

# Visual Currencies

## REFLECTIONS ON NATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY

Edited by Henrietta Lidchi and Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie



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# 'A Many-Splendoured Thing'

## Liminality as Empowering Discursive Space in Rosalie Favell's Digital Art

Amalia Pistilli Conrad

My quest to find my place in the world has taken me many places physically, intellectually and spiritually. My work comes from a culmination of searching for a way to comment on the worlds that I live in, investigating issues of personal and cultural identities. ...

Although it is not an exhaustive search of the universe it is a culmination of many years and many more queries into what is now painfully apparent to me to be a never-ending search for self.

(Rosalie Favell 2006)

**R**OSALIE Favell was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba in 1958, the daughter of a Métis father, Gerald, and a mother of Scottish/English ancestry, Florence McFadyen. She grew up, in her own words, 'invisibly in a mixed-blood urban family in the middle of North America'.<sup>1</sup> The question of invisibility is a very poignant one, generally linked to the condition of Native peoples in North America, and, arguably, in a special way to the Métis: if Native Americans and Canadian First Nations are mostly absent from the national discourses, the Métis in Canada have been rendered invisible by the lack of full recognition for their status: despite a belated acknowledgement of their distinctiveness as an Aboriginal group, their legal status *vis-à-vis* the federal government remains a grey area.<sup>2</sup>

From being a mixed-blood group composed of those born of the union between Native (mostly Cree and Ojibwe) women, and European men involved in the fur trade, the Métis soon developed a distinct cultural identity of their own with a language (Michif, a blend of Cree and French), songs, dances and artwork. If the condition of all Native people in North America (as citizens whose lives are still regulated by special laws in a way not required of any other ethnic group *vis-à-vis* the dominant social order) could be seen as existing in a sort of liminal space, then the positionality – historically and currently – of the Métis might represent a liminality within this liminality.

[opposite page]

Figure 1

**LONGING AND NOT BELONGING #4 (1999)**

Tryplich, digital inkjet print on watercolour paper.

From 'Longing and Not Belonging' series.

Rosalie Favell (Métis)

In the anthropological literature, the liminal stage was characterized by Arnold Van Gennep (1960) in the early 1900s as the space between the beginning and the end of a rite of passage, when someone is initiated into a different role in their society. Victor Turner returned to this formulation and applied it to a variety of rituals understood essentially as performance (1979).

Whilst well aware here of the danger of imposing yet another anthropological taxonomy upon Native lives, I believe that the concept of liminality can be rescued from this straightjacket and employed to signify an empowering, fluid, space where identities and cultural productions mingle to create different permutations.

This liminal space could also be equated with the place of Native art itself within the dominant Western canon, as constantly shifting between the contrasting statuses of art and artefact, between the space of the ethnographic museum and that of the art gallery. Furthermore, while rejecting fixed notions of cultural identity, some Native artists have also affirmed their being gay or lesbian. This means something beyond mere sexual orientation and is related to the two-spirit people who existed in many Native societies and have been narrowly termed as transsexuals or homosexuals by anthropologists, while their status would more profitably be seen as a kind of gender shape-shifting. The Navajo term for this, *nádleehé*, literally translates as 'one who changes continuously'. If, therefore, we use the word 'process' *in lieu* of category, even sex could be viewed as being of an essentially performative nature, and its roots to be found in culture and not in nature (biology or physiology).<sup>3</sup>

Many Native artists today have also staked a claim over the territory of digital arts and the Internet which could be seen as liminal spaces *par excellence*. The advent of digital photography exploded, once and for all, any lingering notions about the 'truthfulness' of the photographic medium. Images appropriated from virtual space or from the artificial source of the image bank or the photo archive, although bearing no evident physical trace of the artist's engagement with the photographic medium, are (re)created as visual statements of a profoundly personal nature.

All of these elements are found in the work of Rosalie Favell. The artist tells a deceptively simple story about her beginnings, recounting that an innate urge to express herself creatively found a locus almost by chance when she took a night course in photography, and then remained faithful to the medium throughout her studies.<sup>4</sup> Yet the corpus of her work has a much more complex story to tell. Ever since its first formulations as an organic body of work, Favell's photographic art has been about the search for identity as variously located in family ties, in lesbian love, in icons from popular culture, and in Native cultural heritage.





Figure 2

KATHY MALLET AND DAUGHTER  
SKYE, PRINCE ALBERT, 7 SEPTEMBER  
1992 (1993)

Silver gelatin print.

From 'Portraits in Blood' series.

Rosalie Favell (Métis)

An early series, 'Portraits in Blood' (1993) [Fig. 2, previous page], presented rather conventional, although beautifully framed and carefully exposed, black and white portraits of Native women depicted in their professional or intimate lives. They were doctors, grandmothers, community leaders, daughters, writers, married and single women. These apparently simple portraits, however, represented an affirmation of Native women as simultaneously full participants in Canadian society and proud members of their nations; thus exploding the myth of Indian invisibility, or of a Native existence only possible within the confines of reservation/reserve life. The extreme visibility of these women, with their smiling or intent faces staring unflinchingly at the camera and their self-assured stances, became the affirmation not only of sheer presence but of a specific identity. These women also participated in the first movement in the ongoing process of self-portraiture set in motion by Favell, who says about this early series that she was 'trying to work out if I could be a Native woman, because I didn't grow up with that vocabulary'.<sup>5</sup> Looking at these portraits, one is reminded of the importance of agency in the roles of sitter and photographer. It is important that the pictures are taken by another Native woman, as it elicits complicity and an affective response in both subject and viewer which is very different than that emanating from the conventional portraits of Native peoples one is used to seeing.

A year after 'Portraits in Blood' – as if she had needed to take courage by representing herself indirectly at first through other Native women – Favell made the switch from external to internal biography, and created a painfully confessional series entitled 'Living Evidence' (1994) [Fig. 3] which chronicled her relationship and its end with another Native woman. The images are 30 large prints derived from Polaroid originals, all the more poignant in their snapshot immediacy. Favell shoots both herself and her lover, keeping the camera at arm's length rather than using the more static and conventional method of the self-timer or cable release. This creates an intimacy that puts the audience in the uncomfortable position of voyeurs. As if to remedy, or paradoxically to emphasize this, Favell chooses to cover her lover's eyes with a black strip.

This mark of erasure reminds us of the Derridian crossing-out of a word while leaving it visible: a gesture that seeks to open a gap between disclosure and secrecy, to make both exist in the same space at the same time, to challenge their dichotomic aspect and perhaps, implicitly, that of Western culture at large. This censure mark across Favell's lover's eyes, as a gesture of erasure/not-erasure, represents simultaneously an affirmation and a negation.

Written excerpts from what could be the artist's journal also 'deface' the surface of the images. Phrases such as 'I found me when you left', or

'There are no endings everything is in a circle', in their banality speak to an absolute purity of emotion unfettered by intellectual diatribes about the 'truthfulness' of photography and text. The realities of loss, pain and remembrance have been turned into art by Favell. Should we see this as an exercise in manipulating the fragility of the self by pushing its boundaries, or as a painfully necessary and honest baring of one's most private history?

The question lingers and it cannot be exhaustively answered. Lying between the private and the public there is a liminal space, a temporal disjuncture between the 'before' when the relationship was alive as incarnated by the image, and the 'after' of the end of the affair delineated by the text. In this zone Favell insinuates her resonant 'How could I go on as if it had never happened'.

This emotional urgency strikes at the heart of the photographic question: does photography incarnate necrophilia, with its attempt to reconstitute for our gaze that which is long gone, or is it a form of resurrection with its (apparently) accessible recovery of the past? Barthes (2000) made this the premise of his meditation on photography, whilst Sontag (1984) adopted a stance of contempt for what she saw as the

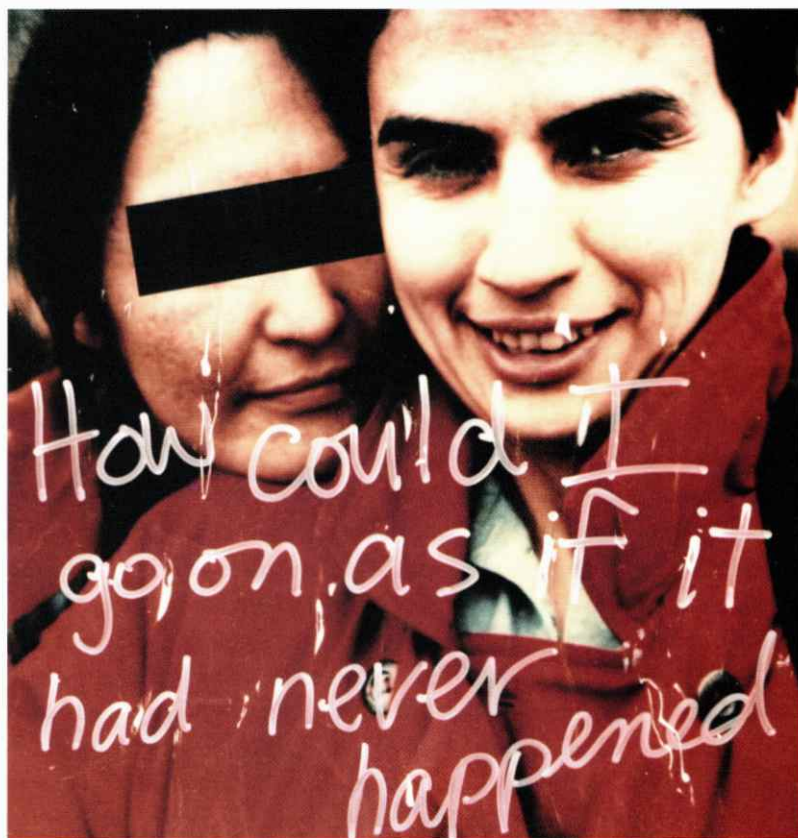


Figure 3  
HOW COULD I GO  
ON AS IF IT HAD  
NEVER HAPPENED  
(1994)

Colour print, tape and  
marker.

From 'Living Evidence'  
series.

Rosalie Favell (Métis)



medium's nostalgic lure.<sup>6</sup> Other theorists (Burgin 1982; Sekula 1986; Tagg 1988) have suggested a more regulatory, if discursive, framework in which photographs achieve a wider social currency where they are inscribed with meaning by the dominant order. I would describe my own position here as being also liminal, believing that photographs can, and do, participate simultaneously in several concomitant discourses; and this is demonstrated in Favell's work.

With 'Living Evidence' (1994), Favell began in earnest her exploration of the theme of identity by using not only the images of family and friends but also, and especially, her own. In recent times significant contemporary artists have operated within the genre possibly best described as extreme autobiography, delving into highly private activities such as sexual and romantic relationships, or physical and mental illness. The British artist Tracy Emin (b.1963), for instance, has been described as the queen of this confessional mode, but also as an opportunist confronting prudish British attitudes which are perversely accompanied by the popular and morbid curiosity for all things private. Perhaps Emin's most famous work remains 'Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963-1995' (1995): a tent embroidered with the names of her lovers, but also people she had simply shared a bed with. Critics such as Cherry have found feminist statements in Emin's work, claiming that she has annoyed her male critics by presenting '... a feminism which has little appeal for a partial masculinity proposing itself as universal' (Cherry 2002: n.p.).

However, if there is anything troubling in Emin's artistic discourse, it is precisely the appeal to a universal self, one that is knowable, unique and most definitely identified with the private, the emotional world of the 'soul' – a term Emin has used often in discussing her work.<sup>7</sup> There is arguably nothing particularly feminist in a discourse poised between the reaffirmation of some essentialist humanism and the reiteration of the feminine as the realm of personal, sexual and physical feelings. It is troubling to see hardly any glimpse of a wider social context in this kind of autobiographical work; rather it seems to be a further reification of the traditional mythology of the artist as owing no allegiance to the social sphere and standing aloof from his/her context.

Better then to locate Favell's work within a larger participatory discourse of visual autobiography which finds its roots in the work of the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo (1907-54). This most iconic of female artists reunited in her work both the political and the personal, although too much has been made by critics of the sensational details of her life at the expense of the rich cultural and political iconography present in her work.

Favell has indeed chosen to simulate Kahlo's well-known 'Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair' (1940), painted a month after Kahlo's divorce from Diego Rivera, in her 'Plain(s) Warrior Artist' series (1999-2006).

Herrera interprets Kahlo's painting as an illustration of her 'violent rejection of femininity, or a desire to excise the part of herself that possesses the capacity to love' (1986: 286). Favell's rewriting of this gesture of excision in 'If only you could love me ...' (in McAlear, *et. al* 2003) [Fig. 4, p. 44] is of a rather different tone: the background and floor colours are very similar to the Kahlo painting, as is the suit she is wearing. But while Kahlo's expression was rather fixed and enigmatic, Favell's stare at the camera is steady, defiant, even angry. The strands of hair do not resemble menacing animals anymore, but are arranged in an ordered pattern around her chair and look obviously fake. A cat stands in the left, a strand of hair in her mouth, as if to give the picture a more jocular tone. The handwritten inscription, 'If only you could love me the way I am', represents a retort to the Spanish popular song whose lines Kahlo had inserted in her painting like a lament: 'Look, if I loved you, it was for your hair, now that you cut it I don't love you anymore.' The score used by Kahlo is replaced by Favell with one she was familiar with as a child, called 'Swans on the Lake' with resonances of swans and ugly ducklings (Ace 2007: 14). This is Favell challenging the viewer to accept her for what she is: woman artist, lesbian, mixed-blood person.

In the series 'Longing and Not Belonging' (1998), Favell had already begun what was to be another of her ongoing artistic preoccupations: a dialogue with, and interrogation of, the icons of popular culture. The Ripley character played by Sigourney Weaver in the 'Alien/s' science-fiction films of the 1980s and 90s, Emma Peel in the 1960s British TV cult show 'The Avengers', and Xena: Warrior Princess from the American hit TV series (1995-2001), are all extracted and set alongside family snapshots and self-portraits in triptychs which Favell (2006) has compared to the ledger art practiced by Plains peoples at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Lesbian artist and critic Bright has commented on how a certain subculture constructed around comic books and fanzines became widespread in lesbian circles in the 1980s:

... a lively grassroots cultural production flourished in the form of videos and zines ... [these] were extremely small-scale and catered to queer subcultures including ethnic and racial groups, aficionados of specialized erotic tastes/techniques, fans of particular cult/camp/icons from popular culture, religious survivors. ... Zines exhibited all the spunk, black humor, and youthful brio of their Dada and surrealist predecessors. (Bright 1998: 8)

It is in this subculture that Rosalie Favell anchors her work, with its



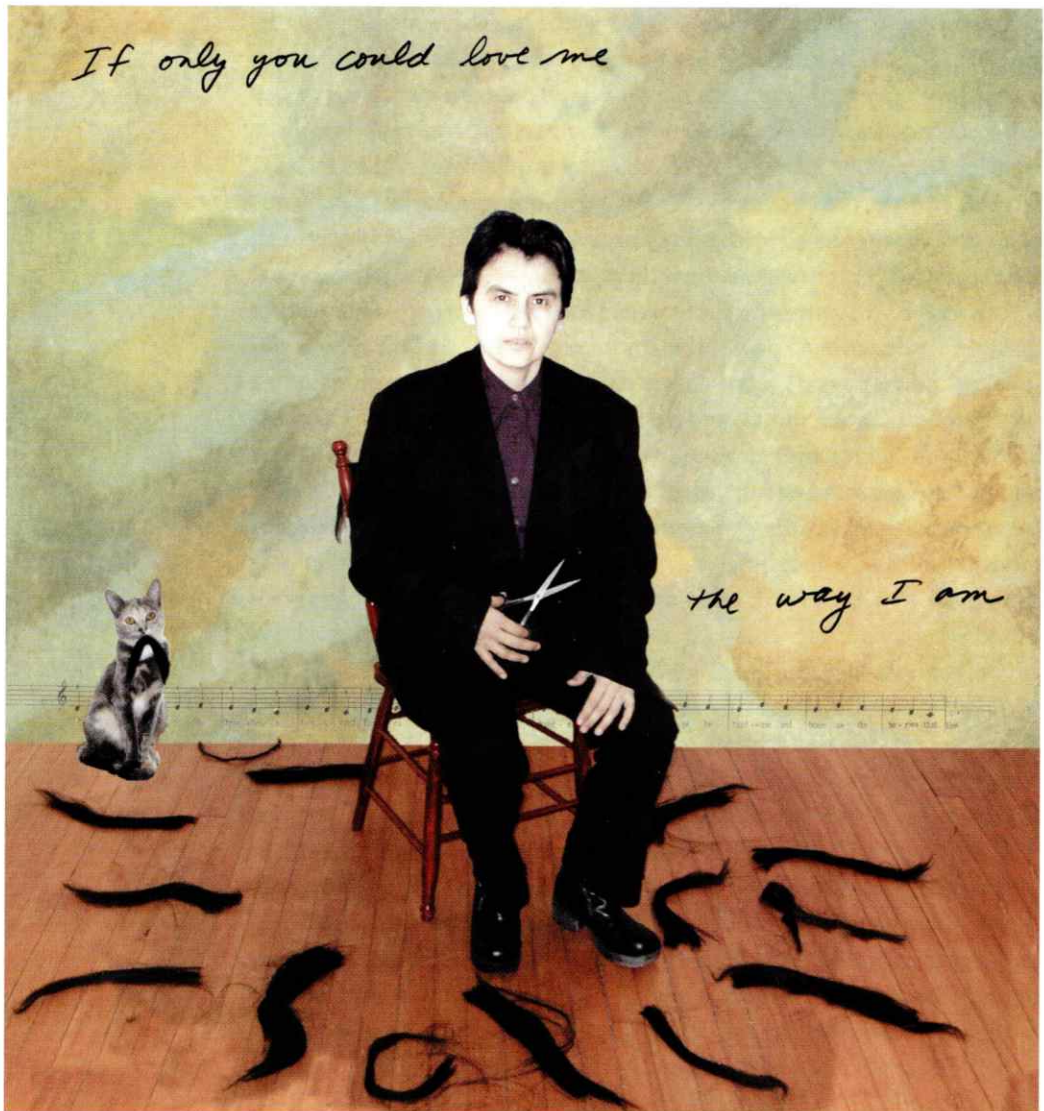


Figure 4

IF ONLY YOU COULD LOVE ME  
THE WAY I AM (2003)

Digital inkjet print on watercolour paper.

From 'Plain(s) Warrior Artist' series.

Rosalie Favell (Métis)

constant references to Xena, a character who, since her first appearance in a TV series, has inspired a loyal lesbian following due to the ambiguity – purposefully left as such by the series' producers – of Xena's relationship to Gabrielle, a beautiful woman who accompanies her in all her adventures.

In one of the triptychs of 'Longing and Not Belonging' (1999) [Fig. 1, p. 36], Favell uses a classic image of Xena brandishing her *chakram* (the legendary quoit-like, razor-sharp Sikh weapon) juxtaposed with a central photo of a young girl in 'nerdy' glasses (an old image of Favell's sister), and a close-up of pink and white peonies in full bloom reminiscent of Georgia O'Keefe's succulent and sensual flowers which have so often been equated, with none-too-subtle allusions, to female genitalia.

In the subsequent series, 'Plain(s) Warrior Artist', begun in 1999, Favell enhances her passion for the motifs of popular culture and her adoption of self-portraiture by fusing both strands in seamless collages produced through Photoshop. In 'I dreamed of being a warrior' (1999) [Fig. 5, p. 46], the opening image to the series, Favell does not just use the icon of Xena to signify an erotic imaginary, as well as the flaunting of female strength: she *is* Xena, mimicking the classic pose, reproduced in countless publicity stills, of her holding the *chakram*. Except that here Rosalie/Xena is brandishing a dream catcher, that most commercialized of Indian objects: originally an Ojibwe artefact, it has become a pan-Indian symbol, replicated today in innumerable Asian sweatshops. The humour and irony are thus multilayered: the reference to the women warriors of traditional Plains culture is conflated with the reference to the TV character of a female warrior from a quasi-Greek past; this hybrid female warrior is in turn furnished with a kitsch object which alludes to the consumption inherent in all cultural icons. And yet, despite its heavily 'New Age' characteristics, the symbolism of the dream catcher nevertheless derives from a traditional Native source.

The Anishinaabe cultural critic and writer Gerald Vizenor coined the term 'postindian simulations' to indicate the hybrid, performative identity that all post-contact Natives have found themselves enmeshed in. The positionality of the 'postindian', in Vizenor's view, is to 'waver over the aesthetic ruins of Indian simulations' (1998: 15) and, presumably, to appropriate those ruins and turn them upside down by exposing their fake nostalgia, the mourning for the 'vanished Indian' that still seems to lie in the background of the discourses about Native cultures and art. That turning upside down or 'turning around' (Durham and Fisher 1986) is also the movement of the trickster, the mythological figure that some critics have seen as exemplifying the role of contemporary Native artists (Durham and Fisher 1986; Lippard 1990; Carl Beam, quoted in Ryan 1999: 3).



Figure 5  
I DREAMED OF BEING  
A WARRIOR (1999)

Digital inkjet print on  
watercolour paper.

From 'Plain(s) Warrior  
Artist' series.

Rosalie Favell (Métis)

In *Mixed Blood Messages*, the late Choctaw-Cherokee-Irish writer Louis Owens observed:

... for Native Americans, the term 'Indian' is a deeply contested space, where authenticity must somehow be forged out of resistance to the 'authentic' representation ... since the simulated Native 'Indian' is a Euroamerican invention. It is the hyperreal simulation that the Native must confront and contest while simultaneously recognizing that only the simulation will be seen by most who look for Indianness. (1998: 13)

Favell is fully in control of this 'hyperreal simulation' in the way she deploys her own image. In her work she is not just playing around with *avatars*, she is posing as one herself. Favell explains, 'Although I looked to Xena as a role model, I stopped looking outside and started to take on the role myself and think that it was time for me to become my own hero' (in Pearlstone and Ryan 2006: plate 40). In both the series 'Plain(s) Warrior Artist' (1999-2006) and in its opening image 'I dreamed of being a warrior' (1999) [Fig. 5], she is alluding to the historical existence of female warriors in traditional Plains cultures. This was extensively



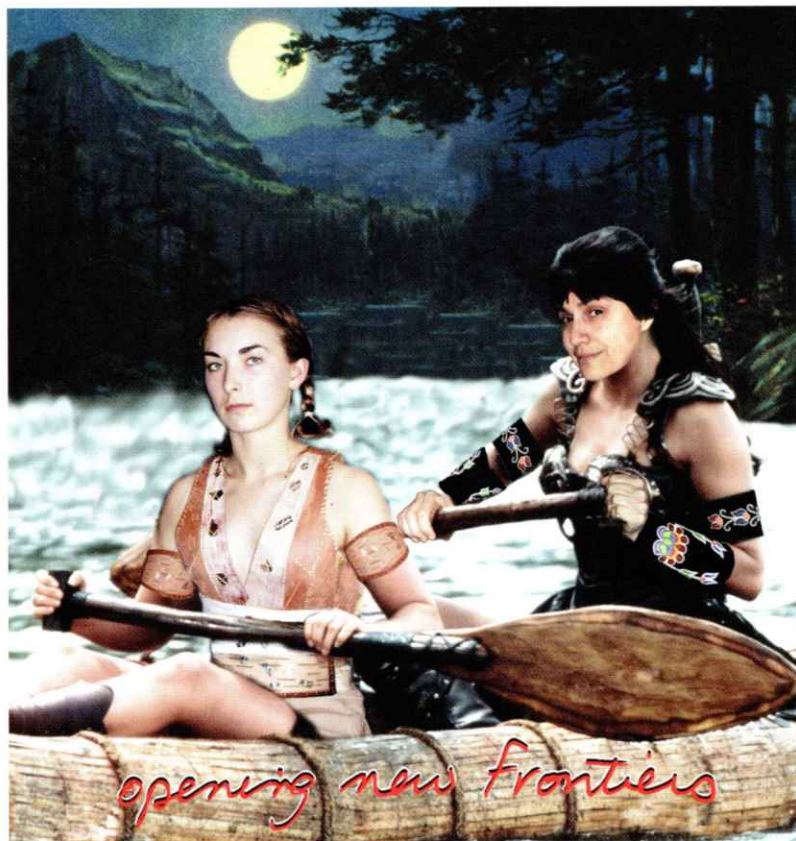


Figure 6  
OPENING NEW  
FRONTIERS (2003)

Digital inkjet print on  
watercolour paper.

From 'Plain(s) Warrior  
Artist' series.

Rosalie Favell (Métis)

studied by the late Lakota anthropologist Beatrice Medicine who writes that, especially among the Peigan of Alberta and Montana, these women assumed privileged roles, obtained favours within the tribe, engaged in warrior pursuits and in unconventional sexual behaviour, such as taking wives (Medicine 1983, 1997). Thus Medicine argues against classic anthropological ideas of the *berdache* as an exclusively male phenomenon and for taking this role out of the discursive space of 'deviant' behaviour. She demonstrates that these two-spirit men and women were respected members of their community where they performed special and specific functions.<sup>8</sup>

Favell's use of text adds another dimension to her already multi-layered work: her verbal puns are not only employed to mirror the visual ones, but rather to create a word-play which widens the gap – the liminal space – in which her digitally-created new realities are born. Her deceptively simple text, when scrutinized closely and positioned within Native, and particularly Métis, history, reveals itself to be a series of allusions to specific contexts and episodes. 'I dreamed of being a warrior' (1999) is not just the expression of some innocent wishful thinking: it points to the shifting of states whereby, according to Medicine, 'among the Lakota, women changed gender identities through

recurrent dreams, while men sanctioned their role reversal through vision quest' (1983: 269).

In another work in the 'Plain(s)' series, 'Opening New Frontiers' (in McAlear, *et. al* 2003) [Fig. 6, p. 47], Favell re-uses a well-known publicity still of Xena and Gabrielle rowing in a canoe. She replaces Xena's face with her own mischievous look, giving herself black embroidered armbands with the floral beadwork still characteristic of many Native traditions, including the Métis.<sup>9</sup> Gabrielle's face becomes that of a blonde friend, or lover, and the background, and title, more explicitly refers to the 'opening' of the Western frontier as the pioneering enterprise mythologized in both American and Canadian history. There is, of course, a pun or *double entendre* in the title, in that Favell surely also refers to the new possibilities engendered by a discourse of Native homosexuality, and by its depiction in the visual arts. Furthermore, her occupation of the pictorial and quite garish 'Western frontier' depicted in the background, complete with mountains, woods, watercourse and a full moon, speaks to the visual re-inscription of a twice-colonized (in law and the arts) landscape. This strategy has also been adopted by other Native artists seeking to reoccupy the land of their ancestors in various symbolic ways in their work.<sup>10</sup>

Several Native artists of Métis and mixed-blood ancestry have also interrogated in their work the difficulty of being 'in-between' the Native and non-Native worlds, never fully accepted or recognized in either. In particular, many have adopted the figure of Louis Riel (1844-85) as a somewhat romantic icon, and Favell commemorates him in two images.

In 'Red River Expedition' (in McAlear, *et. al* 2003) [Fig. 7], the reference to an important site of Métis identity is transformed into the location of a family outing at the fairgrounds. The bitter irony here is that Red River was one of the original settlements where the Métis developed a cultural group identity, only to be encroached upon by successive attempts to take over the land by the European fur traders of the Hudson's Bay Company. They had been allowed into the area by the British colonial government – in opposition to Métis demands for recognition of Manitoba as a Canadian Confederation territory. As a liminal zone, Red River fell prey to contrasting interests: there was no agreement between Europeans and Métis, and no agreement among all Métis as to its destiny. After a series of movements back and forth, an army of over 400 Métis led by Louis Riel took over the settlement, establishing a provisional government which lasted a year, to be eventually ousted by the intervention of the Canadian army (1869-70). Riel was later executed for treason in 1885, after leading the Métis people in another political revolt (Dickason 1992: 262-72).



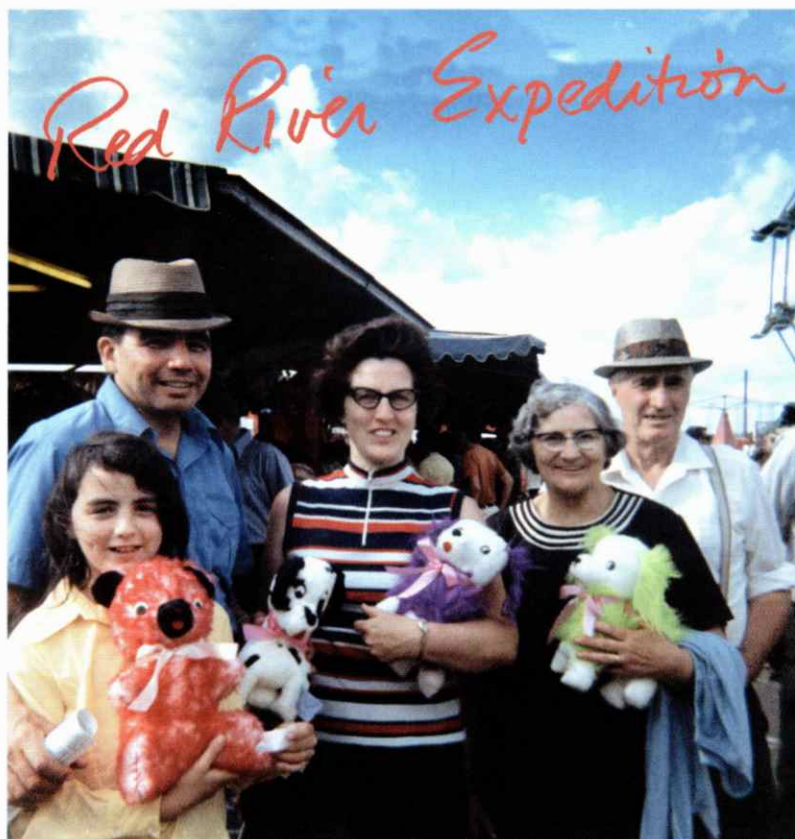


Figure 7  
RED RIVER  
EXPEDITION (2003)

Digital inkjet print on  
watercolour paper.

From 'Plain(s) Warrior  
Artist' series.

Rosalie Favell (Métis)

In Favell's (re)take on this history, her father, mother, grandparents and one of her sisters, all holding stuffed toy animals, smile at the camera. Thus Red River, a liminal geographic space key to the formation of Métis identity, is both commemorated and becomes an ironic metonym for the Favell-McFadyen mixed marriage.

In 'I awoke to find my spirit had returned' (1999) [Fig. 8, p. 50], Favell trades places with Dorothy in the famous still from the 'Wizard of Oz': she has just awoken to find that her journey was all a dream, and the characters of the Witch, the Tin Man and the Lion who had accompanied her are in fact her uncles and auntie, now gathered around her bed. A figure, however, peers through the open window, disturbing this idyllic arrangement: it is Louis Riel himself, and the title of the work is a reference to his famous phrase, 'My people will sleep for 100 years, and when they awake it will be the artists who give them back their spirit'. Favell/Dorothy is covered in the typical striped trade blanket which functions as another mnemonic device, symbolic of a history of economic change but also of a tragic past of smallpox infection and the allegations that these blankets were used by British and American armies intentionally to spread the virus among Native tribes. Favell's own commentary on this image is not bleak, however. She sees 'Riel as prophet



*I awoke to find my spirit had returned*

Figure 8

**I AWOKE TO FIND MY SPIRIT  
HAD RETURNED (1999)**

Digital inkjet print on watercolour paper.

From 'Plain(s) Warrior Artist' series.

Rosalie Favell (Métis)

or Wizard of Oz telling us that everything that we need is right inside of us, that all roads lead to home, that being true to our people is the way to recovering our pride, self respect' (Favell, 2006).

## Conclusions

From its beginnings, photography has been shuttled between the conflicting discourses of realistic representation and artistic expression; the former claiming the 'truth' of the photographic image, the latter advocating free reign to the imagination. This dichotomy continues to characterize it today: from the formalist desire to have the photograph be 'just art' to postmodernist contentions that the photograph can only be one in a system of signs framed by issues of power, the debate is still enacted between those who place their absolute faith in images and those who do not.

Examining such debates chronologically and ideologically, Batchen (1997) argues that these two positions may not be so different but rather represent two sides of the same coin:

Already we begin to see the limitations of these prevailing ways of talking about photography. Despite appearances to the contrary, both share a presumption that ... photography's identity can be determined as a consequence of *either* nature *or* culture. The distinction between these two entities, more particularly the politics of the maintenance of all such distinctions, is left unquestioned.

(Batchen 1997: 21)

Indeed while most of the early photographers sought ways to reproduce nature (and reality) most faithfully, there were already some who exploited the immediacy of the medium to set up completely fictional, symbolic, and surreal images. One such pioneer was the Frenchman Hyppolite Bayard, who staged his own death in three slightly different photographs, all bearing the same title: 'Le Noyé (Self-Portrait as a Drowned Man)' (1840). As a pointed commentary on Bayard's own position within the French artistic establishment (he was denied recognition for his technical discoveries, contemporaneous or even earlier than Daguerre's), and with its references to images of French political 'martyrs' such as Marat, the work possessed a multilayered resonance. By positioning itself in uneasy tension with the present, at the same time alluding to the past and pointing to the future possibilities of the medium, the work represented a discourse on the liminal space that photography could occupy, contrary to its description at the time as just a medium to depict nature.



One century later, these insights pertain equally well to Rosalie Favell's work. Her images seem to respond to the debates on photography by acting simultaneously on two levels: using the photographic image to represent actual reality *and* to create a personal imaginary.

She works in the liminal space between the true and the fictional, between the personal and the social, revealing and obscuring. The images insinuate themselves in those spaces in between, to open them up and forcefully activate the slippage between real and unreal to make it function as a constantly shifting surface – much like shimmering light on water creates endlessly mutable reflections.

## Notes

- 1 This quote was extracted from the Winnipeg Art Gallery website.
- 2 The Métis National Council website [www.metisnation.ca] provides the most useful, constantly updated information on all Métis political issues past and present.
- 3 The literature on the *berdache* (the conventional anthropological term for what Native people prefer to call 'two-spirit') is vast. For an exhaustive survey which takes into account contemporary debates about the paradigm of 'deviance', see Longman 2002. A pioneering take on the cross-cultural examination of 'third sex' phenomena is found in Herdt (1994), which critically revisits the anthropological literature.
- 4 Rosalie Favell, *pers. comm.*, April 2007.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 Cf. Barthes (2000:89): 'To ask whether a photograph is analogical or coded is not a good means of analysis. The important thing is that the photograph possesses an evidential force, and that its testimony bears not on the object but on time. From a phenomenological viewpoint, in the Photograph, the power of authentication exceeds the power of representation', with Sontag (1984: 71): 'As the fascination that photographs exercise is a reminder of death, it is also an invitation to sentimentality. Photographs turn the past into an object of tender regard, scrambling moral distinctions and disarming historical judgments by the generalized pathos of looking at time past.'
- 7 Tracey Emin (2001): 'You forgot to kiss my soul', solo exhibition, White Cube, London; (1996) 'It's not me that's crying, it's my soul', solo exhibition, Galerie Mot & Van den Boogard, Brussels.
- 8 This issue is, however, fraught with complexities and misunderstandings, because it is in the first instance very difficult to determine to what extent two-spirit people were accepted participants in their societies, given that this phenomenon only began to be seriously studied by anthropologists after the influence of white Christian culture had already irrevocably changed certain patterns of Native lives. Furthermore, the absorption of the homophobic message of Christianity by modern Native peoples, coupled to a resurgence of Native political activism in the 1970s, created a situation where homosexual behaviour was negatively perceived (even persecuted) on many reservations (Medicine 1997). This forced many homosexual Natives to relocate to urban centres where they came into contact with the new gay and lesbian movements. It is in this context, therefore, rather than in a historical-traditional one, that the idea and terminology of two-spirit people should be situated. Indeed, this designation was first coined in 1990 at the third Native American/First Nation gay and lesbian conference in Winnipeg (Jacobs, Thomas and Lang 1997: 2). This term served 'as a lingua franca to bridge cultural and linguistic differences' (Jacobs, Thomas and Lang 1997: 3).
- 9 Through contact with Euro-Americans and an increasing demand for such artefacts as souvenirs and collectables, as well as the influence of the residential/boarding schools where nuns instructed young Native girls in this style of embroidery and beadwork, floral designs replaced the more abstract and geometric ones that had been traditional of Cree, Ojibwe, Haudenosaunee, Mi'kmaq, Métis and other Native cultures.

- 10 Rebecca Belmore (Anishinaabe, b.1960), Edgar Hachivi Heap of Birds (Cheyenne/Arapaho, b.1954), Pamela Shields (Blackfoot/Blood Band, b.1956), and Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie (Seminole/Muscogee/Diné, b.1954), are among some of those who have created performances, installations and photomontages that challenge the colonial reinscription of Native land as Euro-American.

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