



Richard Maynard
Takush Harbour, 9 June 1873
albumen print, 18.3 x 23.5 cm

Picture Collection

David Garneau

I

Their ocean unheard by this photograph

What waves resound
over the shoulder of the composer of the Gwa'sala
is an audio shade summoned by the colonial desire to know
to complete, to feel we can access everything
and imagine what we cannot

Unsound memories, seeming echoes in cochlea shells

Say "salt" and nearly taste it.

My heels do not sink in the off-camera sand slope
And this humid rot?
Palimpsests of my prairie Lac La Nonne
stink of a stick poked pike corpse four decades gone
not this salty shore a hundred and forty three years ago
Knowing this, my mind stirs table salt into fresh water

Say "water" and what comes to mind is never theirs.

Out of sight sepia rollers perhaps see-able
if only I could pull my gaze from this picturing
avert my lens, adjust my depth perception
but I, too, am fixed by collodion
Used on photographic plates and small wounds

Say "know" and hear yes.

Taken internally, images look for like
attract transpositions that feel as real as shadows
mental filaments stitched into this counterfeit screen
an effort to make it sensible, mine

Say "mine" and think resource extraction.

Photographic memory
makes sense without non-visual senses
Affective error always feels right
Aesthetic empathy works best in isolation

Say "art" and draw a blank stare.

II

A gold rusher before a light writer
He sought fresh resources when the gilt faded
mined people for their images
More money in copy, right?

Surveying the empire's edge with Israel Wood Powell
the first federal Superintendent of Indian Affairs for BC
Richard Maynard documented Natives for the official report

Trained in the craft by Hannah, an artist and much better half
he had an almost innocent eye, at least an unblinking stare

A tone-deaf composer incapable of Curtising his subjects
even if he wanted to
Lined them up like books, spines parallel to the picture plane
volumes pressed into classical arrangement despite all that space
Even the dogs are in order

Conducted with his voice, his device, for the record, the archive
Camera
A generation of illness
People on the verge, dying of exposure, documents filed for the grave

At once hunting party and salvage operation
they rescued what they endeavored to destroy

[Insert lines about Indigenous resistance, even if you feel uncertain.]

Oculus scans shores for the familiar unfamiliar
rather than meaning, or beauty, or friends, or relations
Become an instrument implacable unshuttered
lens collects light sensitive subjects
is directed by creative imaginations beyond him
Wet plate, dry eye