

Saint James Cathedral:
Walking tour of a Monumental Paradox



Sarah Wilkinson

September 2010

This essay will focus on the way in which the historical narrative associated with Montreal's Saint James Cathedral, also known as Mary Queen of the World Cathedral, and its aesthetic and surroundings correspond to the interior space of the Cathedral.¹ This essay is the first to date to provide an examination of the Saint James Cathedral using a postcolonial methodology. I am proposing that this site is paradoxical. I believe that the architecture of the Cathedral attempts to convey Catholic rights to the land on which it stands. The interior narrative of the space contradicts this reading. These attempts to convey Catholic rights to the land are manifested in the choice of geographical location of the Cathedral and its architectural details, which can be traced back to the classical period. On the interior walls, art works contain a narrative of colonial suppression, which is in contradiction to the exterior, as the artworks illustrate a more recent history than what is conveyed by the exterior.

In this essay, I will use Roland Barthes' terms *studium* and *punctum* in order to visually analyze historical and contemporary photographs of the Saint James Cathedral. I will also utilize the writings of Clarence Epstein and Anthony Blunt to discuss the exterior architecture of the church. Finally, because the works of art in the interior are framed according to Museum standards of display and lighting effects, this essay will use Mieke Bal's approach presented in her book *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis* in order to provide an interpretation of the space as it may potentially be seen through the eyes of a museum visitor.

William Fowle's photograph *Saint James Cathedral, Dorchester Street, Montreal*, which is dated approximately to 1930, offers a glimpse of early-twentieth century Montreal (Fig. 1).

¹ The name of the Cathedral-Basilica was changed to Mary Queen of the World on January 1, 1955. The Cathedral visitor pamphlet published by the Archbishop Cardinal Jean-Claude Turcott and the Cathedral website state that the cathedral also maintains the name Saint James Cathedral. For the purpose of this paper, I will be referring to the present day church as Saint James Cathedral.

The Church is central in this photograph and is evocative of the strong relationships that existed between church and community during this period. Fowle's photograph does not, however, indicate the underlying history of the structure or why it has become a beacon of religious authority and a political symbol of Quebec Nationalism.

In comparison with Fowle's earlier composition, a contemporary photograph taken in September 2009 highlights the economic growth of Montreal and represents an alternate, less serene version of the space (Fig. 2). The church is effectively dwarfed by the surrounding skyscrapers, which engulf the structure. The skyscrapers primarily house Anglophone companies including the Queen Elizabeth Hotel, the Atrium building, and CIBC bank.

In the historic photograph, the church may be interpreted as what Roland Barthes calls the "studium" in his 1981 book, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. The concept of studium within a photograph is argued to be the consequence of the viewer's knowledge and culture.² Studium may elicit a general or "polite interest" in a photograph but it does not have the ability to animate the viewer.³ Alternatively, in the contemporary photograph the church's position among the city skyscrapers results in what Barthes refers to as "punctum," as the punctum constitutes a rupture in the studium.⁴ In the specific context of the contemporary photograph, the skyscrapers may be viewed as the punctum of the studium because they are the specific elements that disrupt the scene, pricking and wounding the history of the surrounding environment.⁵

² Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 1981) 25-6.

³ Barthes 27.

⁴ Barthes 26.

⁵ Barthes 27.

For Barthes, certain photographs only represent the concept of studium and are not ruptured or disturbed by a punctum. Fowle's historical photograph of Saint-Jacques Cathedral provides an example of this as the studium has been preserved and maintained within the image.⁶ The church structure itself represents the studium, or culture, inherent in the scene. When there is a co-presence of both studium and punctum, an alternative reading of a photograph can be proposed.⁷ Barthes believes that punctum or *wounding* is not solely evident within historical images but may also be observed in contemporary photographs.⁸

This paper, taking its cue from Barthes' theory, argues that both studium and punctum are present in the contemporary photograph of present day Saint-James Cathedral. Historically, the Cathedral stood as a relatively unified, self-contained architectural structure but over time punctum has emerged within the juxtaposition of modern skyscrapers and the traditional Cathedral. The clash between the architectural style of the Cathedral and its modern surroundings connotes the permanence of the structure on the land. This permanence is connoted through the appearance of the Cathedral as architecturally rooted in the past. The space surrounding the Cathedral has evolved drastically, however the building remains as a signifier of history.

As the first newly built Catholic church in Montreal since the British conquest, the architectural style of the original Saint-Jacques Cathedral was significant (Fig. 3).⁹ The combination of an arch with a pierced window and the use of an Ionic colonnade provided one of

⁶ Barthes 40.

⁷ Barthes 42.

⁸ Barthes 96.

⁹ Clarence Epstein, "Church Architecture in Montreal During the British-Colonial Period, 1760-1860" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1999) 108-12.

the earliest examples of the French neo-classical architectural style in Montreal.¹⁰ Furthermore, the architectural style stood as a visual emblem of the underlying struggle present in French Canadian Catholicism at the time.¹¹ The building fused vernacular traditions of both Quebec City and Montreal.¹² It also maintained the tradition of French-Canadian neo-classical architecture during a period when rival factions were adopting innovative styles. Sulpicians chose Gothic elements for the Notre Dame Cathedral. This innovative decision was made with the hope of securing religious authority through a separate architectural identity.¹⁴ The auxiliary Bishop chose Neo-Classical tradition over innovation in order to appeal to the French-Canadian population.¹⁵

In the 1820s Montreal was a part of a British Colony, thus making British institutions more visible and prominent than their French Canadian counterparts.¹³ The city was unique, however, in that the French Canadian culture was not completely assimilated and both English and French culture existed simultaneously. The ability for French culture to prevail under foreign rule, as documented by the French surveyor Count Alex de Tocqueville, was unexpected.¹⁴

In August 1831 Count Alex de Tocqueville conducted several interviews with Sulpician superior Joseph Vincent Quibler.¹⁵ During one of these interviews Quibler stated that the most significant conflicts that arose between British and French Canadians were predominantly caused

¹⁰ Epstein 121.

¹¹ Epstein 125.

¹² Epstein 129.

¹³ Epstein 100.

¹⁴ Epstein 103-5. Epstein has highlighted excerpts from the second volume of Count Alex de Tocqueville's 1838 book, *Democracy in America*. These excerpts and the documentation provided, discuss the co-existence of both British and French culture in Montreal during the nineteenth century.

¹⁵ Epstein 103-5.

by religious animosity.¹⁶ What remained unmentioned during this interview, however, was the fact that religious animosity also existed between the Sulpicians and the auxiliary bishop Jean-Jacques Lartigue (1777-1840).¹⁷ The Sulpicians were allied with the Gallican rite, a French system of doctrine, while Lartigue was appointed by the Quebec City diocese in 1821 and maintained allegiances with the Pope in Rome.¹⁸ These allegiances placed the Sulpicians and Lartigue in a direct rivalry.

The appointment of Lartigue subsequently led to a battle for religious control between the Sulpicians and the auxiliary Bishop.¹⁹ The ongoing rivalry between the two religious factions manifested itself in the form of an architectural contest or competition in which each faction attempted to visually and structurally surpass or outdo the creations of the other.²⁰ The Sulpicians came to be associated with the Neo-Gothic architectural style, while Lartigue incorporated Neo-Classical elements into his architectural structures in order to set his cathedral apart from others.²¹ The divide between the middle class, which supported the construction of Saint-Jacques, and the merchant elite, which alternatively supported the re-building of Notre-Dame cathedral, also surfaced at this time (Fig. 4).²²

¹⁶ Epstein 103-5.

¹⁷ Epstein 103-5.

¹⁸ Epstein 127.

¹⁹ Epstein 111.

²⁰ Epstein 111-25.

²¹ Epstein 121.

²² Epstein 106.

The original Saint Jacques Cathedral was constructed by the business partner of Charles-Simon Delorme, an amateur by the name of Joseph Fournier (1790-1832).²³ It was located on the corner of St. Denis and Mignonne Street, currently known as Boulevard De Maisonneuve, in the heart of Montreal's French quarter.²⁴

Prior to 1840 both French and English cultures had existed relatively simultaneously. In 1840, however, English colonists began to encroach upon the city of Montreal. The influx of British, Irish and Scottish settlers resulted in more than half of the city's 40,000 citizens being Anglophone. This also led to the arrival of English speaking auction houses, libraries, theatre performances and churches.²⁵ Architecture was seen as a symbol of culture and, after the 1840s, church architecture reflected various cultural tastes.²⁶ An example of this can be seen in British church architecture.

Beginning in the 1840s, the British population came to consider the Gothic style to be a Christian art form.²⁷ Between 1840 and 1890, all Anglican churches were modelled in the Gothic style as a means to assert Anglican identity in a predominantly Roman Catholic society.²⁸ In Montreal this Neo-Gothic style of architecture became a symbol of British ideals, as it served to separate and distinguish the English colonists from the French-Canadian Roman Catholics.

²³ Epstein 112.

²⁴ Epstein 112.

²⁵ Epstein 206-9.

²⁶ Jean-Claude Marsan, *Montreal in Evolution: Historical Analysis of the Development of Montreal's Architecture and Urban Environment* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1981) 131.

²⁷ Marsan 206.

²⁸ Marsan 203.

Although certain elements of the Neo-Gothic style were utilized by Sulpicians, the style became decisively attributed to and associated with the Anglo-Protestant population.²⁹

In 1840, Ignace Bourget, Lartigue's secretary took on the role of Diocesan Bishop of Montreal, a position he maintained for thirty-five years.³⁰ Bourget was especially concerned by the fact that an 1850 survey had ranked Montreal as the top Anglophone city in British North America.³¹ After fire ravaged the city of Montreal in 1852, destroying the Saint-Jacques cathedral in the process, Bourget began making plans for a new Cathedral.³² The new Cathedral, named Saint-James Cathedral, was intended to architecturally and geographically set Bourget apart from the Sulpicians as the religious authority of Montreal and assert the position of the French Canadian Roman Catholic population as separate and distinct from that of the Anglo-Protestant.

In 1854, Bourget visited Rome.³³ It is possible that this visit inspired Bourget to model the new Saint-James Cathedral after Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome (Fig. 5).³⁴ This classical architectural style set his Cathedral apart from the Neo-Gothic style that had come to be associated with the Sulpician and Anglo-Protestant communities. The classical style and the influence of Saint Peter's Basilica in the architectural design of Saint-Jacques also provided a connection between Montreal and the Holy See in Rome.³⁵

²⁹ Marsan 207.

³⁰ Edgar Allan Collard, "The Other Side of Bishop Bourget," *The Montreal Gazette*, 8 June 1992.

³¹ Epstein 261.

³² Léon Pouliot, *L'Évêque de Montréal, Deuxième Partie: La Marche en Avant du Diocèse* [Monseigneur Bourget et Son Temps, Vol. 3] (Montréal: Bellarmin, 1972), 112.

³³ Pouliot 112.

³⁴ Pouliot 113.

³⁵ "Les 150 ans du Diocèse de Montréal Marie-Reine-du-Monde, un rêve réalisé," *La Presse*, 10 May 1986: 1-3.

Bourget hired Victor Bourgeau (1809-1888) to build the church.³⁶ Bourgeau was the leading Quebec architect of the nineteenth century and the official architectural consultant on Diocesan matters.³⁷ When first approached with the plan to build a replica of Saint Peter's Basilica Bourgeau refused. He cited that no building of that stature could be properly scaled down and that the materials would never withstand the harsh winter elements.³⁸ Upon Bourgeau's refusal, Bourget sent Father Paul Michaud to Rome to take measurements of Saint Peter's Basilica. When Father Michaud returned to Montreal with a scaled down version of Saint Peter's, Bourgeau acquiesced to oversee the construction of the church. He chose to do so due to Michaud's lack of architectural expertise. He worked in consultation with Father Michaud to build the new Cathedral.

Church construction began in 1870 and was completed in 1894. The new site upon which the Cathedral was to be erected was in central Montreal on the current Boulevard Rene-Levesque. Bourget was aware of the political implications underlying this new church location.³⁹ To situate Saint-Jacques Cathedral at the centre of the Anglophone and Protestant community, on the grounds of an abandoned Catholic cemetery, had significant political ramifications.⁴⁰

The use of classicism is a statement of the Cathedral's historical rights to the land. The church is classified as Neo-Baroque.⁴¹ It borrows elements from the Baroque style, which is

³⁶ Pouliot 112-17.

³⁷ Epstein 275.

³⁸ Marsan 210.

³⁹ Pouliot 115-17.

⁴⁰ The abandoned Catholic cemetery is the old Saint Antoine cemetery. This cemetery was used for burial of victims of the cholera epidemic. It was in operation from 1799-1855. The city of Montreal is in the process of undertaking a large redevelopment project to run from 2009-2011 at the cost of 9.6 million dollars. For more information and model plans visit the Dorchester Square website.

⁴¹ Marsan 205.

distinctive in its use of lighting effects and curves, as opposed to straight lines or complex forms, and oval forms.⁴² All of these elements may be observed on the exterior of Saint James Cathedral. The façade is divided into three planes. The central plane protrudes the furthest and echoes Carlo Maderno's façade at Saint Peter's Basilica, while its design enhances the effect of light and shadow (Fig. 6).⁴³ Although it is difficult to see in the photograph (Fig. 7), it is also significant that the oval incorporated into the entrance of the church is the same type utilized by Bernini in Saint Peter's Piazza (Fig. 8).

The Baroque style became incorporated into Romanesque architecture in the 1620s.⁴⁴ Many design elements used during this period originated from the classical period, including the use of giant orders and columns that extended through two or more stories.⁴⁵

A giant order of Corinthian columns is present on the façade of Saint James Cathedral. Another similarity between Saint James Cathedral and Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome is the inclusion of thirteen statues on the balustrade of the façade.⁴⁶ The statues at Saint James are similar to those at Saint Peter's, although they differ in meaning. The statues on Saint Peter's Basilica represent Saint John the Baptist, eleven apostles, Saint Mathias, and Christ the Redeemer.⁴⁷ The thirteen statues of Saint James are the work of Joseph-Olindo Gratton

⁴² Anthony Blunt, *Baroque & Rococo: Architecture & Decoration* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978) 11.

⁴³ Maurice and Eloise Howard discuss the façade in "Façade of Saint Peter's," *Saint Peter's Basilica*. n.d. n. pag. Web.

⁴⁴ Blunt 19.

⁴⁵ Blunt 14.

⁴⁶ Howard n. pag. The term "Balustrade" was taken from the Saint Peter's Basilica website. The website contains a virtual floor plan with many in-depth explanations and illustrations concerning its architecture. The illustration and explanation of "Balustrade" are available under the "Façade" heading.

⁴⁷ Howard n. pag.

(1855-1941), a native sculptor of Saint-Therese, Quebec.⁴⁸ They were sculpted from 1892-1898 and represent each of the patron Saints of the parishes that donated the statues to the church.⁴⁹

The statues on the Cathedral may be viewed as a reminder that although Saint James Cathedral is modelled after an iconic church in Rome, it still remains a distinctively French-Canadian religious building. The architectural style of the exterior of Saint James visually portrays a sense of antiquity and historical grandeur. I believe this type of effect alludes to a sense of timelessness and was utilized as a means to secure the church's historical authority.

Another significant architectural aspect is the Cathedral floor plan. The church's layout is in the shape of a Latin cross. This type of floor plan was incorporated into church planning in Rome between 1570 and the early 1600s.⁵⁰ The layout was preferable to the traditional Greek cross layout, as it emphasized the sacredness of the priesthood by clearly defining the choir space as separate.⁵¹ The Latin cross format also allowed for a longer nave, which proved more suitable for processions and the construction of chapels dedicated to individual Saints.⁵² These chapels allowed for the worship of individual Saints by church attendants and pilgrims. A pilgrimage can be defined as a journey to view shrines that contain relics or bodies and they are common practice in many religions.⁵³

⁴⁸ Marie-José Laurin, "Oubli," *La Presse*, 15 April 1994.

⁴⁹ Cardinal Jean-Claude Turcotte, *Cathedral-Basilica Mary Queen of the World and St. James the Greater* (Montreal: Saint James Cathedral, 2006) 6.

⁵⁰ Blunt 19.

⁵¹ Blunt 19.

⁵² Blunt 19.

⁵³ Roger A. Stalley, *Early Medieval Architecture* (New York: Oxford UP, 1999) 147.

Pilgrimages influenced church architecture. Roger Stalley notes in his book, *Early Medieval Architecture* that “Pilgrimage in its turn encouraged the spread of architectural knowledge as information about church design was disseminated along the pilgrimage routes.”⁵⁴ Aisles were incorporated into church planning around the twelfth century in order to accommodate the growing numbers of pilgrims.⁵⁵ This new floor plan allowed pilgrims to travel throughout the church without disturbing mass.⁵⁶ During these visits pilgrims often travelled through the aisles of the church, pausing to pray and contemplate the sufferings of Jesus Christ and his death.⁵⁷

Although the Stations of the Cross were traditionally a central focus of pilgrimages, they are overshadowed at Saint James Cathedral by the disproportionate size of the historical paintings in comparison to the viewer (Fig. 9). The interior of Baroque churches were meant to evoke strong feelings of awe and astonishment in citizens as well as pilgrims.⁵⁸ The sizes of the historical paintings featured in the aisles of Saint James are astonishing due to specific juxtapositions between the viewer and other works in the aisles (Fig. 10). The large size of the historical paintings may suggest the importance of the church in relaying its history and religious contributions to its potential visitors.

⁵⁴ Stalley 147.

⁵⁵ Stalley 153.

⁵⁶ Stalley 153.

⁵⁷ There are fourteen scenes in total that depict the passion and crucifixion of Christ and they are referred to as the Stations of the Cross. The Stations rule of representation is chronological, charting the beginning to the end of Christ's life. For more information on the Stations of the Cross please refer to John F. Sullivan, *The Externals of the Catholic Church* (New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1867) 172.

⁵⁸ Blunt 10.

The narrative portrayed in these paintings may in fact be viewed as an “exposition.” Mieke Bal defines an exposition as a public event in which a subject’s deepest-held beliefs and views are brought to the public eye.⁵⁹ In doing so, the subject or person bringing forth these views exposes him or herself as well as the object which he/she is attempting to expose. Thus “the exposition is also exposing the exposee” and puts forth a broader knowledge of personal or group beliefs.⁶⁰ This exposure becomes a type of performance. The narrative presented within the art works in the Saint James Cathedral may be seen as a kind of performance; however, it can alternatively be read to reveal more about the recent history of the Cathedral. This projected Saint James history contradicts the style of architecture that the Cathedral relies upon to portray its authoritative position on the land it occupies.

The Saint James Cathedral stands as a product of colonialism in a postcolonial era; however, this colonial impact is not apparent upon first glance of the exterior architecture. Bal suggests that examining different ways of seeing may be useful in discovering “ideological, epistemological and representational implications of dominating modes of vision.”⁶¹ Museums may be viewed as housing art that displays human achievement. Operating on the model of the Cathedral as museum, there are various examples within Saint James Cathedral that exemplify Bal’s statement. It appears as though these paintings were intended to showcase the martyrs and heroes of the Catholic parish during colonial settlement of Montreal.

While these works were meant to stand as visual representations of history, they may also be understood in a different manner; they can be seen as evidence of the fact that the Indigenous

⁵⁹ Mieke Bal, *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) 2.

⁶⁰ Bal 2.

⁶¹ Bal 9.

population living upon the land was assimilated and nearly decimated as a result of the Colonial mission of the Catholic Church. This essay will now present this alternative postcolonial reading of the Cathedral by guiding the reader through a walking tour of the Cathedral interior in which key works of art will be discussed in conjunction with Bal's concepts.

In chapter three of her book Bal discusses the "talking museum."⁶² She infers that images and text work together within the museum to provide a "speech act."⁶³ These speech acts work together to build a narrative discourse.⁶⁴ For instance, speech acts may be created by what the author calls "collocation."⁶⁵ Collocation happens when two works of art are placed on the same wall.⁶⁶ The placement in turn negates the autonomy of each work because it clarifies their connection to the viewer.⁶⁷ The viewer does not remain static in the presence of these works but moves from one to another allowing for the works to touch upon one another throughout the walking tour.⁶⁸ For Bal the walking tour must be taken seriously as a "meaning-making" event.⁶⁹

The manner in which particular works are placed within the Saint James Cathedral provides an example of narrative discourse through particular speech acts. It is for this reason that Bal's theories are relevant in the exploration and understanding of the interior space. There

⁶² Bal 87-134.

⁶³ Bal 88.

⁶⁴ Bal 88.

⁶⁵ Bal 95.

⁶⁶ Bal 95.

⁶⁷ Bal 95.

⁶⁸ Bal 95.

⁶⁹ Bal 96.

are many architectural and sculptural details present in Saint James Cathedral and the works presented in the walking tour are all located along the aisles of the church.

Upon first entering the church and travelling along the aisle to the left of the nave the visitor is met with a large painting from 1885 titled *Colonel Athanase de Charette* (1885) by Lionel Royer (Fig. 11). In this painting the Colonel is depicted in the heat of battle. He points off into the distance, leading a charge. Colonel Athanase was the commander of the papal Zouaves, a regiment of the papal army with over five hundred Canadian Zouaves, which was sent to Italy in 1868 to defend the head of the church against Italian patriot Giuseppe Garibaldi.⁷⁰ On either side of the painting, and on the wall directly across from the painting, the five hundred and seven names of Zouaves are engraved in gold lettering on marble slabs (Fig. 12A-B).⁷¹ These works may be viewed as separate, each carrying their own meanings. However, the painting of Colonial Athanase hangs between two of the marble slabs. This positioning is an example of a collocation, bringing forth a new reading of a work of art. In the image showing the slab and the painting in context side by side, it appears as if the Colonel is no longer pointing into the distance but is pointing out the names of his fellow Zouaves (Fig. 13). This type of 'look over here' gesture draws attention to names that the Cathedral meant to be recognized on the marble slabs.

Further along the walking tour, in the left (South) transept, a grouping of visual elements creates a particularly interesting speech act. These elements are the 1908-1909 oil painting by Montreal artist Georges Delfosse, *The martyrdom of Fathers Jean de Breboeuf & Gabriel Lalement* (Fig. 14) and the 1889 oil painting by Ernest Laurent, *The First Mass in Montreal May 18, 1642* (Fig. 15). The first painting, by Delfosse, depicts a scene in which Huron are burning

⁷⁰ Turcotte 1.

⁷¹ Turcotte 1.

two Jesuit missionaries tied to a stake. According to the Church website and printed literature for visitors, this work is meant to stand as a historical painting representing an event in French Canadian Catholic history in which two figures of the Catholic Church were martyred.⁷²

This work is problematic on several accounts. The Indigenous figures are depicted as sinister with reddish skin and their faces are illuminated by the fire; the priests are presented in extreme suffering as the Huron mock their pain. Although this work is intended to illustrate the sacrifice of the two missionaries to the Catholic Church and honour their place in history, this painting may also be read through a postcolonial lens. It may be seen as presenting and contributing to stereotypes of Indigenous figures. The most apparent stereotype presented in this painting is the “Indian as savage.”

On the opposite wall is a painting of equal size. This work, also a historical painting, depicts Father Barthelemy Vimont giving the first mass in Montreal in 1642. In attendance are Paul de Chomedey and Jeanne Mance, prominent figures in Montreal history.⁷³ On opposing walls, the placement of these two paintings creates a speech act by placing the visitor as a witness to a conversation between the two works. In the Delfosse work, the scene takes place outdoors, in a densely wooded area, with little or no lighting provided. The scene is one of chaos, with smoke, fire, movement and laughter. Laurent's painting almost mirrors the figures of Delfosse's scene. However Laurent presents his scene as one of serenity and uniformity. The sky is blue and the sun is shining. All of the figures are kneeling or standing in a uniform order. The figure of Father Vimont is facing the direction of a large ship, his hands raised in an upward

⁷² Turcotte 3.

⁷³ Turcotte 3.

gesture. This gesture may be read as Vimont praising the Lord or, perhaps, as praising the ship, a signifier of the New World.

When factoring in the position of the confessional booth, the conversation embodied in the narrative offers yet another reading; it can be viewed as the path between chaos and unity (Fig. 16). The conversation alludes to the success of the Colonial mission where sacrifices made by the martyrs and heroes were not in vain. The narrative traces a path from the trials faced in the assimilation process, to the gradual assimilation, to the final visual depiction of mass held in Montreal. It also indicates that the land that the Catholic mission laid claim to was previously occupied. This reading creates a paradox between the intended image of the Cathedral, as the rightful owner of the land, and what is illustrated within the paintings of Indigenous people displayed within the Cathedral interior.

Bal states that the act of showing can be considered as a rhetoric of persuasion and that it is an extremely powerful tool in influencing the viewer.⁷⁴ This may be observed in the placement of an untitled statue (Fig. 17) in close proximity with the 1908-1909 Georges Delfosse painting, *The Martyrdom of Father Nicolas Veil and his disciple Ahuntsic in 1625* (Fig. 18). When viewed independently both of these works may be interpreted in their own ways. However, when placed in close proximity the spatial relations provoke another interpretation, one that can be read as an example of vice and virtue. The sculpture provides no indication of who is being portrayed but physically resembles the figure of the martyr in the painting. This association of works, in effect, alludes to vice and virtue. It associates virtue with the priest and the vice with the Indigenous figures.

⁷⁴ Bal 96.

The final work on the walking tour, and the second to last along the right aisle of the Cathedral, is the final Delfosse painting, *Jeanne Mance and the Hospitalieres de Saint-Joseph, 1659* (1908-9) (Fig. 19). This painting depicts Jeanne Mance, one of the founding figures of Montreal and the founder of the first hospital of Montreal.⁷⁵ Jeanne Mance is located in the background of the painting tending to an Indigenous child. In the foreground a nun is speaking with a solitary Indigenous man. Unlike the previous Delfosse paintings, only two Indigenous figures are represented here. The man lies on a stretcher; his demeanour appears to be one of resignation. The shrubbery in front of the man's feet and arms appear to be restraints rather than part of the landscape.

The last work on the aisle, *Jesus depose au tombeau* (artist and date unknown), is located on the same wall as the Delfosse painting (Fig. 20). The work is the fourteenth scene in the Stations of the Cross and is rendered in high relief. It depicts the body of Jesus being laid in the tomb. The head of Jesus is downward and his body curved in at the chest. This posture echoes the posture of the Indigenous man in the Delfosse painting.

The painting of Jeanne Mance is intended to pay homage to a founding figure in the history of Montreal and also to serves as a visual reminder of the Catholic mission's service to society during time of medical need. However, in the same manner that the previously mentioned art works offer alternative readings, so does this final juxtaposition in the Cathedral aisle. Presented in association with on another, the painting by Delfosse and the relief *Jesus depose au tombeau* may be read as a metaphor for the decimation of Indigenous people and their culture by the colonial mission. The Indigenous figure in the painting is solitary and the nun at his side

⁷⁵ Turcotte 4.

points upwards as if signalling to the Holy Father. His body appears heavy, almost lifeless, like the body of Jesus in the high relief beside it. The small child in the background is reaching out for Jeanne Mance rather than the wounded figure of the Indigenous man. The Indigenous child may be seen as representing a newly assimilated generation. The death of Jesus in the relief may be viewed as an echo of the death of Indigenous people and their cultural traditions in exchange for the Catholic religion. This reading becomes more obvious when taking into account the fact that this painting is placed in juxtaposition with the final scene in the Stations of the Cross, a narrative meant to be depicted from beginning to end.⁷⁶

As has been illustrated through these images, the artworks along the aisle and the transept of the Cathedral, which depict historical scenes from the settling of Montreal, are undoubtedly meant to illustrate for visitors and tourists the great sacrifices of prominent figures in the Catholic mission but they can also be seen through the postcolonial lens. Utilizing Mieke Bal's approach of a walking tour, this essay was able to devise a postcolonial reading of the Cathedral's interior space. The works of art displayed within the Cathedral become problematic when juxtaposed with the classical exterior architecture and the site becomes a palimpsest of politically charged layers. These layers include the land on which the church stands, the Catholic role in the colonial mission, the struggle for control of French Canadian Catholicism, and the assertion of French Canadian presence and culture in a once British Colony. The images of the interior and exterior of Saint James Cathedral provide an alternate reading that challenges the

⁷⁶ It might be worth noting here that this comparison could also be viewed as the Native figure being martyred. This perhaps points to how a postcolonial reading of these paintings may still be perceived by some as being deeply informed by Christian conventions. Though I am aware that this could be seen by some as a contradiction, my intention is not to fall into Christian conventions but rather to utilize this dominant convention as a point of entry in order to provide a different perspective on the space.

historical presence of the Cathedral as the rightful owners of the land it occupies by highlighting the paradox between its art and its architecture.

Figures



Fig. 1 William Fowle, *Saint James Cathedral, Dorchester Street, Montreal, QC*, c. 1930.
Photograph, silver salts on glass, gelatin dry plate process,
12 x 17 cm. Gift of Mr. Phil Fowle. Source: McCord Museum website.



Fig. 2 Saint James Cathedral, Montreal. Photograph: Sarah Wilkinson, 2009.



Fig. 3 Unknown photographer. Saint-Jacques Cathedral, n.d. Black and white photograph.
Source: Cathédrale Catholique Marie-Reine-Du-Monde website.



Fig. 4 Alexander Henderson, *Notre Dame Basilica and Place d'Armes Square, Montreal, QC*, c. 1870. Photograph, silver salts on paper mounted on card, albumen process, 26.1 x 31.5 cm. Gift of Miss E. Dorothy Benson. Source: McCord Museum website.



Fig. 5 Unknown photographer, Saint Peter's Basilica. Source: <http://www.biblestudy.org/basicart/origin-of-the-title-of-pope-as-head-of-catholic-church.html>



Fig. 6 Saint James Cathedral, Montreal. Photograph: Sarah Wilkinson, 2009. The right side of the photograph depicts a partial view of the oval. The same oval was utilized by Bernini in Saint Peter's Piazza, as observed in the following image.

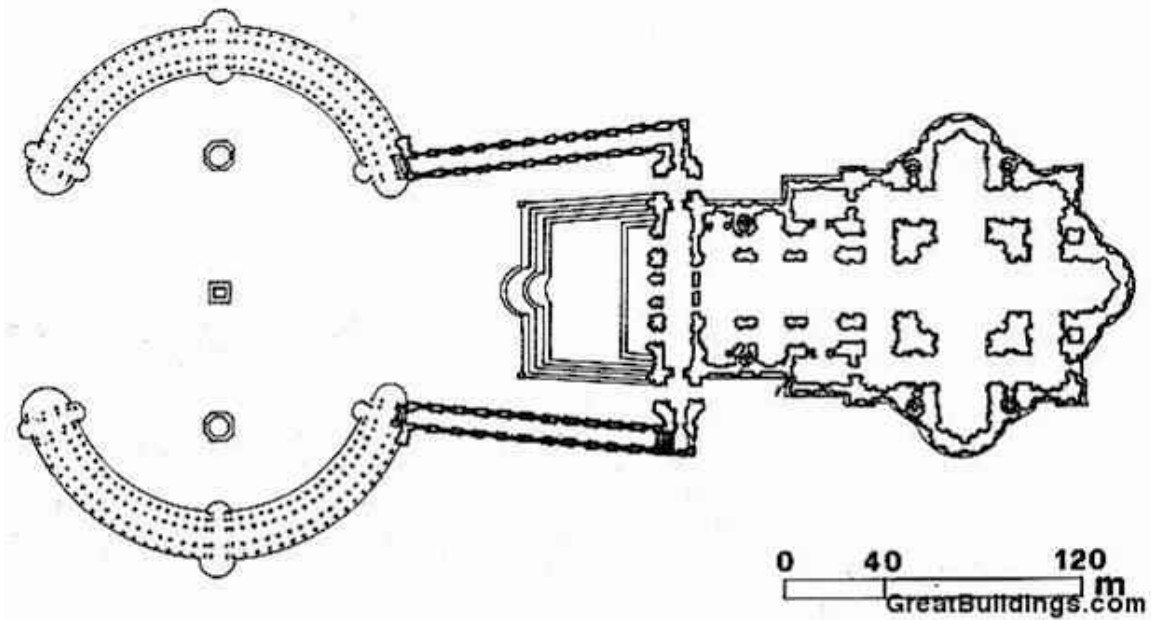


Fig. 7 Bernini, *Plan drawing of Piazza of St. Peter's at Vatican City, surrounded by Rome, Italy, 1656 to 1667.* Source: Great Buildings website.



Fig. 8 Unknown Artist, *Jesus depouille de ses vêtements* [Tenth Station of the Cross], n.d. Saint James Cathedral. Photograph: Sarah Wilkinson, 2009.

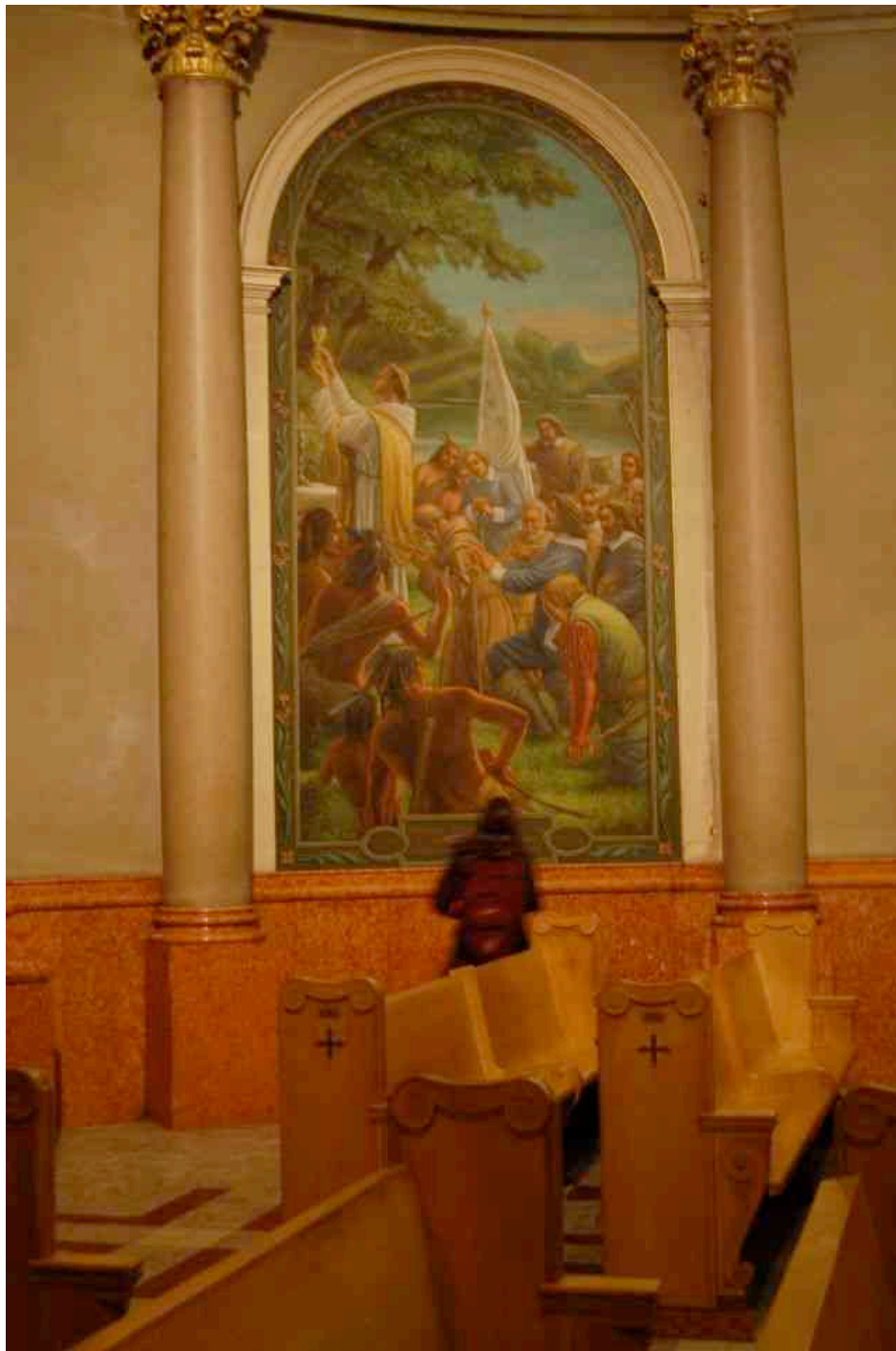


Fig. 9 A Size Comparison: The visitor vs. Georges Delfosse's *The First Mass Celebrated at Riviere-des-Prairies*, 1908-9, Saint James Cathedral. Photograph: Jessa Alston-O'Conner, 2009.



Fig. 10 Size comparison, First Station of the Cross, Saint James Cathedral.
Photograph: Sarah Wilkinson, 2009.



Fig. 11 Lionel Royer, *Colonel Athanase de Charette*, 1885. Oil on canvas. Saint-James Cathedral, 2009. Photograph: Sarah Wilkinson.



Fig. 12A Detail of the marble slab depicting the names of the Papal Zouaves. Saint James Cathedral. Photograph: Sarah Wilkinson, 2009.



Fig. 12B Detail of the marble slab depicting the names of the Papal Zouaves. Saint James Cathedral. Photograph: Sarah Wilkinson, 2009.



Fig. 13 Look over here? Interior, Saint James Cathedral.
Photograph: Jessa Alston O'Conner, 2009.



Fig. 14 Georges Delfosse, *The Martyrdom of Fathers Jean de Breboeuf & Gabriel Lalement*, 1908-1909. Oil on Canvas. Saint-James Cathedral, 2009. Photograph: Sarah Wilkinson.



Fig. 15 Ernest Laurent, *The First Mass in Montreal May 18, 1642*, 1889. Oil on Canvas. Saint James Cathedral, 2009. Photograph: Sarah Wilkinson.



Fig. 16 Interior, Saint James Cathedral.
Photograph: Sarah Wilkinson, 2009.



Fig. 17 Unknown artist, Untitled sculpture, n.d. Saint James Cathedral.
Photograph: Sarah Wilkinson, 2009.



Fig. 18 Georges Delfosse, *The Martyrdom of Father Nicolas Viel and his Disciple Ahuntsic in 1625*, 1908-1909. Oil on canvas. Saint-James Cathedral, 2009. Photograph: Sarah Wilkinson.



Fig. 19 Georges Delfosse, *Jeanne Mance and the Hospitalieres de Saint-Joseph*, 1659, 1908-9, Oil on canvas. Saint James Cathedral, 2009. Photograph: Sarah Wilkinson.



Fig. 20 Unknown artist, *Jésus déposé au tombeau*, n.d. Saint James Cathedral, 2009.
Photograph: Sarah Wilkinson.

Works cited

- Bal, Mieke. *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill & Wang, 1981.
- Blunt, Anthony. *Baroque & Rococo: Architecture & Decoration*. New York: Harper & Row, 1978.
- Collard, Andrew Edgar. "The Other Side of Bishop Bourget." *The Montreal Gazette* 8 June 1992.
- Epstein, Clarence. *Church Architecture in Montreal During the British-Colonial Period, 1760-1860*. Ph D dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1999.
- Howard, Maurice and Eloise. "Façade of Saint Peter's." *Saint Peter's Basilica*. n.d. Web.
- Laurin, Marie-José. "Obli." *La Presse* 15 April 1994: B2.
- "Les 150 ans du Diocèse de Montréal Marie-Reine-du-Monde: un rêve réalisé." *La Presse* 10 May 1986.
- Marsan, Jean-Claude. *Montreal in Evolution: Historical Analysis of the Development of Montreal's Architecture and Urban Environment*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1981.
- Pouliot, Léon. *L'Évêque de Montréal, Deuxième Partie: La Marche en Avant du Diocèse [Monseigneur Bourget et Son Temps, Vol. 3]*. Montréal: Bellarmin, 1972.
- Stalley, Roger A. *Early Medieval Architecture*. New York: Oxford UP, 1999.
- Sullivan, John F. *The Externals of the Catholic Church*. New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1867.
- Turcotte, Jean-Claude. *Cathedral-Basilica Mary Queen of the World and St. James the Greater*. Montreal: Saint James Cathedral, 2006.