist) labour force.⁶ In the colonial West Indies, before a racially-based caste system was established, many poor, unwed white women interacted closely with the enslaved population. It was only when race laws were enacted did white women who were lower on the socio-economic scale become distinct from and better protected than non-white and Black enslaved women.⁷ The ceremonial and ritual practices of Black women were punished brutally and stamped out of communities during and throughout transatlantic enslavement, undermining feminine or matriarchal communities which either developed within enslaved communities or were held-over from the African villages from which they originated.⁸

Often times witches were non-white women whose cultural knowledge needed to be delegitimized or who could be used as outlets for societal anxieties during times of widespread social or economic strife.⁹ In other words, the practices that women were being punished for were racialized. For instance, Tituba, a Black servant, was the first alleged witch to be convicted during the Salem witch trials of the 17th century.¹⁰ These “witch” practices undermined the rule of colonial law and formed communities among the enslaved that often empowered women and placed them in positions of power within these communities. Another instance of the demonization of ritual practices is the history of Obeah women, who were powerful female leaders with shaman-like powers for healing and community leadership.¹¹ Obeah in the West Indies were thought to have the knowledge to do things like brew poisonous concoctions in their master's food, or inspire slaves to revolt. Fears of witches and the ritual practices of women of colour were linked to the false issue of population decline (thought to be due to the use of contraceptives pro-

6 Federici, Silvia. *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*. New York: London: Autonomedia; Pluto, 2003. Pp. 75.

7 *ibid.* pp. 88

8 *ibid.* p 115

9 *ibid.*

10 *ibid.* p. 237

11 See selected trails for Obeah practice in Caribbean: <https://www.caribbeanreligioustrials.org/>



Image: Detail of *Jeanne: A Melodrama I-V*, 2002 by Maude Sulter. From pages 18-19 in the artists' exhibition catalogue, *Jeanne Duval: A Melodrama* (2003).

vided by “witches”).¹² The primary fear among white, wealthy, land-holding classes was that their social subordinates, particularly women, would sneak into their homes and kill them in order to become free.¹³ The persecution of witches (like the slave trade) was a central aspect of the accumulation and formation of the modern proletariat, erasing and oppressing any agency that manifested outside of the structure of a capitalist economy.¹⁴ North American and European progress cannibalized the ritual lives and bodies of Black women in order to build our current, (perhaps now crumbling) capitalist economy. The secrecy implied through the presence of Harpokrates and the anonymity of the Sorceress' kit speaks to a similar suppression of female power and community in the Kit's Greco-Roman context.

Similarly, Jeanne Duval embodied the ambient fear of Black women by white Europeans when she arrived in France at the end of the 19th century. She is said to have come from a former slave colony island in the Caribbean, likely Haiti. Most writing about Jeanne

12 Federici, 87.

13 See: <https://www.caribbeanreligioustrials.org/>

14 *ibid.*

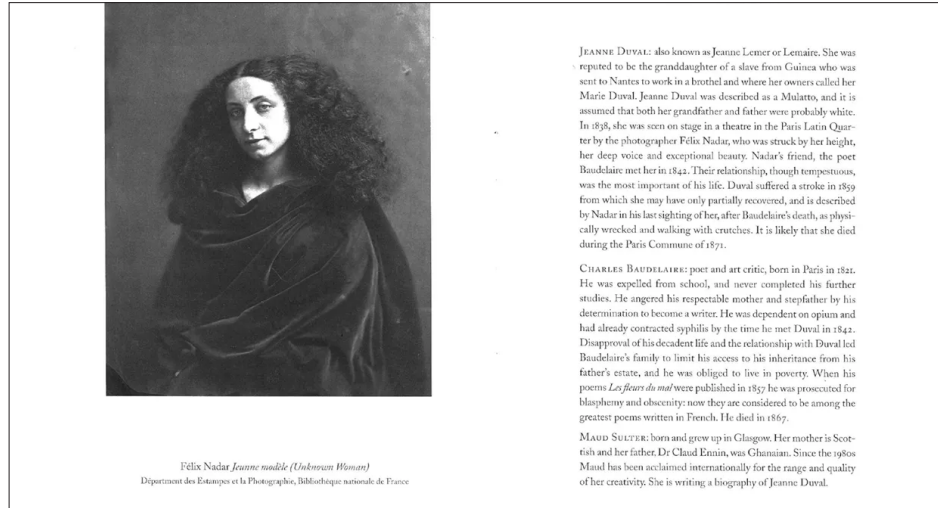


Image: *Jeanne modèle (Unknown Woman)*, c. 1860, photograph by Félix Nadar. From pages 8-9 of *Jeanne Duval: A Melodrama* (2003) by Maude Sulter.

Duval describes her as a “Quarteroon”, three-quarters white and one-quarter Black—an exotic negress who enchanted French poet Charles Baudelaire with her “colonial allure” for more than two decades. Duval, also known as Jeanne Lemer or Lemaire, was likely the granddaughter of an enslaved woman from Guinea in West Africa who was sent to Nantes, France to work in a brothel where her owners called her Marie Duval.¹⁵

Art Historian Marc A. Christophe describes Duval not as a woman but as an extension of Baudelaire's psyche—a Black Venus that embodied all of the dark and lascivious qualities of the tormented genius. Any history of Duval is picked out of Baudelaire's letters to his mother and friends, filtered through his voice, his moods, and his thoughts. What is known is that Jeanne Duval and Charles Baudelaire met in 1842 when Duval arrived in France from Haiti and remained together on and off for 20 years. Often Baudelaire would live with Duval when he could not afford to live alone and Duval was known to sell her own possessions in order to feed herself and the poet.¹⁶ The racialized and sexist historicization of Duval as “bestialized, stupefied, hated, ugly”¹⁷ and an overall negative influence

¹⁵ Christophe, M. (1990). JEANNE DUVAL: BAUDELAIRE'S BLACK VENUS OR BAUDELAIRE'S DEMON? *CLA Journal*, 33(4), 428-439. Retrieved February 11, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/44324912

¹⁶ Sulter, M., & National Galleries of Scotland. (2003). *Jeanne Duval: A melodrama*. Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland. Exhibition catalogue. Print.

¹⁷ Christophe, M. (1990). JEANNE DUVAL: BAUDELAIRE'S BLACK VENUS OR BAUDELAIRE'S

on Baudelaire is a characterization meant to depict Duval as a foil to Baudelaire's other well known white mistress, the French socialite Apollonie Sabatier.¹⁸ This characterization contradicts much of the fragmented information still in existence about the relationship in which Baudelaire takes turns describing Duval as either a Black Sun, “... *if one could conceive a black star pouring out light and happiness*”¹⁹ or as he refers to her in his poem, “*Les Fleurs du Mal*” (1857), “... *La Sorcière au flances d'ébène...*” (the witch with ebony flanks),²⁰ a sexual being who Baudelaire was unable to resist nor fully control. After Baudelaire's death, all of the letters from Duval that he had kept were burned by Baudelaire's conservative mother who disapproved of his relationship with Duval, who she saw as a corrupting influence over her son.²¹

Most sources indicate that Jeanne Duval died during the Paris Commune in 1871, though the location of her burial site is unknown. Although she was depicted many times by well known artists such as Felix Nadar, Edouard Manet and Gustav Courbet, Duval the woman disappeared from the telling of her own history—another woman whose story, like the unknown owner of the Sorceress' Kit, is lost in the ashes of a crumbling empire.

Artist Maud Sulter describes her first encounter with Jeanne Duval, who she first noticed in a photograph by Felix Nadar, captioned *Unknown Woman* (c. 1860). “There she stared at me, willing me to give her a name, an identity, a voice...”²² Sulter's search for Duval took place through her art practice, making photographic self-portraits depicting representations of Duval drawn from Baudelaire's poems. Sulter articulates her own discomfort on the Black female sitter, writing, “Black people are still so often anonymously objectified in representation—and I do not suggest that mere naming is enough to redress the balance à la Robert Mapplethorpe or Craigie Aitchison.”²³

There is a correlation between the anonymous objectification that Sulter identifies here, such as the owner of the Sorceress' Kit and women like Jeanne Duval, and great artistic genius. As Sulter implies in the description of her first encounter with an uncredited image of Jeanne Duval, Black women instilled agency onto the objects they influenced, made, and helped circulate. Sulter's attempt to redress the balance, came in the form of her inhabiting the position of both muse and artist, seeking Duval's buried subjectivity while maintaining her own—using her body to help Duval speak. For an exhibition of her

DEMON? *CLA Journal*, 33 (4), 428-439. Retrieved February 11, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/44324912

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ Baudelaire, C., Shapiro, N. R., Schorr, D., Barnstone, W., Baudelaire, C., & Baudelaire, C. (1998). Selected poems from *Les fleurs du mal: A bilingual edition*.

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ Christophe, M. (1990).

²² Sulter, M., & National Galleries of Scotland. (2003).

²³ *ibid.*

work at the National Gallery of Scotland in 2003, Sulter published her most comprehensive text about Duval titled, *Jeanne Duval: A Melodrama* (2003), an exhibition catalogue which contextualized some of Sulter's research and documentation of the artist's ongoing interest in re-presenting women of colour within historical narratives.²⁴ Sulter had also begun a biography of Duval, but it was never completed as Sulter died in 2008 after battling a long illness.

DeFreitas' work, *arriver avant moi, devant moi* (2019) similarly helps create a lineage of women of colour through time who enlivened objects with their knowledge and existence. A mirror appears within each photograph in the series, sometimes catching a glimpse of DeFreitas' face or hair, and sometimes the mirror is empty, open and inviting. The consistent appearance of the artist's hands in the images form connections through time, since the mirrors act as portals connecting DeFreitas with Sulter, Duval and the viewer. The artist's touch is gentle, both Duval and Sulter's images are carefully held by DeFreitas—an infinitely prolonged gesture captured by the photograph. In this moment, all three women are now connected across time.

In one photograph from the series, Baudelaire's poem, "Hemisphere in a Head of Hair" (1862), appears along with Nadar's photograph of Duval that Sulter had been so drawn to. DeFreitas' hair is reflected in the small, circular mirror. An excerpt of Baudelaire's poem reads

Let me bite and bite again your dark, heavy tresses. When I nibble your defiant, elastic hair, it seems to me the nourishment of memories.²⁵

Duval literally fed Baudelaire's creative labour, just as more broadly, contemporary culture feeds off of women of colour. In several images from the series, DeFreitas physically positions herself in relation to Sulter, Duval and Baudelaire, joining Duval in being observed, her own hair captured in the mirror's reflection, re-embodying the elastic defiance that Baudelaire observed in Duval's hair. Like Sulter, DeFreitas does not disappear in order to look, but appears along with Duval, placing herself in relation to her remaining fragment. While DeFreitas is a beneficiary of this legacy, she is still an object of consumption for the engine of the white male genius, a devouring she resists through the defiant elasticity of her own hair depicted in the mirror.

Written in the margins of DeFreitas' work are notes from her research, and words from Baudelaire's poem: "tropical azure, downy banks, blend of tar, musk, coconut oil, defiant

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ Baudelaire, C., Shapiro, N. R., Schorr, D., Barnstone, W., Baudelaire, C., & Baudelaire, C. (1998). Selected poems from *Les fleurs du mal: A bilingual edition*.



Image: Detail from *arriver avant moi, devant moi*, 2020 by Erika DeFreitas. Photo courtesy of the artist.

elastic." This list seems to embody the artist's thoughts on Duval and Sulter as the search for these women unfolds. Like the Sorceress who used the objects in her Kit to perform rituals for her female community, DeFreitas performs a similar world building from the feminine lineages she utilizes through her art making and research. As delicate pieces are picked up, pointed to, and dusted off, DeFreitas' gestures also sift through the volcanic ash, restoring these women to a history and legacy they had been robbed of by the machinations of patriarchal narrative hegemony, having disappeared from historical time, in its own magical disappearing act.

Burned letters, painted out of history, hidden grave stones, buried under ash, lost to illness. Fragments of these stories remain, activated through touch and connected across time. The Sorceress' Kit is one of these fragments, a series of delicate objects that holds the knowledge and presence of the women who enlivened them, and suggests new ways to think about how magic functions in society. DeFreitas' work documents the action of unearthing the threads of interconnectedness of lost Black women across time and space, reaching out particularly to Sulter and Duval to help unearth a buried female history. DeFreitas' work traces a careful lineage; a branching tendril that flows softly through time, connected yet diverging. All these objects of protection and community, all of the delicate, ashy, time-worn pieces not wholly legible that have been lost, are only now being held again—but this time, for the world to see.

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PART 1 Preamble to Jane Manning James

In Mormonism, there are many popular phrases that come from scripture and collect associative meanings over the years as they are employed by General Authorities¹ and echoed by membership. Eventually these phrases become adages that stand-alone from their original texts. An example comes from the Prophet Moroni in the Book of Mormon, who writes: "... faith is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith".² The snippet "trial of your faith" titles General Conference talks and Sunday school lessons, and has become an easily referenced mantra for being obedient even when being obedient doesn't make any sense at all.

An art history professor, lecturing on Hubert and Jan Van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece*, taught me the similar, more scholarly phrase "the divine right of kings," which I would hear abbreviated as simply "divine right." The 15th century religious altarpiece employed multiple panels to insinuate certain relationships between the spiritual world and the earthly realm, placing them on a continuum and highlighting their interconnectedness. At the top and center, a bearded deity sits dressed in Byzantine splendour and sporting a papal crown. But placed at the God figure's feet sits an unclaimed, more contemporary crown. This crown hovers over the panel below, whose ceremonial actions take place on Earth, symbolizing that the right of monarchs to rule over their subjects is divine, emboldening the ruler to rule with absolute authority. In other words, the wearer of the crown receives divine right to speak on behalf of God, and is thus beyond human reproach.

The discussion of the *Ghent Altarpiece* in Art History that day helped me understand the political and social implications of assigning one leader the right to speak definitively, indisputably backed in heaven. But this Northern Renaissance relic was being contextualized as describing a bygone belief system, in a chiding academic way by someone brilliant and respectable. I remember feeling embarrassed because I couldn't help but see a parallel in my own life as a young Mormon. Although not exactly the same, "Trial of your faith" was sloganized to dismiss anything that counteracted what Heavenly Father's prophet on Earth was saying.

¹ *General Authorities* is the umbrella term for the (all male) leadership of the LDS church. The term includes the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the Presidency of the Seventy, the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy, and the Presiding Bishopric.

² *The Book of Mormon*, Ether, Chapter 12, Verse 6.

One of the foundational tenets of Mormonism is the belief in a living prophet, and although he wears no crown, he and he alone is said to wear the metaphorical mantle of prophetic authority. Currently, his name is President Russell M. Nelson. Whatever he says in a professional church capacity is to be taken as divinely inspired. Before him it was President Thomas S. Monson, and before he died it was President Gordon B. Hinckley, and so on and so on, back seventeen presidents to the time when Joseph Smith was president and founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.³ In 1833, he established the administrative structure that is used today, intending it to be modeled after Christ's Twelve Apostles. I have a memory of gathering together as a family to watch a 60 Minutes interview that Wallace Gordon did with Gordon B. Hinckley, in which he suggested that the church was run exclusively by old men. Hinckley's reply was, "Isn't it wonderful?" In our living room, it landed with laughter although the question begs re-posing: wonderful for whom?

General Authorities remain the voice on gospel matters even those pertaining to race and gender – subjects that the generally white and always male church officials address from a place of privilege. Their voices are an intergenerational exercise in maintaining power through a discourse that justifies racism and sexism as foreordained in Heaven. There are two uncomfortable and unpopular topics from the history of the church that I remember being consistently and quickly swept under the rug. The first was polygamy, which was always explained as something that happened during a tiny necessary blip in history. Not until doing my own research did I learn that the practice spanned 50 years, with some leaders having just that many wives. The second was race.

White supremacy was at the heart of the gospel law that prohibited Black members of the church from entering the Mormon temple before 1978. The popularized explanation for this exclusionary practice, when young minds like mine inquired, was that though church leaders would have wanted everyone to have access to temple blessings, the world would not have been ready for this kind of radical inclusion any sooner than 1978, insinuating the threat of outside violence if the LDS church had allowed full access to Black members before that time. I suggest that the church's ambivalence on issues of race was reinforced through the omission of

³ I use the term "founder" but this terminology would never be used within the Church. Mormons believe that Joseph didn't start his own religion, that he simply restored the true Gospel that was already on the Earth from Adam, but had been lost in modern times. Mormons would use the verb restored.

stories about Black contributions to the early LDS pioneering efforts. Burying those narratives, and essentially whitewashing the history of the church, allowed generations of white Mormons to have an uncomplicated perspective on the church's racist doctrines and practices.⁴

PART II Jane Manning James: The Saint in the Waiting Room

In the early 1840s, Jane Manning James, a free Black woman in her late twenties, was working for a family in Connecticut when she learned about Joseph Smith and his new book of scripture, *The Book of Mormon*. She and her relatives, like many of the early Mormon pioneers believed in the power of the young, handsome prophet and in the words of the ancient book he was believed to have recovered and translated, enough so that they would pack up all of their possessions and muster westward, expanding conversion efforts into frontier America. This was done on the belief that preexisting cultural ideas of Zion were misguided because the true promised land—a Holy Land reserved for the most righteous of people—was in America.

I'll never understand why a Black woman in the 19th century would want to spend her life fighting for full inclusion in the Mormon Church, but I've seen many sacrifices on account of faith made in my lifetime that I will also never understand. Even though I don't hold dear the same beliefs, I admire Jane Manning James for recording her story, and demanding that it be included as part of official church history. Considering that so many Black stories from the American Antebellum South were not recorded, I am especially grateful for Jane's.⁵ Her position is both one of an honoured insider and a fundamental outsider.

Joseph and Emma Smith's home in the newly settled Nauvoo, Illinois functioned as a hotel for new Saints arriving to join the religion and settle the area. After Jane arrived, she stayed on as a housekeeper, helping the

⁴ I intend to address the racism perpetrated on Indigenous people by the LDS church in another essay, as Church doctrine is employed in specific ways to subjugate Indigenous people.

⁵ Like Quincy D. Newell, I'm choosing to use Jane's first name: "Jane Elizabeth Manning James used three different surnames over the course of her long life: She used "Jane Manning" until her first marriage, but thereafter the only people who used this name were those who considered her marriage irrelevant. She used "Jane E. James" and variants of that name throughout more of the rest of her life, with the exception of a few years when he was married to Frank Perkins and employed "Jane Perkins" on an inconsistent basis...So I use Jane's first name throughout this book because it is the name that she used most consistently, and because I want to keep the focus on her, rather than the men whose names sometimes marked her as "theirs". Quincy D. Newell, *Your Sister in the Gospel* (Oxford, 2019): 3.

operation go smoothly but tensions were high during Jane's year in the Smith home, which was preceded by the Latter-Day Saints' exodus from Missouri motivated by threats of mass violence and followed by Joseph's arrest and assassination in 1844.⁶ This one-year period is pivotal to Jane's story as she tells it; this is when she established roots with Joseph Smith and the Mormon faith, signing on for whatever would happen next. This is when she establishes herself as an insider with a firsthand understanding of the first Prophet's vision for Zion. But her lived experience and social status as a Black woman would also keep her on the outside.

When I say that Jane fought for full inclusion in the church, it is important to understand what that meant, and still means today. Pre-1978, to be Black and Mormon was to be in an incomprehensible double bind. You were permitted to be baptized and confirmed. You could attend chapel services, were expected to pay tithing, and could serve certain roles in the church, but if the overall aim of your piety was—as is the premise of the Mormon faith—to obtain salvation and to live righteously with your loved ones in heaven for all eternity, access was denied. Black members persisted in Mormon congregations based on the belief that the ban would be lifted, if not in their mortal lifetime, then in the endlessness of the afterlife. Early Black Mormons persisted on the *trial of their faith*.

In addition to baptism and confirmation, there are two other ceremonies a Mormon person must participate in to receive salvation, and these must take place in the temple: the temple initiatory and the temple sealing. These ceremonies are only made possible through the leadership authority called the priesthood, which is conferred on young men who are then groomed to carry the increasing responsibility of the authority as adults. The Mormon governing structure is patriarchal, both institutionally and familiarly.⁷ The pre-1978 ban excluded all Black members from entering the temple; and also excluded Black men from holding the priesthood. It is hard to convey the scope by which, socially and practically, this would alienate not just Black male members of the church and by extension, their entire families.

Jane Manning James recorded her autobiography circa 1902. It is short;

⁶ In Executive Order 44 (1838), Governor Lilburn Boggs orders that Mormons “must be exterminated or driven from the state” of Missouri.

⁷ The family is given so much power in Mormonism, and the father figure is given the map. I often wonder if I was able to see the flaw in the whole hierarchy early on because I grew up with an absent father. Without a patriarch to lead the whole system was supposed to deflate, but it didn't. And instead I saw my mom and grandma be treated worse for working twice as hard.

a few pages transcribed by her neighbor Elizabeth J. D. Roundy.⁸ A scan of the original document is archived for public download on the church website.⁹ Although it is short, Jane's story, as told by her, has very recently garnered interest to both Mormon and non-Mormon historians.¹⁰ Her story is incredibly relevant today, as we hunger for a collectively deeper examination of the machinations that have systemically propelled and safeguarded racism in the West. It seems no small coincidence that Jane's own autobiography was quoted verbatim in the 2018 LDS book *Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints: Volume 1*¹¹, and that an LDS-produced film titled *Jane and Emma* was also released that same year. This means, however, that the LDS church is taking the opportunity to control Jane's narrative, championing certain aspects of her story and downplaying others, ultimately positioning her story as part of the Mormon canon, even if under historical scrutiny their claim to her story is bittersweet. I argue that the LDS church's renewed celebration of Jane is not based in an admission of the racism embedded in the policies and attitudes of its institutional structure but rather as a strategy to present a timeline where, from the beginning, the Church was inclusive and well-intentioned toward Black people.

It is crucial that the LDS church cobble together a cohesive metanarrative, creating a theological and historical thread from the 1830s to the present day and beyond.¹² Art becomes a tool to reinforce this narrative of continuity, especially in the church's most sacred site: the temple. Paintings, murals, statues, and stained glass are all employed to construct a cohesive narrative of the premortal existence, earthly church history, and what is yet to come. Because of the exclusive nature of the temple, only accessible to LDS members who have a temple recommend, artworks that are carefully vetted to hang in the interiors of temples are only for the eyes of those worthy enough to enter.¹³ Yet, thanks to an

⁸ It is documented by this time, that Jane's eyesight is failing.

⁹ <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/record/87811103-6a8f-496e-a68f-590604cdf5bc?view=browse>

¹⁰ It is important to note that my assertion that Jane told her own story is disputable: “Because James did not herself put pen to paper, her text became subject to direct intervention by the transcriber. As such, James lost control of the legible embodiment of her own narrative, a loss of control, I suggest, that could have been the result of the loss of control over her own (sexual) body.” Max Perry Mueller, “Re-presenting Black Mormon Memory through Reenacting the Black Mormon Past,” *Journal of Africana Religions* 1.4 (2013): 518.

¹¹ Which all LDS families were encouraged to read, by the way.

¹² Race, polygamy, and sexism are taboo topics in the church because prophets varied morally on these topics highlighting the ways in which personal politics figured in to their leadership and destabilizing the baseline belief that they were all the conduits for the same unchanging God.

¹³ Your bishop assesses your temple worthiness every two years on the basis of church attendance,

article from an unofficial online publication for Mormons, we know that a portrait of Jane Manning James was commissioned for the Payson, Utah temple.¹⁴ Understanding the private sanctity of the temple, the article includes the image of a different painting by the commissioned artist, Elpseth Young. Jane is also the subject of this image, which is titled *Till We Meet Again*. Although it depicts Jane modestly dressed and in presumably righteous reverie, this painting does not meet the criteria required for a painting to be hung in a temple.

On Elpseth Young's website, you can find a portrait of the same model that does fit temple criteria, which requires, first that the painting be bright, with no shadows, dark or obscured elements. Secondly, the subject must be dressed all in white. Anyone who enters the temple must be dressed in white, and the subjects of paintings are no exception. *And Thou Didst Hear Me* features a young Jane Manning, knelt in prayer, arms delicately folded over pearlescent mounds of white fabric¹⁵. Her braided hair is pulled back into a bun, her face is bowed, eyes closed, lips relaxed. The background is a placeless colourfield blending of gold, yellow, and white, and her features are illuminated by a warm glow. If this is not the portrait that hangs in the Payson Temple, then one can presume it is one very similar.¹⁶

The placement of artworks within each temple is extremely intentional; they are meant to complement the architecture of the building and serve to instruct members on how each highly codified room is meant to function. Where would Jane's portrait hang? And what would its special significance be? Herein lies a clue as to how the LDS church would like the narrative of her life to be canonized. All throughout her life, Jane implored church leaders to let her be sealed in the temple. Multiple requests, spanning decades, were denied. In May 1894, Joseph F. Smith invented a ceremony that would never be repeated, where Jane was "attached"—as opposed to "sealed"—to Joseph and Emma Smith as their servant.¹⁷ So if that counts in the high courts of Mormon heaven, or in the LDS archive, or in the eyes of common decency, then yes – Jane was allowed to be sealed in the temple in her lifetime. But bear in mind that because Jane could

tithe payment, service to God, and sexual purity. Interviews are conducted one-on-one and the questions are very personal.

14 <https://utahvalley360.com/2015/04/23/6-things-look-payson-utah-temple-open-house/>

15 Mormons most commonly fold their arms in prayer, clasping hands together is also acceptable, but hands flat and pressed together is not part of Mormon iconography.

16 https://www.alyoung.com/art/work-and_thou_didst_hear_me.html

17 Joseph F. Smith was the sixth prophet of the church, also the son of Joseph Smith's brother Hyrum Smith.

not enter the temple, a white woman attended her "servant's sealing" as a proxy. Also keep in mind that the sealing is the Mormon wedding ceremony. It is meant to bind a marital union forever, well past "til death do us part." It also binds any children that couple has to them, the politics of which create a secondary family tree, charting who is bound to whom, not just who is related to whom.¹⁸ Never has there been a ceremony to bind servitude to a master for all eternity. If this off-handed ceremony were to be recognized, the gift of eternal life for Jane would mean an eternity in a heaven that includes race-based class division.

The temple portrait of Jane Manning James, commissioned by Elpseth Young is hung in the sealing room waiting area at the Payson Temple. The emotional manipulation of the narrative is expertly executed. A young woman waiting to be sealed will see a radiant portrait of Jane praying.¹⁹ She is invited to contemplate what a privilege it is to go and be sealed in marriage for time and all eternity as a wife and mother, a privilege that was restricted from generations of Mormons of colour. But look Jane, you're here now, you made it...by the trial of your faith.

It is touching to consider someone's personhood over one hundred years later. Although I have never been worthy enough to enter the temple rooms that lie past the baptistery, I know that Jane's portrait cannot be hung in the sealing room proper, as wall space is reserved for mirrors, which allow the couple to visualize themselves sealed to each other for all eternity while they are kneeling at an altar in the centre of the room.²⁰ One can't rightly shatter the couple's *mise-en-abyme*. But placing Jane in the waiting room inscribes the work, and her significance as a canonical figure with a sick double meaning. She was waiting her whole life to be admitted into the temple, a space so sacred in the LDS faith system that it is thought to bridge the earth and the afterlife. It is believed to be a portal at the crossroads of physical and spiritual dimensions, where contracts are made for a soul's lifetime, not just for a body's. Architecturally, the concepts of time and space are meant to collapse in the temple, as it is a

18 For example, because my mom got married/sealed after I left the church, I am not sealed to her as an eternal daughter. Because my grandma had a civil wedding outside of the temple, my mom is likewise not sealed to her. So, according to Mormon law, our souls are not linked in the eternities; it is an intergenerational responsibility to marry a worthy priesthood holder (a man) to ensure that the family chain is unbroken. My understanding is that non-marital sealings were a more common practice in early church history to attach loners to faithful members as children, like networking for heaven.

19 Waiting rooms, like most spaces in the temple, are gendered.

20 Only baptisms for the dead take place in the temple, a ritual done by proxy for the deceased by Mormon youth such as myself.

space that is no stranger to visual metaphor. Jane's portrait is not just hung in a waiting room, where brief ceremonies take place. Her portrait is hung in a waiting room for eternal perpetuity.

The waiting rooms in the temple are solitary spaces, where a participant is completely emancipated from any worldly influences and left to contemplate their commitment to their Heavenly Father, as if they found themselves in the waiting room of the afterlife. In many ways, the Payson Temple's intention was to honour Jane with the placement of her portrait. But in other ways, this placement adds insult to injury, serving as an admonition of institutional guilt rather than a celebration of Jane Manning James as a pious and obedient disruptor of the status quo. The LDS re-adoption of her story assigns a moral to her biography: Moroni's lesson, that after a trial of their faith, the righteous will receive their reward. The undercurrent message of the phrase is that one must be absolutely obedient to the structures as they are and that this obedience means total submission to God's plan as it was told to, and enacted by, the leaders of the church. In ascribing this moral to Jane's biography, the church has effaced the realities of her own experience.

Jane Manning James adored Joseph Smith, but being attached to him as a servant when Emma's original offer was in fact, for her to be sealed to him as a child, did not satisfy her. Her year with the Smith family is the main focus of her autobiography, and in it, she conveys her friendship with Joseph and Emma, the other wives, and their extended family. Her bias to the family is comically obvious when we consider that after Joseph's death, Jane worked for the subsequent prophet, Brigham Young, but neglects submitting for public record anything about her experience of that time.²¹ However, the fact that she did not stay in Nauvoo with Emma to support the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints suggests that Joseph was her favourite.²²

Elizabeth Roundy transcribed Jane's verbal autobiography because Elizabeth, also a big fan of Joseph, had embarked on a self-directed church

²¹ There is record that Joseph Smith supported abolition. Brigham Young however, did not.

²² This is the point in history where the Mormon church branches off: Emma stays in Nauvoo, and her then 12 year old son Joseph Smith Jr. grows up to lead the Reformed LDS church, which still exists today and still views the practice of polygamy as their religious right. Brigham Young, then the highest-ranking Mormon authority after Joseph Smith, would, after Joseph's death, be voted in as prophet. He would then move the church's head quarters to its current location in the Salt Lake Valley, encourage slavery, wage war on the Indigenous groups in the area, declare himself Governor, attempt to wage war with the United States, name a university after himself, and leave a legacy where his thoughts on food storage are about the only safe thing to quote from his time as the 2nd prophet.

history project to record the statements of the original pioneers who knew the prophet when he was alive. This may explain why the autobiography focuses so extensively on Jane's relationship with Joseph. But I bet that Elizabeth and Jane had a relationship more sisterly than journalistic between them. Jane requested that Elizabeth read her biography at her funeral – a request she made Elizabeth put in writing. And Elizabeth honoured this request, reading all but the section about polygamy, which was censored. I told you we don't talk about that.

When Jane passed away, she was 94 years old. She had spent a lifetime trying to exemplify faithfulness, even with limited access to the same tools and spaces of worship as her peers: "I pay my tithes and offerings, keep the word of wisdom, I go to bed early and rise early, I try in my feeble way to set a good example to all" she states.²³ Accounts say that she often talked of her special relationship with the founding prophet Joseph, indirectly reminding everyone that, prejudices aside, she was one of the original pioneers, and even though she was not listed among the official record of the original settlers of the Utah Valley, presumably due to her status as a servant, that she was there. She was there when the saints were originally beckoned to gather in Nauvoo, even if it took her months longer to walk with her family, to reach the same distance as the white saints, who were allowed to take the boat from Connecticut. Being there, or being the descendant of those ground floor Mormons, conjured a lot of respect in the community, and still does. The trailblazing of a Zion on the American frontier and the hardships of the early pioneers are lauded to this day as a benchmark for modern-day sacrifice. Their songs are still sung in Sunday sacrament meetings. Even I have to confess that despite my best efforts, when "Come, Come, Ye Saints" comes on, and as the tune swells, and sinks, and rises triumphantly again even my hardened ex-Mormon heart is having a good time.²⁴

In 1904, when Jane, who made sure she was known and remembered in her lifetime for her contributions to the building of Zion, passed away, Joseph F. Smith, then-president of the church, gave the eulogy. How I would love to have access to archival footage of this funeral service, where Elizabeth read Jane's account of her life over the pulpit where Joseph F. Smith presided. Elizabeth read the biography, which could not have been a more tasteful and pious "screw you" to the leadership that kept her from her dream of a temple sealing. Confirming that her very presence

²³ Jane's autobiography, dictated to Elizabeth J.D. Roundy (between 1902 and 1908).

²⁴ William Clayton, "Come, Come, Ye Saints," 1846.

made a difference, Joseph F. Smith would crack down on segregation after Jane's death, ensuring that policies were put into writing to make church membership less than desirable for people of colour. He buried Jane's memory for decades.

While Joseph F. was more concerned with implementing discriminatory policy, his son, Joseph Fielding Smith, the 10th president of the church, was more publicly vocal on the topic of race, and articulated why his father had fortified restrictions on Black members specifically. There are many quotes that situate his racist justifications for white supremacy. Here is one:

There were no neutrals in the war in heaven. All took sides either with Christ or with Satan. Every man had his agency there, and men receive rewards here based upon their actions there, just as they will receive rewards hereafter for deeds done in the body. The Negro, evidently, is receiving the reward he merits.²⁵

Amidst generations of hate speech, Jane's autobiography reads like a testimony. The tradition of bearing testimony is an important and frequent rite in Mormon practice. One Sunday a month, the sacrament meeting pulpit is left open for the congregation to take turns sharing their testimony. If you see a used copy of the Book of Mormon at a thrift store, check the first page. Chances are you will find someone's handwritten testimony, written in the hopes that you read it and be moved by it. As a young Mormon, you are taught the proper way to bear testimony. At best, the speech should highlight your belief in Jesus Christ as redeemer, in Joseph Smith as the prophet, seer, and revelator who restored God's one true religion, and in The Book of Mormon as a one hundred percent true account. These points should be supported with personal anecdotes to make them compelling. It is a storytelling practice, a lens through which even the mundane events of a life are meant to connect to a deeper well of faith.

This is the lens through which I look at Jane's biography. It is testimony. She recounts the sacrifices she made to join the Church, highlighting her commitment through action. She shares examples of events that strengthened her faith in the new religion. She covers everything from sacred objects, to the laundry, to the sacred objects she found in the laundry. Her style is easy, conversational, funny at times, heartbreaking at others, and her tone is unassumingly matter-of-fact. Her criticism of the church's segregation practices that kept her separate from her white

²⁵ Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, compiled by Bruce R. McConkie, 1954-56.

loved ones are gracefully integrated into her story and are therefore impossible to extract and therefore censor. I have no reason to suspect her of calculating her words, except for her careful omission of details that might, in a Mormon worldview, discredit her righteousness. She had a fatherless son, for instance, who came with her to live at the Smith's, but she does not name him with the other family members who also arrived at the Smiths' house. This sparks in me the belief that she knew how to play the game.

Others have already done full analysis of Jane Manning James' autobiography, and I do not want to dwell on the various ways that her words can be interpreted. It is enough for me to note that they exist and that they are undeniably powerful, regardless of whether they are interpreted through a secular or devout point of view. With Jane's rising popularity, many more interpretations will come, making it even more valuable that she left behind a primary source with the intention that it outlive her to be read out loud, post-mortem, in front of the very figureheads holding all the power—the power of divine right—to debase her spiritual growth based on a racist fiction that her unborn spirit had been assigned a “curse.”

It is my belief that racism is fundamental to the historical existence of Mormonism. The conditions of the American Northwest that sensationalized the birth of new religions and precipitated the quest for a North American Zion were rooted in segregation. The ideal saint was white; the ideal convert, white; the salvation of souls, a white endeavour. During her lifetime and after, church authorities promised Jane that because of her righteousness, her skin would be turned white in resurrection. The off-limit topics of Mormonism protect the wrong interests with silence. The unrelenting fiction of white purity has coded itself deeply into Western culture, both Mormon and otherwise. But I hope that by untangling the ways that the culture I grew up in sanctifies channels of oppression and vindicates white supremacy, power can be shifted and renegotiated, if only in my own personal and unauthorized version of LDS church history.

Julie Yu

The Lot, Mentorship Program CARFAC

August 2020

Many towns are passed on the highway that takes you from Saskatoon to Yorkton. Between Kandahar and Mozart, is the town of Wynyard. The town motto is “Growing for tomorrow”, but when I arrived in Wynyard, I found a lot more of the past than of the future.

Peter, my friend and photographer, had come along to photograph as many Chinese restaurants as possible in Saskatchewan. I had wanted to document the Chinese restaurant history of Saskatchewan and to see more of the province we had both grown up in. When Peter and I arrived in Wynyard to photograph the restaurant, we were surprised to see a newer circa 1990s restaurant along the side of the highway. It was in a strip mall. We proceeded to take our photos of the Panda Express restaurant, not to be confused with the line of American chain restaurants. It had been a long day of driving and the sun was high in the sky, so we took a break in Wynyard.

Walking through the town we came across a bakery. Inside the bakery we were transported to a space that had a 1950s feel. The wall behind the

counter was lined full of colorful antique radios. A series of photographs hung on the rest of the walls. I couldn't stop staring at the photographs. They caught Peter's attention as well. Every photo was a static image showing the insides of churches across Saskatchewan with no people present. Framed images that were poised so perfectly that they reminded me of those miniature dollhouse recreations. I kept staring to make sure that these were actual photographs of churches.

After our chocolate milks and baked goods arrived, a man approached our table. Drawn towards Peter's large camera, he introduced himself as Ed. His wife, Linda, was the owner of the bakery and he spent his time helping her at the business. He was also the photographer for all the photos in the bakery. We told him about our jour-



ney to photograph Chinese restaurants. Ed told us that the bakery we were in was once a Chinese café and that he might have something of interest for us.

He took us to the back of the bakery and showed us around. He explained how Linda's bakery made the bread for the town and neighboring communities. He showed us the building extension that supported the growth of the business. Expansion meant taking out the house behind the lot. This house was more of a shed. It consisted of uninsulated four walls, built with wooden boards. It was the dwelling place of the original restaurant workers. A simple structure sitting steps away from the once Zenith Café. Ignored for decades, it stood as proof of the long-gone Chinese Café. Despite the harsh Saskatchewan winters, stored inside were the memories of the café undamaged for eighty years.

Across the way from the bakery was a house that Ed had converted to a photo studio. Inside, he explained his love of archeology and history,

showing us photos of his travels around the prairie landscape. He presented us with a metal and leather-bound menu that had been in the house on the lot. Unlike the usual plastic cardboard paper menus, this menu was well crafted with a leather binding and metal nameplate. The other items from the box were packed in Ed's house, and he promised to email us photos when he got home.

Not long after returning home, Ed emailed me images of all the items from the box. Hidden away for decades inside a forgotten dwelling, this box was a time capsule of Chinese prairie history. These images were not in the museum or provincial archives, but stuck inside of that forgotten one room house behind the bakery. There were professionally photographed images of Chinese men, a few books, and a waiter's uniform. An incredible find, I cursed myself for not paying attention in the decade of Chinese school I attended. I showed the photographs to my cousin from China. He said this was a very traditional, formal written style of the Chinese language. He told

me the yellow book looked like a propagandized ode to Mao Zedong's communist China while the purple book appeared to be a ledger for a branch of the Canadian Chinese Nationalist Party. There was a newsletter booklet as well, which was common during that time. These newsletters were once used to support Chinese immigrants sharing information with one another. As for the photographs, my cousin suggested that they might have been the restaurant owners themselves or gifts to the restaurant owners. He told me that people had their photos taken only once in their lifetime. It was expensive to get professional pictures and these precious copies would be given as mementos to family and close friends.

The box housed a part of Chinese prairie history that would have been lost forever if Ed had not decided to take down the house on the lot. This was a time capsule showing a snapshot of Canada's history. A time when Chinese men were separated from their families and the Chinese Exclusion Act was established to keep the Chinese

from entering the country. Surviving the elements for almost a hundred years, the contents now became my mystery. Who were the men in the photos? Where did they go after the Zenith Café?

Through the summers of 2014 and 2015, Peter and I drove the backroads of Saskatchewan for the untold stories and histories of Chinese to this province. Growing up in this province, Chinese Canadian history always seemed to be the stories outside of Saskatchewan. The box in the house has always haunted me; preserved, waiting to be found. A spectral reminder of early Chinese settlers and their experiences with exclusion, mistrust, and isolation. I hope one day that this box can be returned to the family that it belongs to and that they can hold a piece of their ancestors. Although stories are often lost when the storyteller is no longer with us, this chance encounter cemented in me that there are always more stories out there waiting to be told.

