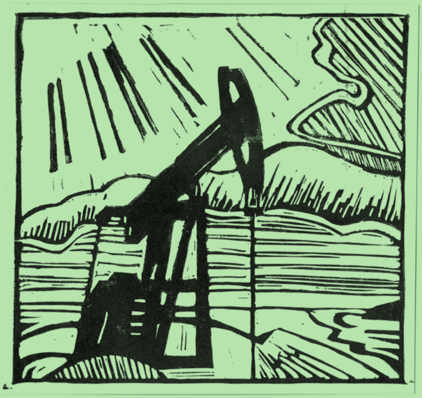


convergence

a journal of
undergraduate
and
community
research

volume iv

convergence

a journal of undergraduate and community research

volume iv
october 2013

published by QPIRG Concordia and QPIRG-McGill
in montreal, quebec
october 2013

the convergence 2013 collective and editorial team
amber gross, brooke nancekivell, carolin huang, degane sougal, elliot montpellier, jaggi singh, kama maureemootoo, nicolas quiazua, sabrina gurniak, sofia bach

layout & design
kristin li

cover art
c. gladu

the journal is available online at **http://convergencejournal.ca**

convergence is distributed under creative commons

This is the fourth edition of Convergence, a modest yet powerful Montreal-based publication aimed at demystifying the traditional concept of research as being necessarily academic. In this space, ideas, people, projects, and concepts of varied nature are brought into contact. This convergence aims at breaking down the barriers between university work and community activism, bridging the individual and the collective, tying the theoretical to the practical, linking grassroots to institutionalized research…

Since we believe that "research" extends beyond the confines of the classroom and the library, we want to acknowledge "community-based social justice research models" that value research as it is rooted in the everyday life of individuals and communities. Through the acquisition of information, the understanding of how society functions, and the comprehension of how social, political and economic systems structure the world and people's lives, individuals and communities generate significant knowledge that falls outside the realm of academia but, we believe, is as legitimate. We see such research as valuable and empowering and we aim to provide initiatives where such knowledge-sharing can take place. Convergence is thus a publication that accompanies the Community-University Research Exchange (CURE), Study in Action and Art in Action which are other processes that are in place to facilitate community-based social justice research.

The fourth edition of Convergence brings together texts and art coming from undergraduate students, artists and community organizers who might share the same politics and/or have direct lived experiences with the issues that they fight for or against. We thank the contributors for sharing their work, and the Convergence 2013 collective for making this rad and exciting publication possible.

We also hope that this convergence of ideas, art, people and communities will take on a life of its own and encourage more spaces for intellectual work geared towards grassroots social justice and community-based models.

unschooling et <<free school>>: l'éducation peut commencer……………………4
marike reid-gaudet

homeschooling in montreal: emerging questions from an interview-based project……………………8
allison jones

a deviant bride to be……………………17
lily hoffman

corps queer: la décolonisation des genres……………………27
cléo mathieu

artwork showcase……………………32

lines of force: critiques of nationalism at the intersection of migrant justice and indigenous sovereignty……………………38
keara yim

language and power!……………………46
aaron barcant

what is in a word?/à l'intérieur des mots: a portrait of community creative writing groups……………………55
myriam abdelhak

burnout in social movements: the roots, the experience, the lessons learned……………………60
allison jones

list of contributors……………………69

Marike Reid-Gaudet

Unschooling et «Free school»

L'éducation peut commencer

La surveillance de l'éducation par les gouvernements est un des moyens dont ils se servent pour influencer l'opinion.
- William Godwin, 1756 – 1836

Je m'intéresse au *unschooling*, à la non-scolarisation, car c'est une philosophie de vie appliquée plutôt qu'une méthode pédagogique comme telle. Cette philosophie, qui est celle des écoles-libres, peut se vivre également dans le cadre de l'éducation à domicile. À mon avis, cette philosophie favorise chez l'enfant l'autonomie, la confiance en soi et le plaisir de s'instruire. L'éducation prend tout son sens en permettant à l'enfant d'apprendre à se connaître lui-même et ne se réduit pas à une simple accumulation de savoir comme dans le système scolaire traditionnel.

Une des plus anciennes école-libre encore active aujourd'hui est Summerhill en Angleterre qui fête cette année ses 92 ans. A.S. Neill[1] fonde Summerhill en 1921, les principes de bases de l'école sont la liberté et l'autogestion. Le rôle de l'expert est remis en question: les profs sont d'avantages des facilitateurs. L'enfant est maître de son temps et responsable de son éducation. Neill croyait que les enfants n'apprennent vraiment que lorsqu'ils le souhaitent, que la motivation est intrinsèque, et que apprendre est un mouvement qui part de soi, alors qu'à l'école traditionnelle l'apprentissage est passif : le professeur possède le savoir et le déverse sur l'enfant qui doit essentiellement mémoriser l'information.

Pourtant on n'apprend pas à un enfant à marcher…

Neill postulait que l'école traditionnelle fabrique des individus plus facilement manipulables afin de répondre aux besoins d'une société de consommation.

Ivan Illich[2], génial auteur et critique de nos sociétés industrielles s'intéresse aux liens entre l'école et la société capitaliste. En 1961, il crée au Mexique un laboratoire où plusieurs centaines de personnes sont venues réfléchir ensemble sur les meilleures façons pour changer la société. Illich trouvait nécessaire une déscolarisation de la société et chercha des solutions pour séparer l'école et l'État. Ces ateliers prirent fin en 1976, mais ils furent des incubateurs de plusieurs révolutionnaires, tels que l'anarchiste Paul Goodman, le pédagogue brésilien Paulo Freire et le pédagogue américain John Holt.

John Holt[3], qui fut amèrement déçu par les réformes, quitta le système traditionnel pour devenir un ardent défenseur de l'éducation à domicile dans les années 70. C'est d'ailleurs lui qui inventa le néologisme *unschooling.*

Le terme *unschooling* définit la façon dont vivent les familles en dehors du système d'éducation traditionnel et de son curriculum compulsif. Holt n'excluait pas, pour les enfants, la possibilité d'utiliser une approche traditionnelle ou des manuels scolaires, mais avec pour différence que ce soit l'enfant qui choisit ce qu'il veut apprendre et comment il va l'apprendre. L'enfant contrôle ainsi son apprentissage. Apprendre ne devrait pas être inféodé à un corpus de savoir et de connaissances qui répond à une demande sociétale.

Le rôle des parents dans le *unschooling* ainsi que des adultes dans l'école libre est d'encourager la curiosité des enfants et de les assister dans leurs recherches et expérimentations. L'enfant est amené à se poser des questions, suivre ses intérêts, lire des textes, initier des projets.

Notre système d'éducation est construit sur un modèle industriel: la journée commence avec une cloche qui sonne, les pupitres sont ordonnés en rangée et les enfants sont séparés en différentes classes, comme par année de fabrication. Ce modèle, né avec le début de l'industrialisation, existe pour reproduire le type de travailleur et de consommateur du système capitaliste. Parce que la philosophie du *unschooling* postule que l'enfant est un apprenant naturel qui devrait être en charge de son éducation, il s'agit d'un changement radical de paradigme où le but poursuivi n'est plus la reproduction du système mais le plein épanouissement d'un individu, l'enfant.

> *Ce n'est pas le savoir qui doit être inculqué, c'est la personnalité qui doit parvenir à son propre épanouissement.*
> *- Max Stirner[4], 1842*

Créer des alternatives concrètes à l'endoctrinement du système d'éducation institutionnel a toujours été une priorité pour les anarchistes. Que ce soit dans le domaine de la réflexion comme chez Godwin ou Stirner, ou dans le domaine de l'expérimentation comme chez Sébastien Faure et Francisco Ferrer.

L'anarchiste français Sébastien Faure[5] créa *La Ruche* en 1904. Cette école-libre ne dépendait ni de l'État, ni du domaine privé, et elle était auto-suffisante. Il s'agissait tout d'abord d'une école, mais elle était aussi d'une coopérative de travail à laquelle tous participaient pour s'autofinancer. Établis à la campagne, les participants y produisaient du miel, du lait et des légumes et les enfants y étaient autonomes. On y trouvait des ateliers pratiques sans aucun classement, les filles y avaient le même statut que les garçons (ce qui était rare à cette époque), et on n'y enseignait pas la religion. En 1917, suite à la première guerre mondiale, *La Ruche* ferma ses portes.

Francisco Ferrer anarchiste espagnol créa l'*Escuela Moderna* en 1901. Ferrer fut emprisonné et exécuté en 1909 par Franco qui a grandement été encouragé par l'église catholique. La mise à mort de Ferrer scandalisa l'opinion publique et donna naissance à plusieurs écoles-libres inspirées de la sienne. Il y a eu en Suisse, en Hollande, en Allemagne et même aux États-Unis.

Qu'en est-il du Québec?

L'éducation au Canada relève de la juridiction des provinces. Au Québec, l'éducation à domicile est légale[6], enchâssée dans la *loi sur l'instruction publique* (article 15.4). Par contre, les écoles-libres sont présentement illégales au Québec. Il existe pourtant des écoles-libres qui ont fait leur preuves en Ontario, en Colombie Britannique, à Albany (à peine deux heures de Montréal).

L'École-Libre Radicale de *Mtl Rad School* est un groupe d'adultes et d'enfants dévoués à la liberté et à la démocratie en éducation. Le groupe milite pour la création d'une première école-libre au Québec. Ils ont depuis quelques années expérimenté le fonctionnement d'une école-libre avec un petit groupe d'enfants se concentrant sur: les cercles démocratiques, la création collective d'un curriculum organique, etc... La première année, ils ont travaillé sur l'éducation des enfants et l'année suivante sur celle des adolescents. En ce moment, ils souhaitent plutôt concentrer leurs énergies à présenter un projet pilote au gouvernement. Si vous êtes intéressé-e-s à vous joindre au collectif et à participer à leur projets, n'hésitez surtout pas à les contacter!

montreal@ecolelibre-freeschool.org
@EcoleLibreMtl

1 Neill A.S. Libres enfants de Summerhill, La découverte, 2004.

2 Illich I. Une société sans école, Seuil 1971.

3 Holt J. Teach Your Own, Perseus, 2003.

4 Stirner M. L'unique et sa propriété ed. Poche, Paris, 2000.
5 Faure S., Propos subversifs Tops Eds H.trinquier, 2012.

6 Association québécoise pour l'éducation à domicile:
http://www.aqed.qc.ca/fr/lois/la-loi

Allison Jones

Homeschooling in Montreal

Emerging Questions from an Interview-Based Project

Introduction

As part of a larger project exploring homeschooling and educational anthropology, I conducted six semi-structured interviews with seven homeschooling parents in Montreal (five individuals and one couple) to learn more about their practice of homeschooling and the ideals behind it. Considering the small size of my sample, I do not claim to make any broad conclusions about homeschooling in Montreal or elsewhere. Nonetheless, these interviews highlighted a number of interesting themes, and raised a number of questions for potential future exploration, both of which will be outlined below.

Recruitment

I recruited participants for the interviews through a local homeschooling centre, Centre Communidée, both online and in person. I have been involved in Centre Communidée for the past 8 months, which provided me with a strong understanding of the organization and a sense of its community before I began my interviews. My research has been significantly influenced by my involvement at the centre and my relationships with people there; it is hard to consider my reflections on the centre 'neutral', but neither do I intend to unabashedly advocate my own interests. Thus, I hope that through examining the interviews I conducted in conjunction with previous literature on homeschooling, my analysis will provide the reader with insight into this small homeschooling community and the lives of some of its members.

My interviewees were recruited through Centre Communidée's website and networks, and therefore my interviewees tended to have perspectives similar to those of the centre itself. This description, from the homepage of Centre Communidée's website, gives a good sense of the mission of the organization. It reads:

Centre Communidée is a non-profit, non-religious, volunteer-run community centre for homelearning families. Membership fees are used to pay for rent, utilities and some supplies. Most activities are organized and run by people from our community, and are included in the membership fees.

All our activities are interest-based and are not designed to meet any educational requirements. As homeschooling families, you and your child are responsible for your child's education. Communidée's activities and workshops are offered as a supplement to your homeschooling experience. ("About the centre," n.d.)

From this description a few key features are noticeable. First, the centre is explicitly 'non-religious' and the fact that activities are 'interest-based' suggests a pedagogical, child-led approach to homeschooling.[1] Second, there is no link between Centre Communidée and the local school board; it is community-based and volunteer-run. Third, we get the sense that activities are more social than educational, and present an important aspect of families' homeschooling methods.

Interview Findings

In my interviews, I found a relatively high level of consistency with previous homeschooling research in terms of family demographics, reasons for homeschooling, and methods and materials used. There is an abundance of different aspects of my findings that could be explored, but I have chosen to focus on themes from the interviews that have been largely absent from previous research.

The Importance of Reading. An interesting value that all but one parent mentioned was the importance of their children learning to read. I have not been able to find any research that explores homeschoolers and reading, despite the fact it was one of the most common issues that my interviewees brought up. Reading was seen as a way for children to take more control over their own learning and explore new topics. One parent summed it up as, "I thought if he can learn to read, then he can read about the other stuff." This did not mean that all parents wanted their children to read at a young age (although some also expressed this sentiment), and two parents said that although their children had started reading later than they might have in school they did not see this as a problem. Nonetheless, reading was an underlying concern, and for many a 'bottom line' of what they wanted to teach their children.

Involvement in Centre Communidée. There has been little academic work written about homeschooling collectives, organizations, and centres. As my research grew from my involvement in Centre Communidée, I was curious about the role of this space in families' lives. Four of the parents I interviewed were currently participating in activities at the centre, one had participated in the past, and one was hoping to do so soon. Parents identified two main reasons for participating in the centre. First, their children were involved in activities there, and enjoyed participating in them. Second, the centre was a space where parents provided each other with mutual support, both emotionally and practically. (For example, parents might babysit or teach each other's children).

Diversity and Similarity at Centre Communidée. I asked the parents currently involved in Centre Communidée to comment on the diversity of the families that use the centre. One parent, who has been involved at the centre for a number of years, described:

In the sort of bigger picture of all the families that have come to the centre, if I sort of line all those people up, I would definitely find a fair amount of diversity. I mean, we have had religious families, we've had, you know, different races coming, different ethnic backgrounds, different philosophies of education, you know, all of that.

Despite the fact that the centre attracts a diverse group for one-off visits, it seems that the people who stay involved are fairly similar. While visiting and participating in the centre's activities, the majority of those involved who I met were white, middle to upper-class, two-parent families in which the mother stayed at home and the father worked. The families usually take a child-led approach to homeschooling, and are often unschoolers.[2] They also tend to share political beliefs, as one parent described:

I would say if you were going to look at it from a political point, most people would be fairly, more or less on the same page in terms of what they believe in. Like, what they believe the kids should eat, in terms of people's rights, people's, you know, they're very more or less on the same page, supportive of women's rights, gay rights. I assume that most of the people, I could be wrong, will more or less be together on that.

Different homeschooling approaches at times caused tensions or made other parents uneasy, though; as one parent said, "there's some I respect enormously for what they seem to be achieving with their kids, and other ones it's like they're not involved."

Attending School in Future. When asked whether they thought their children would attend school in the future, there was a marked difference between those who had been homeschooling for a longer or shorter amount of time. The five parents who had been homeschooling the longest tended responded along similar lines to this parent: "[We're] not opposed to [our children going to school], but I would say probably more at the university or the CEGEP level rather than before." Almost all parents indicated at least some interest in having their children attend higher education.

The two parents who had been homeschooling for a shorter time indicated a stronger expectation that their children would return to school sooner rather than later. In both cases, they had removed their children from school due to specific negative experiences and said they would not enroll their children in the same schools again. One expressed a desire for their child to attend an alternative school.

Feelings Towards School. More generally, then, what were the feelings expressed towards school by interviewees? One of the parents who expects their child to return to school in the near future described:

I guess my feeling is that I don't feel strongly that schools are terrible and wrong and bad and oh-my-goodness. I think there are things that should be changed and should be different, that could be more effective and wonderful and good, but I don't think that they're this terrible thing either.

This perspective was fairly typical of those interviewed, who saw schools as having flaws, but also saw those flaws as fixable. Another parent described, "well, homeschooling isn't perfect, and school isn't perfect, so you have to weigh the pros and cons, that's what I've discovered."

Critiques of schools tended to focus on the methods used and on the fact that teachers are very overworked, and therefore have a difficult job to attend to the needs of 25 or 30 students simultaneously. Some parents felt that schools were too rigid in their methods, and not representative of how contemporary society works. For example, "school systems that teach this material, and this curriculum, and this so the kids end up with this, are doing everybody a disservice because society doesn't work that way any more."

A common feeling for those parents whose children had attended school in the past was that the schools were slow to respond to specific problems, especially bullying and poor teaching. A number of parents also identified their own school experiences as negative in some aspect, whether simply boring, riddled with poor teachers, or focused on useless material.

Suggestions for Change. Parents made suggestions both about improvements that could be made to schools as well as improvements that could be made to policy regarding homeschooling. A number of parents proposed that school boards should offer support to registered homeschoolers, but recognized such support might come with strings attached. One parent elaborated more on the fears they have about such a program, stating they were against any method that linked a family's right to homeschool to their children's performance:

So they say we're going to evaluate your kid to see if you have the right to homeschool, if your kid doesn't fare well, you don't have the right to homeschool him? Like, that is just wrong to me. Because, even though my kids are shining little geniuses who will do just fine in the world, not everybody has such little treasures, you know. And some kids have a hard time learning one thing or another, or are different from, you know.

Other parents advocated more cooperative, grassroots relationships between homeschoolers and schools. For example, one described:

The idea of Communidée is a great idea, it should be standard, it would be really great if there was something tacked on to the existing school system, where they allow them to use the gym, or arts and crafts class…I think homeschooling partnerships with schools would be beneficial to everybody. Because I think the kids that are homeschooled would get *a lot out of it, but I also think the school kids would see a different point of view.*

Three parents suggested that they would also like to have the option of sending their children to school part-time in order to get basic instruction, and then be able to do activities as a family or outside of the school for the rest of the day. One parent described:

I think that is really the way to do it, to have the discipline of doing two hours of good, intensive schooling, where you can give them all the information they need at their level and probably beyond, and have the rest of the time to do whatever you want. I think that's the approach I would like to go to.

While this depiction, emphasizing 'intensive' schooling, may be more rigorous than some homeschooling families would accept, the idea of not having to go to school full-time, in order to be able to do other things, was shared with others.

Suggestions for changes that could be made to the current system were described in all interviews. Parents clearly identified what was working for them about homeschooling, what they missed from schools, and what they imagined could cater to families' diverse needs. Despite these ideas, though, only one seemed involved in homeschooling organizations that were making concrete demands of the government in order to help such changes materialize.

Implications of Findings

Overall, my interview findings were consistent with previous research on homeschooling. My interviewees fit the demographic portrait of Canadian homeschoolers put forth by previous authors (Ray, 1994; Smith, 1993; and Van Pelt, 2003). Research that has shown the tendency for change in homeschooling families over time, in methods, materials, and philosophies (such as the work of Arai, 2000; Chapman & O'Donoghue, 2000; and Van Galen, 1988), seems very applicable to this group of families, who generally focused on flexibility and practicality in their homeschool practice. Interviewees also fit the portrait of Quebecois homeschoolers given by Brabant, Bourdon, and Jutras (2005), which highlighted family-centred practices and ideals and a high level of animosity towards school boards and homeschooling registration.

There were a few topics that I found came up frequently in my interviews that are not discussed in other homeschooling research and would make interesting future topics of inquiry.

First, the increasing presence of homeschooling centres and the ways in which they act similarly and dissimilarly to schools in the lives of homeschoolers has largely been unexplored. While Centre Communidée serves more pedagogical homeschoolers, authors have also noticed a trend in the US for religious homeschoolers to create charter schools (particularly in California) in order to use state resources to purchase curriculum and support their homeschooling practice (Hill, 2000). What do homeschooling families find different about homeschooling centres and charter schools from the mainstream school system that makes them interested in being involved in the former, but not the later? Why might some homeschooling families not want to be involved in these homeschooling community groups either? How does diversity, in demographics as well as values, affect families' participation in homeschooling centres?

Second, the sole skill that almost all families mentioned they want their children to learn is reading. Of course, reading is a very common skill in Canada, and one that is incredibly useful in many ways, but so are other many other skills (cooking, using technology, conversing, and problem-solving come to mind). Why then, was reading highlighted so prominently?

Third, many interviewees suggested that although they doubt their children will ever attend school, they do expect their children may want to attend university. How does university differ from other forms of schooling? Why is that more attractive for homeschooling parents? Fourth, these parents articulated clear desires for a changed and improved state response to homeschooling. How might these desires be addressed in systemic reform of the education system in Canada? How can a better balance be found between state interests and family practices? Do homeschooling parents think about how the absence of their children from school may impact institutions of public education?

The research I conducted was not targeted enough at a specific issue, nor was it conducted with sufficient interviewees, in order to draw new conclusions about these realms of homeschooling. It does, however, indicate areas where existing literature does not account for the diverse and personal experiences of different families.

Conclusion

Much research has been done on homeschooling in the past fifty years as it has fluctuated between being a counter-cultural practice of leftists and hippies, a rejection of secular schools by religious fundamentalists, and a last-choice for parents whose children suffer rather than flourish in a traditional classroom. Previous research has tended to focus on why parents homeschool, what homeschooling families do all day long, and what are the demographics of homeschoolers. In this project, my interviews allowed me to explore the breadth of homeschooling, looking both at these areas as well as themes that have been unexplored so far. Those that I have summarized present avenues to be explored in future, which may tell us not only about homeschooling but also about schools, community, and larger values in our society. They are therefore important in terms of building a broader understanding of the role of education in our lives, and adapting ourselves to the variations in how that education may occur.

1 In a model proposed by Van Galen (1988), homeschooling families or groups are often referred to as either 'pedagogical' or 'ideological'. Ideologues are religiously motivated homeschoolers, whose main critique of the school system is the ideological content of the curriculum (see for example Moore & Moore, 1979; Moore & Moore, 1981). On the other hand, pedagogues believe that schools are incompetent at teaching, and have a strong respect for the creativity and independence of children. They choose to homeschool in order to nurture this creativity and independence in a freer environment (see Holt, 1964, 1981, 1989; Neill, 1960). This model has been challenged by a number of other authors for being over-simplistic (see for example Arai, 2000), but nonetheless captures an important and basic divide in the homeschooling community.

2 Unschooling, in its most extreme form, is a version of homeschooling in which children have absolute autonomy and authority over their own lives, do what they want when they want, determine their own interests and schedules, and are free from any parental constraints on their behaviour or education. In a more moderate form, it refers to homeschooling in which children do self-directed learning, but parents may have a say in other aspects of their lives. This second form of unschooling was more represented in those homeschoolers I interviewed.

References

About the centre. (n.d.) Retrieved April 24, 2013, from **http://montrealhomelearners.ca/communidee/**

Arai, A. B. (2000). Reasons for home schooling in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 25(3), 204-217.

Brabant, C., Bourdon, S., & Jutras, F. (2005). Home education in Quebec: Family first. *Evaluation and Research in Education*, 18(3), 112.

Chapman, A., & O'Donoghue, T. A. (2000). Home Schooling: An emerging research agenda. *Education Research And Perspectives*, 27, 19-36.

Hill, P. T. (2000). Home schooling and the future of public education. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 75(1-2), 20-31.

Holt, J. C. (1964). *How children fail.* New York, NY: Pitman.

Holt, J. C. (1981). *Teach your own: A hopeful path for education*. New York, NY: Delacorte Press.

Holt, J. C. (1989). *Learning all the time. Reading*, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Miller, R. (2002). *Free schools, free people: Education and democracy after the 1960s.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Moore, R. S., & Moore, D. N. (1979). *School can wait.* Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press.

Moore, R. S., & Moore, D. N. (1981). *Home grown kids: A practical handbook for teaching your children at home.* Waco, TX: Word Books.

Neill, A. S. (1960). *Summerhill: A radical approach to child rearing.* New York, NY: Hart Publishing Company.

Ray, B. D. (1994). *A nationwide study of home education in Canada: Family characteristics, student achievement, and other topics.* Salem, OR: National Home Education Institute, Western Baptist College.

Smith, S. D. (1993). *Parent-generated home study in Canada: The national outlook 1993.* New Brunswick: Francombe Place/Research Associates.

Van Galen, J. A. (1988). *Ideology, curriculum, and pedagogy in home education*. Education and Urban Society, 21(1), 52-68.

Van Pelt, D. (2003). *Home education in Canada: A report on the Pan-Canadian study on home education 2003.* Medicine Hat, AB: Canadian Centre for Home Education.

Lily Hoffman

A Deviant Bride to Be

"I just love ya, babe." These words are often platonically exchanged between me and my closest friend, a cis-gendered femme queer woman. In an attempt to challenge capitalist mechanisms of hetero-normativity and gender performance, I decided to dress butch,[1] accompanied by my femme friend. The two of us pretended to be an engaged queer couple while I tried on wedding dresses; my friend was there to act as my girlfriend and fiancé, proclaiming her (perceived non-platonic) love to me throughout our adventure. By blurring gender presentations and publicly existing as an engaged queer couple in an expensive bridal shop, this act aimed to dissent against dominant gender presentations, hetero-sexism and hetero-normativity, and confront the use of capitalist exchange as a means of gendered social control.

I chose this act of gendered deviance for various reasons. First, I present and identify as a woman, although sometimes more androgynous. I was interested in exploring a more traditionally masculine and gender-queer expression of myself, to further queer my already non-normative self-perceptions and expressions by presenting as butch. The act of wearing a wedding dress also seemed a challenge given my sometimes androgynous expression. Further, as a queer woman, I was interested in publicly displaying an expression of my sexual identity in the heterosexual space of a bridal shop I would never otherwise enter. Finally, I hold many qualms about the institution of marriage and its role within an oppressive capitalist system as a means of patriarchal and state control. I felt that this act would challenge me in its conformity to materialist expressions of femininity and beauty, manifested in a wedding dress, encouraging compliance with the institutional framework of marriage and weddings.

When my friend and I walked into the bridal shop, holding hands, we were asked politely if we had an appointment. We answered that we did not, and the woman who greeted us explained that she would check to see if it would be possible for us to be assisted without one. Her face was marked with a degree of concern or confusion. The co-worker she returned with began assisting us, starting with numerous questions. She first inquired about who was getting married, to which we replied that we were marrying each other. A look of surprise struck the employees' faces, as they responded with "Oh, vraiment? Très

bien!" Up until this point, the women were primarily addressing my 'feminine' friend, until I announced that we were there in search of a dress for me, and that my "fiancé" would be using her mother's dress. Again, expressions of surprise emerged, and they ushered us into the store. As we began to examine the dresses, it took a few minutes for the employee to begin addressing me first, shifting her gaze and the direction of her words away from my feminine-presenting accomplice. Over the course of the visit, the woman assisting us referred to my friend and I as "friends," and only once, after some stuttering and hesitation, did she use the word "fiancé."

The responses to our deviance were subtle, and in large ways embedded within the capitalist environment the act took place in. The employees did not argue nor negate our presence as a lesbian couple in the store, yet were clearly surprised. In some ways they seemed excited; as if our presence validated their store and marriage itself as somehow "progressive" and "inclusive." However, their surprise and excitement obviously reflects heterosexism and the normative assumptions embedded within the bridal shop. Lesbian presence is unexpected; while acceptable, it is perceived as somehow not 'normal' or unusual. Further, the initial cling to my 'partner' as the primary customer reflects normative gender judgements, even within a queer relationship. To the employee, the 'feminine' partner conformed more to conventional standards of a bride-to-be. Even with a wedding dress on my body, the employee was suggesting dresses to my friend that she should try on, prioritizing her as a potential customer over me. I suggest that the subtleties of their reactions were due to the context. In a setting of the sale of expensive material goods, explicit limiting of non-normative behaviours or obvious disapproval is not usually socially acceptable. The employees quickly warmed to our unique story when they realized we were still potential customers, from whom they could make a monetary profit. The potential capital gain from our interaction limited the explicit nature of the social control mechanisms exercised on my friend and me during our deviance. My experience of this act and acknowledgement of the employees' reactions is reminiscent of Julia Serano's passage "Performance Piece." In it, Serano discusses how understanding gender as only a performance is limited, that she "can perform gender...but [that] *performance* doesn't explain why certain behaviours and ways of being come to [her] more naturally than others."[2] This act was very much a performance for me; I adopted an unusual personal style, and acted the role of fiancé to my best friend.

Serano contends, however, that "when we talk about…gender as though it were a performance, we let the audience – with all their expectations, prejudices, and presumptions – completely off the hook."[3] The subsequent analysis aims to understand the construction of the performance aspect of this act, as well as examine underlying influences shaping the responses to our deviance.

Two theoretical frameworks are of primary use in the analysis of this act. First, queer theory can be utilized to understand the gendered and sexual deviance embedded in my behaviour, as well as how the social institution of marriage intersects with this particular performance. Second, Marxist feminism provides an interesting perspective on the role of capitalism and material exchange in influencing the outcomes of the event.

Queer theory suggests that gender and sexual identities are socially constructed as categorical dichotomies. An individual's gender or sexual identity is constructed with large reference to these socially established categories. Identities are not fluid, and queer theory encourages the dismantling of such socially-prescribed categories, including 'man,' 'woman,' 'heterosexual,' and 'gay,' among others. Langer and Martin suggest that "it is not the private experience of one's gender (gender identity) or the public manifestation of it (gender role) that is necessarily socially constructed, but rather the conceptualizations of gender-appropriateness and gender-inappropriateness."[4] This understanding highlights the fluidity of acceptable limits to gendered behaviours.

There are various ways in which the deviant act under discussion can be analyzed through a queer theory perspective. Most obviously, our adoption of different gender presentations represents a blurring of gender expressions and categorical relevance. While I do sometimes present as androgynous, assuming a butch presentation was both a challenge to me and the traditional gender binary. As a cis-gendered woman, I have been socialized towards a more feminine physical representation. A less feminine presentation, demonstrated through my clothing, blurs conventional understandings of what a cis-gendered woman, and future bride, should look like. This blurring also challenged me to examine how much I rely on physical presentation to give cues to others and receive validation from them for my own identity. Kate Woolfe echoes these sentiments in her narrative description of her embrace of and acceptance into lesbian communities.[5] Woolfe discusses how she

initially catered her image to fit stereotyped versions of lesbianism, with short hair and other de-feminizing features. Her piece discusses how she heavily relied on her appearance as a means to communicate her lesbian identity to others, and utilized her physical presentation to develop her community inclusion. While Woolfe later views this vanity through a critical lens, when I dressed as a butch I felt connected to her expressed links between identity expression, community recognition, and inclusion.

Further building on queer theory, the conjunction between our gendered presentations and our existence as a queer "couple" in a heterosexual space embodies the struggle sought by queer theorists. Upon first glance, a butch and a femme couple may appear heterosexual, as their gender presentations in some ways conform to traditional 'male' and 'female' categories. The filling of these roles by two cis-gendered women, however, challenges normative assumptions about gender presentation in relation to sexual desire and relationships. Further, the passable presentation as a male/female relationship in the heterosexual space of a bridal shop can be seen as a subversive act to structures of hetero-normativity and gendered desire. As a queer 'couple' assuming presence in a straight space, we were confusing conceptions of belonging and acceptance, as well as conventional gender presentations, especially within queer relationships.

Specifically relating to trying on wedding dresses, the gender roles embodied and acted out during this act also align with the goal of challenging normative categorizations of gender and desire. First, a non-heterosexual 'couple' searching for a wedding dress is in itself challenging to structures of hetero-sexism, and the privileged access of straight couples to the institution of marriage. As well, the fact that the more 'masculine' presenting partner in this scenario (myself) was the primary customer confronts the rigid gender categories and acceptable limits of behaviour within them. The store employees initially, and continually throughout the exchange, perceived my femme friend as the primary customer. Queer theory would suggest that this bias was due to her more feminine presentation and stricter conformity to established behaviours within the category of 'woman'.

In addition, queer theory can help illuminate how marriage serves as an institution of social control, especially for queer communities. Marriage is a social contract between two individuals and the state in which they marry; the boundaries, expectations, and benefits of said relationships are legally outlined. Traditionally reserved for heterosexual partnerships, recent movements are struggling for the granting of marriage rights to non-straight couples. Gay marriage is legal in Canada, yet its inclusion within Canadian socio-legal discourse can be seen as perpetuating the limited dichotomized categories of gender and desire as discussed through queer theory. The extension of the category of marriage to include gay couples normalizes gay or lesbian relationships which choose marriage, at the expense of couples including trans* individuals, non-monogamous partnerships, and other non-"normative" relationships. From a queer theory perspective, one could argue that gay marriage re-enforces the rigid polarizations of male/female and gay/straight, and thus undermines the struggle for categorical dismantling. Marriage serves as a mechanism of control, erecting normative boundaries of acceptable expressions of desire. Trying on wedding dresses is representative of this institutionalized control.

A wedding dress symbolizes the social norms embedded within marriage as well as the influence of capitalism over individual behaviours. Marxist feminism is relevant in examining the role of capitalism in shaping this deviant act, including an analysis of both the material and social interactions which occurred.

From a materialist perspective, Marxist feminism suggests that material production and the goal of profit is foundational in an understanding of patriarchy. The capitalist mode of production and exchange drives all social interactions and systems, and is fundamental in the oppression of women, and the power of men over women more generally. In many ways, this theory is consistent with the events as they unfolded in the bridal shop. First, the necessity of an appointment to visit the store serves as a screening process, restricting access to the products only to a self-selecting group of clientele. Further, the excessive price of the dresses themselves represents the pervasiveness of capitalism in achieving the socially normalized and mandated ends of marriage. The least expensive dress in the store was $2000; this price embodies a female slavery to, and need for money as a means to attain the feminine dream of being a bride. Marxist feminists might claim that this reflects the power of money and materialism over women's actions. Further, the dresses on the floor shop were all one 'standard' size; they were designed to fit a 5'11" woman, who had a small waist and bigger bust. The employees contended that this was the case because most women had their dresses tailor-made to their bodies. However, offering one size, one which conforms to socially-prescribed ideals of female bodies, sells a certain body shape to customers. While women are able to have a dress tailor-made, not fitting into a dress in the store is likely to be a disappointing experience for potential customers, one which could highlight potentially already existing insecurities. Here, we can see how capitalist materialism sells certain bodies and more financially privileged lifestyles as expectations of femininity.

Drawing from Marxist feminism, I suspect that the subtleties of control manifested during the discussed interaction were in large part muted by the drive for profit. As already mentioned, the products being shopped for were extremely expensive, and it is possible the employees worked with commission benefits. While the women were obviously surprised by our presence and requests in the store, they were conscious of muting their shock, so as to not scare away or offend potential high-paying customers. From a Marxist perspective, the goal of profit on behalf of the employees, as well as the conventions of customer service as established for situations involving material exchange, can be seen as limiting the behaviours of the female employees and setting the tone for the entire interaction. Capitalism and material exchange strongly influenced the employee's reactions, and encouraged the utilization of subtle mechanisms of social control over more explicit repressions.

Committing this gendered deviant act was particularly challenging for me. The most difficult part was the reflection experienced as a result of the linkages between my dress and gender presentation. As already discussed, dressing butch was an exaggeration of a style of appearance I already sometimes embrace. Adopting such a style prompted me to think further about the relationship between my dress and identity. More taxing, however, was trying on the wedding dresses themselves. I have never envisioned myself in a wedding dress, or having my own wedding, and seeing myself in an extravagant, expensive gown was extremely uncomfortable emotionally. I felt as if I was drowning in white fabric, consumed by lace and excess material. The white colour made me feel dishonestly 'pure;' the dress' corset made me feel trapped in a vision of femininity I do not identify with. Again, this parallels Woolfe's expressions as a queer woman. "The Lesbian Look...has less to do with one's sexual preference and more to do with a rejection of our culture's values about women. The Look frees us up to be more than decorative."[6] In a wedding dress, I felt exactly that, *decorative*, and limited by social values of women's beauty. Seeing myself in a wedding dress re-affirmed to me my act of embracing non-normative and androgynous aesthetics. Further, my presence in the bridal shop was extremely uncomfortable for me. I felt out of place and personally deviant in my mere presence in such an expensive and culturally select store. My discomfort with the environment and the dresses in fact limited my playing the part I assumed in the act, that of an engaged queer woman. I was less inclined towards physical or verbal displays of affection to my 'partner' because of this uneasiness. My deviance itself was limited by the extravagance of capitalism and materialism as it manifest in the store, and by the standards of beauty and femininity set by the environment.

Finally, this act questioned my identity and expression as a queer woman. While challenging manifestations of heterosexism and social gender expectations, I was prompted to examine my own relationship to institutions such as marriage, as well as how my queerness affects social interactions outside of queer-welcoming communities. Queer theory's encouragement of dismantling categories of gender and sexual identity is an admirable goal, and personally experiencing this struggle in a capitalist setting was particularly interesting. Deviance, as well as mechanisms of control to limit dissenting behaviours, is often subtle, and strengthening the ability to behave defiantly, with confidence, is of crucial importance to dismantling oppressive systems.

An extended and different version of this project, from where the included photos were taken, can be found at:
http://youngist.org/post/54548700371/my-body-my-marriage-photo-essay-by-lily-hoffman

Photographs
Photographer: Nicolas Quiazua
Model: Lily Hoffman

---

1 Butch and femme are slang terms used to signify the conscious performance of (exaggerated) stereotypical masculine and feminine (respectively) gender roles, most typically by queer individuals

2 Julia Serano, "Performance Piece" from *Gender Outlaws: The Next Generation*, edited Kate Bornstein and S. Bear Bergman (Seal Press, 2010), page 85

3 Ibid, page 86

4 Susan Langer and James Martin (February 2004). How Dresses Can Make You Mentally Ill: Examining Gender Identity Disorder in Children. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 21:1

5 Kate Woolfe, "It's Not What You Wear: Fashioning A Queer Identity" from *Looking Queer: Body Image and Identity in Lesbian, gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Communities, edited Dawn Atkins* (Harrington Park: 1998)

6 Ibid, page 504

Cléo Mathieu

Corps queer

La décolonisation des genres

Le mouvement queer occidental, éclos au début des années 1990, est une contestation radicale de la prédominance du modèle binaire de genres et des stigmatisations sociales en dérivant. L'appartenance queer signifie un refus d'appartenance à l'hétéronormativité, un refus d'être identifié-e/désigné-e comme homme ou femme, et par conséquent comme hétéro, homo ou bisexuel-le (puisque les individus correspondant à ces catégories doivent au préalable s'identifier/être identifié-e-s comme appartenant à un sexe ou à l'autre). L'auto-identification comme adhérent de la théorie queer implique une opposition au conformisme et à l'absence de questionnement de la norme hégémonique. C'est une bravade aux modèles établis, une déconstruction des catégories sexuelles imposées par le système hégémonique patriarcal : c'est une tentative d'abolir la pathologisation systématique des formes de sexualités considérées comme ''déviantes'' par la société, d'abolir les formes d'aliénation basées sur le sexe. La principale force du mouvement queer contre la domination patriarcale réside dans l'adaptation permanente qui lui est sous-jacente: elle défie le concept de catégories en refusant d'y adhérer. Quoique cela soit discutable et discuté parmi les rangs même des militant-e-s queer : autant la «multitude sexuelle» qu'elle prône semble satisfaire certains puisqu'elle déconstruit le modèle binaire hétéronormatif, autant semble-t-elle insuffisante pour d'autres puisque la déconstruction mise en oeuvre n'est que partielle - il s'agit encore de catégories, quoique d'une multitude de catégories...

∞

Le concept de «multitude sexuelle» est au coeur de l'argumentaire de Beatriz Preciado. Philosophe féministe d'origine espagnole, elle est connue notamment pour ses expérimentations anti-normatives sur son propre corps, soit par la prise régulière de testostérone durant une année pour son livre *Testo Junkie. Sexe, drogue et biopolitique*, dans un but «politique» de déterritorialisation de son corps. Ce concept de déterritorialisation est une expression empruntée à Gilles Deleuze, et Preciado l'emploie dans un contexte allégorique de décolonisation, c'est-à-dire de réappropriation des "biens" colonisés, nommément le corps des individus, aliéné par l'hétéronormativité. «Une sexualité quelconque implique toujours une territorialisation précise de la bouche, du vagin, de l'anus. C'est ainsi que la pensée straight assure le lien structurel entre la production de l'identité de genre et la production de certains organes comme organes sexuels et reproducteurs. Capitalisme sexuel et sexe du capitalisme.» (PRECIADO, Multitudes queer)

∞

La vision du corps est d'ailleurs un concept fondamental à la pensée queer, car c'est par la perception que l'on a du corps d'une personne que se fait l'assignation sexuelle, de même que l'ostracisation ou la pathologisation de la sexualité de cette personne pouvant s'en suivre. Ainsi, particulièrement en ce qui a trait aux catégories de genres, le corps peut aisément devenir un outil de protestation sociale. C'est en effet en accordant une valeur au corps qui est différente de ce qui est conventionnel en réduisant, voire en anéantissant l'importance accordée au corps, à l'apparence, que la communauté queer parvient à contester les catégories de genre ainsi que la division des rôles sexuels. Cette valeur est celle d'une banalisation du corps vers la liberté/libération de celui-ci - une libération des carcans socio-normatifs prescrivant un certain code vestimentaire, une certaine manière d'agir, voire même de penser, suivant le genre qui nous a été attribué - ou que l'on s'est soi-même attribué.

C'est du reste à ce propos que réside le conflit semi-interne particulièrement ambigu entre les identités queer et trans:

il est considéré, par plusieurs, que les personnes trans ne remettent pas vraiment en question le système hétéronormatif. L'argument est basé sur le fait qu'une personne trans passe d'un des deux seuls genres identifiés par les codes sociaux hétéronormatifs à l'autre, et par là renforce l'idée qu'il n'existe que des *femmes* et des *hommes*. Pour d'autres, cependant, la personne trans permet de déranger le genre dans ce passage d'un genre à l'autre: la transition démontre ainsi que la binarité du genre n'est pas *à priori* fixe. En sus, les personnes trans peuvent développer des modes d'identifications fluides, qui se localisent entre les deux genres, en étant les deux, ou entre les deux, mais jamais que un des deux.

Il existe aussi une problématique à la communauté homosexuelle, soit le soutien d'une perspective dominatrice hétéronormative sous une forme légèrement différente; l'homonormativité, laquelle promeut un standard, un modèle de vie de beaucoup basé sur le mode de vie normalisé des hétérosexuels (se marier, avoir une famille, avoir une carrière réussie, etc.). Dans les deux cas, la remise en question des catégories sexuelles n'est pas posée de façon fondamentale: les bases sociales restent les mêmes que celles construites par le patriarcat quant au mode de vie général à suivre.

∞

Beatriz Preciado affirme dans son essai *Multitudes queer - Notes pour une politique des ''anormaux''* qu'il « n'y a pas de différence sexuelle, mais une multitude de différences» contredisant le modèle qui s'ancre dans la différence entre les sexes - modèle promulgué autant par les membres dominants de la société patriarcale que par bon nombre de féministes. Référence par ailleurs plutôt *essentialiste* puisque désignant deux catégories sexuelles (mâle et femelle) comme les seules ''normales'' et qui plus est comme étant *biologiquement* différentes, en plus d'être (relativement) immuables en elles-mêmes. La philosophe espagnole soutient au contraire un mode de pensée constructiviste, c'est-à-dire une idée voulant que l'individu détient intrinsèquement une capacité de reconstruction (après avoir passé par une certaine dé-construction).

Cette dé-construction, prônée également par Jacques Derrida (philosophe dont le travail, outre celui de Judith Butler, fut très formateur pour Beatriz Preciado) est très proche du concept de dés-ontologisation, processus inverse à celui de l'ontologisation: « Partie de la philosophie qui a pour objet l'élucidation du sens de l'être considéré simultanément en tant qu'être général, abstrait, essentiel et en tant qu'être singulier, concret, existentiel.» (source: CNRTL) consistant ainsi en la considération particulière et non générale de l'être, de même qu'à la déconsidération de l'argument *naturel*. Preciado parle de «dés-ontologisation des politiques des identités. Plus de base naturelle ("femme", "gay", etc.) qui puisse légitimer l'action politique». Une base naturelle qui plus est véhiculée sous une forme normalisante et, par le fait-même, ostracisante.

La dé-construction à des fins de reconstruction est un concept-clé du raisonnement anti-essentialiste puisqu'y sous-tend l'idée que l'on crée soi-même son identité (l'*être* versus le *faire*), que notre identité n'existe pas préalablement à notre existence individuelle. L'identité de genre - au centre de la théorie queer - de l'humain est en constante évolution et est due à son environnement et à son expérience plutôt qu'à son essence.

∞

Déplaçant le concept de dé-construction vers une optique plus explicitement queer, Preciado aborde la «"Dés-identification" (pour reprendre la formulation de De Lauretis), identifications stratégiques, détournement des technologies du corps et dés-ontologisation du sujet de la politique sexuelle, telles sont quelques unes des stratégies politiques des multitudes queer». En se dés-identifiant de l'assignation de genre faite dans une logique hétéronormative, comme des genres en général, en refusant de manière manifeste d'adopter les comportements prescrits par la société patriarcale, les pluralités queer se développent comme «puissances politiques et non simplement comme des effets des discours sur le sexe» (Preciado, référant à Maurizio Lazzarato). En bref: l'apparence de neutralité (en termes de genre) comme affront à l'ordre social.

∞

Preciado conclut son essai sur une référence à peine voilée aux manipulations de l'hégémonie hétéro-normative à des fins de cohésion sociale, arguant que «les politiques des multitudes queer s'opposent non seulement aux institutions politiques traditionnelles qui se veulent souveraines et universellement représentatives, mais aussi aux épistémologies sexopolitiques straight qui dominent encore la production de la science» soulignant de ce fait l'importance du rôle que joue la science dans le maintien des structures et de la logistique hétéronormative.

∞

Le mouvement queer est un mouvement très critique de ses prédécesseurs (féministes, homosexuel-le-s) qu'il accuse souvent de n'être pas assez radicaux dans leur contestation du modèle hétéronormatif. En réaction à un féminisme trop neutre en ce qui a trait à l'inégalité motivée par des considérations de nature sexuelle et basée sur la non-binarité du genre, le mouvement queer fait front contre l'aliénation sexuelle des individus par les rouages de la domination patriarcale, en choisissant d'afficher un genre (à la base outil d'oppression) ambigu - niant par le fait même l'utilité des catégories de genre, de même que la notion d'essence qui y est étroitement liée. La décolonisation des genres sous-tendant à la théorie queer tient à ce que la différence sexuelle unique n'existe pas: c'est quantité de différences qui existent entre les individus - et c'est leur abondance qui annihile leur importance.

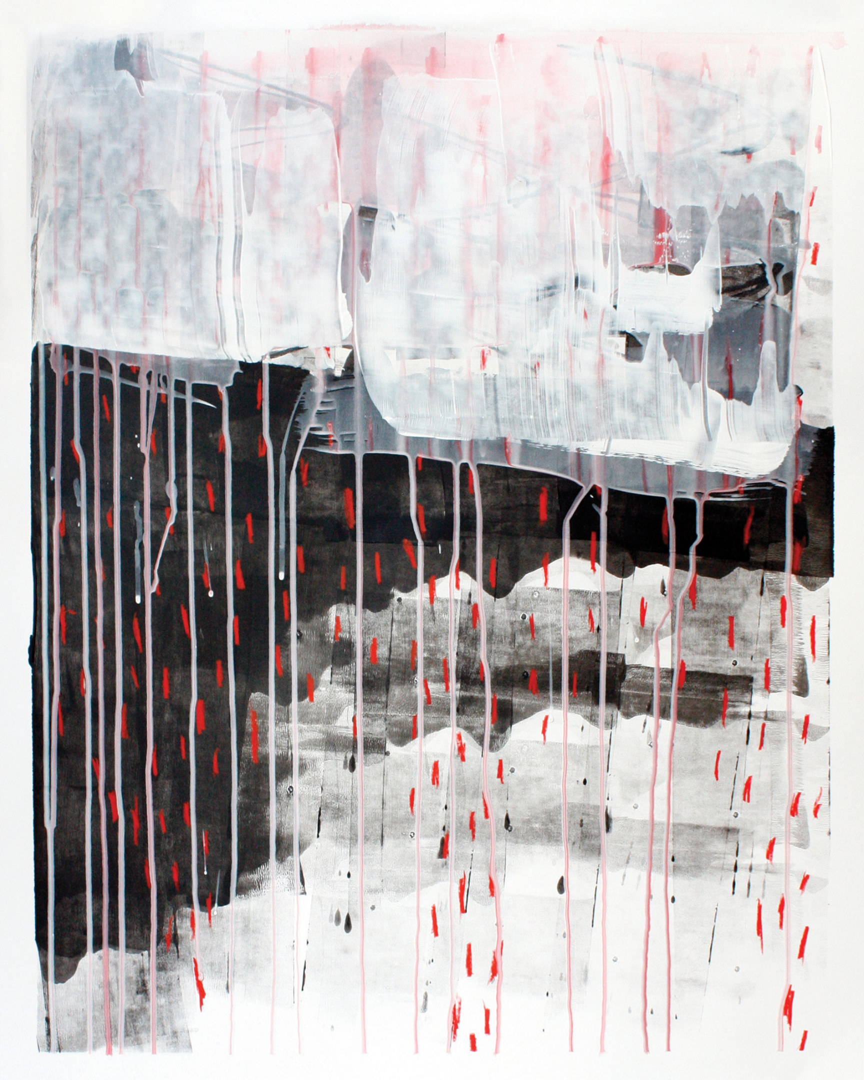
Bibliographie

PRECIADO, Beatriz. *Multitudes queer - Notes pour une politique des "anormaux"*, article mis en ligne en mars 2003, **http://multitudes.samizdat.net/Multitudes-queer et http://www.lespantheresroses.org/textes/multitudes_queer.htm**

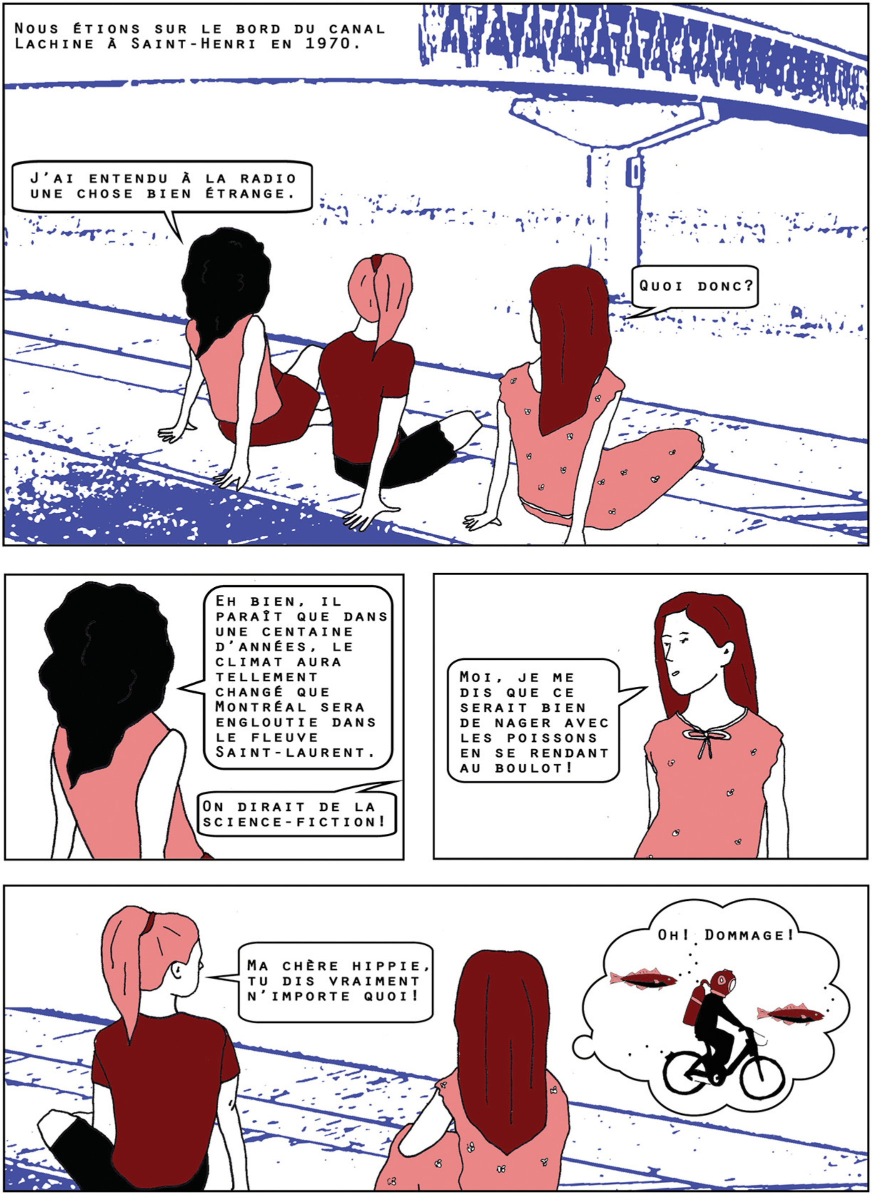
LAVIGNOTTE, Stéphane. *Le queer, politique d'un nouveau genre*, **http://www.lespantheresroses.org/theorie-queer.html**

WILCHINS, Riki Anne. *Queer theory, gender theory*, Los Angeles; California, Alyson Books, 2004

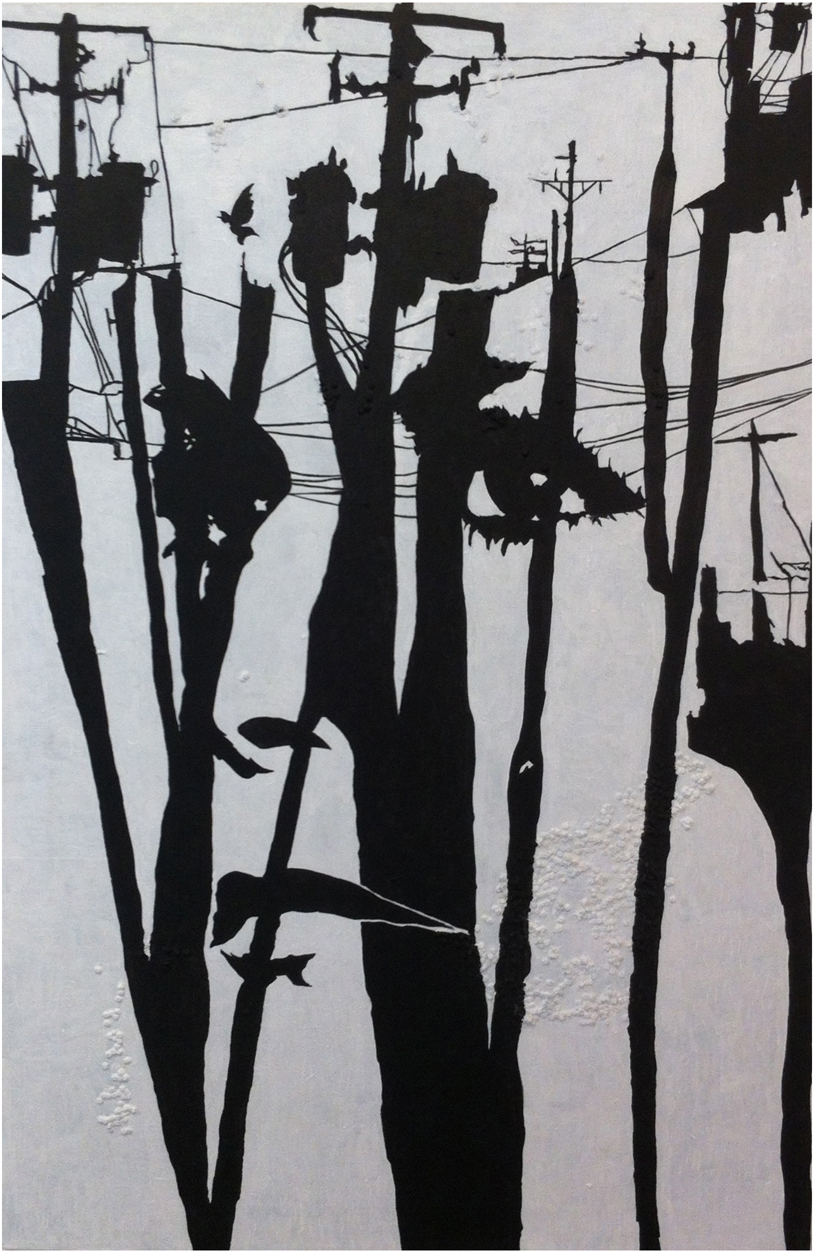
DAUMAS, Cécile. *Tête à queue*, 14 octobre 2008, **http://www.liberation.fr/livres/0101124185-tete-a-queue**

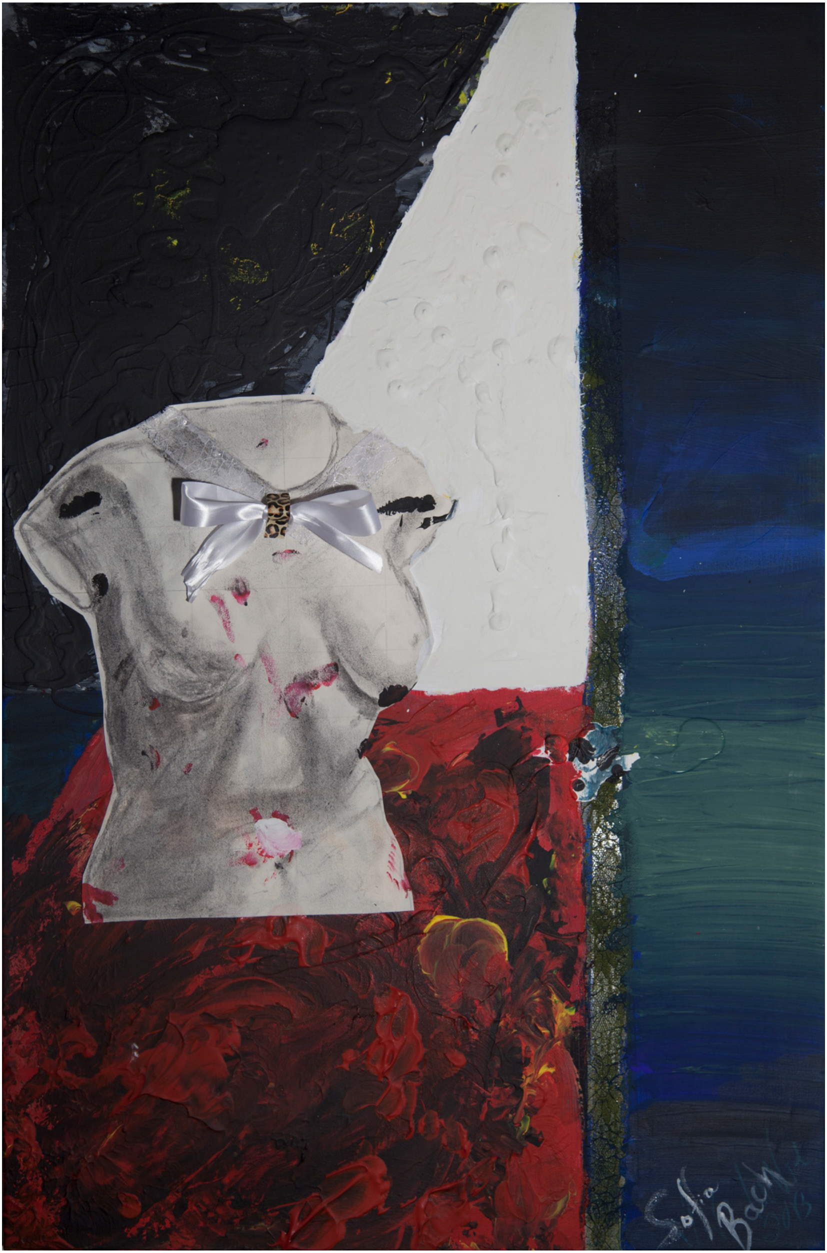


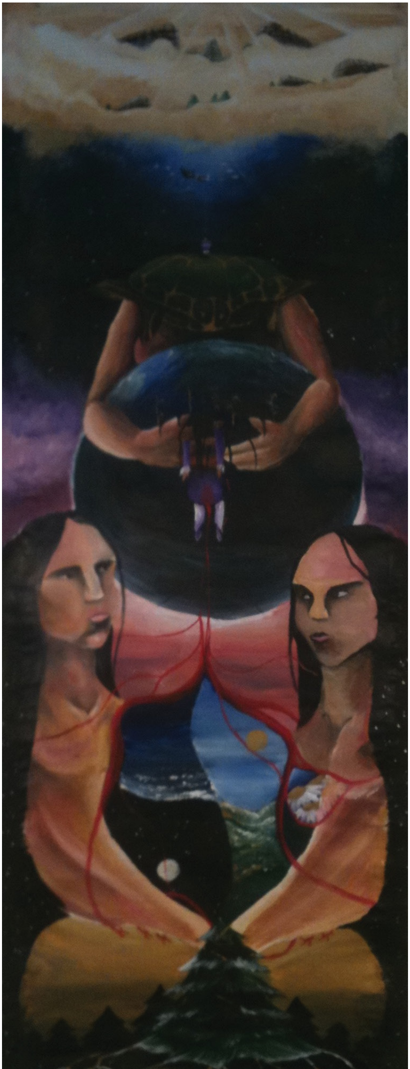
SUBMERSION

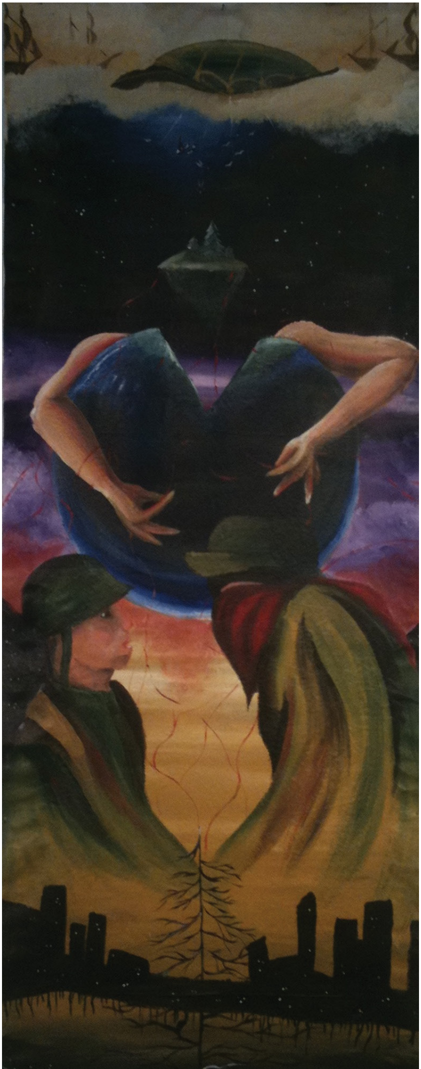

Nous étions sur le bord du canal Lachine à Saint-Henri en 1970.
J'ai entendu à la radio une chose bien étrange.
Quoi donc?
Eh bien, il paraît que dans une centaine d'années, le climat aura tellement changé que Montréal sera engloutie dans le fleuve Saint-Laurent.
On dirait de la science-fiction!
Moi, je me dis que ce serait bien de nager avec les poissons en se rendant au boulot!
Ma chère hippie, tu dis vraiment n'importe quoi!
Oh! Dommage!

Geneviève Giroux avec la collaboration de Charles Bossé, 2013




Sofia Bach 13





v + vi

i

Title: Untitled
Artist: Shannon Willmott
Medium: Mixed media on paper
Description: This painting is about history and the weight of the legacy we are struggling under. We cannot escape the atrocities that have happened on this earth - to the land, to the animals and to each other. It is a terrible and ongoing weight. The feelings that motivated the making of this painting asks me, how will you continue? How will you intervene? What can be done?

ii

Title: Submersion
Artist: Geneviève Giroux
Medium: Bande dessinée
Description: En 1970, trois amies discutent d'environnement et de ce qui pourrait arriver à leur ville.

iii

Title: En la calle
Artist: Arianna Garcia-Fialdini
Medium: Acrylic on canvas, mixed media
Description: "En la calle" is an art work that deals with the subject of women and their roles in politics, religion and the public and private sphere, as well as how they are viewed and perceived by society, including men and other women and the collective unconscious.

This specific piece asks out loud where the line is drawn between being viewed or perceived as either victim or vixen as a woman. How does the context in which a woman is seen play an active role in the perception of their body language, attitude and in how she perceives herself and other women?

iv

Title: Der Geist der Menschheit (The Soul/ Spirit of Humankind)
Artist: Sofia Bach
Medium: Acrylic on canvas
Description: Inspired by readings on psychoanalysis and personal introspection, this work explores the links between the conscious and the unconscious. The main subject being the interaction between the four parts of the human mind (Chaos, Order, Rationality and Passion), this piece explores the ways in which the female body is perceived. The woman's bust is represented simultaneously as a nurturing mother but also as a sexualized object. These contradictory assumptions are a wink to the confusions about the role of the modern woman in our society, between the traditional values and those shown through media and pop culture.

v + vi

Title: Hybrid Spirit I & II
Artist: Megan Kanerahtenha:wi Whyte
Medium: Acrylic on unstretched canvas
Description: "Hybrid Spirit" (2012) explores the relationship between past and present Indigenous realities through two complimentary paintings. The two artworks compare elements of the Mohawk legend of Sky Woman with events in recent history to demonstrate the cyclical nature of time.

Keara Yim

Lines of Force

Critiques of nationalism at the intersection of migrant justice and indigenous sovereignty

Indigenous feminist Andrea Smith writes that the crucial lens Native feminist theory brings to feminist politics is a "questioning [of]…the nation-state as the appropriate form of governance" (2005:128). Given that white settler nation-states are predicated on the genocide and colonization of Indigenous peoples, it is impossible to reconcile an understanding of colonialism with an acceptance of white settler nation-states. In full support of Smith's position, this paper is a substantiation of her call to question nation-states beyond a context of the white settler state generally, at the intersection of migrant justice and Indigenous sovereignty, prompted by my own inability to distinguish between exclusive nationalisms and Indigenous sovereignty movements. As sovereignty movements of colonized peoples in the global south have actualized as nation-states, as Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island struggle for sovereignty, how does Smith's call to question nation-states apply? More precisely, how do Indigenous notions of nationhood differ from, and how can they be realized in terms other than what I will discuss to be the problematic ideology harnessed by nation-states?

Importantly, as a non-Native person thinking about Indigenous sovereignty it is not my place to tell first peoples what I think sovereignty should look like. The point of this investigation, rather a weighing in on internal politics of Native communities, is an exercise directed towards myself, meant to determine whose leadership within Indigenous communities I wish to follow, how I wish to ally myself.

Beginning with examining the fetishization of nation-states, state control over a population relies on generating the common-sense idea that the state, despite being an elite white capitalist institution, rules for us. This perception is conjured through nationalist ideologies that imagine the diverse peoples within state borders as a unified homogenous community, a family. Anderson emphasizes that this community, because it is utterly imagined, is an ideological construct; as he writes, "members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or ever hear of them" (1983:6). Facilitated by the exclusive belonging of nationalism, the state, with its power naturalized in the image of a father's authority over the family, then plays the role of "uphold[ing] and defend[ing] the space occupied by the nation" against the threat of foreign Others, patrolling on our behalf (Sharma 2006:143).

The imagined community of the nation can only be defined in relation to an Other; belonging and Othering are mutually reinforcing as subjects' allegiance to the national community in turn naturalizes the differential treatment of foreign Others through the denial of rights of citizenship. At first glimpse it may seem as though the nation-state acts as a container for the rights and privileges of its "proper subjects", however geographer Ed Soja explains that "space is not merely a 'container' for society or only a 'context' in which it exists but is, instead, a social structure created out of extant power relations" (in Sharma 2006:140). As such, the territorialisation of rights upheld by the current nation-state system creates zones of freedom for citizens, but also actively creates zones of unfreedom for foreigners, pathologizing movement and naturalizing a denial of rights to foreign Others which is central to maintaining capitalist forms of social relations. While in popular discourse the space of the nation-state belongs only to those with citizenship, border control practices are clearly ideological as it was never possible that every person would remain within their allocated container, especially while ongoing processes of imperial dispossession, military aggression, and exploitation constantly cause people to move. Indeed, international migration has increased at unprecedented rates in the past thirty years with the U.N. Population Fund estimating that 175 million people cross national borders each year (2003). Most of these cross-border migrants are non-whites and from the global South (Sharma 2006).

As such, state borders do less to physically control the movement of people and in reality play a more important function of naturalizing the denial of rights, critical to maintaining an available and compliant unfree labour force; in Canada this is composed of undocumented migrants and the indentured labour of temporary workers in its Non-Immigrant Employment Authorization Program. Thus the rights afforded to citizens by the nation-state must simultaneously be understood as legislated unfreedom that facilitates the exploitation of non-citizens/foreign Others. The unfreedom of any worker is ultimately detrimental to all as the relative cheapness of any group of workers contributes to the vulnerability of all groups (Sharma 2006). A freedom that is compartmentalized will thus always be inadequate, yet rather than struggle for global commons, we have been rendered complacent by being allocated rights within certain spaces. Nationalizing freedom with citizenship therefore has had the powerful effect of (mis)aligning our allegiances with a fictive community, a contemporary reformulation of processes previously accomplished through race. Much as Du Bois describes the relative privilege afforded to white labourers as a "psychological wage" (in Croatoan 2012:6) which ensured their loyalty to a white elite in spite of their own low wages, the same formulations of logic operate today through nationalism. It is a subtle shift in the determining factor from skin to space, from bloodlines to place of birth.

Following this migrant-centered critique that traces links between state power and nationalist discourses, I am interested in examining the possibilities that Indigenous epistemologies offer for sovereignty movements to avoid actualization as simply another piece in a global puzzle of nation-states. While Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination is often equated with Western conceptions of sovereignty as absolute power (Smith 2005) and self-government, "decolonization" that occurs in the image of the very states that emerged from colonization, "the kind of self-government where we are merely granted the authority of administering our own misery" (Monture-Angus 1995:262), is utterly inadequate.

Andrea Smith explains that white supremacy targets communities of colour through differing logics (slavery, colonialism, Orientalism) which overlap in often contradictory ways. As such, rather than trying to organize around a common oppression, we should be aiming to build "strategic alliances based on where each one of us is situated in the political economy" (Smith 2010). By considering how migrants who have been displaced by similar processes of capitalist imperialism are positioned in relation to Indigenous sovereignty movements, the goal is to develop considerations for decolonization. Following the preceding problematization of nationalism's Othering function, I now turn to the thought of Indigenous scholars on alternate foundations of identity to ground our political communities.

Attending to how the Indigenous identity of a sovereignty movement is constructed, a sovereignty that posits only those who can claim Indigenous identity as its proper subjects and disregards migratory experiences of colonialism is destined to reproduce the hierarchical and exclusionary forms of belonging exhibited by nation-state forms of governance. A "proper subject" of citizenship can only be actualized in the form of a patriarchal state that assumes the right to control its borders and determines who it governs. Such ethnic nationalist movements do not consider that Indigenous identity as a category was itself a primary means of colonial domination – as Fanon writes, "it is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence" (Fanon 1963:79). Indigenous identity drew a line between settlers who "become the law, supplanting Indigenous laws and epistemologies" (Tuck 2012:6) and those denied self-determination.

The monolithic politico-legal definition of identity is problematic as it is based on an understanding of history "a meta-narrative of timeless cultural continuity" (Altamirano-Jiminéz 2011:113); these rigid definitions are vast oversimplifications that ignore that cultures are multifaceted and constantly shifting. Attempts to establish essentialized identity categories reproduce existing inequalities; as Altamirano-Jiménez writes, "who gets to tell stories about Indigeneity, what stories are remembered, in what forums they are told, and for what purposes – all of these abilities are linked to memory and power" (2010:114).

Furthermore, embedded in a state's patriarchal authority to control who are proper subjects via border control of a territory is the Western understanding of land as property, as a commodity to be controlled and owned. Indigenous sovereignty is not based on control, but responsibility for the land. (Monture-

Angus 1999) As Smith explains, “once land is not seen as property, then nationhood does not have to be based on exclusive control over territory. If sovereignty is more about being responsible for land, then nationhood can engage all those who fulfill responsibilities for land” (2011:60). Unfortunately Indigenous peoples seem forced to engage in a “politics of recognition” (Coulthard 2007:437) in attempts to resist the settler state: to defend land and to be recognized by the dominant legal system, Indigenous peoples must argue that the land is “theirs”. This limited form of politics is utterly inadequate, as Indigenous peoples are unable to question a cultural relationship between peoples and land that is taken for granted as universal in the dominant legal system (Smith 2011). Glen Coulthard notes that in the last 30 years the dominant discourse of self-determination efforts of Indigenous peoples throughout Canada has been cast in the language of “recognition” (2007:437). Coulthard defines a “politics of recognition” as the now expansive range of recognition-based models of liberal pluralism that seek to reconcile Indigenous claims to nationhood with Crown sovereignty via the accommodation of Indigenous identities in some form of renewed relationship with the Canadian state. (Coulthard 2007:438)

A Native sovereignty movement that seeks recognition from the surrounding settler states will only be actualized in the colonizer’s terms, as only Western understanding of sovereignty are legible to the state. As the terms of recognition will always be the property of those in power (Coulthard 2007:449), while recognition can facilitate the incorporation and elevation, of Indigenous identities into liberal pluralism, the actual structures of colonial power will remain unchallenged. As Fanon writes, the best the colonized can achieve within this politics is “white liberty and white justice; that is, values secreted by [their] masters” (in Coulthard 2007:449), thereby reproducing the very colonial power structures that Indigenous peoples have long sought to destroy. Indeed, to remain at the level of identity politics, “reaffirming their identities within existing hierarchies of power, is to work within a rigged zero-sum game for the liberation of a particular oppressed identity at the expense of others” (Croatoan 2012:12). Included in this “politics of recognition” are self-determination efforts through economic development that has created a new Aboriginal capitalist elite, self-government based on colonial models, and land claims processes grounded in notions of property (Coulthard 2007:452). Struggles for self-determination must not be predetermined by a need for recognition, rather bell hooks writes that we should be "recognizing ourselves and then seeking to make contact with all who would engage us in a constructive manner" (1990:22).

Returning to the preceding meditation on identity, rather than exclusionary forms of belonging that require patrolling of borders, many argue for an Indigenous identity that is not reified through apolitical legal biological definitions, but understands Indigeneity as a social process (Altamirano-Jiménez 2010, Sharma 2006, Smith 2011, Alfred 2005, Finley 2011). Alfred and other Indigenous scholars advocate for an Indigeneity that recreates relations between themselves and their landbase (Alfred 2004, Finley 2011). This is an inclusive vision that calls for, rather than rights upheld by the nation-state, a non-normative nationhood which recognizes our interrelatedness and is constituted by mutual responsibility between all beings, human and nonhuman (Smith 2011:58). This is a rejection of "transcendent" ideas of nationalism that create an imagined community and misdirect our solidarities, in favour of "imminent" relationships based in practices (Sharma 2006:153). Rather than a reified identity which rules out distinctions between colonizers and those forced to leave due to colonial oppression, this participatory form of belonging has the potential for solidarity between Indigenous peoples and migrants exploited by ongoing processes of capitalist imperialism. This exemplifies Patricia Monture-Angus's understanding of sovereignty as a Mohawk woman - as she writes, "self-government is really very simple to maintain. All it really requires is living your responsibilities to your relations" (1999:161).

This problematization of nationalist state discourses seems to be necessary and basic groundwork for a comprehensive struggle against empire - here is a very particular historical mode of relations that to many appears to be universal and eternal. As such, the jagged lines of national borders etched across continents must be recognized as crucial technologies of power in capitalist modernity, eclipsing solidarities borne of shared experience and struggle with an insubstantial fictive community. While we have witnessed many colonized populations' struggles for independence actualized in the form of nation-states, leading to what Fanon refers to as "the curse of [national] independence" (in Coulthard 2005:455), there are Native sovereignty struggles that reject rather than rely on logics of colonialism. Believing that Indigenous notions of self-determination can or must be equated to nation-state structures privileging Western ways of knowing, constitutes a form of epistemic violence that blinds us of other possibilities. This paper has followed Fanon's imperative when he writes that, "The colonial world is a world divided into compartments… if we examine closely this system of compartments, we will at least be able to reveal the lines of force it implies. This approach to the colonial world, its ordering, and its geographical layout will allow us to mark out the lines on which a decolonized society will be reorganized" (1963:80). It is thus not only where the lines of force have been drawn that continues to bind us today, but the act of drawing the line itself that is the ultimate colonial act.

References

Alfred, Taiaiake. (2005). Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom. Peterborough: Broadview Press.

Altamirano-Jiménez, I. (2011). Indigenous women, nationalism, and feminism. In Razack, S., Smith, M., Thobani, S. (Eds.), States of Race: Critical race feminism for the 21st century.Toronto: Between the Lines. pp. 111-126.

Anderson, Benedict. (1983). Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. London: Verso.

hooks, bell. (1990). Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics. Toronto: Between the Lines.

Coulthard, Glen. (2007). Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the "Politics of Recognition" in Canada. *Contemporary Political Theory.* No. 6. Pp. 437-460.

Croatoan. (2012). Who Is Oakland?: Anti-Oppression Activism, the Politics of Safety, and State Co-optation (zine).

Driskill, Qwo-Li. (2011). D4Y DßC (Asegi Ayetl): Cherokee Two-Spirit People Reimagining Nation. In Driskill, Q.-L., Finley, C., Gilley, C., Morgensen, S. (Eds.), *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature.* Arizona: University of Arizona Press. Pp. 97-112.
Fanon, Franz. (1963). Concerning Violence. In Lawrence, B. B., & Karim, A. (Eds. 2007) *On violence: A reader.* Durham [NC]: Duke University Press. Pp. 78-100.

Finley, Chris. (2011). Decolonizing the Queer Native Body (and Recovering the Native Bull-Dyke). In Driskill, Q.-L., Finley, C., Gilley, C., Morgensen, S. (Eds.), *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature.* Arizona: University of Arizona Press. Pp. 31-42.

Lawrence, B., Dua, E. (2005). Decolonizing Antiracism. *Social Justice.* 32(4). Pp. 120-143.

Monture-Angus, Patricia. (1995). Thunder in my Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Monture-Angus, Patricia. (1999). Journeying Forwards: Dreaming First Nations' Independence. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Nasdasdy, P. (2005). Hunters and Bureaucrats: Power, Knowledge, and Aboriginal-State Relations in the Southwest Yukon. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

Radice, Hugo. (1984). The National Economy: A Keynsian Myth? *Capital and Class*. 22. Pp. 111-140.

Sharma, Nandita. (2006). Home Economics: Nationalism and the Making of "Migrant Workers" in Canada. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Smith, Andrea. (2005). Native American Feminism, Sovereignty, and Social Change. *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1. Pp. 116-132.

Smith, Andrea. (2010). Building Unlikely Alliances: An Interview with Andrea Smith. Upping the Anti. 10. **http://uppingtheanti.org/journal/article/10-building-unlikely-alliances-an-interview-with-andrea-smith/**

Smith, Andrea. (2011). Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism. In Driskill, Q.-L., Finley, C., Gilley, C., Morgensen, S. (Eds.), *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature*. Arizona: University of Arizona Press. Pp. 43-65.

Smith, Neil. (2002). New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy. Antipode. No Volume. No Issue. pp.427-450.

Soltys, M. (2012). Tangled Roots: Dialogues Exploring Ecological Justice, Healing and Decolonization. Guelph: Heal the Earth Press.

Tuck, E., Yang, K. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society. 1(1). Pp.1-40.

United Nations Population Fund. (2003). The State of World Population. New York: United Nations.

Aaron Barcant

Language and Power!

I explore the concept of language in the English-speaking Caribbean through a feminist postcolonial & anti-colonial lens. I explore language not as a typical linguist would but in the context of language as social fabric which constitutes power. I will organize this paper into two parts. First, I will set the stage with a brief description of the Caribbean landscape through the lens of language. Here I will focus on the case of Trinidad to understand the importance of the English language to the British colonial agenda. I do this to draw forth the argument that the British colonizers understood the power of language and utilized it in their conquests of Empire expansion and consolidation, manifested both socially and institutionally; calculated to a degree where they made great efforts in their time of rule to ensure it became an essential component of identity. Second, I will then contest the colonial discourse of successful domination and imposition of language in the English-speaking Caribbean by highlighting the prominence of multiple hybrids which serve as acts of identity and resistance to the dominant order. The case of Rastafari, Reggae, and Dub Poetry will then be explored to indicate key and globally successful forms of resistance to colonial domination. I put forth that it was the recognition of the importance of language, and the disciplined focus on resistance through language that gave agency to these downpressed peoples.

Prior to the 'discovery' of the 'New World' the Caribbean was populated through a series of waves of settlement by peoples spanning the period from 4000 B.C. - 1500-1600 A.D. In *Languages of the pre-Columbian languages of the Antilles* (2004) archaeological and linguistic data is used to map the language communities of the Caribbean region. At the time of Spanish intervention there were seven different speech communities in the Antilles (p.123). Evidence shows Ortoiroid sites existing in Trinidad from 5250 to 450 B.C. (Rouse 1992:62; Rouse and Allarie 1979:108-109 cited in Granberry, 2004). In Trinidad and Tobago (TT) there existed at least 10 known pre-Columbian languages spoken by a variety of peoples of different origins. None of these languages remain with native speakers in these islands, though there exists a rich legacy through topographical names (Adonis and Ferriera, 2012).

Columbus claimed Trinidad for Spain on July 31, 1498 on his third voyage to the Americas. Though under Spanish rule for about three hundred years the island was neglected by prospects of other colonies, in such that it was regarded as the colonial slum of the Spanish Empire (Millette, 1970, p.1). Spain recognized the disparate and vulnerable state of the colony and in the latter half of the 18th C began to make efforts to ameliorate the situation. In 1776 a *cedula* was published opening to foreigners the privilege of settling in Spanish colonies on very generous terms. As such there were large influxes of peoples to the island from a variety of different backgrounds. Trinidad became 'a French colony in all but name'; the ratio between French and Spanish citizens was twenty to one (Millette, 1970, p.25).

The outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 had a consistent and visceral impact on the Caribbean colonies. In Trinidad it served to introduce new elements of instability into a fundamentally unstable society. Ideas of freedom and democracy became subjects of thought and debate amongst all aspects of the society (Millette, 1970, p.23). The revolution in St. Domingue (Haiti) further fuelled these ideas of liberation and revolt in Trinidad. Through this period Trinidad became a haven for refugees, across a full range of classes and castes (Wood, 1986, p.32). This reality became a looming threat to British colonial ambitions, and thus Trinidad became the target of British Empire. Trinidad, because of the 'Principles and Persons which have lately been introduced there', had become 'a course of just alarm and real Danger to several of our most valuable Islands' (Millette, 1970, p.35). As such in 1797 Trinidad was conquered without much resistance from the Spanish, and the first four years of the British sovereign project took form in military occupation. Trinidad became a formal British colony in 1802, Tobago in 1814, and in 1889 the two become one legal entity (Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 2012). Britain obtained TT at the time when slavery began to be phased out, and as a result indentured labourers from India and China were brought from 1845 onwards. This dynamic has contributed significantly to the diverse linguistic repertoire of the island in many ways. This background is important as it highlights the inseparability of language from ideology and power (Freire, 1996). It was the language of French in this context which was the catalyst for revolutionary ideas in the unique geopolitical context of Trinidad, which overdetermined the British colonial intervention. The response to this unique social setting has been a strictly regimented and institutionalized system of language imposition and constitutional engineering.

English language was initially taught to natives and slaves by missionaries, this initiated the institutionalized discourse of control through 'liberal education' (London, 2003, p.308). From here forward a plan was executed by the colonial power to ensure English was the primary language used both socially and institutionally. "Central to the move was an attempt to construct socially the role of a language, in this case English, and some strong ideological and cultural forces were at work to guarantee dominance not only at the time but also for today and most likely in the future" (London, 2003, p.288). In elementary schools eighty percent of the official allocated learning time was dedicated to English, as such phrases like 'school was English and English was school' (London, 2003, p.287) became relevant.

This British approach to language in TT was not a unique case; the 'Macaulay Minute' set forth an ideological praxis of language from the position of the British Empire. This discourse put forth that languages had a natural hierarchy and as such English was the language of 'useful knowledge' due to its refined body of philology. It was further projected that English would become the language of international communication, and by extension, 'What was good for Hong Kong, symbolically speaking, had to be good for the Gambia' (London, 2003, p.301). The recognition of the impact of this approach in the current context of TT is essential when considering the argument put forth by Smith (2007) in *Imperialism,* *History, Writing, and Theory*. It must be noted that English is the vehicle through which these colonial discourses were disseminated, as Hall (2007) puts it, 'discourse is about the production of knowledge through language' (p.56). More specifically, it was literary formulations which gave this discourse its' uniformity and persistence. It is fitting then that it was Edward Said (a professor in European literature) who first identified and nuanced this embodied discourse, which he referred to as Orientalism. The English language cannot be separated from the concept of the 'other', and creation of the 'other' in the discourse directed to the populations of the West. Coming back to Smith's article, 'language carries culture and the language of the colonizer became the means by which the mental universe of the colonized was dominated' (p.336). In her critique of the hegemonic nature of writing, history, and theory Smith is careful not to disregard these points, but recognize them and understand that rejecting them does not diminish their existence or influence. She concludes the paper with a call to recognize the importance of relevant and useful research to indigenous communities and to ensure 'the exercise is about recovering stories from the past. This is inextricably bound to recovery of our language and epistemological foundations' (p.337).

In this second part of this paper I will begin to highlight the inevitable resistance to the colonial order of English language in the Caribbean. A number of these countries speak English officially, thus their populations are counted in the total global English-speaking population. Yet, if one has ever been to Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica or any of these other places one would question the hegemony embedded in these classifications.

In reality, within each island there is great diversity in how that 'English' is spoken; a reflection of social grouping, ethnicity, race, class, gender, sexuality, education, travel experience, and other factors. Often a foreign tourist needs translation when speaking to some local Caribbean peoples. There are many different names given to these speech forms, depending on who you ask: creole/kweyol, patois/patwah, slang, broken-english, dialect, unique accent and others. The dominant discourse surrounding creoles is characterized by the ever-present colonial dualism whereby the Creole is defined against and in subordination to the Standard. There have been many academic studies across many disciplines on Creoles (Creole Discourse, 2002). What is to be brought forth from this is the resultant deviation from the colonial ideal. Just as Black slaves could never attain the whiteness valued by the colonial order, the peoples of the Caribbean would never attain the English speech as imposed by the same colonial system. Homi Bhabha (1985) articulates this reality as a form of resistance:

> *resistance is not necessarily an oppositional act of political intention, nor is it the simple negation or the exclusion of the 'content' of another culture, as difference once perceived… [but] the effect of an ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference. (p.153)*

This is an important point with the consideration of the position of the government of Trinidad and Tobago, "Nevertheless, every Trinbagonian speaks English and you will find our charming accent one of the easiest to understand - it's singsong like and full of flavour - just like our people!" (GORTT, 2012). This quote, taken from the government website indicates the lack of critical consciousness and resistance to colonialism/imperialism. As with the statistics, the government's position is an erasure of any resistance to the colonial hegemony. Furthermore it shows who the government speaks to, and thus acknowledges the power hierarchy of foreign interests. This hybrid language, which the government denies, is an unconscious resistance to the colonial system. The next point of interest is the question of the product of a conscious resistance to the colonial system through the power of language.

Throughout the entire process of slavery, in the plantation engine of the capitalist economy of the Caribbean, there has been resistance. Slaves fought for freedom or death, and attempted to flee the plantations into the hills when possible. There in the hills of these islands Maroon communities were established. Each of these islands' histories is dotted with known rebellions against the colonial system. In Jamaica, 'The Legacy of Tacky, Cudjoe, Nanny, Paul Bogle and Sam Sharpe was linked to the struggles of Harriet Tubman, Soujourner Truth, King Ja Ja, Chaka Zulu and King Menelik of Ethiopia' and were known and kept alive to continue the resistance (Campbell, 1987, p. 39). Here the importance of storytelling and oral tradition inherent to African (indigenous) culture is kept alive, and serves its purpose of linking the society to grow together in knowledge. The first Rastas were avid readers, and considered it their duty to keep informed in historical, geographical, and political contexts. In the initial organization there was consciousness with regard to the alienating effect of the power inherent in knowledge (Campbell, 1987, p.123). Thus it became fundamental that critical attention was placed on language, and the larger medium of communication. A unique, and consciously moulded language was developed; 'Rasta Talk', or 'Dread Talk' (DT). 'This talk sought the deepest expression of racial memory, and the power of this memory was expressed in the lyrics of the Rasta song - reggae.' (Campbell, 1987, p.124).

Rastafarians in Jamaica were in the process of creating a popular culture which was based on the spirit of resistance, combined with good humour and spirit of joy which had become part of the disposition of black peoples of the world. As capitalist relations in the society deepened, and the people had the distinct feeling that capitalism was destroying their personality, the Rastas were a section of the working poor who wanted to break the spirit of competition and individualism which permeated the society and its main institutions. (Campbell, 1987, p.121)

Drawing from Pollard (1994), Dread Talk (DT) arose out of English, consciously 'stepped up' to reflect position in society, philosophy, and resistance against the dominant culture. The language originally arose out of a need to speak and not be understood by the downpressors (slave masters, elite of society). It is the context of the social environment of Caribbean plantation colonies which gave rise to the urgent and resounding challenge of Rastafari. It is this violent system of slavery in all of its insidious manifestations which gave rise to a language and livity of conscious resistance. Rastafari has taken the English given by colonial powers, and 'stepped up' the device on a number of levels. 'Social protest manifests itself in language change. For defiance of society includes defiance of its language' (Pollard, 1994, p.18).

Here Fanon's theory on violence is pertinent. As has been shown above, the colonial agenda of language imposition was a prolonged system of epistemic violence. Thus as Fanon argues, 'at the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores self-respect' (Fanon, 1961, p.93). This is core to the approach to language used by Rastafari which recognized the epistemic implications of the colonial system, and subverted it defiantly. This is echoed in Audre Lourde's ever relevant and frequently quoted statement, 'The Master's tools will never dismantle the Master's house' (1984).

Rastafari and the Negritude framework were points of social organization which were race-conscious and anti-colonial. For Rastafari the platform for self representation is reggae music. For Negritude the platform for self representation is (academic) literary form. The overstanding and lived approach to language identified by Rastafari, is the essence of reggae music. The ability of this music to relate to people across the globe, in all positions (class, race, gender, or any other social construct) is the crux of its tactic of resistance. Negritude remained confined primarily to literary form, thus inaccessible to the large proportions of the social groups whom it spoke of. On the streets the symbols of Rasta and the melody of reggae are never far, while one would have to inquire to notable extents to find one versed in negritude.

The dominant number of reggae artists are male. This brings forth questions of representation within this movement of anti-colonial resistance, but is a complex reality which needs analysis. I will not go into depth here, but I will note that Rastafari cannot be removed from the colonial (patriarchal) structure it grew in resistance to. Rasta has spoken to this question; though pertinent questions are yet to be revealed in the contemporary world. I wonder about the gaps in representation and resistance that such a fact brings forth.

Vaughn Benjamin is the songwriter and lead singer of a contemporary roots/conscious reggae band known as Midnite. The band is known for its precision of beats, humility in live deliverance, and is held in high regard based on the uniqueness and critical content of the vocals. Midnite has produced an extremely large amount of albums, over 50 since their initial release in 1997.

D'bi Young is a Dub Poet of a hybrid generation. Born and raised in Jamaica, she came to Canada to study in her post-secondary years. She is critical of white (liberal) feminism (Young, 2006), for its negation of women of colours' history of organization and self-determination. She also challenges the praxis of an academic literary base, through the use of dub poetry. Though she does not publicly define herself as Rastafari her language and ideology reflect the essence of the position of Rastafari. She has taken her life experience and channelled it into a powerful and growing praxis, which she travels and spreads in art/activist communities globally. The SORPLUSI principles are a product of a matrilineal connection to Dub Poetry in both performance and theorizing about the application of Dub Poetry to society.

Dread Talk, Reggae, and Dub Poetry are all conscious forms of resistance manifested through expression of culture.

The overstanding of the importance of culture, and the role of language in maintaining and renewing culture are the essential points in these modes of resistance. They are rooted in recognition of the systemic reality of oppression which surrounds these societies, while seeking to address and confront this reality in a collective creative process. To understand DT one must have an understanding of English at its core, but once this is attained one begins the personal journey of transcending its limitations epistemologically and culturally. One can begin the journey from understanding to overstanding. This point concludes my intention; to recognize the importance language and to keep it in I consciousness through livity.

References

Adonis, C., & Ferreira, J. S. (2004-2012) *Amerindian Languages in Trinidad and Tobago*. STAN. University of the West Indies. Retrieved from **http://sta.uwi.edu/stan/article13.asp**

Bhabha, H.K. (1985) Signs taken for wonders: *Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside Delhi,* May 1817. Critical inquiry 12 (1), Autumn: pp. 144-165.

Devonish, H. (2010) *The Language Heritage of the Caribbean: Linguistic Genocide and Resistance*. Heritage Language Journal, University of the West Indies.

Fanon, F. (1961) *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove Press.

Freire, P. (1996) *Paulo Freire - An Incredible Conversation*. Retrieved from **http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aFWjnkFypFA**

Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (2012) General Information, Language. Retrieved from **http://www.ttconnect.gov.tt/gortt/portal/ttconnect/SharedDetail/?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/gortt/wcm/connect/GorTT%20Web%20Content/ttconnect/home/about+t+and+t/general+information/language.**

Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (2012) General Information, History. Retrieved from **http://www.ttconnect.gov.tt/gortt/portal/ttconnect/!ut/p/c1/04_**

Granberry, J. & Vescelius G.S. (2004) *Languages of the pre-Colombian Antilles.* Tuscaloosa : University of Alabama Press.

Hall, S. (2007) The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power. Das Gupta, T. Et al. (Eds), *Race and racialization: Essential readings* (pp.56-60). Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.

Le Page, R.B., Tabouret-Keller, A. (1985). *Acts of identity: Creole-based approaches to language* *and ethnicity.* Cambridge University Press.

London, N. A. (2003). Ideology and Politics in English-Language Education in Trinidad and Tobago: The Colonial Experience and a Postcolonial Critique. *Comparative Education Review*, 47(3), 287.

Loomba, A. (1998) *Colonialism/Postcolonialism.* Routledge.

Lourde, A. (1984) The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Crossing Press.

Magnet-Johnson, C.A. (2008). *Dread Talk: The Rastafarian's Linguistic Response to Societal Oppression*. Digital Archive, Georgia State University.

Millette, J. (1970) *The genesis of crown colony government: Trinidad, 1783-1810*. Moko Enterprises, Trinidad.

Muhleisen, S. (2002) Creole Discourse. Exploring prestige formation and change across Caribbean English-lexicon Creoles. *Creole Language Library Volume 24*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Nangwaya, A. (2007) Rastafari as a Catalytic Force in Ecotourism Development in Jamaica: Development as Economic and Social Justice. UWI conference series, retrieved from **http://sta.uwi.edu/conferences/salises/documents/Nangwaya%20%20A%20.pdf**

Nero, S. (2006). Language, identity, and education of Caribbean English speakers. *World Englishes*, 25(3/4), 501-511. doi:10.1111/j.1467-971X.2006.00470.x
Pollard, V. (1994). *Dread Talk. The language of Rastafari*. Canoe Press. UWI- Mona, Jamaica.

Premdas, R. R. (2011). Identity, ethnicity, and the Caribbean homeland in an era of globalization. *Social Identities*, 17(6), 811-832. doi:10.1080/13504630.2011.606676

Smith, L.T. (1999) *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples.* Zed Books. New York.

Smith, L. T (2007) Imperialism, History, Writing, and Theory. Das Gupta, T. Et al. (Eds), *Race and racialization: Essential readings* (pp. 328-338). Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.

Wood, D. (1986) *Trinidad in Transition. The Years after slavery.* Oxford University Press.

Young, D (2006) ain't I a ooman. *Art on black*. Toronto: Women's Press.

Young, D (2012) r/evolution begins within. *Canadian Theatre Review, Volume 150* (pp.126-129). Retrieved from **http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/canadian_theatre_review/toc/ctr.150.html.**

Myriam Abdelhak

In collaboration with Sandra Sjollema, Director, L'Anneau Poétique

What is in a Word? / À l'intérieur de mots:

A Portrait of Community Creative Writing Groups

"What is in a Word / À l'intérieur des mots" is a project that started in February 2013, initiated by L'Anneau Poétique, in collaboration with the Community University Research Exchange (CURE) at QPIRG Concordia. The aim of the project was to gather information on community-based creative writing groups in Montreal for research purposes, and to make it easier for the different groups in the city to communicate with each other, organize collaborative events, share knowledge, and build solidarity. L'Anneau Poétique holds monthly poetry sessions, open mics, and teams up with activist groups and grassroots writing groups from across Canada to organize events in its home base of Côte des Neiges as well as in other parts of Montreal.

For this project, I gathered information on the following groups: Jeunesse 2000, Café Grafitti, the Saint James Drop-in Centre, Forward House, Les Impatients, Culture X, L'Injecteur and BUMP. This article aims to provide an overview of the research done as of July 2013, as well as underlying the major ideas I gathered through this project.

Overview: A plurality of voices and purposes

The different creative writing groups I contacted throughout the project encompass a lot of different voices from varied communities and experiences. These include people with mental illnesses and disorders, people who consume street drugs (UDI- Utilisateurs de Drogues par Injection et Inhalation), disaffected youth from different neighbourhoods, homeless people, young pregnant women and many others whose voices are rarely heard. The aims of these creative writing activities are also diverse as they range from fostering creative expression to providing therapeutic outlet to fighting for social integration and action. Groups also produce publications that sometimes have a strong social and political commitment.

The groups' sizes range from 2-3 to 10-12 participants. The groups that are part of the project are all attached to community organizations that fund these writing activities, and in turn, get their funding from the Quebec Government, the City of Montreal, banks, or from other donors. Café Grafitti, however, is a self-funding organization that funds its project by selling Reflets de Société, a magazine on current social issues.

Spaces of free expression

The groups offer safe and inclusive environments to their members and in doing so, they create spaces of free expression where creativity can be fostered in an independent and organic way. The studio activities carried out by these organizations seek to provide equipment and recording material for their members. For example, Jeunesse 2000, a drop-in centre in NDG for youth aged 12 to 17 allows members to sing, slam, rap, and write poetry. The Studio has been running since 2005, and is participatory in nature. It seeks to foster the youths' creative selves but is also dedicated to social action and community building. Similarly, West Haven in NDG and Youth in Motion in Little Burgundy also offer studio activities and spaces of expression for the youth of these neighbourhoods. On the eastern side of Montreal, Café Grafitti in Hochelaga is a space of creative expression for youth as well as young adults for members can remain part of the collective until they believe they are autonomous and independent to leave. The group describes itself as a "milieu de vie" where members can attend a variety of workshops including creative writing and graffiti.

In other cases, spaces can take the form of a blank page left for anyone to fill in. After being hit by a fire in 2012 and being forced to relocate, the Saint-James Drop-in Centre – a downtown Montreal group dedicated to offering a safe space to marginalized people suffering from homelessness, addiction or mental illness – left 5 journals to be filled in by its members to express themselves throughout the transition and relocation. What came out of this project was Idéambule, a journal launched by the Centre in May 2013 and that contains drawings, written pieces and poetry that reflect the lived experiences of a community at the margins of society.

Community building and social integration through culture

Another important aspect I found in all the groups is their emphasis on using creative cultural tools and creative writing for social integration, through fostering the members' social skills and confidence. Forward House, a community-based mental health service organization located in NDG, holds creative writing workshops that are also dedicated to the preparation of their bi-annual publication, the BUOY journal. The workshops aim to allow members of Forward House to develop better social and interpersonal relationship skills through the writing and sharing of their texts. Similarly, Café Graffitti offers participatory creative writing workshops that have an emphasis on social integration. Raymond Viger, its founder, describes the workshop as leading to personal progression towards autonomy and reintegration into society while at the same time fostering a sense of belonging in its members.

Culture X, located in Montreal-Nord, and as part of a greater program of "intégration socio-professionelle," also seeks to create solidarity and social inclusion. Culture X is a community organization functioning under the Commission Scolaire de la Pointe de L'Île, dedicated to social and professional integration through the arts, including writing workshops for young people who have dropped out of school. Their activities, although primarily targeting youth, are open to everyone. The writing workshop, which occurs on a weekly basis for seven months, focuses on songwriting and performance. Thus, the workshop allows the participants to build a solid experience in writing and performing, while at the same time fostering solidarity between the participants inside the group. On a larger scale it seeks to demystify the prejudices about Montréal-Nord by encouraging everyone in other parts of the city to attend.

Community building and beyond: networks of solidarity & positive effects on neighbourhoods

An important feature of some of the groups studied here is their outreach efforts to their local neighbourhoods and beyond, to other parts of Montreal and even Quebec, and the rest of Canada. Although writing is an individual experience, a number of the groups help foster a sense of belonging to a broader community by building solidarity networks, while positively affecting their neighbourhoods at the local level. Journals published by some groups are distributed to several different community organizations, thus reaching a broader readership and creating links between different communities.

For example, Forward House's BUOY journal is distributed to many other community organizations such as UP House, L'Abri en Ville, and Ami Québec – organizations also dedicated to people with mental illness – as well as to public libraries and coffee shops in NDG and other neighbourhoods. Les Impatients, a community organization in Ville-Marie, dedicated to people with mental illnesses, publishes an anthology of love letters written by their members and other voluntary participants. The anthology, Milles Mots d'Amour, is sold in many bookstores all around Québec. L'AQPSUD (L'Association Québécoise pour la Promotion de la Santé des Personnes Utilisatrices de Drogues), a community organization dedicated to and run by people consuming street drugs also produces a publication, L'Injecteur, that aims to promote health and create better living conditions. It is distributed at the local, regional, provincial and national levels, but also in several countries in Europe. Therefore, the distribution of these journals originating at the local level helps build much broader networks of solidarity beyond their specific locations.

Creative writing workshops can also have a positive impact on their neighbourhoods at a very local level. For example, BUMP, the Burgundy Urban Mediation Project in Little Burgundy, hosted regular creative writing workshops from 2009 to 2012 for the youth in Little Burgundy, with the specific goal of helping to reduce violence in the neighbourhood through creative expression. It was also a way to help the participants to do better in school with the ultimate goal of creating a better social environment for people in Little Burgundy by using writing and education.

Fighting prejudice and empowering communities

Finally, the last important aspect of those creative writing groups and their publications is their role in empowering marginalized communities that often face prejudices. This is accomplished by presenting knowledge and stories via a creative writing process which originates from the communities themselves and allows them to fight prejudices through self-representation. Forward House's journal and writing workshops, along with its social integration and community building purpose, also has social action as a goal. Indeed, it aims to empower the community of mentally ill people, and seeks to defeat the stigma put forth by society regarding mental illness. Similarly, Les Impatient's anthology seeks to demystify mental illness for the public.

L'Injecteur, the AQPSUD publication, is another good example of empowerment and social action through writing. Only those who are drug users and who are part of this community, called the Infomans, write in this journal. The same can be said about its twin organization, l'ADDICQ (Association pour la Défense des Droits et l'Inclusion des personnes qui Consomment de la drogue au Québec), where only people that are themselves drug users are allowed to have a say and vote in the functioning of the organization. Thus, the knowledge and stories originate from them. By doing this, they seek to get rid of paternalist and moralizing attitudes, but also to contribute to the empowerment of this community of drug users that is comprised of a variety of people who suffer greatly from marginalization, as sharing personal stories will genuinely speak to other people in the same situation and create links.

Conclusion

The research project shows that the aim of community-based writing groups can go beyond their initial creative purpose. By creating inclusive environments, they encourage people to express themselves freely and communicate. Thus, each group in their own way contributes to the social integration of their members and to building a local, empowered community. In addition, it also shows that everyone can be a writer and a poet, and thus challenges the traditional views of poetry and creative literature as an elite art.

The detailed information gathered throughout the project will be shared on the Anneau Poétique website at **http://anneaupoetique.wordpress.com/**

Allison Jones

Burnout in Social Movements

The Roots, The Experience, The Lessons Learned

This paper explores my personal experience of burnout[1]. This is not a topic I intended to write about, but one that grabbed me and demanded attention. Here, I explore the meanings and roots of activist burnout, and what social movement theory might offer to understand this experience. I will argue that burnout is both a public and private issue, and offer constructive suggestions of ways that burnout in social movements can be prevented and addressed.

The Impetus

This paper was born out of a group project for the course 'Contemporary Social Movements'. For the project we were asked to organize a number of actions around an issue at our university, and engage in 'learning-by-doing' by executing our ideas and incorporating the social movement theories we had learned in class into our planning. Initially, I was overjoyed at the opportunity to engage in activism as part of my coursework; unfortunately, this enthusiasm was short-lived. Our group organized two actions, both focused on critical pedagogy at McGill. While I expected the project to be fun and interesting, I instead found that I was disengaged, frustrated, and cynical about the project, our actions, and our results.

My ongoing pessimistic and disinterested attitude prompted me to begin wondering why my enthusiasm was so low, and, after linking this to other events and recent experiences, to wonder whether I was 'burning out'. These questions lead me to research the phenomenon of activist burnout, and reflect on my own experiences of it.

Involvement in Activism

It is important to understand that this project was not my first involvement in social action. I have been involved in organizing in a variety of capacities for a number of years, but in the past year found myself increasingly invested in high-cost activism[2]. During the student strike, I attended numerous demonstrations, helped with mobilization efforts at McGill, participated in nightly casseroles, and became highly engaged in popular education groups throughout the city. A large portion of my time was devoted to these activities. Simultaneously, I was a member of a number of environmental and political groups on campus, particularly through QPIRG and CKUT. This year, I continued to participate in quite a few of these groups, while also working three part-time jobs and studying full-time. These experiences encouraged me to take this social movements course, and also played a significant role in my reflections on activist burnout.

Biographical Availability

The reasons for this high level of involvement are many, including previous experience, ideological affinity, social networks, and structural availability. In particular, I could be involved in high-cost activism because of my biographical availability, "defined as the absence of personal constraints that may increase the costs and risks of movement participation" (McAdam 1986, 70). This includes my being a student (with a flexible schedule), unmarried and with no children, a Canadian citizen, and new to Montreal (thereby lacking other major commitments). A shift in my biographical availability recently, which I perceive as linked to my burnout, was to go from being unemployed during the last school year to working this year.

Niche Overlap

Another way of understanding my involvement in a variety of SMOs[3] is to refer to Popielarz and McPherson's (1995) description of niches in social space. Social space is arranged by sociodemographic characteristics on multiple axes. Since people tend to associate with others who have similar sociodemographic characteristics as themselves, those people are also close to them in social space (701). While there are a number of components to this proposition, that which concerns my argument is the concept of niche overlap. Niche overlaps are areas in social space where multiple groups recruit members. This causes members whose identity falls into a niche overlap to "run out of the resources necessary for membership" (715) because of the pressure to participate in many groups. I propose that SMOs, which require members to have certain social networks, value systems, and structural availabilities, often draw on the same individuals for membership, and that these members have increased turnover and burnout.

As a student activist who believes in free education, during the Quebec Student Movement I lay in the niche overlap of many SMOs recruiting members. Additionally, as a queer woman interested in and studying migrant justice, sustainability, and First Nations rights, my identity and interests also made me a potential member for other SMOs and activist causes. This resulted in me "quickly run[ning] out of the time, money, and attention important for voluntary association participation" (Popielarz and McPherson 1995, 704).

Burnout

Not only did my biographical availability allow me to become involved in high-cost activism, as McAdam (1986) proposes, my social location also positioned me in a niche overlap, where I was pulled in many directions at once by varied SMOs whose 'profile' I fit. After the decrease in my biographical availability when I began working, I continued to be involved in most of the SMOs I had previously participated in, spreading myself very thin. Despite attempts to withdraw myself from a number of commitments, I was unable to do so for a variety of reasons: I needed to finish hiring new coordinators for one of my jobs before I could leave; a friend relied on me for babysitting her son while she worked; two organizations that I could have more easily left were those that I enjoyed most and with which I wanted to stay involved.

This led to a slow process of burnout, characterized by disengagement, disinterest, exhaustion, and cynicism. I withdrew from organizations that I had been very involved in, considering this retreat to be partially based on my exhaustion, but also due to structural problems in organizations with which I was highly involved. For example, I increasingly found that the Alternative University Project (AltU) was overly focused on building institutional structure to formalize its existence; The Plant (a collectively-run art cooperative and living space) was dominated by a few individuals, all male, and left little room for new members or actions; and QPIRG (an organization focused on environmental and social justice research, action, and popular education) was not welcoming enough, and thus only attracted the same small group of students to all events. I almost stopped participating entirely in events such as meetings, demonstrations, workshops, and actions. Additionally, I found my emotional state to be much less consistent than in the past, and began experiencing sudden and very powerful mood swings.

I consider these experiences to fulfil the description of burnout given above, and think that being burned out led to my disinterested participation in our group project for the course. I felt critical of the project and found it emotionally straining on my pre-existing relationships with group members. Seemingly small things, like the fact that much of our organizing was done via e-mail, became very frustrating for me; I felt our organizing process was not well-done, the actions would fail, the project would be worthless, and so what was the point in trying, anyway.

Individual Model

Much literature characterizes burnout as an individual problem. This can be seen, for example, "in the occupational medical setting of some European countries…[where] burnout is an established medical diagnosis" (Schaufeli, Leiter, and Maslach 2008, 205). When categorized as such, burnout is ascribed to a particular individual, based on their symptoms. It is also treated individually and, as Arches (1997, 52) describes, "proposals for what can be done focus primarily on the individual and adaptation, with counselling and self-healing the interventions of choice".

Yet, I found while working through my own burnout, that changes focused solely on myself were not effective in overcoming the roots of the burnout. Giving up commitments made those I had organized with disappointed at my disengagement, and I felt frustrated at no longer participating in what I had considered to be meaningful organizing. I also found that when discussing burnout with friends, many could relate to my experience. I realized that this was a much broader problem—many SMOs were systematically not able to support members and prevent widespread burnout.

Based on these experiences, I do not feel that an individually focused understanding of or response to burnout is appropriate; therefore, I will instead outline a social analysis of burnout.

Social Analysis

Schaufeli, Leiter, and Maslach (2008) argue that burnout in the workplace is due to two factors: a lack of resources for human services work, and a lack of alignment between the values of companies and their workers. They push towards a social understanding of burnout by acknowledging these common trends in organizations, but I think that the work of Arches (1997) is more thorough and useful for this analysis. Arches suggests that burnout is a public issue, created "by tensions between bureaucratization, individualization and professionalization" (1997, 52) in the workplace. Drawing parallels between her analysis and my experience, I will compare the SMOs that I was involved in with the social work workplace that is central to her research.

The commitments with which I felt the strongest frustration and burnout were those that had the least collective components and the most individual, bureaucratic work. A major part of my declining energy was because a number of groups I was involved in decreased the number of meetings, actions and activities focused on hope and building alternatives to mainstream institutions, in order to focus on logistically moving projects forward. This meant a rise in organizing via email, and that meetings became brief, tense, and goal-centred.

I also felt that towards the end of the Quebec Student Movement, some groups, such as AltU and the Popular Education Network, became very focused on creating institutional structures and that all our efforts went into this, rather than organizing workshops, teach-ins, public discussions, skill-shares, and other forms of popular education as we had originally done. Thus, the organizing I was participating in was becoming less process-centred, creative, and dynamic, and more structured and goal-focused. This process in SMOs mirrors the process of professionalization and bureaucratization in social work, where these trends are often seen as significantly contributing to worker isolation, exhaustion, and loss of autonomy (Arches 1991).

In addition to these factors, I believe that the Quebec Student Movement perhaps led to a collective experience of burnout by many activists in the past year in Montreal, which played a key part in the decline of the movement. This is based on my own experience and on trends I have noticed in friends, in organizing, and in the public presence of the movement in Montreal. It is possibly due to the fact that many students, although biographically available to participate in high-cost activism during the strike, became positioned within niche overlaps, causing them to engage and disengage in varied groups and actions with a high turnover rate. When the strike ended, students' biographical availability decreased (as they returned to class), and after months of protests, meetings, actions, and organizing, many were too exhausted—emotionally, physically, and mentally—to continue being involved in activism to the same extent.

Strategies

I will now address potential strategies for dealing with burnout, moving from individual to social responses, exploring the balance between these methods and the strengths and weaknesses of each.

As described above, the most common mode of individual response to burnout is counselling or the development and practice of self-care methods. These techniques are used both to address burnout once it is occurring and as preventative measures. Schaufeli, Leiter, and Maslach suggest that "preventing burnout is not enough, it is necessary to go further to foster work engagement" (2008, 216). They point to a shift towards positive psychology in the field of burnout that encourages psychologists to consider strengths rather than weaknesses, and look for energy, involvement, efficacy, vigour, dedication, and absorption of workers in their practice. Yet, looking for these characteristics without realizing that they are highly influenced by work conditions again misses the crucial social factors of burnout.

Downton and Wehr (2000), in a study of persistent peace activists in Colorado, find a middle ground between individual and collective responses to burnout. They describe how "persisters were creative in designing their lives so they could be available" (538) as a preventative measure against burnout through over-extending themselves. By this they mean that individuals intentionally maximized their biographical availability. They further argue that organizations have a significant influence on cultivating 'commitment sustaining factors' to "influence the depth of persisters' involvement and their ability to stay active over the long term" (536). Commitment sustaining factors both prevent and respond to burnout. They include developing strong ties to SMOs, balancing between different aspects of their lives, personally benefiting from activism (materially as well as emotionally), and having space for creativity and innovation in activism. Thus, individuals and the groups they are involved with co-create conditions that foster long-term involvement and preclude disengagement.

Valocchi (2010) also offers a balance between individual and collective responses to burnout in his book *Social Movements and Activism in the USA*, based on a series of interviews with activists in Hartford, CT. He describes how almost all of the activists he interviewed framed their burnout as an individual issue, but argues that it is important to put their individual stories in dialogue with social theory. He critiques their individual focus on burnout but social focus on other issues, writing, "they fail to turn their progressive values onto themselves and ask themselves how communities of activists should take care of one another" (138). The solution he offers is that activists should "spend as much time fashioning plausibility structures[4] and other forms of internal support for themselves and others as they do engaging in the more externally directed battles for social change" (130).

A number of authors in the field of social work offer structural solutions to burnout. Dreikosen puts this bluntly: "an empowered group of social workers, working together to change a system that is oppressive and flawed, is a great deal more productive than several isolated workers blaming themselves for burning out" (2009, 108), and advocates for coalitions of social workers to create systemic change in their profession. Arches (1997) makes a similar argument, and gives more concrete suggestions on how to create this systemic change. She suggests that burnout can be prevented and addressed through forming political support groups of social workers; forming coalitions with the communities in which social workers work; publicizing successes; lobbying the government to change working conditions; participating in public and community education about resource constraints and opportunities; and developing an awareness of alternative, more community-based structures (such as feminist and Africentric models).

Based on these different author's work and research, I wish to take forward with me a few key ideas about burnout prevention and response. The first is that individual actions, while possible, can only go so far. Counselling and self-care respond to the symptoms of a widespread problem, rather than its roots. I can act individually by trying to increase my biographical availability, for example by reducing other commitments, but doing so does not address the fact that there are many others in similar situations and that this is a systemic problem.

A second lesson is that organizations can play an important role in addressing and slowing burnout. A number of the organizations that I have been involved with could have worked more collaboratively, instead of separately working on the same issues and causing members to burnout faster because of the creation and exploitation of niche overlaps. We could have also focused less on institutional strength, as based in bureaucratic models of organizations, and instead embraced more community-centric models like those Arches (1997) advocates.

Third, the qualitative studies I read about activist commitment and burnout (Downton and Wehr, 2000; Valocchi, 2010) focus on the fact that although burnout can be prevented by SMOs developing strong support and commitment sustaining factors, in reality activists are often forced to create their own strategies, as organizations do not make this a priority. This makes me want to work to ensure the organizations with which I work in the future prioritize strategies that support activists from varied backgrounds. It also signals to me that, to a certain extent, my life must be constructed around my involvement in activism. I am implementing small steps towards this, for example by shifting my employment to be more directly linked to my activism, by changing my academic program to study activism and topics of interest to me, and by learning more about burnout and how to address it.

Conclusion

Writing this paper has been a significant part of my process of dealing with my burnout this year. It has helped me understand that my experience of burnout was not isolated or individual, but was linked to structural factors and social patterns. As members of activist communities, we need to find ways to support one another and ensure that the groups we are a part of are actively combating wide-spread and persistent activist burnout. To address this problem, we must begin to explore, together, how to foster long-term, sustainable commitment.

References

Arches, Joan L. 1991. "Social Strucure, Burnout, and Job Satisfaction." *Social Work* 36(3): 202-206.

Arches, Joan L. 1997. "Burnout and Social Action." *Journal of Progressive Human Services* 8(2): 51-62.

Downton, James, Jr. and Paul Wehr. 2000. "Persistent Pacifism: How Activist Commitment is Developed and Sustained." *Peace Research Abstracts* 37(1): 531-550.

Dreikosen, Denise. 2009. "Radical Social Work: A Call to Link Arms." *Journal of Progressive Human Services* 20(2): 107-109.

Fillieule, Olivier. 2010. "Some Elements of an Interactionist Approach to Political Disengagement." *Social Movement Studies* 9(1): 1-15.

McAdam, Doug. 1986. "Recruitment to High-Risk Activism: The Case of Freedom Summer." *American Journal of Sociology* 92(1): 64-90.

McCarthy, John D. and Mayer N. Zald. 1977. "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory." *The American Journal of Sociology* 82(6): 1212-1241.

Schaufeli, Wilmar B., Michael P. Leiter, and Christina Maslach. 2008. "Burnout: 35 Years of Research and Practice." *Career Development International* 14(3): 204-220.

Valocchi, Stephen. 2010. *Social Movements and Activism in the USA*. London: Routledge.

1 In this paper, burnout is defined as "a cluster of physical, emotional and interactional problems stemming from emotional exhaustion, perceived lack of accomplishment, and depersonalization related to job stress" (Arches 1997, 51). In this case, 'job' is understood broadly as my activism, following Fillieule's (2010) discussion of the notion of the 'activist career'.

2 High-cost activism refers to participation requiring significant expenditure of time, money, and energy (McAdam 1986). I typify my activist involvement as such because of the high time and energy it requires. The risk level of my involvement varies depending on specific actions.

3 An SMO is "a complex, or formal, organization which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or a countermovement and attempts to implement those goals" (McCarthy and Zald 1977, 1218).

4 'Plausibility structures' are cited by Valocchi as a concept developed by Sharon Erickson Nepstad, and defined as "a set of practices, networks, and relations that provide material, cognitive, and emotional supports for activists doing demanding work" (Valocchi, 2010, 129).

List of Contributors

Articles

Aaron Barcant
I am an international student from Trinidad, at Concordia University. I do not believe in confinement to disciplines (or static identities), as my learning and study focus reflect in every way. I am particularly interested in language due to its central relationship to identity, epistemology, and ontology. This is heightened further when it comes to the question of organization in ascribing active – conscious – resistance and expression.

Allison Jones
Allison is interested in radical forms of anti-oppressive and anti-authoritarian education. She is studying Anthropology at McGill University in Montreal, but her learning happens all the time and all over the place.

Cléo Mathieu
Cleo studied Women Studies and Linguistics at Concordia for a semester, and is currently working in a raw-food kitchen downtown Montreal, as well as working on her own literary and drawings projects.

Keara Yim
Keara Yim is an undergraduate student in the women's studies and geography departments at Concordia, based in Montreal. She is interested in decolonization and the practice of Indigenous solidarity, particularly from the position of QPoC, and is currently doing research in support of the Unist'ot'en Pacific Trails Pipeline blockade.

Lily Hoffman
Lily Hoffman is a former McGill student. They are interested in issues of gender, sexuality and queerness, and how these things intersect with capitalism and state power, amongst many other things.

Marike Reid-Gaudet
Marike Reid-Gaudet a un background en anthropologie et en sociologie de l'éducation. Elle est présidente de l'AQED (Association québécoise pour l'éducation à domicile) et rêve (et travail avec d'autres rêveurs) à la mise en place de la première école-libre à Montréal.

Myriam Abdelhak
Undergraduate student at Concordia, I volunteer as a researcher for L'Anneau Poetique, and am a member of Concordia University Television. Location area: Montreal.

Art Work

Arianna Garcia-Fialdini
Arianna Garcia-Fialdini, newcomer Canadian, born Mexico City,1983.
First BFA in Painting, Concordia University, second BFA Art Education. Completed MFA studies in Painting in the west of Ireland, April 2012. Lives and works in Montreal. Has exhibited in Mexico, Canada, the US and Ireland.

Geneviève Giroux
Bédéiste et illustratrice, Geneviève Giroux s'intéresse à la vie de quartier de Montréal, ainsi qu'à la culture et à l'histoire du Québec.

Depuis 2012, elle a présenté deux expositions individuelles et a exposé dans une vingtaine de lieux culturels. Elle a publié un recueil de bandes dessinées et a participé à une œuvre collective de bédéistes. Elle a obtenu une maîtrise en éducation à l'Université du Québec à Montréal en 2010. Elle a souvent sollicité la collaboration de Charles Bossé, enseignant de français et passionné de bandes dessinées, pour la réalisation de projets artistiques.

Megan Kanerahtenha:wi Whyte
Megan Kanerahtenha:wi Whyte is an artist and art educator from the Mohawk Nation of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Through her artistic and academic endeavors, her goal is to culminate a growing curriculum of multimedia visual art and exploratory processes that address the issues concerning Indigenous rights, cultural traditions, and hybrid identities.

Shannon Willmott
This painting is about history and the weight of the legacy we are struggling under. We cannot escape the atrocities that have happened on this earth - to the land, to the animals and to each other. It is a terrible and ongoing weight. The feelings that motivated the making of this painting asks me, how will you continue? How will you intervene? What can be done?

Sofia Bach
Sofia Bach is a 20 year old ukrainian artist residing in Montreal and studying at McGill. Acrylic on canvas being her main medium, she investigates on human psyche in modern life through the means of painting. The conception of the objectivization of the human individual since the industrialization and the languages of the subconscious are her main artistic interests.

Cover Art

C. Gladu
C. Gladu is an interdisciplinary PhD student and artist focused on issues of identity, the environment, and political activism. Drawing from a diverse educational background in business, fine arts and design, my work often weaves together seemingly disparate elements in a way that is bold and intelligent while also being playful and narrative.

Study In Action

Study in Action is an undergraduate conference designed to link students and community activism. It is held in March every year and is organized by a collective through QPIRG Concordia and QPIRG-McGill.

In its mission, Study in Action seeks to foster ties between undergraduate students and the broader Montreal community in order to strengthen the spirit of social and environmental justice, promote undergraduate research, and emphasize links between the two. Study in Action provides an opportunity for students and people outside the academic community to come together to work on and discuss approaches to social justice, while creating a forum to highlight undergraduate research. The conference is a forum for students to present and engage in meaningful academic work that will benefit their communities as well as their academic experience and careers. Panel presentations showcasing undergraduate research provide students with the opportunity to present and develop their university work and direct its application to community issues.

http://qpirgconcordia.org/studyinaction/

Art In Action

Art in Action is affiliated with Study in Action. Art in Action highlights creative student and community contributions related to social and environmental justice issues through diverse mediums including: drawing, painting, photography, performance, film & video, installation, music, spoken word, zine, collage, water colour, poster, and print.

Community-University Research Exchange (CURE)

Community-University Research Exchange (CURE) is a database by which students can integrate their academic research with the work of local movements and activist organizations. Through the administrative infrastructures already in place at McGill and Concordia University, students may complete a CURE research project as an independent study course, internship, or thesis advised by a departmental professor, or as a term project for an upper-level class. By connecting students to non-profit community groups with limited resources, CURE hopes to encourage and support academic research that is socially relevant.

CURE operates on the principle that the University is an institution which maintains systems of privilege and oppression around race, class, and neocolonialism. By redirecting resources to groups and individuals in need of theory, information, and the energy to supply them, CURE encourages students to acknowledge their institutional advantage, and convert it into a useful tool for political action. By allowing students both to engage in anti-oppressive academic research, and to work with local movements for social change, CURE is an initiative that hopes to make rubble of the walls which enclose academic privilege.

http://curemontreal.org/

about the cover images

Title: Oh Canada...
Artist: C. Gladu
Medium: Lino cut prints on paper
Description: This series of drawings is an exploration of Canada's changing national identity and character as it relates to environmental stewardship. As a point of departure, these works borrow heavily from the familiar works of a number of Canadian landscape artists such as Lawren Harris and Tom Thompson, which present an idealized depiction of the Canadian landscape. Modern interventions on these images serve to represent the visual impact of our hunger for natural resources and raise questions about the changing in the nature of our national identity.

2013