Picturing Her: Seeing Again and Again

—Loren Lerner

For the past ten years, my research as an art historian has focused on the meanings of Canadian images of children and youth. I have been exploring imagery, the premise being that imagery offers a unique arena of knowledge for developing an understanding of the experiences and expectations of young people. Recognizing the complexities inherent in creating these pictures and the need for an analysis that takes into account the plurality of such images over time and place, my research has drawn together depictions of children in various media as well as child-related works by artists from different eras. When Mavis Reimer invited me to participate in a roundtable discussion at the Association for Research in Cultures of Young People at the University of New Brunswick in spring 2011, she asked me to "outline the primary propositions of a theorist or a group of theorists" whose writings have assisted me in my research "about the lives and representations of children and youth." In responding to this daunting task, I decided to examine some approaches I had in mind when I curated *Picturing Her: Images of Girlhood / Salut les filles! La jeune fille en images*, an exhibition at the McCord Museum of Canadian History in 2005 (see fig. 1).

I begin with an overview of this exhibition. Following that, I introduce some of the critical thinkers I turned to for theoretical frameworks, contexts, and studies. As this paper will make clear, I am committed to a pluralistic approach, with methods that incorporate different epistemologies, traditions, and practices. More specifically, narrative and semiotic analyses, theories of art and cultural history, cognitive and perceptual psychology, and a postcolonial perspective have guided me to define an interpretive paradigm dedicated to discovering the constellation of meanings associated with images of young people.

Picturing Her considered the evolution of visual expressions of Canadian girlhood between the 1860s

Figure 1: *Picturing Her: Images of Girlhood / Salut les Filles! La jeune fille en images*, McCord Museum, November 25, 2005 to March 26, 2006. Installation view.

and the year of the exhibition. Paintings, prints, drawings, and photographs, sourced primarily from the McCord Museum, were selected because they not only reflected various ideas of what girlhood was but participated in creating new visions—some restrictive, others liberating—that illustrated society's continuing interest in investing "her" with beliefs, desires, fantasies, and expectations.

The exhibition was divided into four sections. The first, entitled "Myths and Allegories," used paintings, drawings, political cartoons, and war posters to show the projection of ideologies onto the female body (Lerner, "'Canada'"). When Canada was a young country, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, artists often employed the metaphor of a girl to define the status of the new nation and its relation to Mother England. For example, in the 1886 photoengraving *A Pertinent Question*, Mrs. Britannia accuses her daughter, Miss Canada, of encouraging a union with her American cousin Jonathan. The possible annexation of Canada by the United States was a matter of concern for both Britain and Canada in the 1880s. The cartoon refers to aborted attempts for Canada to renew with the United States the Reciprocity Treaty that had doubled trade between the two countries. *Hail Dominion*, a 1906 oil study by Gustav Hahn, was part of a design for a mural entitled *Canada Receiving the Homage of Her Children* that had been proposed by eight artists for the entrance hall of the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa. In Hahn's painting, "Canada" embraces her young provincial daughters, posed casually around her in a way that suggests a close family. In the Great War poster *Do It Again Daddy Please! Buy Me a Victory Bond* by Joseph Ernest Sampson, a girl begs her father to buy more Victory Bonds in order to raise money for the war effort. She represents civilians affected by the war, urgently in need of protection from the enemy.

From the mid- to late nineteenth century, the house was the space most closely associated with girlhood. Girls were expected to stay at home, where they were taught how to be good wives and mothers. For the bourgeoisie, the feminine ideal required daughters to bring honour to the family by being virtuous and versed in literary and artistic culture. In the "Spaces and Places" section of the exhibit, the cloistered world of middle-class girls was presented through photographs taken from the McCord's Notman Photographic Archives and Canadian paintings (Lerner, "From Victorian"). Girls could be seen at home, in garden settings that served as symbols of purity and virginal love (Lerner, "Innocence"), and in winter scenes that emphasized their Canadian identity.

By the early 1900s, many girls between five and sixteen years of age attended publicly funded schools. In *Quebec's School Law in Operation*, a pen drawing by Henri Julien, a little girl marches stoically up the steps to school. Slow to take effect in Quebec,

compulsory schooling was controversial, especially for girls, who were often needed at home to help with domestic chores. During this period a good many older girls from lower-class rural and immigrant families worked as domestics or were employed in factories and stores. In *Girl Washing Dishes on a Farm, St. Eustache, Quebec*, an oil painting by Regina Seiden Goldberg, the girl performing a monotonous task in front of a window suggests a longing to escape—if only in her imagination. Girls from the age of fifteen began entering the workforce in unprecedented numbers after World War I. An office environment was generally preferred to factory, domestic, or retail employment. In the photograph *H. P. Labelle & Cie. Office Interior, Montreal*, two girls work at side desks, while the men sit in a more spacious area, indicating their higher status.

At different times in Canadian history, girls have expressed themselves through such media as sketchbooks, diaries, and albums. The section of the exhibition entitled "Autobiographical Expressions" showed how these documents give personal voice and imagery to the experience of growing up female and to the challenge of making meaning out of it. They provide direct access to the secret aspects of a girl's social life, her private rituals, opinions, and emotions, and how she deals with the contradictions, conflicts, and consequences of moving from girlhood to the life of an adult. A photographic album compiled by Margery Paterson, a Montreal girl who became ill with tuberculosis soon after she graduated from high school in the 1930s, reveals the memories of girlhood from the viewpoint of a young woman isolated by illness (Langford, "Speaking"). The Anne Savage Collection of Student Works from the 1920s shows the ways that the artist Anne Savage, an early exponent of teaching creative art, encouraged her mainly female students at Baron Byng High School in Montreal to picture aesthetic connections between themselves and Canadian art of that era (Lemerise and Sherman). Burnings, Straight from Hell or the Art of Survival by Katja MacLeod Kessin is a series of images on small, book-size pieces of wood with titles like *Scared Rabbit*, *Becoming Transparent*, *Safe Place (Little Portable Doll)*, and *Monkeys on My Back*. Taking the form of a visual diary, Kessin's wood burnings are projections of visual memories that surface day by day. They represent the artist's attempt to use her art practice to gain glimpses of forgotten memories and might be said to employ a basic Freudian approach to the self as a reservoir of images from the experiences of early childhood.

"Minds and Bodies," the last section of the exhibition, began with the sentimental, soulful portraits of girls painted in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In William Brymner's *Gathering Wild Strawberries*, an older girl kneels with gathered strawberries on her lap while a child in the distance looks for more. The girl's sweet face suggests her

virginal state, but the curves of her body hint at her blossoming womanhood. Brymner often depicted girls in a landscape, thus associating nature with youth, fertility, and femininity. In the 1930s and 1940s, the images created by a new generation of artists reflect a new understanding of the girl: these images are interested in a girl's psychological and physical self-awareness of her growth and development from child to adult. *Young Girl* by Jori Smith pictures a little girl who sits, her gaze averted, looking forlorn and a bit sullen. In this portrait of a preadolescent French-Canadian child from Charlevoix, Quebec, the artist has made an effort to show how an individual feels and thinks. During this era, the idea of the Canadian girl expanded to include a wider range of urban and rural girls as well as girls of different cultural backgrounds and social classes. *Little Girl of Saint-Dominique Street, Montreal*, a drawing by Louis Muhlstock, shows a tired-looking girl from a poor neighbourhood of Montreal, one of a number of children from immigrant families depicted by Muhlstock during the Depression. In *Indian Child* by Prudence Heward, the painting's vibrant colours and bold contours contribute to the intensity of the Aboriginal girl's expression. Heward's depictions of girls evoke the feminine ideal of an individual with a strong sense of self—a pictorial model that reflected her own character and independence.

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Works of contemporary women artists that respond to society's exploitation of girlhood and the narrow definitions of female beauty and of an ideal body type perpetrated by the media featured prominently in the "Minds and Bodies" section of the exhibition. *Meditation* by Josette Trépanier, a photographic transfer on a copper plate, is one of a series of prints based on photographs of a dancer. Trépanier asked the dancer to adopt the poses of a teenage girl

observing her own body in a sauna. The image with the dancer's eyes peering intently at her figure suggests the anxiety stirred in today's girls by the slightest physical imperfection. These recent investigations of girls considered all kinds of girls, from those who radiated potential, self-esteem, and promise for the future, to those who evoke vulnerability (Lerner, "Adolescent"). *Killing Me Softly*, a painting by Natalka Husar, is a follow-up to the artist's Blond with Dark Roots series, which includes paintings of post-Soviet immigrant girls growing up in new political, social, and economic surroundings. As her half-bald head hints, this girl has been displaced from Chernobyl. The horseshoe-shaped handle of her handbag seems to symbolize her old-country hopes for success in a brazen new world, but those hopes are subtly undermined by her mismatched garments: flowing summer polka dots and itchy winter mohair.

As I was researching the content and organization of the show, I thought of Mieke Bal, a cultural theorist who has developed a set of semiotic tools to further art historical analysis. Her work offered me a research path for exploring *Picturing Her*, and I am particularly indebted to her concept of "museal discourse" (*Looking* 162), which proposes a method for deciphering the logic of exhibitions in terms of their structural and contextual framework. Bal's focus is the role of the curator and other museum professionals who create the authoritative texts that accompany an exhibition, such as wall texts and writing used in publicity materials. Their choices in this regard, she says, are some of the "cultural acts" that create "biases" (*Looking* 161). Other elements that can influence people's interpretation of an exhibition include the mandate of the hosting institution, the underlying construction of the exhibition, and notions that may arise as a result of a critic's analysis of the show. Furthermore, the individual's response to an exhibition may be affected by the personal profile of that person.

In the case of *Picturing Her*, I was aware that, as curator, I had assumed the connection of the exhibition to my research project, "Visual Representations of the Canadian Child," which had been underway for two years. The objective of this research was to seek to understand the symbolic references, moral and cultural notions, pedagogical principles, political contexts, and social and religious undercurrents that affected the visual images of children. An underlying assumption of this research was that, because adult issues are projected onto representations of children and because adults see themselves in the guise of children, these pictures of children are not solely the visual records of a family album but are indicative of social, cultural, and political changes in a society. The objective of the project was threefold: to show how representations of children can offer new insights about the art and history of Canada; to explore the works of artists, many of them women, who painted pictures of children; and

to show the relationship in these multi-faceted images between "low" art in the popular culture of newspapers and magazines and the "high" art of exhibited works.

Two publications served as examples of the kind of research I was pursuing. In *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*, Simon Schama dubs the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic the "Republic of Children," because of the numerous portraits of young people that were commissioned by parents to be displayed in their homes. He links the special place that children enjoyed in this society to the virtues and frailties of the new Republic, its awareness of itself as youthful, and its urge to go forward and prosper. Similarly, David M. Lubin explains in *Picturing a Nation: Art and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century America* how the frequent portrayal of children in genre paintings embodied American images of themselves as a nation, either as it was or as it should be. In following these approaches, which incorporate a social history of culture, I had as my aim to show how various pictures interpret Canadian society through the images of children they present.

While keeping in mind Bal's museal discourse and the parameters of the research project that preceded the exhibition, I also intended with *Picturing Her* to give equal weight to all the images included there. As Bal has argued in "Visual Essentialism and the Object of Visual Culture," "visuality as an object of study requires that we focus on the relationship between the seen and the seer" for all types of artifacts (14). This approach differs from past research on visual representations of children, which has been devoted for the most part to works of art. Such studies encompass a spectrum of periods and themes, but they are mainly grounded in art historical methods and centred on the art productions of recognized artists. Robert Rosenblum's *The Romantic Child from Runge to Sendak* is one of the first monographs on childhood in art. In this short text, Rosenblum looks at the Romantic vision of children in paintings and book illustrations from the late eighteenth century to recent times that perpetuate a sentimentalized view of domesticity and the myth of childhood as a sacred time, uncorrupted by the adult world. In *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood*, Anne Higonnet takes another point of view, investigating the concept of the child who was judged to be inherently innocent in both body and mind, a concept that was confirmed in the public's imagination with the portrait paintings of British artists Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Gainsborough, Sir Thomas Lawrence, Sir Henry Raeburn, and John Hoppner. Higonnet explains that the emphasis on the child's body in mass-produced illustrations and photographs, beginning in the late nineteenth century, led to the transformation of the Romantic child into the "knowing" child in images that subverted the ideal of innocence (209). The

children by contemporary artist-photographer Sally Mann, for example, are possessed of a more complex, ambiguous, and sexually problematic configuration of attributes. Claire Perry in *Young America: Childhood in Nineteenth-Century Art and Culture* demonstrates that this young country took a broader view in seeing itself in its young people: nineteenth-century American artists pictured a wide range of children, male and female, white and Aboriginal, truant and studious. European artists from the nineteenth century to the beginning of World War I—Gustave Courbet, Jacques Henri Latrigue, Oskar Kokoschka, Edouard Manet, Auguste Renoir, and Egon Schiele—are the subject of a series of essays in *Picturing Children: Constructions of Childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, edited by Marilyn R. Brown. These papers discuss how images of childhood so central to the production of modern art coalesce with the emergence of the modern concept of childhood that began with the publication of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Émile* in 1762. In a more wide-ranging survey of images of children in the history of Western art, Erika Langmuir's *Imagining Childhood* explores the centrality of pictured children in the debates on the human condition. Through themes such as the family, aging, loss of innocence, illness, and death, Langmuir shows that no one historic period or nation has had a monopoly on visualizing childhood to explore the complex relationship between imagery and real life.

While indebted to these findings, which are mainly about works of art, I began the research for *Picturing Her* with the understanding, promoted by Bal and other scholars, that visual culture should examine all types of objects and in doing so engage interdisciplinary methodologies to widen the interpretive lens. Whether oil painting, children's drawing, photograph, snapshot, commercial reproduction, cartoon, or advertisement, canonical or not, each image is understood to have an important part to play in advancing our understanding of the girls of Canada and of Canadian girlhood. This point of view is consistent with the principles and practices of the McCord Museum in researching the material culture of Canada. *Picturing Her* was seen in conjunction with a second exhibition at the McCord, *Growing Up in Montréal/Grandir à Montréal*, which provided viewers with an opportunity to make comparisons with the exhibition I curated in terms of both thematic content and the use of different artifacts. In contrast to *Picturing Her*, *Growing Up in Montréal* highlighted medical and technological innovations that changed the lives of children and considered the role children played in shaping Montreal's rapidly expanding urban environment. Through toys, games, books, furniture, clothing, and historical photographs and documents, the exhibition examined children's activities and behaviours at home, at school, in hospital, as well as in parks, playgrounds, and back lanes.

Bal's concept of museal discourse and her extension of visual culture to include a wide range of images and objects deepened my reflections as I worked to define the meaning of *Picturing Her* and helped me to contemplate the ways in which the exhibition would connect to a collective consciousness. This approach considers the exhibition as a collection of entities that creates a concept greater than the sum of its parts. As an art historian, however, my task was also to reveal the meanings of the individual images as discrete entities and groupings of similar images before placing them as part of a whole in an exhibition. An art historian important to me during that period was Michael Baxandall, whom I greatly admire because he refrains from formulating definite interpretations of an artwork and from suggesting one particular methodology for others to follow. Instead, he asks art historians to consider their role as interpreters of visual objects and challenges us to contemplate the limitations of our practices. He reminds us that, at different times and in different places, viewers have understood aspects of an image that in later times or other places have gone unrecognized. With the aid of texts and related evidence, the art historian can develop a "period eye" that will help in the retrieval of the relevant features of a period's culture, awareness, style, knowledge, and methods of production.

To understand better the meanings in Notman's photographic portraits of girls from the "Spaces and Places" section of the exhibition, for example, I turned to historical Canadian writings that are available through Early Canadiana Online, a growing digital library that provides access to over two million pages of Canada's printed heritage from the time of the settlers to the early twentieth century (see Lerner, "William Notman's Portrait Photographs of Girls"; Lerner, "William Notman's Portrait Photographs of the Wealthy"). Also included are non-Canadian reading materials that were disseminated in Canada and widely read by Canadians. My objective in extrapolating from these sources was to demonstrate how an investigation of published material can reveal messages embedded in images and, conversely, to show how images can illuminate printed material. The imagery of the girl reader, for example, contains information that relates to the social and cultural inferences made in these written texts. What girls should read and how this would affect their growth and development was the subject of numerous advice manuals, novels, magazine articles, and books written especially for and about girls. In the 1870s, the Montreal-based magazine *Canadian Illustrated News* frequently visited the subject of book learning for girls through articles such as "What to Teach Our Daughters," "The Best Education," and "What to Do with the Girls." In one of these pieces, "Hearth and Home—Female Education," the author emphasizes that literature gave a girl "real and proper weight in society" when used with "proper

Figure 2: William Notman, *Miss Jacobi*, Montreal, QC, 1867, Silver salts on paper mounted on paper - Albumen process, 8 x 5 cm, Purchase from Associated Screen News Ltd., I-28018.1, McCord Museum

Figure 3: Jean Paul Lemieux, *The Orphan* 1956, oil on canvas, 60.9 x 45.6 cm, Purchased 1957, National Gallery of Canada (no. 6684)

discretion" (307). In Notman's 1867 photograph of Miss Jacobi, one of many examples of this pose (see fig. 2), the subject sits with a book on her lap in a close-up portrait set in an oval frame. The contemplative look on her face suggests that the girl is reflecting the attitudes and methods described by the writers who defined the right way for girls to read. One writer for *Northern Messenger* insisted in 1897 that all that was needed for a child to strengthen her memory was to absorb what she had read by pausing to think about it:

> After reading a book or an article, or an item of information from any reliable source, before turning your attention to other things, give two or three minutes quiet thought to the subject that has just been presented to your mind to see how much you can remember concerning it, and, if there were any new ideas, instructive facts, or hints of special interest that impressed you as you read . . . the very effort to think the matter out will engrave the facts deeply upon your memory—so deeply that they will not be effaced by the rushing in of a new and different set of ideas. ("To Strengthen")

Seen from the viewpoint of these writings, Miss Jacobi appears to be thinking about her reading; imagining and remembering, she is in the process of absorbing, having understood the educational benefits that come from reading properly.

In his 1921 article "On Realism in Art," linguist and literary theorist Roman Jakobson states that literature does not exist as a separate body, and that many works of art, like most works of literature, tell stories. Jerome Bruner, a psychologist whose writings have contributed to cognitive psychology and to the history and the philosophy of education, believes that people make sense of their lives by organizing all received images, sounds, and other sensory experiences into stories that link who they are in the present to past and future actions. He writes that stories are not just situation-specific events that have meaning only for the people involved, but rather, they are part of "narrative accrual," the telling and retelling of analogous stories by many people (8). The result is a collective narrative that encapsulates tradition, history, and culture.

In my pre-exhibition research, I linked Jakobson's and Bruner's definitions of narration to the ideas of Martha Langford, an art historian who specializes in Canadian photography. Writing about the photographic album, she explains that a photograph is not exclusively a visual medium: it has an oral consciousness, by which she means that it is affiliated with voices that articulate attitudes, values, sensibilities, identities, and self-worth. In fact, the oral aspect of society forms the basis of human relationships and is always present to some degree. Inevitably, orality as a repository of memory and evidence of living performances leaves its traces

in visual images and written texts. The role of the researcher is to discover how the voices embedded in contemporaneous texts communicate the beliefs of people living during that time. This means that photographs, in capturing members of a specific community during a particular period, are descriptive of a world view that is shared by those members.

In the instance of Notman's portraits of girls, the community is comprised of wealthy English Canadians living in Montreal, and the members being captured in photographs are the daughters of these families. The period is the Victorian era, specifically the 1860s to the 1890s. Throughout these decades, Canadians of this newly formed nation were engaged with each other critically and robustly in discussions about the education of youth. Recognizing how the visual record literalizes the images suggested in the texts allows the researcher to uncover the oral underpinnings of these photographic portraits of Montreal girls.

Having integrated these sets of ideas, I realized that what was ultimately created in Notman's portrait photographs of girls, who were invariably portrayed at their best and often posed as if caught in the act of reading, was a collective narrative of society and nationhood. These portraits entailed a complex consensual interaction with the client and, in many ways, codified the assumptions, biases, and ambitions of the wealthy citizens of Montreal. The standards of right behaviour, the constraints imposed by this elite, the display of the appropriate attitudes of the girls, and the subtle play of social and artistic conventions are some of the elements of this narrative. In what Bruner refers to as a "symbolic system" organized to "mediate thought" and mark "representations of reality" (3), the girl, when perceived as a symbol, can be seen to personify the hopes and values of Canada as a young nation (Lerner, "George Reid's"). The viewer's comprehension of these images can never be completely subjective. While interpretation depends on a person's own experiences, it is also necessary that other stories and pictures drawn from the surrounding culture confirm the interpretation. The meaning of these images is, in Bruner's words, "so socially conventional, so well known in keeping with the canon, that we can assign it to some well rehearsed and virtually automatic interpretive routine" (9). In this way, Bruner's concept of narrative construction correlates with Baxandall's concept of the period eye: according to Baxandall, comprehending stories is like understanding visual imagery with its "stock of patterns, categories and methods of inference; training in a range of representational conventions; and experience, drawn from the environment, in what are plausible ways of visualizing" (32).

Bal has emphasized that "visual culture studies should take as its primary objects of critical analysis the master narratives that are presented as natural, universal, true and inevitable, and dislodge them

so that alternative narratives can become visible" ("Visual Essentialism" 22). The ideas of Homi Bhabha, a postcolonial theorist, are particularly relevant when examining the girls presented in *Picturing Her*—working girls, immigrants, French Canadians, First Nations and Inuit girls—none of whom belong to the master narrative of the dominant English middle class represented in Notman's photographs of Montreal girls (Lerner, "Photographs"). In his introduction to *Nation and Narration*, Bhabha demonstrates the uses of semiotics and psychoanalysis as analytical systems through which to describe nations as constructions that form as a result of the interactions of competing communities. In *The Location of Culture*, he expands on the idea of seeking the "location of culture" in marginal spaces such as the works of artists, where the representation of difference opposes dominant social forces. In the "Spaces and Places" section of the exhibition, some prints attempted to conceal the difficult social conditions of the so-called orphan girl. For example, *Incidents of the Week—"Safe in the Arms of Jesus"* is a group portrait of Miss Rye's supposedly happy orphans at the immigration shed in Montreal published in *The Canadian Illustrated News* on 28 June 1879. Maria Susan Rye, a social reformer from London, England, brought approximately three thousand girls from London slums and workhouses to work as domestic servants in Canadian households. With funding from church agencies and philanthropists, over 100,000 destitute "home children" were sent from England to Canada between 1869 and the early 1930s. From the outside, *Miss Rye's Home for Emigrant Female Children, at Niagara, Lake Ontario*, published in the *Illustrated London News* on

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29 September 1877 appears pleasant and orderly ("Young Immigrants"). This image of a "home," however, belies the crowded interior conditions and the cruel treatment of the girls finally revealed in inspector reports and newspaper coverage.

This is also true of the photograph entitled *Orphanage and Nuns' Residence, Montfort*, an example of one of the many prison-like orphanages typical of the early decades of the twentieth century. The Montfort orphanage was attached to the convent of Notre-Dame-de-Montfort, located in the Laurentians. Supported by churches, benevolent institutions, and government funding, these orphanages cared for not only orphans but the offspring of unwed mothers and the children of impoverished families. In Jean-Paul Lemieux's *The Orphan* (see fig. 3), in which a French-Canadian girl is pictured in a Quebec rural landscape, the anonymity we discern represents a narrative of trauma and exclusion, although it is countered by the qualities of her face, such as the tiny mouth, the upturned nose, and the sparkle in her eyes. Is this lonely girl one of the numerous French-Canadian orphans or the offspring of an unwed mother who were removed from their familial environments and placed in the institutional care of the Church, or is she the personification of a collective grief or an expression of a rupture in the rural continuity of French Canadians? In either case, this painting is a visual story that connects to other narrative texts such as events, cultural artifacts, and written records, and it must be considered within the framework of historic and social situations.

Art historian T. J. Clark writes that "astonishing things happen if one gives oneself over to the process of seeing again and again: aspect after aspect of the picture seems to surface, what is salient and what incidental alter bewilderingly from day to day, the larger order of the depiction breaks up, recrystallizes, fragments again, persists like an afterimage. And slowly the question arises: What is it, fundamentally, I am returning to in this particular case?" (5). Clark reminds me that no matter whose methodology I choose when organizing a show, looking—really looking—at a work of art is crucial. On this subject I still consider Rudolf Arnheim, an art and film theorist and a perceptual psychologist, to be one of my most important teachers. Arnheim argues that visual thinking "is a form of reasoning, in which perceiving and thinking are indivisibly intertwined." He challenges the differentiations between intellect and intuition, insisting that "the remarkable mechanisms by which the senses understand the environment are all but identical with the operations described by the psychology of thinking" (v). To a certain extent, he says, this psychology of thinking is an inborn reaction to balance, shape, colour, and movement.

Returning to Lemieux's painting with Clark's admonition to see again and again in mind, I see a

half-length figure of a girl dressed in black and the infinite space of a landscape textured with muted colours. The girl's black hair and eyes, set deep in grey circles, are echoed in the distant church and scattered buildings. Arnheim's idea of visual thought encourages me to look at this painting intensely in an effort to bring to light the inventive workings of the artist. I compare the harsh movements of Lemieux's brush as he conceived the landscape to the delicate strokes that created the girl's face, and I notice the dark colours he chose and the jarring relationship between the close-up figure and the distant ground. The purpose of visual thinking, according to Arnheim, is to control the urge to identify significance immediately. Instead, studying the effects wrought by the painting allows the viewer to comprehend its multi-faceted meaning.

In summary, two premises continue to guide my study of images of children. The first holds that "the child" is a historically changeable social construction linked to adult issues and desires that inform our learning about actual children. The second is a warning I give to myself: not to interpret these representations simply as illustrations of a verifiable external reality. Making images presupposes the visual inventiveness that characterizes the agency of the creator in relation to complex socio-historical reactions and contexts. When constructing *Picturing Her*, these premises loomed large. My hope was that the exhibition would encourage further analyses of visual imagery of Canadian children and youth that take into account the collective meanings of stories, histories, memories, signs, symbols, and perceptions.

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