Representing "Indians": H. G. Gylde's Rutherford Library Mural as Seen by a Métis Artist

Henry George Glyde's sixty-year-old mural, "Alberta History," has been getting some attention recently—critical, but revitalizing nevertheless. Art lives only through the attentions of the quick, and these hungry ghosts are not fussy about whether the notice is positive or negative.

The most notable attendee is Noor F. K. Iqbal. Her essay, "'Civilizing the Warlike Indians:' A Confrontation of the Rutherford Library's Glyde Mural,"[i] published last year in *Constellations*, is a fine post-colonial reading that I will echo often today. I hope my soundings will reverberate a little deeper into the cave by adding a compassionate tone to the volume.

This talk is divided into two sections. The first, "On Smugness," is not about the mural. The second, "On the Mural," is.

You don't get pictures for the first bit, because it is about texts and the writing is more evocative and I don't want you distracted by slides. You do get pictures in the second part because that section is about the mural, and the prose is more didactic and less interesting and I hope the images do distract you from the poor words.

On smugness

Non-fiction texts are artificial minds that are better organized and more interesting than their human progenitors. Well, they are more artful and take less of your time to get to the good stuff. The voice of the text—the prose self as opposed to the prosaic self—is usually authoritative. It is more or less stable, edited and referenced. Such inspection, correction, grooming, such composure tends to engender smugness.

And sharing such beautiful images, reading, unpacking elegantly compressed thoughts and twining with another's consciousness is a seduction that can infect the mind reader, raise the temperature, the pulse and momentarily expand a sense of self.

Postcolonial non-fiction is especially smug. The already assured authorial voice is inflamed by the writer's confidence that he or she is on the right side of history. And, if, in addition, you are lucky enough to be one of the oppressed, well-educated minoritized peoples who is paid by an academic institution to criticize and ideally reform its racist, sexist, homophobic, capitalistic, colonial hegemony—smugness is a vice exceedingly difficult to resist.

Smugness is not just taking pleasure in one's own display of wit and general superiority. According to the Oxford English dictionary—a copy of which I own (and I don't mean a digital version) [this is an example of smugness]—a quiet, hard-working student is smug; a man who dresses scrupulously is smug, as is one who is conceited. My sartorial and rhetorical styles are rarely smug. I am indifferent dresser and an intuitive thinker who is suspicious of smug, that is, neat theory because it is especially prone to harm when imposed on messy, real, that is, non-fiction people. It is especially problematic when applied to silent (in our case, recently deceased) persons who do not speak, cannot correct us.

When applied to history, postcolonial critical smugness is a form of dramatic irony: a contemporary author professes an understanding that their (past) subjects did not have. It seems counter-intuitive that we could know more about the past than those who actually lived it. But of course, we do know more about some aspects. We know what happened after that particular person died. We might also know about the larger historical, political, economic, environmental, and rhetorical forces that shaped that life.

If history is a construction after the lived fact, then, yes, the present may understand more about the past than a formerly living subject could. But this is only true of very limited aspects of experience, only those elements registered *as* history, as text. History is the past that the present deems worthy of notice, of note, of notation. That interest is more an artefact of the writer's (self) interest than some abstract notion of Truth. Well, at least this is so in my case, as you will soon see.

As a ground for smugness, being alive is rather soft; if only because we, too, will die. Once buried, burned, or at least retired, our clever successors will mock our short-sightedness for reasons we cannot yet imagine—until they, too, exit, making room for the next edition, and so on.

But of course, history is not just text. Another way of doing history, a vernacular way, considers history (in the sense of true stories) as something living passing through specific bodies (knowledge keepers) to other bodies. Knowledge is shared (orally), often in special places and at special times. What is told, who tells what, and to whom are regulated by earned relationships and by protocols. There are some teachings that are not meant to become texts. Their full meanings are attached to certain bodies, sites, occasions and relationships and the translation to a disembodied and portable object renders them mere information.

This vernacular model of knowledge keeping and sharing is the essence of not just cultural but literal survival. As the early anthropologists and ethnologists knew, the textualization of a society is the prelude to their extinction. Once a people are recorded their physical elimination is more tolerable: 'at least their culture was spared'. The refusal to share certain knowings apart from these embodied relationships encourages literal, not just literary, survival.

Perhaps you were imagining traditional Aboriginal people just now, of teachings told around a winter fire or kitchen table. Why not picture academics? All this is true of both ourselves as Aboriginal people and as scholars—of what we are doing right now.

Academics do not and should not put everything into their books and articles and online. Here we are participating in an ancient rite. We come together to speak in this set-aside space according to traditional protocols. We do this because we know that in such gatherings different sorts of knowledge are produced and exchanged than are permitted by reading and writing alone. We keep these rituals because the interrogation that happens in the question periods and in the rich exchanges away from the podium is as valuable as our animating texts.

This way of doing knowledge, in public, in relation, encourages humility. There is always the possibility that if your subject is not in the room (Noor Iqbal, are you out there?), some related self might stand up for that absent presence. So, you act differently, more responsibly and responsively, than when you are only a text, when your body is off line. Embodying our words embarrasses smug theory and obfuscation.
If you can't explain the essence of your research to your Kookum, it's probably wrong.

Smugness is a bi-product of the ego-inflation that comes from mastering a new tool combined with a wilful blindness toward those moving parts that do not match your devices. Such inflation can only be sustained by muting everything beyond your theory, your disciplinary focus, and its amenable subjects, or, by distorting those peripheral forms to fit your instrument. Such puffing-up is eventually deflated by the recognition that your theoretical tools are limited, and that their application actually shapes the subject under review as well as the re-viewer.

A reading whose sole tool is postcolonial theory is only able to see instances of colonialism: narratives of oppression and resistance—despite the protestations of the subjects. As the Freudians say, resistance is futile. No, wait, that's the Borg. Resistance is evidence of repression; that's it. The reading is correct; the read is faulty.

This used to be called professional deformation. The answer for the world's seemingly intractable problems is education, if you are a teacher; entrepreneurship, if you are a businessperson; art if, you are an artist; and better oral hygiene, if you are a dentist.

Realizing that it is the nature of tools to instrumentalize their subjects is humbling. Among the stubbornly smug, humility normally follows humiliation, and usually occurs at mid-career, in public, and is administered by a mis-representative subject of your monologue.

As a first principle, we must be humbled by our subject—look for its being beyond our present theory. Interesting works of art and all people have aspects that escape the measure of our tools.

Therefore, when we reach the limit of our measure, we must be led by the gravity of our subjects toward other methodologies. We meet them half-way: in their half and in their way. Or, when even this doesn't satisfy our intuitive grasp, we must turn to art, which (in many but not all cases) is the use of tools for non-instrumental ends to achieve unexpected wisdom.

One of the uncanny attractions of art—to making, curating and reading it—is that art objects are ontologically perverse. The Glyde mural, for example, was made in the past and has meanings for and of that time. But it also has an existence in the present. It is here, as a real thing, right now. And, it has current meanings and uses that are not identical to those of its past—in part because its originally intended audience has become an unintended one. A white European created this picture for white Canadians. He would be astonished to have a non-Euromerican and now a Métis write this way about this work. I think he would be humbled by the unconscious possibilities of his own production.

People who hold unfashionable ideas eventually no longer pose an impediment on seeming progress; they retire and pass-on. Works of art and other legacy objects linger, an eternal present, a perpetual gift, until someone takes courage to destroy them or, more passively, embalms them out-of-sight, or warehouses them in poor conditions until the elements silence them altogether. Iconoclasm is difficult. We are rarely sure about the present or future value of many things, especially marginal ones like this mural. Ironically, the more sentences Iqbal and I contribute to this object the more significance it gains and the more useful it becomes. It is now a controversial object, a valuable discursive tool. It needs to be restored….and contextualized, and rebutted.

I would like to pick up a thread I dropped earlier. I was celebrating the oral aspect of our enterprise not to suggest that we ought to not write but to recognize that speaking our texts, as we do here, is a necessary supplement to our introverted agony. Our ritual acknowledges, that, what art historian James Elkins calls "our beautiful, dry and distant texts,"[ii] when embodied, interrogated, socialized is the moment when they are most authentic, or at least when they most resemble their sources. For those of us interested in Indigenizing the academy, developing ways of bringing our work home in style and fact is part of the program.

Another, though seemingly non-academic way we express our 'knowing' in to the past includes retro-speculative fictions. If speculative fiction is a fantastic account of alternate contemporary or, more often, future possibility, retro-speculative fictions are imaginative accounts of the past. They spring from the desire to illuminate the spaces between the lines of textual history to discover messier being there—being that echoes our own not-quite-historical stories. They combine history-as-text with an author's empathetic imaginative projections. Such projections are based on the certain feeling that past people resembled us but were also unlike us in ways that define who and how we are, or present us with alternative ways of understanding present being or construct future being.

Many historical novels are retro-speculative fictions—especially those that present traditionally unhistoricized lives against a historic background. The Gylde mural is a retro-speculative fiction. "Alberta History" displays awareness that it is not Alberta History. It is clearly an edited volume that gathers and condenses images of past events, people and buildings into a homo-social primal

scene of Alberta's formation. It is designed not only to represent the past but to consolidate an official wish-image for mid-twentieth century Alberta students who would be players in the second wave of provincial economic development.

However, to read this work this way, alone, is to see Glyde as a colonial agent and the mural only as an expression of empire and this reduces the man's humanity and misses the painting's informing and informative peculiarity. Such a narrative makes sense of a great deal of the picture but does not account for its strangeness and the possibility that this instrument of empire (Gylde) was either imperfectly formed or had alternative ideas.

I am not referring to Iqbal alone or especially in my critique of postcolonial prose. My argument emerges from my entering the composition of this text from a postcolonial perspective only to find myself, as a history painter, empathizing with the artist's impossible task, and as a Métis, discovering a missing narrative in the space between colonial/postcolonial binary readings.

I wonder if postcolonial theory is the best set of tools for the Prairie situation. Postcolonial theories may make sense for post-colonies. But, as Iqbal deftly reminds us,[iii] the colonizers never left Canada. If the Settlers are not unsettling, we cannot de-colonize.

I suppose it is possible that a formerly colonized people could decolonize their minds and practices—once their oppressors departed. This seems incredibly difficult given globalism. But in the case of Canada, where Europeans did not have a neat, smug, history of imperialism followed by withdrawal, but were in fact transformed by their contact and intermarriages with Aboriginal people and culture, and became no-longer-quite-European—John Raulston Saul's idea[iv]—we need a theory not of post-colonialism, nor of colonialism alone or primarily, but theories of a perpetually contested co-existence with no utopia in the future or past.

Because the Indigenous population was not conquered, and because there is no post to our colonization, it is insufficient to see the Glyde mural only as an expression of state power. We should also consider it as the record of a struggle; the work of an artist who, as a European immigrant to Canada, was caught between a colonial mission and an Alberta difference—which includes Aboriginal people. The mural is a narrative of confused loyalties.

On the mural

Henry George Glyde was a foundational figure in non-Aboriginal Alberta art and arts education. Born in Luton, England in 1906, trained at the Brassey Institute of Arts and Sciences, Hastings, the Royal College of Art, and in Italy, France and Belgium, he taught in England before immigrating to Canada in 1935 to teach at the Provincial Institute of Technology and Art in Calgary (now the Alberta College of Art and Design). In 1946 he started up the University of Alberta's Art Department. He remained there until his retirement in 1966. He died just three years ago. Glyde also headed painting at the Banff School of Fine Arts (1936-66). He was a member of the Canadian Society of Graphic Arts, the Alberta Society of Artists (President 1945), The Federation of Canadian Artists (National President 1954), and the Canadian Art Council. In 1949 he was elected to the Royal Canadian Academy.[v]

Glyde created “Alberta History” for the newly built Rutherford Library. It was not a commissioned work but a gift from the artist. The mural took eleven months to research and design and four months for he and his student assistants to paint. It was unveiled in May 15, 1951.[vi] The painting is twenty feet long and eight feet high and twelve feet from the floor. It is above the interior entrance to the large reading room on the second floor.

Glyde drew the design for the mural; photographed it and made slides which were then projected then traced onto the plaster wall in vine charcoal. Instead of an under-painting, Glyde used light brown and green pencil crayons to develop the modelling in warm and cool colours. This is a drawn version of *grisaille* under-painting. Pigments were then suspended in casein—a medium derived from milk—and applied over the under-drawing. Casein paintings are brittle and matte but can be brightened and protected, as in this case, by a coat of dammar varnish. This method was very popular among Mexican Mural painters and artists in the 1920s to the 1940s, most notably the Regionalist art movement of the American mid-West. Gylde painted in a variety of styles familiar to his era and British training. But he was most influenced by Thomas Hart Benton. Glyde’s palette is more sombre than Benton’s; more like the Sistine chapel, before the cleaning. And while a regionalist, he avoids Benton’s jingoistic Mannerism.

Writing about the mural at its unveiling, Edith Park notoriously reports that it pictures “the civilizing influences in the early life of the province,” especially the “Edmonton district around the period 1850-1870.”[vii] While the painting is an amalgam of buildings and people from all over the pre-province, the location does look like the Edmonton site. Founded in 1795, Fort Edmonton (in the top, center right) was the region’s trade hub. It is also the future site of the province’s Legislative building; it is the artist’s adopted home base and the location of this mural. It makes sense that this be stage for Glyde’s heterotopia. Surrounding the Fort are important religious structures. The McDougall church (top far right), built in 1871, it was the first permanent Edmonton building erected outside the stockade. Thought to be Alberta’s oldest surviving building, the Catholic mission (top, center left) was constructed at near-by St. Albert in 1861. The mid-ground church (center left) is the McDougall mission located at Morley, 350 km south. The more mobile homes, the tepees, are to the left of the Fort and in also in the left mid-ground. The markings seem more generic than particular but may suggest Blackfoot or Stony design. There is a York boat on the river (mid-ground, right). In the right mid and background, people are moving back and forth carting goods between the dock and the Fort. Most of the action is in the foreground. The scene is divided denominationally with McDougall and his clothed congregation on the left and Father Albert Lacombe and his nearly naked flock on the right. At the bottom left there is a third group consisting of a pair of Aboriginal men and a pair of Settlers engaged in trade. The scene is predominantly male with only a few Aboriginal women on either extreme of the composition.

As Iqbal indicates, the picture’s ontological ranking places most Aboriginal people at the bottom (along with the dogs); most white men at the next level up (along with horses and the ox); and white, male religious and the Northwest Mounted Police higher still. The Methodist, Rev. John McDougall, on horseback is elevated above Fr. Lacombe but equal to the fresh representative of central state power, the Mountie. The most important figure from the Fort’s early days is the infamously bull-headed Chief Factor John Rowand (1823-1854), shown (symbolically?) to the

right of Lacombe's ox. It may seem strange that so central a figure is up staged by religious leaders, but fitting given the civilizing theme. Rowand was a far from *civil* servant. This slight, however, is compensated by the fact that the highest point in the scene, above the tepees and church steeples, is the famous Rowland's Folly; his four-storey panopticon, reputed to be the first building in western Canada with glass windows. Religious authority is supported by the police presence and contained by Rowland's corporate gaze. A short, very heavy man, Rowand was known as "Big Mountain." But here, he is slimmed. Glyde's Rowand is probably the HBC propaganda version rather than the tough administrator found in the archives and oral history. Glyde is likely perpetuating Hudson's Bay mythology—specifically from this illustration in the HBC calendar printed four years before the mural was painted: "John Rowand halts the Blackfoot Charge," by Henry Simpkins.The story—a retro-speculative fiction—goes that Rowand stopped a charge of 200 warring Blackfoot by holding out his hand and shouting, "Stop, you villains!"[viii] The warring chief is said to have apologized and left! I am not going to dignify this with explication—in this crowd, the thing un-reads itself.
Unlike most of his paintings which are formally unified, "Alberta History has a very awkward design consisting of two classical compositions barely linked by the indifferent man in the cart.

Macdougall—clean shaven in a more 1950s than 1870s style—and his steed are in the center of a crowd of bowed First Nations men and women. He holds the Bible in his left hand while his right hand points upward, indicating the Deity above all, including the HBC. But his face and eyes are turned toward his completion, Lacombe; a gesture that, along with the Oblate Father's slightly more central position, and reduced background clutter, makes him the focal point of the picture. The bored man is at the compositions actual center, but his eyes too are directed at Lacombe, who is among the few figures to address the viewer, reinforcing his dominant position. He holds a raised crucifix in his left hand, a signal mirroring his fellow missionary's gesture to the higher authority from which his power derives. But strangely, he sports a flag of St. George in the other hand. This seems the central symbol of the painting. What could it mean? St. George is the patron saint of England, Glyde's original country, and the flag is flown by those wanting to show specific pride as Englishmen, as opposed to being British. Is this an insult to the Francophone Lacombe? Is Glyde picturing him as a champion of England—a country not often associated, happily, with Catholics—or at least showing him as a champion of English rule in pre-confederation Canada?

It is possible that Glyde wanted to picture Lacombe as a proud Francophone. A red 'X' appears in various 19th century Montreal flags, but never as a plain St. George cross like this. The civic flag of 1939 is closer. It is a St. George cross though it includes other elements referring to the founding races of Montreal (France, England, Scotland and Ireland)—though, of course, not the First Nations. Is this an anachronism, a simple mistake or a larger claim? Whatever it is, it is odd. I'll abandon you to your opinions. The ontological hierarchy breaks down in the foreground where the two pairs of traders seem near equals. While the white men are slightly raised to preserve their 'standing' they are bowed toward the more comfortable Blackfoot men, who, compositionally are also more stable and authoritative. Ironically, the Aboriginal man in the center of this group seems to echo McDougall's pose while the white men repeat the bent Indians in the mid-ground. The trader in the hat is a self-portrait and the man above Gylde is "the University bursar or senior financial administrator."[ix] Glyde did the painting as a gift to the

university. Was his inclusion of a university money man an ingratiating hint? Of all the places to possibly work himself into the scene, why here?

The mural's narrative is that religion, backed by the police, civilizes the Natives making them better future trade partners. The painting seems to render time from the past in the background (top right) and toward the future in the foreground (bottom left). The story being that the old stockade mentality and corporate monopoly gave way to individual, free-agency and inter-racial—but not quite inter-National, partnerships. If my suggestion of the painting's time is reasonable, Glyde is closest to the viewer, to the present and the future. His clothing is more contemporary than of the 1870s. He seems to identify not with religion but commerce, suggesting that the future lies in fair trade with the keepers of the land.

My retro-speculative narrative has the Englishman Glyde initially coming to Alberta to teach the uncouth youth how to paint and their parents how to appreciate it. But he soon gets caught up in the Canadian difference, and, like Thomas Hart Benton in the United States, he wants to help articulate a visual nationalism emancipated from Europe. His biographer Patricia Ainsly writes that his students say that Benton was "mentioned frequently" by Glyde in his classes: "a painter for the people, making art of commonplace subjects for the common people." "He continued to promote his idea of a truly Canadian art. He spoke of the European interpretation of the Canadian landscape and compared that to painting by paintings by Canadian artists, especially the Group of Seven."[x]

Glyde spent his adult career painting his way into citizenship, and Indians are part of the Alberta Advantage. In one sense, painting Indians was, at that time, a way of doing Canadianism. Canada was, and is, making it up as it goes along. There is a sense of improvisation here, of making a story rather than telling one. While he *is* showing the civilizing of the Indians, the transition is neither smooth nor complete. The composition is divided into two competing religious ideologies; various types of commerce; two races; and multiple ways of being 'Indian'. Apart from a personal narrative, Glyde shows that relations with First Nations is ongoing and is about to enter a new phase that, in 1951, echoes the events of seventy years before.

The painting was produced just four years after Leduc #1 stuck oil: the most important event in provincial history. It changed Alberta from an agrarian society to an energy producer and the subsequent land, people and money rush had a huge impact on treaty relationships, land claims and Indigenous people. Oil exploration, production and pipelines were to the1950s what the railroad was to the 1880s: both required the pacification of or partnership with First Nations if the land was to be made available for passage and exploitation. This painting is an attempt to draw parallels between the current (1950s) land negotiations with Aboriginal people and the earlier events of Treaty negotiations (1870s) and the Métis Resistance (1885). For my claim to work, I need to widen the period covered by the mural from Edith Park's 1850-1870 frame. Let's push by inches. McDougall church was built in1871. The Northwest Mounted Police were established in1873, didn't get to Fort McLeod until the next year and not to Edmonton until 1880.

The scene is said to depict Fr. Lacombe quelling of inter-tribal warfare (red-on-red violence!). He "pacifies the Blackfoot who threaten to attack their hereditary enemies the Cree."[xi] (Now we

know why Glyde places Chief factor Rowland beside him—to amplify the authoritative silencing of the Blackfoot.) Okay, that happened; Lacombe *is* locally famous for brokering a truce between these peoples in the late 1860s. But he is *nationally* famous for "negotiating the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway through Blackfoot territory (in the early 1880s), and securing a promise from the Blackfoot leader Crowfoot that he refrain from joining the North West Resistance of 1885."[xii] To McDougall's right is Chief Crowfoot. What is he doing in the McDougall camp? He was much closer to Father Lacombe.

To establish a terminating date for the mural's range, we need to know which edition of Crowfoot this is. It certainly is not the accomplished youthful warrior, or the great chief who, in 1877, negotiated Treaty Seven and, in 1885 did not join the Batoche Resistance. This is a very different image than how he was conventionally represented and seen, as strong, proud and dressed in finery. He is pictured here old, humbled, penitent, with his hat off. He is in European clothes—un-chiefed, domesticated, a post-Indian. It is a Settler wish-fulfillment that dates this part of the painting to sometime near his death in 1890 but probably not before he went to Ottawa in 1886, by invitation of the Prime minister, with a petition to have his adopted son, Poundmaker—who *did* participate in the Resistance—pardoned.

And who is that beside Crowfoot. It certainly looks a lot like Poundmaker. His proximity and muffled authority fit that possibility. Now, that makes things very interesting. Poundmaker was imprisoned for seven months for his part in the Resistance. Prison devastated his health. Almost immediately after his release and his return to Blackfoot territory he died from a lung haemorrhage at the age of 44.[xiii] This image must mean to represent the older or perhaps unwell man in that little window of time in 1886 before his passing. This may explain why he, like his adoptive father, is not in regalia or even finery, but is pictured as a blanket Indian. While Crowfoot is depicted as cowed, Poundmaker, the unrepentant warrior looks out at us—one of the very few people to do so. He is inscrutable and condemned. Gylde steals his finery and turns him into a blanket Indian because he resists salvation, the government and European-style commerce. Look how he is painted: steady, unbending, not trading, still and alone. He is not a member of any compositional group. And yet he is represented, looks back, endures.

Iqbal likens the near naked men in the foreground to Hollywood Indians. Nearly everyone—especially mostly clean-shaven Settlers seem from a 1940s B western, or Glyde's paintings of contemporary Prairie life. The skimpy Indian attire is more probable on a California back lot than what folks actually wore around here in the 1880s. Bare feet, really? The fact that their skin colours are undistinguishable from the 'white' men is equally suspicious—especially when they are getting so much sun! Most of the figures that are allowed to face us are specific people copied from photographs. Are the faces of the remaining Indians hidden because Gylde did not know what Blackfoot and Cree people looked like—and he was afraid to do some research?

The strange thing is that not all of the Indians are as unclothed as the group below Lacombe. The five warriors in this 'Luncheon on the Grass,' look especially odd because everyone else is so swathed in fabric. It could be that this is a recapitulation of the Garden of Eden in which these prelapsarian gents will taste the knowledge of good and evil through the gospel, the nudes will awaken to their nakedness and don the clothes of their betters. What moment of placation does

this scene record? Notice that while the warriors' rifles are on their laps, they remain armed. And look to the right.

One of the most curious figures is this armed warrior who is given the rare privilege of being rendered as a full figure and the closest to us. He is the foil of every humbled Indian in the set. He is fit, armed and ready for action. Does he represent an on-going Aboriginal threat, or Native pride? He might figure the continuation of warrior attitude apart from western 'civilization'. He counter-balances the other warrior in the picture, the marginal Mountie on the opposite side of the mural. All that stands between them are the influences of colonial religion and trade. This not-yet-pacified warrior is accompanied by a woman, one of the very few in the scene. She, like the only child (far right), are on the periphery of the painting's discourse display. I am probably getting closer to the retro-speculative fiction portion of my reading, but seen as a pair, perhaps he protects her from European influences. They may be the generation that follows Poundmaker rather than the Lord's ministers. They look like they are about to back out of the scene and into a better mural—perhaps Glyde's "When the World Was Burned," down the way—his Noah painting. This pairing is a slight antidote to this larger scene of homo-social indoctrination in which Native men were encouraged through the bribes of unearned social privileges over women to restructure power relationships closer to the European patriarchal model.

I have not been able to find anything about Gylde's thoughts, feeling and relationships with Aboriginal people, but I get the feeling from this strange inclusion of a desire to not completely un-man and tame the First Nations—or at least this one. This could be a remnant of European fetishization of the Romantic Savage—it could be real admiration—it is a mixed message.

My favourite rhetorical term is preterition, which is the act of emphasizing something by omitting it or talking around *it* without naming *it* directly. Iqbal's fine reading neglects the paintings very center, I think, because it does not conform to the imperial binary, the cowboy and Indian dichotomy. The empty figure at the center, once read, fills the composition with an alternative history. The painting, too, is a preterition, a looking around, about, and over this middleman, this go-between. Allow me to introduce you to Alexis Cardinal, Métis.

Edmonton was a not-quite white territory at this time. Before the railroad, the events of 1885 and subsequent rush of state-sponsored Euro-migration, it was predominantly French Métis. The land was even partitioned according to the French/Métis river lot system. The mural's weird composition split is not simply about Indian/White or Methodist/Catholic but also English/French. And who is in the middle of all these binaries, in this intra-mural space, arms crossed, waiting in his Red River cart for the dust to settle? A Métis! Father Lacombe came west a Franco-phone with little English. While French was the trade language, he needed Cree and Mitchif to reach the people he hoped to convert. He asked Alexis Cardinal, a Lac La Biche Métis, to be his guide and interpreter. 'Faithful Alexis' served the role for twenty years.

Let's re-view the scene spoking out from this Métis axis. Fort Edmonton is in the background on the North side of the North Saskatchewan River. To the left are tepees and then Lacombe's Mission, the oldest remaining building in Alberta, built by the Métis Catholics of St. Albert (named after Albert Lacombe). The foreground, where all the action is, is the south side of the river, the French side, directly across from the Fort. As I have suggested, the depiction of time

moves, roughly, from the back to the front. The Métis are in the past and the center and are an amalgam of what is to the left and to the right. What about the time to come?

Edith Park chose to terminate Gylde's narrative in 1870 (despite the anachronisms that this date creates) because 1870 has dramatic political meaning favouring the Settler point-of-view and muting both French and Métis presence. 1870 is the year Rupert's Land, part of British North America and controlled by the Hudson's Bay Company, was sold to the newly confederated Canada.[xiv] Transfer would have happened earlier but for the Métis Red River Resistance. By holding the line at 1870, Park is claiming the land of the painting for king and country, who for at least for one more year following the time of her writing (1951), was King George the Sixth. But whose land was it after 1870?

Allow me to introduce you to Laurent and Eleanor Garneau, Métis. My great, great Grandparents. You knew this was coming. Upon fleeing Red River due to his involvement in the 1869/70 Resistance, Laurent and his family arrive at Fort Edmonton. They settled across from the Fort sometime after1870, certainly owning the land by 1874 until they left in 1896 to join Father Lacombe's Métis refuge, St. Paul des Métis.

I don't know what Gylde knew of Laurent and if he intended a Métis possibility for his narrative, but he might have. Laurent Garneau was a prominent citizen, a founding father of the city. He had money, many friends and ran for public office. After he left Edmonton, his former property was named the Garneau community in his honour—there is a section of St. Paul similarly named. There are three plaques dedicated to Laurent in Edmonton, and one in St. Paul. One marks the so-called Garneau tree and is on the edge of the Hub Mall parking lot where his house stood. It pictures both Laurence and Eleanor. Another, nearby, overlooks the river. Neither mentions that he is Métis; the third, most recent one, does. Given that Glyde set up his metaphorical easel on the land named Garneau, right beside the University where he had his office and studio; it is conceivable that he knew about Laurent. Certainly, in my retro-speculative fiction he does. Like a Mason, he hides his coded narrative in plain sight.

With all this action occurring on a Métis' land, and with a Métis interpreter and guide at its center, Métis building in the background, and who knows how many mixed-bloods peppered throughout, whether by design or accident, this is a painting of Métis history—or at least does not exclude the Métis from the First Nations/Settler dynamic. It's time to put the Métis back into our reading of Gylde's mural.

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[i] F. K. Iqbal, Noor. 'Civilizing the Warlike Indians:'A Confrontation of the Rutherford Library's Glyde Mural." *Constellations*. Volume 1 No. 2 (Spring 2010). http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/constellations/article/view/8050/6506, accessed, Sept 20, 2011.

[ii] Elkins, James. *Our Beautiful, Dry and Distant Texts: art History as Writing.* Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press. 1997.

[iii] Iqbal, ibid.

[iv] Ralston Saul, John. *A Fair Country*. Toronto: Viking Canada. 2008.

[v] Unknown author. "H. G. Glyde." Artist entry, Virginia Christopher Gallery website: http://www.virginiachristopherfineart.com/artists/henry_glyde/henry_glyde.html, accessed Sept. 22, 2011.

[vi] Ainslie, Patricia. *A Lifelong Journey: The Art and Teaching of H.G. Glyde*. Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1987. 54.

[vii] Edith Park, "The Rutherford Library," originally published in New Trails, 1951. http://www.ualberta.ca/ALUMNI/history/buildings/51sprruth.htm, accessed September 15, 2011.
[viii] http://www.canadiana.ca/hbc/_popups/PAMp411_e.htm, accessed Sept 25, 2011.
[ix] Unknown author. A one page explication of the painting (possibly by the artist) from the University of Alberta Art Collection artefact file (#1965.34). April 26, 1955. All the iconographic claims in this paper, except for the Poundmaker attribution, come from this document.
[x] Ainsley, ibid, 53.
[xi] Unknown author. A one page explication of the painting from the Rutherford Library.
[xii] http://franco.ca/edimage/grandspersonnages/en/carte_r06.html, accessed Sept 15, 2011.
[xiii] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pitikwahanapiwiyin, accessed Sept 15, 2011.
[xiv] http://www.solon.org/Constitutions/Canada/English/rpl_1868.html , accessed Sept 24, 2011.