

Université de Montréal

**"A Most Weird Dialectic of Inversion":
Revolutionary fraternity, sexuality and translation
in Pierre Vallières and Eldridge Cleaver**

William M. Burton
Département d'études anglaises
Faculté des arts et des sciences

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Ce mémoire intitulé :
"A Most Weird Dialectic of Inversion":
Revolutionary fraternity, sexuality and translation
in Pierre Vallières and Eldridge Cleaver

présenté par :
William M. Burton

a été évalué par un jury composé des personnes suivantes:

Jane Malcolm
présidente-rapporteuse

Robert Schwartzwald
directeur de recherche

Caroline Brown
membre du jury

For my parents

&

In memory of

*Ray (1933-2010), Uretta (1918-2010),
John (1924-2011), Patricia (1936-2011)*

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table of Contents | ii |
| Résumé / Abstract | iii |
| Acknowledgements | iv |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Methodology and corpus | 6 |
| Terminology and language | 8 |
| Chapter 1: <i>Les Nègres blancs d'Amérique</i> | 9 |
| Introduction | 9 |
| Phallic Mother / Castrated Father | 13 |
| Passive / Active | 20 |
| Fictive Kinship and Revolutionary Fraternity | 28 |
| Chapter 2: <i>Soul on Ice</i> | 33 |
| Introduction | 33 |
| White Man / Black Man | 34 |
| White Woman / Black Woman | 40 |
| Miscegenation and Ruptured Genealogy | 46 |
| Brotherly love | 50 |
| Chapter 3: <i>White Niggers of America</i> | 56 |
| The drive to translation | 56 |
| Made in U.S.A. | 62 |
| "White Niggers..." | 67 |
| "...of America" | 78 |
| Conclusion | 83 |
| Appendix 1: Vallières's gay writings | 91 |
| Appendix 2: Defense | 93 |
| Bibliography | 97 |

Résumé / Abstract

Dans ce mémoire de maîtrise, il s'agit d'examiner le rôle du genre, de la sexualité et de la traduction dans les rapports entre deux mouvements nationalistes. D'abord, nous examinerons les représentations de la famille véchiulées dans l'autobiographie du membre du Front de libération du Québec Pierre Vallières (1938-1998), *Les Nègres blancs d'Amérique*. Ensuite, nous nous pencherons sur l'analyse du genre et de la sexualité contenue dans *Soul on Ice*, un recueil de textes écrits par le nationaliste noir Eldridge Cleaver (1933-1998). Dans les deux cas, la question de la violence révolutionnaire tiendra lieu de fil conducteur. Enfin, dans le troisième chapitre, nous relisons la traduction anglaise de Vallières, *White Niggers of America*, signée par Joan Pinkham. Cette relecture nous fournira l'occasion à la fois de comprendre et de critiquer, à partir de la perspective établie par la pensée de Cleaver au sujet de la masculinité noire dans une société régie par la suprématie blanche, comment Vallières essaie de bâtir des réseaux de solidarité internationaux et interraciaux entre les hommes. Dans notre conclusion, nous réunirons ces trois textes par le biais du sujet de l'internationalisme, en nous servant de la théorie *queer*, de la traductologie et des données biographiques pour résumer les résultats de nos recherches.

Mots-clés: Pierre Vallières, Eldridge Cleaver, Joan Pinkham, genre et sexualité, race, traduction, études queer

In this master's thesis, I will explore the roles of gender, sexuality and translation in the relationship between two nationalist movements. In the first section, I will look at the representations of family life contained in the autobiography of Front de liberation du Québec member Pierre Vallières (1938-1998), *Les Nègres blancs d'Amérique*. In the second section, I will examine the analysis of gender and sexuality offered by *Soul on Ice*, a collection of texts written by the Black nationalist Eldridge Cleaver (1933-1998). In the third section, I will re-read *Nègres blancs* in English translation—Joan Pinkham's *White Niggers of America*—in order both to understand and to critique, from the vantage point created by Cleaver's reading of Black masculinity in a white-supremacist society, Vallières's attempt to build networks of international and interracial solidarity between men. In the conclusion, I discuss internationalism as a way of tying the three texts together and make use of queer theory, translation theory and biographical data to formulate final remarks.

Keywords: Pierre Vallières, Eldridge Cleaver, Joan Pinkham, gender and sexuality, race, translation, queer studies

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¹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, Series Q (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), xiv.

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*New York City
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Introduction

If the body is synecdochal for the social system per se or a site in which open systems converge, then any kind of unregulated permeability constitutes a site of pollution and endangerment. Since anal and oral sex among men clearly establishes certain kinds of bodily permeabilities unsanctioned by the hegemonic order, male homosexuality would, within such a hegemonic point of view, constitute a site of danger and pollution [...].²

Pierre Vallières wrote *Les Nègres blancs d'Amérique* in November 1966 while in prison in Manhattan. Arrested by the New York police for disturbing the peace while protesting in front of the United Nations, Vallières and his comrade Charles Gagnon had hoped to garner support for the cause of Quebec independence among the Third World nations whose representatives now thronged the organisation's halls.³ A year previously, the two had founded the first cells of the Vallières-Gagnon group of the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ). After undertaking a few actions or attacks against businesses in Montreal—some of which resulted in deaths—Vallières and Gagnon went on a tour of the United States in the summer of 1966, hoping to forge links with Black Americans and Puerto Ricans. During this time, back in Montreal, the police were actively working to break up the FLQ cells Vallières and Gagnon had built: on 15 June, two *felquistes* were arrested for stealing arms from an army barracks; as Canada Day approached, the police performed at least 115 "preventive" arrests; on 27 August, three members of the Vallières-Gagnon FLQ network were arrested trying to rob the cinéma Jean-Talon; and on 15 September, a dozen members of the *réseau* were detained and the police released an arrest warrant for Vallières and Gagnon.⁴ It was in this climate that they made

² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble : Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 168.

³ Pierre Vallières, *Nègres blancs d'Amérique. Autobiographie précoce d'un "terroriste" québécois*. (Montréal: Typo [parti pris], 1994), 30, 454–5.

⁴ Louis Fournier, *FLQ : histoire d'un mouvement clandestin* (Outremont, Québec: Lanctôt Editeur, 1998), 133–5.

their way to the UN headquarters in New York City, hoping to protest the conditions of these "political prisoners".⁵

Meanwhile, Eldridge Cleaver was serving time in Folsom Prison in California for rape charges—he had been raping white women as "an insurrectionary act".⁶ This was Cleaver's second time in prison; he had become acquainted with the racist disciplinary and penal system much earlier, in 1954, when he had been sent to Soledad state prison on marijuana possession charges.⁷ Not long before Vallières was imprisoned, Cleaver was writing:

It is exasperating [for white Americans] to see little brown men and little yellow men from the mysterious orient, and the opaque black men of Africa (to say nothing of these impudent American Negroes!) who come to the UN and talk smart to us, who are scurrying all over *our* globe in their strange modes of dress—much as if they were new, unpleasant arrivals from another planet. Many whites believe in their ulcers that it is only a matter of time before the Marines get the signal to round up these truants and put them back securely in their cages. But it is away from this fantasy world that the white youth of today are turning.⁸

Cleaver and Vallières both found decolonisation in Africa, Asia and Latin America exhilarating and wanted to hitch their respective people's wagons to its star. For Cleaver, this would happen when he left prison: while there, he had affiliated first with the Nation of Islam, then with Malcolm X after he broke away from that organisation, and eventually joined the Black Panthers.⁹ This last association would be his most famous.

One might well build a comparative study of these two writers based on their interest in and appropriation of decolonial discourse, since both clearly were inspired by African, Asian and Latin American liberation movements. Some research into this has already been initiated, at least for revolutionary Quebec nationalism.¹⁰ What follows, however, turns the focus away from the importation—via French culture brokers and exegetes like Sartre or

⁵ Vallières, *Nègres blancs*, 453–4.

⁶ Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice* (New York, N.Y.: Delta Trade Paperbacks, 1999), 33.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 21–2.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁹ Eldridge Cleaver, *Eldridge Cleaver: Post-prison Writings and Speeches* (New York: Random House, 1969), ix–xiv.

¹⁰ David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex and Security in Sixties Montreal* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2013); Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010); Mathieu Poulin, *Citer la révolte : la reprise québécoise du discours de la décolonisation francophone* (Montréal: Université de Montréal, 2009); Robert Schwartzwald, "Institution littéraire, modernité et question nationale au Québec, 1940 à 1976" (Université Laval, 1985).

through English-language translations—of decolonial thought, and examines from a comparative and translational point of view Vallières, Cleaver and the former's translator, Joan Pinkham, within their North American context, as socially-produced actors specific to this continent.

Over the course of my research, it has become apparent to me that many people find the idea of comparing Eldridge Cleaver (1935-1998) with Pierre Vallières (1938-1998)—not to mention Black nationalism with revolutionary Quebec nationalism—surprising, uncomfortable or unpalatable. But these two prison writers present a host of similarities. Some are superficial, but nevertheless striking. Both were renowned advocates of political violence; both were members of radical revolutionary cells—Cleaver, after writing *Soul on Ice*, would become a controversial member of the Black Panther Party, and Vallières was imprisoned twice because of his role in the FLQ. And both continued to change throughout their lives, Cleaver eventually affiliating with the Church of Latter-Day Saints and becoming a Reagan Republican, Vallières reconverting to Catholicism, coming out of the closet and involving himself in Indigenous solidarity during the Oka crisis in 1990. Cleaver and Vallières both died in 1998, each with his mental health in a fragile state.¹¹

Beyond these similarities, however, ideological links between revolutionary Black and Quebec nationalist groups do indeed exist, and they even seem to have had material ties to one another as well.¹² At least one incident ties them together: a plot to blow up the Statue of Liberty, among other monuments. According to *Time*, "the Black Liberation Front, a hot-eyed batch of pro-Castro New York Negroes" (namely, Robert Collier, Walter Bowe and Khaleel Sayyed), together with "[a] frowsy, 6-ft. blonde [woman] named Michelle Duclos, a 26 year old member of the Rassemblement pour l'indépendance nationale", hatched the plans; but

¹¹ "Pierre Vallières, 60, Angry Voice of Quebec Separatism, Dies," *New York Times*, December 26, 1998; Charles Gagnon, "Adieu Au Camarade Pierre Vallières," *Conjonctures* no. 29 (Printemps-été 1999): 41–47; "Eldridge Cleaver, Black Panther Who Became G.O.P. Conservative, Is Dead at 62," *New York Times*, accessed August 21, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/02/us/eldridge-cleaver-black-panther-who-became-gop-conservative-is-dead-at-62.html?scp=12&sq=eldridge%20cleaver&st=cse>; Ashley Lavelle, "From Soul on Ice to Soul on Fire: The Religious Conversion of Eldridge Cleaver," *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 14, no. 1 (2013): 75–93.

¹² I believe that the subject is explored in Ryan Andre Brasseaux, "Ensemble, On Est Capable: Memory, Cultural Politics, and the Rise of l'Amerique Française" (Yale University, 2011), chapter 7. However, Brasseaux's dissertation is under embargo until publication and therefore I was unable to consult it.

ultimately, both the BLF and Duclos were duped.¹³ The BLF member agitating for the plot was a New York police officer cooperating with the FBI and the RCMP. Four other Montrealers would be arrested.¹⁴ Vallières does not mention the plot in his book, although he discusses it in later works; Cleaver does, without mentioning the Quebec angle, however.¹⁵

So, ships passing in the night, as far as Eldridge Cleaver and Quebec nationalism are concerned. Since the texts that would constitute *Soul on Ice* mostly appeared in the left-wing Catholic magazine *Ramparts* before 1966 (the year the book came out), it is possible that Pierre Vallières read them before he went to prison that year. However, since Vallières's official archive at the Archives nationales du Québec in Montreal (MSS293 Fonds d'archives Pierre Vallières) contains only manuscripts for two books published in the late 1970s, it is difficult to ascertain whether he had read Cleaver or not. What is certain, however, is that he had traveled throughout the U.S. and spoken with Black American activists, and that he had read Robert Wilson's *Negroes with Guns* and a collection of Malcolm X's speeches (*Malcolm X Speaks*).¹⁶ As for the possibility of Vallières influencing Cleaver, because the writing of *Soul on Ice* predates the publication of *Nègres blancs* in English in 1971 as *White Niggers of America*, the latter could not have written his book under the former's influence.¹⁷

But over and above these biographical similarities, and beyond the question of whether Vallières had read parts of *Soul on Ice*, the two writers emerge from a specific historical conjuncture of the postwar period in North America. Coming of age in the aftermath of the war, members of politically dominated proletarianised ethnic minorities (although only one of them is racialised), the two writers are especially preoccupied by the psychosexual development of their people and its relationship to their emancipation. They understand the political situation of their respective groups as a form of the struggle for recognition that

¹³ "The Monumental Plot," *Time* (February 26, 1965): 28; Fournier, *FLQ*, 99–103.

¹⁴ Fournier, *FLQ*, 100.

¹⁵ Cleaver, *Soul on Ice*, 76.

¹⁶ Pierre Vallières, *Les héritiers de Papineau : itinéraire politique d'un "nègre blanc" (1960-1985)* (Montréal, Québec: Québec/Amérique, 1986), 107; Vallières, *Nègres blancs*, 114–115.

¹⁷ I will discuss Joan Pinkham's situation vis-à-vis Vallières in great detail in chapter 3; suffice it to say here that though I am disappointed to reproduce the traditional invisibility of translators in this introduction, it is—I hope—for good reason here.

characterises the Master/Slave relationship.¹⁸ For both writers, the alterity "generated and maintained"¹⁹ by domination—whether it be white supremacy, British colonialism or American Empire—aligns the dominated class or group, conceived of as a subject-nation, with a series of lesser terms in the binary polarities that structure Western modernity. In this paradigm, the dominant class/nation—Anglo-Saxons or whites in general—occupy the position of master, associated with the mind, the masculine, gynoerotic desire and creative energy, technology and modernity. Meanwhile, the dominated nation becomes isomorphic with the body, the feminine, androerotic desire and procreative capacity, the land and archaic folklore. The men of the dominated class are relegated to the status of object and Other to the subject and Self of the dominant class.

Cleaver and Vallières are particularly concerned with the damage that this system wreaks on the masculinity of the dominated subject-nation. Claiming that racism and colonialism emasculate and even "homosexualise" Black men and French-Canadian men, each writer seeks not only to empower his people politically and economically through a program of modernisation, but also to emancipate it in the realm of the Symbolic through a program of virilisation: to recover the phallus. For both writers, the body is synecdochal for the nation, as Judith Butler argues in the quotation I have used as this chapter's epigraph, and thus being dominated by women or non-normative men, or allowing a white man to fuck you, not only degrades you as an individual, but the nation as a whole. Indeed, in the texts I will analyse, there is no difference, on the personal or the national levels, between authentic political and economic empowerment in the Real, accession to modernity, and the re-possession of the phallus in the Symbolic.²⁰ Political and economic revolution will bring about a radical transformation in psycho-social relations. Thus when Cleaver and Vallières propose

¹⁸ This reading of the master/slave relationship is widespread in postwar French and francophone philosophy, particularly among those influenced by Alexandre Kojève; we can see its influence in Sartre as well as in Fanon. The summary here owes something to a series of lectures by Myriam Bienenstock, "Emmanuel Levinas in Context: The French Connection" (Elie Wiesel Center for Judaic Studies, Boston University, April 10, 2013); "Emmanuel Levinas in Context: The German Connection" (April 17, 2013); "Emmanuel Levinas in Context: The Jewish Connection" (April 24, 2013).

¹⁹ The phrase is taken from Vincent Desroches, "Présentation: En quoi la littérature québécoise est-elle postcoloniale?," *Quebec Studies* 35 (Spring-Summer 2003): 10.

²⁰ The previous sentences obviously bear the mark of Lacanian influence, but I emphasise that I use the terms "phallus", "Real", "Symbolic", etc., only loosely; they do not indicate any adherence to Lacan's system of thought.

revolutionary violence as the means by which the current political-economic order can be overthrown, they view this course of action as necessarily restorative of the masculinity of a subject-nation understood as psychically castrated.

In chapter 1, I will show that for Vallières, the dominance of women—and in particular mothers—impedes appropriate political violence in Quebec and thus retards French-Canadian liberation. By rejecting overbearing mothers and forming intersubjective, non-hierarchical relationships with other men, male Quebeckers will be able to create an independent, socialist and secular francophone nation in North America, a body politic whose subjectivity is no longer fragmented by the agony of colonial capitalism.

In chapter 2, I will examine Eldridge Cleaver's system of thought, in which Black revolutionary action will, by negating the negation of Black men's humanity and intellect, accelerate a dialectic through which they will cease to be emasculated and penetrated by white society and recover their proper role as figures of authority in their relationship to Black women, thereby becoming full subjects. The dialectical, revolutionary process will establish balance in the four-way relationship between Black men and women and white men and women.

In chapter 3, I will examine Joan Pinkham's translation of Pierre Vallières into English. I will demonstrate the presence of what I call, after Antoine Berman, Vallières's drive toward translation, as well as Joan Pinkham's translation strategies, the publication process of *White Niggers of America*, and its place within Vallières's ideological and strategic concerns as a would-be revolutionary.

I will conclude with some comments on Vallières's later life as an openly gay activist and the impact these later developments, as well as his status as a minority-language writer, might have on our re-reading of his work and its translations today.

Methodology and corpus

In chapters 1 and 2, I approach the texts using a form of rhetorical discourse analysis deeply informed by the methodologies of intellectual history, largely inspired by the works of Marc Angenot, in particular his notion of the argumentative arsenal; the details of this approach are

given in chapter 1.²¹ Taking for granted the notion that texts are socially produced, I discern in Cleaver and in Vallières the presence of argumentative arsenals derived from their particular speech communities—African-Americans and French-Canadians.

In chapter 1, I relate Vallières's writing to the tropologies of development commonly found in French-Canadian literature, working with the definitive 1996 edition of *Nègres blancs d'Amérique*, reviewed by Vallières before his death. I occasionally compare it with the other editions, especially the original, published in 1968. In chapter 2, I do the same for Cleaver (*mutatis mutandis*), while comparing the tropologies of African-American literature and life he uses with those discussed in chapter 1. My source here has been the definitive, widely-available edition of *Soul on Ice*. In chapter 3, I use an historicising, semi-biographical approach, with recourse to interviews and archival material, alongside reader-response theories of translation, in order to understand how Joan Pinkham's translation of Vallières was written, became successful—and then dropped off of the radar of most U.S. readers. My conclusion will explore, using translation and queer theory, relationships between racial-minority and linguistic-minority cultures.

I do not come from such cultures. I am a gay white anglophone American man. To some, these subject-positions will not be relevant to the research results that follow this introduction; to others, they may be incredibly important (and not detailed enough!). There is merit, I believe, in both arguments, and to be frank, I have not resolved the question for myself. Am I authorised to discuss such texts, which deal so intimately with Black masculinity or Québécois virility? Can I do so without reproducing white-supremacist or colonial tropes? Does my position as researcher put me into an unethical position of power over the writers I study? I do not know. For lack of extended metareflection—which I do not feel capable of offering here or now—I can only say that I hope what follows is manifestly animated by what, in the history of ideas, is somewhat condescendingly called, the "principle of charity": as far as

²¹ Marc Angenot, "La notion d'arsenal argumentatif: L'inventivité rhétorique dans l'histoire," in *Chaim Perelman, 1912-2012: de la nouvelle rhétorique à la logique juridique* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2012); Marc Angenot, *1889: un état du discours social*, Collection L'Univers des discours (Longueuil, Québec: Le Préambule, 1989); Marc Angenot, "Théorie du discours social," *CONTEXTES. Revue de sociologie de la littérature* no. 1 (September 15, 2006), <http://contextes.revues.org/51?id=51>; Marc Angenot, *L'histoire des idées: problématiques, objets, concepts, méthodes, enjeux débats*, Discours social nouv. sér., 2011, v. xxxiii, xxxiii BIS (Montréal: Chaire James McGill d'étude du discours social de l'Université McGill, 2011).

I am concerned, Joan Pinkham, Eldridge Cleaver and Pierre Vallières believed in good faith that what they were writing and doing was ethical, rational and sound. I have attempted to understand their work in its context, without criticising them for failing to live up to my own historically-contingent and –constructed ethics or politics.

Terminology and language

I use the term "French Canadian" (adjective: "French-Canadian") when referring to the self-identified ethnic group descended from the French settlers who colonised New France in the 17th century. "Québécois", "Quebecker" and their variants, I prefer to reserve as a non-ethnic denominator of people living in Quebec. Nevertheless, since the distinction between these two terms is crucial in Pierre Vallières's work—and since, for him, they cover roughly the same population—usage in what follows may be somewhat inconsistent.

In my text, I use the term "Black" and "Black American" to refer to the self-identified ethnic group descended primarily from slaves brought to North America by European traders and colonists. I capitalise this term, since it refers to an ethnic group and not simply a racial category. As for "white", on the other hand, which is rarely used as an ethnic denominator outside of explicitly white-supremacist organisations, I prefer not to capitalise.

When authors whom I quote follow different capitalisation or terminological regimes, I have maintained their own practice. French quotations are generally given in the original without translation. However, I have occasionally translated single words or brief phrases for the sake of euphony. I write 's after Pierre Vallières's name when I use it genitively, since the *s* in Vallières is silent.

Chapter 1: *Les Nègres blancs d'Amérique*

Introduction

One of the curious afterlives of Pierre Vallières's memoir-cum-political tract *Les Nègres blancs d'Amérique* was its use as pedagogical material in a translation of *The Birth Control Handbook* by the early radical feminist group le Front de libération des femmes du Québec. Sean Mills writes that

From a contemporary perspective, Vallières's denunciation of his mother—blaming nearly all of his problems of adolescence on her domineering tendencies and holding her responsible for imposing clerical repression on the family—strikes the [contemporary] reader as approaching misogyny in its virulence.²² But at the time, Vallières's argument that "capitalism and religion have mass-produced mothers like mine" was understood by radical women as a damning indictment of the ways in which the combined forces of capitalism and colonialism stripped individuals of their humanity. It was in this context that he was cited, and the introduction [to the *Handbook*, written by the FLFQ] went on to argue that access to contraception provided the first step toward women's liberation, as the "control of one's own body" provides the condition for "the control of one's individual and collective existence".²³

This is not the only example of Quebec feminists appropriating, in order to conceptualise women's liberation, revolutionary nationalist ideas that later were labeled misogynistic. The articulation of a bodily politics by radical feminists in the early 1970s, Diane Lamoureux notes, was directly tributary to the language of male activists: Quebec feminists described their bodies as "territoire opprimé", mirroring a common trope of nationalist poetry (in Gaston Miron, for example) and politics. As Stéphanie Lanthier writes, summarising Lamoureux, "dans un premier temps, [...] le nationalisme a délimité le champ de perception du féminisme et, dans un deuxième temps, lui a fourni des éléments conceptuels utiles au développement de sa problématique de l'oppression".²⁴

²² I think many would consider "approaching misogyny" a charitable description. See, e.g.: Katherine Roberts, "Mère, Je Vous Hais!": Quebec Nationalism and the Legacy of the Family Paradigm in Pierre Vallières' *Nègres Blancs d'Amérique*," *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 20, no. 2 (September 1, 2007): passim.

²³ Mills, *The Empire Within*, 132.

²⁴ Stéphanie Lanthier, *L'impossible réciprocité des rapports politiques et idéologiques entre le nationalisme radical et le féminisme radical au Québec, 1961-1972* (Sherbrooke: Université de Sherbrooke, 1998), 7.

I begin this chapter thus, *in medias res* so to speak, in order to illustrate one of the most important questions posed by Vallières. As we shall see in great detail in what follows, the Québécoise mother is one of the fundamental causes of Quebeckers' collective failure to resist colonialism, according to Vallières's analysis. What could make this argument seem reasonable to the Québécoises of the FLFQ? The answer resides in the fact that in Quebec, both radical feminism and revolutionary nationalism evolve within what Marc Angenot calls the same *logic*. Angenot defines a logic as the "gnoséologie sous-jacente à un état de civilisation et à sa production d'opinions et de doctrines".²⁵ It is a set of rules limiting what can be said and thought, "un système [...] déterminant en moyenne durée un dicible local et un probable particulier, de sorte que seules certaines thématisations peuvent s'y exprimer. [Cet] ensemble [...] est formé de contraintes avec une marge de variation": namely, "le *dicible* et le *pensable*".²⁶ A number of these logics will compete within any given state of society. Western modernity has seen innumerable clashes between radical, liberal, conservative and reactionary paradigms, for example, and Angenot has written much about the first of these, which he understands as a "utopian-gnostic logic" consisting in an "articulation de la critique social et d'une contre-proposition utopique (qui se présente comme une prévision démontrée)".²⁷ He writes: "On voit se constituer intégralement dès le premiers tiers du 19ème siècle un *enchaînement propre* de raisonnements sur une société 'malade', sur un état social qui ne peut plus durer et sur son remplacement inévitable et prochain par une société juste et bonne".²⁸ Revolutionary Quebec nationalism is a local manifestation of this logic, pitted, as elsewhere, against the others, and one that conditioned the possible fields of vision of radical political movements that followed in its wake, like the FLFQ's.

This conditioning is due in part to the "rareté" of discourse.²⁹ Indeed, if one looks closely enough at any polemic or debate, it becomes clear that, rather than abounding in

²⁵ Angenot, "Arsenal argumentatif," 45.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 48.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 53–4.

²⁹ Michel Foucault, *L'ordre du discours : Leçon inaugurale au Collège de France prononcée le 2 décembre 1970* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009); Angenot, "Arsenal argumentatif," 48.

infinite variation—"plénitude et richesse infinie", as Foucault says³⁰—political disputes take the form of a severely limited number of arguments allowed by a given logic and available to the participants. Through rhetorical analysis, we can "reduce" these to a series of "*idéaltypes* étayés par des tendances rhétoriques bien marquées en moyenne ou longue durées", and then condense them into "un arsenal formé d'un nombre fini d'arguments récurrents en moyenne durée" with a certain degree of variation—what Angenot calls an argumentative arsenal ("arsenal argumentatif").³¹

That the FLFQ could find Vallières's account of motherhood not only compelling, but convincing as a symptomatology, derives from the fact that both radical feminism and revolutionary nationalism emerge from Quebec's utopian-gnostic logic. Vallières's work is limited, shaped, by the "weapons" made available to him by decolonising nationalism's tropology of gender and sexuality in Quebec. And although *Les Nègres blancs* is fundamentally a narrative—an *autobiographie précoce*—it nonetheless presents a series of arguments. Indeed, its narrativity might make it the ideal text for such an exercise, since, as Angenot writes, "[c]'est dans la co-occurrence du descriptif, du narratif et de l'argumentatif que s'enclenchent les mécanismes de déduction et d'induction mais aussi de l'abduction à l'origine de tout processus intellectuel puisqu'il s'agit de 'cadrer' des faits hétérogènes en une intelligibilité d'ordre nomothétique, paradigmatique ou séquentielle".³² Thus Vallières's book becomes a privileged site of interrogation since it combines in an idiosyncratic way the registers of description, narration and argumentation in an effort to frame or to explain at once an individual's *parcours* and his nation's history, vocation and destiny.

Narratives such as Vallières's are often marked by a particular strategy of the West's utopian-gnostic logic, namely what Angenot calls "la pensée binaire" or "la pensée manichéenne": "une manière de raisonner sur le social par alternatives et antithèses".³³ He gives an idealtype of this rhetorical structure: "au cœur des Grands programmes de critique social modernes se rencontrent inévitablement l'énoncé condensé du mal, le diagnostic de sa

³⁰ Michel Foucault, *L'archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 156; Angenot, "Arsenal argumentatif," loc. cit.

³¹ Angenot, "Arsenal argumentatif," 49, 52.

³² Ibid., 66–67.

³³ Ibid., 58.

cause ultime, la preuve de son caractère contingent et la prescription du remède tiré par renversement du constat du mal, et prouvé *a contrario*".³⁴ The slogan of *parti pris*, the magazine as well as the house of the same name which published *Nègres blancs*—"Laïcisme, indépendance, socialisme"—was articulated around such antitheses: religion, to be replaced by secularism, colonisation/revolution, capitalism/socialism. These social antitheses can be superimposed on teleological polarities of development (from the archaic to the modern, childhood/maturity). Together, they interface with binaries of domination: colonised/coloniser and proletarian/bourgeois in their linguistic (French/English, *joual*/French), gendered (female/male), sexual (castrated/virile, homosexual/heterosexual) articulations.³⁵ These last constituted a central antinomy in the cultural production of Quebec radical politics in the 1960s, in particular as it related to the "health" of the nation. In that decade, and indeed throughout the 20th century, we find "pronounced rhetorical tendencies" that allow us to abstract a limited number of tropes, an argumentative arsenal deployed to denounce the perceived feminisation/homosexualisation of Quebec society under colonial rule—although the target of the homophobic invective varied, from clerical nationalists in the 1930s to liberal federalists in the 1960s.³⁶

In what follows, I reread the accounts of gender and sexuality contained in *Les Nègres blancs d'Amérique* in light of this argumentative arsenal, identifying the ways it remains consonant with, or alternately marks a distance from, the tropes circulating in the 1960s. Closer examination of the polarities castration/virility and homosexuality/heterosexuality point us to an etiology of what Vallières understands as a widespread feminisation or pacification in Quebec. In section one, I will explore the undermining of patriarchal authority by capitalism and the opposition between the phallic mother and the castrated father. Section two looks at the impact of this conflict on the son's psychosexual development as he is educated within a school system dominated by gender-transgressive priests. In the final section, I analyse

³⁴ Ibid., 59.

³⁵ Lanthier, *L'impossible réciprocité des rapports politiques et idéologiques entre le nationalisme radical et le féminisme radical au Québec, 1961-1972*, 83–4.

³⁶ Robert Schwartzwald, "Of Bohemians, Inverts, and Hypocrites: Berthelot Brunet's Montréal," *Québec Studies* no. 15 (93 1992): 87–98; Robert Schwartzwald, "La fédérostrophie, ou les lectures agitées d'une révolution tranquille," *Sociologie et sociétés* 29, no. 1 (1997): 129–143.

Vallières's proposed solution to feminisation through the formation of elective kinship networks that would resubjectify Quebecker men as properly virile political subjects.

Phallic Mother / Castrated Father

About Vallières's mother in particular, I will not enter into much detail, although the portrait he paints of her is rich and, due largely to the materialism the author struggles to espouse throughout *Nègres blancs*, in fact rather nuanced; Katherine Roberts has already acquitted herself of that task.³⁷ Rather, I will show here how Vallières's parents take on the shape of the discursive patterns set by the argumentative arsenal. Vallières's mother Madeleine becomes the dreaded *mater castrans*, relegated to the private sphere and forbidding any ambition to change one's station; Vallières père, the castrated father, is full of political aspirations but blocked by his domineering wife.

The gendered division of labour in Vallières's childhood not only keeps his parents in "deux univers qui s'opposent", but endows them with different social and affective benefits and disadvantages: if, at the factory, his father "connaissait la fraternité dans le travail", "[à] la maison, au contraire, [sa] mère était seule avec les enfants et toujours la même corvée se présentait à elle".³⁸ Trapped in a domestic setting, Madeleine cannot see beyond her own nuclear family: "[Ma mère] n'aimait, en tout cas, personne en dehors de son mari et de ses enfants" (148), but Vallières intimates that this love was perhaps not what her family was looking for.³⁹

Indeed, between the spouses, there seems to be little in the way of true affection: Vallières believes that "[ses] parents ne connurent jamais l'amour, mais firent semblant de s'aimer, comme des milliers de Québécois" (148). The theme of family life as a primary form

³⁷ "Vallières' initial description of his mother hints at the complexity and tragedy of her situation and demonstrates his awareness of a socialisation model operative in 1960s Quebec that encouraged passivity and resignation in women. Raised and schooled to wait and pray, sacrificing her autonomy in order to fit into a larger social organisation of gender roles, the Quebec working-class mother learned to abandon her hopes and dreams and to accept her lot in life," Roberts writes regarding what we might call an epistemological or a rhetorical blind-spot: Vallières constantly verges on a sympathetic view of his mother's plight, but cannot quite formulate such a perspective. Roberts, "Mère, Je Vous Hais!," 297.

³⁸ Vallières, *Nègres blancs*, 151. All further citations are integrated into the body text between parentheses.

³⁹ "Mais je ne suis pas certain qu'elle nous aimait comme nous aurions voulu être aimés" (148).

of alienation recurs in Quebec literature of the time.⁴⁰ For Vallières, this feeling derives from the profound social and psychic disruptions caused by the colonial-capitalist order. Consequently, in a capitalist society, authentic love can no longer take root:

Seuls les prêtres s'imaginent que l'amour peut s'accommoder de la misère, de l'abrutissement quotidien, de l'ignorance crasse des lois et des beautés de la sexualité, du jansénisme et de la dictature du capitalisme. [...] Quand une femme fait l'amour par devoir d'État et subit la passion de son mari comme un prisonnier supporte la torture de la police militaire, comment la joie peut-elle l'habiter? Quand un homme abandonne à sa femme le contrôle de sa propre destinée... pour lui faire plaisir ou l'empêcher de gueuler, comment la joie peut-elle l'habiter? (152)

The perspective Vallières adopts here, as elsewhere in his autobiography, is the husband's, and it echoes traditional Christian injunctions about marriage: true wedded joy is a product of the wife *desiring* to "submit" to her spouse's "passion"; a man must preserve his autonomy, even as he shares his life with his wife.

The last line in the passage refers to Vallières père's submissiveness, for, according to his son, his political development is impeded at every turn by his wife. Consumed by anxiety that her family will not have enough money for food or shelter, she seeks only to protect her family and to make sure they lose nothing of the very little they already have. His father, meanwhile, "savait que [la misère,] c'était un problème social et collectif, qui réclamait un engagement social et politique", which he discussed with his "camarades d'usine" (148). "Mais jamais ma mère ne lui aurait permis de faire de la politique" (149); instead, she "annihilates" him, "imprisons" him "dans une peur irrationnelle et, disons le mot, égoïste" (149).

Nevertheless, fleeing his loveless home, Vallières's father seems to find another kind of love in the factory. "Probablement que mon père était très passionné à l'usine. Il était très aimé de ses camarades, en tout cas," Vallières reports (150). He finds similar moments of excitement and admiration with other men as well. For instance, when Vallières and his father meet with a landowner in Longueuil-Annexe who would like to sell his house, the latter tells them that he is moving because "[j]'ai toujours rêvé de travailler à mon compte. Un jour ou

⁴⁰ Michel Tremblay, for example, uses the metaphor of the prison cell in his *À toi, pour toujours, ta Marie-Lou* (1971). As Alain-Michel Rocheleau reads him: "Négligeant leurs besoins essentiels au profit des demandes d'un environnement exigeant, coupées de tout contact enrichissant avec elles-mêmes et les autres, les mères de famille, comme Albertine [e.g., in *Albertine en cinq temps*, 1984] et Marie-Louise, mènent une existence tissée de multiples frustrations. [...] En fait, loin d'être un lieu de bonne entente et de compréhension mutuelle, l'environnement familial se présente comme une prison (une 'cellule de tu-seuls') où chacun cherche à avilir l'autre, consciemment ou non". "Marcel, Manon et les autres... ou la folie dans l'œuvre de Michel Tremblay," *Québec français* no. 91 (1993): 74.

l'autre, il faut bien se décider à prendre des risques, pas vrai? Autrement, on piétine. [...] Je suis écœuré de cette vie-là. L'esclavage, ça fait trop longtemps que je supporte ça. [...] De toute façon, si je manque mon coup, ça ne sera pas pire que maintenant" (167-8). The key values of Vallières's ideology are here: autonomy and non-hierarchical living ("travailler à mon compte", "L'esclavage, ça fait trop longtemps..."), the assumption of the risks of adventure or ambition ("il faut bien se décider à prendre des risques", "ça ne sera pas pire que maintenant"). And since both Vallières and his father share these values, the latter cannot help but to admire the landowner. Vallières relates the incident with all due *mise en scène*: "Mon père écouta l'homme en le dévorant des yeux" (168).

Vallières's vocabulary in these two passages stands out: "passionné à l'usine", "très aimé de ses camarades", "le dévorant des yeux". For though these terms have neutral meanings, they also bear an erotic or desiring connotation that signals a displacement of amorous bonds from the spousal relationship to fraternal ones (albeit perpetually stymied by an interfering wife). Once the family has moved to Ville Jacques-Cartier, Vallières's father expresses an interest in social activities, hoping to "donner à toute la population cette dignité qui les éviterait, dans les reportages des journaux, d'être considérés comme les déchets humains de la métropole voisine. Mais là encore, ma mère opposa son veto" (171).⁴¹ In a soliloquy that presents her in a relatively complex way, Vallières's mother rebukes her husband with her despair: "Notre chair, qui n'a jamais connu la tendresse ni la chaleur de... ce que je n'ose nommer, n'est bonne,⁴² dans le monde d'aujourd'hui, qu'à ensemençer la terre de

⁴¹ It should be noted that at this point in his story, Vallières's family has moved from the Centre-Sud of Montreal proper to Longueuil-Annexe, later Ville Jacques-Cartier, eventually simply the city of Longueuil. While conditions in Longueuil-Annexe might have constituted an improvement on the slums of Montreal proper, they were hardly better. Vallières describes his family's wooden "cambuse", with three rooms: a kitchen-cum-dining-room-living-room-bathroom, a bedroom for the parents and youngest child, and another bedroom for Vallières and his brother. The walls of the shack were made of *donnacona*, "une espèce de carton dur et épais" made by Domtar. Many of the other houses in Longueuil-Annexe were made of tar paper. Most didn't have indoor toilets. The water came from an outdoor well (176-8). The only bus line going from Longueuil to Montreal was operated by a private company, the president of which would be the city's first mayor (175). See pp. 191-3 for an evocative description of the fragility and insalubriousness of the lodgings in Ville Jacques-Cartier.

⁴² Here, as elsewhere, Vallières shows great reticence speak frankly about sexuality. Later on, for instance, he writes "Après l'école, n'allions-nous pas, avec les filles, faire ces petites saletés que monsieur le cure appelait des péchés contre la pureté" and, describing a young woman who is "un peu [sa] maîtresse", he declares: "[N]ous nous amusons souvent à jouer avec nos..." (190).

sang inutile. Et tu crois que de cette atrocité universelle pourra sortir un jour une fraternité? Tu rêves, mon vieux, ou bien tu t'amuses à oublier la réalité" (144).

In this connection, I am reminded, by antithesis, of Robert Roussil's spruce sculpture "La Famille" (1939). The piece encapsulates—although in an oblique or somehow "off" way—the change many wished to see in Quebec society. It depicts a patriarchal figure towering over his wife, "un homme debout et une femme agenouillée devant lui, brandissant un enfant sur son épaule, dans un geste d'offrande. Les trois personnages sont nus et l'homme mesure plus de trois mètres".⁴³ The woman is scandalously, sensuously round. François Tétreau describes her: "Dodue, elle offre ses seins, des fesses et des rondeurs tout faits pour l'amour, le plaisir et la maternité. Callipyge en diable, et généreuse, cette femme palpite, ventre et cuisses en chamaille, elle bouge".⁴⁴ The woman, in this reading of the sculpture, represents sexual availability, procreative capacity and a proper submissiveness, ceding the child to the father figure. Curiously, however, the male figure is far from the traditional iconography of a virile, muscular, imposing patriarch: indeed, Tétreau compares him to the liberated inmates in Fritz Cremer's Buchenwald memorial! Although Roussil's man is all ribs, his "passive" attitude—arms held behind back, his flaccidity—differs markedly from the triumphant one lent to Cremer's survivors. Nevertheless, with its impressive height, the male figure—"totémique"⁴⁵—succeeds in creating an imposing presence.

The combination of the three figures produces, in the words of Guy Robert, a "hermaphrodisme [... qui] s'explique autrement que par une ambivalence anormale ou par une indétermination sexuelle", depicting rather a "conjugaison [...] des éléments masculins et féminins" that signifies "germination".⁴⁶ For Robert, this eroticism is not "une fin en soi" but "une manière d'être et de vivre", an explicitly political coupling: "Il y a le couple, l'amour, la famille: mais il y aussi la ville, la nation, les peuples et leurs rencontres qui sont la guerre et la

⁴³ François Tétreau and Robert Roussil, *Roussil écarlate: monographie* (Saint-Laurent, Québec: Trécarré, 1996), 13.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴⁵ Robert Roussil, *Vers l'universalité, le cul par terre* (Montréal: sn, 1977).

⁴⁶ Guy Robert, *Robert Roussil, 18 Novembre 1965-2 Janvier 1966* (Montreal: Musée d'art contemporain, 1965), 45.

paix".⁴⁷ "La Famille", for Robert, expresses an "érotisme de la solidarité qui voudrait que les hommes puissent vivre ensemble, plus chaleureusement".⁴⁸

Robert's reading is supported by Roussil's well-known political engagement on the left, which probably raised as many hackles as the sensuality of the piece. In 1949, Roussil placed the statue on the front lawn of the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Montreal. Robert's casually misogynistic account of what followed is revealing of the intellectual climate the statue was produced in: "Une dame patronnesse de la vénérable institution [Mme Angus⁴⁹], outrée dans sa décence britannique autant que troublée dans sa biologie profonde, use de son pouvoir dépité, fait venir la gent constabulaire: les policiers cèdent à ses douces instances, enveloppent soigneusement cette nudité trop familiale et la mettent en état d'arrestation".⁵⁰ In Michel Gaudet's account, the "obscenity" of the work is a pretext for political repression, invented by a "cabale".⁵¹ The work provoked a similar reaction in Tourettes-sur-Loup a few years later, although it was not jailed this time. "Le ridicule de l'affaire masquait en réalité une action contre Roussil", Gaudet writes, "dont par la suite de nombreuses statues furent brisées ou enlevées sur l'ordre de l'administration. L'auto-défense du pouvoir était en effet constamment en éveil car les prises de position politiques de la jeunesse et particulièrement de Roussil étaient nettes".⁵² Roussil's politics and aesthetics came into direct conflict with the "Establishment", as it would come to be called (in Quebec French as in English): with the logic of the reigning conservative order.

Although Roussil's politics were left-wing, and although his other sculptures represent more autonomous female figures, "La Famille" seems to echo, through negation, the same tropes as Vallières's portrait of his parents' marriage: the phallic mother and the castrated father, here replaced by a properly authoritative father and a properly submissive mother. Pierre Maheu gave perhaps the most sophisticated theoretical description of the "problems" of

⁴⁷ Ibid., loc. cit.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 48.

⁴⁹ Tétréau and Roussil, *Roussil écarlate*, 15.

⁵⁰ Robert, *Robert Roussil, 18 Novembre 1965-2 Janvier 1966*, 7.

⁵¹ Robert Roussil, *Vers l'universalité*, 24.

⁵² Ibid.

the Quebec family in his essay "L'Édipe colonial". Patricia Smart summarises and analyses the essay as follows:

Tout en insistant sur le fait qu'en réalité le Canada français traditionnel était une société paternaliste, Maheu montre comment sur les plans religieux, familial et historique cette société a vécu sous l'emprise du mythe de la mère. L'immobilisme [...], l'insistance sur les valeurs spirituelles et morales au détriment de l'action furent selon lui autant de manifestations de la "féminisation" du système des valeurs. Dans la situation coloniale, soutient-il, le passage de l'adolescence à l'âge adulte (il s'agit bien entendu du sujet masculin [...]) est vécu comme un affrontement non pas du père—puisque celui-ci est "inexistant"—mais d'"une présence d'interdictions... globale, englobante, maternelle" [...] une "bouillie sociale qui menace de nous engoutir dans les sables mouvantes de la Mère".⁵³

Smart writes elsewhere that "[o]n a souvent appelé la société traditionnelle canadienne-française un 'matriarcat' [...]. En réalité, cependant, cette figure maternelle solitaire et puissante était une construction idéologique créée par une hiérarchie mâle rattachée à l'Église catholique et modelée sur la France pré-révolutionnaire".⁵⁴ In fact, "le pouvoir du Père s'est toujours savamment dissimulé derrière l'écran de son 'pouvoir' à elle [la mère]", thus provoking the "ressentiment du fils qui est lésé dans sa propre autonomie".⁵⁵ This "pouvoir du Père" is that of the Church, which ultimately maintained control over social reproduction through institutions like schools and hospitals where decision-making power, although reliant "en grande partie sur le travail bénévole des femmes", rested in an all-male hierarchy.⁵⁶ As the "pivot de l'institution familiale," in Diane Lamoureux's words, mothers loom large in a society bent on the preservation of an "ethnicity", since they were more "sedentary", had greater literacy rates and thus acted as "adultes de référence".⁵⁷ Under the law, however, women enjoyed virtually no subjectivity (that is, personhood) until Bill 16 was adopted in 1964.⁵⁸

The trope of the all-powerful mother, then, is ultimately a myth. What of that other commonplace, the castrated father? He is equally the target of Vallières's text, even if portrayed more sympathetically. "[V]éritable ruine d'homme" (250), Vallières père is "l'absent,

⁵³ Patricia Smart, *Ecrire dans la maison du père: l'émergence du féminin dans la tradition littéraire du Québec: essai*, Collection Littérature d'Amérique (Montréal, Québec: Québec/Amérique, 1988), 241.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁵⁶ Diane Lamoureux, *L'amère patrie: féminisme et nationalisme dans le Québec contemporain* (Montréal: Editions du remue-ménage, 2001), 101.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 99–100.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 101.

le travailleur de nuit [...]. Il était comme mort [...]" (230). This decrepit man corresponds *du tout au tout* to the trope of which Maheu, once more, gives the most sophisticated rendition.

Katherine Roberts makes the connection between Maheu's text and Vallières elegantly:

The real father is far from an epic figure but "un homme fatigué, dégoûté de son travail, et qui n'aspire qu'au repos pantouflard et aux vacances ... le mari québécois est un homme accablé, écœuré des responsabilités de la famille, qu'il tend à fuir vers la routine de la bière et de la berceuse" [Maheu]. Similarly, in *Nègres blancs d'Amérique*, Vallières' father is both absent (working two jobs in order to save the money necessary to buy a house) and submissive (because he accepts his own oppression within the capitalist system). In a manner typical of anti-colonial nationalist rhetoric, the young Vallières is "fatherless", and left without an obvious target for his revolt.⁵⁹

Vallières's father's absence is in some sense metonymic for the absence of all French-Canadian fathers, an "abdication" that leaves the playing field open to what would later be called "les faux pères"—Catholic priests—who incarnate the "faux-féminin", that is, symbolic or literal homosexuality. "Sous le regime du faux-féminin", Robert Schwartzwald writes, summarising this trope, "la société vivait repliée sur elle-même et ses parties constituantes se renforçaient dans le mensonge de leur 'destin exceptionnel'".⁶⁰ Les hommes y sont dépourvus d'une authentique virilité, les femmes culpabilisées, mais en vérité injustement accusées et les enfants faussement blâmés pour leurs névroses".⁶¹ Robbing fathers of a true virility, the reign of the *faux pères* encourages a "repliement" on all levels of society, Schwartzwald remarks in a reading of Gaston Miron's "Notes sur le poème et le non-poème":

chez Gaston Miron ces domaines [le Québec figuré comme pays colonisé] se transforment en un "CECI" stagnant où la non-circulation de l'extérieur et de l'intérieur devient la norme. D'ailleurs cette condition tient autant pour l'individu et son rapport au monde que pour la communauté nationale et sa présence sur la scène internationale. En s'isolant dans son "CECI", le Québécois n'est pas à l'abri des assauts contre son intégrité: au contraire, sa passivité le condamne à subir les agressions du dominateur avec une vulnérabilité accrue.⁶²

Vallières's father, passive because brow-beaten by his over-powerful wife, is unable to move about in circuits of masculine identity (fraternal relationships of identification and recognition), just as his country, Quebec, is unable to be recognised as such by other subject-

⁵⁹ Roberts, "Mère, Je Vous Hais!", 296.

⁶⁰ Referring here to a strain of messianic thinking in Quebec politics.

⁶¹ Robert Schwartzwald, "(Homo)sexualité et problématique identitaire," in *Fictions de l'identitaire au Québec*, by Sherry Simon and et al. (Montréal, Québec: XYZ, 1991), 134.

⁶² Schwartzwald, "Institution littéraire," 157.

nations.⁶³ The diagnosis and the cure become clear once Vallières's discourse is placed in its tropological context: Women and false fathers run Quebec; this state of affairs maintains Quebec in colonial servitude; a restoration of authentically virile patriarchy is the solution.

Passive / Active

With an absent father and a phallic mother, the son is bound to follow an atypical—from the point of view of normative, heterosexist models—path toward subjectification. Of course, the daughter in all of this is lost, and not simply because Vallières is writing an autobiography. In much Quebec nationalist literature—indeed, over most of human history—men have not recognised women's full, autonomous subjectivity.⁶⁴ Subsumed by men's needs, women's subjectivity becomes defined by their relationship to men.⁶⁵ For instance, Vallières regrets that his mother did not become politically active—because it would have made his father happier! "Comme j'aurais voulu que ma mère fût une femme capable d'un certain courage et d'un espoir au moins semblable à celui de mon père", he writes. "Je suis certain *qu'alors mon père aurait mieux vécu et donné un sens à sa vie*" (149; emphasis added). Crucially, this is how Vallières describes his lovers throughout *Nègres blancs*. Roberts analyses these women as a series of "safe havens", "consoling female presence[s] [...] subconsciously perceived as maternal".⁶⁶ Ultimately, Roberts argues via Diane Lamoureux, women—as non-subjects—are ineligible to participate in political action as anything more than comforting, encouraging mothers (or maternal figures).⁶⁷

This pattern holds as true for stories like Vallières's—ostensibly based on the facts of his life—as for those fictional or poetic texts where relationships between men and women are metonymic for the nation. Lamoureux remarks that "une trame sexuée" structures "[l]e

⁶³ Much more on this in chapter 3.

⁶⁴ See Simone de Beauvoir's *Le Deuxième Sexe* (Paris : Gallimard, 1949).

⁶⁵ Smart, *Ecrire dans la maison du père*, 32, passim. Cf. Monique Wittig, "One is not born a woman", in *The Straight Mind* (Boston: Beacon, 1992).

⁶⁶ Roberts, "'Mère, Je Vous Hais!'", 302, 299–302.

⁶⁷ Or else they are sluts: Vallières, like many writers of his generation, finds himself mired in the Madonna-whore complex (about which binary vision see Beauvoir, "Le Mythe de la femme", *Le Deuxième Sexe*, vol. 1). See the analysis of his early novel, *Noces obscures*, by Jacques Pelletier, "L'imprécateur: Tombeau de Pierre Vallières," in *La gauche a-t-elle un avenir?: écrits à contre-courant* (Québec: Editions Nota bene, 2000), 133.

discours national[,] qui est celle de l'oppression comme castration ou comme infantilisation, à laquelle on oppose l'affirmation, la certitude de soi, partie constitutive du sujet moderne".⁶⁸

The subject-nation, then, is presumed male, and castrated or infantilised by British colonisation or U.S. imperialism. In a similar vein, Schwartzwald describes a *topos* where

la voie œdipienne (voie vers la domination) n'est pas accessible aux Québécois, du moins selon les règles du jeu "normales". [Le théoricien Gilles] Thérien semble croire que les Québécois seraient trop réticents à entreprendre le chemin de la révolte, en partie à cause de la possibilité de fixation sur un père absent dont la domination est d'autant plus efficace à cause de son caractère extranational (colonial, impérialiste). En d'autres termes, l'absence d'un père "national" fait différer une révolte qu'une démarche œdipienne autorise en confondant symboliquement père et Père, "luxe" qui n'est pas disponible aux Québécois.⁶⁹

This state of castration is understood as a kind of feminisation; the remedy to the process is, following a logic of negation, virilisation. Schwartzwald writes that "[d]ans la mesure où c'est le féminin qui représente l'état fragmentaire prêt à se faire infuser par la signification, c'est la littérature, ou plus précisément le littérateur qui est censé tenir, dans l'œuvre qu'il produit, cette promesse d'unité et de signification dont semble manquer le monde".⁷⁰

Part and parcel of the virilisation paradigm is a homophobic sexual anxiety, otherwise known as "homosexual panic".⁷¹ In the interminable debates between advocates of independence and federalists, "tous ceux que l'on estime traîtres à la révolution nationale sont dénoncés comme des hommes passifs/séducteurs".⁷² The passive seducer par excellence is the "fédéraste", simultaneously "victimes d'un viol et [...] séducteurs rusés", "débauchés" in their youth who "cherchent à leur tour à débaucher les autres".⁷³ Notably, the word "fédéraste", derived from the Franco-French "pédéraste", exudes an air of foreignness, setting up an opposition between a feminised Europe and a virile North America. Schwartzwald analyses

⁶⁸ Lamoureux, *L'amère patrie*, 112.

⁶⁹ Schwartzwald, "(Homo)sexualité et problématique identitaire," 139.

⁷⁰ Schwartzwald, "Institution littéraire," 215.

⁷¹ A canonical reference on this subject is Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2008), 19–21. It is Schwartzwald's analysis that has most influenced mine here.

⁷² Schwartzwald, "(Homo)sexualité et problématique identitaire," 132. I encourage readers interested in this problematic to consult his "La fédérastrophobie, ou les lectures agitées d'une révolution tranquille", which is the definitive study on the subject. In what follows I have preferred to quote his "executive summary" version found in "(Homo)sexualité et problématique identitaire".

⁷³ Schwartzwald, "(Homo)sexualité et problématique identitaire," loc. cit.

the paranoiac, panicked accusations of "fédérastie" found in the "Vulgarités" section of *parti pris* (the magazine) to discover a "véritable courant qui affleure dans la décolonisation au Québec: les Québécois qui vivent grâce au système fédéral sont d'abord les victimes, puis les auteurs débauchés d'un viol permanent par un Canada licencieux contre le Québec, enfant misérable et innocent".⁷⁴ As the word "panic" indicates, many saw signs of a supposedly widespread homosexuality throughout Quebec's cultural production; among them, Hubert Aquin who perceived, in the "inflation des jeunes prêtres modernes et des situations sacerdotales dans nos romans", "[une] survalorisation de toutes les situations humaines qui se rapprochent de l'inversion".⁷⁵ In this context, Schwartzwald sees a frequent "glissement de registres, du pédagogique au pédérastique", which is "cohérent avec l'auto-représentation du sujet colonisé comme un fils égaré, vulnérable aux gestes flatteurs mais enfin exploités des faux pères".⁷⁶ Seduced, young men become "de véritables fédérastes, comme les animateurs 'fifis' de Radio-Canada avec leurs accents européens, ou la 'tapette' Trudeau, comme on désigne l'ancien Premier ministre [...] dans un des manifestes du Front de libération du Québec".⁷⁷

Ultimately, however, the false fathers prove to be a false problem: it is "surtout à cause de l'absence de 'vrais' père à qui [les jeunes hommes québécois] se soumettraient dans un moment décisif de l'itinéraire œdipien" that Québécois men remain in a situation of "développement arrêté" or of blocked subjectification.⁷⁸ "[L]e véritable père dans le contexte colonial ne se trouve jamais à l'intérieur de la nation, dont les codes symboliques sont brouillés et supprimés par l'autorité coloniale externe".⁷⁹ In this paradigm, the colonial authority seems to be French, and "[l]'opposition postulée entre l'américanité virile et la francité efféminée opère une autre inversion idéologique: elle fait du Canada, avec ses origines françaises, le site de la castration tandis qu'elle rend le Québec, l'ancien espace domestique féminisé, celui de

⁷⁴ Schwartzwald, "(Homo)sexualité et problématique identitaire," 133.

⁷⁵ Qtd. in *Ibid.*, 137.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 138.

l'implantation de la nouvelle famille patriarcale et nationale", a phrase that cannot fail to recall Roussil's sculpture.⁸⁰

I have already mentioned that Vallières's father corresponds to the trope of the absent father and his mother, to the figure of the *marâtre*, "the ultimate authority figure in the young revolutionary's life".⁸¹ Seeking, it would seem, to bond with his father and to help him carve out some autonomy, Vallières encourages him to "obéir à ses rêves et [...] se dépêcher de faire quelque chose". "[J]'eus tôt fait de m'apercevoir que le lendemain, mon père avait renoncé. Entre nous deux, il y avait toujours le NON de ma mère" (149). Madeleine "suffocates, forbids and controls".⁸² Throughout his autobiography, Vallières recounts her efforts to direct him toward assimilation and lucrative employment.⁸³ He recognises, however, that she is not alone in her anxiety-driven desire to control his life, and that her stance against politics has little to do with blind obedience to church dogma:

Ce n'est pas que ma mère, comme Duplessis, voyait le diable rouge (le communisme) dans toute forme d'activités sociales. [...] C'était irrationnel chez elle. Son opposition obstinée à toute activité sociale et politique était une espèce de névrose et comme telle avait ses racines obscures dans l'inconscient, probablement dans l'insécurité congénitale de la classe ouvrière. [...] Le capitalisme et la religion ont fabriqué en série des mères comme la mienne... Et rares sont les Québécois—du moins dans la classe ouvrière—qui n'ont pas été, à une certaine période de leur vie, asphyxiés par l'amour (?) d'une mère possessive. (172)

And while Vallières pinpoints the church as one of the primary causes behind the feminised or passive subjectivity of Quebeckers, he nevertheless tempers his rabid anticlericalism (*passim*) with an appreciation of individual religious figures: "Des individus dans l'Église peuvent être progressistes, comme il existe des réformistes dans l'État capitaliste, mais l'Église, en tant qu'institution, est essentiellement réactionnaire (politiquement, économiquement et idéologiquement) et n'a pas grand-chose à voir avec l'Évangile de Jésus-Christ, si ce n'est une phraséologie de circonstance qui pratiquement ne signifie rien" (290). He scatters examples of "good Christians" throughout his narrative: his professor of

⁸⁰ Ibid., 139.

⁸¹ Roberts, "Mère, Je Vous Hais!", 296.

⁸² Ibid., 297.

⁸³ E.g., 224-227

philosophy, for example, who "nous initiait [...] à la théorie de la relativité d'Einstein⁸⁴ et à la doctrine interdite de Teilhard de Chardin sur l'évolution de l'homme," but whose beliefs he reduces to "un individualisme malheureux, honteux, tourmenté et finalement hypocrite, puisqu'il jouait le jeu en faisant croire qu'il le faisait par obéissance et charité. En réalité, il jouait le jeu par paresse, sinon par lâcheté" (294). In other words, his philosophy professor's sin was dissimulation, passivity and inaction—a condemnation which, through a chain of associations, resonates with the homophobic tropes of *parti pris*.⁸⁵ This is in fact about as close as Vallières comes to explicit homophobia, for the only reference to same-sex activity in *Nègres blancs* implicates a non-clerical teacher in what would now be called child sex abuse⁸⁶ and eschews any homophobically-charged moral outrage. The priests scattered throughout the narrative remain ignorant of sexuality and shocked by their charges' openness.⁸⁷ Vallières departs from the trope of the priest debauched in his youth, debauching the youth in his charge, which is practically omnipresent in other late 20th-century works (such as Marie-Claire Blais's *Une Saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel* [1965] or in the Aquin passages discussed above).

The asexuality of the priests in Vallières's account nonetheless reinforces the generalised "feminisation" of the school system.⁸⁸ As Lamoureux underlines, although men ran the church and the school system, actual classroom duties often fell to women. For these

⁸⁴ In Vallières's narrative, science plays an important role as source of metaphor and as ideal of a powerful form of creativity denied to the colonised by their poverty. *Mutatis mutandis*, the figure of the scientist is comparable to the banker or the politician in Hubert Aquin's essays, especially "Profession: Écrivain," in *Point de fuite*, ed. Guylaine Massoutre (Montréal: Bibliothèque québécoise, 1995), 45–59.

⁸⁵ It should be noted that *parti pris*, like Vallières, was more anti-clerical and anti-theocratic than anti-religion. Vallières's take on religion in *Nègres blancs* is typical therefore. "D'ailleurs, pour une revue marxiste-léniniste, l'attitude de *Parti pris* à l'égard de la religion est peu agressive et même passablement conciliante. La revue ne conteste pas réellement la religion comme valeur, elle n'affiche pas une véritable pensée athée. Elle vise la décléricalisation, la déconfessionnalisation du Québec pour que la religion soit une affaire personnelle dans un Etat laïc." Robert Major, *Parti pris : idéologies et littérature* (Québec: Hurtubise HMH, 1979), 21, n. 18.

⁸⁶ "[C]et instituteur ne nous enseignait rien. [...] [E]ntre les cours, prenant avec lui les plus vicieux d'entre nous, [il] leur apprenait à raffiner leurs vices, leur distribuait des photos obscènes et leur vendait de bonnes notes en échange de certains petits services..." (189) As Robert Schwartzwald has pointed out to me, it is notable that Vallières writes of sexual relations between the teacher and "*les plus vicieux d'entre nous*" (my emphasis)—thus giving the boys agency as well as avoiding the (contemporary) commonplace of "innocent children".

⁸⁷ E.g., 190, 218.

⁸⁸ The trope of the "feminising/feminised" school system has had a long life: it continues to circulate among misogynistic "men's rights" groups in Quebec, viz. in complaints over the overrepresentation of women in the teaching professions.

institutrices, as well as for his female classmates, Vallières has mostly scorn to offer: "Durant les récréations", he writes, "comme il n'y avait aucun sport masculin d'organisé (comment voulez-vous que de vieilles filles organisent des équipes de baseball ou de hockey?), nous nous adossions au mur sombre de l'école, tandis que les filles, séparées volontairement de nous, causaient ou chantaient des cantiques en compagnie des institutrices. Un vrai paradis, quoi" (184)!⁸⁹

Those clerics who escape Vallières's condemnation often do so because, unlike the average priest who transgresses traditional precepts about how a man should be, they conform to masculine norms: le père Charles, for example, is "un homme exceptionnel" because he teaches his students art ("Imaginez un peu Malraux expliquant la grandeur de l'art égyptien à des enfants de cinq ans qui n'ont jamais connu qu'un univers de tôle rouillée" [220]) and because he is an "anticonformiste" opposed to the *Duplessiste* rector of the school. When Vallières composes, for a school assignment, a soliloquy in the voice of his father, "[l]e père Charles, qui était un homme avant tout, ne corrigea pas ma copie; il la lut en classe..." (222). The emphasis on Charles's masculinity is important, since it is one's ability to maintain a certain kind of virility that signals one's transcendence of the hypocrisy of institutionalised religious life. We can even see this among nuns: "Je connus une sœur," he writes, "en particulier, qui était déchirée entre la spiritualité contemplative de sa communauté et son besoin de faire une action concrète et nécessairement politique pour transformer les conditions de vie des travailleurs" (302). Vallières and this nun engage in a philosophical dialogue, during the course of which she teaches him that he does not really know "les gens d'ici" (303). "Son visage et le ton de sa voix avaient quelque chose de masculin" (303), and her great merit, in Vallières's eyes, was that she was prepared to *passer à l'acte* (303–4). Her proclivity for direct action and her masculine appearance link her to the values of an active virility.

While in *Nègres blancs*, the representation of clerics conforms overall to the commonplace of the *faux-féminin*—though without overt homophobia and with a certain degree of latitude—Vallières himself escapes the trope of the *fils égaré* through a definitive revolt against the church hierarchy. The break comes just before he leaves school to work at a

⁸⁹ This scene, among others, paints such an overdetermined division between the sexes that it stretches credulity and reminds the reader of the constructed nature of such testimony.

bank: "Un jour, je dis à l'un [des clercs] qu'ils étaient tous une bande de putains et les pires ennemis du peuple québécois" (241). The *curé* with whom Vallières is speaking responds that although the priests support the struggles of Quebeckers, they cannot take sides in political debates. Vallières replies:

—Vous êtes tous complices de l'exploitation, de l'obscurantisme et de l'injustice tant que vous n'osez pas des ACTES. Des ACTES, pas des sermons!

—Tu es dur...

—Je ne le suis pas assez.⁹⁰ Tenez, je vais vous dire une chose qu'un jour j'affirmerai publiquement... Tous les prêtres seront pour moi des profiteurs et des lâches tant que je ne les verrai pas aider les ouvriers, les cultivateurs et les étudiants du Québec à brûler leurs églises, leurs séminaires, leurs presbytères, leurs Cadillac et le reste! C'est bien beau, mon petit père, d'être honnête et vertueux dans son cœur, mais ça ne donne pas grand-chose à ceux que le régime opprime chaque jour. Comme tous les hommes, vous avez aussi des bras, servez-vous en! (241-2)

This passage stands out for its emphasis on action, on physicality, and on virility—all tropologically isomorphic, of course, and signifying a rejection of feminine passivity and quietism.

In the same chapter, a major rupture in Vallières's already fractured relationship with his mother also occurs along similar lines:

Un jour, je dis à ma mère (à travers elle, interrogeant toute la population):

—Bon Dieu, pourquoi donc existez-vous encore?

—...

—Vous ne vivez plus... que sur l'élan ralenti de... je ne sais plus trop quoi. Vous allez crever de vieillesse comme le mécanisme des montres finit par s'user fatalement... Pourquoi ne protestez-vous même pas? Pourquoi?

—On n'a pas les moyens. Et puis, si on avait les moyens... C'est pas nous qui avons de l'argent, l'instruction, la pratique de toutes ces choses-là que tu appelles la politique. Que veux-tu qu'on fasse? Avec qui? On ne se connaît même pas dans cette maudite ville...

—Si vous sortiez davantage...

—Sortir? Pour rencontrer qui? Des ignorantes et des salopes?

—Vous mépr...

—Toi, parle de "méprisage"! T'as rien à m'apprendre là-dessus.

—Je...

⁹⁰ Masculine "hardness" is, of course, also a part of the chain of binarisms that connect to antinomy of masculinity/femininity.

—Crisse, on ne se connaît même pas dans cette maison! Tu le sais aussi bien que moi, TOI, LE SAVANT!

—Je...

—Il n'y a rien à faire. Quand on est né...

—Pour un petit pain...

—Il faut savoir s'en contenter, c'est tout! (235-6)

The repetition of a stuttering "je" and Madeleine's emphasis on reciprocal knowledge or recognition makes this dispute all the more interesting: it is as though Vallières's mother, attacked in her very existence by her son, refuses to recognise his own in a normative, Oedipal way: she refuses him recognition as a subject, and underlines that they do not even "know" each other. Furthermore, the son's insulting question that led to this back-and-forth actually affects Madeleine: "Elle reprit sa besogne avec tristesse, ce jour-là" (236). And Vallières seems to indicate that it is in the very act of wounding his mother that she becomes a subject, even though a subject that blocks his own subjectivity: "C'est la seule fois où ma mère m'apparut fabriquée de la même étoffe que mon père. [...] Pour la première fois, sa souffrance me touchait. Pour la première fois, je voyais en elle autre chose qu'une mécanique rabougrie tout appliquée à ses occupations routinières de ménagère. Pour la première... et dernière fois". (236) For afterwards, he disengages entirely from family life. Commenting this same conversation, Roberts writes that it

brings to the fore Vallières's transformation of his mother into an archetype of Quebec suffering and humiliation. Moreover, he seems to be insisting that it is she, and not his father, who should answer for all the injustices that have been visited upon the French-Canadian people. The young male revolutionary succumbs to the myth of the all-powerful mother whom he must reject in order "to give birth to himself" and then to bring into being a fraternal society.⁹¹

My interest in juxtaposing these two passages is twofold. First, Roberts' reading puts us in a mind to connect Vallières to a broader trend in Quebec revolutionary literature, explained succinctly by Patricia Smart:

[L]e projet nationaliste en littérature fut lié à [un] rêve de puissance absolue et excluait les femmes par les termes mêmes dans lesquels il a été énoncé. Faire la révolution en littérature, c'était un projet de fils élevé contre la mère, c'était une "virilité" à assumer contre et au dépens de la femme. C'était aussi une naissance, mais une naissance conçue comme rejet, refus et

⁹¹ Roberts, "Mère, Je Vous Hais!," 298.

rempart contre la mère trop enveloppante. La violence, sanctionnée par la conjoncture révolutionnaire, perpétuait des valeurs mâles vieilles comme la culture patriarcale.⁹²

As Smart rightly underlines, it is a question of "virility" that involves rejection, not simply, however, of the mother, but of femininity writ large. It is in this way that Vallières's work fits into the misogynistic and homophobic rhetorical framework of revolutionary nationalism, and in so doing exposes the root connection between misogyny and homophobia. Unwilling (for reasons never expressed but clearly discernible given his later life) to trade in the homophobic remarks of his contemporaries, Vallières nevertheless prizes masculinity and only masculinity, whatever its guises. Thus a woman who has a "virile face and tone" receives Vallières's seal of approval, but the *faux pères* who evince a certain faux femininity, signalled by the passivity and resignation that characterise women in Vallières's text, are rejected as archaic and reactionary.

Second, Smart's and Roberts' interpretations bring us toward the veritable reparative programme through which Quebeckers can restore their virility: subjectification seen as virilisation through revolutionary violence. By consigning femininity to an archaic past that nevertheless persists in the present as an impediment to development, and by building elective networks of subjectification, revolutionaries in Quebec can become authentically virile and modern.

Fictive Kinship and Revolutionary Fraternity

Recall Schwartzwald's comment that "la voie œdipienne (voie vers la domination) n'est pas accessible aux Québécois, du moins selon les règles du jeu 'normales'".⁹³ Quite logically, then, much of *Nègres blancs* is dedicated to describing the ways in which Vallières overcomes this ontological blockage, caused by colonialism, in order to properly "enter history" as a subject that is virile and full of mastery but without the unethical domination that characterises the current order. He does so in two registers: on a personal level, he seeks fictive kinship with two father figures, Gaston Miron and Jacques Ferron; and on a political one, he finds a form of non-Oedipal subjectification through horizontal politics, what Roberts calls "une société

⁹² Smart, *Ecrire dans la maison du père*, 239–40.

⁹³ Schwartzwald, "(Homo)sexualité et problématique identitaire," 139.

fraternelle', [...] a paradigm [of modern nation-building] built on male solidarity, deep horizontal comradeship and the rejection of weak and ineffectual father figures".⁹⁴

The fraternal society Vallières speaks of corresponds to what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls a "manhood-initiation model". She writes that "two contradictory *tropes of gender*" have shaped the ways in which same-sex desire has been understood in the West—namely, "the trope of inversion" which preserves "an essential *heterosexuality* in desire itself" by postulating an essential femininity in gay men and an essential masculinity in lesbians; and the trope of gender separatism, according to which "it is [...] the most natural thing in the world that people of the same gender [...] should bond together [...] on the axis of sexual desire".⁹⁵ "[T]his trope tends to reassimilate to one another identification and desire", placing women-loving women and men-loving men "at the 'natural' defining center of their own gender, again in contrast to inversion models that locate gay people—whether biologically or culturally—at the threshold between genders".⁹⁶

Gender separatism is not merely about same-sex desire, however, as the pedagogical aspect of manhood-initiation models indicates. The classical Greek practice of pederasty usually involved a significant educational component, and the Roman Catholic educational paradigm (and society) within which Vallières was educated plainly functioned along gender-separatist lines (albeit ostensibly non-sexual ones). In Vallières's lifetime, modernisation and urbanisation were forcing a reconfiguration of the gendered division of society.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, there is a clearly discernible desire (or even nostalgia) for manhood-initiation in Vallières's text, notably in his portraits of two Quebec writers.

Gaston Miron plays an important role in Vallières's political and literary development. Having taught him about contemporary poetry and the literature of colonised peoples (253), he also furnishes Vallières with another example of embodied virtue: "Miron[] vivait et créait sa poésie [...] sans savoir qu'il nous exprimait avec le génie profond d'un François Villon, méprisant la publicité et la renommée, ne recherchant qu'une chose: l'amour. Comme nous

⁹⁴ Roberts, "'Mère, Je Vous Hais!'," 299.

⁹⁵ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 87.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁹⁷ For more on these developments, in a slightly earlier time, see Schwartzwald, "Of Bohemians, Inverts, and Hypocrites: Berthelot Brunet's Montréal."

tous" (255). This value of love is the bedrock upon which fraternal solidarity is built, and in Vallières's analysis, the project of expanding fraternity is blocked by the material conditions of colonial capitalism. He ascribes his own desire to change those conditions and make greater fraternal solidarity possible to the influence of Miron *qua* father:

En réalité, [l'importance que j'accorde ici à Gaston Miron] ne rend pas du tout justice à ce grand poète vivant qui est le père spirituel (malgré son jeune âge) du FLQ, de *Parti pris*, de *Révolution québécoise*, de *Liberté* et de bien d'autres mouvements politiques ou littéraires. En ce qui me concerne plus particulièrement, Miron est celui qui développa ma conscience politique et qui fit déboucher ma recherche philosophico-littéraire en un engagement politique pratique. (255)

On Jacques Ferron as well, Vallières bestows high praise: "Pour lui, le peuple a toujours passé et passera toujours avant les partis, et la fraternité humaine avant la politique. En fait, je crois que pour Ferron il n'y a que cela qui compte: la fraternité" (201). An embodiment of the virtue of fraternity, Ferron arrives in Longueuil-Annexe to work as a doctor—often without payment—among the working class and poor families living there. Although at first they distrust him, they soon discover that "Ferron n'était pas venu pour les mépriser"; rather, "il était avec eux. Il ne les jugeait pas. Au contraire. Il les écoutait, les soignait, leur rendait mille services, vivant au milieu d'eux comme au milieu de ses amis, reconnaissant leur liberté" (202). Recognising that his privileges derive from "l'exploitation quotidienne imposée aux pauvres" (203), Ferron is a communist, "un vrai", that is a heterodox anti-Stalinist. He is feared and hated by the *curé* of Longueuil-Annexe, "car, à l'idéologie de la hiérarchie, Jacques Ferron opposait une fraternité vécue, faisait naître autour de lui le besoin de cette fraternité" (203). Vallières recounts how Ferron gives him books and newspapers to read (203-4) and ends by ascribing to himself a sort of lineage leading back to Ferron: "En attendant [de revoir Ferron], je tenais, dans ces pages écrites en prison et à la hâte, de dire à Jacques Ferron qu'il n'est pas étranger—loin de là—à mon engagement politique d'aujourd'hui" (204).⁹⁸

The figure of Ferron thus appears as a sort of secular saint, living among the poor as one of them, serving them as he can, alternately eschewing the privileges that accrue from his wealth and social capital or using them to help the downtrodden. Beyond Ferron's influence on the young Vallières's reading habits, his example of horizontal solidarity stands out as an

⁹⁸ To my knowledge, Vallières does not comment on Ferron's writing here or elsewhere.

important lesson to the latter as an adult. But Vallières warns that "[l]a fraternité qui ne débouche pas sur une révolution populaire est une fraternité dangereuse. Car, tôt ou tard, elle devient religion ou éthique; elle ne change finalement rien à la condition matérielle des hommes, à la division de la société en classes, à l'exploitation de l'homme par l'homme. [...] Je crois que Ferron comprend cela. Et c'est pourquoi je crois qu'il a depuis longtemps graissé son fusil" (204-5)! This emphasis on violent revolution is crucial: fraternity for Vallières must lead to action.

Indeed, Vallières decries the counter-culture of his time for its inaction, denouncing the way in which the "pharisaïsme des révoltés en smoking, chaussés de leurs pantoufles de satin, complète admirablement bien le néopharaonisme des Soviétiques qui condamnent la guerre du Viêt-nam tout en collaborant avec les Américains" (259). In particular, he singles out the youth culture of New York City: "[R]acaille de luxe! Les jeunes fascistes de Greenwich Village qui dessinent la croix gammée sur les murs [...] sont aussi des fervents lecteurs de Sartre, de Genêt [*sic*], de Gide! Un hasard? Un accident" (260)? It is suggestive—though far from conclusive—that Genet and Gide, two authors well-known for their openness about their homosexuality are selected here.⁹⁹ "Un hasard? Un accident?" Since they receive this treatment more than once in *Nègres blancs*,¹⁰⁰ it is difficult not to see this condemnation as explicitly homophobic, drawing on the French tradition associating homosexuality and fascism (and in particular, Nazism).¹⁰¹

While the Front de libération du Québec seems to provide Vallières with a certain degree of the fraternity he so clearly craves, Quebec itself seems to limit the possibilities of subjectification:

J'avais peur ... peur que ce peuple ne meure étranglé dans sa pauvreté et sa passivité... Ces gens avaient besoin non de pitié mais de coups de pied au cul! [...] Aussi, malgré mes bonnes intentions, un sentiment dominait peu à peu tout le reste: l'exaspération. Une exaspération douloureuse, appelée, soutenue, nourrie par le spectacle quotidien de la servitude des miens. Une exaspération qui ne demandait qu'à se transformer en fraternité active. Mais fait-on une fraternité avec des milliers de morts-vivants? (234)

⁹⁹ Of course, the difference in degree of openness between Gide and Genet are vast.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. 261

¹⁰¹ See, for historical background, Mark Meyers, "Feminizing Fascist Men: Crowd Psychology, Gender, and Sexuality in French Antifascism, 1929-1945," *French Historical Studies* 29, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 109–142, esp. 134.

Over time, however, Vallières realises that he can come into existence as a subject through writing: "L'écriture, jour après jour, me révélait à moi-même et me faisait exister. [...] Quelques amis consentaient à me lire et, pour eux, je commençais à exister sous mon vrai jour. On m'écoutait, on me comprenait... C'était la première fois de ma vie que des gens croyaient que j'avais quelque chose à dire et à donner. Enfin, je ne me débattais plus seul" (247). It is thus as Vallières begins to write that he comes into contact with people, who, like Miron (who reads and encourages him), recognise him as a fellow subject capable of action in the world.

But this action, as Vallières insists throughout the book, relies not just on mutual recognition and identification among properly virile subjects. Indeed, the "brothers-in-arms" that he envisions must take up the armed struggle, for it is only in fighting together, in undertaking shared revolutionary violent action, that they can both become men and recognise one another as such, as in the famous closing lines of *Nègres blancs*:

Hé! Georges, qu'est-ce que tu attends pour te décider? Et vous autres, Arthur, Louis, Jules, Ernest? Debout, les gars, et tous ensemble: au travail! On prendra un autre verre de bière quand on aura fait plus que discuter et mettre le blâme toujours sur les autres. Chacun de nous a sa petite part de responsabilités à assumer et à transformer en action. Plus vite nous serons unis, les gars, plus vite nous vaincrons. Nous avons déjà perdu trop de temps en vaines récriminations. Il faut maintenant passer à l'action. (442)

As we shall see in the next chapter, Vallières was hardly alone in the North American context in understanding collective revolutionary violence as a transformative, subject-forming activity. His call to his fellow Québécois men parallels the message conveyed to Black American men by the future Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver in his essay collection *Soul on Ice*, published in the same year as the French-language edition of Vallières's autobiography.

Chapter 2: *Soul on Ice*

Introduction

When Monthly Review Press published Joan Pinkham's English-language translation of Vallières's book in 1971, many critics predicted that *Nègres blancs d'Amérique* would join works by Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver, Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara and Régis Debray as a classic of revolutionary literature.¹⁰² While time has not borne this prophecy out—some of these names have remained well-known and others, like Vallières, have dropped into obscurity, at least in the anglophone world—the very comparison begs investigation.

At the time, the similarities between Vallières and Eldridge Cleaver seemed so obvious as to merit little more than passing comment. And indeed, while recent scholarship has not yet produced an extended comparative study, some critics have observed the resemblances between Cleaver and Vallières.¹⁰³ This chapter will push beyond the gesture at comparison by consistently drawing attention to points of convergence and divergence between Vallières's writing about Quebec and Cleaver's ideas as they relate to the history of African-American political thought and culture.

In some sense, Pierre Vallières's *Nègres blancs d'Amérique* bears more generic similarity to Malcolm X's *Autobiography*, insofar as both works mix analysis of their people's collective and individual subjectification with the story of one individual's life. Cleaver's *Soul on Ice*, on the other hand, is a heterogeneous collection of commentaries, essays and biographical musings. Nevertheless, the centrality that Vallières gives to the *psychic* damages of colonialism *within family life*, specifically in the way that the domineering mother and absentee father hinder or harm the psychosocial and political subject-formation of the son, aligns *Nègres blancs* with *Soul on Ice*. Sexual and romantic attachments in Cleaver's work play a role analogous to the one filled by family life in Vallières's worldview—and one that emerges, in a parallel discursive strategy, from a remarkably stable set of tropes relating to gender and sexuality that circulate in the Black American intellectual production. These serve

¹⁰² For citations on reception, see chapter 3.

¹⁰³ Bryan D. Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (University of Toronto Press, 2009).

to propose a new form of sociality in which Black men recognise each other as whole, unfragmented subjects through a rejection or abjection of women and gender-transgressive men as political actors. Thus Cleaver, like Vallières, interprets the gender and sexual relationships between Black and white men and women as a form of generalised "inversion". Moreover, for Cleaver, they are the direct result of the ravages of white-supremacist capitalism.

While I will continue to label this finite set of tropes a "rhetorical arsenal", I should note that, to my knowledge, there has not yet been an attempt to take stock of its "weapons" in the same systematic way as have, for example, Lamoureux and Schwartzwald in their analyses of Quebec nationalist writing and thought. This has primarily to do, I believe, with academic-cultural differences. While the use of a rhetorical and taxonomic approach is common in the francophone academy, in the English-speaking world other methodologies predominate. Nevertheless, I will isolate certain tropes in Cleaver's writing (the Black matriarch, for example) and highlight those that Cleaver names (the Ultrafeminine, for instance) in order to see how they might compare with the made-in-Quebec tropes discussed in chapter 1.

In this chapter, then, I will analyze Cleaver's sexual dialectic in the first two sections, following his division of humanity into sexual and racial classes and examining in particular the stakes of Black manhood. In latter half of the chapter, I will look closely at the twin problematics of miscegenation and homosexuality in *Soul on Ice*; together, the two phenomena produce tension within Cleaver's thought as to possible paths toward a reunified Black subjectivity through fraternal recognition, the subject of the last section.

White Man / Black Man

Jared Sexton writes that, a decade ago, when he was delivering a paper on Cleaver at a conference on "imprisoned intellectuals", other participants expressed an "ambivalence attached to our collective memory of [Cleaver's] tumultuous life": Cleaver's works, his interlocutors implied, are somehow "beyond the pale" of what ought to be remembered from

the 1960s.¹⁰⁴ In response to this, Sexton claims that on the contrary, we should revisit Cleaver's writing, since

[o]ne of the enduring challenges of resisting state violence is liberating black radicalism from its historical entanglements with various forms of sexism, patriarchy, and misogyny, from its frequent reliance on the strictures of homophobia and heteronormativity, and from its highly ambivalent and deeply problematic relation to the sexual color line. In each respect, the figure of Eldridge Cleaver presents a highly instructive case in point [...] for the extremity and wildness—as well as the complexity—of its failures.¹⁰⁵

"[R]iddled with [...] intricate inconsistencies and oversights"¹⁰⁶ related to gender roles and interracial sex, *Soul on Ice* seems unable to decide what position to take, despite Kathryn Bond Stockton's claim that "the volume of his essays could almost be read as a novel of patchwork forms—confession, essay, letter, allegory, incantation—all in the service of an overarching plot: escaping, being cured of, miscegenation".¹⁰⁷ The struggle with miscegenation is the connective tissue of Cleaver's essays; by virtue of its very nature, the question of interracial love brings together the antitheses that Cleaver uses to "raisonner sur le social" (Angenot): Black and white, male and female, masculine and feminine, heterosexual and homosexual, the "Third World" and the United States. The task Cleaver gives himself is the resolution of these apparent contradictions; however, rather than simply substituting the dominated term for the dominant—Black for white, say, as Angenot would have it¹⁰⁸—Cleaver wavers at every turn, claiming first that Black men's liberation means access to white women's bodies, then that it requires them to love Black women and shun the white. Similarly, his denunciations of homosexuality evoke the bitterness of a spurned friend or lover, oscillating between sympathy and abjection; and so on and so forth.

¹⁰⁴ Jared Sexton, "Race, Sexuality, and Political Struggle: Reading 'Soul on Ice'," *Social Justice* 30, no. 2 (92) (January 1, 2003): 28.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 28–9.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁰⁷ Kathryn Bond Stockton, *Beautiful Bottom, Beautiful Shame: Where "Black" Meets "Queer,"* Series Q (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 160.

¹⁰⁸ "[A]u cœur des Grands programmes de critique social modernes se rencontrent inévitablement l'énoncé condensé du mal, le diagnostic de sa cause ultime, la preuve de son caractère contingent et la prescription du remède tiré par renversement du constat du mal, et prouvé *a contrario*", Angenot, "Arsenal argumentatif," 59. Angenot is obviously constructing an idealtype, but it bears mentioning that our authors do not follow such simplistic logic.

In Cleaver's writing, the origin of these dichotomies is found in the division of the "Primeval Sphere" in a process he calls "the Primeval Mitosis" (the clearest exposition of which is found in the essay of the same name).¹⁰⁹ In the beginning, Cleaver writes, was a Primeval Sphere, which, dividing itself, "established a basic tension of attraction, a dynamic magnetism of opposites—the Primeval Urge".¹¹⁰ In this essay (and most of *Soul on Ice*), it is clear that "Cleaver believes, as if it were some biological law, that only so-called opposites attract".¹¹¹ The opposites alluded to here are none other than the binaries that structure modern Western thought (masculine/feminine, Black/white, creative/procreative, and so on; we saw a variant of the same structure of thought in Vallières's writing). The Primeval Urge pushes these opposites to "fuse" (206) "back together into a unity" (207), so that "the male and female [might] realize their true nature—the lost unity of the Primeval Sphere", thus "achiev[ing] supreme identity in the Apocalyptic Fusion" (207). This eschatology understands difference in the world as the result of an event structurally similar to the Christian Fall or, in Löwith's reading of Marx, the invention of private property,¹¹² leading to a time of trial and hierarchy but eventually overcome by a reunion that suppresses difference in favour of harmonious balance.¹¹³

The prerequisite for the Apocalyptic Fusion is a "Unitary Sexual Image, i.e., a heterosexual identity free from the mutually exclusive, antagonistic, antipodal impediments of homosexuality (the product of the fissure of society into antagonistic classes and a dying culture and civilization alienated from its biology)" (207). We can already see, then, that in

¹⁰⁹ Cleaver is following Plato here: "In his essay, 'The Primeval Mitosis,' Cleaver draws on Plato's Symposium to evoke a pre-social era in which the essence, the Primeval Sphere, became divided; but unlike Plato, this division is between not three, but two parts, male and female". Douglas Field, "Looking for Jimmy Baldwin: Sex, Privacy, and Black Nationalist Fervor," *Callaloo* 27, no. 2 (April 1, 2004): 464.

¹¹⁰ Cleaver, *Soul on Ice*, 206. Page numbers given hereinafter parenthetically after quotations.

¹¹¹ Stockton, *Beautiful Bottom, Beautiful Shame*, 164.

¹¹² "Le matérialisme historique est une histoire sacrée formulée dans la langue de l'économie politique", Karl Löwith, *Histoire et salut : les présupposés théologiques de la philosophie de l'histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), 70. See ch. 2 for his extended argument.

¹¹³ As with Roman Catholic messianism's role in radical Quebec nationalism—with its ostensibly secularist ideology—the role of Christian eschatology in the apparently anti-Christian politics of Black nationalism invites further study.

this system "the preservation of heterosexuality is a cosmic decree, basic and irresistible".¹¹⁴ This form of sexual class consciousness itself can only arise when "the dynamic of history", "the Class Struggle" (in a properly Marxist register) culminates in the realisation of a "Unitary" or "Classless Society" that will provide "optimal conditions" for the Apocalyptic Fusion (207). In the meantime, "[a]ll impediments to realization of the [unitary] image become sources of alienation, obstacles in the way of the Self seeking to realize its ultimate destiny" (207).

In the Class Society, sexual images are "fragmented", with "[e]ach class project[ing] a sexual image coinciding with its class-function in society. And since its class-function will differ from that of other classes, its sexual image will differ also and in the same proportion" (208). Adopting the language of the subject-nation from chapter 1, we could describe an individual nation that is divided into classes as suffering from a fragmented subjectivity. The end-goal of political action as unification here distinguishes Cleaver—and Vallières—from postmodern celebrations of fragmented or multiple subjectivity. A crucial difference between *Soul on Ice* and *Nègres blancs*, however, is that white people—in Cleaver's rhetoric, the structural equivalent of Vallières's *Anglais*—at times seem to be included as part of the subject-nation, as though the ultimate goal were to restore wholeness, not to Black America alone (as Quebec alone is the subject in Vallières), but rather to the entire United States.

"The source of fragmentation of the Self in the Class Society", Cleaver continues, "lies in the alienation between the function of the man's Mind and the function of his Body. Man as thinker performs an Administrative Function in society. Man as doer performs a Brute Power Function. These two basic functions I symbolize, when they are embodied in living men functioning in society, as the Omnipotent Administrator and the Supermasculine Menial" (208). In a "normal" society, Cleaver implies, men would have both functions within their ken, but in a Class Society, the "elite classes usurp the controlling and Administrative Function of the society", with cascading effects even "in the nature and biology of the men in the classes below them" (208). As a result, men of the lower class "have the administrative component in their personalities suppressed, alienated, denied expression" (208). The Omnipotent Administrators "repudiate the component of Brute Power in themselves, claim no kinship with

¹¹⁴ Sexton, "Race, Sexuality, and Political Struggle," 32.

it, and project it on to the men in the classes below". (209) The "Supermasculine Menial" becomes "alienated from the administrative component" of his personality, "alienated from [his] mind[]", an alienation proportional to his "distance from the attainment of a Unitary Sexual Image" (209).

Within the system of polarities created by the Primeval Mitosis, the Administrative Function aligns with "[w]eakness, frailty, cowardice, [...] effeminacy", "the Mind", "physical weakness, decay, underdeveloped bodies, effeminacy, sexual impotence and frigidity"; individual Administrators are "weak, delicate, effeminate, with the affectations of demonstrative homosexuals" (210). On the other hand, the Brute Power Function links to "[s]trength, brute power, force, virility, [...] physical beauty", "the Body", "virility, strength, power"; Supermasculine Menials are "physically strong, hearty, fecund" (210). Cleaver's anaphoric deployment of the words effeminacy and virility (and related terms) in these descriptions cements the importance of masculine/feminine dualism in his thought: the class society replicates the more fundamental difference that is gender—*but between men of different classes*, the elites becoming therefore womanlike and the dominated, masculinity incarnate.

Furthermore, this division of sexual attributes between classes becomes particularly ossified in a "racial caste system". In the U.S., Cleaver writes, "[t]he gulf between the Mind and the Body [seems] to coincide with the gulf between the two races" (219-220). Thus, in Cleaver's thought, white men become effeminate and physically inept whereas Black men take "all of the attributes of masculinity associated with the Body"—all but one, that is: "the essence and seat of masculinity: sex. The penis" (193). The white man says to the Black man:

To prove my omnipotence I must cuckold you and fetter your bull balls. I will fetter the range of your rod and limit its reach. [...] I will have sexual freedom. But I will bind your rod with my omnipotent will, and place a limitation on its aspiration which you will violate on pain of death...I will have access to the white woman and I will have access to the black woman. [...] I forbid you access to the white woman. [...] By subjecting your manhood to the control of my will, I shall control you. The stem of the Body, the penis, must submit to the will of the Brain. (193-4)

The Omnipotent Administrator is the archetypal effeminate white man but nonetheless powerful and the Supermasculine Menial, the stereotype of the highly sexualised, and hence sexually policed, Black man.

The notion of "cuckolding" or castration derives, of course, from the reality of lynching and other forms of terrorism practiced post-bellum by whites in the United States that threatened the bodily and psychic integrity of Black men. Angela Davis' discussion of "the myth of the Black rapist" is pertinent here. She describes the ideological construction of Black men as hypersexual and violent as a way of camouflaging the very real campaign of sexual violence fought by white men against Black women: "One of racism's salient historical features has always been the assumption that white men—especially those who wield economic power—possess an incontestable right of access to Black women's bodies".¹¹⁵ "Sexual coercion was [...] an essential dimension of the social relations between slavemaster and slave. [...] The licence to rape emanated from and facilitated the ruthless economic domination that was the gruesome hallmark of slavery".¹¹⁶ In the post-bellum context, in which white men's sexual domination of Black women did not end, the "political invention" of the Black rapist emerges as an attempt to shore up white supremacy. Davis demonstrates the "indiscriminate" way in which rape charges have been aimed at Black men, citing startling statistics (out of 455 men executed for rape in 1930–67, 405 were Black, which does not even begin to broach the number of men assaulted, castrated and/or murdered by mob violence in the same period).¹¹⁷ Thus the mobilisation of the rape charge enables a form of sexual policing and sexual violence against Black men, creating an "historical knot binding Black women—systematically abused and violated by white men—to Black men—maimed and murdered because of the racist manipulation of the rape charge".¹¹⁸

Derived from this historical context, castration expands in Cleaver's writing to cover a whole range of the effects of white supremacy, becoming a metaphor for the subordination and inferiorisation of Black men more generally. Thus he writes of a "conscious, systematic emasculation of Negro leadership" (112) which condemns "any Negro who sought leadership

¹¹⁵ Angela Y. Davis, "Rape, Racism and the Myth of the Black Rapist," in *Women, Race & Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 175.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 172.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 173. Of course, Cleaver was a convicted and avowed rapist who later repudiated his actions. See 33–34. The scope of this thesis will not permit detailed discussion of rape in Cleaver's work, but see Davis, *op. cit.*, 197–8. The discussion of the rhetoric of rape here serves only to set the scene, as it were, to describe the terrorism practiced by white society against Black men.

over the black masses and refused to become a tool of the white power structure" to failure (murder, prison, exile, obscurity). As a result, "the best-known Negroes in America have always been—and still are—the entertainers and athletes" who are implicated in a "technique of 'Negro control'" that relies on using them "whenever a crisis with racial overtones arises" "to expound a predictable, conciliatory interpretation of what's happening" (113). This idea of political and social emasculation brings to mind one of the justifications of radical Quebec nationalism's virilisation project: the notion that Quebecker men are "castrated" by both their controlling mothers and the *faux pères* who control their society. Once feminised, Quebeckers fall into political inaction and careers in supposedly quietistic, marginal or imitative sectors of society.¹¹⁹

Curiously, Cleaver's logic places Black men contradictorily on both sides of the dominant/dominated binaries that structure his thought: now they are associated with the Body, as against the superior Mind; now with masculinity, as against inferior femininity. But it is precisely this contradiction—Black men's virility, their most threatening aspect to white supremacy—that propels his dialectic. For while their virility makes them the target of sexual violence by white men (thereby placing them, again contradictorily, in a position not dissimilar to that of Black women), it also makes them sexually desirable to white women.

White Woman / Black Woman

The process that creates gendered polarities between men cannot but have consequences on women, who in Cleaver's writing "*belong* either to the [white] bourgeois class or to the [Black] proletariat class, in other words, to the men of these classes", as Wittig, in another context entirely, says in her famous critique of Marxist misogyny.¹²⁰ Thus elite (white) women, responding to the inordinate femininity of their men, up the feminine ante, so to speak—"*Even though her man is effeminate, she is required to possess and project an image that is in sharp contrast to his, more sharply feminine than his, so that the effeminate image of her man can still, by virtue of the sharp contrast in degrees of femininity, be perceived as*

¹¹⁹ See, in chapter 1, "Passive / Active", as well as Hubert Aquin's eloquent essay "Profession: Écrivain".

¹²⁰ Monique Wittig, "One Is Not Born a Woman," in *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 18. I have supplied the racialised connotations these classes bear in Cleaver.

masculine. Therefore, she becomes 'Ultrafeminine'" (211; emphasis in original). Thus a corollary to Stockton's formulation, cited above, that opposites attract: heterosexuality requires a dynamic calibration of masculinity and femininity to preserve psychosexual dimorphism or balance.

Similar to the Omnipotent Administrator, the Ultrafeminine leeches her "extra" femininity from the lower classes by "repudiat[ing] and abdicat[ing] the Domestic Function [...] which is, in the female, the counterpart to the function of Brute Power [...]" (211). We are to understand here that the Domestic Function is the equivalent of the Brute Power Function in men—so the Ultrafeminine "project[s] onto the women in the classes beneath her" the Domestic Function, which "decrease[s]" the femininity of lower-class women.

In effect, a switch is made: the woman of the elite absorbs into her being the femininity of the woman below her, and she extirpates her domestic component; the woman below absorbs the elite woman's cast-off domestic component and relinquishes her own femininity. The elite woman thus becomes *Ultrafeminine* while the woman below becomes *Subfeminine*. For the purposes of social imagery, the woman below becomes an *Amazon*. (211)

In the overall "social imagery" of the Class Society, "there will exist [...] two sets of competing images. Contending for the crown of masculinity is one image based on the Body and another based on the Mind; contending for the crown of femininity is one image based on weak, helpless Ultrafemininity and another based on the strong, self-reliant attributes of the Amazon" (219). Every part of this four-way dialectic suffers from a form of alienation. The Primeval Urge encourages them to restore their shattered Sexual Image to a state of unity.

A case in point is the Black Amazon, whose embodiment of femininity and domesticity Cleaver criticises as "Subfeminine" or, put another way, overly masculine. Cleaver's criticism echoes the U.S. government's 1965 Moynihan Report, according to which, in Angela Davis' words,

the source of oppression [in Black communities] was deeper than the racial discrimination that produced unemployment, shoddy housing, inadequate education and substandard medical care. The root of oppression was described as a "tangle of pathology" created by the absence of male authority among Black people! The controversial finale of the Moynihan Report was a call to introduce male authority (meaning male supremacy of course!) into the Black family and community at large.¹²¹

¹²¹ Angela Y. Davis, "The Legacy of Slavery: Standards for a New Womanhood," in *Women, Race & Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 13.

The Report itself did not invent anything new; rather, it is a crystallization of a myth—the myth of Black matriarchy—that informed academic studies before its writing and since: "Most [...] have interpreted slave family life as elevating the women and debasing the men, even when the mother and father were present".¹²² This is because in the slave system, women's labour was exploited in the same way that men's labour was: they performed the same work, in the same place, in the same conditions, facing the same violence:

The demands of this exploitation caused slaveowners to cast aside their orthodox sexist attitudes except for purposes of repression. If Black women were hardly "women" in the accepted sense, the slave system also discouraged male supremacy in Black men. Because husbands and wives, fathers and daughters were equally subjected to the slavemasters' absolute authority, the promotion of male supremacy among the slaves might have prompted a dangerous rupture in the chain of command. Moreover, since Black women as workers could not be treated as the "weaker sex" or the "housewife", Black men could not be candidates for the figure of "family head" and certainly not for "family provider".¹²³

According to this construction of Black masculinity, their treatment by slavemasters as boys robbed them of their ability to take responsibility for their families, making women by default the heads of their households—thereby producing domineering women who, even after slavery ended (in principle, giving Black men the opportunity to become proper *paterfamilias*), emasculated their husbands and children. Davis disputes this view, arguing that it was

[p]recisely through performing the drudgery which has long been a central expression of the socially conditioned inferiority of women, [that] the Black woman in chains could help to lay the foundation for some degree of autonomy, both for herself and her men. Even as she was suffering under her unique oppression as female, she was thrust into the center of the slave community. She was, therefore, essential to the survival of the community.¹²⁴

Rather than producing matriarchy, women's centrality in slave communities created a form of "sexual equality", since men, too, performed domestic labour: "[Black people] transformed that negative equality which emanated from the equal oppression they suffered as slaves into a positive quality: the egalitarianism characterizing their social relations".¹²⁵

Davis argues that this standard of womanhood differs markedly from the one promulgated by white society. She claims that with the implantation of patriarchal white

¹²² Ibid., 16.

¹²³ Ibid., 7–8.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 17.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 18.

standards of womanhood—of which the Moynihan Report was an apparatus—Black men came to see the strength and autonomy of Black women as threatening, rather than a powerful resource in a white-supremacist culture. This empowered and therefore menacing female presence—a constant reminder of the castration of her partner—recalls the figure of the castrating French-Canadian mother, who, in the narrative produced by the argumentative arsenal of radical Quebec nationalists in the 1960s and 70s, dominates home and family life with similarly deleterious outcomes.¹²⁶ For Cleaver, however, the maternal role of the Black woman is much less important than her fitness—or unfitness—as a potential *partner*.

Indeed, he claims that the Black man or Supermasculine Menial "recoils from the excess of strength injected into the Amazon by the Domestic Function she performs. Also, since standards of beauty are set by the elite, the Ultrafeminine personifies the official standard of feminine beauty of society as a whole" (217), thus leading him to reject the woman of his class who, "alienated from the feminine component of her nature", finds "her reinforced domestic component [...] an awesome burden and shame of which she longs to be free" (218). That freedom cannot be found in the Supermasculine Menial, because he is "only half a man", since he "[h]a[s] no sovereignty over himself", exercising no Administrative Function (218). Furthermore, the very egalitarianism that is the heart of Davis's defence of Black family structures is, in Cleaver's analysis, at the root of the problem: "[Black men and women] are too alike in class and gender codings—strong in body, aggressive in spirit, and menial in labor—to be 'hetero' for each other".¹²⁷ It is therefore "toward the receptacle of sovereignty", the Administrator, that the Amazon is attracted—who, as it happens, is her "opposite", that is, feminine.

Meanwhile, in a chiasmic movement, the opposite drive animates the white woman, for whom the "*basic motion [...] is flight from their bodies*" (213), since "[a]n appearance of strength in her body is called *ugly*" (214). Following the rule that "opposites attract", this state of affairs makes the Supermasculine Menial, that "walking phallus symbol", the white woman's "psychic bridegroom" (215). The Ultrafeminine is "fully convinced that the

¹²⁶ Pierre Maheu, "L'Œdipe colonial," in *Un parti pris révolutionnaire* ([Montréal]: Parti pris, 1983), 27–39; Smart, *Ecrire dans la maison du père*; Nicole Brossard, *L'amèr: ou, Le chapitre effrité* (Montréal: Quinze, 1977); Roberts, "Mère, Je Vous Hais!"

¹²⁷ Stockton, *Beautiful Bottom, Beautiful Shame*, 215.

Supermasculine Menial can fulfill her physical need. It will be no big thing for him to do since he can handle those Amazons down there with him, with his strong body, rippling muscles, his strength and fire, the driving force of his spine, the thrust of his hips and the fiery steel of his rod" (215).

Logically, the Administrator would in turn spurn the Ultrafeminine, the woman of his class, in favour of the Amazon—and yet, through "a most weird and complex dialectic of inversion [established] in the Class Society", the white "Omnipotent Administrator is launched on a perpetual search for his alienated body, for affirmation of his unstable masculinity" (211) in the person of the Supermasculine Menial, whose sexual prowess and physical beauty receive such an apt, and homoerotic—or even autoerotic—, description in the quotation above. Indeed, the Administrator has "a secret or subconscious aversion to the women of his own class, because the Ultrafemininity [...] developed to counterbalance [his] effeminacy" leads him to "make[] an icon of his woman and, literally, [to] worship[] her", rather than to desire her sexually (212). Instead, "the white man now seems primarily interested in the black man. The white man's desire toward the black woman has been erased and his relation to the white woman is hollowed out from within. The only real desire he now experiences is for the black man, an interracial homosexual desire for reunification with the Body (represented by blackness)".¹²⁸ The "homosexualisation" of white men is a trope, the inverse of the hypermasculinity of Black men, that has historically enjoyed widespread currency in Black nationalist literature, in particular in the Black arts movement.¹²⁹ LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka, for example, famously writes that "Most American white men are trained to be fags", which explains their fear of "the black man as potentially raping every white lady in sight"¹³⁰—the

¹²⁸ Sexton, "Race, Sexuality, and Political Struggle," 35.

¹²⁹ Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "The Black Man's Burden," in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 260; Marlon B. Ross, "Camping The Dirty Dozens: The Queer Resources of Black Nationalist Invective," *Callaloo* 23, no. 1 (2000): 300, n. 26.

¹³⁰ Amiri Baraka, *Home: Social Essays* (New York: Morrow, 1966). This trope finds fuller expression in his play *The Slave* (Amiri Baraka, *Dutchman and The Slave, Two Plays*. [New York: Morrow, 1964]. Baraka's case is complicated by the fact that he frequented gay literary circles early in his career and made use of queer thematics; see, notably, Amiri Baraka, *The Baptism & The Toilet*. (New York: Grove Press, 1967). Discussions of his knotty relationship with same-sex desire can be found in: Ross, "Camping The Dirty Dozens"; José Esteban Muñoz, "Cruising the Toilet: LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka, Radical Black Traditions, and Queer Futurity," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 13, no. 2 (2007): 353–367. Baraka recently gave his opinion on the controversial essays found in *Home*; see

perceived masculinity and sexuality of the Black man is constructed as threatening the already-fragile heterosexuality of the white man.

In Cleaver, it is logical and even healthy that the Black man seeks out the white woman—each has what the other wants. Sexton writes that "the white man and the black woman should seek each other out for similar reasons. However, no such connections are sanctioned for Cleaver. In fact, within this four-point schema (black/white/man/woman), there are no lines of desire pointing toward the black woman".¹³¹ Ultimately, she is spurned by all parties (and lesbianism in Cleaver's worldview is not an option),¹³² even as she turns to the white man in order to find, not her own mind or her own sovereignty, but someone she is capable of respecting and who can exercise sovereignty over her.¹³³

Worshipping the white woman, refusing the Black woman, and irresistibly attracted to the body of the Black man, the white man incarnates the inversion operated under white-supremacist capitalism. But what does the Black man want in all of this? "[R]obbed of his mind", the Supermasculine Menial, like the Amazon, seeks reunification with it (216). "The struggle of his life is for the emancipation of his mind, to receive recognition for the products of his mind, and official recognition of the fact that he has a mind" (216). Logically, he would move toward the white woman, reciprocating her desire. Indeed, "they find themselves mutually attracted to one another, so much so that [Cleaver] dubs them 'psychic bridegrooms'".¹³⁴ And yet this desire, despite appearing in a core portion of the book—Cleaver's love letters to his white lawyer, Beverly Axelrod—is described in the most unflattering of terms: "[D]esire for the white woman is like a cancer eating my heart out and

Amiri Baraka and Sophie Erskine, "Art Is a Weapon in the Struggle of Ideas," *3am Magazine*, June 4, 2009, <http://www.3ammagazine.com/3am/art-is-a-weapon-in-the-struggle-of-ideas-an-interview-with-amiri-baraka/>.

¹³¹ Sexton, "Race, Sexuality, and Political Struggle," 34.

¹³² "If a lesbian is anything she is a frigid woman, a frozen cunt, with a warp and a rack in the wall of her ice" (214).

¹³³ "The Amazon finds it difficult to respect the Supermasculine Menial. She sees him essentially as only half a man, as an incomplete man. Having no sovereignty over himself, he hasn't that sovereignty over her which our traditional patriarchal myths lead her to believe he should have" (218). See also "The Allegory of the Black Eunuchs", where Cleaver discusses Black women's perceived preference for White men.

¹³⁴ Sexton, "Race, Sexuality, and Political Struggle," 34.

devouring my brain" (188). In the last section of the book, "To All Black Women, From All Black Men", Cleaver turns instead to the Black woman, writing:

Let me drink from the river of your love at its source, let the lines of force of your love seize my soul by its core and heal the wound of my Castration, let my convex exile end its haunted Odyssey in your concave essence which receives that it may give. Flower of Africa, it is only through the liberating power of your *re-love* that my manhood can be redeemed. (238)

The goal of "*re-love*" between Black men and women directly conflicts with the widespread desire Black men feel, in Cleaver's account, for white women, as well as with the "struggle [with] the Omnipotent Administrator [...] for control of sexual sovereignty" (220), since what is at stake there is not mastery of Black women, but of white women.

Miscegenation and Ruptured Genealogy

Among the contradictions that "riddle" (Sexton) Cleaver's essays, then, the most complicated are doubtless those articulated by "The Primeval Mitosis". While the "weird dialectic" (211) of the psychosexual relationships binding white and Black men and women might easily form a flowchart of masculine and feminine energies and lines of libidinal investments, it ultimately engenders a situation that Cleaver aptly describes as prisonlike: "It reminds me of two sets of handcuffs that have all four of us tied up together, holding all black and white flesh in a certain mold" (191). The key to restoring the fragmented subjectivity of Black men (as well as the other members of this foursome), individually and collectively, are nowhere to be found; or, rather, they are to be found everywhere: for Cleaver proposes in *Soul on Ice* several intersubjective relationships that might heal psyches wounded by white supremacy.

At first, it seems as though he sees salvation for Black men in their relationship with white women, for not only does he pen eloquent love letters to Beverley Axelrod (and dedicate the book to her¹³⁵), but he at times claims that Black emancipation will only come with access to white women's bodies: "I will not be free until the day I can have a white woman in my bed

¹³⁵ Axelrod's own letters to Cleaver are published in the book as well, and he offered her 25% of the royalties of *Soul on Ice*. He later refused to give Axelrod that share, prompting her to sue him. "Beverly Axelrod -- Attorney to Black Panthers," *SFGate*, accessed August 15, 2013, <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Beverly-Axelrod-attorney-to-Black-Panthers-2805883.php>.

and a white man minds his own business" (189).¹³⁶ He compares his meeting with Axelrod to the resurrection of Christ (169-70), the veritable model of the idea of subjectivity restored to wholeness.¹³⁷ Coming in the wake of the murder of the Black teenager Emmett Till for allegedly flirting with a white woman, the equation freedom = unmolested relationships between Black men and white women is far from trivial,¹³⁸ and recalls Katherine Robert's reading of Diane Lamoureux on liberal democracy: "what distinguishes modernity (fraternity) from patriarchy (power of the fathers) is that equal access to women is no longer limited to the patriarch alone but is shared by all men. Fraternity can thus be understood as the law of male sex-right".¹³⁹ In this case, the new social contract Cleaver envisions would involve a fraternity of white and Black men: "This is America recreating itself out of its own ruins. The pain is mighty for every American, black or white [...]. But there are strong men in this land and they will not be denied. Their task will not be ended until both Paul Bunyan and John Henry can look upon themselves and each other as men, the strength in the image of the one not being at the expense of the other" (121). In this passage, the subject-nation implied by Cleaver's politics seems to include white and Black men within the purview of the new social contract, mutually recognising each other as men and, implicitly, each other's sex-right.

Later on in *Soul on Ice*, however, Cleaver argues—passionately—for love between Black men and women, claiming that healing and restoration of Black subjectivity can only come through "the liberating power of [...] *re-love*" (238). The implication here, to stay with the language of the social contract, would be a new contract that unites Black men among themselves as the possessors of Black women (and Cleaver as their spokesman: "To All Black Women, From All Black Men"). And yet something about this last section of *Soul on Ice* is unconvincing, has the air of a *deus ex machina* solution. Perhaps this is because of the preponderance of discussions of miscegenation and the importance of "sexual sovereignty".

¹³⁶ This proposition is complicated by the fact that it is not Cleaver the essayist who writes it, but rather a character in one of his Platonic-style dialogues who speaks it. Still, it is consonant with his analysis of interracial relationships elsewhere in the text.

¹³⁷ See the titular essay in Giorgio Agamben, *What Is an Apparatus?: And Other Essays*, Meridian, Crossing Aesthetics (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

¹³⁸ "I know that the white man made the black woman the symbol of slavery and the white woman the symbol of freedom" (189), Cleaver writes. See discussion of Till, 29–30; Davis, *op. cit.*, 178–9.

¹³⁹ Roberts, "Mère, Je Vous Hais!", 292–3; Lamoureux, *L'amère patrie*, 45–55.

As Sexton points out: "For [Cleaver], the taboo on miscegenation, specifically the bar on sexual contact between black men and white women, was the key, the linchpin to the structure of white supremacy".¹⁴⁰ In some sense, advocating intra-Black love as the solution seems only to side-step, not to resolve, this problem. Furthermore, the division between Administrator and Menial, an "unnatural apportioning of universal social functions in and as hierarchy", robs Black men of their very masculinity, and "sexual sovereignty" (that is, male sex-right) is a crucial part of regaining the agency implied by that term.¹⁴¹ Conversely, the loss of that agency has more frightening consequences than simply not being able to choose:

[W]hen Cleaver talks about the black man's loss of sexual sovereignty or his lack of "a mind of his own," he generally suggests that black men cannot be "real men" in their preordained role, that is, actively initiating heterosexual relations with women of their choice. Under white supremacy, the white man monopolizes that capacity. What seems to trouble Cleaver's framework most profoundly is that *this loss of sexual sovereignty puts black men and women on the same side of the sexual equation, such that both are subjected (though very differently) to the sexual whims of the white man.*¹⁴²

By depriving Black men of sexual sovereignty, white supremacy effectively castrates them on a psychosocial level and opens them up to abuse by white men.

It stands to reason, then, that reconquest of sexual sovereignty in Cleaver's paradigm implies the disappearance of Black women from the "lines of desire" sketched in "The Primeval Mitosis" (in Sexton's words). As Stockton points out, Cleaver also understands that Black men's desire for white women is mistaken: "[B]lack men of the 1960s, chafing at the bit of (their metaphorical) slavery, (mis)recognize white women as their wished-for phallus. 'She' is freedom because she 'embodies' the white man's omnipotence (literally by supplying the site to which he penetrates)".¹⁴³ In other words, the white woman "is the phallus" but does not "have the phallus" (Stockton here redescribes Cleaver in Lacanian language, and notes that Cleaver anticipates by about 10 years the English-language appearance of Lacan's "The Meaning of the Phallus").¹⁴⁴ Thus is Cleaver obligated to "absent women from his considerations, since white women (unlike Cleaver's white men) have no mental sovereignty

¹⁴⁰ Sexton, "Race, Sexuality, and Political Struggle," 31.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 35–6. Emphasis mine.

¹⁴³ Stockton, *Beautiful Bottom, Beautiful Shame*, 167.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 166.

and black women (unlike Cleaver's black men) lack the defining mark of Body (the black man's penis). In this way, Cleaver's foursome also whittles down to two[:] two who seems to supply each other's needs (black male body, white male mind)".¹⁴⁵

The transition from four-part dialectic to homosocial love-triangle between white men and women and Black men, and the triangle's subsequent reduction to a two-way relationship, introduces a significant degree of tension into Cleaver's writing. He makes as much clear, in fact, when, early in *Soul on Ice*, he discusses his lawyer: "So I love my lawyer. My lawyer is not an ordinary person. My lawyer is a rebel, a revolutionary [...]" (40). He continues on for nearly a page without gendered pronouns, concluding: "I suppose that I should be honest and, before going any further, admit that my lawyer is a woman" (40). This "momentary tease of homosexuality", as Stockton calls it—a kind of tension-reducing joke—is indicative of a broader anxiety about passivity and activity in relationships between whites and Blacks. Nowhere is this more evident than in Cleaver's discussion of James Baldwin.

Cleaver's famously homophobic essay on Baldwin—in which he writes that "[h]omosexuality is a sickness, just as are baby-rape or wanting to become the head of General Motors" (136)—has caused much ink to be spilled, starting notably with Michelle Wallace's landmark *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (the latter being another avatar of the trope of the Black matriarch).¹⁴⁶ Cleaver argues that Baldwin's work manifests "the most grueling, agonizing, total hatred for blacks, particularly of himself, and the most shameful, fanatical, fawning, sycophantic love of the whites that one can find in the writings of any Black American writer of note in our time", which he then mysteriously labels "an appealing contradiction" (124). For Cleaver, Baldwin's "version of manhood" roots itself in an "appropriation" of "the white man's heritage" (125), effectively a betrayal of Black culture. "Baldwin's nose, like the North-seeking needle on a compass, is forever pointed toward his adopted fatherland, Europe, his intellectual osmosis and in Africa's stead" (131). Abandoning the paternal heritage of Africa—an interesting reversal of the trope of the mother country—and venerating such decadent writers as André Gide (131),¹⁴⁷ Baldwin, like "many Negro

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 165.

¹⁴⁶ Michele Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (New York: Dial Press, 1979).

¹⁴⁷ Whom Vallières denounces as well; cf. chapter 1, "Fictive kinship".

homosexuals", "acquiesc[es] in [the] racial death-wish" expressed by their sexual desire for white men. "[O]utraged and frustrated because in their sickness they are unable to have a baby with a white man" (128), Black homosexuals, like Baldwin's character Rufus Scott, are "pathetic wretch[es]" who let themselves be "fuck[ed] [...] in [the] ass" by white men (132) in postures of "lamblike submission" (134). Fundamentally, for Cleaver, Baldwin's work testifies to a sickening homosexuality that expresses his hatred of "masculinity", for Baldwin "cannot confront the stud in others—except that he must either submit to it or destroy it. And he [is] not about to bow to a *black* man" (135). Furthermore, Baldwin's case is irremediable, "because the only way out for him is psychologically to embrace Africa, the land of his fathers, which he utterly refuses to do. He has instead resorted to a despicable underground guerrilla war, waged on paper, against black masculinity" (135), choosing to "take[] the white man for his lover as well as Big Daddy" (129), which makes of the Black homosexual a double invert, *anima mulieris in corpore virile* and "a white man in a black body. A self-willed, automated slave, he becomes the whiteman's most valuable tool in oppressing other blacks" (128).

The logic of Cleaver's critique of Baldwin reinforces the very binary polarities that he mobilises elsewhere to denounce the inferiorisation of Black men. Passive and therefore feminine, destined to meaningless kind of writing, exemplifying rather the "sophistication and style" that reduces him to the status of an Uncle Tom (128), the figure of Baldwin accepts that his genealogy has been ruptured by slavery and refuses to undertake the task of restoring his relationship to a paternal Africa. Cleaver's mobilisation of tropes of femininity and ancestry here invites comparison with the Quebec nationalist commonplaces of both of the *fédéraste*—the treacherous homosexual intermediary in love with the dominant class and whose very name hints at "European" proclivities, structurally parallel to the "bootlicking Uncle Tom"—and the *filis égaré*, led astray by the charms of a European culture, which, in Cleaver's argumentative arsenal, fills the role of the *faux père* in Quebec nationalism's tropology, substituting itself for the authentic lineage of the dominated class.

Brotherly love

And yet, Cleaver's treatment of Baldwin is more complicated than this. Consider this passage, from the beginning of the essay:

I, as I imagine so many others did and still do, lusted for anything that Baldwin had written. It would have been a gas for me to sit on a pillow beneath the womb of Baldwin's typewriter and catch each new born page as it entered this world of ours. I was delighted that Baldwin, with those great big eyes of his, which one thought to be fixedly focused on the macrocosm, could also pierce the microcosm. (122-3)

There is clearly an eroticism to Cleaver's attachment to Baldwin, a casting of the writer as a virile, creative member of his own sex, with admirable or attractive attributes ("those great big eyes"), upon whom he would like to spy in the act of making his works. The fruit of Baldwin's labour—those "newborn pages"—Cleaver will later call "the fruit of a tree with a poison root. Such succulent fruit, such a painful tree, what a malignant root" (130)! Using the same metaphor, he writes that "the cross [Black gay men] have to bear is that, already bending over and touching their toes for the white man, the fruit of their miscegenation is not the little half-white offspring of their dreams but an increase in the unwinding of their nerves—though they redouble their efforts and intake of the white man's sperm" (128).

The notes of bitterness and pain in Cleaver's writing, his disappointment with Baldwin, make the case more complicated than a simple instance of literary gay-bashing. Of course, the essay clearly participates in the particular form of queer-baiting common within the Black nationalist literary tradition that creates "a curious subterranean connection between homophobia and nationalism".¹⁴⁸ Cleaver, like LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka, who also wrote about Baldwin, "sling[s] heterosexist (and sexist) lines as though homosexuals (and implicitly women) were the enemy, rather than the white system of domination", as Marlon Ross writes in his reading of Baraka's critique of Baldwin, in which he argues that Baraka's attack is a form of self-protection, since, in foregoing "literal warfare" for "literary warfare"—using "words—not fists, knives or guns", "the black cultural nationalist writer [...] distract[s] himself and his audience from the realization that as long as he has a pen in his hand, he is deferring picking up a real weapon"; in some sense, then, the writer who condemns the passive homosexual is effectively also targeting himself, "that punk part of the self, which is in fact the writer within the self, suppressing through the act of writing the arrival of the real black

¹⁴⁸ Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "The Black Man's Burden," 261. See also Ross, "Camping The Dirty Dozens"; Philip Brian Harper, "Eloquence and Epitaph. Black Nationalism and the Homophobic Impulse in Responses to the Death of Max Robinson," in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

man of warring action".¹⁴⁹ It is not so much, however, the act of writing, but rather doing so within canonical European forms—using "sophistication and style" in imitation of "the white man's cultural heritage", to use Cleaver's language—that singles one out as a homosexual, since "verbal facility becomes one's proof of one's conventional [Black] masculinity [...] only when it is demonstrated through use of the vernacular" or an avoidance of "the standard white idiom", use of which "can quickly identify one not as a strong black man, but rather as a white-identified Uncle Tom who must also, therefore, be weak, effeminate, and probably a 'fag'".¹⁵⁰

Literature as a form of passivity to be feared and avoided is related to the fear of castration and more broadly to the trope discussed above that "black manhood is the primary target of racism".¹⁵¹ The predator against whom Black men must defend themselves is ultimately the white man, effeminate and homosexual, and thus "invested in the effeminization and homosexualization of Black men".¹⁵² These *faux pères* exercise their power over Black men—make them effeminate homosexuals—by fucking them, according to Cleaver. This expression of gay panic is a displacement of the fear of castration, or its condensation in a particular, metaphorical sexual act—one that would place Black men on the same level of vulnerability as Black women. Field contends that in his denunciation of Baldwin, Cleaver emphasises Rufus's submission to white men's sexual desire, and in so doing

conflates black homosexuality with his dubious views on the powerless of African-American women. [...] But if Cleaver suggests that power is enacted through fucking, then, as [Michelle] Wallace mischievously points out, might we not consider the black homosexual who fucks the white man as the most revolutionary of all? "If whom you fuck indicates your power," Wallace argues, "then obviously the greatest power would be gained by fucking a white man first, a black man second, a white woman third and a black woman not at all. The most important rule is that nobody fucks you".¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Ross, "Camping The Dirty Dozens," 295.

¹⁵⁰ Harper, "Eloquence and Epitaph. Black Nationalism and the Homophobic Impulse in Responses to the Death of Max Robinson," 274.

¹⁵¹ Dwight A. McBride, "Can the Queen Speak? Racial Essentialism, Sexuality and the Problem of Authority," *Callaloo* 21, no. 2 (April 1, 1998): 370.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

¹⁵³ Field, "Looking for Jimmy Baldwin," 464.

Field's view coincides with Stockton's: the homosocial triangle white man/white woman/Black man cannot be indefinitely maintained within Cleaver's system—ultimately, the Black man should fuck the white man to regain the phallus.

Nevertheless, Cleaver's own assault on Baldwin puts his categorical rejection of the writer into doubt. Dunning notes that Cleaver's fantasy of watching Baldwin write "mimick[s]" "the black homosexual's desire to have the white man's child"; she writes that "his initial description of Baldwin shows all the earmarks of idolatry".¹⁵⁴ Further:

[Cleaver writes:] "After reading a couple of James Baldwin's books, I began experiencing that continuous delight one feels upon discovering a fascinating, brilliant talent on the scene, a talent capable of *penetrating* so profoundly into one's own little world that one knows oneself to have been unalterably changed and liberated, liberated from the frustrating grasp of whatever devils happen to possess one" [emphasis on penetrating Dunning's] (8). Baldwin is given the highest compliment, that being the ability to penetrate Cleaver's own little world and "free" him. The use of the verb "liberate" shows that Cleaver regards Baldwin as a man, capable of breaking his bonds of oppression. [...] Cleaver is, at best, ambivalent about Baldwin's sexuality.¹⁵⁵

This ambivalence centres fundamentally on interraciality: "Cleaver's particular argument seems to suggest that Baldwin's presumed rejection of Black masculinity as sexually desirable is what is most objectionable".¹⁵⁶ Let us recall that Cleaver bemoans the fact that "Baldwin despise[s]—not Richard Wright, but his masculinity" (134), as well as Baldwin's "school-marmish dismissal of [Norman Mailer's] *The White Negro*", which, in Cleaver's reading, extols the virtues of Black masculinity.¹⁵⁷ Cleaver's essay represents not only a castigation of homosexuality, but stages its rejection in the context of *interracial* homosexuality, because he conceptualizes it as a "rejection of the worth and value of black masculinity", thus "thinly veil[ing] his deep identification with Baldwin and his characters" in their love of men.¹⁵⁸ Dunning concludes that "Cleaver cannot completely reject Baldwin's love of men since it is Cleaver's presumably non-erotic love of black men that drives his masculine

¹⁵⁴ Stefanie Dunning, "Parallel Perversions: Interracial and Same Sexuality in James Baldwin's 'Another Country'," *MELUS* 26, no. 4 (December 1, 2001): 101, doi:10.2307/3185543.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 101–2.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁵⁷ "His hatred for blacks [...] makes him the apotheosis of the dilemma in the ethos of the black bourgeoisie who have completely rejected their African heritage, consider their loss irrevocable, and refuse to look again in that direction. This is the root of Baldwin's violent repudiation of Mailer's *The White Negro*" (129).

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

agenda. [...] Metaphorically, Cleaver feels that Baldwin has rejected him, if not erotically then nationalistically, and that Baldwin's crime is his love of whiteness more so than his love of men".¹⁵⁹ Structurally, this rejection of gay men because they abandon their country parallels the use of the term *fédéraste* in Quebec literature as an invective highlighting, not simply a politically disqualifying homosexual desire, but one focused on "outsiders".

In Cleaver, the solution for the dilemma faced by Black men who desire white women, yet who are in turn desired by white men, lies in the mutual recognition of each other's masculinity as they take, or re-take, possession of Black women from white men. Certainly, as Amy Abugo Ongiri writes, Cleaver's "vision of masculinity is enabled rather than disabled by the acts of terror which threatened the very existence of Black men, precisely as raced and gendered subjects",¹⁶⁰ insofar as the very violence that white supremacy imputes to Black men as an ontological property occupies pride of place in Cleaver's vision. But masculinity is not just a matter of body—it is also a question of mind. In an essay on Muhammad Ali, Cleaver criticises the prevailing "dim vision of masculinity" as a "rough-and-ready, savage mishmash of violence and sexuality, a dichotomized exercise and worship of physical force/submission to and fear of physical force" (110). He praises Ali not just for his grace and prowess, but his sharp mind and poetic spirit—which are precisely the qualities that Cleaver believes frightens white America insofar as they portend a reunification or a restoration of Black men to the whole subjectivity they have long been denied.

For Cleaver, revolutionary violence is certainly a part of masculinity ("We shall have our manhood. We shall have it or the earth shall be levelled by our attempts to gain it" [84]), but regaining recognition and respect for the products of one's mind is just as important. Just as Muhammad Ali frightened white America with his poetry, another model of masculinity—Malcolm X, "our living, black manhood", in Ossie Davis' words (qtd. by Cleaver 84)—terrified white-supremacists because of his incredible intelligence and because of his willingness to "take our cause before a sympathetic world" (83). Malcolm X "awaken[ed] into self-consciousness [...] twenty million Negroes" (82) with his words and his mind.

¹⁵⁹ Dunning, "Parallel Perversions," loc. cit.

¹⁶⁰ Amy Abugo Ongiri, "We Are Family: Black Nationalism, Black Masculinity, and the Black Gay Cultural Imagination," *College Literature* 24, no. 1 (February 1, 1997): 282.

Malcolm X's internationalism, identified by Cleaver as one of the pillars of his masculinity, proposes a path toward a dis-alienated subjectivity for Black men. Rather than rejecting Black masculinity, as the treacherous Baldwin does in Cleaver's account, Malcolm X encourages Black men to seek recognition and respect from each other. It is through emulation of Muhammad Ali and Malcolm X, who combine the intellectual prowess denied to Black men by white supremacy with the physical power forced upon them that Black men can become wholly men. And in recognising this whole masculinity on an international scale, the world order might be changed. Thus the imperative to "link up the Negro revolution with national liberation movements around the world" (90), which together form "the central event of our era" (93). It is through a world revolution made by "people not usually thought of as white" (105) that white supremacy will be overthrown and Black men will find themselves whole again. It is this revolutionary fraternity of Black men and men of colour around the world that will lead to the promised land. In the next chapter, we shall see how similar, and parallel, this claim is to the one Vallières makes for the oppressed men of Quebec.

Chapter 3: *White Niggers of America*

The drive to translation

Obviously, the principal goal Vallières sought to achieve in writing *Les Nègres blancs d'Amérique* was a *révolution québécoise*.¹⁶¹ Therefore, we can reasonably assume that his target readership consisted of white francophone Quebeckers, descendants of French settler-colonists. However, a closer examination of *Nègres blancs*, especially when set alongside Vallières's other (published and unpublished) writings, reveals that he wrote his autobiography with an eye toward its "afterlife" in translation.¹⁶² "Translatability is an essential quality of certain works", Walter Benjamin writes, "which is not to say that it is essential that they be translated; it means rather that a specific significance inherent in the original manifests itself in its translatability".¹⁶³ While Benjamin's conception of the task of the translator verges on the metaphysical, what interests me in Vallières is something altogether more concrete: *Nègres blancs* seems designed to play an important role as propaganda for Quebec revolutionary nationalism outside of Quebec, and this, specifically among Black nationalists in the United States. In other words, Vallières integrated translatability into the composition of his work. Let us recall that Vallières wrote his text in 1966, while imprisoned in the Manhattan Detention Complex (the "Tombs"), fighting extradition to Quebec.¹⁶⁴ Prior to his arrest, he had been on a several-month-long tour of the United States to learn more about American radicalism and, at the time of his arrest, had been protesting in front of the United Nations in order to "sensibiliser certains pays—que l'on disait révolutionnaires—à la cause d'un Québec libre et socialiste".¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ The title of a journal Vallières edited.

¹⁶² Sometimes rendered "survival". German: *Überleben*. Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*," in *The Translation Studies Reader*, trans. Harry Zohn, 2nd ed (New York: Routledge, 2004), 76.

¹⁶³ Loc. cit.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁶⁵ Vallières, *Nègres blancs*, 30. All further citations in this chapter are integrated into the body text between parentheses and signalled "NBA".

In the introduction to *Nègres blancs*, Vallières is quite explicit about his intentions, insisting that though "this book [...] was conceived first of all in terms of the practical tasks which today confront [the people] of Quebec", "perhaps it may also have something to say to the men and revolutionaries of other countries, colonized or even imperialist".¹⁶⁶ By including "imperialist" countries in his list of potential readers, Vallières hints at his ambition that an American readership will appreciate *Nègres blancs*. He is more precise in *Les Héritiers de Papineau* (1986), in which he reflects on his time in prison, claiming that "les Noirs américains ignoraient absolument tout de la lutte des Québécois, de leur histoire, de leur culture, de leurs croyances et de leurs aspirations".¹⁶⁷ "Pour les Noirs, j'étais, à première vue, un Blanc nord-américain comme un autre... Pas encore un 'nègre blanc'",¹⁶⁸ which meant that he was merely a "cochon[] à liquider".¹⁶⁹ Wounded by Black Americans' perceived ignorance of Quebec's specificity—its difference from the mainstream of whiteness—Vallières makes it his mission to educate them about his struggle: "C'est en voulant percer ce mur d'indifférence et de mépris que j'inventai, pour désigner les Québécois, le concept de nègres blancs d'Amérique. C'est d'ailleurs en anglais que ce concept se formula spontanément dans ma tête. *White Niggers of America*".¹⁷⁰

These statements open up an intriguing possibility for analysing the translation of *Nègres blancs*. I want to ascribe to Vallières's writing process something like the *pulsion du traduire* theorised by Antoine Berman: a drive towards translation, a movement towards an other.¹⁷¹ But while Berman finds his *pulsion du traduire* in the psyche of the translator, I propose to look in the source-text author for traces of a drive towards translation, of a secret

¹⁶⁶ Pierre Vallières, *White Niggers of America*, trans. Joan Pinkham (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), 15. All further citations in this chapter are integrated into the body text between parentheses and signaled "WNA".

¹⁶⁷ Pierre Vallières, *Les héritiers de Papineau : itinéraire politique d'un "nègre blanc" (1960-1985)* (Montréal, Québec: Québec/Amérique, 1986), 104.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁶⁹ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁷⁰ Vallières, *Nègres blancs*, 31. Of course, Vallières did not invent the term "nègres blancs" at all, but the words "d'Amérique" seem crucially to have been his addition; see Mills, *The Empire Within*, 75–6.

¹⁷¹ Antoine Berman, *L'épreuve de l'étranger: culture et traduction dans l'Allemagne romantique: Herder, Goethe, Schlegel, Novalis, Humboldt, Schleiermacher, Hölderlin* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), 21–3.

appeal to an imagined, hoped-for target-language readership. In *Nègres blancs*, we find such an embedded call, specifically in Vallières's revisionist history of Quebec. Indeed, *White Niggers of America*—and in particular its eponymous first chapter—manifestly recasts the history of Quebec as both identical to and different from that of Black Americans. As Fernande Roy describes it, "le militant dresse un parallèle non seulement entre le passé des Afro-Américains et celui des Canadiens français, mais entre leurs présents respectifs",¹⁷² now through outrageously explicit comparisons, now through more surreptitious analogies. Conforming to canonical translational tactics that aim for transparency and minimally intrusive interventions on the part of the translator, Joan Pinkham's practice in *White Niggers of America* abets Vallières's rhetorical strategy by smoothing over his most scandalous statements while transmitting, without comment or context, the author's tendentious understanding of Quebec history.

Vallières opens his account by explaining the growing interest Quebeckers have taken in Black Americans' "liberation struggle":

[L]es travailleurs du Québec ont conscience de leur condition de nègres, d'exploités, de citoyens de seconde classe. Ne sont-ils pas, depuis l'établissement de la Nouvelle-France [...], les valets des impérialistes, les "Nègres blancs d'Amérique"? N'ont-ils pas, tout comme les Noirs américains, été importés pour servir de main-d'œuvre à bon marché dans le Nouveau Monde? Ce qui les différencie: uniquement la couleur de la peau et le continent d'origine. Après trois siècles, leur condition est demeurée la même. Ils constituent toujours un réservoir de main-d'œuvre à bon marché que les détenteurs de capitaux ont toute liberté de faire travailler ou de réduire au chômage, au gré de leurs intérêts financiers, qu'ils ont toute liberté de mal payer, de maltraiter et de fouler aux pieds, qu'ils ont toute liberté, selon la loi, de faire matraquer par la police et emprisonner par les juges "dans l'intérêt public", quand leurs profits semblent en danger. (NBA 61-2)

[T]he workers of Quebec are aware of their condition as niggers, exploited men, second-class citizens. Have they not been, ever since the establishment of New France [...], the servants of the imperialists, the white niggers of America? Were they not imported, like the American blacks, to serve as cheap labor in the New World? The only difference between them is the color of their skin and the continent they came from. After three centuries their condition remains the same. They still constitute a reservoir of cheap labor whom the capitalists are completely free to put to work or reduce to unemployment, as it suits their financial interests, whom they are completely free to underpay, mistreat and trample underfoot, whom they are completely free, according to law, to have clubbed down by the police and locked up by the judges "in the public interest", when their profits seem to be in danger. (WNA 21-2)

¹⁷² Fernande Roy, "Nègres Blancs d'Amérique?," *Liberté* 51, no. 3 (285) (2009): 35.

In this passage, Pinkham smoothens the harsh edges of Vallières's rhetoric. First, she suppresses the distancing quotation marks of "Nègres blancs d'Amérique", giving the more direct "White Niggers of America". Second, she de-emphasises the simile "tout comme les Noirs américains, [...] importés", turning it into the slightly more reasonable-sounding "imported, like the American blacks".¹⁷³ An alternative rendering of the simile in that sentence might have given "just like American Blacks", with greater emphasis on the identity between the two groups. We see a similar strategy in another line, perhaps the most shocking in the paragraph: "Ce qui les différencie: uniquement la couleur de la peau et le continent d'origine". Vallières uses parataxis here to express mimetically the supposed simplicity of this "truth". Pinkham's version relies on explicitation and standard syntax to soften the bluntness of Vallières's sentiment: "The only difference between them is the color of their skin and the continent they came from". The total effect of these translation strategies is euphemism: they downplay the hyperbole of the source-text, thereby ensuring an easier reception for the target text.

With its claims that French Canadians were "imported [...] to serve as cheap labor", this first passage ushers us into a network of tropes that recall or resonate with the history of Africans in the New World. The word "imported" seems to invoke the Triangle Trade and to imply that French Canadians were viewed as no more than "goods" to the French colonial administration.¹⁷⁴ According to Vallières, as soon as they arrived in New France, the colonists were forced to do the bidding of the colony's *Intendant*: "Ceux qui refusaient d'obéir aux directives de l'Intendant étaient emprisonnés ou renvoyés en France" (63-4). Pinkham renders this: "Those who refused to obey the directives of the intendant were put in prison or sent back to France" (22). In this version of history, French Canadians are nearly as much at the mercy of the *Intendant* of New France as slaves were to slave masters—albeit with much less harsh punishments for disobedience. Ought we to take Vallières at his word here? Clearly not, since

¹⁷³ Vallières does not, in his revisionist history, discuss at any length the complicated, often violent relations between French colonists and First Nations. Although a lengthier critique of his failure to address the French as colonisers in the context of his own claim that French Canadians are a colonised people is necessary for a complete analysis of *Nègres blancs*, the scope of an M.A. thesis limits the number of subjects I can include herein.

¹⁷⁴ It should be noted that Vallières also claims that "[o]ur ancestors came here with the hope of beginning a new life" (22)—which is of course the beginning of a different, but also thoroughly North American, topology...

in the very same paragraph he notes that many "preferred to become *coureurs de bois*" (22), which would indicate a degree of freedom or agency that, during the antebellum period especially, most enslaved Black Americans did not enjoy. Thus, even though Pinkham's translation seems quite "transparent" and bears no explanatory note on the extent to which the political hierarchy of New France had control over the lives of the average colonists, Vallières's own text implicitly acknowledges that it is not so total as that of slave-masters over their slaves. The tendentious comparison, then, seems to gain in credibility in the eyes of a target readership unacquainted with Quebec history because Pinkham follows canonical translation practice by not annotating the sentence. Similarly, when Vallières claims that French Canadians had "no technical knowledge and nothing to offer [*Intendant Jean*] Talon but their muscle, good will and taste for adventure" (22),¹⁷⁵ Pinkham's minimal interventions in the text leave Vallières as a privileged informant about his culture's history, thus reinforcing the perceived veracity of the master/slave–*Intendant*/colonist version of French colonisation in Quebec.

The trope of forced labour finds itself complemented in this section by the trope of forced marriage. The arrival of *les filles du Roi*, female orphans sent from France, with their passage and dowries courtesy of the Crown, gave the fledgling colony an enormous population boost. In Vallières's recounting, however, the intended unions were not wholly consensual: "Plusieurs colons préféraient se faire coureurs des bois plutôt que d'être contraints d'épouser une femme qu'ils ne connaissaient pas et dont souvent ils ne voulaient pas, parce qu'elle avait mauvais caractère, était laide ou stupide" (64). Pinkham renders this: "Many colonists preferred to become *coureurs de bois* rather than be forced to marry a woman whom they did not know and often did not want because she was ill-tempered, homely or stupid" (22). (The italics here are a rare indication to the target reader that Vallières writes from within a non-anglophone North American context.) According to some accounts of *les filles du Roi*, the colonial administration issued decrees requiring single men in New France to marry them within a given time period after their arrival, punishing those who did not with the suspension

¹⁷⁵ "Ils ne possédaient aucune connaissance technique et n'avaient que leurs muscles, leur bonne volonté et leur goût de l'aventure" (64).

of certain colonial privileges.¹⁷⁶ But the scale of these forced marriages pales in comparison to the systematic violence of the "slave breeding" practiced on American plantations.¹⁷⁷ Once more, Pinkham's translation of Vallières's claim is without comment, thereby facilitating his movement into English.

According to Vallières, since the British conquest French Canadians have lived under the successive yokes of Britain, Canada and the United States.¹⁷⁸ As U.S. industrialism sets up shop in Montreal, Quebec's economy comes to require ever greater labour power, leading to "[l]a prolétarisation des Canadiens français 'ruraux, catholiques et français' et l'urbanisation du Québec médiéval" (82),¹⁷⁹ or as Pinkham writes: "proletarianization of the 'rural, Catholic, and French' French Canadians and the urbanization of medieval Quebec" (36). The process Vallières describes in this section recalls the Great Migration of African Americans from the rural and religious southern U.S. to the relatively more secular, industrial and urban north during roughly the same time period. The Great Migration in the United States in turn led to the emergence of Black ghettos in the cities, characterised by overcrowding and segregation. Echoing this trajectory, Vallières describes the Centre-Sud of Montreal as a neighbourhood where francophone Quebeckers live one on top of another, replete with gangs and violence (WNA 89-91).¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ See, e.g., the tendentious Léandre Bergeron, *Petit manuel d'histoire du Québec* (Montreal?: Éditions québécoises, 1970), 35. I have been unable to confirm the facticity of this account.

¹⁷⁷ Manning Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America: Problems in Race, Political Economy, and Society*, Updated ed, South End Press Classics Series v. 4 (Cambridge, Mass: South End Press, 2000), 72–3.

¹⁷⁸ I am skipping over Vallières's extremely important denunciation of Catholicism as an ally of state repression, for the sake of brevity. For a succinct overview of *laïcité* in *parti pris*, see Major, *Parti pris*, 20–21. Recent scholarship on the matter, more directly related to Vallières: Gilles Labelle, "La Révolution tranquille interprétée à la lumière du 'problème théologico-politique'," *Recherches sociographiques* 52, no. 3 (2011): 849; Jonathan Livernois, "Le retour du chanoine Groulx malgré Pierre Vallières : l'hypothèse d'une palinodie dans les années 1970," *Recherches sociographiques* 54, no. 1 (2013): 109.

¹⁷⁹ The quotation marks around "ruraux, catholiques, français" are present in the 1st and 2nd editions of *Nègres blancs*, but not the "definitive" 1996 edition

¹⁸⁰ Although my goal here is not to examine the truth-value of Vallières's statements, but rather to understand how Pinkham's translation facilitated the passage of a certain ideological discourse on Quebec history into English, I would be remiss not to correct a common misunderstanding here, namely that this particular comparison—between Black ghettos and French-Canadian neighbourhoods—was totally unfounded.

All of these tropes might be said to bear two valences. On the one hand, they serve to shock the French-Canadian reader into recognition of the abject state of French Canada. On the other hand, they appear to constitute a secret appeal to potential Black American readers: these eminently translatable tropes should correct the assumption that Quebeckers are "des Blancs nord-américains comme des autres".¹⁸¹ Pinkham's transparent and unobtrusive translation strategy comes to fulfill the *pulsion du traduire* that Vallières's book suggests.

Made in U.S.A.

This drive towards translation is expressed by Vallières in a 1968 letter to *parti pris's* publisher. Writing from Bordeaux prison, he enthuses about the publication of *Nègres blancs* and hints that he wants it to reach non-Quebec readers: "La parution du bouquin m'a également beaucoup encouragé. [...] J'aimerais beaucoup qu'il soit diffusé en Amérique latine et aux USA".¹⁸² These are precisely the target readerships that I maintain he had in mind—in

In 1951 (*i.e.*, when Vallières is 13), 86% of lodgings in Montreal have their own bathtubs or showers; in poor, generally francophone neighbourhoods, however, this rate drops to 62% and in the wealthiest quarters, rises to 98%. Sixty-two percent of lodgings have a refrigerator, but only 40% of those in poor neighbourhoods, against 85% in the wealthiest. Only 44% of lodgings have central heating—a shocking statistic in such a cold city—and this rate drops to 25% for the poor and rises to 76% for the rich. In 1975–6 (Vallières is now nearly 40), life expectancy at birth in Montreal is 72.8. However, in the Centre-Sud—where Vallières was born—it is 63.8. (Tellingly, Vallières will die just shy of that figure at age 60.) In the Boucle d'or, including wealthy anglophone and francophone areas (from Westmount to Outremont), it is 76.8. In the same time period, infant mortality for the Centre-Sud is 24.6 per 1000, but 12.5 per 1000 in the Boucle d'or. Anne-Marie Séguin, Paula Negron-Poblette, and Philippe Apparicio, "Pauvreté et richesse dans la région montréalaise depuis l'après-guerre. Un paysage en mouvement," in *Histoire de Montréal et de sa région*, vol. 2 ([Québec]: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2012), 1150.

Employment statistics from the early 1960s (*i.e.*, around the time when Vallières is entering the labour market) consistently show that ethnic French-Canadian men are among the lowest wage-earners in Montreal, and this, even when they speak English fluently or as their first language. British-origin Montrealers earn the most and suffer from the least underemployment; French Canadians, though not the most affected by underemployment, suffer a dramatically high rate at 13.2%. Two failings of these statistics: the sample size is too small to be completely reliable in some instances (e.g., for anglophone ethnic French Canadians); they do not take into account Black workers' experience, nor do they examine in depth that of Indigenous men (the lowest wage-earners recorded). While I draw here from Sheilagh Hodgins Milner and Henry Milner, *The Decolonization of Quebec. An Analysis of Left-wing Nationalism* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), 55, 57–8, all of chapter 3, the statistics ultimately derive from the *Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism*, which—*sauf erreur*—does not even include Black people as an ethnic group in Montreal (see vol. 3a, pp. 16, 18, 19, 123).

¹⁸¹ Vallières, *Les héritiers de Papineau*, 105.

¹⁸² Pierre Vallières to Gérald Godin, May 17, 1968, MSS140. Fonds Éditions parti pris, Archives nationales du Québec. In another letter, Vallières, having heard that the book was being sold as a

addition to Québécois readers—when writing *Nègres blancs*. In what follows, I rely on Julie McDonough-Dolmaya's thorough research into the translation of the book to show how its very publication history reflects this hoped-for translational afterlife.

The English translation was published by Monthly Review Press, the publishing house of an intellectual journal with a socialist and anti-imperialist agenda.¹⁸³ Vallières, who read *Monthly Review*, already had a relationship with the magazine.¹⁸⁴ The translator, Joan Pinkham, also had a pre-existing association with the *Review* and publishing house, and though she did not ask to translate *Nègres blancs*, "she did agree to translate the book because she believed in Vallières' ideas".¹⁸⁵ "[S]he was 'happy and proud' to undertake the translations offered to her by Monthly Review Press and [felt] 'this work constituted [her] small contribution to the propagation of ideas that [she] believed in".¹⁸⁶ An American who had previously worked at the United Nations and done several other translations from the French,¹⁸⁷ "Pinkham initially knew very little about Vallières and the political situation in Canada in the early 1970s, although this changed considerably as she prepared her translation".¹⁸⁸ The publishing house put her in touch with a consultant familiar with Quebec nationalism—Malcolm Reid, the left-wing Anglo-Canadian journalist and author of *The Shouting Signpainters*.¹⁸⁹ In an interview with McDonough-Dolmaya, Reid claimed that the translation "was to put Quebec on the world map of lefts".¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, because the War

"Journal", emphasises the importance of its title: "Claire m'a assuré qu'on conserverait le titre original: Les nègres blancs d'Amérique. J'y tiens beaucoup". Pierre Vallières to Gérald Godin, August 24, 1967, MSS140. Fonds Éditions parti pris, Archives nationales du Québec.

¹⁸³ Julie McDonough, "Framed! : Translations, Paratexts and Narratives of Nationalism, Independence Movements and the 1980/1995 Referenda in Canada, 1968-2000 with Special Focus on Mordecai Richler's 'Oh Canada! Oh Quebec!' and Pierre Vallières' 'Nègres Blancs d'Amérique'" (University of Ottawa, 2009), 300.

¹⁸⁴ McDonough Dolmaya, "Framed!", 303, note 227.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 290.

¹⁸⁶ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁸⁷ See McDonough Dolmaya, "Framed!", 289–91, for an overview of Pinkham's oeuvre.

¹⁸⁸ Julie McDonough Dolmaya, "1971. Pierre Vallières Comes to English Canada via the United States," in *Translation Effects* (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's, 2014).

¹⁸⁹ Malcolm Reid, *The Shouting Signpainters. A Literary and Political Account of Quebec Revolutionary Nationalism* (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1972).

¹⁹⁰ McDonough Dolmaya, "Framed!", 320.

Measures Act was still *en vigueur* when Pinkham was working on the translation, any affiliation with Vallières dangerous; thus, Reid preferred to receive no credit for his role. "By choosing to remain anonymous, [he] removed all Canadian connections from the translation",¹⁹¹ which was both undertaken by an American and published by a U.S. publishing house. In Canada, a facsimile of the American edition was published by McClelland & Stewart, a general-interest house that, while eschewing ideological labels of the kind Monthly Review used, gave itself a nationalist mission: describing themselves as "the Canadian publishers", M & S aimed to consolidate and build up Canadian literature, an integral part of the task of Canadian nation-building. I will argue, following McDonough-Dolmaya, that publishing Vallières's autobiography can be seen as a part of this task.

In her work, McDonough-Dolmaya focusses on the framing—the peritext—of the translation in its U.S. and Canadian editions. She writes that the texts of the two versions are "identical: the translation is the same length and all translator notes are the same. The only difference between the two texts is the front and back covers, and the seven page Publisher's Afterword to the Monthly Review Press translation that is not included in the McClelland & Stewart edition".¹⁹² The Monthly Review edition "framed *White Niggers of America* by positioning the author as a socialist activist who had been harassed, unjustly imprisoned, subject to unfair trials and yet continues to be a revolutionary despite these injustices".¹⁹³ It adorned the front cover with a photo of Vallières fighting the police and included laudatory reviews on the back cover which compare Vallières to Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver, Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara and Régis Debray.¹⁹⁴ (We will return to the question of reception in the next section.) McClelland & Stewart, on the other hand, uses cover copy, the author biography and its publicity to frame the text as a sort of anthropological document that will help anglophone Canadians understand "what Quebec wants": "[Target-language] readers are not encouraged to read the [target text] as a goodwill gesture or to help forge better relations

¹⁹¹ Loc. cit.

¹⁹² Ibid., 307.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 314.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 328.

between anglophones and francophones, but rather so they can understand 'the enemy', that is, the FLQ (and therefore not Quebec writ large).¹⁹⁵

Monthly Review's framing, as we shall see in the next section, worked quite well, since newspaper reviewers "position[] Vallières as addressing issues that apply to anyone" and his book as "a source for understanding 'young revolutionaries of all countries'".¹⁹⁶ McDonough-Dolmaya comments that "[t]his strategy helps make *White Niggers* relevant to American readers, and positions Vallières in a very positive light, showing that reviewers from multiple sources have labelled his work 'profound' and 'lucid'".¹⁹⁷

At the same time, the peritexts and translation strategies Pinkham employs both efface Vallières's specificity vis-à-vis an American readership and maintains his status as "other" in the eye of his English-Canadian audience. Thus the extreme readability of *White Niggers*, which enables him to be lauded in the U.S. press as "representative of 'the crisis of the modern world'",¹⁹⁸ owes much to Pinkham's particular translation choices, as we saw in the previous section. For instance, McDonough-Dolmaya analyses Pinkham's translation of the French term "camarade", used by Vallières in a number of different contexts. Pinkham thins its polysemy by rendering it almost uniformly as "comrade", a word which in English, at the time, had particular political connotations and certainly keyed Vallières text into a favourable semantic network.¹⁹⁹

Similarly, "[t]he original French source text uses the term *cheap labour*, in English, on at least half a dozen occasions [...] and these have been kept in the English text".²⁰⁰ "While most of the occurrences of *cheap labour* are not offset by quotation marks as they were in the French source text [...], the translator note on page 149 indicates that *cheap labour* is one of several English words 'sprinkled' throughout the French text".²⁰¹ As for *joual*, Pinkham writes that it

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 326.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 330.

¹⁹⁷ Loc. cit.

¹⁹⁸ Loc. cit.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 308–9.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 310.

²⁰¹ Loc. cit.

is the name given to the language of Quebec, a French that retains some holdovers from the seventeenth century and is heavily corrupted by English. [...] The radical *joualistes* (André Major, for example [...]) write in *Joual*, claiming for it the status of a separate language. Vallières opposes this position. His own work, while it is sprinkled with English words [...] and contains a number of peculiarly Québécois expressions, is written in standard French. (WNA 149, note)

Rather than distancing Vallières from the joual writers, Pinkham could have built a different intertextual network here, explaining that the use of joual, and in particular anglicisms that have to do with capital, often serves as a means of denouncing the miseries wrought in Quebec by British colonialism and U.S. capital. She could have referenced, for example, Jacques Renaud's form of joual writing.²⁰² By eliding Vallières's relationship to the denunciatory use of joual, and for the sake of transparency, she minimises Vallières's difference from his American readers, who in the main do not share this relationship to the English language.

The McClelland & Stewart edition retains most of the U.S. peritext that was designed to increase the transparency of *White Niggers* for its American readership. Harry Braverman, Monthly Review Press' editor, described the agreement between the two publishing houses as follows: "We have been assured by McClelland and Stewart, both contractually and orally, that they will use exactly what we give them, and in fact may even photo our pages. [...] McClelland and Stewart will only be a few weeks behind us, since they intend to produce and publish as fast as possible after they have our negatives".²⁰³ "[O]bliged to reproduce the target text exactly as it appeared in the United States",²⁰⁴ M & S did not replace, for example, explanatory footnotes that gave context to American readers that would be unnecessary to English Canadian ones (such as a note explaining what the New Democratic Party is). Indeed,

[b]ecause the translation was published in the United States, it also had the effect of removing—to a certain extent—English-Canadian ties to the book. [...] McClelland & Stewart simply copied the translation page for page, including explanatory footnotes for American readers [...]. Although M & S intended to add a preface to the English-Canadian edition (indeed, one was prepared by McGill history professor [and later Liberal senator] Laurier LaPierre), Vallières refused to have it included in the translation.²⁰⁵

²⁰² Robert Major, *Parti pris : idéologies et littérature* (Québec: Hurtubise HMH, 1979), 273–86, in particular the discussion of Renaud.

²⁰³ Qtd in McDonough Dolmaya, "1971".

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

On Vallières's refusal, McDonough-Dolmaya cites the *Montreal Star*, reporting that he "objected to the inclusion on the grounds that the book must speak for itself"; but McDonough-Dolmaya writes that "this may not be the real reason, as [he] did not object to the afterword included" in the *Monthly Review* edition.²⁰⁶ She concludes that

by agreeing to reprint Pinkham's translation as is, McClelland & Stewart—intentionally or not—has positioned Vallières as an Other. Because the English text does not conform to Canadian spelling conventions and the translation includes footnotes for concepts, groups and people English-speaking Canadians are familiar with, this translation comes from outside the country rather than within.²⁰⁷

It would be absurd to say that the othering of *White Niggers* in an Anglo-Canadian context is entirely by design. Vallières certainly had no control over Malcolm Reid's decision to remain uncredited, for example. But the overall effect of the framing of Pinkham's translation, including Vallières's insistence that the book not include a specifically Canadian introduction or other peritexts, indicates that the book addresses itself first and foremost to a U.S. target readership. That Vallières is writing with an eye toward U.S. activists—and in particular, Black nationalists—has a decisive impact on our reading. By giving English-Canadian readers the same peritext to help them understand his autobiography, Vallières effectively refuses to recognize them as a significant target group and arguably signals his feeling that useful or meaningful solidarity will only come from outside of the Canadian context.

"White Niggers..."

The densely allusive title of *Les Nègres blancs d'Amérique* is, of course, controversial, and perhaps more so in English than in French, given the taboo on the word "nigger".²⁰⁸ It has been thus since the initial publications of the book in both languages. It is unsurprising then that today, many readers—even those who experienced Montreal's tumultuous 1960s and 1970s—find the comparisons between francophone Quebecers, Black Americans and the colonised peoples of Africa signified by Vallières's title intolerable. Diane Lamoureux is

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, n. 17.

²⁰⁷ McDonough Dolmaya, "Framed!", 319.

²⁰⁸ An accessible introduction to the controversy around the word can be found in Randall Kennedy, *Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003).

representative when she writes, in 2001, that "une relecture des *Nègres blancs d'Amérique* [...] peut s'avérer intéressante [...], d'autant plus que les 'évidences' de l'époque sont loin d'être les évidences actuelles, notamment l'insistance sur le statut colonial du Québec".²⁰⁹ In a 2009 article, Fernande Roy hits a more polemical note:

Si, par cette expression ["Nègres blancs"], on a la moindre prétention d'établir un lien entre la situation politique, économique et sociale des Canadiens français et celle des Noirs américains, il me semble qu'on erre complètement. On ne peut pas simplement se dire que toute comparaison est boiteuse. Ici, la comparaison est odieuse. Elle révèle, à mon avis, une bonne dose d'ignorance et même de nombrilisme.²¹⁰

Thus it appears that today some sectors of the social discourse²¹¹ in Quebec consign not just the racial metaphor of Vallières's title, but the entire ideology subtending it, to the realm of what Marc Angenot calls the illegible,²¹² or to what Sean Mills terms, in this instance, "the alterity of the past".²¹³

In the English-speaking reception of Vallières's work, we find a similar trend. A comparison of what the *New York Times* has to say about Vallières in the 1970s with what it published upon his death in 1998 presents a remarkable illustration of the phenomenon. In 1971, the future Canadian Liberal Party senator Laurier LaPierre (who attempted to write a preface to the book's English translation; see above), in the *New York Times Book Review*, declared Vallières "Canada's Eldridge Cleaver or Malcolm X";²¹⁴ Christopher Lehmann-Haupt wrote in a *New York Times* review of Pinkham's translation that it would "take its place alongside the writings of Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver, Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara and Régis

²⁰⁹ Lamoureux, *L'amère patrie*, 116. A bit earlier, Lamoureux writes: "Dans la perspective de l'oppression nationale, le statut des francophones du Québec est assimilé à celui des Algériens [...] ou encore à celui des Noirs américains [...], ce qui fait fi de différences assez fondamentales touchant à l'existence des droits politiques et d'institutions parlementaires représentatives" (116). She is, of course, absolutely right.

²¹⁰ Fernande Roy, "Nègres Blancs d'Amérique?," 34.

²¹¹ I use the term in Marc Angenot's sense. See n. 22 in the introduction.

²¹² Angenot, "Théorie du discours social," para. 48–50. I do not necessarily subscribe to all of the implication Angenot gives the word "illegibility".

²¹³ Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial thought and political activism in Sixties Montreal* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 20.

²¹⁴ Laurier L. LaPierre, "White Niggers Of America; The Precocious Autobiography of a Quebec 'Terrorist.' By Pierre Vallieres. Translated by Joan Pinkham. 288 Pp. New York: Monthly Review Press. \$7.50," *The New York Times Book Review*, April 11, 1971, Fonds parti pris, Archives nationales du Québec.

Debray".²¹⁵ In 1998, however, the *Times* could only refer to such comparisons indirectly, by quoting earlier articles, and with a major caveat: "[Vallières] and the [separatist] movement clearly identified with the struggles of blacks in the American South, although he was criticized for comparing the history of the blacks to the less burdensome travails of French-Canadians".²¹⁶

The gulf that separates these two assessments of Vallières follows a larger pattern in which Quebec revolutionary nationalism has become difficult to understand for many people today.²¹⁷ And yet in the 1970s, American, British and left-wing English-Canadian reviewers of *White Niggers* nearly all echoed the *Times*' evaluation of Vallières.²¹⁸ Many compared his book to works by Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver, Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara and Régis Debray, making explicit analogies between Quebec separatism and the U.S. civil rights movement, African decolonisation, upheaval in Latin America and the unrest in Ireland.²¹⁹

²¹⁵ Quoted in Mills, *The Empire Within*, 80.

²¹⁶ "Pierre Vallières, 60, Angry Voice of Quebec Separatism, Dies." It is interesting to note that the Grey Lady fails to mention (1) the work of civil-rights activists in California, the Midwest and the Northeast, i.e. outside of the South; and (2) that Vallières speaks specifically of revolutionary action in urban areas, like Harlem and Watts, as his inspiration.

²¹⁷ Robert Schwartzwald, for example, has demonstrated that international observers of the crisis in Quebec frequently made links that today strike many as bizarre. He writes that the *Times* of London "compared the initiative held by the FLQ in the early days of the [October] crisis to the one enjoyed by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) after it hijacked a BOAC jet" and "explained how the FLQ was ideologically aligned with similar groups in the Middle East and Latin America". "The new nation [i.e., Quebec], claimed the *Times*, would be 'a base from which to attack the United States and the West'". See Robert Schwartzwald, "1970. The October Crisis and the FLQ Manifesto," in *Translation Effects* (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's, 2014). A similar comparison today—between the Parti québécois and the Palestine Liberation Organisation, for example—could only be considered humorous, because so ludicrous.

²¹⁸ See the following letters, respectively a request for the film rights to the English translation and two requests from British publishing houses for the translation rights of *Nègres blancs*: Ronald Garrett to Harry Braverman, July 11, 1971, MSS140. Fonds Éditions parti pris, Archives nationales du Québec; Richard Handyside to Gérald Godin, August 30, 1969, Archives nationales du Québec; Andi Engel to parti pris, December 6, 1970, MSS140. Fonds Éditions parti pris, Archives nationales du Québec.

²¹⁹ Maurice R. Berube, "White Niggers of America," *Commonweal*, June 25, 1971; Herman Buller, "White Niggers of America," *Canadian Jewish Outlook*, April 1971; Robert Davenport, "Tough Message for Our Time," *The Seattle Times*, May 9, 1971; Geoffrey Godsell, "In Quebec: The Raising of a Rebel," *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 22, 1971; Chester Higgins, "People Are Talking About," *Jet*, May 6, 1971; Vincent Houghton, "White Niggers," *New Society*, January 6, 1972; Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, "The Making of a Terrorist," *New York Times*, April 6, 1971, sec. Book Review; Harding Lemay, "The Story of a Revolutionist," *The Washington Post*, April 26, 1971; Jack Morgan, "Canada Has Its Wretched, Too," *The Cleveland Press*, May 7, 1971; Ronald E. Santoni, "Call for Revolt," *The Progressive*, July 1971; Larry L. Simms, "White Niggers of America," *Commentaries (B.U. School of*

These readings strike contemporary readers—and, *a fortiori*, anglophone readers, because of Vallières's use of the word "nigger"—as distinctly artefactual: that is, they belong to a form of social discourse that is unrecognisable, existing only in some kind of ideological prehistory. It is perhaps the rapidity with which *Les Nègres blancs* has acceded to that ideological obsolescence that has made the book so attractive to a number of researchers in recent years. Confronted by a phrase whose most salient feature is its distastefulness or offensiveness—a phrase that not fifty years ago found ready acceptance on the anglophone Left—a number of academics have taken to explaining or critiquing its use.

When these re-readings of the racial metaphor deal explicitly with the eponymous book, they largely hinge their analysis of race on Vallières's title, and in particular the phrase "nègres blancs"/"white niggers". Bryan Palmer argues, with a somewhat recuperative thrust, that there is a dialectical project in *White Niggers of America* that seeks to "transcend" racial divides between Blacks and whites: the book's rhetoric constitutes "an embrace of *négritude* as a universal struggle of all those oppressed and exploited, all of those who could join the ranks of anti-colonialist, anti-capitalist insurgents to create a society in which the oppositional clash of *white* and *nigger* could be transcended".²²⁰ Corrie Scott, in her forthcoming book *Une race qui ne sait pas mourir*, interprets *Les Nègres blancs d'Amérique* as a form of blackface: she views the book's project as not dissimilar to a minstrel show in which the focus, through a contrast effect, is finally on the whiteness of the performers. "[L]e message sous-jacent est [que Vallières] ne devrait pas être traité de nègre puisqu'après [sic] tout, il est un homme blanc", thus precluding any authentic form of solidarity between French Canadians and Black

Law), Winter 1992; Reginald Stuart, "'Terrorist' Equates Political Minorities," *The Nashville Tennessean*, June 20, 1971.

While the majority of reviews in the U.S. seem to have been positive (as evidenced in the above-cited), some reviewers rejected the comparison out of hand and denied any importance to the situation in Quebec: "White Niggers of America," *The New Yorker*, May 15, 1971. Pat Connolly labels Vallières a "bourgeois nationalist" and an unavowed Trotskyite in "White Niggers of America," *Workers' League*, September 27, 1971. A writer using the pseudonym Billie Gram harshly criticises Vallières in the alternative press, derisively comparing the FLQ to the Weathermen in "White Niggers of America," *Second City*, June 1971, Vol. 3, no. 3 edition. (Nearly all of the above-cited documents are available at the Archives nationales du Québec, MSS140, Fonds Éditions parti pris.)

²²⁰ Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*, 339.

Americans.²²¹ Sean Mills, following David Roediger's analysis of "Quebec radicals appropriat[ing] racial metaphors in the late 1950s and the early 1960s", sees Vallières's title as having a subtle racist meaning: the term is "not [...] an act of solidarity with the marginalized, but rather [...] 'a call to arms to end the inappropriate oppression of whites'".²²²

Ching Selao's reading has been the most cautious, the most nuanced and the most explicitly recuperative. She suggests we might see in the term *nègres blancs* "les germes d'une hybridité, au sens 'postcolonial' du terme" and asks whether the "nègre blanc" is not the "third" that would explode the colonial binary of Black and white (a similar reasoning to Bryan Palmer's).²²³ These hypotheses emerge out of a series of analyses Selao has undertaken comparing 1960s and 1970s Quebec poets with the *négritude* writers.²²⁴ Notably, Selao does *not* analyse Vallières; she names him, but only to exclude him from her corpus.²²⁵ By removing him from the equation, Selao gives herself the liberty to consider hybridity as an ethical and aesthetic concept, to the detriment of understanding "white niggers" as the keystone of a politics and a political strategy with immediate goals.

Selao's refusal to read Vallières in a postcolonial paradigm underscores one of the central difficulties of approaching *White Niggers* as a literary text. Although it does have literary merits, Vallières wrote the book principally as a part of a broader, concrete strategy for revolution. In adopting a postcolonial perspective that emphasises hybridity and valorises fractured subjectivity, contemporary readers risk a serious anachronism. For in the decolonial paradigm, the goal is to overcome the painful ruptures inflicted by colonialism, to restore to

²²¹ Corrie Scott, *Une race qui ne sait pas mourir. Les avatars de la race dans plusieurs textes littéraires québécois* (Montréal: XYZ, 2013), 105, 117. As I write, Scott's reading appears to take on new pertinence, as the several incidences of Black face at a number of events in Montreal over the past two years (demonstrations, comedy shows, etc.) have sparked outrage.

²²² Mills, *The Empire Within*, 76. Of course, as mentioned above, Mills' reading has the merit of discussing *White Niggers* with "Feu sur l'Amérique".

²²³ Ching Selao, "D'une comparaison 'politiquement incorrecte' aux germes d'une hybridité" (presented at the Mondialisme et littérature, dans le cadre du colloque annuel de l'ACFAS, Montréal, 2012).

²²⁴ Ching Selao, "Échos de la négritude césairienne chez Gaston Miron et Paul Chamberland," *Voix et Images* 36, no. 3 (2011): 99; Ching Selao, "Des couleurs et des mots : l'héritage d'Aimé Césaire à travers une polémique québécoise," *Spirale* no. 228 (2009): 28–9; Ching Selao, "Les fils d'Aimé Césaire. De la Martinique au Québec," *Tangence* no. 98 (2012): 35.

²²⁵ Selao, "D'une comparaison."

the colonised a full and authentic subjectivity.²²⁶ Thus Selao's exclusion of Vallières from her corpus is ultimately quite prudent.

What's more, Mills, Palmer and Scott all offer readings of *Nègres blancs* in which a shock effect is produced through the juxtaposition of supposed opposites. Certainly, this is true. Scott sees the term as a call to white Quebeckers to stop allowing themselves to be treated like Blacks: "[le terme] semble plutôt insister sur la blancheur des Québécois, qui présumément méritent plus que d'être appelés 'nègre', qui méritent un meilleur traitement justement à cause de la peau blanche cachée sous un masque noir".²²⁷ I maintain, however, that this reading, by virtue of focusing entirely on the French-language text, elides one of the key goals of Vallières's appropriation of the word "nègre". While the term of course relies on its use of antithesis, there is another dimension to the phrase "nègres blancs", one that constitutes its very core, emerging from the dual contexts of American Black nationalism and the *négritude* writers.

For Vallières, as for the *négritude* movement, the word "nigger" is universalised in its meaning:

To be a "nigger" in America is to be not a man but someone's slave. For the rich white man of Yankee America, the nigger is a sub-man. Even poor whites consider the nigger their inferior. They say: "to work as hard as a nigger", "to smell like a nigger", "as dangerous as a nigger", "as ignorant as a nigger". Very often, they do not even suspect that they too are niggers, slaves, "white niggers". White racism hides this reality by giving them the opportunity to despise an inferior, to crush him mentally or to pity him. But the poor whites who despise the black man are doubly niggers, for they are victims of one more form of alienation—racism—which, far from liberating them, imprisons them in a net of hate or paralyzes them in fear of one day having to confront the black man in a civil war. (WNA 21)

"Nigger" is the equivalent in this passage to "(wage) slave", corresponding more closely to that term, commonly employed by Marxists, than to actual slavery in the antebellum American South, which the word "nigger" immediately evokes in English.²²⁸ This universalisation of the

²²⁶ "[T]he various aspects of post-modern sensibility that proved attractive to new writers are stigmatized within decolonization discourse as unfortunate, ultimately remediable consequences of the colonized condition. The discourse of decolonization tended to reduce all social conflict and antagonism to subordinate elements of national oppression; new writing insisted upon new points of engagement with readers." Robert Schwartzwald, "Literature and Intellectual Realignments in Quebec," *Québec Studies* no. 3 (1985): 49.

²²⁷ Scott, *Une race*, 117.

²²⁸ Scott concurs, and reads the term as de-racialised: "Vallières est avant tout marxiste et conséquemment son 'nègre' désigne en premier lieu l'agonie économique" (*Une race*, 121). I believe

meaning of "nigger" in *White Niggers* is due to a possible confusion, to the mixing of the referents of the English "nigger" with those of the French "nègre", thus expanding the word's connotation to cover all those exploited by imperialist capitalism. This redefinition repeats—but with a difference—a gesture made by the *négritude* writers. Sean Mills reports that although "[Aimé] Césaire admitted to hav[ing] first laughed at the prospect of a White population employing the concept of *négritude* [...] he eventually came to see that Vallières [...] had understood [*négritude*] at a profound level. [...] 'Our movement was based [...] apparently on race but it went beyond that [...]. There was a cry, a universal human cry'".²²⁹ Nevertheless, while Césaire sought to extricate *nègre* from its connotation of subordination,²³⁰ for Vallières, this aspect remains crucial.

So while Vallières's universalisation of "nègre" echoes the *négritude* writers, his maintenance of its negative connotations bears the mark of English-language extensions of the meaning of "nigger", which nearly always signal a state of domination. Mills discusses the adaptability of the word during the 1960s at length, referring to Jerry Farber's famous essay *Student as Nigger*.²³¹ In addition to students, that era saw gay men,²³² women,²³³ and working-

we could postulate that the term itself has its origins in actual slavery, since in Marx's philosophy of history, the capitalist wage-slavery but follows the slave-system of classical Antiquity and the serfdom of the Middle Ages.

²²⁹ Mills, *The Empire Within*, 77.

²³⁰ Ching Selao makes this point as well, noting that while the connection between "nègre" and "esclave" in French is not new and has not always been considered racist, the word has never been neutral and Césaire's goal was to "dé-sémantiser" it. "Les fils d'Aimé Césaire. De la Martinique au Québec," 50. See also Albert Memmi, *Portrait du colonisé, précédé du Portrait du colonisateur et d'une préface de Jean-Paul Sartre, suivi de Les Canadiens français sont-ils des colonisés?*, Édition revue et corrigée par l'auteur, 1972 (Montréal: Étincelle, 1972), 14.

²³¹ Mills, *The Empire Within*, 76.

²³² Paul Goodman, "Memoirs of an Ancient Activist," in *The Homosexual Dialectic* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 115. Goodman writes that his "homosexual needs have made him a nigger".

²³³ Yoko Ono, "[Interview]," *Nova* (June 1969).

class whites²³⁴ added to the ranks of potential "niggers" in the social discourse, this last group referred to at times as "white niggers".²³⁵

Parallel to this extension of "nigger", we find an expansion of the meaning of Blackness in English. Mills notes that the "racial metaphor" of Blackness presented "flexibility and malleability", pointing, for example, to the aftermath of the Cuban revolution when Stokely Carmichael told *Time* that "Castro is the blackest man I know".²³⁶ "[T]he word 'Black' [... is] a flexible metaphor" in this usage, Mills claims, employed to designate at once people of colour and "the vanguard of world revolution".²³⁷ He continues: "During the 1960s, writer after writer argued that to be 'Black' [whether as a 'Black man' or as a 'nigger'] was not only to be colonized [literally or metaphorically], but also to be on the side of humanity which was poised to create a new world".²³⁸ In other words, while "nigger" marks a group as downtrodden, Blackness signifies the revolutionary potential of an individual or collectivity.

This last point is of crucial importance and signals the limits of those readings of *White Niggers* that seek to maintain it within the white/Black binarism. In Vallières's reading of the contemporary U.S. political situation, "[c]lass consciousness is developing despite the long history of senseless hatreds that has so weakened the movement for workers' demands in the last thirty years. It is a slow process, but little by little racism is giving way to solidarity" (WNA 51). This solidarity is mainly the work of Black Power: "The blacks are at the head of the movement, followed by the Puerto Ricans of New York and the agricultural workers of California and Texas" (51). And it is through violence that Black Americans have developed such advanced revolutionary consciousness: "These slaves learned long ago to mix their blood with their anger" (51). Vallières writes that Black Power has two main objectives: first, self-

²³⁴ "Opinion Makers Answer: Should the Word 'Nigger' Be Banned?," *Jet*, May 31, 1979, 54; Larry L. King, "Redneck!," *Texas Monthly*, August 1974, 53; Bennett Lerone Jr, "Black Power Part VII: Society 'Turned Bottom Side Up'," *Ebony*, October 1966, 106; John N. Woodford, "White Hate Groups," *Ebony*, August 1965, 39.

²³⁵ David Austin has just published a book *on ne peut plus pertinent* to the problematic explored in this chapter, which also recounts in great detail and analyses the history of Black nationalism in Montreal itself. I must unhappily report that the book's publication came too close to the final edits of this thesis for me to integrate the insights afforded by Austin's research into my own work. See, in particular, Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation*, 53–72.

²³⁶ Mills, *The Empire Within*, 72.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 77.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 76–7.

determination for areas with "black majorities" (71) and second, "*armed self-defense* of American black communities and of such [self-determined] governments" (71; emphasis his). Over and over again, the lesson he draws from Black activists in the States is violent revolution: "With fire and the sword, the blacks are regenerating North America and giving back to man what belongs to man by wrenching it from the grasp of the businessmen, the Johnsons, the McNamaras and the Kennedys (Bobby, Ted, John F., and Co.)" (73).

I want to underscore this last quotation: "With fire and the sword, the blacks are regenerating North America and giving back to *man* what belongs to *man*" (73; emphasis mine). In other words, Black Americans are violently repossessing what belongs rightfully to them *and in doing so, they are becoming men*. This passage is the key to understanding the relationship, in Vallières's thought, between the terms "nigger" and "Black", a binary that is perhaps more important than the Black/white opposition. For Vallières, the "nigger"/"Black" couple constitutes another dialectic, one in which the former label, as a universalised term designating the state of being dominated under capitalism, is opposed to "man", another universal, meaning an authentic, emancipated human being. As Palmer writes, "In organizing and orchestrating a popular and focused revolutionary violence, in Vallières's view, men remake themselves and make history".²³⁹ Black activists are accelerating the dialectical transformation of themselves from "niggers" into "men", but not just any men: into revolutionary Black men, in all of their particularism. Moreover, the universal freight of the term "man" here seems to intimate that Vallières views Black Americans as "giving back to man [Black Americans, Puerto Ricans, and so forth] what belongs to man"—that their particular struggle in fact necessarily aids the struggle of other minority groups in recapturing their manhood.²⁴⁰

For Vallières, this is the great lesson of both Black nationalism and Quebec separatism: they "are [...] teaching people how much is demanded by a true respect for men in the equality

²³⁹ Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*, 345.

²⁴⁰ Vallières's use of *nègre/Noir* or nigger/Black man opposition seems to echo a powerful trope of development in Black nationalist art. Consider these lines of Nikki Giovanni's from the poem "The True Import of Present Dialogue: Black vs. Negro": "Can we learn to kill WHITE for BLACK / Learn to kill niggers / Learn to be Black men". As Phillip Brian Harper rightly notes, the poem signals "the necessity of cathartic violence to the transformation of blacks from victims into active subjects". Harper, "Eloquence and Epitaph. Black Nationalism and the Homophobic Impulse in Responses to the Death of Max Robinson," 275–6.

of *natural* and *historical* differences (and not differences in power and privilege created by the unequal division of wealth [etc.])" (WNA 52). "Far from destroying nationalities and the individual", globalization, and in particular international struggle, will "actually provide[] an opportunity, if we succeed in overcoming certain individual and collective fixations on outmoded 'categories', of coming into our own, perhaps for the first time in history" (13). This passage makes it clear that although "nigger" is a universalised term for Vallières, the abolition of the category through revolution will *not* result in homogenisation: on the contrary, in a dialectical movement, "*natural* and *historical* differences" will be maintained as "unnatural" differences of economics and power will disappear: leaving behind the subaltern status of "nigger" or "white nigger", African Americans and French Canadians are becoming Black men and Québécois men.

In *White Niggers of America*, then, Black men's violence is understood as a force that restores Black men's virility and thereby their humanity.²⁴¹ An obvious problem with all of this is that it instantiates Black masculinity as somehow equivalent to or defined by revolutionary violence. In insisting on Black men's de-alienating revolutionary action, Vallières replicates the twinned raced and gendered definitions of Black men as essentially violent people, a trope that remains common in American culture today.²⁴² As Scott writes, "Vallières exalte une hypermasculinité noire pour prendre le contre-pied de l'image d'un homme blanc affaibli et émasculé. Le 'nègre' de Vallières est à la fois un sous-homme et hyperviril, un exemple de la masculinité imaginée des Noirs acceptée comme preuve de la soumission juxtaposée à une hypermasculinité".²⁴³ In her critique of Vallières, however, Scott fails to see that the "nègre" who is a "sous-homme" is not the same as the "Noir" who is

²⁴¹ Violence as a regenerative tool that re-virilises the castrated men of the colonised class is a major theme in Fanon's work; see, in particular, "De la violence" in Frantz Fanon, Magali Bessone, and Joseph-Achille Mbembe, *Les Damnés de la terre*, in *Œuvres* (Paris: la Découverte, 2011). The ideologue of violence as regenerative has a long history in European modernism: Robert Buch, *The Pathos of the Real: On the Aesthetics of Violence in the Twentieth Century*, Rethinking Theory (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010). I associate it strongly, in this context, with a particularly American phenomenon, however: see Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000).

²⁴² A recent debate over the aesthetics of the "cool violence" that Black men supposedly embody centred on Quentin Tarantino, *Django Unchained* (The Weinstein Company, 2012). An example of the ensuing discussion can be found in Paul Barrett, "Django Unchained: Coonskin Redux?," *Racialicious*, January 22, 2013, <http://www.racialicious.com/2013/01/22/coonskin-redux/>.

²⁴³ Scott, *Une race*, 123.

"hyperviril": as she herself notes, "nigger" in Vallières's thought is practically de-racialised as a term (see note 226 above), serving as the starting point of a dialectic leading to authentic Blackness. She is nevertheless right to insist that, *mutatis mutandis*, the figure of the Black man

passe par une masculinité noire menaçante pour se dire dans une mimesis bâtie sur un stéréotype peut-être déplorable, mais efficace dans son provocation d'un sentiment ouvrier blanc: "Plus vite, les nègres que nous sommes s'armeront de courage et de fusils, plus vite notre libération de l'esclavage fera de nous des hommes égaux et fraternels" (NB[A], 288).²⁴⁴

Vallières's view of Black masculinity, then, is fundamentally impoverished. It ultimately refracts a white supremacist ideologeme—Black men are violent—with a simplistic resignification (instead of negative and threatening, this violence becomes positive and revolutionary). Yes, Vallières says, Blackness *is* a threat to the established order; but this threat is good. The weakness of this analysis must be contrasted with Eldridge Cleaver's much more complex and nuanced reflections on Black men's relationship to revolutionary violence in *Soul on Ice*, which was the subject of chapter 2. For Cleaver, the casting of Black men as primarily embodied (rather than intellectual) beings, as physically powerful, even as violent, is a contradiction within the series of binaries that structure white supremacy. Whereas the Black/white binary usually connects with other polarities in a way that devalues Blacks—slave/master, primitive/civilised, and so forth—the embodiedness of Blacks links up to power/weakness and virility/femininity in a fashion that places Blacks on the dominant side of the binarism. This contradiction propels the dialectic toward a future in which Black men's subjectivity will be restored through a reunification of binary oppositions—one of the fundamental aspects of which is gaining recognition and respect for Black men's intelligence and the products of their minds. In its emphasis on Black revolutionary violence as a model to emulate, Vallières's admiration of Black nationalism seems inadvertently to reproduce the very logic Cleaver attempts to refute. He even appears to do so in more subtle ways than his praise of Black violence, as, for instance, when he lauds Black nationalism for its "objectifs immédiats" which are "mieux définis", with an explicit comparison to Quebec nationalism,²⁴⁵ while claiming that "[l]e *Black Power* n'est cependant pas encore une organisation structurée

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 124.

²⁴⁵ "C'est [le *Black Power*] un peu l'équivalent afro-américain du séparatisme québécois et toutes les nuances s'y retrouvent" (114).

et idéologiquement déterminée" (NBA 114)—with an implicit comparison with the apparently better-organised FLQ. It is difficult not to read these lines as a reproduction of a racialised division of labour: Black Power has mastered the concrete aspects of revolutionary causes, whereas Quebec nationalism remains more intellectually rigorous.

Regardless of its shallowness, Vallières's analysis of Blackness manifests a certain attraction to Black nationalism and Black nationalists as ideals, role models. In a chapter cut²⁴⁶ from the original version of *Nègres blancs*, he insists that "C'est seulement par solidarité [...] que les hommes [...] pourront travailler ensemble, dans l'égalité, la dignité, la justice, la fraternité et l'émulation à l'avènement et au développement d'une société plus humaine [...]".²⁴⁷ But even as he recommends Black masculinity as a model to emulate to his fellow Quebecers, Vallières always underscores that the revolution Black nationalists and Quebec separatists are attempting cannot be accomplished alone:

I cannot "live my life" without working to make the revolution, and it seems to me that it is pretty much the same for you. It is not a question of playing at being heroes—besides, who can do that, in the era of the atomic bomb and the agonizing war in Vietnam?—but of getting *together* to build a new world in which ordinary men, like you and me, will no longer be the niggers of the millionaires, the warmongers, and the preachers of passivity, but will be free at last to subject the world to their "whims": love, scientific curiosity, creation... in solidarity and equality, in modesty and pride. (WNA 254; emphasis in original)

Indeed, one of Vallières's political projects is to re-inscribe Quebec as modern and North American. This project is often obscured by the shock value of *White Niggers*, which covers over the second half of Vallières's title: *of America*.

"...of America"

That awful comparison, *White Niggers*, is inseparable from *of America*. In Vallières's eyes, "Black nationalism—like French-Canadian separatism—is of inestimable service to revolutionaries in that it forces them to envisage the liberation of the whole of man and enables them to avoid the trap of half-revolutions which, as soon as they are victories change into the oppression of racial, linguistic, religious, or other minorities" (52). Vallières and his close collaborator, fellow inmate and member of the FLQ Charles Gagnon, learn from Black

²⁴⁶ According to Pinkham, because it was "unreadable". McDonough-Dolmaya, "1971".

²⁴⁷ Pierre Vallières, *Nègres blancs d'Amérique. Autobiographie précoce d'un "terroriste" québécois.*, 1st ed., Centrentenaire 2 (Montréal: parti pris, 1968), 376. Emphasis mine.

nationalism in formulating the peculiar variant of Marxism that underpins *Nègres blancs*.²⁴⁸ For both writers, Black Power and Quebec separatism are in the vanguard of worldwide revolution.

It is Gagnon who provides the most ample theoretical text on the subject in "Feu sur l'Amérique", a strategic and analytical document written in Montreal's Bordeaux prison in 1968 and suppressed before publication.²⁴⁹ From his prison cell, Gagnon writes that "l'Amérique du Nord est un monstre" wherein "tous les échecs et tous les succès de l'industrialisme absolu" are contained.²⁵⁰ On this continent that is both the heart of Empire and (thus necessarily) the site of its most highly accelerated contradictions, the working class has become reactionary; in its place, Gagnon claims that "national minorities" will lead the revolutionary struggle.²⁵¹ "Le ferment de la révolution en Amérique du Nord est constitué par la classe des pauvres [...], et plus particulièrement par ces secteurs [...] de la classe des pauvres qui appartiennent à des collectivités nationales opprimées, victimes du racisme blanc anglo-saxon, tels les Québécois, tels les Noirs et d'autres encore".²⁵²

This analysis signals a crucial difference between Gagnon's understanding of revolution and the orthodox Marxist view of class struggle. On the one hand, as Jean-Marc Pottle notes, Gagnon "remplace la classe ouvrière comme moteur de la révolution par la classe des pauvres, les groupes nationaux colonisés et les jeunes".²⁵³ On the other, the capitalist class

²⁴⁸ Much of the theory described in the following paragraphs made its way into the first edition of *Nègres blancs*, only to be cut later. Vallières explicitly calls for a "Front international de libération des travailleurs, paysans et ouvriers", *ibid.*, 376–451.

²⁴⁹ Mills, *The Empire Within*, 78. Mills also compares *White Niggers* with "Feu sur l'Amérique" and the paragraphs that follow owe something to his work, especially "The International Dimension of Resistance" in chapter three of *The Empire Within*.

²⁵⁰ Charles Gagnon, "Feu sur l'Amérique," in *Feu sur l'Amérique*, ed. Robert Comeau, Manon Leroux, and Ivan Carel, Collection "Histoire politique" v. 1. 1966-1972 (Montréal: Lux, 2006), 103.

²⁵¹ Gagnon's analysis here aligns with Fanon's and surely is consonant with Sartre's critique of *négritude* as reactionary: "La réponse de Fanon [aux critiques de Sartre] était de faire des colonisés des 'prolétaires du monde' ou des peuples prolétaires comme le ferait Pierre Vadeboncoeur au Québec" (Robert Schwartzwald, "Institution littéraire, modernité et question nationale au Québec, 1940 à 1976" [Université Laval, 1985], 172).

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 113.

²⁵³ Jean-Marc Pottle, "Note de lecture : Charles Gagnon, Feu sur l'Amérique (Écrits politiques, vol. 1, 1966-1972), Lux, 2006, 213 p.," *Le Bulletin d'histoire politique*, accessed March 27, 2013, <http://www.bulletinhistoirepolitique.org/le-bulletin/numeros-precedents/volume-15-numero-3/note-de-lecture-charles-gagnon-feu-sur-lamerique-ecrits-politiques-vol-1-1966-1972-lux-2006-213-p/>.

becomes "racialised", as Mills points out: "Throughout Gagnon's text, the 'racial' category of 'blanc anglo-saxon' is continually highlighted, constructed as the Other against which various political movements could mobilize".²⁵⁴ In positioning "national minorities" or proletarian peoples as the revolutionary class and in placing (his understanding of) "antiracisme" at the centre of his strategy,²⁵⁵ Gagnon indicates that he has taken into account the major peculiarity of North American capitalism: in his view, capitalism and imperialism (that is, racial, ethnic and linguistic oppression) have become co-constitutive, for although capitalism precedes racism,²⁵⁶ they henceforth evolve "en symbiose", inseparably.²⁵⁷ The forms of oppression created by capitalism—collapsed by Gagnon into one category, "racisme"—have a long history on the continent, resulting in one of the most important contradictions of North American capitalism: the existence of pockets of the Third World within the First.

Nous n'oublions pas que le "développement" de l'Ouest américain et canadien s'est fait dans le sang des Amérindiens et des Métis; nous n'oublions pas que les nombreuses tentatives de libération du peuple mexicain ont toujours été écrasées par la force militaire ou économique de puissances étrangères; nous n'oublions pas que le Sud des USA est le sol où des milliers d'esclaves noirs sont morts pour enrichir une poignée d'exploiteurs; nous n'oublions pas que la confédération canadienne s'est faite au mépris le plus complet des droits de la collectivité française d'Amérique à laquelle l'impérialisme et ses valets refusent encore le droit sacré à l'autodétermination.²⁵⁸

This kind of exaggeration—for surely it is hyperbolic to draw an equivalence, "indifféremment", to borrow Piote's word, between all of these events— is typical.

In any case, the nascent Black Power and Quebec nationalist movements are to be found in the vanguard of the revolutionary movement to destroy the imperialist U.S. state.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁴ Mills, *The Empire Within*, 78.

²⁵⁵ See Gagnon, "Feu sur l'Amérique", section 9, "Antiracisme et révolution", 134-137.

Here, the term "antiracism" (which I leave in French in the text to highlight its cultural-temporal specificity) might lead us to anachronistic interpretations of Gagnon. When he defines his politics as "antiracist" and defends the validity of antiracism as such, it seems likely that he is addressing, not so much a Black or otherwise racialised reader (at least in the way we understand the term "racialised" today), but white communists for whom Black nationalism, Quebec separatism, etc., amount to nothing more than bourgeois nationalism, left deviationism. I thank Catherine Leclerc for this insight.

²⁵⁶ Gagnon, "Feu sur l'Amérique," 134. "Le capitalisme a créé en Amérique le racisme blanc anglo-saxon".

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 135.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 134.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 134.

Through autonomous but coordinated organising across the continent, "[l]e racism doit mourir: la chute de l'empire yankee lui portera un coup fatal sur ce continent et dans le monde".²⁶⁰ "Pour éviter tout racisme", this work must be done "dans le respect absolu des volontés de chacun de ces peuples".²⁶¹ Opening multiple fronts against imperialism is an ethical choice, just as much as it is a strategic one:

C'est en luttant à New York, à Chicago, à San Francisco, etc., que les Noirs aideront le plus les peuples mexicain et québécois à se libérer, comme c'est en luttant à Québec, en Abitibi, à Montréal, que les Québécois rendront les plus grands services à tous les peuples opprimés d'Amérique et du monde. Le véritable internationalisme réside d'abord là: dans la conscience que l'affaiblissement de l'impérialisme en un point du globe signifie son affaiblissement partout.²⁶²

An early, Third-Worldist version of "Think globally, act locally", then.²⁶³

The ideological architecture of "Feu sur l'Amérique" undergirds a brief communiqué written by Vallières and Gagnon in 1971, "Pour un front commun multinational de libération". This four-page text, written for propaganda purposes and intended for a Quebec readership, aligns the province with Palestine and the other "pays dits du 'tiers monde', cet immense bidonville multinational [...] dont fait partie aussi le Québec",²⁶⁴ in a revolutionary struggle that, though it must be waged locally, has international implications. The success or failure of the struggle in Quebec will necessarily impact the struggle elsewhere (Guatemala, Black ghettos in the U.S., *Acadie*, for instance).²⁶⁵ Because of the interdependence of local struggles everywhere, Vallières and Gagnon argue that it is urgent to forge a solidarity that goes beyond

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 135.

²⁶¹ Ibid., op. cit.

²⁶² Ibid., 136. It should be emphasised that this plan is literal: the goal was to unite a certain number of actors in a very real fight against the U.S. government. Cf. p. 155.

²⁶³ The ethos I am describing here is a classic of the North American New Left, as described, e.g., Michel Feher, "Sur quelques recompositions de la gauche américaine," *Esprit* (December 1992): 60–79. More directly influential on my reading is Benita Roth, "Organizing One's Own," in *Separate Roads to Feminism* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 99–118. Roth's work reconstructs the context out of which separate—and sometimes separatist—Black, Chicana, lesbian and White feminist groups emerged in the United States, but I believe some of her conclusions apply to a broadly North American political dynamic, including Quebec's Left in the 1960s, 70s and 80s.

²⁶⁴ Charles Gagnon and Pierre Vallières, "Pour un front commun multinational de libération" (Établissement de détention de Montréal, Montréal, 1971), 1.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 4. Authors' underlining.

that of "bonnes intentions", but that is situated instead "au plan de l'action".²⁶⁶ Bilateral relationships (between Quebec and Vietnam, for example) must give way to "un authentique front commun multinational de libération".²⁶⁷

Pour nous, Québécois, cela implique d'abord que nous fassions la preuve, aux yeux du monde, [...] que notre anti-impérialisme est autre chose que de la théorie, que notre détermination est assez grande et lucide pour créer ici, à partir de nos conditions de vie à nous et des rapports sociaux qui caractérisent notre collectivité nationale, un autre Vietnam, une autre Palestine.²⁶⁸

These two texts are the nodal point, the hinge, that allows us to connect *Les Nègres blancs d'Amérique's* gendered understanding of national subject-formation, discussed in chapter one, and the importance of *White Niggers of America*, for we see in these passages that Vallières "imagin[es] [himself] as a part of [the] larger global movement" of anti-imperialism.²⁶⁹ Through his writing, he seeks to incite his male comrades to a form of virilising revolutionary action in order to attract the attention of the international decolonisation movement. In other words, Vallières encourages Quebeckers to participate in a mimetic form of the revolutionary action or of the violent resistance in Palestine, Vietnam and the U.S., with the goal of eliciting recognition of Quebec's worth, that is, its virility, from those "*frères*" whom he views as revolutionary actors. He seeks their identification *of* and *with* Quebeckers as "one of them", as a Third World country: "un autre Vietnam, une autre Palestine". Thus, Quebec may side-step the vertical struggle for recognition from its colonial master(s) by attempting to build horizontal forms of subjectification.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., loc. cit. Authors' underlining.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 3. Authors' underlining. It is unclear to what extent bilateral relations existed between the Viet Cong and the FLQ...

²⁶⁸ Ibid., loc. cit. The authors are riffing off of Che Guevara, of course ("Create two, three, many Vietnams").

²⁶⁹ Mills, *The Empire Within*, 76.

Conclusion

In the first section of chapter three, I described how Vallières inscribes an appeal to hoped-for Black nationalist readers into the source text of *Nègres blancs d'Amérique*, a purpose enabled—wittingly or not—by Joan Pinkham's *translation strategy*. The second section of that chapter explored the ways in which the *publication process*, by virtue of taking place in the United States and under the aegis of an American publishing house, creates networks of solidarity that sidestep the coloniser (English Canada) by appealing directly to U.S. readers. In section three, I examined the *intellectual architecture* of Vallières's appeal to Black readers—his admiration of Black men as an embodiment of regenerative violence, its correspondence with the racist trope of Black corporeality, and Vallières's differences from Eldridge Cleaver's reading of the same commonplace. Section four explained the *concrete strategy* calling for a multinational common front against American imperialism that subtends *White Niggers of America*. To conclude, I would like to look forward to Vallières's post-FLQ life in order to better understand how all of this—fraternal circuits of identification, language and translation, particularism and internationalism—fits together.

I will skip over the details of Vallières's life in the immediate aftermath of the 1970 October Crisis and fast-forward to the early 1980s, when he publicly came out as gay.²⁷⁰ Returning to Montreal after years spent in rural and post-industrial areas, Vallières became an active member of the city's gay community and a frequent contributor to its press. But despite the fact that he published dozens of essays about queer subjects in books and periodicals (primarily in *Le Berdache*; see the appendix), and even planned on publishing a monograph called *Homosexualité et subversion*,²⁷¹ recent treatments of Vallières are nearly unanimous in

²⁷⁰ For details on those years, numerous sources exist: Pierre Vallières, *L'urgence de Choisir: Essai*, Collection Aspects, 13 (Montréal: Éditions Parti Pris, 1971); Nicholas M. Regush, *Pierre Vallières: The Revolutionary Process in Quebec* (New York: Dial Press, 1973); Vallières, *Les héritiers de Papineau*; Daniel Marcoux and Pierre Vallières, "Pierre Vallières: Du mythe à la réalité. L'homme de l'engagement," *Sortie*, January 1984; Jeandré and Pierre Vallières, "Pierre Vallières: Du mythe à la réalité (II)," *Sortie*, April 1984; Jean-Daniel Lafond, *La liberté en colère*, Long métrage, Documentary, 1994, http://www.onf.ca/film/liberte_en_colere.

²⁷¹ The book is mentioned as "à paraître chez VLB" in the list of the author's works found in Pierre Vallières, *Le devoir de résistance* (Montréal: VLB, 1994). A VLB employee confirmed to me that they do not have a record of the manuscript: Ariane Caron-Lacoste to William M. Burton, "RE: Formulaire Contact Edvlib.com - Commentaires et Suggestions," January 7, 2013.

either ignoring or dismissing his sexuality. Bryan Palmer only discusses it in an endnote;²⁷² Corrie Scott does not broach the topic; Katherine Roberts, even as she examines gender in *Nègres blancs*, does not so much as mention his sexuality.²⁷³ Jacques Pelletier, in an otherwise exhaustive and positive overview of Vallières's published output, mysteriously skips *Changer de société*, a volume Vallières edited and to which he contributed an important essay on "mouvements homosexuels et hétérodoxie sociale".²⁷⁴ A posthumous anthology of his writings includes one of his essays on sexuality, but buries discussion of his own sexual identity in the middle of its introduction to the piece.²⁷⁵

Perhaps this reticence to broach the theme of Vallières's sexuality stems from a cultural difference between anglophone and francophone institutional practices: in those mentioned above, only the historian Palmer—trained, unlike Scott, Roberts and Pelletier, in a non-francophone, non-literary context—mentions Vallières's sexuality. Tellingly, Malcolm Reid as well discusses it, if only briefly.²⁷⁶ Perhaps it stems from Vallières's own uncharacteristic timidity on the subject. For someone who, besides his association with the FLQ, had made himself famous through often embarrassing tell-alls and explorations of his own psychology and subjectivity, he was strikingly silent about the process of coming out. Rather, he focuses on what are ultimately more palatable changes: in *Les héritiers de Papineau*, for instance, he coyly describes a life-changing conversion experience occurring around 1980—only to reveal that he has become Catholic (again).²⁷⁷ Even in interviews with the gay press, he remains

²⁷² Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*, 548–9, n. 60. Notably, he cites *Homosexualité et subversion* as though published.

²⁷³ Roberts, "Mère, Je Vous Hais!". Roberts' omission is particularly comical, since her title seems to be an allusion to Gide's famous slogan, "Famille, je vous hais!"

²⁷⁴ Pelletier, "L'imprécateur: Tombeau de Pierre Vallières," 166–7.

²⁷⁵ Pierre Vallières, Jacques Jourdain, and Mélanie Mailhot, *Paroles d'un nègre blanc* (Montréal: VLB, 2002).

²⁷⁶ "Emerging from prison after the October Crisis, Vallières admitted to himself that he was gay. There had been no reference to homosexuality in the *White Niggers*, at the time of whose publication there was a woman in Pierre's life, a fiancée. Now he began taking part in Montreal's gay liberation movement (and he promises a book on gay culture for 1995)". Malcolm Reid, "The Adventures of Vallières and Gagnon," *Canadian Dimension*, 1995, Canadian Periodicals Index Quarterly.

²⁷⁷ Pierre Vallières, *Les héritiers de Papineau : itinéraire politique d'un "nègre blanc" (1960-1985)* (Montréal, Québec: Québec/Amérique, 1986), 271–3; See also, by his former teacher, Constantin Baillargeon, *Pierre Vallières vu par son professeur de philosophie* (Montréal: Médiaspaul, 2002). Naturally, the *curé* does not discuss Vallières's sexuality.

cagey, impersonal—he discusses events in an abstract and historical register, rather than a subjective, affective one.²⁷⁸ Most of his articles for *Le Berdache* discuss theoretical topics, often concerned more with "politics" writ large than with queer politics in particular.

Nevertheless, Vallières's later writing may serve as a key to understanding how his work fits into the literary production of *parti pris* and this, through *Nègres blancs*'s insistence on translation. Robert Schwartzwald writes that

[a] thematic and even stylistic reading of partipriste literature seems to confirm the existence of a dialectic of "*démystification*" and "*prise de conscience*" [... that] aimed to exorcise, as it were, the social and psychological deformations wrought upon "*l'homme québécois*" (the gender specificity, given the consciousness of the writers at the time, is unfortunately appropriate), who, as the "*colonisé*", had been robbed of self-determination, self-respect, and, severed from historical and communal bearings, self-knowledge.²⁷⁹

This dialectic relied on the alternation of a "*misérabiliste* aesthetic[,] favoured especially by the *Parti pris* writers", on the one hand, with, on the other, "metaphoric constructions of [the Québécois's] new physical and psychic relationship to the land (often posed in terms of 'possession' of the feminized land by the male voice and their productive interrelation), in short through explorations of Difference and Identity".²⁸⁰ Schwartzwald continues: "Ultimately the 'resolution' which takes place in the literature of decolonization is not *in* the text, so to speak, but rather in the relationship it constructs between writer and reader".²⁸¹ His description of *parti pris*'s literary strategy applies quite neatly to Vallières, with some modifications: the *misérabilisme* in *Nègres blancs* has much to do with family life in particular (as described in chapter 1), and it alternates, not with dreams of the possession of the land/woman, but with fantasies of revolutionary fraternity, of a virile homosocial union.

²⁷⁸ Marcoux and Vallières, "Pierre Vallières: Du mythe à la réalité. L'homme de l'engagement"; Jeandré and Vallières, "Pierre Vallières: Du mythe à la réalité (II)."

²⁷⁹ Schwartzwald, "Literature and Intellectual Realignments in Quebec," 39.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

If the phrase "*nègres blancs*" is meant to jolt readers into recognition of the abjection of Quebec through provocative language (cf. Corrie Scott), then it plays a role not dissimilar to that of *joual*, the use of which is one of the most important textual strategies employed by the *partipristes*, who sought thereby to provoke, in Robert Major's terms, a dialectic of *dévoilement* (another name for Schwartzwald's *démystification*) and *prise de conscience*. See, e.g., Robert Major, "Le joual politique. Sur Le Cassé de Jacques Renaud," in *Convoyages. Essais critiques*. (Orléans: Les Éditions David, 1999), 285–303.

²⁸¹ Schwartzwald, "Literature and Intellectual Realignments in Quebec," 39.

This anticipated homosocial union would not be limited to the FLQ, even if Vallières clearly hoped to recruit more members with his book; it would extend to the *front commun multinational* he and Gagnon proposed in their other writings. As we saw throughout chapter 3, Vallières found the cause of Black nationalism attractive, and in turn sought to attract Black nationalists to his own cause. To do so, he seems to incorporate what we might call "foreign intelligibilities and interests", namely what I have variously called an appeal to Black American readers or, following Walter Benjamin, "translatability", into *Les Nègres blancs d'Amérique*. This textual strategy mirrors one described by Lawrence Venuti, who writes that translators inscribe their target text with "domestic intelligibilities and interests" in order to render their work legible within the target society.²⁸² Vallières, as writer rather than translator, incorporates these "intelligibilities and interests" or this "translatability" into his French-language source-text. Thus the rhetorical paralleling of Black-American and French-Canadian history, the co-presence of *nègre* and *nigger* in the title—these are strategies for attracting the interest of non-Québécois readers and bringing them to a certain understanding of Quebec politics and history; but within the source-text, they remain in germ, so to speak, since their full effect can only come to fruition in the target-text, with the intervention of a translator. The aim, as Venuti writes, is to "foster a common understanding [shared by source-text readers and the target readership] with and of the foreign culture [in this instance, Quebec]".²⁸³ This goal is properly utopian: it results in an imagined community of readers, in Benedict Anderson's sense, "created around the text—although in translation", who are interested in the foreign as non-domesticated other.²⁸⁴ Following Ernst Bloch, Venuti describes this communitarian horizon as the "surplus" that exceeds ideology and "anticipates a future 'consensus'", "a way of imagining a future reconciliation of linguistic and cultural differences, whether those that exist among domestic groups or those that divide foreign and domestic cultures".²⁸⁵

Although Vallières's future sexual politics stray far from the androcentric fraternity of his FLQ-era writings and exhibit the influence of Second Wave feminism in its American and

²⁸² Lawrence Venuti, "Translation, Community, Utopia," in *The Translation Studies Reader*, 2nd ed (New York: Routledge, 2004), 482.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 487.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 497.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 499.

French variants,²⁸⁶ connecting his sexuality with his earlier work allows us to see in the insistent—indeed the structuring—need for fraternity in *Nègres blancs* and its translation a repressed homoerotic dynamic. Obviously, the misogynistic and homophobic intellectual climate described in chapter 1—and to which Vallières's autobiography largely conforms—precluded any open avowals of same-sex desire. So while the desire for male community undergirds his entire horizontal strategy for decolonisation (the fraternal subjectification via reciprocal recognition and mutual struggle that Vallières puts forward as preferable to the hierarchical struggle for recognition from the Master), it cannot be spoken about except in platonic terms. *Same-sex desire is the absent presence that does not so much motivate Vallières's politics, as animates it.* It drives it towards translation, toward a union with the other, toward a shared struggle against the white Anglo-Saxon oppressor. Out of this shared struggle, a revolutionary consciousness or a dis-alienated subjectivity might emerge.

Thus *White Niggers* points to a future beyond a battle for recognition from the absent colonial Father. In a mutual acknowledgment of both particularity and a common manhood, "the niggers of America" will be "one with the niggers of the entire world [...] in the struggle for liberation[, ...] in the grand event that will sweep away all the decay of the old system and prepare all humanity, that is, all men, to begin a new history, without masters or slaves, without war or racism, without banks or thieves".²⁸⁷ That Vallières corrects himself—"all humanity, that is, all men"—is significant here: his goal throughout *White Niggers* is to connect with other men in ever-higher, more emancipatory forms of same-sex relationships.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ Pierre Vallières, "L'alternative à fleur de peau (C'est encore loin l'amour?)," *Le Berdache*, February 1981.

²⁸⁷ Vallières, *White Niggers*, 53.

²⁸⁸ While it is certainly possible that Vallières is using "men" here to refer to Man, that now-archaic universal indicating self-conscious and self-determined humanity, the gender specificity is nevertheless striking, particularly given the evolution of the French editions. From 1968 on, the French reads: "ce grandiose événement qui balayera toute la pourriture du vieux système et rendra l'humanité, c'est-à-dire tous les hommes, aptes à commencer une nouvelle histoire" (e.g., Pierre Vallières, *Nègres blancs d'Amérique. Autobiographie précoce d'un "terroriste" québécois.*, Nouvelle édition revue et corrigée, Aspects 5 [Montréal: parti pris, 1969], 69). The 1994 reissue reads: "l'humanité, c'est-à-dire tous les hommes et toutes les femmes, apte [*sic*] à commencer une nouvelle histoire" (NBA 113). In fact, Vallières corrected the gender-specificity of *Nègres blancs* in several places throughout the Typo edition—an editorial revision that, given my analysis, I cannot help but see as an expression of regret on Vallières's part and a distortion of our view of radical Quebec nationalism in the 1960s.

A thorough understanding of the translational destiny of *Nègres blancs d'Amérique* will thus necessarily attend to its routing through an erotic relationship to Black nationalism, if eroticism can principally be understood here as forms of the desire for recognition. Exploring this erotic component—the strategy of attraction or even seduction that Vallières employs—is not meant to de-politicise his work, but on the contrary to render our understanding of his politics more complex by re-injecting it with aspects of his life usually considered "private". Schwartzwald has argued, in a reading of the gay French libertarian communist Daniel Guérin's work, "sexual desire is neither trivial nor ancillary to public life".²⁸⁹

Guérin's autobiographies present the journey toward socialist politics and the awakening to homosexual desire as "two components of the same vital flux: the first takes priority, and aims for a radical mutation of society; the second is complementary, and tends toward the love of boys." [...] Personal sexual urgency, though "just as pressing" as social transformation, is "redeemed" for politics by Guérin's assertion that "it wasn't in books, but first of all in myself, through years of sexual frustration, and through contact with oppressed youth, that I learned to hate the established sexual order".²⁹⁰

His attraction to working-class men and his alienation from hetero society together fashion his politics: indeed, "[same-sex] erotic desire and the aspiration for social emancipation" constitute, in Guérin's work "a crucial nexus".²⁹¹ And in fact, there is a long tradition of understanding same-sex desire and emancipatory politics as tightly bound up: Jean Genet—speaking precisely about his engagement with the Black Panthers—claimed that "a very intense erotic charge" drove his politics of solidarity.²⁹² Regarding the Palestinians, with whom he was also involved, he said: "I don't know whether I could have stayed so long with them if physically they had been less attractive".²⁹³ Numerous antecedents and echoes to Guérin's cross-class and Genet's transracial attractions, identifications and solidarity politics come to mind: Walt Whitman, Oscar Wilde, Edward Carpenter and George Merrill... This

²⁸⁹ Robert Schwartzwald, "The Same Vital Flux: The Gay/Left Nexus in Daniel Guérin's Autobiographies," in *21st-Century Gay Culture* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2008), 40.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁹² Amy Abugo Ongiri, "Prisoner of Love: Affiliation, Sexuality, and the Black Panther Party," *The Journal of African American History* 94, no. 1 (January 1, 2009): 75. See also, of course, his film, *Un chant d'amour*.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

same spirit—repressed but always returning—animates *White Niggers of America* as it seeks the other across linguistic divides.

That Vallières's desired target readership could not access his writings (with the exception, of course, of those in the U.S. who could read French) posed a significant problem for his efforts to remain loyal to his notion of nationhood, predicated as it was on language, while reaching out to an international—or rather, American—audience. How indeed to articulate an internationally-appealing radical politics from a subject-position whose most salient feature is minority-language status?²⁹⁴ Although Cleaver does not face the same linguistic problem, he nevertheless expresses a similar tension between local politics and international solidarity, one that is tightly bound to his own homosocial-homoerotic fraternal-revolutionary fantasies. The internationalism I discuss in the section "Brotherly love" in chapter 2—the idea that "the central event of our era" is "the national liberation movements abroad and the Negro revolution at home"²⁹⁵—contrasts with such notions as: "It is not an overstatement to say that the destiny of the entire human race depends on the outcome of what is going on in America today".²⁹⁶ But for Cleaver this contradiction does not call for specialised textual strategies, since he is writing—*de gré ou de force*—in the imperial language of English. He can expect others to learn his language. For Vallières, although he writes in another imperial language—the already declining one of French—his main interest lies in the famously monolingual United States:²⁹⁷ thus his inventiveness, his creation of new

²⁹⁴ I believe that Vallières's text participates in a broader trend in internationalist politics and poetics in Quebec, whereby writers seeking worldwide recognition nevertheless attempt to remain "loyal" to their mother tongue. Nicole Brossard is an excellent example of this; on this question in Brossard's work, see my paper, "« L'envers des mots » : Hétérotopie, ironie et traduction féministe dans *Le Désert mauve* de Nicole Brossard" (presented at the The Art and Politics of Irony, Institute for the Public Life of Arts and Ideas, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, December 4, 2012), http://www.academia.edu/2096235/_Lenvers_des_mots_Heterotopie_ironie_et_traduction_feministe_dans_Le_Desert_mauve_de_Nicole_Brossard One might postulate that writers such as Brossard and Vallières have one foot in North American anti-Marxist or anti-universalist identity politics of the late 1980s and the 1990s, even as they maintain strong ideational ties to the totalising philosophies that preceded them.

²⁹⁵ Cleaver, *Soul on Ice*, 93.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 140.

²⁹⁷ Of course, the United States is *also* famously polyglot, but it has been ideologically constructed as a strictly monolingual country.

textual strategies enabling him to call for translation even as he maintains a certain loyalty to the particular material and cultural conditions from which he has emerged.

Chapter 3 was devoted to exploring the many facets of those strategies. In chapter 2, Cleaver gave us much fodder for a critique of Vallières's understanding of Black masculinity, but also, in the structural similarities of his rhetoric on gender and sexuality to Vallières's—the subject of chapter 1—good reason to see why the Quebecker would see links between his struggle and that of Black Americans. Much of what these two thinkers wrote on gender, sexuality and race appears today fumbling and awkward, when not downright offensive. But I believe that it is incumbent upon us to recognise that these activist-thinkers produced their works within the intellectual confines of a particular time and place—the social discourse of their societies limited what was thinkable and sayable.

We, too, are so circumscribed. With this in mind, we can see that these texts represent in fact sophisticated appropriations and rearticulations of the tools made available by their cultures' argumentative arsenals. Using and transforming strategies drawn from their lived experience as minorities and from the worldview of the Masters (Cleaver using Plato, Vallières using English, for instance), both authors attempted to think and write (and fight) their way out of domination. While we may disagree—vehemently—with their ideologies or practices, or with those of the FLQ and the Black Panthers, we can still learn from them. Even *a contrario*. Once these writers are re-immersed in their historical contingency, we are faced with their immense creativity and intelligence, and must acknowledge that the three books studied here represent good-faith efforts to build more ethical circuits of international solidarity and to found an emancipatory politics, not only for their own peoples, but for all oppressed. From that point on, eschewing the hubris of the present, we can only appreciate the strenuous effort of thought that permitted Cleaver and Vallières to clear a path for contemporary politics and literature.

Appendix 1: Vallières's gay writings

I reproduce here a bibliography of Vallières's writings on queer subjects and those published, regardless of theme, in Montreal's LGBT press. I believe this list to be exhaustive, but it is difficult to know for certain. All of these texts are available in the Collection nationale of the Bibliothèque et archives nationales du Québec in Montreal.

Most of Vallières's gay writings appeared in the radical LGBT liberation magazine *Le Berdache*. Publishing between 1981 and 1983, it offers readers a fascinating, entertaining and often poignant insight into the lives and politics of Montreal queers in those years. Obviously, the title of the magazine is itself another cultural appropriation—this time from First Nations cultures. See Guy Ménard, “Du berdache au *Berdache*: lectures de l’homosexualité dans la culture québécoise,” *Anthropologie et sociétés* 9, no. 3 (1985): 115–138 for a compelling analysis.

- Jeandré, and Pierre Vallières. “Pierre Vallières: Du mythe à la réalité (II).” *Sortie*, April 1984, 16.
- Le Berdache. “Regards sur la pornographie. Débat présenté par l’ADGQ.” *Le Berdache*, February 1982.
- Lortie, Alain, and Pierre Vallières. “Pierre Vallières est-il devenu Pro-Reagan? (Letter, with response by Vallières).” *Le Berdache*, December 1981.
- Marcoux, Daniel, and Pierre Vallières. “Pierre Vallières: Du mythe à la réalité. L’homme de l’engagement.” *Sortie*, January 1984, 14.
- Pleau, Marcel. “La parole est à eux.” *Le Berdache*, June 1981.
- Vallières, Pierre. “À propos de ‘Salò’ et de Fassbinder.” *Le Berdache*, October 1981.
- . “Albert Memmi et les mulets de la race.” *Le Berdache*, May 1982.
- . “Bravo Gisèle: à bas les normes!” *Le Berdache*, May 1982.
- . “Comme Brejnev et le Pape, Drapeau entend mourir à son poste.” *Sortie*, January 1983, 3 edition.
- . “Congrès de l’IGA à Strasbourg.” *Le Berdache*, May 1982.
- . “Cuba: la répression ne lâche pas.” *Le Berdache*, November 1981.
- . “De Dalila Maschino à Emile Nelligan (C’est encore loin l’amour?).” *Le Berdache*, April 1981.
- . “Dehors les guidounes.” *Sortie*, October 1982, 1 edition.
- . “Devrons-nous faire la guerre aux Russes? (C’est encore loin l’amour?).” *Le Berdache*, November 1981.
- . “Fags: De Berlin à Manhattan (C’est encore loin l’amour?).” *Le Berdache*, February 1982.
- . “Faut-il sortir du ghetto? (C’est encore loin l’amour?).” *Le Berdache*, May 1981.
- . “Guerre à la sodomie à Washington.” *Le Berdache*, November 1981.
- . “Guerre et contrôle social (C’est encore loin l’amour?).” *Le Berdache*, December 1981.
- . “Homos. Hétéros. Opposition fictive ou lutte de pouvoir? (C’est encore loin l’amour?).” *Le Berdache*, May 1982.
- . “Homosexualité et politique (C’est encore loin l’amour?).” *Le Berdache*, March 1981.

- . “Homosexuels et lesbiennes en mouvement (La parole et l’image).” *Le Berdache*, October 1981.
- . “L’alternative à fleur de peau (C’est encore loin l’amour?).” *Le Berdache*, February 1981.
- . “L’obsession de l’inceste.” *Le Berdache*, December 1981.
- . “La semaine gaie à l’université Laval.” *Le Berdache*, May 1982.
- . “Le 9e congrès de l’ADGQ: un franc succès.” *Le Berdache*, June 1981.
- . “Le chef Beaudoin veut-il la guerre?” *Le Berdache*, October 1981.
- . “Le dernier tour de piste de l’Empereur maganné.” *Sortie*, November 1982, 2.
- . “Les fichiers ‘gais’ de la GRC et l’affaire Watkins.” *Le Berdache*, November 1981.
- . “Les fiers papillons et la démocratie sexuelle (C’est encore loin l’amour?).” *Le Berdache*, June 1981.
- . “Les gais et la politique active: le nombre torontois.” *Le Berdache*, February 1981.
- . “Mouvements homosexuels et hétérodoxie sociale.” In *Changer de société*. Montréal, Québec: Québec/Amérique, 1982.
- . “Paris, rive gauche: de Gide à Sartre.” *Le Berdache*, November 1981.
- . “Pierre Herbart ressuscité.” *Le Berdache*, November 1981.
- . “Qui a peur de Pasolini? (C’est encore loin l’amour?).” *Le Berdache*, June 1981.
- . “‘Salò’ sort du placard.” *Le Berdache*, November 1981.
- . “Solidarité Québec Europe de l’Est [sic].” *Le Berdache*, March 1981.
- . “Une vitalité désespérée (in insert: Choisir sa vie, c’est choisir sa mort: Pasolini).” *Le Berdache*, December 1981.
- . “Yourcenar à l’Académie.” *Le Berdache*, March 1981.

Appendix 2: Defense

Here, I reproduce the text that I read from during the *soutenance* held for this thesis, because the *mises à jour*, the critiques and the metareflection contained in it now constitute, from my perspective, an essential clarification and an integral part of the argument advanced by my work.

Before beginning, I would like to express my gratitude to the committee, professors Brown, Malcolm and Schwartzwald: I am very grateful for the opportunity to discuss my work. And though I would like to repeat my entire acknowledgments section, I obviously don't have enough time—so I'll just say thank you again to Professor Schwartzwald for his excellent supervision.

I don't want to summarise the entire thesis here, but I would like to give a very brief overview of the conclusions I reached. In chapter one, I read Pierre Vallières's *Nègres blancs d'Amérique* as calling for a violent, revolutionary struggle that would both establish a secular, independent, socialist republic in Quebec and virilise Quebec men, to the exclusion of women and non-normatively masculine men. In chapter two, I examined the analysis of gender and sexuality offered by Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice*. Cleaver seeks the recovery of Black men's manhood, which means recognition of their intellects and what he calls "sexual sovereignty", again through revolutionary violence. Here, I drew consistent parallels between the rhetorical strategies employed by the two writers. Chapter three examines Joan Pinkham's translation of Vallières, *White Niggers of America*, in order both to understand and to critique, from the vantage point created by Cleaver's reading of Black masculinity, Vallières's use of transracial metaphor to build networks of interracial solidarity between men.

Today, I want to discuss some of the difficulties I experienced during and after the writing of the thesis; these will hopefully open the work onto other interrogations that could have—perhaps should have—been a part of my scholarship, all of which in any case would have made the thesis more complete. The first difficulty I encountered might be called a timing problem. Prominent incidents here in Montreal of what I would characterise as anti-Black racism—of blackface, most pertinently—gave me pause as to the timeliness of my own research. While I stand by the results of my work, I do wonder whether it was truly apropos to

have undertaken it when I did. One event especially troubled me. In an article published in 2012 on the *Huffington Post*, the lawyer Anthony Morgan described how anti-tuition-hike protestors had painted their faces black and borne a float of Jean Charest's face, with his legal name and a title—"Sir John James Charest"—written on a sign. The allusion to Vallières's work is obvious: the students would be latter-day *nègres blancs d'Amérique*.

Now, don't think that I have changed my mind about Corrie Scott's reading of Vallières's text as a form of blackface. But it is incontestable, as this event demonstrates, that many people *have* read Vallières the way she does, as a form of blackface that calls attention, through antithesis, to the inappropriate oppression of whites; and that many people, unlike Scott, do so *because they think it is true*. So when I read Anthony Morgan's article on this incident, I realised that one of the greatest difficulties facing my own reading was that it might be recuperated as a validation of that view.

Scott's reading puts me in mind of the one developed by David Austin in his new book *Fear of a Black Nation*, which unfortunately appeared too late for me to respond to it in my own work. Austin poses questions that I wish I had had the perspicacity to come up with:

[I]f French Quebecers claimed *négritude* as their own, essentially becoming Blacks in whiteface—what of the Blacks who lived in the same province? What about the history of Black enslavement by the French, and the Black opposition to it, and the longstanding, and continuing, history of racial exclusion of Blacks in Quebec? [...] For [Vallières] [...] anti-Black racism, exploitation, and oppression did not exist in his home territory. Blacks, in essence, did not exist [there].²⁹⁸

The phrase "Blacks in whiteface" leads me to believe that Austin and I have come to similar conclusions about the meaning of *Nègres blancs*. It is not, as Scott contends, a form of blackface, since signalling through blackness that the oppression of French-Canadians is inappropriate would undercut the entire project of international and particularly Black-American–French-Canadian solidarity. Nevertheless, Austin is absolutely right—and Vallières himself would have agreed, later in life, I believe—that the book erases the existence of Black people and anti-Black racism in Quebec. I wish that I had had the opportunity to address Austin's reading in my thesis.

²⁹⁸ Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation*, 69.

One of the difficulties of this work, then, was attempting to understand Vallières's autobiography on its own terms and see past my own initial reaction of disgust and distrust (you will have guessed that the contemporary reader to whom I often allude is not infrequently myself). Another difficulty had to do with my methodology: employing a form of social discourse analysis heavily informed by Marc Angenot's work meant that I attempted to immerse each text within the total discourse of its time, place, and culture. For Vallières, I had already been well-trained, with several years of study of Quebec literature behind me; but to read Eldridge Cleaver in this way, I was ill-prepared, never having studied American literature or African-American literature in a formal way outside of high school. I am not sure that I was able to "immerse" *Soul on Ice* in the social discourse of the United States as much as I would have liked.

It was also extremely important to me, in studying and researching Cleaver, to avoid the impression that I was "ganging up", as it were, with Black feminists (such as Michelle Wallace) on a Black nationalist, a phenomenon Ishmael Reed criticises in his preface to *Soul on Ice*.²⁹⁹ This is why Angela Davis's work for me was paramount: her intersectional understanding of feminism directs our energies away from a criticism of Black men and toward a critique of white-supremacist society.

I hope that I adequately expressed my sensitivity to that danger, and that my chosen methodology helped avoid that particular pitfall. Social discourse analysis, by presuming the social production of texts, can deflate some of the pressure on individual authors; for example, when I write about Cleaver's attack on Black women as too strong, I wanted to convey—through reference to the Moynihan Report, for example—that this is a racist trope, produced by a racist society, that has become a part of social discourse, white *and* Black. Thus while Cleaver certainly espouses misogynistic ideas, the true target of my critique here is white supremacy.

²⁹⁹ Ishmael Reed, "Preface", in Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice*, 3: "While white males were on the receiving end of a criticism by black writers during the sixties and early seventies, some white male writers and media commentators have since gotten even by bonding with the black feminist movement and criticizing the treatment of black women by black men".

To close, I would like to bring into the discussion an unrelated text that allowed me to rearticulate the problem posed by the relationship between Vallières and Black nationalism, perhaps more clearly than before. It was Judith Butler, in her book on Jewishness and Zionism, *Parting Ways*, that helped me reach this new formulation, and I would like to quote her here. In this passage from the essay "Impossible, Necessary Task", Butler is discussing the possibility of a connection between Jews after the Shoah and Palestinians after the Naqba, so I offer this quotation *toutes proportions gardées*, since the relationship between Black Americans and French Canadians is literally nothing like the one obtaining between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis:

Let us assume that there are historically specific modalities of catastrophe that cannot be measured or compared by any common or neutral standard. [...]

[T]o grant the singularity of one history is implicitly to be committed to the singularity of all such histories, at which point one can begin to ask a different kind of question [... which would be] how certain kinds of principles might be extrapolated from one set of historical conditions to grasp another, *a move that requires an act of political translation that refuses to assimilate the one experience to the other, and refuses as well the kind of particularism that would deny any possible way to articulate [general] principles [...]*.³⁰⁰

Paradoxically, Butler calls here for a form of non-analogical comparison. In other words, to repeat the title of the essay, itself a quotation of Mahmoud Darwish: "an impossible, necessary task". While it is difficult to say that Vallières successfully acquitted himself of that task, his attempt is certainly catalyzing, in much the same way that, as Jared Sexton writes, "the figure of Eldridge Cleaver presents a highly instructive case [...] of radical politics entangled in systems of oppression [...] for the extremity and wildness—as well as the complexity—of its failures",³⁰¹ and it is for these reasons that I am delighted to discuss these authors with you today.

Université de Montréal
17 December 2013

³⁰⁰ Judith Butler, *Parting Ways. Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 29–30.

³⁰¹ Sexton, "Race, Sexuality, and Political Struggle," 28.

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