Ethical Gestures: Articulations of Black Life in Montreal's 1960s

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Abstract

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This thesis traces articulations of black diasporic politics and practices in Montreal's 1960s as they revolve around two particular events that took place in the city, the Congress of Black Writers in 1968 and the Sir George Williams Affair in 1969. Though it has relevance for studies in black Canadian history, black left and grassroots activism and diaspora studies broadly, this project is above all a theoretical exploration into the overlapping realms of ethics and politics. This interdisciplinary project draws on a variety of oral and written sources to trace the political, social, and performative tenors of memory-work that underwrite collective and individual narratives unfolding before this historical backdrop. Chapter one looks at the promise of democracy as a single problem-space that attracted the attention of black activists of various stripes, the university administration and federal police; the contested political arena in which they made their respective claims is also a moral arena in which ethical modes of being and dissenting were reproduced and countered. Using oral history interviews with six female Black Canadian and Caribbean women, chapters two and three highlight the politics of moral memories. The emphasis on politics as intimately bound to everyday practices and lived experiences points to ways of reading this history that might be overlooked otherwise. Ultimately, this research aims not to champion any one vision of black liberation but to offer a periscope into the ways black narrators made and make life livable.

Acknowledgements

This project has been a product of intense collaboration and widespread contribution from its earliest days. Knowing these words could never be enough, I can only do my best to mention those who took part in giving it, and me for that matter, the sustenance and support we needed to reach this point. Nonetheless, I am deeply grateful and thank you, one and all.

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Introduction

In the early 1990s, I was fortunate enough to be raised in a Toronto neighbourhood with

lots of children and many playmates. Not long after we moved in, my Ethiopian parents struck

an immediate friendship with an Eritrean family and my sisters and I were happy to find out they

had two children similar in age. Though we got to know many of the other children, in those

years, the five of us spent most of our summers together. And like any neighbourhood,

sometimes us kids would get into fights. But it was only many years later that I would come to

understand just how colonial these fights could be.

"Go back to Somalia and stay there!" A favourite taunt by the neighbourhood bully

directed at the east African children (whose numbers grew seemingly all at once). A typical

response from me or one of my sisters: "We're Ethiopian, get it right!" Followed by another

important correction: "No way, *we* are Eritrean and proud." And the final chorus: "Why don't

you go back to Jamaica?"

In retrospect, we were completely oblivious to the city wide tension developing

throughout the 1990s between newer waves of East African migrants and the older Caribbean

counterparts, especially between Somali and Jamaican communities.[1] Or the ongoing historical

and institutional legacy that benefited from our bickering, such as the Toronto Housing

Authority that governed our homes to name one example. I can't help but ironically impose the

perception of any one of our white neighbours who would be looking at a handful of black

children. Yet the language we used to engage in conflict is reflective of exactly that dynamic.

And the nationalist pride within our own retorts point to the overlapping but unequal grids of

belonging we claimed: we objected first to the misnaming of our origins and second to our right

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[1]Michael J. Doucet, *The Anatomy of an Urban Legend: Toronto's Multicultural Reputation* (School of
Applied Geography, Ryerson Polytechnic University, 2001), 36.

to live there. To say that we grew out of these childhood squabbles, though true, would miss an important point. From somewhere between the ages of seven and twelve, we internalized public discourses used to shape contentious boundaries of exclusion and shifting lines of difference associated with identity and place over time. To be of a black diaspora in Canada meant - indeed means - many things.

It was this memory that immediately came to mind in my third year of undergraduate studies while reading about Black Power in Canada. And the thought that preceded it: "Canada had a Black Power movement?" I was stunned and thrilled to read David Austin's article "All Roads Led to Montreal" which traces the social, economic and political conditions that lead to a black radical tradition in Quebec – one that reflected an international consciousness but still responsive to local realities.[2] At the same time, I wasn't surprised at all that tensions emerged between the earlier generations of African Canadians living in Montreal and Anglo Caribbean immigrants arriving in the 1950s and 1960s. Or that the means of achieving Black Liberation were contested both within black communities and with wider Quebec and Canadian society. Contemplating my new interpretation of the familiar 'go back and stay there' dialogue, I was aware that the politics of solidarity could not be taken for granted. This stark realization gave way to a persistent frustration: How would I begin to make sense of this narrative absence in the many communities to which I belong, knowing the impact of these histories shape so much of my reality. Together these insights started a chain of inquiries that animate this thesis.

> "This is a story within a story – so slippery at the edges that one
> wonders when and where it started and whether it will ever end."[3]
>
> -- Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*

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[2]David Austin, "All Roads Led to Montreal: Black Power, the Caribbean, and the Black Radical Tradition in Canada," *Journal of African American History* 92, no. 4 (2007): 516–539.

[3] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 1.

The opening lines of Michel-Rolph Trouillot's classic study *Silencing the Past* succinctly express the contingency embedded in both the production of history and the practices of storytelling. By examining the function of silences in history, the underlying lesson Trouillot offers is that historical analysis cannot be separated from power in the 'history' we accept as truth. [4] In many ways, this historical lesson mirrors the radical black imaginary that animated African diasporic practices worldwide in the twentieth century. Variably named Garveyism, Negritude, Pan-Africanism, and Black Power, a number of different black internationalisms emerged behind which African descendants rallied to affect change in society.[5] Without collapsing the distinct temporal and spatial characteristics and trajectories of these movements, I want to highlight how each one necessitated a vision of African history that was deliberately contrasted with received narratives in order for them to make political and social claims about the worlds they lived in. Yet this hindsight projection, albeit to imagine a greater future, still had the capacity to re-inscribe other hierarchies in society.   As Robin Kelley notes about his generation of 'Afro-dreamers':

> "We wanted to find a refuge where 'black people' exercised power, possessed essential knowledge, educated the West, built monuments, slept under the stars on the banks of the Nile, and never had to worry about the police or poverty or arrogant white people questioning our intelligence. Of course, this meant conveniently ignoring slave labor, class hierarchies, and women's oppression, and it meant projecting backwards in time a twentieth-century conception of race, but to simply criticize us for myth making or essentialism misses the point of our reading. We dreamed the ancient world as a place of freedom, a picture to imagine what we desired and what was possible."[6]

As a generational message to future dreamers, Kelley's words offer great insight. Even those who revise for social good can still be accused of falsifying the story or read differently, guilty of

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[4] "Silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of *sources*); the moment of fact assembly (the making of *archives)*; the moment of fact retrieval (the making of *narratives)*; and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of *history* in the final instance)." Ibid., 26.

[5] Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[6] Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003), 15.

telling a story that empowers some, while limiting others. But rather than condemn historical actors or their narrators, Kelley and Trouillot would agree, an emphasis on historicity is not enough to understand the power of history.

Existing Frames

There are a number of existing frames that can be used to understand black Montreal in the 1960s as a historic period and setting for internationally imagined and locally shaped social, political engagements that appear in this thesis. Two events in particular are the Congress of Black Writers held October 11-14, 1968 and the Sir George Williams Affair that culminated in February 1969.[7] Gathered on a mid-fall weekend at McGill University, attendants and speakers at the Congress of Black Writers discussed what they saw as the most pressing issues of their time as captured by the full title of the conference: "The Congress of Black Writers: Towards the Second Emancipation, The Dynamics of Black Liberation." In his invitation letter to C.L.R. James, the chairman of the organizing committee Roosevelt (Rosie) Douglas articulated the urgency of the CBW's aims:

> "[At Congress] an attempt will be made to trace the whole history of the Black liberation struggle in a series of popular lectures. One of the crying necessities at the present stage of the struggle, we feel is the need for the Black masses to develop a sense of their own history, of the role which their own people have played in the whole history of Black-White confrontation. Such a total conception of the development of the lack struggle seems to us absolutely vital as a means of giving moral strength to the concrete political struggle now being waged. Black people must begin to see themselves as the subjects, rather than the objects, of history – the active creators, rather than the passive sufferers of historical events." [8]

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[7] I will refer to the Congress of Black Writers as Congress or CBW from here on. I will refer to the Sir George Williams Affair as SGWA or the Affair and shorten Sir George Williams University to Sir George.
[8] "Rosie Douglas to C.L.R. James, June 9, 1968" as printed in C. L. R. James, *You Don't Play With Revolution: The Montreal Lectures of C.L.R. James*, ed. David Austin (Oakland: AK Press, 2009), 283.

While the topics and political questions were firmly grounded in present dilemmas and future

aspirations, their claims were staked in a particular vision of unity in an African past.[9] Speakers

and invited guests ranged from Walter Rodney, Richard Moore, Rocky Jones C.L.R James, Stokley

Carmichael and the present but silent Miriam Makeba. That riots in Trinidad and Tobago ensued

when Walter Rodney was banned from returning to Jamaica where he taught at the University

of West Indies for his participation at Congress testifies to the transnational scope of the event

and its ripple effects. [10] At a much closer distance, the events at Sir George Williams University

(now called Concordia University) formed an integral part of the shifting black political

consciousness and racial discourse in Montreal and Canada in the late sixties. The incident

began in April of 1968 when a number of students placed a formal complaint against university

lecturer Perry Anderson for what they believed to be his racist distribution of grades among

other grievances. Over the course of the spring and subsequent terms, students believed their

concerns were not adequately addressed by university administrators and took to other means

of vocalizing their frustration. On January 29th, 1969, over two hundred supporters attending a

rally headed to the university's nerve centre, the computer lab on the ninth floor of the Hall

building, marking the beginning of a two week demonstrated that ended on February 11th, 1969

when ninety seven protestors were arrested following a confrontation with police. In the

process, a fire erupted in the computer lab while damages totaled over two million dollars. [11]

Whether it was viewed as a gradually escalating conflict or a sudden, undignified outburst, the

discussion of the Sir George Williams Affair as it became known served as a flashpoint for

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[9] And even closer to their contemporary moment, the name of the conference itself invoked an earlier moment of black internationalism as writers and activists from the continent and New World gathered in Paris in 1956. Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*.

[10] Details on Congress including speakers who attended: Austin, "All Roads Led to Montreal," 518–520. Also see his forthcoming publication David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex, and Security in Sixties Montreal* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2013).

[11] Austin, "All Roads Led to Montreal," 68.

racialized dissenting discourse across the country.[12] To engage the broader significance of these events, Black Canadian historiography, legal and immigration studies and narratives of sixties activism are a few existing frames to consider.

Barrington Walker has noted the distinct development of African Canadian historiography in the face of seismic shifts to the historical discipline over the last four decades. Although interventions of social, feminist and Marxist histories in the 1960s and 1970s, postmodernist and poststructuralist critiques of 1980s and 1990s, and diaspora and Africana studies from the 1990s onwards have all challenged positivist roots of history writing, unlike the United States, this path has not lead to the institutionalization of African Canadian studies in the academy. According to Walker's review, the persistence of Robin Wink's 1971 monograph *The Blacks in Canada* attests to this continued marginality in Canadian history.[13] Though it is praised for the empirical scope and bold claim to narrate the entirety of black experiences in Canada, the interpretation however, remains firmly embedded in "small-l" liberal valorization of individualism, dismissing the contributions of black political and social institutions as insular activities. His disparaging interpretation of this history as a "depressing" and "sad" story haunts the task of transforming popular perception of black Canadians from "marginals and transients" to active and dynamic subjects whose aspirations and activities are not always or only nullified by harsh conditions of life.[14]

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[12] Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal* (Montreal-Kingston: McGill Queens University Press, 2010), 104–108.

[13] Barrington Walker, "Marginality, Interdisciplinarity and Black Canadian History," *New Dawn, Journal of Black Canadian Studies* 1, no. 1 (August 6, 2006): 70–73.

[14] Daniel McNeil draws heavily on George Elliot Clarke's engagement with Winks in *Odyssey Home* to make a larger point regarding black public intellectuals. Still, this article includes a useful summary of problematic interpretation and persistence of Wink's scholarship including his rejection of feminist critiques and mischaracterization of postcolonial theory. Daniel McNeil, "'Are African Canadians Always and Only Marginals and Transients?' The Politics and Poetics of Fanon's Children," *Southern Journal of Canadian Studies* 5, no. 1 (2012): 29–32.

Nevertheless, there are many scholars whose work has accomplished exactly that. In studies of black histories in Quebec, Dorothy William's *The Road to Now: A History of Blacks in Montreal* is prominent among them. [15] *The Road to Now* is structured around key events and organizations in the development of the community from as early as slavery until the second last decade of the twentieth century, documenting the struggles for survival and strategies for realizing their diverse aspirations. Establishments and organizations such as the Union United Church, Universal Negro Improvement Association, Negro Community Centre, all of which are located in the St. Antoine District, she demonstrates have long standing roots but also adapted, willingly or not, as the community grew through waves of immigration in the post-war era and period of increased black activism in the 1960s.[16] As a historian who identifies strongly with the community she writes about, her desire to share a collective history through the "social history paradigm" is also evident in her explicit framing within a democratic national narrative: "We were here, we are here, and as long as one black citizen calls it home, Montreal will be our history." [17] Though I appreciate the significance of such contributions and social histories generally, I question the assumptions and possibilities grounded in the aim of giving voice exclusively[18] through positive representation and especially when tethered to one's contributions as a citizen.

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[15] Dorothy W. Williams, *The Road to Now: A History of Blacks in Montreal* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1997). Her study builds on an earlier demography of Black Montreal which focused on historical consequences of discrimination in housing and extends the narrative to include barriers of employment and education as factors that continue shape the overall possibilities and conditions of community life. Also see Leo W. Bertley, "The Universal Negro Improvement Association of Montreal, 1917-1979" (PhD diss., Concordia University, 1980); Leo W. Bertley, *Canada and Its People of African Descent* (Pierrefonds, QC: Bilongo Publishers, 1977). For a history of the St. Antoine district, John Gilmore, *Swinging in Paradise: The Story of Jazz in Montreal* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1988).

[16] For another oral history of Black Canadian Women, see Karen C. Flynn, *Moving Beyond Borders: A History of Black Canadian and Caribbean Women in the Diaspora*, Studies in Gender and History 37 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

[17] Williams, *The Road to Now*, 9.

[18] Walter Johnson, "On Agency," *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 1 (2003): 113–124.

Seven years after Walker's article was published in *New Dawn*, there are indeed a great many more titles which confirm the generative and growing contributions of African Canadian historiography that include his own publications on race, immigration and the law. [19] Along the same lines, a second possible frame to interpret research on Montreal's sixties would examine scholarship on legal, immigration and policy studies that joins experiences of black Canadians with other racialized and marginalized minorities. [20] Some scholars critical of dominant national narratives argue the opening of Canada's immigration system in 1967 and the establishment of a state sponsored Multiculturalism Policy in 1971 were not watershed achievements of a libratory democracy but rather a forward thinking recalibration of racially exclusionary boundaries as they appear in legislation. The Cold War context provided the perfect cover under which critiques of liberal democracy were rebuked and rebutted with moral championing of racial equality and individual rights and freedoms. Official language debates, as an integral part the shift from race to language and multiculturalism within a bilingual framework hold the very same tensions questioning the government's responsibility to correct historical oppressions through policy changes. [21] While I do not engage with these related struggles directly in this thesis (and certainly not for lack of importance), there is an overlap in that I examine the perspective of law enforcement officers who are increasingly pressured to defend the historically uneven structures of power that naturalize their privileges.

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[19] Barrington Walker, *Race on Trial: Black Defendants in Ontario's Criminal Courts, 1858-1958* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010). Also see two edited collections: *The History of Immigration and Racism in Canada: Essential Readings* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2008); *The African Canadian Legal Odyssey: Historical Essays*, 3rd Revised Edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012). Walker's review, moreover points to the fruitful products of interdisciplinary studies as he suggests some of the best scholarship of black Canadian experiences have been produced outside of the discipline.

[20] Some examples include: Charmaine Nelson, ed., *Racism, Eh?: A Critical Inter-disciplinary Anthology of Race and Racism in Canada* (Concord, ON: Captus Press, 2004). Constance Backhouse, *Colour-coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Franca Iacovetta, Frances Swyripa, and Marlene Epp, *Sisters Or Strangers: Immigrant, Ethnic and Racialized Women in Canadian History*, vol. 24 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

[21] Eve Haque, *Multiculturalism Within a Bilingual Framework: Language, Race, and Belonging in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 3.

In the last decade, a resurgent focus on the long sixties suggests new ways of writing about this period, [22] and most productively as global or transnational histories deeply entangled with the genealogy of empire.[23] Principles of post colonial studies and emphases on decolonization challenge the modernizing focus of area studies and a Western liberal teleology. This way of writing the long sixties firmly counters a number of problematic tropes in dominant narratives: that it occurred only in Europe or the United States; that it was only a youth/student movement with no real purchase once they aged; that black liberation struggles were successful during Civil Rights and devolved with rise of aggressive Black Power movement. The conference publication *New World Coming: the Sixties and the Shaping of Global Consciousness* is a product of this shift, with some chapters standing out more than others. [24]

At the confluence of many fields

And while the present study has relevance for the shift in sixties historiography, this thesis extends a critique of modern liberalism in another direction, broadly oriented towards diaspora and memory studies to contextualize and delineate conceptions of experience and subjectivity through intersections of politics and ethics. Saba Mahmood's salient arguments challenging the separation of politics and ethics in liberal political theory suggest there is much to be gained through this cross over. In her words:

> "[P]olitical projects are not only the result of coalitional organizing, ideological
> mobilization, and critical deliberation. They are predicated upon affective, ethical and
> sensible capacities that are often ignored as consequential to the analysis of politics.
> Departing from one's accustomed political stance and adopting a new one requires
> more than ideational, judgmental, or conceptual shift. It necessitates a whole series of
> affective and sensible reorientations, some of which are undertaken systematically and

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[22] There are other anthologies that make attempts to challenge some of these tropes, although they still have certain inconsistencies.
[23] Scott Rutherford, "Canada's Other Red Scare: Rights, Decolonization, and Indigenous Political Protest in the Global Sixties" (PhD diss., Queen's University, 2010). Mills, *The Empire Within*.
[24] Karen Dubinsky et al., *New World Coming: The Sixties and the Shaping of Global Consciousness* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2009).

others of which are acquired through social and cultural exposure and imbibing." [25]

That I have found the contribution of a variety of disciplines helpful is not surprising considering the fruitful cross-disciplinary interests that underline each research area and especially Black Canadian Studies. I outline them in this section to expand and connect three key terms in particular - 'diaspora', 'place', and 'memory' - with the literature on moral anthropology as a critique of the implicitly liberal projects in some national and social histories.

David Scott's foundational essay on the category of 'diaspora' in anthropological studies does not begin with a history of this term used to identify people of African descent, displaced from the continent and scattered around the world by the brutal history of slavery. Rather, he outlines the centrality of two terms "Africa" and "slavery" as constitutive reference points applied to recuperate continuities of culture and identity between the old world and the new. [26] As a trend in anthropology, the narrative economy of this problematic essentialises identity by assuming continuities as the only and natural mode of connection between 'Africa' and 'slavery'. Scott suggests we go beyond essentialist or anti-essentialist categorizations by reading 'diaspora' instead as a "discursive tradition", one that anchors itself in different registers of meaning to carry out various works: establish authority, create social norms, or stake political claims among others.[27]

And attending to the particularities of this task requires grounding the "uses of diaspora" in their historical and political context. Brent Hayes Edwards likewise avoids a "seductive etymology" and instead emphasizes the term's entrance as both politically and

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[25] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2012), xiii.

[26] David Scott, "That Event, This Memory: Notes on the Anthropology of African Diasporas in the New World," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, no. 3 (1991): 261–284.

[27] Scott also takes up this concept in *Refashioning Futures: Criticism After Postcoloniality* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1999).

historically specific to the needs of black internationalist writers in the 1950s and 1960s. [28] This

need evolved over the coming decades as it was institutionalized in the form of Black Studies in

the United States and through a different trajectory of Cultural Studies in the United Kingdom.

Indebted to this legacy on both sides of the ocean, Black Atlantic Studies as introduced by Paul

Gilroy's seminal text have gone far beyond his tension filled and generative introduction.[29]

Daniel McNeil's excellent study takes up this call in often ignored Canadian context. [30] Taking

heed of Stuart Hall's caution against the desire for 'championing fiction', Edwards uses the term

"decolage" to signify an artificial prop or wedge that is deliberately held in place through various

practices of diaspora; and the challenges to monolithic experiences of blackness, rooted in

strong identification with an African past and/or hegemonic US experiences creates the effect of

removing this prop, essentially revealing the "prior uneven-ness" of black experiences in all their

particular locations in space and time.

Likewise, Katherine McKittrick draws on the essential contributions of black feminist

thought to expose the intersections of racialized and sexualised productions of space in *Demonic*

Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle. By examining black geographies, she

takes seriously the 'imbrications of material and metaphorical spaces,' so that black lives and

black histories can be conceptualized and talked about in new ways." [31]

In the case of new world black liberation struggles in the second half of the twentieth

century, the meta context of this thesis, these invocations of 'that event,' and 'this memory'

coalesce over practices aimed at affirming the diasporic subject. Thus, a nuanced theoretical

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[28] Brent Hayes Edwards, "The Uses of Diaspora," *Social Text* 19, no. 1 (2001): 45–73.

[29] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[30] In addition to McNeil, ""Are African Canadians Always and Only Marginals and Transients?". See Daniel McNeil, *Sex and Race in the Black Atlantic: Mulatto Devils and Multiracial Messiahs* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 18–20.

[31] Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xii.

understanding of 'memory' and 'place' as they ground practices appearing in written and oral

sources compliments the analytical purchase of diaspora as a category of inquiry.

The range of meaning explicitly and implicitly attached to 'memory' makes it difficult to

categorise as the broad focus of many disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. "The

study of colonialism is itself," Ann Stoler and Karen Strassler remind us, "a memory project, as

has been the intensive analytic work on postcolonial subjectivity." [32] The internal tensions within

these studies, between hydraulic or identity model of remembering which simplify memories as

gateways to an authentic subaltern past or purely constructed acts of self-making respectively,

bear the markers of political context in which they developed. Thus, counter-memories as

counter narratives could form powerful means of challenging state implemented forms of

amnesia or erasure in postcolonial contexts. In shifting their analysis to the *how* of remembering

rather than what, Stoler and Strassler take up the wider postmodern critique against objectivist

principles of truth in which experience (decoded from memory) is no longer accepted as

'evidence' for historical analyses. [33] By that same token, perspectives that locate memory in the

mind reinforce the mind/body split along with a whole host of dichotomies that privilege

rational thought over bodily sensation, emotions and affects as ways of knowing and being, and

in relation to one's surroundings. A cultural studies approach to emotions extends this critique

against essentialism by arguing 'emotions' are not something individuals 'have' but rather they

circulate and travel between bodies as collective phenomenon. [34] And Sara Ahmed's instructive

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[32] Ann Laura Stoler and Karen Strassler, "Castings for the Colonial: Memory Work in' New Order' Java," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, no. 1 (2000): 7.

[33] Joan W. Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (1991): 773–797.

[34] "A cultural analysis of emotions focuses on context, power and relationality. Emotions are investigated in context as historically specific, always changing and contested, cultural forms and practices. Power is seen as central and productive, pervading every level of social interaction, working both to constrain and enable subjectivities and social hierarchies. Relationality refers to the ways culture, context and power operate interactively." Jenny Harding, "Talk About Care: Emotions, Culture and Oral History," *Oral History* 38, no. 2 (2010): 33. Also see Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh

attention to 'proximities' as they appear in emotional economies, argues that emotions create the very surfaces, the lines of difference in which subjective bodies appear as distinct bodies,[35] re-enforces the spatial analysis I have maintained throughout the investigation to understand the contours of meaning-making central to memory studies.

As human geographers and public historians inspired by Henri Lefebvre's provocations have argued, these capacities are intimately bound with the production of space in non-deterministic relations with dynamic subjectivities. [36] In *Remembering Place and Placing Memory in Canada,* editors John Walsh and James Opp bring together a variety of essays that understand one's sense of 'place' as central to history and memory in the same way that memory-work provides the ties that bind a speaker to the land.[37] As a methodology and analytical frame I elaborate in further detail within the chapters, oral history's preoccupations with subjective truths and embodied memories as a nexus for broader local and global phenomena such as decolonization, deindustrialization, and urban change makes it especially useful in shifting away from event centred narratives that privilege historicity over the politics of remembering. Memory studies as a field then brings together these wide ranging concerns to look at the ways life is (re)produced through memory. [38]

Herein lies the most salient aspect of memory studies for our investigation into diasporic practices; the politics of remembering are most explicit in transfers of memory as made evident explicit by the varying practices of diaspora within a common context of erasure.

University Press, 2004); Jennifer Harding and E. Deidre Pribram, eds., *Emotions: A Cultural Studies Reader*, 1st ed. (Abington, Oxford: Routledge, 2009).

[35] Sara Ahmed, "Affective Economies," *Social Text* 22, no. 2 (2004): 117–139.

[36] As a central aim, Lefebvre's concepts "foster confrontation between those ideas and propositions which illuminate the modern world even if they do not govern it, treating them not as isolated theses or hypotheses, as 'thoughts' to be put under the microscope, but rather as prefigurations lying at the threshold of modernity." Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, vol. 30 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 24.

[37] John C. Walsh and James William Opp, eds., *Placing Memory and Remembering Place in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010).

[38] Karen E. Till, "Memory Studies," *History Workshop Journal* 62 (2006): 325–341.

In other words, how, why, when, and where memory-work operates in the black diasporic

context has direct relations to the conditions of displacement, social death, and lingering effects

of slavery that continue to engender these desires, that persist in the need to remember. [39] In

this sense, it seems arbitrary to divide memory studies as separate from diaspora studies since

issues of 'memory' and historical consciousness permeate the political potential of diaspora as

an analytical framework posited against the cultural and ideological impacts of the modern

nation-state. In my research, the greatest potential for insight is in the specific overlap of ethics

and the politics of remembering: particularly in assertions of the 'right way' to remember

solidarity and through performances of ethical memories. Remembering as a process that

articulates subjectivities through this relationship between life, land and the self, therefore, is

teaming with generative potential to move, bind, distance, and fix bodies from one another,

people from objects, symbols, institutions, or places and not necessarily as a result of deliberate

intentions. Therefore, this thesis joins literature that pushes beyond visibility/invisibility

dichotomy of black diasporic practices by looking at moral and emotional economies which

allow for a varied subject ontology beyond that of citizen or slave.

Ethical Subjects or Methods

My attention to ethical subjects blends these interdisciplinary interests in a number of

ways that make up the core analytical focus on various *practices*. I follow the interventions of

several scholars who engage the 'moral turn' by applying a neo-Aristotelian understanding of

virtue ethics that emphasise practice or action as a means *and* end of moral cultivation, not

simply a reflection of an interior, pre-figured morality. Moreover, attention to the ordinary

circuits and habits that "capture the complexity of moral experience, moral self-making and the

embeddedness of the moral in everyday practice action" provides an interpretive frame to

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[39] Saidiya Hartman, "The Time of Slavery," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, no. 4 (2002): 759.

"explore the ethical as a social, as well as personal, matter." [40] In the work of Veena Das and

other scholars who view ethics as a dimension of everyday life in which the minute and

mundane acts lead us towards rather than away from being moral subjects, there is little benefit

in maintaining classical distinctions between ethics as rational judgment and morals as discrete

practices. [41] As an example of this insight, I detour into a personal reflection at an important

turning point in my thinking about my research:

> In my early reflections of Sharon's interview, that I was immediately struck by a certain emotional weight is understandable. In many of her stories, I could hear my mother, my aunts and other relatives advise me about life choices; I could see myself projected into the stories as a representative of the absent youth whose unwritten futures carried in equal measure the potential to fulfill or disappoint her life expectations. For a time I was nearly paralyzed by this heaviness, likely intensified by my own experiences with loss of the only grandparent I knew less than two months prior to the interview. According to Della Pollock, that discomfort and heaviness I felt was my 'response-ability', the emotional and ethical reaction that manifests through witnessing a life story. [42] I would say for me, this also meant, however unintentionally, splicing the complications of my family life into my response-ability as researcher. Rather than draw the line between my multiple roles in this space -indeed I wouldn't know how - I wondered if there was a way to honour my promise to listen and write about her life in a way that reflected the full impact of our interaction. One way I tried to do this was to embrace Lisa Ndejaru's definition of shared authority "as solidarity, deep listening and sharing each other's load." [43] This commitment to ethical interaction through self-reflection made me realise emotional weight, similar to physical weight can do more than anchor you; it also carries you forward, propels you sometimes in directions you would never expect.

Aside from demonstrating the 'sticky' way emotions work, [44] I also want to acknowledge my own

role in the creation and interpretation of sources. And beyond, or perhaps through this self-

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[40] Cheryl Mattingly, "Moral Selves and Moral Scenes: Narrative Experiments in Everyday Life," *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* (November 12, 2012): 6, doi:10.1080/00141844.2012.691523.

[41] Veena Das, "Chapter 8: Ordinary Ethics," in *A Companion to Moral Anthropology*, ed. Didier Fassin (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 134. Also see introduction to the same volume for a helpful discussion on what is at stake in different scholarship the emphasizes or minimises the difference between the terms ethics and moral.

[42] Della Pollock, ed., *Remembering: Oral History Performance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 4.

[43] S. High, L. Ndejuru, and K. O'Hare, "Special Issue of Sharing Authority: Community-University Collaboration in Oral History, Digital Storytelling, and Engaged Scholarship," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 43 (n.d.): 11.

[44] Admittedly, I wrote this before I encountered cultural studies approach to emotions. But in hindsight, it's a useful example for the tactile, sensory perceptions of affects that emerge as 'sticky' emotions. I

critical impulse, I came to understand how paying close attention to the murky domain of ethics as urged in moral anthropology [45] within the politics of remembering points to the most significant potentials in this study. Once again, we must avoid the desire to supplant an interpretation of memory/experience as positivist records or all-encompassing construction of the self, especially a moral self. Instead, I take memory or remembering to be *a* category of practice which can be undertaken as the means/end to cultivate an ideal self; a category among many other that incites the moral self into being.

Thus, ethics as a dimension of the everyday in this thesis unfolds as a series of nested arguments about various ordinary practices. Diaspora as a category of practice encompasses but does not constrain remembering as a performative act only in relation to Africa/slavery. Instead, memory-work overlaps with the historical conditions that created a diaspora and goes beyond assumed essentialisms. I look at narrative composure as a particular ethical practice among many that brings the spheres of politics and ethics together.

On Foundations: Cemented, Shifted, and Paradoxical

Consequently, the following investigation, inspired by a chance revelation of childhood reflection, is not strictly about 'what' happened but traces *how* memory 'works' in narratives of black life in Montreal's 1960s, particularly through various understandings of solidarity as they appear then and (re)surface now. How do writers and narrators organize or adjust their political frames around practices, beliefs, and expectations of black activism and solidarity? What modes of being, performances, or registers – affective, social, or moral - are involved in cementing or shifting these frames? If narrative composure is understood as an act of ethical cultivation, what

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needed to work through my feelings of empathy to understand how I should proceed, to guide my practice.

[45] James D. Faubion, *An Anthropology of Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

does the relationship between interiority/exteriority suggest for the liberal division of politics and ethics?

Although this investigation strives towards answering some of these questions; it stands more usefully as a gateway to further inquiries on these themes. This is by no means an exhaustive study on these questions but an exercise in echolocation, a sounding board for foundations of sorts. [46] The joint fixity and flexibility in this metaphor is inspired by Stuart Hall's notion of *articulation.* On the one hand, I'm pointing to the fixity of structures – in popular memory, in personal memory and even theoretical and disciplinary conceptions. On the other, I'm highlighting the very flexibility of these structures through the circuits they rely on, the mortar in between their stones, the transformation of affects as they travel between objects and surface as emotions. Therefore, this thesis serves as an example of the investigative possibilities when tensions are placed front and centre over precise cohesions. In doing so, I challenge traditional political, social and oral histories by engaging theoretical conceptions of liminal subjectivities, spatialized remembering, and agency that disguise modern projects by obscuring their intimately liberal logics as the only ethical way to live.

In Montreal, Quebec, as one of many North American centres of contentious black politics in the 1960s and 1970s, the identification with Africa past and present to define black subjecthood was made in a variety of ways and towards differing ends. A growing call could be heard from students, activists, educators, and "everyday people" for an increased presence of African history both inside of schools and in the community. Despite the differences in expectations for what this knowledge would lead to, there was a palpable sense that self and community empowerment were linked to historical knowledge, which had been until recently denied. That is, historical interpretation and representations were intensely politicized in

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[46] There is another understanding of echolocation that I will expand on in the conclusion.

popular discourse. Through events such as the Congress of Black Writers, prominent orators

made this connection clear; their words painted a slippery slope in which historical memory

blended with personal memory, and personal memory was the gateway to a truer self**:** know

your history, know yourself.[47]

Yet, who this "self" is or could be was anything but fixed. The visible social practices that

came to be associated with Black Power movement also hint at the nexus of culture and politics

and the production of space. Even for black residents in Montreal that deliberately avoided the

Congress of Black Writers or politicized educational gatherings, the dramatic consequences of

the Sir George Williams Affair served as a flashpoint for public discourses of black politics on

multiple geographic scales. Moreover, the anti-black backlash that spread following the two-

week occupation of a SGWU campus building made it clear that what was at stake could not be

limited to the actions of "black militants" but bore long term consequences for the ways the

Canadian state understood its own role in governing its "citizens" and "others."

Thus, in addition to a focused reading of black serials emerging in response to the

SGWA, the first chapter, On Cementing Foundations, explores insights from institutional

assessments by SGWU administration and RCMP files to illuminate the simultaneous discourses

of power, race, and democratic entitlement that develop alongside protests in the city. Though

black residents shared a collective experience, the diversity of politics reflects another

important feature about the rich texture and depth of memories: that alternate boundaries such

as class and gender also shape collective and individual memories even while universalizing

registers such as those assumed in an ordinary ethics draw together various and conflicting

interpretations of solidarity. Chapter 2, On Shifting Foundations, approaches this topic directly

through an oral history analysis of interviews with five women narrators, listening closely to

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[47] 'You Don't Play With Revolution', *McGill Daily* Interview, November 4, 1968. James, *You Don't Play With Revolution*, 229.

their memories of the 'we' without losing sight of the 'us' and 'them' that emerge in social and political conflicts, such as the Affair. Even when listening to a single narrator, individual and collective memories can carry these fault lines of difference, evident in the tensions and patterns that appear when we shift gears from an 'event' centred history to a life stories approach in the final chapter. The function of morality tales threading the narratives in previous chapters are highlighted most explicitly in Chapter 3, On Paradoxical Foundations, in what I term 'ethical gestures', an alternate way of reading performative tenors of remembering for ways a narrator might exercise agency in the manner of storytelling. Although the subject and backdrop to these stories differ greatly from the ones that captured Truillot's focus, his signalling of a "story within a story" can be used to frame many contentious tales and their equally contentious bookmarks.

As a final caveat accompanying my personal asides, I want to emphasize this thesis does not aim for the excavation of an authentic black memory – it will not be an essay on what makes me, or the other neighbourhood children essentially black. I offer no comprehensive or singular representation of historical Black Montreal, and nor do I aim to. Rather, the following chapters attempt to trouble the assumptions between 'memory', 'experience' and 'truth' while remaining attentive to the conditions that might create the desire for solidarity and trace the various means black subjects worked to effect those bonds. Thus, this thesis offers insight to a number of discussions that highlight the productive relationship between place, memory, identity and politics. Moreover, the moral and ethical imperatives set by the oral history stage mirror the ways narrators negotiate present landscapes of power which are inseparable from the past. These ethical gestures offer a periscope into the ways black narrators made and make life liveable.

Chapter 1 – On Cementing Foundations

"When the path home disappeared, when misfortune wore a white face, when dark skin guaranteed perpetual servitude, the prison house of race was born. And so too was the yearning for the black promised land and the ten million trees that would repel the enemy's advance and stand in for all of those gone and forgotten."[48]

Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*

Bringing together many international perspectives of black liberation, the Congress of Black Writers was one of several social and political events that formed the backdrop to the Sir George Williams Affair, a very local manifestation or imitation of black liberation struggles around the world, depending on who was asked. In order to make sense of the highly visible and contentious public events marked by the university demonstration and its aftermath, spectators and participants had to address the historical nature to the claims made by protestors. Oftentimes, this meant both events, separated by less than half a year, were drawn together in the same story. The work of David Austin has been crucial in placing the Congress of Black Writers and the work of Caribbean Conference Committee in dialectical relationship with black radical politics in Canada and the Caribbean, most recently through a Black Atlantic framework. [49] Likewise, Sean Mills delivers a rich analysis of the circuits travelled by decolonization theory among various social movements in Quebec, as it was variably adapted and interpreted to articulate the social critiques and dreams held by different groups in interrelated, though not identical ways.[50] By taking these multiple radical imaginary circuits in at the same time, *Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Sixties Activism in Montreal* erodes the geographic boarders used to separate imperial legacies, as suggested by the title.   While these

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[48] Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 48.

[49] In addition to Austin, "All Roads led to Montreal," see Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation*.

[50] Mills, *The Empire Within*.

titles point to the possible breadth and depth for historical studies of black activism in Montreal, I do not aim for a comprehensive overview. Instead I follow Arundhati Roy's example and offer an "*under*view of specific events that I hope would reveal some of the ways democracy," and if I may add diaspora was, "practiced."[51] Though she engages a different geographical context, Roy's keen expression of paradoxical limits holding together stated intentions and hidden agendas by Union and Progress shares a commonality with the discussions and events that took place in late sixties Montreal, reaching back and spilling over into the following years. The task of 'making sense' is germane to any attempt at narrating these experiences for historical actors and historians alike. While I take up this aim using oral history research in the later chapters, here I approach the practices of 'democracy' and 'diaspora' by tracing the ways 'race' was mobilized into and out of 'memory' as naturalized truth.

This analysis benefits from a few key points drawn from a blend of theories in imperial studies, post-colonial studies, and of political subjectivities. The first emphasizes the racialisation of national projects generally, and specifically in this case the Canadian nation; the construction of nation in post-WWII Canadian context is analogous to construction of whiteness as a normative subject position that benefits from colonially shaped structures of power.[52] Indeed, this concept is exactly why so many cross-national banners have been used to mobilize for political changes affecting African descended peoples, as in the focus on diaspora in this essay. This leads to a second point: it isn't quite possible to talk about the privileges of the Canadian nation(al) without considering the multiple historic others which it was built against. Richard Iton's way of revealing these parallel techniques and discourses is to trace both the

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[51] Arundhati Roy, *Listening to Grasshoppers* (Hamilton, Canada: Hamish, 2009). Italics in the original text.
[52] For this particular argument, see Sunera Thobani, *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007). The connection however between race and nation is essential to colonial and imperial roots of nation-state generally. The same insight comes also from critical race theory and immigration studies.

governmentalities and subordinativities that differentially connect all bodies to modern and pre-modern forms of power in the same spaces.[53] And thus, the co-existence of these spheres gives rise to many lines of difference along which populations are united, divided and stratified; that while 'nation' might be the standard through which claims are made and countered, it has many fault lines (such as gender, class, religion, language) that emerge, especially when its boundaries are tested on questions of solidarity.[54] And lastly, a crucial means of maintaining these lines of difference was through the reproduction of ideal subjects in a range of practices, but most prominently in this essay by establishing narrated memories and experiences, including foundational stories that are centuries-old, as constitutive reference points. Consequently, I don't wish to argue for simple division based on the content of these memories, between activists and racist states, or militants and reformists. But instead, to tease apart the political consequences of representations embedded in memory and narrative practices made possible by naturalized alignments.

Thus, this chapter makes use of diverse sources narrating the significance of black activism in Montreal much in the same way that Daniel J Walkowitz and Lisa Maya Knauer present contested histories in public spaces. These narrative and discursive struggles over the meaning of the past perform as layered arenas, shaped by the political stakes embedded in race, memory, and the nation.[55] The sources reflect an internal yet very public dialogue, so to speak, in discussions printed in two black periodicals - *UHURU* and *Umoja* - that began circulating in Montreal 1969. The other set of 'internal' documents include reports gathered by Sir George

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[53] Richard Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic: Politics and Popular Culture in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[54] For a way to historicize processes that link colonial structures in post-colonial presents, see Ann Stoler's concept of 'imperial debris' in Ann Stoler, "Imperial Debris: Reflections on Ruins and Ruination," *Cultural Anthropology* 23, no. 2 (2008): 191–219.

[55] Daniel J. Walkowitz and Lisa Maya Knauer, *Contested Histories in Public Space: Memory, Race, and Nation*, vol. 2 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2008).

Williams University administration in the aftermath of the protest and Royal Canadian Mounted

Police regarding security assessments and surveillance reports of black activism in Montreal.

Collectively, these documents carry an interesting dual purpose as the authors wrote with

particular audiences in mind; yet their significance changes as we question their intended

frames. Admittedly, there are important distinctions between records marked for immediate

public release and those whose access would be granted much later (and remain partially

redacted). And while I have separated the analysis to reflect this divide, I have kept them in the

same essay because this chapter takes the *promise of democracy* and corollary narrative of

progress as a single problem-space[56] to examine variable understandings of 'race' and 'nation' in

the political work carried out by diasporic memory. As a shared discursive space, this promise

was imbued with colonial and anti-colonial narratives that sought to define the exact limits of

democracy by identifying and challenging which subjects in particular would be entitled to its

benefits. Since, the primary rhetorical vehicle driving this contestation were narrations of the

nation(al) and its boundaries, black activists used the politics of representation and

identification as the means to negotiate this power. Ultimately, through a defence and

normalization of a white Canadian nation and practices of black diasporic politics respectively,

historical memories both dominant and counter-narratives were called on to account for and

challenge a political status quo. But rather than create a simplistic dichotomy between attempts

to expose or erase imperial logics, I point to the overlapping tactics in which memory was

deployed and employed to varying ends.

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[56] I am making use of 'problem-space' as David Scott uses in his introduction: Scott, *Refashioning Futures*. Though the source base might seem eclectic, it is the circulation of colonial and anti-colonial images in the same sphere that makes it especially useful to examine together.

Dispatches Part 1: Through Thick and Thin

The sensational reporting of the Sir George Williams Affair made headlines across the country in the days around the occupation. According to Marcel Martel's analysis of mainstream media representations, much of the tone registered surprise and criticism of such wonton destruction.[57] Dorothy Eber's journalistic impressions in *The Computer Centre Party* released in 1969 offered the first book length account of events; despite her claims to a neutral position, the writing and overall presentation dovetails with a generational dismissal of the situation faced by arrested students as a product of youthful misguidance.[58] Although much of the early reporting varied in degrees of paternalistic sympathy to unabashed hostility, few if any mainstream representations engaged with the claims made by protestors regarding imperial and colonial legacies. This imbalance in media coverage became a strong motivational factor in the creation and rapid expansion of several alternative newspapers and newsletters in Montreal, established to counter distorted portrayals of black subjects. As part of Montreal's Black Renaissance of community organizing spurred by conditions of the late sixties, Sean Mills demonstrates this symbiotic development between postcolonial currents in Montreal's leftist movements and thriving alternative press; these organs facilitated spaces to deliberate, communicate and adapt peripatetic views and intersecting practices. [59] And according to Dorothy William's study of black periodicals in Quebec, the changing demographic landscapes

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[57] Marcel Martel, "'Riot' at Sir George Williams: Giving Meaning to Student Dissent," in *Debating Dissent: Canada and the 1960s*, ed. Dominique Clément, Lara A. Campbell, and Gregory S. Kealey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

[58] Dorothy Eber, *The Computer Centre Party: Canada Meets Black Power* (Montreal: Tundra Books, 1969). Eber's book remains useful for its collection of press clippings and photos in that year. In contrast, P. Kiven Tunteng's 1973 article in *Race and Class* offers interprets the events through newspapers and personal interviews to frame the issue on one hand as a mismanagement of race conflict and on the other, overreaction by emotional black students. P. Kiven Tunteng, "Racism and the Montreal Computer Incident of 1969," *Race & Class* 14, no. 3 (1973): 229–240.

[59] Mills, *The Empire Within*, 8, 108–112 .

before and after this moment suggest *UHURU* and *Umoja* appear at a particular turning point

for Montreal's dynamic black population.[60]

In this section I follow these two newspapers to understand how representations of

black identity and memory – deliberately linked through a historic and living connection to

Africa – articulate differing political stakes through the contested contours of black solidarity.

Once again, the practices of diaspora include such publications that enact this concept of a

shared identity through identifications across time and space, even while using different

collective banners such as Black Power or Pan-Africanism to work through the prior

'unevenness' created by conditions of displacement.[61]

In the pages of *UHURU*, one the foremost battles of representation waged was against

the characterisation of the Sir George Williams Affair as an external problem, an aberration of

Canadian society. Indeed, the newspaper was initially published as news bulletin for the Feb

11th Defence Committee, keeping the community up to date with situation facing students. That

it was adapted at once as a space to address and deliberate issues relevant for black

communities and gained immediate success[62] reflects the shared context for black students and

Montreal's black community. In *UHURU*'s continued coverage of differential treatment of black

people within a Canadian justice system, reports localized both issues of racism and institutional

investments in colonial narratives and imperial economic structures that perpetuated or denied

the existence of discrimination. For instance, defence attorney Juanita Westmorland's

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[60] Dorothy W. Williams, "Sankofa: Recovering Montreal's Heterogeneous Black Print Serials" (PhD diss., McGill University, 2006). That is to say these sources are not without precedent as the earliest papers trace back to the nineteenth century, and counter the tendency to view Canada's black populations as recent migrants. Paradoxically in Quebec, the substantial increase in French language papers in the 1970s points to the large waves of Haitian and francophone immigrants in subsequent decades; this demographic shift has political implications for a black Anglophone population that is suddenly a linguistic minority of a racialized minority *and* also associated with dominant economic position in Canada through the politics of language.

[61] Consequently, I will use diasporic practice to include both banners as they were held in the two periodicals for the remainder of the chapter.

[62] Mills, *The Empire Within*, 110.

comment's on jury selection in the case of the "Trinidad and Tobago 10" challenges equality of

domestic legal proceedings, despite the outer-national moniker attributed to the defendants:

"No one can say the fact that all 10 accused are black is a coincidence. We maintain that they

cannot have a fair trial unless there are also black people on the panel from which the jury will

be chosen."[63] The two page spread tilted "Canadian Justice" marking the beginning of the trial

alongside several examples of legislated racism makes this connection explicit; "the function of

the state with its police and judiciary is to protect the racist status quo as defined by the

corporate elite."[64] Moreover, this analysis is carried over to experiences of racism and their

summary dismissal by mainstream reporting in an editorial titled "The Writing on the Wall."[65]

Whereas other newspapers in the city attributed the racial slurs marking the apartments of two

black families as discrete acts of "a few bigots", the editor insists "*UHURU* is different in its

analysis; since infact (sic) we as blacks have suffered, we start from the premise that racism is an

institutionalized Canadian fact." Further castigating the police for their insufficient response,

("justice is always slow for blacks") the editor also comments on the failure of "black embassies"

to uphold their responsibilities to their citizens abroad while simultaneously enabling the

Canadian government to maintain exploitative economic relations. [66] The simultaneous

challenge launched against claims of equality within Canada's institutions and demand for more

substantial support from black governments outside its territories represents what Richard Iton

has termed the juxtapositive and geoheterodoxic capacities of diaspora; the former

denaturalizes modern representations to reveal its colonial scripts, while the latter indicates

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[63] "Canadian Justice," *UHURU*, Feb 2, 1970.
[64] "Canadian Justice," *UHURU,* Feb 2, 1970
[65] "Editorial: Writing on the Wall," *UHURU*, Jan 12th, 1970.
[66] "Editorial: Writing on the Wall," *UHURU*, Jan 12th, 1970.

"the capacities to imagine and operative simultaneously within, against, and outside the nation-state."[67]

As a concomitant practice, *UHURU*'s treatment of worldwide liberation struggles emphasizes the importance of a Black Nationalist pledge for solidarity made possible through various identifications, whether they are located in a proud past, an embattled present, or a more just future. The struggle for worldwide black liberation is thus featured in the "Checkpoints" column, regular bulletin updates titled by location: Rhodesia, Tanzania, Toronto, Montreal, South Africa, Guyana, and Halifax among other places. Even if authors and readers could not physically participate, the knowledge of these struggles and especially historic achievements and contributions to their contemporary world reinforced blackness as an empowering space of unification. The desire to know more, to value history as personal knowledge is also evident in the multiple articles on ancient African civilizations, and sometimes an explicit call to return to such a state through cultural practices.

This politicization of cultural knowledge and identification, however, also mapped onto a number of hierarchical relations and norms which perpetuated other colonial narratives. The valorization of a distant African past, of successful empires and technological advancements, reproduces the civilizationist rhetoric used to justify colonial expansion.[68] The gendered language of decolonization movements also positioned 'Africa' alternatively as the victim of European colonial rape, and ultimate space to express masculine self-determination. Thus, a patriarchal agenda assigned to Black Nationalism entailed the recuperation of black masculinity and the protection of (a muted, static) black femininity as the bearers of cultural significance. Given the literal distance between Africa and Montreal's population, it fell to the expressions of everyday life to signify one's commitment to such politics. Consequently, the charged distinction

[67] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 202.
[68] "Our Heritage" *UHURU,* Aug 18, 1969.

often drawn between the 'Black Man' and the 'Negro' (judged by his dress, assertive

relationship to white men and veiled domination over black women) creates multiple criteria to

regulate and measure the quality of 'true' revolutionary agents.

Likewise, festivals, concerts, fashion shows and artistic expressions reported in *UHURU*'s

pages brought about another way for outer-national identifications to challenge the alienation

of Canadian national narratives, although sometimes in contentious ways. On the one hand, the

proliferation of island associations points to the ways black residents of Montreal, especially

recent immigrants, were making spaces for social connection and cultural reproduction perhaps

despite the hostile environments of white mainstream society *UHURU* documents. On the other

hand, as some contributors pointed out, such activity could be seen as insular and more

problematic for the stability of Black Nationalism rather than supportive of the people this

political vision aimed to unite. Consequently, these grievances mirror the friction in *UHURU*

publications between the ideological politics of Pan-African identification and practical ties to

Caribbean nation-states.

Despite the oppositional tone assumed by some writers, I suggest we avoid a dichotomy

in order to recognize the blending of political and territorial identifications with affective

registers in daily activities and dispositions; Benson's editorial regarding the role of Caribbean

emigrants articulates potential pressure points made possible by various modes of behaviour

available in exile.

> "Whites like to argue that the fact that more and more Afro-Caribbean people emigrate
> to Canada each year is an indication of 'the decline of racial discrimination' in Canada.
> Well that's a lot of pigshit. In point of fact, black people leave their homes for Canada
> not out of any desire to participate in Canadian nation-building, but because they wish
> to flee from the stifling oppressive conditions existing in the Caribbean. This is one of
> the average man's methods of defying the imperialists. [...] Some people wage their
> own wars with the system...some deliberately go slow on their jobs...others are
> constantly 'ill'... others become activists while others emigrate. The emigrant imposes
> exile on himself. [...] The immigrant comes to make a new home while the exile changes
> the scene of the struggle. Caribbean exiles in England have done considerable damage

> to the British economy by sending money back to relatives still trapped on the plantation." [69]

It is a paradoxical reality that despite the immense hardships and difficulties faced by immigrants, particularly racialized immigrants moving to the global north, the vast majority of the world's poorest do not make this journey. Of course this is not to judge but emphasize the way lines of political solidarity are shifted through identification and cultural practice to reinforce a united black front; passive dispositions, affective attachments across nations to "relatives" and "new home[s]", and militarized struggles of warriors against "the system" are all ways the author has actually recast the narrative of immigration and privilege of migration. In this way, *UHURU* articles that emphasized solidarity with contemporary third world liberation struggles demonstrated first, by rejecting membership or strict alliance with Canadian nation and secondly, by highlighting connection to African past, epitomized the political potential of 'black memory' as personal memory to improve the lives of those who ascribe to this mode of self-empowerment, even as it carried within it certain modernist and gendered tropes of anti-colonial language and imaginaries.

While this tethering of memory with identity, practice, and politics is very strongly evident in *UHURU* as a whole, it is also representative of the political thrust behind Black Power ideology more generally. Moreover, Dennis Forsyth's collection of essays firmly grounds the Sir George Williams Affair within this transnational framework.[70] Not surprisingly, there is an overlap in the organizational leadership behind the publication of *UHURU,* supporters of protestors at the Sir George Williams Affair and conference organizers for the Congress of Black

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[69] K. Benson, "Caribbean Exiles Assist in Struggle" *UHURU,* August 18, 1969.

[70] Unlike Eber's account, Forsythe's anthology was also the only secondary source to take seriously the arguments of protestors within a deeper socio-historical context. Dennis Forsythe, *Let the Niggers Burn!: The Sir George Williams University Affair and Its Caribbean Aftermath* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1971).

Writers.[71] Many of the speakers at Congress offered anti-imperial analyses, using examples from

England, the United States, and countries in Africa and the Caribbean to articulate a shared

historic condition of Africa and its diasporas. Once again, the reproduction of this knowledge

was politicized by the controversial context in which it was shared or restricted. That is, some

speakers refused to discuss the details of a black liberation struggle in front of white audience

members, insisting these debates could only exist safely and productively within a black caucus,

a family meeting, away from potential infiltration or destruction of white people. This argument

is essentially an extension of the impetus to establish black newspapers, a separate space

controlled by diasporic voices to better represent and address their needs. At the same time,

neither *UHURU* nor Congress speakers were entirely united on the contents of such

deliberation.

That the politics of solidarity within and across racialized and gendered divisions

mapped onto debates about how best to achieve total liberation is clearly evident in creation of

Umoja, another black Montreal newsletter working towards reconfiguring representations of

black experiences in public discussions.[72] In contrast to *UHURU*'s ardent claims to political

primacy of Black Nationalism, *Umoja* insisted on the importance of unity *within* a Canadian

national framework as the first step to achieving broader liberation for all black people. The

emergence of *Umoja,* just a few months after *UHURU* in the fall of 1969, however, was not

without its own controversial context. On October 18th-19th 1969 at the Lord Simcoe Hotel in

Toronto, Ontario, the Canadian Conference Committee's first national meeting of black

organizations from coast to coast was also the inauguration of National Black Committee of

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[71] Mills, *The Empire Within*, 111.
[72] Also note the importance of *Contrast* in Toronto: this black periodical was likewise established according to its editor as a corrective to the backlash against West Indian people for the destruction at Sir George. And its longevity also points to certain demographic shifts of black Anglophone population in coming decades.

Canada (NBCC) and a heated conflict between several delegates. *Umoja* was created, as the editors noted, partially in response to the perceived distortions in *UHURU*'s coverage of the events that transpired that October weekend.

While the editorial made it clear in its inaugural publication that the first order of business for this newspaper was to reject the defence of those involved with the Sir George Williams Affair, this disagreement was more of a spark than defining feature as the paper also aimed more broadly to address an imbalance in narratives presented by the black press. To give more contexts, there are some differences between *Uhuru* and *UMOJA* that make it a bit difficult to compare. By its second issue, *Umoja* was adopted by the NBCC as its main organ while *UHURU* remained a decentralized publication that did not represent a formal association. And although the former only published four issues total, the newsletter continued under another name, *Haijiri Voice*, for several years and run by some of the same editorial staff.[73] My analysis here will be limited to *UMOJA.*

Nevertheless, these issues provide important insights as to what is at stake in debates regarding the best frame for representations of black identity and memory. The editorial note "Black Unity" in the first issue states:

> "UMOJA is the Swahili word for unity. Unity is essential to, and prior to, collective freedom (i.e. Black Liberation). The contents of this issue have been prompted by the disruptive activities of some revolutionary "Toms" attending the first annual meeting of the Canadian Conference Committee held in Toronto, October 17-19, and the continued character vilification pursued by UHURU since then. We feel that these acts are anti-radical, anti-revolutionary, and malicious. It is, therefore, imperative that black people be exposed to other black media, views, and positions so that they can be better equipped to judge for themselves. Black unity must be based on some democratic process not fascism. UMOJA is, therefore, another building block in the struggle for a healthy black community."[74]

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[73] Bertley, *Canada and Its People*.
[74] *Umoja,* October 30th, 1969.

 The initial statements of concern were directed at establishing the most pressing needs for the improvement of Canada's black communities in areas of housing, employment, and social services. Another outcome to this approach is the emphasis on needs based on geographic particularity across the country.[75] As the organ of a newly established umbrella organization, this emphasis on strategic goals and clarification of needs and responsibilities are to be expected. The titles of workshops and conferences also indicate this phase.[76] Other solutions proposed were also very institutionally oriented – emphasizing the role churches, professional associations, and island/national associations should be playing in a co-ordinated effort. In particular, the call for more social workers and an enumerated snapshot of the conditions of black Canadians is also very interesting for its demand for greater returns of taxpayer dollars. Hence the 'groundwork' emphasis they discussed recalls a biopolitical enumeration of black life, even if inadvertently so. Despite their insistence on working within Canadian context, the resonance of contemporary, modernist development schemes are not hard to detect. In particular, the call for a 'bootsrap' operation of sorts is an overt nod to the development policies in Caribbean. Based on the form of their demands, what is at stake is the potential to make valid claims regarding the deserved opportunities for black citizens as equal voters in a democracy; in other words, exploring the juxtapositive and geoheterodoxic claims that diaspora enables when race is considered a setback to a supposedly equal vote.[77]

Yet if these policies would benefit the writers of *UHURU* and *Umoja* equally as underrepresented residents in Montreal, how do we understand the visceral urgency with which this paper was established as an oppositional stance? What does this reaction tell us about their expectations for coherence? Thus my interest in analysing this paper is less focused on the

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[75] See "Review of National Black Coalition Activities 1969-1970" *Umoja,* Dec 16, 1970.
[76] See *Umoja* , Sept 1971, Vol 2, No 2
[77] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 202.

positivist strategies for social and material improvement than the discourse of uplift and respectability that characterize the writing. Once again returning to the conflict that sparked *UMOJA*'s introduction, there is a palpable division that emerges between those writing and supporting the paper and scathing indictments of those who disagree. Writers of *UHURU* were charged with the destruction of the black community through its reporting, calling it a 'rag' that jeopardizes a collective reputation.

Obviously there is a very personal context to some of these reports, one that does not fully clarify itself in these papers. Yet the language of thinly veiled disgust for certain political positions permeates the rest of the newspaper because of what it is subsequently called to defend, a respectable black class. In this vein, the promotion of violence or aggression becomes another litmus test that defines the lines of respectability for *Umoja* contributors. Moreover, the emphasis on a family situation as a metaphor to represent the 'nation' question and problematic of acceptable/non-acceptable solidarities remained at the heart of conflicting visions for representation for both newspapers.

As suggested by these familiar metaphors, the rallying point behind a black national organization within Canada allowed for a certain shift in demands and discourse among *UMOJA* writers, but perhaps one that was not so different from some central concerns in *UHURU*'s cross-national framework. The 'family' as a metaphor for the people of African diasporas appears in *UHURU* as well and for the same reason: as a way to demarcate appropriate spaces for the deliberation of political strategies before putting them in practice in a commonly acknowledged hostile public. Hence why the contentious reporting of the NBCC's inauguration did not register simply as a journalistic difference but a deeper betrayal, a blatant act against 'keeping it in the family' for both papers. What's more important than the righteousness of either position, however, is what this metaphor enables by drawing on naturalized

understanding of affinity and difference, gendered roles and responsibilities; who gets cast out of this 'family', how, and why is tied to differing expectations for the reproduction of political subjects.

While their strategies and visions for economic self-sufficiency varied greatly between the two publications, they were both drawn to gendered cultural identifications rooted in Africa in a way that blurred other distinctions. The importance of teaching and preserving African heritage and cultural practices as a means of self-empowerment was paramount to writers for both papers, and obviously supported by their chosen titles. Although *Umoja* offered fewer pieces of cultural production, they did support other publications (such as *the black I*) that show cased the work of black artists and writers. In keeping the majority of their articles focused on the socio-economic conditions of black communities and institutionally oriented solutions, *UMOJA*'s slippages between 'the black man' and 'black nation' as the target for uplift points to the erasure of female experiences in this process of creating change. On the other hand, *UHURU*'s fixed representations of black femininity associated with Africa in most artistic and culturally reproductions resulted in a similar erasure. The one topic in which they shared gendered expectations and norms, taking up discourses of respectability, concerns the plight of the black family and concern with inter-racial adoptions. Evident in the hostility towards interracial adoptions, several articles condemn the sexual behaviour of black mothers while indicting the community for its failure to support future generations. [78] Karen Dubinsky's study shows the loaded myths of kidnap and rescue refracted racial and class fears in reporting of interracial adoption in the 1960s.[79] Thus, in a rather telling reflection the crisis of the family and crisis of the 'family' overlap in their morally described expectations of care and solidarity.

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[78] "Do black parents care?" *UHURU,* July 13th 1970.
[79] Karen Dubinsky, *Babies Without Borders: Adoption and Migration Across the Americas* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 74–79.

The second point of convergence between *UHURU* and *Umoja's* articulations of black diasporic politics is the necessity of fusing a long-term memory with their political visions for the future. Similar to the deliberate personalization of slavery in *UHURU*, *Umoja's* recording of the historic conditions that created a black diaspora was part and parcel of their struggle to achieve justice within Canada's legal framework. Considering the tensions between the two papers, however, it is intriguing to note the latter's inclusion of historical oppression only after *Uhuru* ceased circulation. In *Umoja's* last issue, "A Point of View: Total Black Education and Development, [80] included references to 'divide and rule tactics' but only after 'unity', or *Umoja* in Swahili, was well established to mean unity within a Canadian framework. Consequently, the newspaper's political alignment with a liberal democratic narrative of progress is well supported by its revision of the history of the NBCC to be a seamless evolution of the Caribbean interest into the Canadian interest.[81]

This emphasis on African culture and historical memory is an inherently political move that accomplishes multiple rhetorical points. First, claiming history as *personal* memory draws 'that event' nearer and by extension legitimizing the demand for accountability. Secondly, upholding its relevance and value counters the effects of dominant representation that form the rhetorical basis for exclusion. In drawing out the lines of thick and thin solidarity, it is hard not to wonder which types of bonds produce more transformative changes. But the schisms that play out while these claims were made bring important questions about the consequences to certain categories often used to remember various interpretations. Or rather explicitly stated, certain

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[80] See "A Point of View: Total Black Education and Development" *Umoja* , Sept 1971, Vol 2, No 2

[81] This view is also supported in Dorothy Williams history. The one point of contention I take is whether or not Caribbean Conference Committee even reflected the views of its original members once it was changed into the Canadian Conference Committee. This seems doubtful based on more detailed accounts of original Caribbean Conference Committee members and political views. Moreover, it seems unlikely given the intense commitment to a diasporic identity that the original members would refer to themselves as the 'going home' contingent. For an alternative reading, see Austin, "All Roads Led to Montreal."

categorical oppositions such as radicals versus assimilationists are less useful in scholarship of this era as they can obscure the conditions they seek to clarify. Instead we might ask what each attempt at articulating black identity and memory brought to the table by those who claimed it. In this ongoing dialogue between them, important questions do surface: what do you give up when you emphasize universal needs and prioritize third world revolution? What do you give up when you concede a national framework? Can we effectively escape the legacies of slavery through a politics of representation?

The solidarity question was evidently as much charged between black political positions as much as they were across other differences. And the relationship between Quebec left and Pierre Valliere furthers the discussion beyond this point.[82] Likewise, the alliance with Red Power documented in Scott Rutherford's dissertation suggests indigenous activists were grappling with these very same questions. Ultimately, it was the very public performances of these debates and dialogues, in the papers, at conferences and demonstrations that caught the attention of the Canadian federal government. And while this was very much intended by those who deliberately made use of public space to make their claims for democratic inclusion, the covert responses by institutional parties worked to understand and reformulate their exclusions. Therefore, another way of joining activities beyond solidarity would be through the purview of the governmentalist arm of the state: the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Dispatches Part 2: "Information believed to be true"

If the production of black periodicals and other such diasporic engagements are marked by the underlying aim of uncovering the significance of race in everyday relations, the aim of university administrators and RCMP officers, knowingly or not, was to insist on a discourse of denial and race-blind justice. More important than denying ill will, the responses reflect the idea

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[82] Mills, *The Empire Within*. Rutherford, "Canada's Other Red Scare: Rights, Decolonization, and Indigenous Political Protest in the Global Sixties."

that the nation as a normative ideal must be defended. According to Barrington Walker's much

needed history of race and law in Ontario courts, there are legal precedents of moralizing

discourse around the law and British fair play. This sense of indignation against the charge of

racism elicits contradictory responses by SGWU administrators and RCMP officers whose

records work to simultaneously assess the challenge to the fairness of their systems of

governance and adjust or reassert their narratives of power. Ultimately, in responding to this

event, among others, they work to construct and police the boarders, behaviours, and

sensibilities of the Canadian nation(al) by dismissing or criminalizing the dissident black other.

The significant weight of the incident is very evidently represented in the administrative

records pains to detail in a fair and accurate manner the unfolding conflicts between students

and the university. The chronologies and summary of the hearings consequently carry a tone of

concerted efforts at diplomacy, offering a fair and even perspective as well as a thorough

response to charges of racism. There's a clear preference to deal with particular comments

rather than vague charges of racist attitudes; the former are typically dismissed by countering

racist intent while the latter are rejected as unsubstantiated and implicitly irrational. In support

of this valuation, several comments point to the erratic or excitable behaviours of complainants

and propagandist displays of discontent, aimed at disrupting the administrations procedural

actions rather than expressing sincere complaints. [83] Moreover, the frustrated tone of Dean

Madras's memo sent to the Faculty Council on December 12, 1968 expresses concern for the

future of University proceedings as a result of overly generous allowances made for students. In

this case, that Kennedy Frederick was allowed to return home for Christmas before detailing the

charges dealing with the case. That "Science Faculty Council…will have set a precedent whereby

any individual anywhere in the University, on any pretext, can raise the cry of racism;

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[83] As cited in "Chronology of Events leading to Riot" by Michael Sheldon, Assistant to Principal, late 1969. Pg 21, 22, 24. [Concordia University Archives]

whereupon a professor, a librarian, a cloakroom attendant, is asked to be relieved of duties

while his accusers go free to take their time about setting down the charges."[84] The danger is

clear: anyone (white) could be a target and anyone (not-white) can evade responsible

procedures with amorphous charges of racism. Through this very clear insistence on factual

reporting and an adherence to university policy, the valuation of student's claims as

unsubstantiated, unfounded and implicitly irrational supported the dismissal for lack of proof.

And yet, there seemed to be an ambivalent concern in the reports regarding the veracity of

racism on the one hand and the appearance of wrong doing on the other. In Professor French's

conclusions in "The Status of the Hearing Committee", he states:

> "In writing this opinion, my hope has been that those who have been making hasty
> judgements will now come to grips with the facts. Although there is no question about
> the legality of the Hearing committee, the question of its morality is less clear … My own
> opinion is that the Hearing Committee should not be dissolved, and that it should
> conclude its hearings and publish its findings. If subsequent events or subsequent
> discoveries demonstrate more clearly than is now apparent that the existence of this
> hearing committee is more unjust than just, then there is a perfectly legitimate
> safeguard open to all parties concerned."[85]

If there are unresolved tensions in this report, it is not a problem unique to Sir George.

Admitting moral wrong, and especially in the context of the law, has material and juridical

consequences. Behind the denial of immediate wrong doing, the very recent context of

segregated reality, and cold war race paradox meant it was imperative for liberal democratic

institutions such as the University and Royal Canadian Mounted Police to distance themselves

from historic injustices and draw closer attention to present universal freedoms.[86]

Consequently, it is understandable why documents recorded by both institutions would be

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[84] As cited in "Chronology of Events leading to Riot" by Michael Sheldon, Assistant to Principal, late 1969.
Pg 11 [Concordia University Archives]
[85] As cited in "Chronology of Events leading to Riot" by Michael Sheldon, Assistant to Principal, late 1969.
Pg 41 [Concordia University Archives]
[86] Indeed, Sunera Thobani's argument in Exalted Subject demonstrates how cold war context was a
reorganization of Canadian whiteness, not the dismantling of its power. Thobani, *Exalted Subjects*.

invested in a politics of denial. As these documents suggest, the moral weight of legal and

political arguments are not self-evident, but they are continuously made and remade. As such,

I'm more interested in drawing attention to the discursive techniques and impact of their denial,

of the insistence on universal equality rather than insisting on presence of racism. In part, this is

accomplished by the erasure of how race continues to operate especially as it is subsumed by

culture and the nation. Secondly, these records naturalize observations as truth, producing the

knowledge it seeks to find. In other words, by attributing danger to the *visibility* of racialized

bodies and extending this meaning to cultural markers of dress, hair, and confident behaviour,

the mere existence and ways of being for a black population becomes perceived a self-

actualizing threat to state security, and subject to constant and pervasive intervention. In short,

this is the work of modernity exposed by Uday Mehta's arguments in "Liberal Strategies of

exclusion"; it hides the seams of its own production.[87]

Within a dozen RCMP case files collected for information regarding the Congress of

Black Writers, informants follow a similar reporting format to record their observations.

Individual officers present at the four day conference reported their observations in

standardized forms, using a similar language and focusing on particularly key criteria to make

their judgments to higher officers. In response, a letter from the recipient in another division

directed to the Commissioner in Ottawa, would indicate the "information is believed to be true"

and offer some further information. Subsequent reports often include newspaper clippings,

conference agendas and other documentations alongside annotations by the compiling officer.

Steve Hewitt and Gary Kinsman have written studies that provide important insight into the

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[87] Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1997), 10; Uday S. Mehta, "Liberal Strategies of Exclusion," *Politics & Society* 18, no. 4 (1990): 427–454.

gross distortions embedded in RCMP records.[88] Having said that, I do not draw on the records

for their accuracy in 'representing' threat but insist on the very creation of differences effected

by this language. Though a great deal of these files remains censored, the contents in between

these gaps are as informative as the erasures.

Echoing the reorganizing consequences of the cadastral survey in Timothy Mitchell's

study of colonial Egypt,[89] the standardized forms which officers used to transcribe observation

into truths is quite instructive to the ways the state officials assessed and responded to

perceptions of danger. The emphasis on exact measurements suggests objectivity and precise

knowledge; always attentive to the duration of a meeting, its date and time, the audience size in

attendance – but especially the number of black or non-white bodies – seemed to quantify the

threats.[90] The modernizing impulse to organize and duplicate information through bureaucratic

channels reinforces these penned observations as truths, while burying the subjective nature of

its source.

Inseparable from the numbers, the qualification of black bodies as particularly

dangerous is epitomized in the descriptions of their dress and behaviour.   While, as Edward Said

notes, "the act of representing (and hence reducing) others almost always involves violence of

some sort of the *subject* of the representation," [91] RCMP officers base their observations on a

defensive stance against their objects of observation. That participants wearing African dress

and natural hair are deemed suspect, while confidence and a vocal support of Black nationalism

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[88] Steve Hewitt, *Spying 101: The RCMP's Secret Activities at Canadian Universities, 1917-1997* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); Gary William Kinsman, Dieter K. Buse, and Mercedes Steedman, eds., *Whose National Security?: Canadian State Surveillance and the Creation of Enemies* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2000).

[89] Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-politics, Modernity* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2002), 58–59, 98.

[90] "Congress of Black Writers: Conference Summary," Congress of Black Writers RCMP Case Files, Montreal, Quebec. May 1969 .Vol 13, p 37-42. [Library and Archives Canada] This enumeration is also present in every individual observation report.

[91] Edward W. Said, *Power, Politics, and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, ed. Gauri Viswanathan (New York: Pantheon, 2001), 40. As cited in Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 109.

are interpreted as aggressive suggests an embodied presence can be enough to challenge

security. The assessment of Jean Hughes' message indicates she "advocated the natural African

look and dressed in such a manner. She appears to be completely anti-white and advised

negro(sic) women not to copy white women in any way."[92] Describing attendees of the

congress, one officer notes, " [t]he dress of 75% of the negros(sic) present was of African type

possibly worn to indicate they were revolutionaries."[93] In a report titled, 'General conditions and

Subversive Activities Amongst Negroes (sic)– Province of Quebec', the investigator begins with

his definition of Black Power:

> "The term "Black Power" has appeared to a number of people as being an organization
> of Negroes bent on determining for themselves a new society within the world. 'Black
> Power' is a motto, constituting the entire movement, radical and non-radical, militant
> and non-violent. 'Black Power' pertains to the entire Negroe(sic) situation. It is in an
> attempt through varying methods to introduce the Negroe(sic) people to their identity.
> The means of attaining these goals are of interest to us and the following is interest to
> us..."[94]

Since the RCMP is writing under the assumption that equality in society and before the law

already exists as the norm, the general aims of the Black Nationalists, or any (racially)

marginalized group is bound to be mischaracterized; under this assumption, all dissent is a

threat to stability acquired through (democratic) exclusions. Furthermore, as suggested by the

qualification of speakers and individuals as "militant" based on their "African dress" or in

support of "a return to the primitive on the part of the Negroe (sic)",[95] the numbers of

attendees or dissenters becomes secondary in importance to the number of all black individuals;

the *potential* for violence is more threatening than any observed action. The fear that RCMP

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[92] "Congress of Black Writers Conference," Congress of Black Writers RCMP Case Files, Montreal, Quebec.
October 21, 1968. Vol 2, p 5. [Library and Archives Canada]
[93] "Congress of Black Writers Conference," Congress of Black Writers RCMP Case Files, Montreal, Quebec.
October 21 1968. Vol 2, p 8. [Library and Archives Canada]
[94] "General Conditions And Subversive Activities Amongst Negroes - Quebec," Congress of Black Writers
RCMP Case Files, Montreal, Quebec. Jan 29, 1969. Vol 5, p 11. [Library and Archives Canada]
[95] "General Conditions And Subversive Activities Amongst Negroes – Quebec," Congress of Black Writers
RCMP Case Files, Montreal, Quebec. Jan 29, 1969. Vol 5, p 11. [Library and Archives Canada]

officials display regarding potential for additional incidents if "activities by known Negro

agitators ...continue unchecked" and concerns about policy restrictions to RCMP activity on

campuses[96] at once legitimized surveillance and precipitated further action against Black

activists.

If the visual commitment to an African culture and identity by a Black diaspora in

Montreal demonstrated an ambiguous challenge, the legal status of dissidents – as immigrant

and especially African-American - not surprisingly, becomes the most significant verifiable

measure of danger and therefore easiest target for the RCMP to respond. In other words, the

gulf between officers writing and the subjects they perceive is clear – the language pathologizes

African culture generally or certain behaviour coded as African to be other; to be black is to be

suspect and deviant. At the same time, the emphasis placed on legal status performs this same

discursive function but in two differing ways; one rhetorical and the other institutional. By

describing Black Canadians as "usually docile coloured population," victims to the

"indoctrination" and "agitation" of outsiders and especially African Americans,[97] the

investigators effectively externalize the source of racial tensions as a US phenomenon,

absolutely alien to the peace inherent in Canadian society. It makes it easier to claim Canada's

generous policies on free speech and tolerant environment are partially to blame for the flood

of ill intentioned immigrants, both short term visitors and long term residents.[98] In response to

the presence of Black Panther members in Canada, a perceived central factor in the Sir George

Williams Affair, one officer suggests, "[a] closer look must now be given to coloured people

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[96] "General Conditions And Subversive Activities Amongst Negroes – Quebec," Congress of Black Writers RCMP Case Files, Montreal, Quebec. Jan 29, 1969. Vol 5, p 14. [Library and Archives Canada]

[97] "General Conditions and Subversive Activities Amongst negroes – Nova Scotia" November 18, 1968. .Vol 4, p 18.; "General Conditions And Subversive Activities Amongst Negroes – Quebec," Congress of Black Writers RCMP Case Files, Montreal, Quebec. Jan 29, 1969. Vol 5, p 10. [Library and Archives Canada]

[98] "Hemispheric Conference To End The Vietnam War '14' – Nov 28th- Dec 1st 1968," RCMP Congress of Black Writers RCMP Case Files, Montreal, Quebec, January 29, 1968. Vol 5, p 8. [Library and Archives Canada]

increasingly entering Canada to preach violence and unrest."[99] Perhaps for this reason, it is

deemed acceptable to characterize speakers such as Stokely Carmicheal and Walter Rodney for

their captivating, charismatic qualities in a tone of fear bordering respect; ultimately, their

presence is not Canada's responsibility (even if it is temporarily Canada's problem).

At the same time, by disassociating dissent from the realm of acceptable (black) civic

behaviour, the RCMP effectively frames outspoken opposition to the state as grounds for

national security concerns, to be handled by deportation. As an extension of the blame placed

on US and international speakers, West Indian Students in Montreal and Caribbean community

organizations are often named as local by products of the Congress of Black Writers. The fate of

Rosie Douglas perhaps best exemplifies this policing strategy. Douglas, one of two people to

serve jail sentence for his involvement in the occupation at SGWA, was also a founding member

of the Caribbean Conference Committee, a key organizer of the Congress of Black Writers, and a

leading figure in Canada's Black Radical tradition developing in Montreal.[100] After garnering

much police scrutiny and attention for his activism, Rosie Douglas was deported in 1971. Rather

than mark the beginning of a racially motivated immigration policy – indeed the history of

immigration in Canada is one characterized by direct and indirect legislated racial exclusions –

the attention to immigration as a source for concern and site for action by security forces is

illustrative of governmentalist procedures at work; the safety of the population (read white

nation) is the purported reason for expanding the security apparatus into government

institutions.

Yet this distinction I make between quantifiable and qualified measures threatening the

state should not be misinterpreted as absolute or exclusive in their operations; indeed, they

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[99] "Hemispheric Conference To End The Vietnam War '14' – Nov 28th- Dec 1st 1968," Congress of Black Writers RCMP Case Files, Montreal, Quebec, January 29, 1968. Vol 5, p 9. [Library and Archives Canada]
[100] Austin, "All Roads Led to Montreal," 525, 534.

work best in tandem to make naturalization of black Canadian citizenship seem impossible. (It

should be noted, as well, the inconsistent patterns of censorship suggests the names of noted

individuals are followed by some type of signifier, such as "Negro-West Indian";[101] It seems their

condition as black, foreigner is reinforced every time their names are included.) As a corollary to

these racialized national norms, the opposition by Canadian born black activist Rocky Jones of

Halifax, Nova Scotia holds a particular place of vehemence for the RCMP officials discussing the

Black Writers Congress.[102] More so than any other speaker, I argue, his legal status as Black

Canadian and outspoken identification as Black nationalist poses a particular problem for

government officials. Reporting on Jones' activities in Nova Scotia, Club Kwacha, a centre for

Black youth was described as "progressing in keeping kids idle. ... Many young girls were

particularly attracted to Jones' Kwacha House as a result of his early drinking and free sex bit."

Regarding his contributions to Club Kwacha, "[i]t was under that period that youngsters 8 years

old and up were instructed in their use of Molotov cocktails and free sex was really being played

up." Jones' perceived sexual deviancy is notably marked through his adult relationships as well;

"among Jones' following are a number of misfits and homosexuals whom he seems to make a

point of befriending**."**[103] In opposition to Foucault's reading of discourses of degeneracy as a

means of bourgeois empowerment, Ann Stoler argues they were not limited to Europe (or the

colonies), "but a 'mobile' discourse of empire that designated eligibility for citizenship, class

membership and gendered assignments to race."[104] Thus, the expressed concerns with Jones'

sexual deviancy, even by association, betray a social anxiety or political fear regarding his legal

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[101] "General Conditions and Subversive Activities Amongst Negroes – Nova Scotia," Congress of Black Writers RCMP Case Files, November 18, 1969. Vol 4, p 12. [Library and Archives Canada]

[102] For more on the contemporary politics in Halifax, see James SG Walker, "Black Confrontation in Sixties Halifax," in *Debating Dissent: Canada and the 1960s*, ed. Dominique Clément, Lara A. Campbell, and Gregory S. Kealey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

[103] "General Conditions and Subversive Activities Amongst Negroes – Nova Scotia," Congress of Black Writers RCMP Case Files, November 18, 1969. Vol 4, p 10-12. [Library and Archives Canada].

[104] Ann Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 1995), 32.

status. This (self-)conscious observation is mixed with a distancing of Jones character as other;

as a speaker, he is grouped with militant African dressed revolutionary others from outside the

nation.[105] In addition, by mocking a newspaper clipping from England in which "Rocky Jones is

referred to as to as governor general of Black Canada"[106], the officer unwittingly points to a

particular irony in the representations of Black Canadian activists. The officer finds it humorous

to see Jones positioned as a respectable figure of authority as the title of Governor General

would imply, though these jeers are veiled behind an evident anxiety of what he may represent

as a leader. At the same time, the title of 'Governor General of Black Canada' recreates once

colonial, now national hierarchies about the significance of Britain over Canada – even for its

descended and marginalized Black populations.

While black Canadians, as immigrants or multigenerational residents, are racialized out

of the nation, the presence of white Canadians at the Congress of Black Writers underscores

another point of contention for government officials charged with defending society. Alongside

the degrees of militancy and 'revolutionary dress,' investigators paid close attention to class

based analyses, and interactions between Black Power advocates and white members of

socialist or communist groups in Canada. The concurrent context of Cold War politics suggests

another possible alignment of dissent that cuts across racial boundaries. But this potential,

according to one particular RCMP officer, remained insignificant as cross-class solidarity was

subsumed by racial hierarchies.[107] Indeed, the notes of one particularly condescending officer

suggests mixed socials offered no legitimate cause for concern as it lacked any substantive

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[105] "Congress of Black Writers Conference, 11-13 October 1968," Congress of Black Writers RCMP Case Files, October 30th, 1968. Vol 4, p120. [Library and Archives Canada]
[106] "Congress of Black Writers Conference, 11 – 13 October 1968," Congress of Black Writers RCMP Case Files, January 30th, 1969 [Vol 5, p 4]
[107] Rutherford, "Canada's Other Red Scare: Rights, Decolonization, and Indigenous Political Protest in the Global Sixties." Note Rutherford's final chapter counters this point by demonstrating just how far government went to break up coalitions. But the insistence that race mattered more is revealing.

solidarity; "a mixed social was held which consisted of groups of a dozen or more standing around trying to convince the others they were blacker in colour and in spirit and the whites trying to convince the blacks of their solidarity."[108] But the divisive decision on whether or not to work with white allies in black liberation struggles are varyingly interpreted to support the essentialized assumptions of race; activists who preferred to attend or speak at 'Black Caucuses' or 'family gatherings' are considered insular, irrational, and particularly violent. On the other hand, speakers who accepted the presence of a mixed audience (and in the case of CLR James advocated for the benefits of their experiences) were less threatening and controllable. According to these officers, the content of their socialist analysis – often mischaracterized, belittled, and even misunderstood – remained secondary to whether they were willing to speak with white people. The intersections of race and class are complicated further by the gendered consequences of 'mixed socials'. That is, fear of a black population evident in these reports is highly gendered – men for their capacity for violence and women for their reproductive capacities. Mixed social, however, were especially threatening for the display of interracial relationships, particularly between black men and white women. Walter Rodney's attendance to one mix social in the company of white women is ridiculed as hypocritical to his politics but evidently threatening in its infringement on purity of white population. As bearers of national morality, the complicit behaviour of white women is also problematic for the officers describing the quality of its citizens. Thus, the collapsing deployment of sexuality and alliance in this transgression expose what is most at stake - the moral cohesion of the racialized and gendered Canadian nation.[109]

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[108] "Congress of Black Writers Conference, 11- 13 October 1968," Congress of Black Writers RCMP Case Files, Montreal, Quebec. November 15th, 1968. Vol 4, p 26. [Library and Archives Canada]
[109] Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 135.

Truth claims made by the Canadian state, that it is above and beyond US racism and a haven for 'legitimate' immigrants granted through democratic principles of equality, are achieved through mobilization of a racial and gendered discourse embedded in national norms of domestic peace over external disorder. Nevertheless, the growth and development of a Black Power movement nascent to Canada is still a problem for officials. That is, externalizing allegations of inequality– especially in the context of Third World revolutions, US Civil rights and Black Power movements, and Cold War politics - makes it possible to claim *origins* of racially mobilized dissent as outside of Canada – leaving *nature* of Canada unmarred by global inequalities:

> "Although these are fairly recent organizations on the subversive scene in this area, the militant Black Power advocates and the Internationalists are indeed the most active. Their effect is being felt throughout the Canadian Universities and unfortunately their popularity is growing steadily at an amazing rate**. It is my firm belief that the internationalists and their corporate, the Black Power organs as previously noted constitute an extreme threat to the national security and their influence in our educational institutions is presently being felt with strong consequences. If able to break down the educational area of our society within the following generation the Nation's Government could be destroyed.** [Two lines censored] It is anticipated that in 1969, the organizations noted in this report will gain movement and power, increasing their areas of concentration."[110]

However, by framing the magnitude of the threat in 1968 as unclear or mysterious in the above passage, the danger posed by vocal black people becomes more pressing, obviating the need for an effective and practical solution to this externally generated but internally located threat.

The dire tone in this report seems to be a long way to travel from the dismissive perspective in initial reporting of the Congress of Black Writers. What changed for it to reach this point? One answer might point to the Sir George Williams Affair. While investigative officers initially dismissed the threat posed by the Congress of Black Writers for lack of any

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[110] "General Conditions And Subversive Activities Amongst Negroes – Quebec," Congress of Black Writers RCMP Case Files, Montreal, Quebec. Jan 29, 1969 .Vol 5, p 13. [Library and Archives Canada] Emphasis added.

logistical plans for a revolution, the reports in December –February of 1968-1969 demonstrate with increasing alarm and concern, the 'problem' of Black Power. The protests at Sir George Williams University four months later thus recast black activism as no longer a foreign concern but a domestic threat. Congress was subsequently reinterpreted as the origin of this shift in the normally passive population, leading investigations into attendees who may have received 'indoctrination'. As plausible as this justification may have been for supervising officers receiving these reports, Steve Hewitt's *Spying 101* would caution an overly literal reading of the recorded fears; departments used these reports to justify expansion and increased funding, creating incentives to make conditions seem worse than they were. And while it is beyond the scope of this chapter to follow the changes through the seventies, the shift Hewitt notes in general operations of the RCMP from campus to community seems to coincide with relatively less alarmist reports collected in 1974.[111]

Once again, the aim in exploring these records is not to suggest their irrelevance by challenging the historicity of their content. Actually, I mean to do the exact opposite by emphasizing what these 'truths' do and make possible. In other words, the blurred lines between observation, interpretation and known facts facilitate the invisible operations of modernizing narratives.[112] Therefore the erasure of discourses of race from their constitutive role in defining the nation allows for the juridical subject, the citizen, to be rhetorically obtainable in a liberal democratic society founded on uneven grounds.

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[111] RCMP Intelligence files on the Caribbean International Service Bureau, collected in 1975. [Library and Archives Canada]

[112] This point can also be read in light of Agamben's idea of Sovereign Police. "The point is that the police – contrary to public opinion – are not merely an administrative function of law enforcement; rather, the police are perhaps the place where the proximity and the almost constitutive exchange between violence and right that characterizes the figure of the sovereign is shown more nakely and clearly than anywhere else." Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino, vol. 20 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 104.

Conclusion: On Cementing Foundations

The Warren Hart story personifies these precarious foundations and offers a salient

concluding point for the research possibilities opened up by the questions animating this

chapter. In 1978, ex FBI agent Warren Hart scandalised the RCMP when he confessed to public

media of his active role in the early 1970s as hired spy.[113] His prior experience infiltrating the

Black Panthers for the FBI made him particularly attractive for the job RCMP believed was

necessary. And while engaged in Canada, as Scott Rutherford demonstrates his role went

beyond destabilizing Black Power and into obstructing coalition causes.[114] Yet, the focus of the

MacDonald Commission convened to assess the situation wasn't even his role as a spy or the

government's opaque and discriminatory state security measures; its aim was to assess if the

RCMP had overstepped its bounds by promising Hart access to citizenship as part of his

compensation. It speaks volumes to the colonial foundations of Canada as a modern state that

the birth of CSIS, following the release of the MacDonald Commission is rooted in anti-black and

anti-indigenous actions by federal police.[115]

Other political and cultural theorists have played close attention to the circulating

colonial discourses to challenge fallacies embedded in liberal practices of democracy. What their

various investigations share is a desire to challenge self evident truths of politicized position of

citizen by exposing paradoxical limits of certain subject positions – the refugee (Agamben), the

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[113] For a substantial overview, see "The Man With the Guns" Montreal Gazette, June 13th, 1981.

[114] See Chapter 6 in Rutherford, "Canada's Other Red Scare: Rights, Decolonization, and Indigenous Political Protest in the Global Sixties."

[115] And what does it mean for a study joining politics and ethics that the reason Hart exposed his operation was not a desire for democratic transparency or other such values but out of spite when he ironically was denied citizenship he was promised? What else could we learn by engaging the complexities of affect, sentiment and emotions that underwrite the capacities, motivations, and dispositions that supported his performance of solidarity?

colonized (Mbembe), the slave (Hartman), the juridical human (Esmeir).[116] As Lauren Berlant

comments, the failed promise of democracy in the US rests in is exclusionary roots and universal

promise:

> "From the beginning, entire populations of persons were excluded from the national
> promise which, because it was a promise, was held out paradoxically: falsely, as a
> democratic reality, and legitimately as a promise, the promise that the democratic
> citizenship form makes to people caught in history. The populations who were and are
> managed by the discipline of the promise – women, African Americans, Native
> Americans, immigrants, homosexuals – have long experience simultaneously the wish to
> be full citizens and the violence of their partial citizenship."[117]

The particular means by which these paradoxical states persist is through the co-existence of

colonial imaginary and libidinal economy[118] or the co-existence of governmantalities and

subordinativities[119] that shape conditions of existence.

Following their theoretical steps, this chapter analyses two ways of mobilizing race into

or out of 'memory' as 'truth' to make two important points. The first is that a single problem

space demonstrates the imbricate logics embedded in both rhetorical practices; the erasure of

racial logics structuring uneven geographies of rights and the insistence on exposing such

operations both rely on the relationship between visible signifiers of cultural "other" (read

blackness) and the political and philosophical realities they alternatively threaten or make

possible. That is, the abstract realms of signifiers and tangible symbols come together through

performative and cultural practices of identification and remembering, creating a dynamic space

open to negotiations of power relations. And secondly, viewing memory in a sense other than

first-hand experience was integral to these negotiations.

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[116] Agamben, *Means Without End*; Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (December 2003): 11–40; Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*; Samera Esmeir, *Juridical Humanity: A Colonial History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

[117] Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 1997), 63.

[118] Frank B. Wilderson III, *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

[119] Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 133, 135.

Thus, authorizations of a diasporic identity, through a longer term memory integral to political landscape of the sixties created a capacity to dream alternate possibilities, even as it delimited others. And yet, there was something about the way black solidarity as a *moral* imperative, an expectant exchange in these authorizing practices that I believe has great longevity and sustained potency in our political presents. It surfaces in the multitude of institutionalized and scripted forms of remembering in memorial practices, each implying a redressive capacity to remember.[120] And in Saidiya Hartman's memoire of her journey along Ghana's slave routes, it surfaces in her realization "that it mattered whether the 'we' was called *we who become together* or *African people* or *slaves*, because these identities were tethered to conflicting narratives of our past, and, as well, these names conjured different futures."[121] Hartman's reflection bridges the concerns of this chapter with the rest of the thesis. It opens up the discussion of diasporic memory-work and it's moral imperatives to the underlying tensions brought about by universalizing narratives embedded in identifications such as 'black', 'citizen', 'activist', 'immigrant' and the unique ways that social locations seep into practices of remembering.

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[120] Hartman, "The Time of Slavery."
[121] Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*, 230.

Chapter 2 – On Shifting Foundations

[The Congress of Black Writers]…it was such a large assembly of progressive, politically progressive black people from all over the world. It was just exhilarating. For me it, in some ways it was like going to a rock concert…For me it was an eye opener. You know, because it wasn't – well it was all political. But then there were a lot of artists; all kinds of artists, painters, musicians. Poetry was definitely the word of the day, I mean everybody became a poet, you know reading and writing liberation poetry. But there were all of those people; it was very exciting, exhilarating. Um, it was a party; it was a learning experience; it was fun. I can't think of anything positive that it wasn't. And I can't think of anything negative than it was. Except maybe it could've gone on longer and that everybody went back to where they came from for the occasion. (laughs).

----Josephine[122], March 29th, 2011

So I got dressed cause I was scared and I came down here. And I was standing on Mackay Street and watching. And you could just see, sometimes you see computer cards coming through the window and smoke coming out the window. And those students were like there locked up and the police were on the other side of the barricades because the students had barricaded themselves on the other side of the computer centre. And it was bad, it was a cold day, it was February 11th, 1969 and the day is etched in my memory. And the newspapers, that they said, big headlines said 'Let the Niggers burn'. Yes. In Montreal. Yes. Yes. And we were there, petrified. Just didn't know what to do. I couldn't believe that this is what this university had come to.

----Miriam, May 30th, 2010

The Congress of Black Writers in 1968 and the Sir George Williams Affair in 1969 appear

in the previous chapter as two significant events that were analysed, discussed, debated widely,

from public stages to restricted circles in the hopes of realizing a democratic vision as it was

variably conceived. The material traces of these discourses, periodicals, semi-redacted

intelligence files and administrative reports, with their structured form and strategic reporting

bear little resemblance to the quotes above, taken from oral history interviews I conducted

regarding the same events. Yet, these evocative memories offer a complimentary means of

entering our larger discussions on black diasporic practices and memory-work. After all, both

sets of sources implicitly rely on an audience's recognition of symbols, structures, and

dispositions to convey meaning; both written and oral sources narrating 'that event', borrowing

from Scott's term and theorization, mobilize registers of meaning that demonstrate authority,

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[122] All names of interviewees mentioned in this chapter have been changed. All interviews conducted by the author. More details to follow.

convey a sense of morality and expose (to some degree) a way of knowing the world that is evident in the re-telling, or 'this memory.'[123]

Moreover, there are particular analytical possibilities opened up for researches using oral sources, and not simply as interchangeable with written sources as discussed in the introduction. Put differently, if my investigative aim for these interviews was to represent the socioeconomic and political conditions of life for African and Caribbean peoples in Montreal vis-a-vis African diasporas around the globe, as it was for UHURU and *Umoja* contributors, it would be very easy to ask the same questions today of events that took place over forty years ago: Were (or Are) black people represented in Canadian publics and how? Regarding the continued omissions of contributions by black people to our contemporary moment, it seems the Sir George Williams Affair alongside other stories of black liberation struggles occupy an ambiguous place in Canadian popular memory and African Canadian historiography.[124] The silence surrounding this protest and its reductive representation means that the challenge of being seen and therefore valued is as much an issue today as it was for Afro dreamers in 1969. Indeed, the politics of representation and claims to public space and symbols remain standing as charged gates at which the statuses of one's civic rights are challenged. Nevertheless, in keeping with oral history practice, this chapter explores stories about life in Montreal and the Sir George Williams Affair as they were told by five women of Afro-Caribbean descent, listening for the multi-layered ways each narrator creates meanings in her reflections.

Although the interviews were conducted individually for the most part, the insights below focus on certain shared grammars and repeated themes that permeate the recordings for two reasons, or rather two ways of viewing the same reason. The first is the rather obvious

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[123] Scott, "That Event, This Memory." See Introduction to thesis.

[124] For an important contribution on this topic: Charmaine Nelson, ed., *Ebony Roots, Northern Soil: Perspectives on Blackness in Canada* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2010).

consequence of my focus in questioning on a particular moment in Montreal's history - seeking

out narrators who were affected by or involved with SGWU in the late sixties and early

seventies. This micro-focus on this historical context is paralleled by the broader discussion of

black diasporic practices which fused the fates of black people as a collective with political

claims of various trajectories; consequently the topic and setting of the interviews nudges each

person to relate her own memories in relation to collective black identities. The interview space

as a meeting of multiple subjectivites has been discussed in many ways in oral history

literature.[125] Alessandro Portelli reminds us interviewers approach the conversation with their

own agenda as well, and it shouldn't be subordinated to the researcher's interests. [126] Similarly,

the cornerstone concept of 'shared authority' introduced by Michael Frisch, as the dialogical

creation of a unique historical document when the 'experience' of the firsthand account meets

the expertise of interviewer, has been modified and expanded by many scholars to constitute a

disciplinary ideal of 'sharing authority' that precedes and continues beyond the recorded

interaction.[127] Ultimately, the myriad of ways verbal and non-verbal communications permeate

these exploration of inter- and intrasubjective relations underscores the dynamic, creative, and

embodied qualities of oral sources. Moreover, it is precisely this subjective quality of each

interview that gives it strength to determine the meaning of an event rather than simply

extracting empirical details.[128] Thus, especially because of this variability in interviewing, I

found the persistent similarities that appeared to be rather intriguing.

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[125]Michael Roper, "Analysing the Analysed: Transference and Counter-transference in the Oral History Encounter," *Oral History* (2003): 20–32.

[126] Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State University New York Press, 1991), 63.

[127] See special volume for other articles on this topic. Steven High, Lisa Ndejuru, and O'Hare, Kristen, eds., "Sharing Authority: Community - University Collaboration in Oral History, Digital Storytelling, and Engaged Scholarship," *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue D'études Canadiennes* 43, no. 1 (Winter 2009).

[128] Alessandro Portelli's classic introduction to *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories*.

The second reason or interpretation guiding the content of this chapter is the persistent

foray into ethical terrains from which narrators ground their life stories more generally. While

their political views and experiences range greatly, they all draw on moral vocabulary to

contextualize their choices, degrees of involvement and desire (or lack thereof) for solidarity.

According to James D Faubian's "revisionist reading of Foucault's ethics," this feature of the

interviews suggests narrators have taken up "informal incitements and incentives that ask or

invite human actors … to make themselves into subjects of esteemed qualities or kinds." [129]

Consequently, asking narrators to answer even logistical questions such as 'what happened'

alongside questions that begin with 'where were you when…' function as the invitation to

explore the contours of such morally defined interpretations. Rather than offering judgement

on the value of such moral positions, this chapter follows Didier Fassin's exploratory inquiries

into a moral anthropology which "takes these moral tensions and debates as its objects of study

and considers seriously the moral positions of all sides." And thus, "[a] moral anthropology has

no moralizing project."[130] In the historical context that forms the setting and subject of these

interviews, it becomes clear that 'black solidarity', with its attendant ties to the cultivation of a

'good black subject' surfaces as a moral imperative that narrators engage to explain their own

ethical positions vis-a-vis this history.

I should note that an essentialist reading of black diasporic memories would attribute

this overlap in topics and themes as a direct consequence to one's experience of black identity,

rather than the prompting of my questions or context of the discussion. And yet, even as I

challenge this interpretation, I want to avoid putting forward an anti-essentialist notion of

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[129] I'm still aware of Foucault's blind spots with race in his theorization of subjectivization, and these are accounted for in Faubian's revision. Yet, this analysis holds perhaps especially for the relationship between nation, state, and democracy, that narrators take up.

[130] Didier Fassin, "Introduction: Toward a Critical Moral Anthropology," in *A Companion to Moral Anthropology*, ed. Didier Fassin (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 3.

memory either. Identity is not constructed simply as a response to anti-black racism, and nor is it impossible for racialized experiences to shape one's ethical development. Or as bell hooks as argued, "[t]here is a radical difference between a repudiation of the idea that there is a black 'essence' and recognition of the way black identity has been specifically constituted in the experience of exile and struggle."[131] Rather I push for a less rigid shape of this connection; indeed I believe it is this *spatialized* relationship that reveals the contingency of such tethering.

Cressida Jervis Read's spatial analysis of *how* this overlap is accounted for in narratives of place, constructed as social relations, is very instructive.[132] In her ethnographic account of conversations with residents in a Delhi resettlement neighbourhood, the first half of Read's analysis is drawn from Cheryl Mattingly's concept of 'emplotment', describing a narrative's "attempt to 'emplot' or enfold the speaker and listener into a particular set of events or dispositions through the account."[133] Read recognizes that while 'emplotment' points to the shared structures or symbols that might appear in a narrative, carrying a more widely recognized significance to nudge participants towards a particular position, this interaction unfolds more as an uncertain and shifting negotiation. Consequently she introduces 'emplacement' "a form of spatial practice mediating between formal 'representations of space' as a space for development (Lefebvre 1991), and it's affectual consequences, space as people lived and experience it,"[134] to describe the way narrators draws on affective registers to ensure the teller comes out on the 'right side' of a story, and perhaps especially so when experiences are wrapped in contested discourses and precariously authorised.

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[131] bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 28.
[132] Cressida Jervis Read, "A Place in the City: Narratives of 'emplacement' in a Delhi Resettlement Neighbourhood," *Ethnography* 13, no. 1 (2012): 87–101. For a theorization of place in historical writing, also see Doreen Massey, "Places and Their Pasts," *History Workshop Journal* (1995): 182–192.
[133] Cheryl Mattingly, *Healing Dramas and Clinical Plots: The Narrative Structure of Experience* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 20 as cited in Read, "A Place in the City," 89.
[134] Read, "A Place in the City," 89–90. Drawing from Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.

Understood in this way, the oral histories that follow demonstrate this contingent relationship in the very grammar and grounds of their narratives, and in turn, the ethical worlds they make possible. Spoken communications, shifts between I/we, us/them among other narrative choices, non-verbal cues and embodied acts all have implications for the lines of community and difference that are redrawn with every story. At the same time, the variability in which narrators 'emplot' themselves in and around, or even far from certain institutions, public spaces, social gatherings, marches, political meetings, among other moments and events speaks to the texture of these ties. This "relationship between the writer/speaker and the landscape in fact makes history and bring the subject into being" in what Edward Glissant calls the "poetics of landscapes."[135] That is, memory-making, as a spatialised practice, indicates the production of space and place in very relational ways to one's subjectivities.

Interview Reflection:

I met Miriam at Concordia University in late May 2010. We got acquainted over a leisurely stroll through the halls of the John F Hall building. A rather surreal moment for us both; it was her first time returning to her Alma Mater since she graduated in the mid-seventies and my first oral history interview on a project that I had occupied my mind for years. Once we sat down and began talking, our location resonated even more with the stories she shared, punctuated by the regular humming of the escalators. After packing up, I was struck by the realization of how different our associations of the Hall building would be: what that place meant to her as a student participant of the Sir George Williams Affair in 1969; to me as a grad student studying its past; and the many other students and educators passing through the halls on a daily basis.

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[135] Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. J. Michael Dash (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1992). As cited in McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, xxii.

The next day, Miriam introduced me to her long-time friend Nina at a Montreal book launch. With a brief reference to our interview and a nod to the book titles we came to view (*Empire Within* and *You Don't Play With Revolution),* the two friends became enthralled in their reminiscences of youthful celebrations and adventures while studying together at Sir George Williams University, sharing some bits but keeping most to themselves. In between laughs, Nina explained to me how little she agreed with most Caribbean students and did her best to steer clear of those in 'the movement.'

When I reconnected with Nina later that year, she introduced me to a close friend of hers whom she insisted would be interesting to hear from for the difference in their perspectives. The two graciously agreed to a joint interview and we met at the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling in November. While I anticipated overlapping voices, shifting perspectives and perhaps even negotiations of shared memories (as in my previous experiences with joint interviews), I was a little taken aback and amused by the dynamics of the interview that followed. Nina insisted on letting Elizabeth 'go first', and only after direct prompting by Elizabeth did the conversation include both perspectives at once for a brief moment. For the most part Elizabeth and Nina kept their stories separate, influenced by their personal interpretation of events alone.

The tensions in producing shared narratives became an entry point for initial discussions with Josephine and Pamela, the last two interviewees of this chapter, whom I met at various public history events in Montreal: Josephine at *Black Histories, Black Futures* (February 12th, 2011) and Pamela at *Black Montreal in the 1960s* (April 22-23rd, 2011). While Josephine was at first reluctant to do an individual interview about her experiences, suggesting her participation at the conference was enough, Pamela I believe agreed for the absence of her perspective at the event we attended.

Only after reflecting on the details of each interview, with five different women who became lifelong educators, did I reconsider these initial meetings and interview locations as extended frames that complement their significance. While this chapter cannot capture the full breadth of topics approached in each interview, I have include the narratives that reflect the intersections of ethical and spatial groundings in shared spaces, material and imagined. They appear under the following headings: Moral Mappings and Reverberations, and followed by concluding thoughts on Legends and Legacies.

Moral Mappings

In some ways, locating a convenient starting point that encompasses five narrators is rather arbitrary as each interview involved continual shifting across time and space, moving through the changes to Montreal, world views and ethical lenses. Several of the narrators elected to begin their interviews with their introduction to Montréal. Others answered questions about their childhood and early education in greater detail. Regarding the explicit relationship between two disciplinary readings of this chapter, I suggest place-based techniques are used by narrators to map themselves onto various moral registers and fields of knowledge. Or viewed in reverse, morally defined stories help narrators identify a consistency in their selves as they experience wider changes to the various places and spaces they inhabit. Stated in either way, these techniques suggest a way of grounding while simultaneously giving direction to continuous movement. Consequently, this section examines the *moral mappings* narrators offer that contextualize ethical and affectual responses to the Sir George Williams Affair in the next section and the topic of intergenerational memories in the conclusion. This mapping involves descriptions of place, of their selves at an important moment in their lives, and etching out the lines of affinity and difference.

When she was a toddler, Josephine's family left the island of Aruba where she was born

and moved into Montreal's Saint Antoine area, currently known as Little Burgundy. She

attended Royal Arthur Elementary School and Montreal High School for Girls as the local

Protestant, English schools. While hinting at the spatial and social organization of daily life

created by divisions of language, religion and sex at various points of her education, Josephine

describes these scenes as rather ordinary details; it's just how life was. There are also moments

in which the ordinary takes on various emotional colourings that alter its resonance. For

example, as Josephine describes her childhood memories, playing in the park on the street with

neighbourhood kids, the pleasantness of her experiences emanates from the feeling of

closeness she describes with the families living nearby: "People knew each other on the streets.

Just as – Funny, people talk about the suburbs and this was the city. I guess when you live in a

neighbourhood on streets inhabited by families, there is some kind of kinship that goes along,

goes around." [136] This closeness is evident as she invokes the image of a suburb to give

character to an urban environment and familial ties that figuratively flow through streets,

joining the people who call it home. The intimacy of this image is both paralleled and juxtaposed

in other parts of the interview as Josephine describes Montreal as a whole in the late 1960s.

> I found it [Montreal] an easy place to live. It was not as busy as it is now. It certainly
> would not have been called diverse multicultural centre that it is now. When you
> walked, St Catherine Street was the main street. I don't know why I'm saying 'was'; I
> guess it kind of still is although it looks different. But when you – when I and my friends
> – walked down the street, we didn't see anybody but white people, that's all there was.
> And, when you saw a black person, you *really* looked. You looked to see if they were
> someone you knew and you acknowledged them whether you knew them or not. And
> they acknowledged you. For the most part.

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[136] What Josephine refers to an irony here is elsewhere describes as a historical process in which inner city suburbs are gradually overtaken by the city, pushing residential areas into the suburbs, followed by degradation of previous suburbs into slums and eventual push for gentrification. Robert Lewis, "The Industrial Suburb Is Dead, Long Live the Industrial Slum: Suburbs and Slums in Chicago and Montreal, 1850–1950," *Planning Perspectives* 17, no. 2 (2002): 123–144.

The memory of this ingrained practice of seeking and offering recognition to other black people on the streets, who were never strangers by virtue of being black and proximate even if they were not yet known, is a poignant example of some tensions that crystallize as Josphine reflects on the particularity of the moment. The self-correcting statements in her speech regarding tense and pronoun usage show not only an attention to precise descriptions by avoiding absolutist claims, but an insistence on limiting her memories to a close circle of subjectivities, that is never speaking for all black people. And yet even as the subtly of the last words "For the most part" underscores this persistent contingency (for herself or others is unclear), the potency of this shared practice, this habit takes over in the last three sentences; here the recognition impulse sounds more like a rule, a social expectation, a proper manner of conduct.

As a central theme, recognition of one's relationship to a black community forms a strong undercurrent in most of the interviews which is not very surprising given its ontological importance generally and historical context of the previous chapter. In the same vein, memory studies scholars have devoted significant attention to this relationship between individual and social memory, among other topics, to explore "the creation, mediation, transmission and circulation of memory through space and time."[137] In Pamela's interview, recognition as a member of this community takes on shifting valences across time and space, through practical, material and affective involvement but always underlined by a moral imperatives of maintaining solidarity. There are two descriptive moments that stand out in Pamela's interview as she relates the tensions and affinities between West Indian students or recent immigrants and local black communities in Halifax and in Montreal respectively.

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[137] Till, "Memory Studies," 331. Also note, that while this topic is subdivided in her review, between approaches focused mostly on individual/social memory as secondary to social interaction and individual/social memory as impacted by unconscious and embodied knowledge, more recent studies, this thesis included, combine both approaches.

While Pamela was a student at Mount Saint Vincent University in the early fifties, she

recalls "black people in Halifax were treated as less than human. You were not allowed to go to

the theatre. You were not allowed, not allowed. So we formed what we called the West Indian

students society." Pamela along with twenty four other students dispersed throughout the

seven post-secondary institutions in the maritime met once a month for social engagements. At

the same time Pamela identifies the need for a social support network, she acknowledges the

privileges West Indian students carried such as the ability to attend the theatre, or the buffer

provided by the campus from outward hostility in the city. And yet, her individual experience of

this uneven relationship is modified by emotional identifications and subsequent actions in the

following passage.

> But I had a great empathy with the locals. Once, one of the magazines, I think it was
> MacLean's wrote a scathing article about the blacks at Africville in Nova Scotia. And I
> was at Mount St Vincent at the time. And I wrote the magazine to kind of defend what
> was going on. And, because Africville was given to the black people by Queen Victoria
> for themselves. …
>
> S: Was this something that the West Indians student society talked about?
> P: Well not really, because we were West Indians and these were native born blacks.
> And, not only were they the black pioneers but when the white pioneers came north,
> they brought their slaves with them. So some of them were descendents of those
> slaves, some of them were black pioneers in their own right, some of them were
> descendents of coal miners who came from the west indies to explore the minds of
> Sydney and work in the minds. So they were different from us because we were
> supposed to be students who went back to where we came from. There was not a great
> rapport between the two groups. Although even way back then I could see that those
> people are my people, you know and I was their people. That's why I wrote a rebuttal to
> the article. And since then, I have – well I go to Nova Scotia all the time. At one point the
> government of Canada used to send me to Nova Scotia to do a lot of work. …[138] And uh
> so again, I have really good memories of Halifax and my relationship with the native
> black community there.

In Pamela's description of the general hostility faced by black residents of Halifax, differences

between 'us' and 'them' take on varied meanings both within this memory and onward in the

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[138] Describes some government sponsored positions in community development. I will return to this topic
later in this chapter.

interview. On the one hand, the primary difference she identifies is the transient presence

attributed to West Indian students which expresses itself as a privileged shelter from

discrimination. Yet she undercuts this protection as her "empathy" draws her closer to the lived

experiences of discrimination and displacement, even if they were not firsthand encounters,

motivating Pamela enough to publicly declare her solidarity. This initial act of (self-)defence is

followed by an increasing affinity between herself and black Nova Scotians, intensified over time

with greater involvement in projects of community building. Consequently, by the end of her

answer, she shifts from discussing West Indian-Halifax relations to Pamela-Halifax bonds

because her individual rapport is greater than group rapport.

This emotional and practical proximation with black Canadians is reoriented later in the

interview as she describes the community tensions in Montreal after she arrived in the early

1960s between the long standing residents and the recent wave of West Indian immigrants.

> The native born population, black native born population weren't too thrilled with the West Indians because we had a completely different mentality to them. When you're born in a country where you're in the majority, where you own and control everything of value in that country, where the cross section of the socio-economic spectrum reflects you and your people, you're not nearly the same as the people who are born in a minority situation where they have been marginalized; where they either don't work or they are marginally working in menial jobs, many of them. And so the two mentalities didn't jell at all. They thought we were, too outgoing, too noisy, too boisterous, too, too, too! And we thought they were too subservient. So, ne'er the two shall meet. But gradually again, those barriers began to break down. And many of us have native born friends. And many of the native borns have adopted some of us as their close friends.

Before addressing the content of this memory, I should note the context of this

articulated difference results more from my repeated questions about community divisions.

Both prior to and subsequent to this anecdote, Pamela describes in great length the many joint

and long standing contributions that began with the efforts of West Indian immigrants who

stayed in Montreal or other parts of Canada. As suggested in the previous example, this

continued residency itself forms an integral standard for her vision of solidarity as a hierarchical

commitment to the uplift of local communities ahead of distant ones.[139] From the interview, it

appears 'solidarity' as she defines it forms a sort of ethos she aims to live by. And by outlining

the moods and motivations, two affective registers infused in her memories of place along

which she enacts this ethos,[140] Pamela's moral mappings guide us through the choices she made

while living in Montreal during the 1960s. Thus, her persistent emphasis on shared projects and

actions are sometimes made quite distinct from dispositions.

Returning to the second narrative of internal divisions, unlike her previous description,

Pamela's words here light heartedly draw out the different dispositions she believes

characterised West Indian immigrants (active, assertive) and black Canadians (passive,

submissive) as an immutable difference in the striking choice of phrase "ne'er the two shall

meet." At the same time, Pamela's explanation simultaneously legitimizes these dispositions by

prefacing this difference with the psychosocial impact of living as a racially and economically

marginalized minority or privileged "majority." Consequently, by describing the changes to

Montreal's black community today, clearly a mixture of both groups, as a gradual dissipation of

animosity, she at once suggests a general transference occurred in which animosity dissipated

while the assertiveness of the entire community was preserved. Hence, she foregrounds the

positive shift in relations as a collective success which contrasts the previous description that

ends with her particular efforts.

For Miriam, the tensions and solidarities between Caribbean migrants, Montreal's black,

and linguistically divided white populations also coalesces around recognition but most

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[139] More on this in the next section.

[140] C. Jason Throop, "Chapter 9: Moral Sentiments," in *A Companion to Moral Anthropology*, ed. Didier Fassin (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 155–156. "Seeing ethos as divided between these two differing affective registers, Geertz characterized motivations as focused, goal-oriented, and discrete dispositions to feel and act in particular ways, according to specific ends, in particular circumstances. Moods, in contrast, were defined by Geertz as diffusely dispersed, objectless, context-defining and totalistic in their encompassment." Ibid., 156.

importantly with one self; the struggle for outward recognition is gained through and leads to

inward recognition or "knowing who you are." When Miriam recalls her difficulty in locating a

Catholic Church offering mass in English, she frames this as a reality of Quebec's political

situation at the time in a sympathetic light: "At the same time we were living here, there were

lots of problems with respect to the French trying to establish who they were in a city like

Montreal. They were clamouring to have people who could speak French working in places like

Eaton's and the Bay…. And they were actually clamoring for more than that, they were

clamoring for their rights as French speaking people in Montreal." While this personal exclusion

is downplayed as a minor effect of a larger struggle, Miriam speaks quite differently about the

outright racial attacks heard over the radio waves.

> But, the other part in Montreal that most people don't recall, there was a guy by the
> name of Pat Burns on a radio station and he was very hostile. His newscast were things
> that he would be saying lots of derogatory stuff about black people in open media and
> there were no limits as to what he would say. He had the whole freedom to say
> whatever he wants and so he went on and on, and sometimes blacks would be calling
> up to say, 'This is who we are!' And no - it didn't matter. He was there ranting and
> raving. [laughs, likely at my facial reaction] You wouldn't believe this place. It was very
> vitriolic; lots of things were taking place.

Using a rather telling phrase in a casual manner, Miriam's detailed contextualising memories

throughout the interview work on multiple levels to support exactly that: her experiences of

Montreal as exclusionary and foundational to her path of self-discovery.

In one version of this path to self-discovery, as Miriam offers multiple throughout the

interview, her heightened "consciousness" is profoundly shaped by her arrival in Montreal in

1968 to attend SGWU. Her narrative begins by contrasting the cliquish and male dominated

environment of the engineering depart she was surprised to discover upon beginning her first

semester with the vibrant social scene created by the Caribbean Student's Association. Not

unlike Pamela's memories of the Maritimes, the general atmosphere in the city allowed Miriam

to appreciate the tight knit social networks and self-affirming experiences these associations

provided through gatherings at conferences, regular parties and dances, and even daily

encounters on the mezzanine in the Hall building in between classes. Yet these spaces, as

exemplified in her memory of the Congress of Black Writers suggests, were equally forums for

black self-identification and contestation on the particular practices that enabled or threatened

self-affirmation.

> But the thing about in those days, the thing about what we had going, we had political activism on two levels. One had to do with the out and out politicizing of life, which was an outcrop of the, I wont say the Black Power Movement or the surge of black identity in the States, being proud of who you are was some of the messages of those conferences. But at another level, you would have problems because there was (pause) because the black guys in trying to define who they were, probably couldn't even define who they were. So, a lot of them would be hanging out with white women and things like that. And I distinctly remember at that conference one of the presenters he was talking about being black and black identity and being so proud of being black. And then I remember somebody in the audience, one of the women in the audiences said 'I don't understand what you're talking about because you who dare to profess to be so black and extolling your black identity. Yet, when we go out, half of you all show up with white women. And the black sisters there don't have anyone to dance with!' So that was a contentious issue. But there was also another issue. So, we here did lots of stuff together. When we got together, we got together with people from McGill. So we had, anything that we had at Concordia, we had open to the public students from McGill came. And anything students from McGill had, people from Concordia could go to and we *did*. So we hung out together and so on. So it was no, it was no coincidence when we had the conferences, students from McGill would come as well as the public would come. But, being a student here on a student visa gave you – oh –[pause] Gave you some sort of benefits in that you were seen by the rank and file blacks who were not at university as being privileged because you could come to university.

The multi-scalar analysis running throughout Miriam's interview, as it does in this passage, is

one of several ways she emphasizes a consistent moral legitimacy founded in her ability to

"know who [she is]" in part by exposing ways this stated ideal departs or converges with the

actions of people around her. All of these details combine to support her own expression of

Black Power politics as a rightfully *domestic* desire, not one that is uncritically imported as her

words suggest. That the Black Power Movement in the US appeared at once a mirror and source

for a sense of empowerment is also supported by Josephine's memories of the Congress of

Black Writers, quoted at the start of this chapter. Although, Josephine casually destabilizes this

US centric image as well through her description of one black British speaker: his radical black

politics and professional education were a novel combination as she remarks "It was the first

time I saw that a black person could be educated and not act white." As such, both narrators

echo the deep resonance and self-awareness felt at such internationally represented

conferences. The celebratory tone and promise of this memory extend beyond the tensions that

subsequently came from different ways of reaching liberation. In other words, even while

Miriam's narrative 'emplots' her perspective within a Black Nationalist position, her

'emplacement' of exclusionary hurt experienced by black women and black residents of Little

Burgundy, as she identifies in subsequent thoughts, excavates her support for this political

position from its historical oversights. Moreover, her own sense of disappointment and surprise

at the hostile conditions in Montreal, both against racialized minorities and between

Francophone and Anglophone residents, contribute to this emplacement by providing the

context in which her participation and solidarity were felt to be the only choice. As she put it,

"it's only so long that someone can stand on your foot before you say, 'you know you're

standing on my foot and its beginning to hurt me.'"

As a bodily sensation pain and its attendant associations with suffering and violence

carries variable and significant potentials in all the interviews, and perhaps most explicitly in

Nina's expressions. From the pre-interview stage, Nina made it clear to me she may not

remember as many historical details about the late sixties in Montreal as her friend Elizabeth,

but what she clearly remembered was her ethical stance rooted in an absolute commitment to

non-violence and spiritual reflection because it has never changed. This pension for

introspection, moreover, permanently separates Nina from most people in her narrative: "When

I left home as a teenager, I went to become a nun. I was studying to become a nun. So I spent

two years in a convent. I've always had a sense of [*unclear*] like that. A very, very strong interest

to ask myself the question: why am I here on planet earth and what's the purpose of life? So my life took a different trend than most people." This continual search for her existential purpose is complimented in her intellectual engagements: "My degree is in history and I did some sociology about, cause I wanted to understand a lot of things with race relations because of what was going on here at the time and the whole black revolution." At the same time that Nina continuously refers to a self-contained and immaterial relationship with this world, her memories also include other ways of knowing that countered her own, offering another opportunity to understand how she persisted in her own ethical conceptualizations. In several instances, this foil is most explicit with her Barbadian-born and Canadian raised roommate who was deeply involved with other West Indian students at SGWU.

> And my roommate was from Barbados. She was, came here as a seven year old. She was a child, seven years old, brought up - she was Canadian more or less. But she had a hard time assimilating into Canadian way of life because they used to call her, I can't remember 'chocolate.' Oh she's very, very light skinned, you know. Was it CLR James? I think its CLR James who talked about the aristocracy of the skin that exists and it was in the United States as well. But growing up here, she had a lot of problems in that sense, you know. She didn't have the foundation that West Indians have; you grow up in a West Indian society and then all of a sudden you going to school and you're called chocolate or whatever. And she's lighter than all of us here in colour. And so it bothered her. And so, when I was – she was always involved with West Indians. So when I went to university, I just - All the West Indians I knew, I met through her. Because I just didn't want to hang out with them. They were not, I'd say, people I would hang with at home; why should I hang with them here at university? So when they (pause) I went to a couple parties but I was not – I don't know – I was not part of it. I was not part of it. It's hard to explain what it was like. I was there but I was not there, if you know what I mean. I was not part of what was going on in the parties. I just wasn't there. I remember sometimes she would come home and she would see me totally alone. I have my music and I'd be sitting and listening to it, and enjoying myself. And I say I'm completely content the way I am and she couldn't understand that. And I'm still the same way as far as that's concerned: I could just be with myself and my music and I don't need to have people around and I'm fine. And it's still there, in essence I can be by myself.

Once again, the question of immutable differences between black people brought up in Canada or the Caribbean is expressed as a foundational rift, but evidently one that can be mended or modified through certain dispositions. That is, while Nina admits this territorial identity

supported her own development, her sensual descriptions of the chasm between her own state

of mind and body in relation to other West Indian students reinforce her assertions of an

isolated ethical world. And yet, the other black students she describes are all connected by their

identification with the anger spilling over from the US, an anger she insists she had nor has no

need for. Although most of the interviewees here differ from working-class backgrounds of

narrators' in Daniel McNeil's interviews in Halifax, they share a similar incorporation of US

context and symbols in discussions of revolutionary blackness from the 1960s with

consequences for reading gender, race, and class.[141]

The interview dynamic between Nina and Elizabeth seemed to embody several of their

respective claims. This particular insight about "anger spilling" for example came about in the

interview as Elizabeth re -posed my question to Nina regarding the presence of a black

revolution in Montreal before emphatically agreeing with her friend's answer. Taken in isolation,

it seems Elizabeth simply repeated Nina's answer. In conjunction with peripheral comments,

however, Elizabeth's navigation of her friend's sentiments is actually typical of her independent

positioning in all her social relations.

> I went to [social] activities but I was never locked in - I had never been locked in with a
> group in my life. I had West Indian friends and I made here and there, but I had other
> friends here and there. … I just, across the board, I just did not lock into just a West
> Indian group. Because if I was going to do that, I might as well have stayed in Jamaica
> which wasn't my preference.

Thus, Elizabeth is actually performing a paradoxical consistency that come from her insistence

on never getting locked into any subjectivity; in this case that includes interviewee as she took

up the role of interviewer a number of times.

For heuristic purposes, I have isolated stories of moral mappings to demonstrate their

anchoring potential in sensorial and emotional memories. However, even the last two examples

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[141] McNeil, *Sex and Race in the Black Atlantic*, 89.

point to the deeply imbricate trajectories with historical events and wider interpersonal

contexts. Political associations and social groupings – 'the movement', 'the black revolution',

'Quebec liberation', 'West Indians and native born blacks' - allow narrators to variously 'emplot'

themselves into, proximate or even very far from historical events while their moral valuations

of solidarity and essential differences 'emplace' their identifications and responses through

these changes. In the process of doing so, narratives are marked by the power relations that

constitute lived experiences of place, even while, or perhaps especially as they reverberate

through moral entailments of conflicting ethics such as those presented by the Sir George

Williams Affair.

 Reverberations: The Sir George Williams Affair

It is true, there is a degree of fixity associated with the map as a colonial tool which

perhaps does not configure well to the evidently dynamic flows of experience that collect in the

previous section. In that sense moral mappings do reflect historical and social relations of power

but are also very much active creations; their constitutive boundaries and scales subject to

continued revision and re-orientation. Inspired by C Jason Throops cultural phenomenological

approach to moral sentiment,[142] I argue the Sir George Williams Affair can be read as a moral

event on and through this map, one which equally alters the map-maker in the process of its

own unfolding. This view (a cultural phenomenology) has implications for all connected subjects:

bystanders, even critical ones reported as yelling racist slogans; participants of all political

positions; and the targeted objects of protests, the university and Canadian government and its

police apparatus. And while this approach can be generalized to all subjects, I'm interested in

the organizations of sentiments and moral expectations embedded in acts of solidarity

associated diasporic practices. This way of relating to this history appears in the interviews in

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[142] Throop, "Chapter 9: Moral Sentiments."

complex entanglements as narrators variously address: their degree and form of participation, relationality with surrounding perspectives, and the longevity of any investments into a particular 'side' at any point in their lives.

According to Tim Cole's research on spatialized narratives with Holocaust survivors,[143] the physical self-placement in their memories at the exact moment of rescue, if it was actually articulated, offered important insight into how narrators negotiate their identity as survivors and the corollary of emotions carried with this position. Despite the difference in context, Cole's questioning of the implicit spatial agency exercised in the physical placement of subjects, and I add sentiments, in memories is rather instructive for our analysis of memories of the occupation. For instance, Nina's description of her one and only approach of the Henry F. Hall building during the two week period personifies her relationship to the entire affair.

> I did not want to get involved with anything that was going on. My roommate was very, very active in the situation of Feb 11th. She slept there every night, they had parties. One night she wanted me to go to see. I went, I looked around from the outside door. I looked and saw what was going on. And we had a word we used to use at that time: vibes. And today they use the word energy, they use energy. And the vibes that I got was that this is not something for me. There was no way, I didn't even go into the room to look, I stood there because she – every*day* she was there, sleeping with them and coming home telling me what was going on in the computer room and 'come on Nina, come and look at it' and I looked from the outside, I stood, I remembering going up the escalator and standing and looking. I feel I'm clear sentient in that sense. And so I said no. I never ever got involved. And she would say to me. We used to have a lot of arguments. … I would say to her. I cannot get involved with something like that. (pause) I, I – it's like I'm selling my *soul* to be accepted by West Indians. And I couldn't do it. I have, I believe in an ethical way of doing things' And 40 years have passed and I still have the same stand. [144] And she used to say to me: "People like you, they gonna kill, just like they killed Ghandi and they killed Martin Luther king." Because I always told her, I used to tell her 'you see look at Ghandi, that's a stand I'll take.' And it's strange, I still have the same stand up to this day.

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[143] Tim Cole, University of Bristol, "(Re)placing the past: Placing self and others in traumatic memory." Beyond Memory and Trauma Conference, Concordia University, March 2012.
[144] Even though a quotation would logically end here, her tonal delivery creates no divide between what she said then and now how she feels now.

Because her narrative is so overtly structured by principles and values as distinct from actions, it also allows Nina to admit with no contradiction that she still supported certain ideas advanced by Black Power politics, as described earlier. "Even if nothing else came out of the black revolution, that is one thing that I am very pleased about." Thus, the focal point of her divergence is not actually the students' claims of unequal treatment or even the desire to empower black people but the *manner* of their response to injustice which according to her was completely out of line with her absolute commitment to non-violence. The visceral response she describes to this atmosphere however goes beyond her sensorium and pierces her spiritual essence: she is above, inside, outside, and beyond localization or recognition all at once. The out-of-this-world scale of her response, that which escapes articulation, furthers her moral self from this historical context, indeed from the changes of historical time. Nevertheless, refusing to sacrifice her moral integrity for the 'black revolution' is intimately bound to how she reinforced differences between herself and certain individuals who took up this call to action and solidarity. Consider the following two stories in which Nina responds to solidarity as enacted by others:

> And one day, I was sitting in the cafeteria. I was working part time while I was a student and I was sitting in the cafeteria with a group of my friends we worked in the history department cause I was doing history and this girl came up to me and she started to lace into me because I was with a group of white people. I was the only black person working in research. I didn't say anything to her.

> And you see this book here [*points to personal copy of* Let the Niggers Burn], I brought it to show you because Dennis Forsythe was teaching at that time. And he gave me this book as a gift, cause he wanted to get me he said, and its only when I opened it that I realised what he wrote in here. [*Reading from the book*] He said, 'Rise my queen and wear the crown.' I don't know what people who look at what they see but I know what it meant. Dennis always would say to me, what he saw in me, I must get up and be *proud*! I must do like all the other black students to stand up and fight for the blacks because you have something to give them, fight for the blacks. And then he gave me this book as a gift. But I couldn't do it, it would be selling my soul, that's how I felt, and I still feel the same way.

Consequently, despite her comportment of inner peace, it is clear that she was neither safe from criticism nor unaffected by the Affair, literally connected through affective displays of

betrayal and alternatively explicit invitations to join the cause. While Nina is rather proud of having resisted these overtures, aggressive or otherwise, she also takes pride in swaying Dennis Forsythe's opinion in his later work as she comments he shifted his politics closer to hers.

This curious interplay between Nina's intentional self-displacement and shared entanglements expresses itself through her joint interview with Elizabeth in interesting ways. Whereas Elizabeth seemed comfortable offering a collaborative response, even at times asking Nina questions to configure or contrast her own evaluations, Nina preferred to keep her responses (indeed time to speak) separate.[145] At the same time, the core of Elizabeth's narrative complements this dynamic well because she emphasizes her role as a sympathetic witness whose perspective is validated by her simultaneous independent judgements and social flexibility. In this way, Elizabeth guides her narrative of the SGWA through its reverberations, near and far.

> Well, the students occupied the computer room. And, I'm just goin back in my memory and what I remembered when I came in, because I can see myself at the time. Well I didn't, it was the heart of the university but I didn't really feel that this was going to go right. So I went into the room into the room to see what this occupation was about. I walked in there, people were sitting around, occupying the room with – I didn't go right, I looked around and I said – man, I would not get into this. I don't think this is going the right way, not much good is going to come of this, although I didn't see what other way, I didn't see how any good was going to come…

> In so much as I thought to myself, this is when I began to think – 'boy, how come in this country people take a second place to money?' And I began to look around and this is when I began to think like this. I never thought like this before. But yes, when they set the bail over some of the murderers, these high, high bails for students and people who committed murder and heinous crimes were much less. Then I realised what Bob Dylan said: money doesn't talk, it swears.

> So a lot of the students who were thrown in jail, and had bails and happened to be there. And I'm sure that they were right. I know they felt too. Many of them had nervous breakdowns and became quite ill. ------- he went back to the Caribbean, he was out of his head; he was not the same person after. There was a lot of anger, a lot of resentment. It really altered some kids. Some kids who were quite, placid or happy go

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[145] Although she didn't interrupt Elizabeth's 'turn', she made her presence known by repeatedly checking her watch and even at times sighing out loud when the topic drifted from the Sir George Williams Affair.

lucky became embittered. And I saw this in a few cases. In Jamaica and Trinidad as far as I know about the other islands, this is what I heard from accounts in Jamaica. They were very angry about what had been done to the students. There was a case of a Canadian, some Canadians, walking on a beach somewhere in Jamaica, some Jamaicans walked up to them and asked them where they are from. They said 'Canada.' They said, 'where in Canada?' They said, 'Montreal.' And they told them, 'get off the beach.' I was told they were told just get off our beach. So the anger was spilling over.[146]

So yes, coming back, I really think about the majority of those students in there were having a party, they were testing something but having a party. They did not go in with any preconceived ideas about starting a revolution. There was Rosie Douglas who was definitely in there to further his political advances, [N: yes, yes] there's no question about it; he'd step on and use any method to get by. [N: yes, yes] I remember the names of all the other people who were identified as ring leaders. In retrospect, you could look back and say yes they were the ones who. But there were people in there who were mild and timid as mice and mild mannered, just sitting there. It's something the kids in the States were doing. It was something you did in university and its part of the whole university thing and I really think that, I don't think that all those students who went in there were angry. *After* the act, [N: oh yes] they became extremely angry. They were altered, embittered.

Thus, Elizabeth's shift in her own thinking regarding the state and her support for the protestors

is based on her observation of a number of moral discrepancies: the hardworking nature of

students who lodged the complaint and their below average grades; the expensive bail set for

arrested Caribbean students and lesser bails for murderers in the same jails; the emphasis on

monetary damages to the school in media reports over the personal and psychological harm

endured by students. While juxtapositions expose the hollow actions by Canadian publics, the

courts, and some ignorant white students, Elizabeth is equally critical of those who benefited

from the high costs paid by student protesters. Her repeated mentions of the deep and

psychological impact on protestors, the way it altered their life options and expectations is a

further indictment on the black leaders as she identified as benefiting from the misery of the

students. Thus Elizabeth's localization of her political support and criticism is a way for her to

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[146] Elizabeth also recounted in great detail the story of a certain Jamaican student studying in Trinidad during the political upheaval sparked by the arrests at Sir George. Once he learned of a plan to kidnap him for his alleged connection to a Jamaican brigadier enlisted to support a Trinidadian government crackdown on protests, he escaped his dormitory in the dead of night, walked with four friends to the airport on foot and arrived safely at home.

mediate her involvement with events and circuits of expectations. In this way, Elizabeth's

emphasis on the root cause of alienation and suffering as a result of discrimination creates a

space for Nina to agree with her distant perspective without contradicting her own.

The name and character of a 'place', Doreen Massey asserts is equally a claim to its past

and present significance as much as its future potential.[147] To understand the implications such

attributes might carry for memories of the SGWA, consider Miriam's deliberate and repeated

emphasis on the falsehoods attributed to the nature of the occupation: "So the notion that it

was a glorious time, Noo! Anybody who wants to make it sound like that, they were not

involved. They.were.not.in.volved.Not.one.minute." [148] In drawing attention to the modes

ascribed to corporal presence of occupiers in Nina, Elizabeth and Miriam's narrative, my aim is

not to recover the veracity of the protestors' emotional states but consider the ethical

possibilities these modes make possible. For Miriam, the space of the occupation must be

understood almost as a reflection of the isolation already imposed on West Indian students

through discrimination and alienation which resonates through the interview: "…that you were

alone in a strange place, a strange person in a strange place, cause you were strange, you were

seen as strange…" Recounting the exact moment leading up to the occupation, Miriam's

thoughts jump across contexts – from the Black Writer's Conference to the Black Power

movement, to grass roots organizations in the US and back to Sir George - to emphasize this

inevitability in Montreal. "And I distinctly remember that they said, 'you know what, we don't

have any recourse. We're going to go and sit in on the computer science building.' And that's

where it started." This circuitous journey her thoughts travel captures the diffuse potential of

affects to join objects and subjects even loosely connected and at any moment gather in a

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[147] Massey, "Places and Their Pasts."

[148] Text formatted deliberately to emphasize Miriam's finger tapping on the table at every syllable.

concentrated surge of emotions.[149] In the following passage, Miriam draws on contemporary

discourse of universal rights alongside institutional isolation and abandonment, to emphasize

the inevitable link between support for the protest and subsequent legislative achievements for

equality.

> Like, what kind of an unjust society this was [laughs] And if you think about it, that happened in 1969. Next year, 2011, we will be celebrating 40 years of Multiculturalism Act in Canada. Those things that we were there, we were foreign students, we weren't even Canadian citizens and we stood up for influenced that Multiculturalism Act. And all the people who talk about the freedom to do this and the freedom to do that came out of what we did when we said, 'NO, we have rights and we should be given our rights.' And that's what happened.

> For Miriam, the SGWA is thus part of a larger narrative associated with her asymmetrical

experiences of migrancy. Standing outside the Hall building on the morning of February 11th,

1969, Miriam reflects on the welcoming reception Canadian's receive when travelling to the

Caribbean as a bitter irony to her situation. And while part of her anger shows in descriptions of

events, it actually reverberates most in a particular telling that takes us through moods and

dispositions before and after the affair:

> [Eric Williams] said in a speech that he made in Trinidad 'Massa Day Done.' And what he means by 'Massa Day Done' was that we could no longer depend on the colonial powers to chart our destiny. So, I was, I came to Canada, we got our independence in 1962, I came to Canada in 1968 and those words were engrained in me. People like CLR James who was one of our philosophers - I knew him cause he knew my dad and things like that. So whenever people like CLR James would speak, my dad would encourage us as children to listen to what he was saying, to listen and understand what colonialism does to you as a person and as a country. So we came, we came, when I – A lot of people write about colonialism from books that they read. I always say, 'see, you know what, I experienced the physical transition from colonial to um post-colonial, I saw the national guard lower the union jack and raise the Trinidad and Tobago flag in the square' so for me, that was a defining movement to post colonialism. So for me, when I came to Canada, and I saw that we had a way of treating people who were quote unquote different, I absolutely couldn't believe it, so as far as that was concerned now, I went on and got my degree. My ex-husband he was he got his degrees and he was working. So I was determined that my children would not come here and be treated as anyway different as far as I knew when I was in Trinidad, it was not 'if' I were going to university,

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[149] Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

it was 'when'. And that is how I raised my children. It's not 'if' you were going to university, its 'when'

… So my children are all university graduates too. But for me, I had to – the energy it exerted on me in order to see my children get the education that I thought that they deserve, an energy that I didn't see my parents exert. And you have to ask yourself the question, what kind of a system would have you as a parent, a black parent, have to exert so much energy for your children to succeed? What kind of a system breeds that kind of experience? So yeah, I remember, I was involved in every single thing that they did. I was their guide leader, their run to ballet lessons, driver, sewed the costumes for them, be there for them. Because I wanted my children to have the full breath of experiences that they would've had if they were living in Trinidad. So I worked like a chicken that lost her head for them to have all those experiences, music lessons. Just every single thing. What's the point of living here? I might as well have gone back home because my sister children would have gotten that, my same sister whose a couple children years younger than I, her children swam competitively all three of them, and still pulled out extremely good grades. So it wasn't that I was trying to have my kids do things that was out of the ordinary, it was something that we would've done [laughs].

At the same time that Miriam's emphasizes her naiveté regarding prejudice in Canada to

adequately characterize her alienating transition to Montreal, she counter-poses this state with

a pre-existing capacity or consciousness for knowledge essential to black revolutional change.

That she lived the transformation in Trinidad and Tobago from colonial to post-colonial, points

to what was lost by coming to Canada while simultaneously drawing on the strength of

conviction she brought with her. By drawing our attention to the stark contrasts she describes

between the possibilities opened to her nieces and nephews with the multiple barriers she

faced through her children's educational experience, Miriam's narrative likewise underlines a

persistent gap and achievement in her life and that especially of her children. Consequently, her

investments in community events in Edmonton where she now resides, in her children's

potential, and her involvement with the Sir George Williams Affair are all tied together as

political, cultural and material struggles embedded in her efforts to realise modernist

expectations often attached to migration. [150] This need to make up for lost potential, or

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[150] Sharad Chari and Vinay Gidwani, "Introduction: Grounds for a Spatial Ethnography of Labor," *Ethnography* 6, no. 3 (2005): 277. For another interesting look at migration and enmeshed expectations,

alternatively expressed, opportunity to reach full potential, a path that had been foreclosed by the conditions of her migration, points to an ambivalent sense of modernist loss that exists on different temporal and spatial planes. Ultimately the unease which accompanies the ongoing act of emplacement while she emplots her story through the wide range of changes to Montreal and Canada's landscape since the late sixties is rather insightfully captured in her joking request to have her body buried in Trinidad after she passes; even in death, Canada will not be her home.

Although Pamela's memories of migration to Canada offer a rather distinct evaluation of events, there are a number of structural overlaps that also demonstrate the geographical orientation of moral experiences. Most of her life history is told in chronological older, organizing her personal stories around institutional milestones, in a seemingly rehearsed tale.[151] That the SGWA is entirely absent might suggest its irrelevance to her overall account of various struggles on behalf of Canada's black populations. And yet, once this event is introduced even peripherally, it repeatedly creeps into her answers in a rather charged manner, suggesting a greater potency of this memory than she is willing to admit. As the first of a rather charged series of answers in her interview, this response might be seen as an aberration of her general narrative making it a candidate for analysis as 'moral breakdown' as understood by Zigon. [152] And while this moment is revealing for its highly personalized and emotional frequency, I agree with Cheryl Mattingly and Veena Das who avoid creating a division between the ordinary, daily

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see Mary Beth Mills, "Engendering Discourses of Displacement Contesting Mobility and Marginality in Rural Thailand," *Ethnography* 6, no. 3 (2005): 385–419.

[151] Despite some of the gendered differences in storytelling, Pamela's interview reminds me of B from an oral history in Britain. Celia Hughes, "Negotiating Ungovernable Spaces Between the Personal and the Political: Oral History and the Left in Post-war Britain," *Memory Studies* 6, no. 1 (January 1, 2013): 80–82.

[152] It is true, Throop's moral sentiments adopts some of Zigon's theory of moral breakdown. But he also pairs it with an emphasis on the every day in an attempt to go beyond Zigon's division. Even though I borrowed from Throop to point at phenomenological unfolding of the moral map, I do not use Zigon's formulation of 'ethical breakdown' as it differs from the neo-Aristotelian ethic I've generally followed in other moral anthropology scholars. See Mattingly, "Moral Selves and Moral Scenes," 6.

enactments of moral behaviours and such explicit challenges to one's ethical position.[153] Or to

put it in Agamebian terms, this answer is a rather telling state of narrative exception that proves

to be the rule on a number of levels.

The inaugural meeting of the NBCC in which Pamela played a primary role thus shifts

significantly in her narrative as a moment of pride to the bitter marks of a contentious dispute.

> P: Oh yes, and that [conflict at the NBCC meeting] was because – the boys that were involved in the Sir George Williams crisis headed by Rosie Douglas, started calling the rest of us that were working and funding everything bourgeois. And they picked up a Marxist ideology and thought that they should feed us their Marxist ideology. That we may not know the Marxist ideology but we are living communism because we put our hands in our pocket to fund everything. And we were paying for everything. So everything we had was in common. So we didn't have to be Marxist. So there was this big division between the two of us – the two sets of people. And they tried to take over. And we prevailed. And we also argued that they were going back to where they came from but we were staying here. So we didn't have to buy into what they [argued].

> S: I imagine the consequences of the Sir George Williams Affair extended to your activities as well.

> P: Well of course, and the Sir George Williams Affair was also dependent on us for help. Because when those boys went to jail, when they arrested them and they took them – to begin with, while they were conducting their sit-in at Sir George. It was those of us who were working that was feeding them, with funds, and everything that they needed. And when they were taken off to jail, it was those of us that were outside that were able to put up the bail to get them out of jail, and it was those of us who were outside that were able to engage a lawyer to help them. But their response to us was, that they were in the sit-in with their Marxist brothers and their Marxist brothers. But the Marxist brothers weren't arrested, they didn't do jail time. And that should've been a very good lesson for them. Because it was nonsense. You don't abandon your own people because somebody tells you they're Marxist and they're lining up with you. But that was, that was part of the tension with that meeting. The division in the ideology. Because they thought they had an ideology and they thought we didn't. But our ideology was what we referred to as African Socialism. Because in the village, if one person eats, everybody eats. And one person helps look after the children of the other. And even in the Caribbean, when you growing up, the whole village would discipline a child if they saw a child doing something wrong. So we had our African socialism whereas they thought they were far superior because they had their Marxist ideology. So that's what separated us really. And yet! That same Rosie Douglas who was so Marxist, when he was in prison, I used to go to see him every week and bring him close and food. And when he needed anything he would write to me for it. I don't know why he didn't ask his white – uh Marxist brothers and sisters.

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[153] Mattingly, "Moral Selves and Moral Scenes"; Das, "Chapter 8: Ordinary Ethics."

That she was in fact involved and participated in such a caring capacity demonstrates her ethos of solidarity. Pamela responded and rallied to the support of 'those boys', not out of a challenge to her ideological conviction but as a duty, an expression of her daily habits; borrowing from her earlier phrase, these were her people. Her twofold points of contention are likewise related to her solidarity ethos. The first is the importance of racial solidarity over ideological divisions; just a minute after the self-correction in the last line of the above excerpt, she explicitly states "the race card was far superior to the ideological card." Moreover, her definition of 'African Socialism' seems to be a permanent commitment in collective care through the most basic of everyday tasks, from food preparation to the nurture and growth of everyone's children. Consequently, this perspective further indicts her 'the other side' for the transiency she attributes to their ideals and desire to return to the Caribbean while highlighting her own commitments to improving lives of black Canadians, sharing in their daily struggles by calling Canada her home and thereby rejecting the charges of betrayal. Thus, her professed outrage exposes the exact kinds of conflicts that are omitted in the rest of her tightly wrapped narrative both directly as in her racialized ideological divisions and indirectly through the descriptions of gendered labour and support that went unacknowledged. The spatial divide of these contributions are evident as 'those boys' 'in there' were oblivious to the sacrifices of 'those of us' 'out here'. The 'us' included the names a number of working women, all recent Caribbean immigrants, whose efforts in providing sustenance made it possible for occupiers to hold their grounds, literally and figuratively. When I tried to ask directly about the gendered divisions of labour, she firmly rejected my suggestion. Rather her response modifies a strictly gendered view of privilege to include the intersecting realities of working class existence. And once again, even as I tried to ask her if any perspectives were left out or went unacknowledged,

she responded in terms of ideological, not gendered division and bringing our conversation back to the crisis.

The factor that especially smooth's over this disappointment or failure of solidarity is, interestingly enough, the institutional progress of Canadian state through Multiculturalism. In a way that ironically echoes Miriam's memories, the current legislative state and institutional opportunities for redress modify any anxieties of past discrimination or broken solidarity while at the same time silencing the ways liberal democratic narratives of progress simultaneously position limited possibilities for others.

And it is this exact point on which Josephine's delivery stands apart from all the others. She rejects sweeping explanations about laws, history or even memory. By insisting there was no causal agenda, she recasts the Sir George Williams Affair as an *ordinary* event. To clarify, she does not downplay the significance but rather tempers the sensational attention it has received. Beyond her analysis of the event, she enacts this position in her meticulous specificity of subjective experiences. Her persistent recalibration of every question challenges the assumed motivations that I wasn't even aware of implying. Throughout the interview, her tone was remarkably even and distant, neither downplaying nor overstating the significance of her 'role'. And it's also interesting that in a moment of genuine wonder, she reflects on the fact that her son will never walk down the street and think he should look to recognize black people.

The scientific definition of reverberation, the persistence of a sound caused by repeated reflection on multiple surfaces after the source has ended, captures a number of salient features of memory-work operating through narratives of the SGWA. Listening closely to the range of reverberations, there is no consensus on the 'original sound' animating these narratives. It could be understood as the demands of frustrated and naïve students at Sir George, the cries of Black Power in the US, the self-affirming speeches heard in Woodford Square, or the ghostly birth of

racism in slavery's inception. But what they do share is a moral navigation as narrators take up

the sound and contributes to its persistence through reflection. An act which leads to the

concluding thoughts for this chapter on the moral underpinnings of teaching this history, or

rather, the active recalibration of such reverberations.

On Shifting Foundations: Legends, Legacies, and Intergenerational Memory

In a special issue of *Ethnography*, editors Sharad Chari and Vinay Gidwani put forward a

way of joining insights from radical geography to ethnographies of work by widening the

grounded knowledge base vital to ethnographic studies to include concerns of social production

of space under capitalism. In one of their central themes, the authors ask "how structures of

feeling, comportment, style and sentiment accommodate as well as transform the politics of

work." [154] And for our purposes, we might re-read this concern to include the outcome of

memory-work produced in acts of memory making, or in other words the politics of

remembering. I address this concern in this chapter by following the example set by Read's use

of 'emplotment' and 'emplacement' which also appears in this journal edition.[155] The five

narrators 'emplot' themselves into what might be recognized as the 'H'istory of Montreal's late

1960s, paying particular attention to dates, chronology, and socio-historical details as they

relate to political developments near and far. Yet, looking at the overall sentiment and

comportment style of each narrator through narrative 'emplacement', they seem to

simultaneously subvert or modify this structure in particular ways which I suggest relates to

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[154] Chari and Gidwani, "Introduction: Grounds for a Spatial Ethnography of Labor," 274.

[155] This article and special edition of *Ethnography* share many concerns with my study, in the dialects of memory and production of space, even if I do not posit my questions on memory-making in relation to capitalism's spatial and temporal operations. There are other scholars who do exactly that. Beverley Mullings, "Governmentality, Diaspora Assemblages and the Ongoing Challenge of 'Development'," *Antipode* 44, no. 2 (2012): 406–427; Paulla A. Ebron, "Tourists as Pilgrims: Commercial Fashioning of Transatlantic Politics," *American Ethnologist* 26, no. 4 (1999): 910–932; Hartman, "The Time of Slavery"; McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*.

where and how they place their moral selves around or in relation to this already established

structure in their individual styles of remembering.

This relationship becomes most explicit in the answers to two questions I asked near the

end of each interview, motivated by the joint moral and political interests of public history: How

should this story be told? What are the lessons to be learned from the Sir George Williams

Affair? Although I asked these questions knowing very well there is no singular way to represent

this shared history, in reviewing the interviews, I was struck by how closely their descriptions of

vital intergenerational knowledge matched their ethical conceptions of solidarity. In other

words, their answers function similar to a legend or 'how to guide' for understanding their

moral mappings. Nina and Elizabeth both use distance to mediate their own positions, offering

ways to circumvent inherited legacies of discrimination. Nina reasserts her timeless ethical

stance by denouncing violence as a political tactic and urging all her students to reflect on their

ethical purpose in life. While Elizabeth points to the harsh ambivalence of Canadian racism,

callous to the historical suffering of black students in national representations, she also

emphasizes her cumulative range of attachments and experiences that give her clarity in spite of

these structural barriers. Although Miriam's political perspectives of the SGWA are completely

opposed to Pamela's, they share a similar trajectory for the ways they each incorporate

historical struggles in their early years in Montreal as necessary developments towards political

and legal gains shared by all today. To honour these milestones is to honour their roots.

Whether the SGWA exists as a stepping stone or a stumbling block, both narrators draw a direct

correlation to the establishment of a policy of Canadian Multiculturalism following this period of

political activism. Pamela's narrative, moreover, is remarkable for the way it closely grafts on to

post-racial, national narratives of democratic progress and the promise of citizenship. Yet, there

are moments of coming to terms with loss and betrayal that still underpin the solidarities she

tries to put forward - whether with Rosie Douglas or 'those boys' in the computer centre - her way of dealing with rejection and betrayal surfaces even as she articulates this solidarity. Even though Josephine's memories explicitly state how fundamental 'the movement' was to her self-perception and political attitudes then, her tone and manner of speaking insist this relationship be understood as a contingent experience, one that shaped her greatly but does not define or limit her positions now. Her lesson is one of caution, to the seduction of all-encompassing narratives that subsume subjectivities within a singular memory. The range of answers reflects different ways of weighing the past in the present and hinting at what futures are thus made possible.

While I contributed to a focus on ethical remembrances in the interviews through some of my questions, this persistence also stems from the logics of diasporic practices themselves. The rhetoric imbedded in histories of black liberation position solidarity as an imperative of one's identity, whether one believes it is a matter of collective survival and therefore responsibility or the marker of a limiting affiliation. Either way, memory is a primary vehicle in working through this imperative. Sadiya Hartman reflects on the central historical dilemma in representing the legacies of slavery as she contends "how best to remember the dead and represent the past is an issue fraught with difficulty, if not outright contention."[156] She engages this dilemma by examining the role of roots tourism, not to dismiss their capacities to serve as counter narratives but to "shake our confidence in commemoration" and challenge the associations between remembrance and redress. A moral duty to memory and visibility is intimately bound with politics of representation. To be clear, this is still important. I do not suggest memory is not politically useful. What the line of questioning into entanglements of moral encounters and the production of space made central by this chapter offers is a challenge

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[156] Hartman, "The Time of Slavery," 758.

to the assumed gains in certain modes of remembering, similar to the association Hartman

examines between mourning and identification in roots tourism. And as we continue to observe

in the following chapter, the shifting links in these foundations are more complicated than a

linear understanding of time or redemptive expectations of memory would permit. As the

poetics of landscapes, the tethering of displaced speakers to lands near and far includes those

voices whose politics inhabit rather than reject capitalist norms in their politics of being.

Chapter 3 – On Paradoxical Foundations

The previous two chapters offer two moments in which memory is mobilized to articulate a collective past and shed light on what it means to be Black in Quebec, then and now. Not only were/are these moments political and contested, but inextricably linked to the social and collective conditions from which the narrators spoke. While the events of late sixties in Montreal are foundational to the way Canada is imagined, to the way black and Caribbean communities narrate their pasts in relation to an African Diaspora, placing the sixties as central to these community narratives also reflects my focus as a historian. Taking a page from Alessandro Portelli's foundational essay on oral history,[157] this chapter follows his approach by asking: what happens to our analysis when we move away from an 'event centred' focus?

Put simply, with another frame comes another meaning. As many scholars in various fields have shown, life history analysis or life review offers insight into the stories people tell by identifying and placing important events within one's life context. That is, only when all the stories are seen in relation to key moments as defined by the narrators, events that create a 'before and after' by which all others are judged, can we take in their significance.[158] Most importantly, a life story approach embraces the variability in what may define a 'key moment' and mobilizes these insights to differing ends. In some collaborative projects, this is done deliberately to help interviewees 'make sense' of their lives for a particular purpose. [159] In other instances, as Alistair Thompson suggests, this desire to cohere the events in one's life to make

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[157] Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories*, 55–58. See Chapter Three: "What Makes Oral History Different?"

[158] The historiographical shift into subjective truths also marks an important development in oral history which unfolded through a number of paradigm shifts. See Alistair Alistair Thomson, "Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History," *Oral History Review* 34, no. 1 (2007): 49–70.

[159] See insightful reflections on this topic in Alicia J. Rouverol, "Trying to Be Good: Lessons in Oral History and Performance," in *Remembering: Oral History and Performance*, ed. Della Pollock (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 19–43.. The complex context for Brown Creek Life Review Performance Project, a play performed by inmates of Brown Creek medium-security prison based on their life stories permeated the entire performance.

positive sense is an implicit practice embedded in all oral histories. For a number of reasons to

which I will return, his theoretical application of 'composure' [160] is instructive:

> "We compose our memories to make sense of our past and present lives…In one sense
> we 'compose' or construct memories using the public language and meanings of our
> culture. In another sense we 'compose' memories which help us to feel relatively
> comfortable with our lives, which give us a feeling of composure."[161]

A common thread running through these examples of life review projects is the fundamentally

performative function of memory; narrators are story tellers and create meaning in the practice

of this craft.

When I came across Candice Ivy's evocative art instillation, "A Sounding: St. Ann's Re-

imagined" in Montreal's Griffintown neighbourhood, her work inspired me to consider another

way of bringing together two particular themes of the previous chapter: tales of moral

cultivation and the rippling echoes they engender individually and collectively. In a public talk

accompanying her project, Ivy traced her artistic process by contextualizing the influence of

Muybridge's pioneering work in photography on her own explorations of gesture, movement,

and memory.[162] I draw on two points in particular from her interpolation of Muybridge

throughout her various projects: gestures are historically shaped, carrying within them the

traces of people and actions past; and the symphonic overlap and discord that occur when we

take into consideration multiple accounts of a similar past and place. In a way, her treatment of

St. Ann's Cathedral, as an architectural sounding board for communal memories is somewhat

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[160] Thinking of Sara Ahmed's reading of white supremacist literature, consider that what makes sense or coheres these alignments isn't always a positive evaluation of the present or future. In this case, a contemporary white supremacist politics would require a theory of racial decline, even though it was captured by a vision of progress in colonial discourse. Ahmed, "Affective Economies."

[161] This definition is adapted from the theory of memory developed by the Popular Memory Group at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham. Alistair Thomson, "Anzac Memories: Putting Popular Memory Theory into Practice in Australia," *Oral History* 18, no. 1 (1990): 25.

[162] Talk was given at the Centre Oral History and Digital Storytelling in May 2011. "A Sounding" was produced in collaboration with *Urban Occupations Urbaine* and on display for only two weeks in May 2011. http://www.urbanoccupationsurbaines.org/uou-monthly-programming/ivy/ For more information on Candice Ivy's work: www.candiceivy.com.

analogous to the place of the Henry F. Hall building in memories of the SGWA, discussed in the previous chapters. The mixed media interpretation of oral narratives beautifully captures much of the nuance in oral history as political, social and performative practices. But rather than approach the 'event' once again, I want to use her work here to approach the larger discussion of black diasporic memory while listening closely to one narrator in particular Sharon whose memories contain examples of what I call 'ethical gestures'.

The intersections of gesturality and oral history are well established in the overlapping literature on performance. Della Pollock's anthology *Remembering: Oral History and Performance* provides a number of poignant insights, [163] as do Steven High and Sandeep Baghwati articles on teaching oral history performance and gesturality, respectively.[164] Similar to Pollock's anthology, both authors explore the ethical choices and discussions necessarily brought about in the process of re-creating oral narratives for a new audience. Bhagwati's observations on the *function* of physical gestures, moreover, draw out my point of departure from this literature. [165] He notes an individual's use of gestures, similar to language, offers a way of 'fitting in' or negotiating not just one but many milieus, revealing the often unacknowledged but inherently multi-gestured way we all live. While these are instructive insights regarding the physical performance of memory beyond the interview, I wish to redirect the analogy back towards iterative performances during its creation. That is, if 'gesture', as Jeff Wall defines it, "means a pose or action which projects its meaning as a conventionalized sign[,]"[166] I believe

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[163] Pollock, *Remembering*.

[164] Sandeep Bhagwati, "Lamentations," *Alt Theatre: Cultural Diversity and the Stage* 9, no. 1 (September 2011): 50–55; Steven High, "Embodying the Story: Oral History and Performance in the Classroom," *Alt Theatre: Cultural Diversity and the Stage* 9, no. 2 (December 2011): 50–54.

[165] This might seem disingenuous because the definition of performance applied in Pollock et al's contributions is not limited to the physical, but incorporates a layered approach that includes iterative acts. That is to say my essay differs because I do not go so far as analyse the recreation of oral histories.

[166] Jeff Wall, *Jeff Wall: Selected Essays and Interviews* (New York: MOMA, 2007), 85.

there are parallels to be drawn within narratives, or rather larger stories that are constructed

through emblematic parts.[167]

Thus, I focus on particular stories in Sharon's life history that offer key moral lessons

which I have termed 'ethical gestures' for the way they reveal complex relationships between

her actions, beliefs, knowledge and subjectivity. The focus on ethical tales relates to both the

moral content of the anecdotes, and their simultaneous expression as they are told; that is, an

Aristotelian view of ethics as habitus, both means and end.[168] As a heuristic tool, I cast gesture

here as a rather malleable mould or frame to highlight the deliberate, contingent, and creative

processes in the acts of memory making, storytelling and listening. Together these processes tell

us not only about who we are, but how we are and how wish to be; these narratives relate as

much to the present and future as they do the past. In relation to a black diasporic memory,

these performative characteristics are precisely what suture received wisdom about a black

memory with a more contingent view of the *work* memory performs.

Reflection 1: Interview Reflection

Walking away from Sharon's home one winter, I carried with me the usual rush of

emotions after connecting with someone during an interview. Though I had only met her once

before, Sharon was warm and welcoming throughout our entire interaction. Several hours of

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[167] Alessandro Portelli Reminds us that oral histories, are after all, narratives and subject to the tools of literary theory. Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories*, 48.It seems only fitting that this concept has been given many names by scholars of various fields who deal with the symbolic expression or signification of localized parts. I will return to Daniel James's use of 'key patterns' and 'mythologies of the self' later in the chapter.

[168] See Michael Roper, "Re-remembering the Soldier Hero: The Psychic and Social Construction of Memory in Personal Narratives of the Great War," *History Workshop Journal* 2000, no. 50 (January 1, 2000): 183–185, doi:10.1093/hwj/2000.50.181.for a discussion on the origins of 'composure' within popular memory scholarship, particularly situated to demonstrate the impact of public discourse on personal reflections. Although Roper suggests composure should also focus on the psychic needs of the narrator in the present in addition to popular discourse, there is still an assumed alignment that privileges the interior as preformed albeit conflicted entity that succeeds in creating composure through an exterior reflection. But in an Aristotelian frame that does not assume prior interior formation, emphasis is placed on act of composure as a *means* and end in cultivating this alignment.

intense conversation, a slice of cake and a cup of tea later, I could hardly call her a stranger. This

feeling of being touched by a connection stayed with me for some time. But there was also

something different from my previous interviews, a certain heaviness I could not yet name. [169]

We covered an array of topics during the three odd hour interview. My questions, relatively few

as they were, reflected the interests of two different but overlapping projects: a public history

of urban renewal in various Montreal neighbourhoods, particularly the working class and now

gentrifying neighbourhood of Little Burgundy, and my own thesis research. As a resident of the

neighbourhood since 1968 when she emigrated from Trinidad and Tobago, Sharon's rich

memories of community, family, migration and struggle offered a great deal for both projects.

Admittedly, it took some time before I could understand exactly how. No matter what I asked, it

seemed the conversation continuously circled back to her experiences of and perspectives on

romantic love. It was only much later that I understood she was teaching me nothing short of

the politics of reproduction and the reproduction of politics.

In reading about Shannon Jackson's review of *Touchable Stories,* a community-art

instillation in Boston, I found another way of revisiting the heaviness I felt after interviewing

Sharon . In particular, her genealogy of oral history and performance scholarship points to the

move by Conceptualist Arts to incorporate audience reception as part of the art object:

> "In his reading of *Sex and Death to the Age 14* when Spalding Gray describes playing
> strip poker with his cousin, critic Henry Sayre focused on the moment when "we
> overhear something in this monologue we wish we had not." This shaky moment makes
> use of a kind of narrative presence, one that "involves its audience by creating a
> cognitive dilemma – usually social in character – with which the audience must come to
> grips and which it must at least seek to understand."[170]

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[169] At the risk of including too much of my voice, needlessly taking up space meant for the interviewees, I feel these reflections were integral to my process of interpretation. And in the interest of deep listening embedded in sharing authority, I have included them.

[170] Shannon Jackson, "Touchable Stories and the Performance of Infrastructural Memory," in *Remembering: Oral History and Performance*, ed. Della Pollock (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 51.

In the context of *Touchable Stories,* "[r]ather than tales of explicit sexuality, however, the narratives of racial prejudice or unequal urban economy might require receivers to come to terms with ("and at least to understand") their own racial and class position in Boston's urban space."[171] Jackson's reflections resonated a great deal for me in thinking about Sharon's interview. Ultimately, our interaction forced me to reconsider my positionality as interviewer. Even though I could relate through my experiences as a child of immigrant parents, growing up in government housing, I was sitting across from her as a researcher.[172] This dilemma raised a number of questions for me: In practical terms, what does it mean to listen once the interview is over? Would my presence not be more meaningful to her as a community worker, a volunteer, a neighbour? In hindsight, it's easy to see these moments of doubt reveal more about my anxieties than the field itself. I wondered if a thesis could be 'enough' when faced with personal tale of loss and disappointment, seemingly outside the realm of activist politics that I had been working through. Yet in exploring these doubts, I was reminded of two concepts fundamental to oral history as a practice. The first, that academia is not the only destination for an interview, and it is this impulse to share stories with multiple audiences that also drives public history. And the second, that these are the stories Sharon chose to share with me; and their strength, in spite of my interpretation, will shine through. These reminders were, indeed, another way of addressing my 'response-ability' and the definition of shared authority that came from it.[173]

Once again, noting the synergy of self-reflection and analysis, I came to understand the nature of my anxiety about the exact same time as her interview transformed in my thinking from a collection of humorous and touching personal stories to a manifestation and expression

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[171] Pollock, *Remembering*, 51.
[172] Keeping in mind the risk of erasing the very real differences of privilege through comparisons and empathetic identification.
[173] See introduction to thesis.

of her political and ethical selves.[174] In this chapter, I work towards this conclusion by way of

analysing a series of ethical gestures that structure Sharon's narratives of composure. I

categorize these stories broadly in four parts: childhood stories, lessons of care work, romantic

love and neighbourly relations. But the distinction is more heuristic than absolute. Indeed the

stories appear in an overlapping and intersecting manner, animating the tensions, streams and

coherence of Sharon's life story.

Gesture 1: Childhood Stories

"We didn't grow up, like you see neighbours around? *[Points out the window].* We grew

up on an estate." Without any prompting from me, Sharon began the interview as many life

history narrators do, with foundational memories of her childhood home. Just as her very

sensory descriptions of life on the estate carve out the physical features and boundaries of the

land, these stories are intertwined with anecdotes of rules and regulations, dictating

appropriate behaviour for all children who were raised there. That her memories of physical

space connect closely with behaviour is not a coincidence, but reflective of how we construct

our identities through relationship with the land that forms our sense of place. [175] Thus, Sharon's

childhood memories provide an appropriate launching point for the multiple ways in which such

gestures support a larger narrative of composure.

Sculpting out the spatial contours of the estate with her hands, Sharon describes her

devout grandmother's close connection to parish priest in this story about his weekly visits.

> She always in church. But the priest used to come on the estate every Wednesday. And
> he has a little prefect car. He was Irish. And he drives up the hill. And that's the morning
> she get up early and they have a little service because we have a little thing on the land
> where the water is coming out from the rock and they have the little Virgin Mary and

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[174] While sharing authority refers to ethical practices of analysis and conduct**,** Michael Roper destabilizes
this relationship in another way by drawing on psychoanalysis to look at ways subjectivities of interviewer
and interviewee can be usefully considered as analytical tools. Roper, "Analysing the Analysed."

[175] Julie Cruikshank, *Life Lived Like A Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Native Elders* (Lincoln, NE: University
of Nebraska Press, 1992); Walsh and Opp, *Placing Memory and Remembering Place in Canada*.

everything. They have a little service there, on our estate. […] And after she had her service there, we have a summer house where they have the thing the Spanish people use – a hammock to swing in. They have those in it, they have benches and herself and the priest and maybe some of the other folks from the – if they do come – sits there and they speak *[pause]* Patois *[pause]* which is broken French. But children was not allowed to speak that. That's how they communicate when they don't want you to understand what they're saying. So we never – pick it up. The only thing we used to, we think we hear everybody say "bonjou, bonjou, bonjou Madam , bonjou, bonjou." *[Tone imitating adults]* By ourselves we would repeat that. But as kids, we can't let them hear we saying that because we repeating what they say. *[Laughs]*

But [when] I was children, we was not nosey. Nowadays children is nosey. They ask questions about everything. We see them bring all these jars and when the priest comes to the estate, he sit there with the coffee and he drink. And I said to myself, "how come, Father Jones came on the land and he going back and his nose all red and his face red?" I said, "but he was not in the sun?" And it when I got married the second time, I asked my father, and my aunt jump up and say, "he was drinking the recipe with your grandmother!" *[laughs]* "What was the recipe??" Whisky! And I only know that, after I was already, you know. *[gestures to say grown]* And I said, "Really?" The man come up normal and he going back red! *[laughs]*

Sharon's memory of the priests visit illustrates one of the most basic functions of her childhood memories. As a narrator, she draws an explicit contrast with children today through an image of her model behaviour through a device known as 'shuttle work'.[176] Though she jokes about the way she and other children imitated adults, this type of play never crossed the line into disobedience. Nor did she observe more than she was supposed to. Throughout the interview, there are various examples of such rules, each told through an anecdote that anchors the memory to the land in some way: 'children must not have coffee' is told alongside description of the coffee extraction process; 'children must respect teachers' is told through a description of specialty oranges and roses Sharon would give her teachers as gifts; 'children must go to church' is exemplified in the distance she had to travel home on foot when her grandmother elected to stay for several masses. In this way, Sharon constructs her childhood, through a

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[176] Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories*, 58.

specific time and place.[177] Although this feature is a common trope in migrant life histories that describe this space-time with a greater physical distance, the rapid changes to one's home or community and sense of displacement brought about by processes like industrialization, deindustrialization, gentrification can elicit similar tones.[178] Likewise, the significance of these particular memories is understood as an explicit contrast to her present observations. That is, details of 'back then' stand out for the way they contrast (or compare) to 'right now', an essential tension driving public history practices more broadly. Sharon draws on this contrast most explicitly to describe the ideal generational interaction; children behaved as they were told and always showed respect for their elders.

Though she is clearly very fond of her childhood, as those experiences set the standard for much of her adult life, Sharon's stories are more than uncritical nostalgia. These recollections also allow her to challenge the authority of her parents or adults generally and the gendered rules of society without actually breaking out of them; thus, maintaining a consistency with her alternate deployment of childhood ethical gestures. The following two anecdotes in particular draw out this dual representation:

> But don't break the rules. If you break the rules - Because through the estate, we have lots of rivers. The worst rule to break is on Good Friday. The day before Good Friday, you have to do all your cleaning and whatever and whatever, the yards and everything. Everything have to be thing- enough water for the this, dad a dad ah. Because, good Friday is the day you spend the time – Here they go on the beach - We go on the river, through the river and we spend the day and swim. People will come to ask if they can use part of the estate to go and swim in a private place. A lot of tourists come there. And if you disobey or you was rude, and they tell you that you can't, you can't. Because they said *[pause]* "if you disobey your parents and you go and swim, you're going to turn a mermaid." [Smiles wide] You hear that crap?? [Laughs] And you know, we kids believed that. Man, you would sit on the riverbank and you watch everyone bathing, and we sit on the river bank. We scared to turn a mermaid because they put that cock-n-bull storey in our head**.** And sometimes we sit on the little thing and we pelting

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[177] Politics of childhood teach us that this is not a value neutral description. Dubinsky, *Babies Without Borders*.

[178] Steven High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969-1984* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

pebbles in the water and everybody having a good time. We cannot go in the water because we disobey or do something, you know what I mean? You know that is – *[turns head many times in disbelief]*– and I said, "I wish my grandmother was alive, let me tell her that cock-n-bull storey was not right?!" *[laughs]*

We plant a lot of peanuts. And we have a lot of cashew nuts. But, everybody like to – when they pick it, to put to dry, when they dig up the peanuts, we might steal one to eat. There are raw peanuts. <u>Young girls must not eat raw peanuts. It's always young girls must not climb trees, young girls</u> – We lived in an estate - if in no distance and we want to pick because its different kind of oranges: we have the navel orange , we have the valenzia oranges, we had the cocoa oranges, we had the pineapple oranges. Oranges that my father graft the plants, and the trees are not tall. (Cocoa oranges are tall.) You could, *[motions with hands as if picking fruit from tree]* you know? […]
SA: Did [adults] give [classmates visiting the estate] the same rules that you had about climbing trees, etc when they came?
EV: Well there's no rules - They're parents must've given them the same rules. "When girls climb trees, they get the fruits sour!"
HOW could we women get fruit sour, tell me?! Huh!! We supposed to be the cream of the - [laughs] My father used to tell me "When your grandmother was alive, you tell she that!" *[laughs and repeats tone]* <u>When girls climb trees …</u> *[Interrupts with her present voice] EXCUSE ME?* I say "what the heck?" You know? So I tell my grandchildren, that them over here. *[Quoting the kids]* "grandma old school" *[laughs]* So I said - but you know, when I came back, I was *a good kid*.

As morality tales, these stories share a similar trajectory as the description of Father Jones's visits. Sharon makes very deliberate use of two (or more) perspectives to tell the stories. There is young Sharon, who may have committed minor infractions, but always followed the important rules. Adult Sharon on the other hand, finds great humour in the absurdity of the rules *but* maintains the importance of parental authority over children. As a recurring pattern regarding life lessons – that she followed the rules only to discover their questionable validity – this recurring theme takes on greater significance with every repetition, contributing to certain tensions in the greater narrative of composure.

In addition to this internal dialogue between past and present selves, Sharon's performative memories also include voices of other adults such as her aunt and father in the above examples. The tone she adopts to recite the rules of the estate (which resemble unwritten commandments), becomes the sound of authority and recognizable in its repetition

throughout the interview. She adopts it in multiple ways, sometimes mocking authority, other

times assuming that position in dialogue with younger generations.[179] Collectively, Sharon's use

of various techniques when shifting perspectives – the changes in tone, integration of hand

gestures, and varied facial expressions –heightens the dramatic representation of memory,

drawing in her audience to experience it for themselves. As an aside, these stories also point to

the limitations and challenges of transcription. Ultimately, the experiential detail and control

Sharon demonstrates augments her authority as narrator while drawing on the relational value

of multiple perspectives.

According to Daniel James, this almost theatrical reproduction indicates a number of

ways that memory as performance carries out its work. There are very strong parallels with my

use of 'composure'/'ethical gestures' here and his elaboration of 'mythologies of the

self'/'anecdotes' within Dona Maria's testimony which are worth quoting at length.

> "Anecdotes represent the relationship of the individual to a dominant social model and attitudes. They express in a synthesized form, on a local scale, the transgression or acceptance of hegemonic values. At the same time, we could also say that anecdotes have a very individual register. They dramatically fashion what Marie-Francoise Chanfrault-Duchet has called "foundational myths of the self," certain "primal scenes" central to the narrator's "process of individuation." On this level they can be said to play an important evaluative function in the overall life story as a demonstration of the kind of person the speaker claims to be. Anecdotes are, then, in some fundamental way morality tales with both a social and individual register: they are about proper and improper behaviour, responsible and irresponsible actions, about the way the world is and the way it ought to be." [180]

Although I find particularly useful his reading of 'anecdotes' as a multi-scalar register and much

of his analysis coincides with Sharon 's personal stories, I prefer the use of gesture for its slightly

more open-ended orientation. That is, not every performance derives significance solely by

modeling or resisting normative behaviour. The childhood ethical gestures set a standard for

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[179] Most importantly, these positions co-exist. They have relational value which can be understood through context with the rest of the interview.

[180] Daniel James, *Doña María's Story: Life History, Memory, and Political Identity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2000), 172.

ideal generational interaction, but they also authorize Sharon's perspective. And overall, they

support a larger narrative of composure in which the imperative of 'being good' remains beyond

the guarantee of any reward. And as we will see in subsequent gestures, the same rhetorical

patterns can be revisited to achieve new goals or alternate meanings. Consequently, these

examples of narrative performance in her ethical gestures allow her to shuttle back and forth

between past and current selves, drawing together the multifaceted person she is *through*

lessons she has learned, and others she has continued to teach.

Gesture 2: Lessons of Care Work

Descriptions, both emotional and physical, remain significant to shuttling throughout

the different gestures. If we listened to these childhood memories, indeed much of the

interview, for these sensory descriptions in another way, what would we discover? Joy Parr's

work suggests an important connection between physical, biological relationship of memory and

space that has greatly impacted much of the literature. Although this view could provide

interesting insights, I do not follow those threads here. Nevertheless, descriptions of sensory

details or processes more generally can offer insight as seen in this next gesture. Sharon 's

memories of care work, particularly her passion for cooking and nursing, also demonstrate a

structural beam so to speak carrying her narrative of composure. These stories permeate the

interview, describing the immense pleasure she gets from a job well done, regardless of the

rewards, in these areas. Thus, this second category of ethical gesture offers Sharon a way to

connect how she lives her life in practical terms, with living a righteous life generally.

Relating the physical with representational, consider two hand movements that

accompany Sharon 's memories. The first appears in descriptions that involve numeration: she

taps each finger on one hand with the index finger of the other, as if to check them off a mental

list one by one. This listing motion not only implies abundance (as in the agricultural variety of

her estate in the previous section) but also helps to order instructions when reciting recipes and

especially the *right* way of carrying out her work, her 'passions' cooking and nursing. In this way,

these stories cohere around Sharon's exemplary knowledge of food and health, even or

especially when differentially valued by society. In some stories, Sharon's delights in certain

skills or knowledge as her well kept secrets, as in her anecdote about "the real bay leaf" which

she imports from Trinidad or the proper way to reap certain plants for herbal medicines. The

scarcity of her knowledge, that these details are not widely recognized, heightens the social

value of her personal experiences and cultural capital in a way that is not recognized in her

institutional work. In contrast, stories about the quality of her food and nursing skills are

validated by frequent requests for her services: whether its calls from prospective palliative

clients before she has space in her case load or calls for catering community or municipal

functions. Perhaps the best example combining both passions and sensory knowledge occurs in

her description of chicken soup:

> Because if you are sick, there is nothing like a good bowl of soup. Homemade, chicken soup! That just <u>heal</u> the soul. Didn't they tell you that as a kid? *[laughs]*   I gets all these old folks "Sharon, can you make me some chicken soup, Caribbean style" *[laughs]* I say "I'm going to hold the pepper," She says, "Oh, yes hold the pepper." *[laughs]* Because, you know?! And the thing is, sometimes I was working with this woman. I used to go and take care of her. And when I used to take her out, we go here we go there. I travel with her and everything. She tell, "Sharon – you do things differently to the other women i know, etc, etc." I said, "If you put your thoughts into things, you could make changes." …

> I'm telling you as a young woman. When you married, or if you going to - or when you have your own house: Chicken, any kind of meat – you understand me? When you have your meat, you put some backing soda in hot water – put some water to boil – baking soda in it – and vinegar. You put your meat in a bowl and you throw that over it. You know what that does? It cleans the bacteria and then you wash it off in room temperature water. You drain it, you understand? If you want to take the skin off your chicken you take it off. And then you season, and ready to bake.

That these stories rarely remain in one tense or neat narrative, but are punctuated with

descriptive detours reflects an important insight from Stoler and Strassler's chapter on colonial

memory: lists, instructions, and recipes can register other ways of remembering that do not always fit into narrative structures.[181]

Similar to the prominence of dialogue in the previous gesture, these performances of valuable wisdom correspond well with Barbara Mayheroff's claims that "cultural performance among the elderly and marginalized is rooted in a crisis of invisibility."[182] The effects are heightened by their cumulative circulation. That is, Sharon does not view her expertise in nursing as separate from cooking, partly due to the literal connection between health and nutrition, but more importantly because of the ethics underlying her approach. In a related sense, the story of herbal medicine her grandmother practiced and taught her, also upholds this ethical gesture in its various performances.

> My grandmother was a herbalist. And every person she delivered their babies, not one ever died. And I'm telling you about million of kids in my community. You understand me, and she never charge you a penny. "Because when God give you a gift, it don't come in dollars and sense." And I used to say *[turns head]* "Woow." You don't charge. And if you go to the medical officer and you have a problem, he said, "You know I can give you this but go to [*points to the right]* Mrs -----. Maybe she can help you." If there was woman couldn't have babies and they not having babies, they'll have twins. She never lost a baby. And she never charge a penny. If you bring her, like this parent will said, "bring that for your grandmother – " One thing, she used to smoke a pipe, tobacco. Because they planted tobacco and she make – [*motioning this process with her hands]* dry it and smoke - if you bring her some tobacco, thank you. You bring her two oranges, two grapefruit and say thank you, that's okay. But not a penny. Should never come in dollars in sense.

Consequently, these stories of affirmation are more than reflections of positive evaluation by society because they emphasize her principles of integrity, irrespective of material rewards. The moral undertones of these stories makes it easy for Sharon to draw connections between the correct way to nurse, to cook, to parent, and to live.

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[181] Ann Laura Stoler and Karen Strassler, "Memory-work in Java: A Cautionary Tale," *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule, By* (2002): 162–204.

[182] As seen in James, *Doña María's Story*. Note: this does not contradict the earlier use of anecdotes in his same chapter. Rather he substitutes anecdotes with this definition to show the varied examples of performance**.**

And the second repeated physical gesture – her index finger pointed at me – reflects the intensely directed nature of her morality tales. I as a listener and specifically "as a young woman" must heed her warning and benefit from this advice.[183] This sentiment echoes what Dionne Brand has labelled 'wisdoms': anecdotes that offer black women intergenerational survival strategies.[184] This brings me to the heavily gendered nature of these performances, both in content and form. For instance, the descriptive details in Sharon's stories often account for the *labour* that goes into preparing food, or necessity of planning and organizing to stretch one's economic resources. Moreover, the use of quotes, dialogue and description as seen in the above examples are also gendered forms of remembering.[185] This gesture is especially significant, I argue, because of the gendered and racialized valuation of 'care work' in society as it intersects with the evaluative function of work more generally.[186] What does it mean that she takes pride in the very occupations historically used to limit or deny the economic contributions of black women? Does this manner of self-representation erase her critical appraisal of gendered, economic and racialized structures of power? (I will return to this point later in the chapter.) Yet, if we limit our discussion to her transgression of or submission to such norms rather than how they function in her narratives, we miss the deliberate, creative and performative ways she cultivates her self-image in the stories.

Finally, consider the statement Sharon delivers after contrasting the deception of a false, immoral herbalist with her grandmother's (and by extension her own) practice.

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[183] Considering she said this explicitly, I think it's safe to say her view of me guides much of the interview as well. This is also a reminder that oral histories are very contingent: how would this interview change if I were older, or a male, or white?

[184] Dionne Brand, "A Working Paper on Black Women in Toronto: Gender, Race, and Class" *Fireweed: Theory* 19, (September 1984): 26-43

[185] Selma Leydesdorff, Luisa Passerini, and Paul Richard Thompson, *Gender & Memory* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2005).

[186] Flynn, *Moving Beyond Borders*.

> "See me? I live no evil and I think no evil. You understand? But there is evil in this world, I tell you that. There *are* good and evil. Tell you in the Bible. But my mentality, I live no evil and I think no evil, you understand? Because it's things you believe sometimes that deteriorate you.

Through her memories, Sharon associates a life-generating view of ethics with her practices as chef, nurse, and storyteller: to live by/tell them means to be a good person. The deliberate association between good and integrity is diametrically opposed to evil and insincerity. According to Sara Ahmed, this distinction is made possible by the very way affect circulates between bodies, aligning some subjects and distinguishing others, establishing the very surface of difference; and, as they circulate, affects also accumulate in value through an economy of emotions.[187] As a recurring theme, Sharon's stories about food, preparing it for some grateful subjects and ungrateful others, having it requested or ignored by certain people is quite telling.

As a way to introduce the third and fourth ethical gestures, we can see that cooking takes on two different valences depending on how you break it down. The first is the desire to consume certain food: this affect is associated with a territorial and gendered identity. While Sharon explicitly asserts Caribbean men prefer Caribbean food, while white Canadians need spices adjusted to their taste. The second cuisine related affect is the will or openness to preparing all types of food; she associates this flexibility and openness with her own accumulated knowledge over the years that mark successful interactions across ethnic encounters, and even in some cases across romantic relationships. Depending on the context, food can become a marker of her own assimilation as a 'good' immigrant and moral woman at the same time. Consequently, it is not that surprising to see the emotive language and narrative gestures associated with the healing power of good chicken soup return when Sharon describes her idea of true passionate love.

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[187] Ahmed, "Affective Economies."

Gesture 3: Romantic Love

> Love could be defined in many different sentences – right? You more educated than I am, right? *[Pause]* Let's say you have an orange. *[Pulls out a pen and paper to draw this point]* And you could slice that orange with all these little pegs. All that is a little ounce of love you given out there. And you could say how much – you know? But true love, passionate love[188] – oh, you got to feel it from within. "I love you? That mean I got to go to bed with you?" Sex don't come just because someone say 'I love you.' That's my old school – it may not be for you but…*[points to herself to say it is for her].*

As one of several moments discussing true versus false love, this description typifies a great deal of our interaction. Similar to the rest of the ethical gestures, Sharon favours sincerity and integrity of one's actions in her memories of romantic relationships and experiences of love; she articulates the evidence of such behaviour in morally consistent actions, as can be seen above, through discourse of sexual purity/chastity. Yet this gesture particularly exposes the paradoxical nature of her composure narrative through an ironic unfolding of events. In the gap between her limited choices and expansive desires is the space for composure to draw strength.

To explore these liminal spaces, Sharon's early memories provide an insightful backdrop. For example, there is a fifteen minute segment in which her stories moves from a warm description of her parents' marriage, to a chance run in with a former school teacher, to an account of her search for love. The story of her parents' marriage offers two points to the listener: that it was a love match made against the wishes of her paternal grandparents; and it was a happy union across racial boundaries. (And when she describes what they had to offer each other, it's clear that perceptions of status and beauty are infused with race and class: "My mother is very tall. My father is a short man. 'How come he married this –' I couldn't get it. So [my father] always say – "Don't ask!" *[laughs]* But, my mother tall and black and good looking fall a Spanish – my father wasn't that good looking but he Spanish, he had the complexion, the

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[188] She uses the exact same hand gesture as when she described healing power of chicken soup, moving her hand from her chest outward in my direction.

hair.") Sharon laughs as she describes the shock her father's family faced when he returned to

Colombia, announcing his love and marriage to a black woman. And this reminds her of another

funny story of a chance encounter with a former school teacher, an indo Trinidadian man,

during one of her visits to Toronto.

> You know, after I married twice and I was in Toronto, a divorced woman, I met my
> school teacher and we talk. … He tell me, "You know when you was 13, I went to your
> mom and dad to ask to marry you. Your dad would've said yes but your mum she turned
> me down." *[Laughs]* I said "Really?" I said, "So I would've been then - " And he's Indian!
> So I would've been marrying then – I Said, "I wish my mother was alive let me ask she,
> 'how come all of them get a little Indian man and I didn't get one?"[189] [*Laughs*] And they
> annul my first marriage!! Because, my aunt I was living with, marry me out of the
> Catholic Church. O God, what confusion. But I wasn't there to have no say. They just do
> everything, and they take me out of the marriage – because the boy family – oh, you
> wouldn't like to hear that story! *[Laughs]* But then they put me in private, commercial
> school. And then my mother get me my husband, the second husband. So I said, I always
> looking for the third husband. You know? That I will find for me. Because, you know
> what? Them didn't find him for me.

The very fact that Sharon tells me these stories with great mirth reminds me of narrators in

Pamela Sugiman's "Life is Sweet: Vulnerability and Composure in the Wartime Narratives of

Japanese Canadians."[190] In varied examples of composure, narrators followed memories of

vulnerability or alienation with positive reflections, reinforcing a divide and progression

between then and now. As an example of recurring composure this story, particularly her

search for a third husband, one worthy of her respectability, is elaborated and told in pieces

throughout the interview, often but not always accompanied by confident laughter.

If this narrative pattern seems familiar, it is because it appears in her childhood

gestures. Even though narrator Sharon might question the fairness of certain choices,

protagonist Sharon follows the 'rules', does the 'right' thing only to find out this path offers no

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[189] At another point, she makes reference to a number of interracial marriages in her immediate and extended family.

[190] Pamela Sugiman, "'Life Is Sweet': Vulnerability and Composure in the Wartime Narratives of Japanese Canadians," *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue D'études Canadiennes* 43, no. 1 (2009): 186–218.

guarantee against misfortune. Thus, comedic irony blends with tragic irony[191] as she describes

two other significant moments that changed her life. When telling me about the betrayal that

ended a deeply loving relationship of over twenty years, Sharon, comes to terms with this pain

through prayer and reflection: "So I talk to him and I speak to my maker and I say, *[pause]* 'Men

are like dogs, you cannot control them.' I forgive, you know what I mean? And I will try and

move on." As one of her 'subjective truths'[192], this view of a gendered morality generally, and

her own self-image as having high moral authority particularly, is repeatedly enforced in other

discussions of sexual relationships. By declaring sex to be a sacred act, its misuse or abuse

becomes immoral and unethical on a religious register. The responsibility, however, for such a

deed is differentially placed because she believes the onus of restraint should be on women

even while recognizing men exercise a greater degree of power in such negotiations. Even

though her claims reveal certain inconsistencies, there is nothing contradictory about her

identity or self-representation. For Sharon , perhaps especially because she cannot guarantee

that tragedy will not befall her, she lives her life as she sees it, on the right side. Remember, "I

live no evil and I think no evil. You understand? But there is evil in this world, I tell you that."

Nowhere is this irony more apparent than the three times she mentions the sudden loss

of her daughter's life, over twenty years ago. The details of her death remain silent in this story,

but certainly not for lack of importance.[193] If we were to draw a link to the 'darker side' of Dona

Maria's narratives, the details of Argentinean labour and political history that curtailed her

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[191] Think about how Daniel James categorizes literary genres of Dona Maria's testimony. And Alessandro Portelli uses literary genres to follow form and meaning in oral histories.

[192] Even though I'm making explicit reference here to the standard in oral history, that the value of interviews come from 'subjective truth' as much as or even more than what they offer to 'objective' facts, there is another way to look at this. Consider Ann Stoler's definition of deployment of race as a truth claim – a way to explain how and why the world is. Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*.

[193] At the time, I was scared to ask more about her loss. I assured myself, she told me so many other personal stories; surely she would elaborate if this was something she wanted to tell. Truthfully, I think I was scared of asking her to relive the pain. Only in reviewing the tapes did I notice how that moment hovers, sometimes very closely and sometimes a little further away, from every other discussion.

opportunities and choices, almost in the face of her every effort towards a different outcome, we might point to this moment as it altered Sharon 's life path. Her plans to retire and live part of each year in Trinidad were set to begin the same year as her daughter's accident. But that changed when she became the guardian of her four grandchildren, born in Montreal: "The days I used to live for material things was before my daughter died." And like Dona Maria, Sharon also turns to religion as a formative part (indeed one of many parts) of her ethical sensibilities to explain such events, find strength, and move on. Yet, this lack of certainty regarding one's future makes it even more important for her to behave morally, to be grateful rather than despair: **"**You have to thank God for everything because you never know what will happen." Thus, the paradoxical elements to these gestures should not be confused with delegitimized perspectives but instead reflect the deeply ambivalent consequence of layered beliefs and material limitations to life.

Gesture 4: Neighbourly Relations

Internal inconsistencies are also apparent in the next gesture as Sharon blends universal notions of good behaviour with a particular vision of her neighbourhood. If struggling with the discomfort I felt was one way of experiencing a 'response-ability' to her stories, I was confronted once again by the challenge of representing Sharon's disappointment of some Little Burgundy resident. [194] On the one hand, this gesture stands out for its explicit connection to the political realm, as she details her grassroots involvement with the Coalition of Little Burgundy and her thoughts on government services and immigration policies. However, I believe it would be more instructively read as a refraction of the remaining gestures for the way she performs this neighbourly ethics; she ultimately draws from the moral discourse and foundation set up in

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[194] For an interesting reflection on subjectivity and identification with narrators see: Valerie Yow, "'Do I Like Them Too Much?': Effects of the Oral History Interview on the Interviewer and Vice-versa," *Oral History Review* 24, no. 1 (1997): 55–79.

the rest of the interview to express what it means to be a 'good' neighbour, and by extension of the changes to the neighbourhood over the last forty years, a 'good' immigrant.

Since I was first introduced to Sharon as a graduate student and researcher for a project on the neighbourhood, her extensive involvement with the coalition from its inception in 1989 naturally underlines much of our discussion of Little Burgundy. When recounting the challenges and strengths of her community, she doesn't shy away from calling it what it is, a struggle. Not unlike former coal miners in Alessandro Portelli's *They Say in Harlan County,*[195] the language of war seeps into her descriptions of crime, poverty and gentrification: "I am telling you girl, it was a war. It was coke (no the coke wasn't much)... It was crack, it was marijuana, and it was cocaine; and all these people live in city housing… And little druggy become big druggy. And that was the mess"; "I'm fighting the war in Burgundy"; "fighting the cause"; "we got to clean up the mess." But for Sharon, it's also a blessing to live in this neighbourhood so rich in life "and thick with culture." Ultimately, she laments the lack of greater interaction among residents that would carry the area to its full potential. And for her, this comes in large part through the absence of strong, positive role models for the neighbourhood children to engage with and learn from. The ambivalence in this assessment is reflected through conflicting emotions about her investments into the community. On the one hand, she gives it her greatest efforts because that is how she approaches all her commitments and responsibilities, especially to her grandchildren: she's working towards their right to safe upbringing. On the other, she's disheartened by what she identifies as the unequal commitment in the neighbourhood by residents who abuse government social services and refuse to contribute. Consequently, her emphasis on the 'right' way to share space and public services makes it very difficult to keep this gesture discrete from the others.

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[195] Alessandro Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County: An Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

As with other gestures, Sharon variably draws on memories that highlight her own

model behaviour, sustained by her continuous moral character or that emphasize the damaging

consequences of superficial commitments and individualism, especially for the sake of Little

Burgundy's youth. For instance, she contrasts her absolute intolerance of any sort of smoking

with observations of other people she sees:

> "In this community here, some of the parents just turn their heads, they seen their kids
> doing it but the kids controlling some of the parents. … Some of them cannot talk to the
> children about it because they have some man that doing it, so how could you tell your
> child not to do it. … If [marijuana]is your high, it's all well and good with you. But my
> beef is when young people innocent God's children figure well, you as an adult could do
> it so can – and don't know what will happen in the long run. And you could become
> addicted. THAT'S my problem. Because children live what they learn. You understand? If
> they living in the surrounding and they see that you lighting up in front of them, they
> will try it sooner or later behind your back or somehow. You know, you have to be very
> strong in mind and faith not to do it.

In other examples, negligence as role models coincides with isolationist attitudes because it is

the parents' duty to know what their children are up to *and* collaborate on issues that affect

everyone. In an interesting re-working of an earlier performance, Sharon used her notepad to

demonstrate this point. Except, rather than depicting the draining out of authentic emotion (for

the orange-slices-of-love metaphor), she drew a series of disconnected shapes for each national

immigrant population in Little Burgundy to emphasize the fracture of a collective whole: "This is

how they fit themselves in a little cubicle. But I don't think people should live in a community

like that." In addition to her views of model authority, Sharon's willingness to extol the

necessity for assimilation to the dominant national cultures also reflects a certain characteristic

of composure narratives: the material, the language she uses to form narrative coherence draws

from popular discourse to effect lines of difference. That is, in a parallel asymmetrical

relationship, this time between citizens and the state, not only must immigrants to Quebec learn

French, but some should also leave their cultural practices and beliefs behind in their country of

origin. She gives the rather charged example of young Muslim girls who deceive their parents by

donning the hijab only when they are close to home. This problem, as she sees is results from

leniency in government policies: "And this is where Canada went wrong. When they in their

country, wear your hijab. When you're in this country – that's my thinking eh – go with the flow

here." Thus, Sharon's physical and iterative performances insist that to act morally for yourself

and your neighbours is to be a good person. At the same time, the language she uses extends

this lesson into her contemplation of Little Burgundy's reputation, a struggle to name its

essential character and how it ought to be.

In accordance with Doreen Massey's call to historicize our concept of place, it is

important that we see this struggle play out across time and space.[196] Sharon's concerns about

her neighbourhood are cemented by her reflection of how different Little Burgundy used to be.

It was a safe place, full of welcoming neighbours, until all of that changed. She characterizes this

divide using two different temporal markers although they correspond roughly with the same

time. The first is the Sir George Williams Affair in 1969 which I will return to. Although my

questioning moves us in a different direction and her responses take us to yet another, we

return to the change in the neighbourhood later in the interview. At this point, Sharon notes the

downward decline started with municipal expropriations in the late sixties [197] and construction

of government housing complexes, followed by an influx of migrants in the late 1990s from

other parts of the world. These forced relocations coincided with the dispersal of Montreal's

black populations across the city. Yet for Sharon this demographic trajectory is actually the

decline of community itself and the beginning of a fractured neighbourhood because of the

connection she makes between anti-black racism and increased ethnic diversity. Consider how

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[196] Massey, "Places and Their Pasts."

[197] Many would agree with this marker, the late sixties as a crucial turning point since a great number of overlapping shifts took place city wide. See Dorothy Williams urban demography for more context on the expropriations Dorothy W. Williams, *Blacks in Montreal, 1628-1986: An Urban Demography* (Cowansville, QC: Éditions Yvon Blais, 1989).

Sharon very directly points out the disproportionate blame placed on poor, black populations

for problems that affect the whole community, such as drug trafficking:

> Well, since I been here, it was good until, they start bring in more immigrants in the neighbourhood. And it started a real, real mix – cultural. And everything start (pause) changing. And the thing is it is not only blacks that is in to the drugs. The Hispanic, the Arabic, the Bangladeshis. Listen to me, there is so much of them here, some of them build all the condos. And their children is from the rich and famous and those who renting it is in the drugs. But some of them are not users, they have the money and selling it on the campuses to the young people. And the young people buying from them selling to the poor people out there to make a dollars. Some of them are not users, but some of them are the sellers. It's on the campuses. It's on big work place. You understand? And that's what's going on. So, they use the younger folks and the poorer ones to do their delivering and the selling. And then the young one start using themselves and they get themselves into trouble. Because - you know what I mean? They, get greedy. But I, as I said to my friend, "I ain't see a rich black drug dealer yet, tell me one."

> So when we formed this coalition, it was to get a mix of people get together. You learn my culture, I learn yours. You understand me? And try to live as – you know. The best we can. But you know the stigma is that black people into the drugs. But that is not what going on in Burgundy, point Saint Charles, even Saint Henri. And the black people – all of them in drugs. Most of them. The Hispanic, you think their parents don't know they in drugs?...They from Bangladesh, but if that's how they want to live, let them live. But imagine that they aint know their child in drugs? "No no we from Bangladesh our child not in drugs. It is the black people in drugs." No, no, no you understand? Drugs is everywhere here.

Consequently, her memories truncate the distance between changes in demographics, urban

landscape and immigration policy by describing the present conditions of the community as the

very reason for the coalition's development twenty five years earlier. Once again, relating to the

very purpose driving Sharon 's ethical gestures, she has remained consistent in raising her

children and grandchildren by continuously supporting the betterment of her community, even

as it changed for better and for worse. More important than any correspondence to historical

chronology, that Sharon 's shifts between the social, political, and economic 'modes' as a

narrator depending on the meaning she wishes to create reflects Portelli's classic analysis of

Luigi Trastulli's death.

Thus, the intersections of race, class, and gender converge completely in memories that are at once spatialized and politicized. As an ethical 'gesture', these stories about Little Burgundy, and the right way to *be* in this shared space, do set her personal composure more firmly within Canadian national (and federalist) narratives, even as she describes the ways black and Caribbean people have been left out of this view. This oscillation between different positions echoes, as Bhagwati has written, the multi-gestured way we live out our lives.

There are two important points to take away from this gesture. The first is to emphasize contradictions and internal consistencies should not delegitimize her perspective but instead point to the fault lines of identity and identification. And more to the point, that the dynamics of power across racialized communities demonstrate that oppression and prejudice are not mutually exclusive. Rather than seek out details that 'give voice' as evidence of resistance to marginalization, perhaps it's more useful to ask what purpose these comments and this ethical gesture generally serve. I think they represent a sliding scale in which the right combination of restraint, engagement, and appearance blend in model behaviours which are simultaneously refracted through prisms of gendered and racialized nationalities. These distinctions moreover, allow Sharon to make certain claims about herself or others using rights and citizenship discourse that reflect the politics of space/place.

The second point is to insist these memories as performance should not be isolated from their personal and social context as an alternate study of formal politics might require. For instance, the Sir George Williams Affair makes a brief but strong appearance in her life history. It's very interesting that she uses a moment of black radical politics in Montreal - symbolized through the fate of Rosie Douglas – to point out the unfair accusations of destruction against West Indian students, Rosie Douglas's affairs with white women as a potential source for the RCMP's targeting of black student, and her implicit support of the movement in the kitchen

even though she didn't fully agree with black nationalist tenets. Consequently, Sharon's life history teaches us to go beyond standard markers of 'politics' in the narrowly defined sense. And when we do, we see the *politics of reproduction* working its way through memories and discussions of romantic relationships and the *reproduction of politics* in views of parenting, religion, and community building.

Reflection #2: Moral Laboratories, Agency, and Paradoxical Foundations

As a field, oral history destabilizes certain assumptions between truth and experience, fact and fiction. As a narrator, Sharon seamlessly leaps across continents and decades, challenging these very same assumptions. In a way, she completely gives up on the fictions of chronology; there is no corresponding truth between a recent 'reliable' memory and a distant 'experiential' memory. As a listener, you're forced to contextualize every narrative to draw out its meaning. This analytical challenge runs parallel to social and oral history's political contributions to the humanities or scholarship on the production of knowledge generally that connects voice with representation and agency. In keeping with this reading, much of the performative functions of memory in this chapter rest upon Sharon demonstrating her visibility and authorizing her presence. As I have argued throughout this thesis, however, there is a danger in cutting the theoretical analysis short at the level of representation.

I propose to re-enter this discussion of 'experience' and 'agency' in the context of an oral history interview by way of Cheryl Mattingly's formulation of 'moral laboratories' and Saba Mahmood's intervention on agency. In "Moral Selves and Moral Scenes: Narrative Experiments in Everyday," Mattingly takes up the recent 'ethical turn' in the anthropology and sociocultural studies broadly by reviewing two primary social imaginaries in which the moral self is crafted, the trial (inspired by Nietzsche) and the artisan workshop (inspired by Foucault), and introducing a third, the moral laboratory. This inaugural scene, the moral laboratory is:

"a metaphorical realm in which experiments are done in all kinds of places and in which the participants are not objects of study so much as researchers or experimenters of their own lives – subjects and objects. … Notably, one of the primary definitions of experience is 'experiment' (OED). It is this relationship between experience and experiment, the experimental nature of experience itself, which the laboratory trope highlights. In this moral laboratory, participants are not working with the odds but also, in important ways, *against* them. The possible is pitted against the predictable. This is a laboratory of unique human actions: that is, a space for the production of beginnings, which turn out to be miracles of sorts."[198]

Mattingly's portrayal of an ethics centred in neo-Aristotelian traditions that emphasize action and experience in the formation of knowledge is thus easily grounded in every day actions and activities, in ordinary scenarios such as the routines and exercises of care givers, domestic heads, or health care professionals.[199] And most strikingly related to our discussion here, that these experiences-as-experiments are sometimes understood best in relation to experience-as-a-risky-journey, or rather the narrative arch germane to the experience itself. Adding to the fragility captured in the inaugural scene, Mattingly suggests, "[w]ith this image of this risky journey, we are offered a particular kind of narrative understanding of moral experience that is not about defending oneself after the fact but experiencing oneself to be living within possible narrative plotlines that stretch backward and forward in time, within a field of narrative potentiality."[200]As her framework resonates strongly with the questions animating this chapter, I suggest we may read Sharon's interview generally and narrative gestures specifically as moral laboratories of sorts, through which experience (as experiment *and* journey) is driven by her exercise of agency as potentiality. To explore this further, consider Saba Mahmood's articulation of agency in her ethnographic study of women's mosque movement in Egypt.

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[198] Mattingly, "Moral Selves and Moral Scenes," 9.

[199] Ibid., 7–8.

[200] The footnote accompanying this sentence is worth reproducing. "One might reasonably ask for more details about how this inaugural scene with its moral laboratories and journeys is narrative in a different way than, for example, the inaugural scene of a courtroom – which obviously also suggests the need for a narrative account of oneself and, therefore, both presupposes and creates a narrative version of a moral self. In the context of this paper, I can only pose this excellent question but have not the space to address it. It deserves its own paper."Ibid., 24. To this question I add another: can a single inaugural scene account for modern subject and the other – the moral self and its shadow?

Mahmood also grounds her definition of agency in an Aristotelian framework of ethics and performance that views the body as a means and end towards cultivating a virtuous subject.[201] On the one hand, it builds from Judith butler's theory of performativity in which Butler emphasizes the contingency embedded in performance of bodily and iterative acts, which in their approximation of hegemonic social norms can destabilize the very structures of dominant representations. The practices Mahmood observes among women in the Mosque movement differ in that their performances do not necessarily destabilize structures and nor do they aim to do so. But they do move towards a particular ideal in a way that builds from one performance to another and uses the body in creating this interior effect and not simply mirroring it. [202] Therefore, in keeping with her overall theoretical push in *Politics of Piety* to uncouple agency from its liberal equation with resistance, she opens up the possibility of viewing these performances as the exercise of agency, directing the moral self towards another telos based in historical and social particularity. In doing so, she pushes for a more flexible understanding of agency as potentiality, as a modality of actions in which the subject may counter, inhabit or support social norms. Mahmood does caution, however, against applying this theoretical frame without considering the particularity of its applications.[203] While there is greater room to perform the intellectual labour required to take heed of this warning, I believe this chapter pushes forward in this direction through its situation of gesture as a narrative act that is also embodied and performed.

In this sense, Sharon exercises her agentival capacities throughout the interview by mobilizing various skills and resources available to her as a way to cultivate her ideal self, characterised by moral integrity and unconditional love. These include a range of actions that

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[201] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*. For a focus on performance and agency, see Chapter 1 and 5.
[202] Ibid., 162–163.
[203] Ibid., 163.

refer to iterative performances as well as physical and emotional investments they narrate; her

social authority as a respected elder and community member, her condemnation of false care

practices and insincere relations, her commitment to civic and institutional engagement, and

insistence on dreaming new possibilities. On this last point, I want to briefly mention another

category of gestures to solidify this theoretical crossover. While the performative aspect of

narrative 'gesturing' allows Sharon to re-live and modify some of her memories of the past,

perhaps especially in contrast to a relative decline, I want to guard against a nostalgic reading of

memory. There are other stories, similar to bell hook's use of 'yearnings'[204] which might be

rooted in her past but also have a forward orientation. Anecdotes of what might have been

overlap and co-exist alongside stories of what might be, of future possibilities; stories of what

Sharon would do given different means and opportunities. In a way, they extend the moral self

she cultivates in her other stories which reveal how she learned certain life lessons, as in her

knowledge of herbal remedies, by describing the ways she would pass on this knowledge. They

offer a space for her to act out the person she would be given different circumstances. But more

importantly they can have a forward orientation, even working "against the odds" towards a

different future than the ones her current circumstances might indicate: running a dance

program for seniors, a hostel service for students, and publishing a book of herbal remedies. In a

way, Sharon's repeated stories of 'if I had the opportunity, I would...' remind me of the Afro-

dreamers of earlier twentieth century for the way she creates a realm of possibilities almost in

defiance of, but closely related to her reality. That her collection of gestures accumulates in a

narrative of composure which is paradoxical both in content and form, moreover, makes this

ethical practice Aristotelian in character.[205] In other words, Sharon has both learned and teaches

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[204] hooks, *Yearning*.

[205] Mahmood, pg 161: "In the Aristotelian worldview, ethical conduct is not simply a matter of the effect one's behaviour produces in the world but depends crucially upon the precise form that behavior takes:

that it is important to always do and be good, *especially* because there is no guarantee this way of being will result in an easy or good life. Likewise, the paradoxical nature of composure, as an interpretive framework which must account for that which is beyond her control is underlined by this need for an open and non-contradictory framework to accommodate all that has been (and some of what can never be), the present and the future in its alignments. The extent to which Sharon works to maintain purity of mind, body, and spirit while embodying the states in all her daily interactions and endeavours, hopes and dreams, and indeed self-representations culminates in her manifestation of what it means to live well.

Conclusion:

If there are similarities between the themes explored in this chapter and received black memory explored in previous chapters, this is because the power dynamics that necessitate some level of authorization (whether located Africa or Sharon's culturally devalued knowledge) have persisted in the legacies of slavery.[206]   As a female black Caribbean immigrant of Catholic faith, Sharon relies on various ways of identifying to illustrate her own portrait of composure. Yet the interconnected boundaries of gender, race, class, and sexuality collide in 'truth' claims she makes using the dominant discourses of nation, citizenship, and rights. Rather than simply questioning the politically transgressive potential of such choices, I believe it's important to ask how such claims limit certain opportunities for life and enable others. Thus, the performance of memory ultimately allows narrators to shape and sculpt their multiple selves - both as they are and as they want to be while the tensions highlight the 'inescapable,' material reality.

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both the acquisition and consummation of ethical virtues devolve upon the proper enactment of prescribed bodily behaviors, gestures, and markers (MackIntyre 1996). Thus, an act is judged to be ethical in this tradition not simply because it accomplishes the social objective it is meant to achieve but also because it enacts this objective in the manner and form it is supposed to: an ethical act, to borrow J. L. Austin's term, "felicitous" only if it achieves its goals in a prescribed behavioral form (Austin 1994)."

[206] That is, it performs the same rhetorical work; the affect derived from 'black history' lessons of activists decades earlier is similar to Sharon's memories that authorize her knowledge, experiences and moral positions.

Another way of approaching black memory through this oral history is to ask how Sharon variously supports, counters, or inhabits norms through her ethical gestures. In short, she does this in the multiple ways place is associated with identity in her narratives. One's origins or place of birth dictate one's desires, preferences, and essential racialized character. This territorial definition of identity however is not fixed but coincides with a more fluid approach drawn out between generations. That is, she acknowledges the duties of any individual to adjust to and invest in her place of residence, especially as an immigrant and for the sake of her descendants. Moreover, the shape and form of one's responsibilities and investments in such political, economic and affective economies are gendered and classed. Consequently, it's easy to see how a liberal national framework supports the trajectory of her claims, even though the details of her memories might point to alternative spaces of being.

In this matrix of belonging and longing, Sharon lives out a diasporic identity, shifting between various cities, communities, and familial networks while maintaining explicit ties and attachment with certain nations and spaces and not others. The embodied telling is an important glimpse into how this is done which is why the underlying principle in oral history and social history is "giving voice". Allowing Sharon to tell her story is supposed to be an active agency, resistance to erasure. But, I think it would be a mistake to stop here because there is a limit to nominal representation. Even though Sharon coheres her life story on the principle of 'doing what's right' regardless of the reward, a principle that she firmly embeds within her self-representation as a respectable, black Caribbean woman, this narrative of composure is tenuously constructed in each recounting of her ethical gestures. It is not enough to ask a person to tell her story, and collect it as additional fact for larger objective history of the world.

But instead we look at the "slippery subjectivity" of black diasporic women[207] in our stories, the myths we live by that offer a more meaningful indication of what it means to live in space, call it home, and trace one's roots'; perhaps especially so because of the dialectical relationship between imagined material worlds. Consequently, these questions are still ultimately political once we accept a broader definition of politics, as taken up by the realm of ethico-politics, the cultivation of our ideal selves.

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[207] Carole Boyce-Davies, *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

Conclusion: Echolocation

To conclude, I want to discuss briefly the third and most common understanding of echolocation: a means for locating oneself in relation to ones surroundings. That is, I return to the very insight that sparked my journey towards listening for ethical gestures. It's worth repeating here, my research is not a 'study of a people in time' as so many individuals have suggested while I struggled to formulate my thoughts in the early stages. Well meaning or otherwise, this common sense understanding of history, of memory can result in particularly damning consequences for the subjects it claims to represent. Furthermore, it might seem tempting to place the findings in each chapter along a theoretical incline, an implicitly chronological ordering of diasporic politics that suggest improvement as time goes on. My exercise in echolocation is aimed at challenging exactly such a reading. Instead, this thesis follows three entry points into memories of black life in Montreal's 1960s, memories that can hardly be confined to the decade, the city or the diaspora. Thus, I hope these chapters appear more like a symphonic arrangement with variations on a number of recurring themes. In total, they offer a beginning, a first step towards understanding a number of relations, my position in this history among them.

This desire or deliberate practice for identification that cuts across time and space is certainly not unique. But as some of the theorists and narrators in the previous pages suggests, it is especially germane to diasporic practices. In this context, identification is not as simple as a self-driven search for recognition but an inherited problematic passed down through the generations since, to borrow from Saidiya Hartman, "the prison house of race was born."[208] David Scott's development of black diaspora tradition as "a socially embodied and historically extended argument"…"within – and especially between – the generations over the meaning in

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[208] Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*, 39.

the present of our past"[209] attests to the continued tensions in every successive inheritance. And in the 1960s particularly, the work carried out by this tradition authorized identification of black communities with a magnificent past, even as perspectives within and outside these communities differed as to *how* this identification should be practiced. And yet, Brent Hayes Edward's concept of *decolage* a historically situated process of articulation, avoids the temptation to assume a teleological solidarity. These practices of diaspora are thus situated in particular contexts that are shaped by various conditions. Their traces are evident in the newspapers, conferences, protests, community organizations that embedded certain capacities, dispositions and daily practices in their politics of remembering. For those who took up this charge then, thinking again of musical recalibrations here, perhaps a mix-tape would be another relevant metaphor. There is no way to engage this simultaneous desire and challenge without sampling or remixing perspectives and actions that came before.

For me, this intergenerational reflection came out in striking and overlapping ways during my graduate studies. Throughout the course of my research, I attended a number of related public history events – film screenings, talks, workshops, and art exhibits. That many of these events coincided with black history month is a reflection of the present memorial culture that unites the moral and political imperative of historical reflection, albeit in institutionalized and prescribed ways. Joining the context that appears in Chapter 1: On Cementing Foundations and oral histories of Chapter 2: On Shifting Foundations, my research suggests authorizing traditions in the former seep into oral testimonies of the later as the moral imperative in solidarity *and* remembering solidarity is refracted in narrative strategies of emplacement. My interactions with Pamela were especially poignant. Near the end of her interview, much of our conversation lingered on the right way to remember the sixties in relation to the exhibit at

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[209] Scott, *Refashioning Futures*, 123.

which we met just a few weeks before. Pamela disliked that it was titled "Black Montreal in the 1960s"; she thought it should have been qualified as "a view" since it certainly differed from her own experiences. As she coupled her critique with a pensive appreciation of a younger generation's attempt to remember, in this case the curators of the exhibit, I was struck by the salience of her comments. It felt as though she was reading my mind as the realisation of the task before me set in: how do I respectfully represent and disagree with the perspectives that have come before me? Is there a way to trace sonic footprints that doesn't involve matching my feet or avoiding the steps that don't quite fit?

In the final chapter, I made this task the central focus by examining the work carried out in the moral laboratory of oral history interview space. In this lab, performative memory-work emits frictional heat as practices mediating desires and expectations rub against material and historic conditions shaping, even bonding the unfolding experiments with certain possibilities and distinguishing it from others. Thus, ethical gestures as my own interpretation of the moral laboratory can do many things including point to historical forces shaping their qualities and the condition from which they emerge. That these gestures may also cohere with coeval oppressions and prejudice, or exclusionary views based on universal principals makes it all the more important not to search only for the most transformative of gestures. Rather, it is more important to ask what kind of political horizons does gesturing ethically or creation of ethical gestures make possible?

Following this line of inquiry, my project aims make central the moral economies embedded in politics of remembering for reflection by or about diasporic subjects. The legacy of twentieth century black liberation struggles implicitly supported in a duty to remember the brutality of slavery is often predicated on the moral expectation that history never repeat

itself.[210]   And many might object that there is a real important difference between brazen displays of racism which inspired Dennis Forsythe's anthology *Let the Niggers Burn* with the seemingly unimaginable possibility of such a scene today. After all, this is precisely how several narrators marked the significance of their memories: it could never happen now, not in that way. Instead, I'd rather point to the similarities between then and now by showing how taken for granted *moral groundings* embedded in universal notions of equality, justice, and non-violence facilitate the continuation of racism, alienation and displacement. In other words, there is an eerie but complex and pervasive acceptance of a history of moral progress, even if an official narrative of progress associated with colonialism has fallen out of favour. So long as these moral groundings remain unacknowledged as such, celebratory narratives make possible the historical hijacking of black liberation struggles towards modernizing ends. Therefore, this study of how memory works aims to challenge easy slippages between experience, truth, and knowledge; it contributes to a larger argument regarding fundamental connection between ethics and politics that come together to structure categorical positions.

Reading Saidiya Hartman's story, following her meandering encounters along the path of strangers, I was taken aback for the second time in the course of my research by memories of childhood arguments. I had never stopped to consider what it meant that I could go back to my parents' homeland and trace my family tree if I wanted. True, as a child of this world I resented the colonial disconnect between me and my mother tongue(s) and came to embrace the history written into my skin colour as if it were my own. But as the echo of another world, I took for granted my ability to trace my path to a time where no one would have thought to shout at me, "go back and stay there." To say it is difficult to articulate this complex pain is an

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[210] Hartman, "The Time of Slavery."

understatement and in a way a central achievement of her writing generally. [211] The artwork of

Kara Walker likewise caries the spectral haunting of slavery in life size, panoramic silhouettes,

visual depictions of struggles for power. The meanings of these images however are firmly

implanted in present contexts, aimed at engaging audiences who are forced to physically move

through the scene. [212] My exercise in echolocation has led me to this scene: to consider the

invocation and provocation evident in Kara Walker's artwork which challenges all audiences,

diasporic or otherwise, to consider their own relationship with difficult histories. In tracing the

living wounds between Africa and its diasporas, Hartman asks "to what end do we conjure the

ghosts of slavery if not to change futures?" I join Hartman and Walker in refusing to turn away

from difficult stories, from apathetic standing point and daring readers to do the same.

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[211] Saidiya Hartman, "The Position of the Unthought: An Interview by Frank B. Wilderson, III," *Qui Parle* 13, no. 2 (2003): 183–201. Not only does Hartman's research underscore the difficulty in writing the lives of slaves when their ontological status in juridical discourses remain non-existent: how does one tell narratives of subjects who occupy "the structural position of the unthought"? Hartman is also willing to have a very difficult conversation about her own politics and that of the people she meets on her journey, all variably connected to these differential legacies. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection* and Frank B Wilderson, "Position of the Unthought – Interview with Saidiya Hartman"

[212] Yasmil Raymond, "Maladies of Power: A Kara Walker Lexicon," in *Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love*, ed. Philippe Vergne (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2007), 347–370.

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