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### Framing identity : social practices of photography in Canada (1880-1920)

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MY STUDY EXAMINES HOW Canadian women used photography as a social practice to establish identity. Specifically, it examines the photographic practice of four, turn-of-the-nineteenth-century women photographers, Mattie Gunterman (1872-1945), Geraldine Moodie (1854-1945), Ruby Gordon Peterkin (1887-1961) and Etta Sparks (1879-1917). From a revisionist point of view, I argue that photography is a social practice used by women professionals and amateurs as a vehicle to explore and establish identity

The introduction *Photography, Women & Identity*, defines photography as social practice and examines how women moved beyond making pictorial images to using photography as a form of speech to represent social issues. The significance of visual literacy and my methods of reading of photographs as narrative texts are introduced. In addition, an overview is provided of cultural and photographic theorists to be drawn upon for the analysis in the chapters to follow. Research for this study is informed by a theoretical framework that includes Mieke Bal, Roland Barthes, Judith Butler, Deborah Cherry, Johannes Fabian, Griselda Pollock, Edward Said, Kaja Silverman, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, John Tagg, Ginette Verstraete and Janet Wolff. Key concepts and practices drawn from cultural analysis and issues related to identity, gender, post-colonialism, tourism and travel are mapped out. In the chapters to follow, I use case studies of both amateur and professional Canadian photographers and provide readings of their photographs as evidence of social practice.

In Chapter One, *From the Albums of Mattie Gunterman*, I situate Gunterman's photographs as a form of visual narrative within the context of the family album and the practice of amateur women photographers. I interpret Gunterman's relationship to Nature and

show how her photographs function as theatre. In Chapter Two, *Geraldine Moodie's Arctic Photographs*, Moodie's portraits of Inuit people are examined in terms of professional photographic practice and discourse on the representation of other. Chapter Three, *Framing the Narrative of Mattie Gunterman*, examines self-portraiture and how Gunterman used her photography albums as a frame to produce a self-aware spectacle. Chapter Four, *The Colonizing Camera of Geraldine Moodie*, introduces questions about images of marginalized peoples and the way in which Canada's First Peoples were represented. Chapter Five, *Ruby Gordon Peterkin and Etta Sparks: Photographs from Away*, analyzes the photographic albums of two Canadian army nurses stationed overseas during the First World War. This chapter considers how identity is created and sustained by the photographic documentation of their wartime service and its contrast to their picturesque tourist snapshots. Chapter Six, *From Amateur to Professional*, presents an overview of the history of women in photography in Canada and investigates various aspects of women's interaction with the medium: as practitioners on a professional and amateur basis, as "family archivists," as support staff in commercial studios and as factory workers producing photographic materials. Concepts of "the male gaze" and "women as sign" are related to the photographs that are read. It also examines the implications of the change from amateur to professional practice for women photographers.

While the photographic practice of Canadian women has had some attention, this has been primarily of a biographical and rarely critical nature. This study differs in that it considers the photographs of these women as readable objects that reveal aspects of the personal narrative of their makers. Their photographic albums are analyzed as the syntactical context for this representational discourse.