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A Home away from Home: Defining, Regulating, and Challenging Femininity at the Julia Drummond Residence in Montreal, 1920-1971

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Abstract

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Résumé

Les jeunes femmes célibataires, récemment arrivées à Montréal, étaient fréquemment assujetties à de mauvais salaires, à des conditions de logement déplorables et à une foule de dangers inconnus, réels et imaginé, de la grande ville. Cet article examine la résidence Julia Drummond comme lieu d'échanges entre deux groupes de femmes - les bénévoles de classe moyenne qui assurent le fonctionnement de la résidence, et les jeunes femmes célibataires qui y vivent. Bien que répondant à un besoin sociétal en offrant logis et nourriture à des femmes gagnant de petits salaires, les gérantes de la résidence s'intéressent tout autant à façonner la féminité et la moralité des résidentes. Ancrés dans un langage de réforme et de renouveau, les pratiques et l'idéologie de ces femmes ressemblent de près à celles des réformateurs sociaux de la génération antérieure, faisant appel à une comprébension de la féminité basée sur leur vision de la race, de la classe sociale, de la religion et de la sexualité. Cet article relate la vie à la résidence et la façon dont certaines femmes y trouvent un second chez-soi. tandis que d'autres se sentent moins à l'aise à l'intérieur

des murs d'une institution inconnue et de classe moyenne. Se positionnant comme citoyennes indépendantes de Montréal, et grâce à la disponibilité de logements abordables, plusieurs jeunes femmes célibataires affirment leur liberté et leur indépendance durant les années qui suivent la deuxième guerre mondiale en défiant les règles qui leur sont imposées et, ce faisant, rejettent la féminité structurée qui leur est offerte par des institutions tels la résidence Julia Drummond.

Before making out your application for residence in the Julia Drummond Residence we should like you to appreciate that this house came into being for the purpose of providing a home for girls coming to the city to work for the first time.¹

In May 1971, after nearly fifty years of service, the Julia Drummond Residence in Montreal closed its doors. This is the story of the residence, from its origin as a vision of Anglican social reformers, through the middle years of its success, to the final years of its struggles and eventual closing. As newcomers to Montreal, young, single, working women were often subject to low salaries, poor housing options, and unknown dangers, both real and imagined, of a big city. This article considers the Julia Drummond Residence as a place of intersection for two groups of women-the middle-class volunteers who ran the residence and the young working women who lived there. While the residence met a need in society by providing shelter and food for women earning small salaries, it also served to regulate and promote a type of femininity as defined by middle-class reformers of English-speaking Montreal. This paper examines how the two groups interacted in the context of the residence and how class, gender, ethnicity, and religion shaped their experiences. The women who managed the residence were as concerned with moulding the residents into "proper women" as they were in giving the young women a place to live. Using rules, staff members, and space, the residence association regulated the activities and productivity of the residents, thus guiding them towards its vision of successful womanhood. This article also describes the transformations and modifications that took place in the postwar years, highlighting the effect that changing ideas of gender, sexuality, religion, and ethnicity had on the women living at and running the residence.

The papers of the Julia Drummond Residence are housed at the Archives of the Anglican Church, Diocese of Montreal. The fond is not exhaustive. What remains, including meeting minutes, promotional materials, photographs, and some correspondence, is enough to get a glimpse of life at the JDR, but there are many gaps. Some can be filled by outside sources such as newspapers, private papers, and the archives of similar organizations. A growing body of secondary literature complements this effort as well. Women's entrance into the paid work force was first explored by labour historians concerned with women as workers. Historians such as Joan Sangster, Linda Kealey, and Bettina Bradbury examined the impact of women on the workplace, with particular attention to their role in unionization and the family economy. Kathy Peiss's watershed work Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York turned our attention to the experiences of single women outside of work through an examination of their leisure activities, arguing that recreation was both a liberating and Americanizing experience. Joanne Meyerowitz and Carolyn Strange further extended this field, revealing the city as a dangerous but exciting place for young, unattached women. In La norme et les déviantes: des femmes au Québec pendant l'entre-deux-guerres, Andrée Lévesque surveyed the ways women in Quebec challenged the roles assigned to them by the middle and upper classes. Those who shaped la norme are brought to light in Mariana Valverde's foundational The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1880-1920, which further revealed the ideologies and methodologies of the social reform movement through an examination of the discourse of social reformers. This article builds on these foundational studies of the social reform movement and considers how the work of reformers continued beyond the traditional periodization offered by historians of social reform.²

Housing the Single Woman in Montreal during the 1920s

During and after the First World War, single women arriving in Montreal to work were faced with the enormous challenge of finding suitable housing. As the largest city in Canada, Montreal had its areas of wealth, beauty, and order, but the presence of slums could hardly be denied. While the middle class could reside in safe and sanitary neighbourhoods, much of the working class was confined to unsafe and unsanitary living conditions. Inadequate living conditions, poor health, and unemployment plagued Montreal's working class partially as a result of the extreme population growth at the turn of the century. The city had a population of approximately 267,730 in 1901.³ By 1921 the population was 618,000, and by 1929 the population was reported at one million.⁴ The housing situation could not keep pace with the speed of in-migration, causing a decline in living conditions, especially noticeable among the working class. As the middle- and upper-class families moved "up the hill," many single-family dwellings were remodelled as rental spaces, making rooms smaller, darker, and more crowded. Low family incomes, absentee landlords, the shortage of materials during the First World War, and the city's failure to adapt effectively further contributed to the slum-like conditions prevalent in working-class neighbourhoods.5

The migration of working women to urban centres at the outbreak of the Great War further transformed the city's demographics. By 1916, extreme shortages in the workforce were evident, and as a result many women and children were employed in Montreal. By the end of the war, a new type of woman was arriving in the city known as the "business girl." According to the 1921 census, 10 per cent of Montreal's population was young women between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five.⁶ Nearly half of this group was listed in the category of wage earner.⁷ As Kate Boyer has noted in her study of clerical work in early twentieth-century Montreal, "office work was the fasted growing sector of employment for women, accounting for the third largest percentage of women in paid employment by 1921, after factory work and domestic service."⁸

Young women who were employed in Montreal, as elsewhere in Canada, were hard pressed to make a living wage. Although Terry Copp, in his Anatomy of Poverty: The Condition of the Working Class in Montreal, 1897-1929, struggled to discover accurate statistics regarding wages during the 1920s, he produced some worthwhile findings.⁹ His estimation, for a woman of twenty years or more, was that she made \$682.00 per annum prior to the economic downturn of 1929, working out to \$13.11 per week, while a man of the same age made \$1321.00 per year, or \$25.40 per week. Women under twenty years of age were reported to be earning \$423.00 per year during the same time, working out to \$8.13 per week, versus \$497.00 per year or \$9.55 per week earned by men under the age of twenty.¹⁰ In 1928, the Women's Minimum Wage Commission estimated that a single woman needed between \$10.85 and \$19.81 a week in order to survive in Montreal, including an allowance of \$7.00 per week for rent, \$11.50 per month for clothing, \$11.00 per month for personal items, and daily streetcar fare.¹¹ A single, working woman in Montreal in the 1920s, therefore, was faced not only with the challenge of earning enough money to get by, she was also confronted with a desperate housing situation.

As single women became more visible in the city as a result of the increase of "business" jobs for women between 1900 and 1930, social reformers became concerned about the respectability and morality of these women. The "business girl" was considered to be a new and different type of working woman. Their positions were deemed to be more respectable than factory work. Often employed in clerical positions, these women were from the middle and working classes, the country and the city. They were required to have a high school diploma and some training in typing or stenography. Most importantly, it was assumed that they would work for a couple years and then leave the workforce upon marriage and motherhood. They were gaining useful life experience through the employment opportunities offered to them but would eventually become the mothers of the future.¹² What was at stake, in the minds of middle-class reformers, was the future of society. It became immensely important to monitor and mould their morality. One of the biggest challenges to maintaining one's morality was finding suitable housing. As noted in the campaign flyer for the Julia Drummond Hostel Association, "When our attention was first focussed upon this subject the public was shocked at the lack of accommodation, the dark rooms, keyless doors, inadequate sanitary arrangements, poor food,

the absence of facilities for social intercourse, or recreation which constituted all that a business girl could call 'home' in the larger cities."¹³

In the minds of Christian middle-class reformers, part of the solution to the problem of inadequate living conditions for single women was to provide supervised accommodations. When daughters left small rural towns, their families could then safely send them to the city without risk of their falling into the many dangers perceived to be there. Many reformers believed that single women who arrived in Montreal would have no defence, on their own, against the city's temptations, an anxiety evidently shared by parents. As Carolyn Strange and Mariana Valverde have pointed out, a white slavery panic dominated the narrative constructed by moral reformers about single women and the city.¹⁴ Stories proliferated about innocent young female victims being seduced at train stations by street-smart, conniving men who then sold these women into a lifetime of prostitution and slavery. By protecting and maintaining women's purity, reformers were equipping women to become good mothers for the "new day," or the creation of heaven on earth. Though largely unfounded in reality, this moral panic provided the impetus for "saving" young women from such a plight by providing safe and supervised living accommodation for them.

In England and elsewhere a popular solution had appeared in the form of hostels, an idea that spread to Montreal. The purpose was to provide affordable and supervised housing in convenient locations (near the working core of the city), to single women moving to cities in order to find work. By 1920, the Young Women's Christian Association, an interdenominational organization, had opened three boarding houses in Montreal with room for 200 long-term residents.¹⁵ Two were located on Dorchester, and one was located on Ste. Famille between Milton and Sherbrooke streets (see figure 1). As well, the YWCA operated a rooming directory, which helped women find supervised living in approved private homes. By 1919, there were 350 supervised houses on their list, and more than ten thousand women had found accommodation.¹⁶ At least five different Roman Catholic organizations offered similar services, but with a denominational requirement. Les Soeurs de la Charité or the Grey Nuns had a residence for pensionnaires at 71 Lagauchetière Ouest. The residents were served their meals in the cafeteria and offered monthly study sessions and access to a library. Les Maisons du "Foyer" had several houses located on St. Denis, Champ de Mars, and Mansfield streets.¹⁷ They housed a chapel, library, verandas, recreation room, and laundry room, along with running water in every room.¹⁸ Similarly, the Fédération nationale St.-Jean-Baptiste offered "chambers pour dames" at 443 Sherbrooke Street East. Prices ranged from twenty-five to thirty-five dollars a month.¹⁹ The Sisters of Service Residential Club was established to provide supervised accommodation along with "assistance, advice and counsel for young girls upon arrival in Montreal . . . [with the] aim to assist these girls to become integrated into the Montreal community as successful and responsible citizens."20 Several other Catholic

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Figure 1: Hostels for Single Women in Montreal, 1920s

Key

- 1 YWCA: 502 Dorchester
- 2 YWCA: 539 Dorchester
- 3 YWCA: 25 Ste. Famille
- 4 Grey Nuns: 71 Lagauchetière Ouest
- 5 Maison du foyer: 207 Champs de mars
- 6 Maison du foyer: 83 Mansfield
- 7 Fédération nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste: 443 Sherbrooke East
- 8 Salvation Army: 5 Mansfield
- 9 Khaki Club (later Julia Drummond Hostel): 2 Bishop
- 10 Julia Drummond Residence

options were listed in *Le Foyer: bulletin mensuel des intérêts féminins*—including private homes and larger organizations.²¹

Despite the presence of such organizations, the 1923 annual report of the YWCA described the continued difficulties of housing single women: "We are tremendously handicapped by not having more accommodation for girls away from home. We are obliged to refer them to our rooming directory every day because we only have a very few single rooms in our buildings, and when the only privacy a business girl finds is in her own room she naturally wants it to herself no matter how small it may be."²²

And in the annual report of the following year, "We are eagerly looking forward to the day when we can have a large hostel to house the numbers of girls who apply to us for rooms."²³ When

this was written, plans to open another hostel in Montreal were well underway.

An Anglican Response: The Julia Drummond Hostel Association

Many of Montreal's elite families were members of the Anglican Church. The Anglican Church, which served as a symbol of status and wealth beyond its numbers, made up 8 per cent of the population of Montreal and 31 per cent of the Protestant population.²⁴ Many families hoping to climb the social ladder made the switch to the Anglican Church from other Protestant denominations. Considered leaders in the community, the Anglican elite engaged in extensive philanthropy. Following the end of the First World War, the Anglican Church energetically took up the cause of the Forward Movement, an interdenominational appeal intended to last one year and produce record amounts of money that would provide the means to move society "forward" via social reform. Montreal's Anglican community was acutely concerned about the social evils that arose from city life. In particular, many Anglicans were concerned that the future of society was being determined by the youth, and felt that the church was not doing its part in protecting this younger generation from the perils of the city. At the annual synod meeting in 1919, the bishop of Montreal observed, "It seems appalling for so many of our young people to come to the city without understanding the dangers and temptations awaiting them; and without that knowledge and high regard for the sanctity and dignity of the human body that would be such a strong defense."25

In 1920, acting on the urging of prominent women in his diocese, Bishop John Cragg Farthing of the Church of England Diocese of Montreal composed and sent letters to all the Anglican parishes of Montreal, in support of an Anglican hostel for young business women. Bishop Farthing outlined his vision for the institution, including specifications for the women who were to take charge:

There is a movement on foot among the women of the Church to take steps to provide a hostel for business girls in this city, and I have been asked to obtain from you the names of two women of influence and zeal in your congregation who can meet with others to consider the proposition. There are a great many girls whose homes are not in Montreal, who are finding it increasingly difficult to obtain suitable and safe lodgings, and it has been suggested that a number of hostels should be established, and I am very anxious that our women should do their share to provide for our girls. If you would be good enough to telephone to my office the names of those whom we could invite, it would save time and also save you the trouble of a written reply.²⁶

Bishop Farthing received varied responses to his letters requesting help. While some vicars, such as the one at Trinity Church, wholly supported the idea, others, such as the vicar of Christ Church Cathedral, responded with much less enthusiasm for an Anglican establishment: "To provide hostels for working girls is an excellent proposition, but I have always felt that this is the type of enterprise which could best be carried out by common action rather than denominational."²⁷

The bishop was adamant in his conviction and responded to his critics with zest and enthusiasm:

I refuse to be identified with an undenominational institution of this character as I [am] perfectly willing that it should become absolutely Presbyterian or even Methodist, but there must be an absolute influence, and that could not be contained in an interdenominational or non-sectarian institution. The Church of England has never limited her service to members of her own communion . . . we minister to all who desire our help irrespective of their affiliations and that will be the attitude of the Hostel.²⁸

Farthing believed that the hostel must be more of a home than an institution and that common religion was what defined a home: "I feel that there should be a home influence in these Hostels, and you cannot have that without the religious atmosphere and we can have the religious influence better where there is agreement. We know how it affects even the religious life and the home when there is a mixed marriage."²⁹

While Farthing initiated this campaign, the practical work was guickly taken up by Anglican women across the city. It is significant that while the names of the residents are almost completely absent from the surviving records, the names of the volunteers who campaigned for and ran the residence are carefully listed for each year. These women, who were members of Montreal's middle and upper class, were incorporated into an extensive network that recognized social obligations, including participation in philanthropic activity. Several of the "founding members" were likely recruited to support the hostel specifically because of their social reputations. Though Julia Drummond did give her practical and financial support to the residence, she knew nothing of the residence until Bishop Farthing approached her for permission to use her name for the home. Lady Julia Drummond-along with the other signatories of the Petition for Incorporation of the Julia Drummond Hostel, Mabel Beatrice Wolferston Lockhart and Katie Tinling Stewart-was a prominent member of Montreal's elite community. All three were widows and very active, generous members of the philanthropic network, though none of them were involved in the initial planning. Likewise, the majority of the members were women who were familiar with philanthropic practices, sitting on numerous other committees and other boards, having the time, money, and energy to give to the cause. Their husbands and fathers were mostly professionals such as physicians, lawyers, and managers, while all executive members were Anglicans.

The early 1920s was a time of shortage and recession in Montreal.³⁰ Any campaign to raise money was destined to be an arduous task. Influenced by the social scientific current that had transformed charity into philanthropy, the women were convinced that the residence should not rely on continuous donations but should be self-sufficient. Using a "good busi-

ness" model, the hostel association focused the campaign on the investment value of the hostel, predicting both a financial and moral gain for individuals and society. As Mariana Valverde has shown in her study of moral reform, while charity depended on individual, random contributions, philanthropy was an organized, communal effort aimed to effect long-term consequence.³¹ Philanthropists sought a systematic way to produce a moral return on their investment, focusing on the root of social problems. The Julia Drummond Hostel serves as a clear example: "The housing stringency is at an acute stage . . . Crowding and discomfort are an inevitable consequence. In the case here presented the problem is not to be solved by taxation; but by the sympathetic co-operation of the public it is hoped the initial cost of building and equipment may be met. Once established, the Julia Drummond Hostel will be run on business lines and will issue no annual appeal."32

On 20 January 1921 the campaign for the hostel began with a grand kick-off event. With a goal of \$150,000, five hundred supporters gathered for tea at the Windsor Hotel.³³ While the institution was run by and under the auspices of the Anglican Church, it was financed by the community at large. An article supporting the island-wide ten-day campaign appeared in newspapers such as the Daily Star and Le Foyer: bulletin mensuel des interêts féminins, extending the campaign's network beyond both the Anglican and the English community. The Montreal Herald provided a daily update of the campaign, noting the amounts raised by each canvasser, encouraging English Montrealers of all denominations to support the "deserving project."34 At the end of the campaign, a disappointing \$51,141 had been collected from individuals and businesses. Though receiving just one third of the expected revenue, the hostel association went forward with an altered agenda, replacing the dream of a new building with a more economically feasible plan of converting the former Khaki Club at 2 Bishop Street (see figure 1) into a suitable residence for young women. In December 1923, Lady Julia Drummond officiated at the opening ceremony of the hostel, which could house between forty and fifty residents.³⁵ Within several years, the hostel needed more space, and in 1927 the association purchased two adjoining houses and property on the corner of Bayle and St. Mark streets (see figure 1). For \$66,000 the new building was able to house between eighty-five and one hundred residents (almost double the capacity of the former building), and the residence officially moved in 1929.³⁶ Located in the western downtown working core, the new residence provided Montreal's "business girl" with "appropriate" quarters close to downtown jobs.

The 1920s had been a time of growth both in the city and in the residence. With a full house, the residence was able to be financially self-supporting with the revenue collected from weekly rentals; there was no need to appeal for further donations. The move in 1929, however, ushered in a new era of difficulty. Faced with the devastating effects of the Depression, including the decline in the number of residents, the residence once again became dependent on personal donations from the community, prompting the residence association to wonder if the hostel could ever be a truly self-supporting institution. In 1932, the board of management invited J. P. Jellett, a prominent businessman, to assess the financial situation of the hostel. All things considered, he "thought the situation remarkably good, the chief problem being those girls who lacked employment, as it was necessary to run the Hostel on a business basis."37 The residence association was hesitant to evict residents who could no longer pay rent, not wanting to turn the women onto the street, creating a growing financial crisis. Several years later Bishop Farthing attempted to rally the board with his hope that "times would soon be prosperous again" and that "the Association would not only get back onto its original self-supporting basis but could perhaps enlarge its scope."38 At its lowest point, the residence was housing only fifty-four residents when it was designed to stay financially afloat at eighty-five.³⁹ Despite financial hardships, the board of management reported a good spirit among the volunteers and the residents. One woman held that "she did not think there was any place in Montreal where young women could obtain such good accommodation at so low a cost."40

With the onset of the Second World War, the association was relieved of many of the concerns about attracting residents. The return of war meant that women were again needed in the workforce in great numbers, and by 1943, the residence was full.⁴¹ Even with the increase in the number of residents, the board of management was faced with severe shortages that resulted from rationing. Heating the building had become enormously more difficult and expensive because of the inferior quality of coal. The most pressing issue, however, was the lack of domestic staff available to keep the residence running. By 1945, the heaviest expenditures went to the wages of domestics and the number of daily women employed when full-time staff were unobtainable. Desperate, the board applied to the Wartime Prices and Trade Board, Rentals Division, for permission to raise fees fifty cents per week.⁴² The morale of the residence, however, was considered by the board to be very congenial. The minutes of the annual meeting record that the residents gathered in the evenings to knit, producing a significant number of socks and sweaters for the Dental Corps.⁴³

After the war, the residence experienced financial prosperity. With all beds occupied and an extensive waiting list, the building itself underwent serious renovation including new plaster, paint, and flooring for most rooms in the house, new furniture in the common areas, and the purchase of modern appliances for the staff. The years of prosperity were reflected in the cheerful reports of the superintendent, Mrs. Buchanan. In 1950, she testified to the pleasant feel of the home because "so many of the girls bring their friends in for the evening and often all the rooms are filled, which is so much better than being out."⁴⁴

Despite these ups and downs, the residence was highly successful for many years from the perspective of the manage-

ment. The coming years would prove to be more challenging, as the residents began to underscore their desire for autonomy and freedom in new ways.

Living at the Julia

The Julia was a hostel for respectable women. To be accepted, a woman was required to fill out an extensive application form and provide a list of references. The referees were questioned about her character as well as the financial resources available to her. She was interviewed alone, then with her parents, and if she was admitted to the hostel, she moved in for a minimum of three months. The enforced minimum stay was meant to deter "transient" women from applying to the residence, though in difficult times this rule was often relaxed. The ideal woman, in addition to being in need and being "desirable as a resident," was between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five and she stayed for two or three years at most, at which time it was hoped she would be moving out in order to get married or make the transition to respectable "spinsterhood." Upon moving in, she would have been required to sign a document assuring the superintendent of her willingness to abide by the rules of the hostel.45

The hostel offered single, double, and dorm accommodations. In 1923 the weekly rate for a single room was \$8.50, a double room was \$7.50, and a dorm was \$6.50. These rates were increased throughout the years, although no major increases occurred until the Second World War, when shortages were rampant in Montreal. The final rate increase was imposed in 1969. At that time a single room cost \$25.00 per week while a dorm was \$18.50 per week.⁴⁶ These rates included two meals a day at the hostel, and if the residents worked within walking distance of the hostel they could return for lunch at a minimal charge. Housekeeping was provided weekly for the residents, although they were expected to keep their own rooms neat and were required to make their beds daily. Aside from the superintendent, there were generally three full-time "housemaids" employed at the residence, as well as a night supervisor, janitor, night watchman, and assistant superintendent.⁴⁷

Occasionally, individual residents emerge from the records. Most, however, remain shrouded in the collective known as the "residents." If the names of the residents no longer exist in a systematic form, what can we learn about these women as individuals and as a group? The original intention of the Julia Drummond Hostel was to provide housing for needy, young working women, "of any creed or colour." Was the home indeed open to all religions and races? From among the muted voices and silences, some facts emerge. In 1946, the minutes record that there were thirty-two Anglicans, twenty-four United Church members, thirteen Roman Catholics, twelve Presbyterians, three Baptists, and one Lutheran living at the JDR. Of these residents, two were under the age of twenty, fifty were under the age of thirty, and ten were over the age of thirty. That the statistics were collected by religion and age rather than race or ethnicity gives an insight into the motivation and experience of

the board. Afraid that the residence would become a home for "spinsters" and not for young women needing supervision in order to maintain their respectability and thus prepare for marriage and motherhood, the board of management made extensive efforts to lower the age of residents, and the average age of the residents had been lowered to nineteen years by 1954. Correspondence from supervisors reveals that women from the Victorian Order of Nurses lived at the residence in the 1930s and 1940s and women from Trans-Canada Airlines during the 1950s and 1960s.⁴⁸

From the outset the women running the Julia Drummond Hostel promoted the residence as a home to women "of any creed and colour." Photographs, however, show well-dressed young women, all of whom are white. Hostel minutes confirm this point, reporting that young women had immigrated from England, Scotland, Ireland, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Switzerland. Even though there were several "exotic" places referred to on the list such as Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and India, places with strong British connections, the women were more than likely white and children of the Empire.⁴⁹

The racial character of the residents is brought out clearly in 1960, when a special meeting was held to discuss "the question of taking two coloured girls from Trinidad." Both of the women were students at McGill and had been living at the Royal Victoria College. Though never a resident at the Julia, Rosemary Brown, in her autobiography, *Being Brown: A Very* Public Life, provides some context for the experience of black women in Montreal.⁵⁰ When Brown chose to move out of Royal Victoria College in the early 1950s, she was frustrated to discover that apartments in the downtown core were not available to her or other blacks. Therefore, institutions such as RVC and the JDR were the only convenient options available to black female students in Montreal during this time.⁵¹ Despite the claim of accepting women "of any creed and colour," the request by the two Trinidadian women was so unusual and contentious that a special meeting was needed to discuss the "situation that has fallen upon us." While there is no transcript of the meeting one can only assume that the topic up for discussion was the racial heritage of the girls and its impact on the respectability of the residence. As they had been recommended by the staff of Royal Victoria College and because the residence was accepting other students at the time, it is doubtful that other issues were a problem. The conclusion of the committee was that "from a Christian point of view, there must be no discrimination. Mrs. Heward proposed and Mrs. Dinsmore seconded that these girls be accepted if their recommendations from RVC (Royal Victoria College) were in order."52

That there needed to be discussion at about "two coloured girls from Trinidad" is evidence of racial bias and prejudice. And it is striking that the home, which had been open since 1923, was experiencing the situation for the first time in 1960. The population of "business" or working women in Montreal was by no means exclusively white during the life of the Julia Drummond Hostel, but for at least the first forty years whiteness was an attribute of what an ideal resident was in the eyes of the women running and living at the hostel. $^{\rm 53}$

Regulating Femininity

In the Julia Drummond Residence the values of young working women came in direct contact with middle-class values. In establishing and managing the residence, the middle-class women positioned themselves as authority figures over the women who lived there. Their power extended beyond the practical decisions of daily life. It determined who was and who was not an appropriate resident and how the residents should behave while under their protection and guidance. An examination of this intersection can reveal the frameworks through which each group viewed the world and allows us to unpack understandings about what it meant to be a woman from two intersecting but different perspectives. Unfortunately, while the term "ideal resident" was used frequently by the middle-class women who administered the residence, there is little recorded dialogue about what this term meant. Therefore, we must look beneath the surface at structures put in place to regulate the behaviour and shape the morality of the residents.

In her examination of health reform and housing in nineteenthcentury England, Annmarie Adams concludes that women, bodies, and houses were actively interacting, shaping, and giving meaning to each other.54 Adams convincingly reads the architecture and the way people thought about architecture as a historical source, expanding the limited repertoire of "traditional" female sources. Antoinette Burton sees the home as a material archive as well, affirming that the home was central to the "social identities & the cultural forms through which they experienced both family life & national belonging."55 Employing these useful techniques in the study of the Julia Drummond Residence, one finds that the building itself and the way the space within the building was used and thought of by its inhabitants become key evidence in exploring the ways regulation was imposed, monitored, and shaped. Fortunately, one source that remains in the fond of the JDR is a small but valuable collection of images. The images were produced for publication and therefore must be considered in that light-situations that were "staged" and were meant to portray a specific image to the viewer.

The building, on the corner of Bayle Street and St. Mark streets, was plain from the outside. From the street it looked like many attached houses in Montreal. The main floor included a living room, date room, recreation room (or lounge), formal dining room (used mostly by honoured guests), chapel, boardroom, and offices of the superintendent and her supervisor. In later years, a sick room was opened for residents needing supervision or isolation as the result of illness. To prevent house fires, a single room was designated for ironing and was situated beside the laundry room. A sundeck and badminton courts allowed residents to get exercise and fresh air in a supervised space.

The pictures of the inside display charming rooms and clean quarters. Many of the rooms combined the comforts of home



Figure 2: The Julia Drummond Residence, undated.

with the realities of living in a communal environment.⁵⁶ For example, the living room was a large, tastefully decorated space with a piano and full bookshelves, where the residents could interact with other residents and guests. While it resembled a middle-class home in the way it was decorated with comfortable sofas, abundant plants, and large windows, the low ceiling and curtained stage gave it a particularly institutional feel. The bedrooms, decorated in pastel blues and pinks with curtains and rugs, though comfortable, were small and dormlike for the most part.

Other rooms such as the dining room, where the meals were served "cafeteria-style," and the staff offices, were more obviously institutional in their appearance and function. The presence of the chapel reinforced the strong religious character of the residence. The date room was reserved for residents wishing to entertain their male guests during visiting hours, episodes that were open to scrutiny from other residents and the supervisor, lending a very formal feel to the space.

Access to privacy—a carefully monitored commodity in such an institution—became the privilege of those who could afford



Figure 3: Living Room, undated.

the extra expense of a single room. Outside of single bedrooms, there were few private moments afforded the residents. The presence of supervisors and staff in conveniently placed locations around the house ensured that the space was maintained for acceptable behaviour only and, in effect, reinforced the cultural expectation that those with more money required less supervision. From its discerning interior design, that was far from excessive, to its physical layout, the residence closely resembled a suitable, middle-class home, a home that may have felt more like an institution at times. It afforded residents the opportunity to observe a good home and the work that goes into maintaining such a home. It also promoted the type of behaviour expected of respectable women.

In order to emulate a home-like atmosphere, the women who ran the residence emphasized the concept of family. Ascribing to maternalist principles, the middle-class women promoted the importance and centrality of the home to women. In a space of domestic interaction, the construction of family roles within the residence reinforced ideas of patriarchy and female submission. In the home, the residents were "sisters," and their sisterhood was strengthened through drama clubs, music clubs, reading clubs, knitting clubs, and the Girls' Friendly Society. Ethel Stevens Martin, who lived in the home during its first years, recalls fondly the bonding that occurred in the evenings at the residence. On 29 January 1924 she wrote, "I stayed in and knitted. There was a crowd of us in the sitting room and we sent out for some ice cream and we went downstairs and ate it and talked, and altogether we had a very nice time."57 Fitting into the sisterhood was important for the residents. Those who, for whatever reason, did not belong in the close-knit sisterhood were not likely to enjoy their time at the residence. When Martin returned to the residence a second time, the reason she gave for not enjoying her time there was that "the girls who are there now are not half as nice as the ones who used to be there."58



Figure 4: Double bedroom, undated.

The board of management determined the primary role of the superintendent to be a "mother" for the residents and, therefore, it was essential that she be a wholesome and worthy model. In response to an application for the position of superintendent, the secretary of the hostel association wrote, "Your letter regarding Miss P---- reached me this morning. We are not looking for a dietician but for a wise and cultured woman to be the Head of our Julia Drummond Hostel."59 The superintendent was there to provide both comfort and guidance to the residents. Her role as "mother" also extended into areas of discipline. It was her role to ensure that house rules were observed and that disciplinary action was taken for residents who breeched the rules. She maintained files on all the women living in the residence, recording such things as the date they entered the home, the payment dates, their behaviour, their interactions with other residents, and the types of recreation each resident was involved in at the home and outside of the residence. The superintendent was also in charge of room inspections, which gave her the right to enter the rooms of residents at will, without their permission. 60 Her duties included making a full report each month of the residents and submitting it at the board meetings.⁶¹

The maternalist image of the family perpetuated by the board pervaded every aspect of residence life and included a patriarchal father figure. In the beginning, the father role was filled by Bishop Farthing, who took an active part in the home. He was known to visit the residence frequently until his health declined, and he resigned his see in 1939. While the executive committee and the board of management, made up entirely of women, managed the home, they were under the direct supervision of the bishop of Montreal, as outlined in the Constitution



Figure 5: Cafeteria/Dining Room, undated.

of 1921, and were expected to submit to his authority—a structural feature they themselves instituted at the hostel's founding.⁶² The patriarchal role was also filled by the Advisory Board, consisting of no fewer than three men, "for the purpose of consultation and advice on legal, financial or business matters arising out of the work [of the Hostel]."⁶³ The Advisory Board, in reality, handled the business that was too "complicated" for the women of the Executive Committee. Certainly these men had professional expertise that was of value for the association, but by creating a separate committee along gendered lines, patriarchal roles were accepted and enforced.

Echoing the ideology and practices of the social purity movement of the late nineteenth century, the women running the residence were preoccupied with sexuality until the close of the residence in 1970. While the association did not approve of certain forms of sexual expression, they did not deny its existence. In their mission to provide young women with the life skills they would need in order to be mothers of the next generation, they promoted "healthy" (i.e., supervised and non-physical) heterosexual interaction. Concerned with the reputation of the residents, the association established rules that regulated sexuality both within and outside of the residence, from strict curfews to formal visitation codes for men. When the home opened in 1923, residents were required to be home and in their own rooms by 11 p.m. In her diary in 1924, Ethel Stevens Martin writes with a fear that was undoubtedly well known to many other residents through the years: "It was after eleven when I got home and the door was locked so I went to the front door and what should I see but a sign over the bell reading 'Bell out of order.' My heart sank but I thought I would at least try to open the door, and Io and behold, it did open. I was just in time though, Mrs. Patton was just going to lock it."⁶⁴

Curfews were extended slowly, though residents were always required to request late night passes ahead of time and had to sign in with the night supervisor.

There was little room or time for a goodnight kiss without being seen by the other residents or the night supervisor. In her diary, Martin relates, "After I had shown [the girls] around the Hostel and as they were preparing to go home, Viola stepped into the hall just as one of the girls was kissing her beau. Viola was shy about going first for the rest of the way out."65 Although the home provided some discrete and dark corners for private whispered conversations, these intimate sessions were not available to males and females. The only place that men were allowed to be present was in the "date room," which, of course, was supervised. The other rooms on the main floor were offlimits to male visitors, and therefore a stolen moment in the hall was the most intimacy that a resident could hope to have with her date. The convenient location of the superintendent's office near the front door meant that she could scrutinize the escorts of residents.

Dances, which afforded the residents and their beaux a chance to be together at the residence, were held in the early years of the hostel. The management believed that it was the perfect opportunity to allow heterosexual interaction in a healthy, supervised environment. Every year until her death, Lady Drummond sponsored a Valentine's Dance, while the residents hosted their own Halloween dance. These dances, which were held in the lardest of the downstairs rooms, were well attended and well supervised. On 25 November 1958, the chaplain reported to the board of management that while attending the Halloween Dance he and his wife were "impressed by the efficiency and organization . . . and [were] anxious for the Board to know that the girls, by their choice of escorts and their deportment with the same demonstrated such high standards as to encourage more entertaining."66 Members of the board were also often present with their husbands, serving as examples of positive heterosexual relationships.

The residents were allowed, for the first time in 1970, to invite their male friends into any room on the first floor. The board of management agreed reluctantly to the rule change only after implementing a plan to monitor and regulate the behaviour and morality of the residents by hiring an additional supervising employee. The *Montreal Star* reported that "the [new] receptionist would keep an eye on things but . . . the formal atmosphere of the previous 'date room' was somewhat more relaxed."⁶⁷ What was at stake in relaxing the rules was the possibility that residents would sully their reputations. The purpose of regulating sexuality was to ensure both the purity of the residents



Figure 6: Date Room, undated.

themselves, as outlined earlier, and the purity of the residence as a home, demonstrating the explicit connection between the morality of the person with the purity of the home. Many similar institutions allowed the residents much more freedom in sexual activity by the end of the Second World War, but the female management at the Julia Drummond Residence was devoted to maintaining the image and morality of the residents and the residence.⁶⁸

Challenging the Norm

As the changing regulation of male visitors suggests, the late 1950s ushered in a decade of new challenges in the world at large and at the Julia Drummond Residence. As attitudes about gender roles, sexuality, religion, and ethnicity were opened to scrutiny and transformation, the practical implications of this process were felt by organizations such as the JDR. At the residence, they caused conflict between the volunteers who maintained expectations of traditional lady-like behaviour (and submission) and the residents who challenged these roles and demanded a new freedom. Furthermore, the increase in university and college attendance delayed the entrance of many women into the workforce, and, as a result, decreased the demand for housing by young single working women between the ages of nineteen and twenty-five. In 1958, as the initial screening process relaxed, a member of the board reported that "disguieting discoveries had turned up regarding the type of girl in residence."69 The nature of the discoveries was not reported but the board reinforced its firm conviction that it had "no intention of changing its policy with regard to taking in psychiatric or emotionally disturbed girls."70 Petty thieving became common, and locks had to be changed on all bedroom doors.⁷¹ In 1959, when the board released the superintendent from her contract because of ill health, the residents reacted by harassing board members with phone calls late into the night and by producing a newspaper that Mrs. Parker, president of the board, called "childish, rude and brash in its attitude of the board."72 Two residents in particular were brought to the attention of the board. One, Miss Young,⁷³ was not only behind in her rent but was deemed "unsuitable" as a resident and asked to leave.⁷⁴ Miss Smith, who was more than \$200 behind in rent and out of work, had "come in intoxicated several times." She refused to give the address of her parents or any information about her background.⁷⁵ She too was asked to leave, and a lawyer was hired to pursue the money owing. In general, the residents were increasingly stretching the rules of the residence, from eating in their bedrooms to sneaking in guests for meals. By the mid-1960s, the number of residents attending chapel services had declined to the point where

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the chaplain decided to have informal discussions rather than formal services.

The number of residents declined as did the number of applicants. Residence demographics witnessed a significant increase in the percentage of students who used the home, while there were fewer working residents. Although the increase in students had brought residents "of an intellectual type with artistic and aesthetic interests" to the residence, filling the residence during the summer months became particularly troublesome.⁷⁶ The residence, consequently, was faced with severe financial deficiencies. At a meeting of the Board of Management in January 1966, it is noted that twenty-four residents had left residence during the previous two months. While turnover had always been a feature of the residence, this time there were few applicants to fill the vacancies. In the past, when reasons for leaving are recorded, the most popular reason was marriage. This time, however, of the extraordinarily high number of residents leaving the residence, only one left to get married. Of the remaining twenty-three, one resident left because she was ill, one had become unemployed and therefore turned to live-in domestic service, another returned to England, while three others left for other hostels (one to the Sisters of Service and two to the YWCA), and one was reported as having moved to the north part of the city. Without giving any reason for departure, three were planning to moving by 2 February, and the remaining sixteen had departed for apartments of their own, claiming that the increased rates at the Julia Drummond Residence was the main reason for their departure.⁷⁷ The empty and affordable apartments left after Expo in the following years only accelerated this pattern.

The sudden decline of the residence caused concern for the women in charge. They immediately set about to fix any problems they could find, believing that the residents were taking advantage of less supervision. In an effort to deal with the problems, the board consulted with Dr. McLeod, a practising psychiatrist and professor of psychiatry at McGill University. He visited the residence and then gave his advice to the board. He believed that a more active board would help "the girls . . . become good citizens and breakdown their social isolation."78 The board members then increased their visits to the residence and attempted to socialize with the residents in group situations such as dances. They also encouraged the staff to be more open to the young women. In particular, the superintendent was asked to spend more time with the residents than was expected of her predecessors.⁷⁹ The women believed that increased personal contact with the residents would produce a more caring environment and hence encourage them to remain at the residence. In order to avoid further problems, when the Girls' Counselling Centre first approached the board with the request to rent several rooms for their clients, the board rejected the offer because of the negative influence the clients would have on the residents.⁸⁰

After several meetings, the board of management agreed that it was important to modernize and revitalize the residence physically. The exterior of the residence was renovated, and several improvements were made to the interior as well, including the introduction of a new study in the basement. By 1969, efforts to "modernize and revitalize" bore some fruit with a full residence for most of the year and a decrease in the deficit as the result of donations given by the community and fees collected from the residents. However, the reprieve was brief, for by the annual meeting in March 1970, the treasurer reported that there was once again a deficit of \$9000 resulting from the high number of residents leaving. The treasurer stressed that "this uncertain hand to mouth existence is untenable and it is important that active steps are taken now."⁸¹ In 1970, the average occupancy had been fifty residents.⁸²

At the same meeting, the treasurer was happy to report that despite an earlier decision not to do so, nine rooms had been rented to the Girls' Counselling Centre for \$1753 per month. She was downhearted to report that this income was not sufficient to wipe out the deficit, though it would help to improve the situation. The financial worries were merely superficial in comparison with the concerns connected to the changing character of the residence. "Business girls, as our studies show, use us as a way station to apartments. To remain full we must count on students. We will, in effect become a student dorm. Our Board questions whether community needs justify such a use for this Residence. Present-day students, who might be expected to stay at least through a school year, demand a new freedom in residence-living which we are unable and also unwilling to provide."⁸³

Their research showed that students, as well as businesswomen, preferred to share an apartment rather than live under to the few remaining restrictions that the residence imposed on them.

The issue was thoroughly discussed. Mrs. Irene Kirkpatrick, the final president of the association, reasoned, "We have the building. We have an enthusiastic and energetic board and staff, and with expert guidance and recommendations of such bodies as the Montreal Council of Social Agencies, I am sure we can fill a pressing need." It was put forward at the meeting that by September 1971 "the present operation of the Julia Drummond Residence be changed to conform to present day needs, serving the Church and community in a new and more constructive capacity." Three months later, the residence received a Notice of Expropriation from the government. Two thousand square feet were to be partitioned off for new construction on the proposed Trans-Canada highway, now the Ville Marie Autoroute. The following month, January 1971, brought a Notice of New Government Safety Regulations, and the renovations required by the new safety regulations would impose an even larger economic crisis.⁸⁴ In February, just a month later, there were only seven residents left, and the focus of the board was to liquidate as much as possible. Once the staff was paid severance, the closing expenses were taken care of and partial tax payments were made for the year 1971, the home officially closed in May 1971.85

Conclusions

That the residence provided shelter and food to thousands of young working women living in Montreal is undeniable. Many

people, including Bishop Farthing and Lady Drummond, sacrificed time, energy, and resources because they believed that they were providing a service that was greatly needed. Beyond its practical mandate, the residence was a place where two groups of women met and interacted and therefore provides us with a glimpse of how these two groups conceptualized the role of women in society.

In the first place, the middle-class women who ran the residence were claiming an active and autonomous role in the public sphere through their philanthropic management. Intertwining the practices of business with those of philanthropy, these women were engaging in a sphere that was considered male and, therefore, largely inaccessible to them in the 1920s. Social historians have been so absorbed in understanding the professionalization of social services that they have often overlooked the continuing role of philanthropic volunteers in the twentieth century. The example of the Julia Drummond Residence challenges the idea that the era of voluntary social reform ended after the First World War and repositions religious conviction and social conscience as central motivating factors well into the 1950s. While meeting a need in society by providing shelter and food for women earning small salaries, the women running the residence were just as concerned with the shaping the femininity and moral fibre of the residents. Using the language of reform and renewal, the practices and ideology of these women resembled closely that of social reformers of the previous generation, echoing judgment of femininity based on understandings of race, class, religion and sexuality.

Second, this case study provides a glimpse at how young, single, working women experienced life in the city. It sketches some of the challenges they faced, particularly those related to housing. These women were needed to find a safe and affordable place to live in Montreal in order to acquire and maintain their jobs, which in turn provided them with some financial independence. The Julia Drummond Residence met this need. Having a safe and affordable place to live meant that a single woman could have a job and, accordingly, be independent of her family. On a second level, the existence of an institution like the JDR affirmed the existence and the importance of single working women. It provided a niche for them in the realm of respectable femininity. Furthermore, the self-sustaining business model employed by the managers was meant to prevent the residents from feeling like recipients of charity, thus maintaining their self-respect and dignity.

This article explores what it was like to live at the residence, how some women found the residence a "home away from home," while others were less comfortable in the unfamiliar and seemingly cold middle-class institution. It delineates the ways rules and space were used to control the activities and the morality of the residents. The life of the residence demonstrates the gradual change in the role of single women in Montreal. Prior to the Second World War, single, working women were thought to need protection from the dangers of the city. Historians such as Andrée Lévesque, Carolyn Strange, and Judith Walkowitz have noted the ways young women rejected and reformulated moral and social conventions imposed on them. While there were examples of such rejection at the Julia Drummond Residence, particularly evident by the 1950s, many of the residents in fact accepted and endorsed the femininity promoted by the women running the home. The tide was changing, however, by the end of the 1950s. Positioning themselves as independent citizens of Montreal, while affordable housing became increasingly available, many young, single women asserted their freedom and independence by challenging the regulations imposed on them, and, in so doing, rejected the structured femininity offered to them by institutions such as the Julia Drummond Residence.

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- For more information on similar types of boarding houses in Toronto, see Carolyn Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, 177–186.
- Minutes of the Board of Management Meeting, 27 January 1959, box 16, AACDM.
- 70. Ibid.
- 71. Ibid.
- Minutes of the Board of Management Meeting, 24 February 1959, box 16, AACDM.
- 73. Names have been changed.
- 74. Minutes of the Board of Management Meeting, 26 May 1959, box 16, AACDM.
- 75. Minutes of the Board of Management Meeting, 31 March 1959, box 16, AACDM.
- Minutes of the Board of Management Meeting, 29 November 1966, box 16, AACDM.

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- 77. Minutes of the Board of Management Meeting, 25 January 1966, box 16, AACDM.
- Minutes of the Board of Management Meeting, 27 January 1959, box 16, AACDM.
- 79. President's Report at the Annual Meeting of the Julia Drummond Residence Association, March 1970, box 17, AACDM.
- Minutes of the Board of Management Meeting, 26 May 1959, box 16, AACDM.
- Treasurer's Report at the Annual Meeting of the Julia Drummond Residence Association, March 1970, box 17, AACDM.
- 82 Ibid.
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 Minutes of the Julia Drummond Residence Association, May 1971, box 17, AACDM.
- 85 All information in paragraph from the Minutes of the Final meeting of the Julia Drummond Residence Association, May 1971, box 17, AACDM.