Spring 2021

Je me Souviens: Visualizing Language in Québec’s Quiet Revolution

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Je me Souviens: Visualizing Language in Québec’s Quiet Revolution

Senior Project Submitted to

The Division of the Arts & Languages and Literature

of Bard College

By

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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May 2021
Acknowledgements

I am endlessly indebted to my mom for moving me around the world and teaching me the value of hard work and perseverance. I could not have written this thesis without your support.

Thank you to all my Bard professors, who have each individually impacted me and irreversibly grown my world. Especially my advisor, Alex Kitnick, for supporting me throughout my years at Bard and during this process. Marina Van Zuylen, for reframing my relationship to French and helping me get to Paris. And Éric Trudel for lending me your knowledge of Québec.
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Bill 101 changed the trajectory of my life. I was eleven years old when I moved to Montréal and faced the reality of the French Language Charter. One of the articles of Bill 101 states that all children under the age of 16 must be instructed in the French schooling system unless one of their parents is a Canadian citizen who has been instructed primarily at English educational institutions. Both of my parents are American.

I began at a bilingual school in the French immersion program, Roslyn Elementary School, half way through the fifth grade. I had a year and a half grace period before I had to move to an all-French high school. I learned virtually no French at Roslyn. When the day switched to French, I was pushed to the side to practice my handwriting while the other kids jumped back into French grammar lessons. I was not given any French language instruction during this first year in Montréal. All the students were Anglophones. We spoke English in the school yard and my friends were bilingual, but most were more comfortable speaking English. I remember leaving Roslyn knowing things were going to be very different.

In the final months of my time at Roslyn, I began applying to high schools, most of which were semi-private, meaning they are partially subsidized by the Québec government and open to any applicant. This process was hard on me and my family. I had to go through a series of entrance exams and interviews, as did my mom. I remember sitting at a desk in a huge classroom at Collège de Montréal, packed with other prospective students, completing the entrance exam. I couldn’t figure out where to fill in my name or my birth date. I was denied admission to CDM. The same went for the other high schools I applied to, except La Villa Sainte-Marcelline.
Marcelline’s entrance interview was conducted—in French—in a classroom with twenty other girls accompanied by their parents. My mom had been coaching me for weeks. My mom’s basic level of French helped us put together solid answers for the most obvious questions. Questions were asked and each prospective student spoke one after another, trying to outsmart the last. My mom scribbled words down for me on a piece of paper. I spoke quietly and fast, trying to emulate the perfect Québec accent, barely aware of what I was saying.

Marcelline is a tiny French, all-girls, Catholic school run by Italian nuns located in Upper Westmount, the most expensive Anglophone neighborhood in Québec. A tiny French intellectual powerhouse, wedged in among huge multi-million dollar Westmount mansions. My three years at Marcelline proved to be the most intense years of my life. Not only was I racing to catch up to the French level of native speakers, but the academic rigor of Marcelline was like nothing I have yet to experience at any other academic institution. I spent three summers in French summer school, my Saturdays in French class and my afternoons in French tutoring. My weekends were spent studying for hours everyday. I was learning French, but I was also learning Spanish, advanced physics, math, biology, religion, history, robotics, geography, and environmental science. I failed both seventh grade and eighth grade. No matter how much I tried, the language barrier was too big to compensate in such a short time. I struggled everyday. I failed tests and exams and presentations. After failing all subjects except English in seventh grade, my mom begged the principal in broken French to let me continue on to the next grade. They came to an agreement: I would spend two weeks of my summer in northern Québec at a French camp.

I hated Montréal, I hated Marcelline even more, and I hated French the most.
Most of the girls at Marcelline did not speak English. I was completely isolated in a foreign environment and learning French was the only way to stay afloat. My teachers did not know what to do with me. Most of them tried their best. I remember failing my seventh grade history test for the third time, sitting in an empty classroom after school with my history teacher who insisted I pass. I couldn’t do it. He sat with me and filled in the correct answers, trying to explain the complexities of the Seven Years’ War and the way to write centuries in Roman numerals. Some teachers were not as forgiving. I was not allowed to speak English once I entered the building and was often shamed when I did. I was constantly reminded of my inadequacies by teachers and peers. I was alienated by a language barrier that weighed heavily on my life. I was viscerally aware of my singularity among my peers, highlighted by the language barrier and undercut by religious and class distinctions.

Marcelline was a ruthless environment, but the powerful, all-female classroom forced me to be strong and taught me how to live in the world. The nuns lived at the school and took care of all the girls like they were their own. They wanted me to succeed, but they were not going to hold my hand while I got there. By my third year at Marcelline, something started to click. My grades went up, the work paid off, and I understood my classes. I was becoming fluent in French. I learned about the complex cultural reality of Québec and the historical fight for linguistic and cultural dominance between Anglophones and Francophones. I came to deeply respect the Francophone fight for cultural survival.

My thesis is my ode to Montréal. I want to acknowledge what Montréal and Québec have taught me. I have immense gratitude for La Villa Sainte Marcelline, for the French language and
Québec culture. French has been the greatest gift to me, leading me to study in Paris at La Sorbonne and take on French studies at Bard. My endless fascination for Québécois culture led me to further understand its cultural complexities through the work of Joyce Wieland’s *Pierre Vallières* (1972) and Michèle Lalonde’s poem/performance “Speak White” in this senior project. Through my writing and research, I hope I can help you, the reader, understand Québécois identity and culture, specifically during the 1960s, a time of Québécois pride and Francophone cultural resurgence. This time period was critical in the fight for survival among Québécois of French Canadian heritage, and, in turn, it profoundly impacted my life and shaped the cultural arena of Québec for the future.

The reality of increased globalization poses an imminent threat to Québécois Francophone culture, a singular province of Francophone culture among nine others in Canada, dominated by Anglophone vectors of power. The future of language in Québec is protected by Bill 101. I hope it stays that way.

Both *Pierre Vallières* (1972) and “Speak White” (1968) beg the question of context. If one is not familiar with the historical and social reality of Québec, these works are largely inaccessible. The knowledge and understanding of history is essential to grasping the dynamic between Francophones and Anglophones within Québec. To this end, I provide here a brief historical context for these contemporary Québécois works.

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The Québec motto—‘Je me souviens’ (I remember) —lingers at the bottom of every Québec license plate. The saying encourages people to never forget the fraught history of Québec, to never forget where they, les Québécois, come from.

What is now called Québec, was colonized by the French in 1534, headed by Jacques Cartier. Aboriginal North America was under attack from that point on. The French were allied with the Algonquin and Huron natives, but they remained ongoing enemies of the Iroquois. However, the name “Canada,” is actually of Iroquoian origin, signifying “a village or group of houses.”¹ The 17th century attracted more Europeans to the area in search of capital gain. In 1608, the lure of a fur trade monopoly prompted the French lieutenant, Samuel de Champlain, to establish a French colony in North America before the British and the Dutch. Thus, on July 3rd 1608, Champlain and his group of men founded what is now known as Québec by building a small settlement of homes that would later be fortified.² And in 1642, Paul de Chomeday de Maisonneuve founded Ville-Marie, now known as Montréal, on the basis of “establishing a mystical colony” to evangelize Aboriginal peoples.³

France’s settlement in the Québec area, “New France,” began to grow in the early 17th century; the pacification of the Iroquois and the growth of the colony were France’s major issues in Québec in the mid 17th century. The French who came to settle in the St Lawrence Valley took on a new identity in the 1660s: they began to self-identify as “Canadois” or “Canadiens,” differentiating themselves from French visitors.⁴ By the late 1600s, the settlers living in Canada were

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² Ibid, 12.
³ Ibid, 17.
⁴ Ibid, 24.
very different from the people of France. The French spoken in New France grew and morphed to fit the differing environment, which created new words and expressions.\(^5\)

New France was again in danger in 1689 by one war of many, between France and England. Moreover, the Iroquois were fighting New France and aiding New England. The British colonies in the “New World,” wanted the complete annexation of Canada, but failed to do so. A peace treaty was signed shortly after and restored the pre-war dynamic. Regardless, the French and Aboriginal nations were weak from on-going wars. Even the Aboriginal nations allied with France were destroyed by European diseases. A major peace treaty was signed between France and some 40 Aboriginal nations in 1701.\(^6\) The treaty made it possible for France to set up new settlements inland and proclaimed that the Iroquois must remain neutral in times of war between France and England, a promise later broken by the Iroquois.

Another war between France and England in the early 18th century weakened France’s powerhold over Canada as colonial territory was handed over to England in the Treaty of Utrecht ending the war. The British win foreshadowed the later takeover of New France by England. As Acadia was one of New France’s territories ceded to England in the Treaty of Utrecht, the Acadians, French-speaking descendants of early French settlers in Acadia, were deported from their land between 1755-1762.\(^7\) The goal of the New England colony was to take over New France completely and they were well on their way.

The decisive Seven Years’ War between France and England began in 1756. The battle of the Plains of Abraham in 1759 was a pivotal conflict in the war in which the French were forced

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\(^6\) Ibid, 28.

\(^7\) Ibid, 31.
to capitulate and Québec was surrendered to the British. The fall of Montréal followed in 1760. Canadians were the “new subjects” of the King of England from then on. Peace was reached in 1763 with the Treaty of Paris. The British crown still reigns over Canada to this day.

In the 1760s, there was a very small English-population in Québec, the vast majority of the inhabitants were either French from old France, or Canadian born, both of whom only spoke French. The Attorney General of Quebec claimed the only way to fix the tension between French and English speakers was to assimilate the French population. British authority sought to erode all signs of Canadian (French) culture and language. Thus, the undying battle for cultural and linguistic dominance began, emanating from years of on and off war between France and England.

Up until the 1780s, the term “Canadians” only applied to French-speaking subjects. In 1787, the postmaster Hugh Finlay broadened the term and took on the identity of Canadian with the following statement:

Some people affect to call the King’s Natural born subjects, new Canadians—He who chose to make Canada his place of residence lost his name of Englishman. The old Canadians are those we conquer’d in 1760 and their descendants, the new Canadians are composed of emigrants from England, Scotland, Ireland, and the Colonies now the United States...they are converted into Canadians…

With time, English speakers took on this label of Canadian. To self-differentiate, the “original French-speaking Canadians” became known as “French Canadians.”

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8 Lacoursière, A People’s History of Québec, 69.
9 Ibid, 72.
10 Ibid, 78.
11 Ibid.
The British investigator, Lord Durham published a report in 1838, reflecting on the tumultuous situation in Canada, which has since become infamous. Durham stated the following in regard to French Canadians: “they form a people without history and without literature...The language, the laws, and the character of the North American continent are English and every other race than the English race is in a state of inferiority.”

Durham’s solution was to impose upon them the “English character” to release them from their innate inferiority.

Given this very brief sketch of Québec history from the original phase of colonization in the 16th century to the triumph of the British in the 1760s and the ongoing tension birthed from the layered colonization, one is able to grasp the foundation of the contemporary dynamic between Anglophone Canadians and Québécois of French Canadian heritage. Moreover, one is able to understand the gradual formation of a distinctive Québécois identity born out of oppression, within the confines of Anglo-Canada.

To fully understand both Pierre Vallières (1972) and “Speak White” (1968), I will further elaborate on the revolutionary moment of 1960s Québec that profoundly impacted both works. In the 1960s, Québec went through drastic foundational changes, culturally and politically, that shaped Québécois identity and society, as well as the cultural productions of the time. This moment of change was labeled the “Quiet Revolution” or “Révolution Tranquille”--a term conceived by an English-speaking journalist from Toronto to “describe the sweeping reforms that were achieved without violent clash.”

The term “quiet” references the lack of violence (for the most part) involved in the 1960s Québec reforms, especially in comparison with other anti-colonial, anti-racist, and anti-imperialist struggles.

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12 Lacoursière, A People’s History of Québec, 99.
13 Ibid, 165.
anti-imperialist fights of independence in other parts of the world. Moreover, all of the revolutionary changes in Québec were implemented under the continued colonial power of the British crown and the stronghold of the Canadian federal government. Jean-Claude Robert characterized the Quiet Revolution as more of an “abrupt unblocking” rather than “a veritable revolution.” Thus, the revolution was “quiet,” yet extremely successful and foundational for the future of Québec identity, culture, and politics.

During the Quiet Revolution, the province underwent an ambitious program of nationalization, modernization, and the expansion of the modern state. The Quiet Revolution was deemed a “social revolution,” one that “finally brought Québec into the mainstream of North American society.” The foundational changes in Québec were ushered in after the death of Maurice Duplessis, the conservative, anti-union leader of the Union Nationale party (premier from 1944 to 1959). Duplessis and the Catholic Church held immense power in Québec during this time, referred to as “la grande noirceur”—a period of great darkness. Thus, the juxtaposition of the proceeding Quiet Revolution was profound in the formation of modern Québec. The Union Nationale was disjointed after Duplessis’s death in 1959 and the following sudden death of his successor. The Liberal party under Jean Lesage won the provincial election in 1960 using the slogan “maîtres chez nous” (masters of our own house), a philosophy that defined the proceeding governmental reforms. A “program of modernization” enveloped the 1960s, which in-


16 Ibid.
cluded the “expansion of the public sector, educational reform, social service measures.” The word “national” started being used to describe Québec government subsidiaries. This period of modernization created the following affects: the church’s power was decentralized, women’s rights were on the rise, health care expanded, educational reform created new universities and higher attendance, internal economic reinvigoration strengthened the province’s economy, and more notably, a desire for independence in relation to Anglo-Canada was a blossoming sentiment, as well as a renewed pride in the Québécois French language and culture as a self-identifying characteristic.

The urgency of economic salvation was widespread among Québécois of French Canadian heritage. For some perspective: “in 1961, French-Canadians earned 35% less on average than English-Canadians, Quebec had 40% of Canada’s unemployed but only 27% of Canada’s population, and francophones controlled less than 20% of Quebec’s economy.” The Quiet Revolution emerged out of these grievances and prejudices in Québec that hindered substantial progress among Québécois.

As the world erupted in waves of revolutionary struggles for independence and equality in the 1960s, groups of Québécois radicals followed the violent liberation movements in Africa and Latin America, as well as the Black Power movement in the United States as sources of inspiration. These Québécois nationalist, separatist groups enforced the notion “maîtres chez nous” (masters of our own house), calling for a kind of economic nationalism, which would create the state of Québec or even the complete separation of Québec from Canada. The most radical and

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18 Lacoursière, A People’s History of Québec, 171.
violent separatist group was the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ), of which Pierre Vallières was a leading figure. The FLQ was referred to as the following: “a revolutionary movement of volunteers ready to die for the political and economic independence of Quebec.” The FLQ self-identified in their own manifesto as the following: “a group of Quebec workers who are determined to use every means possible to ensure that the people of Quebec take control of their own destiny.” The FLQ hid bombs in locations around Québec that they felt enforced the colonial oppression of their province, such as the Federal Tax building, several Westmount mansion mailboxes, and the home of Montréal major Jean Drapeau. The FLQ’s armed violence reached an apex during the October Crisis 1970, which involved two kidnappings.

The journal Parti Pris, founded in 1963, was considered the intellectual branch of the FLQ, identifying as “indépendantiste et socialiste.” Parti Pris sought to provoke a collective consciousness among Québécois as well as promote the transformation of traditional nationalism to a “néonationalisme progressiste et indépendantiste.” The journal celebrated Québec French, known colloquially as joual. The essence of Parti Pris was characterized as the following: “a moment of encounter between language and the nationalist spirit,” a sentiment that characterized much of the individual impacts of the Quiet Revolution.

21 Front de Libération du Québec, “MANIFESTO,” Translated & edited by Damien-Claude Bélanger (Trent University, 2007), no pagination.
22 Lacoursière, A People’ s History of Québec, 169.
23 “Striving for independence and socialism” (translated by me). Pierre-Luc Bégin, “Parti pris: un phénomène majeur méconnu” (Québec français, 2009), 49.
Pierre Vallières published his incendiary book, *Nègres blancs d’Amérique* (*White N*****s of America*) in 1968. Not only was it foundational for the message of the FLQ, but it became a “rallying cry” for many non-violent Québécois as well. Moreover, the book is what distinguished Vallières from his FLQ peers and ultimately led to Joyce Wieland’s idea for her short film as well as Michèle Lalonde’s poem “Speak White.” Lalonde’s “Speak White” was originally composed for a fundraising event in 1968 (*Chansons et poèmes de la résistance*) to raise money for Vallières and his FLQ companion who were imprisoned in New York at the time. Thus, “Speak White” is in direct conversation and support of Vallières’s rhetoric. “Speak White” became a famous Québec poem in 1970, when Lalonde performed it herself at Nuit de la Poésie.

It is during the 1960s that French Canadians living in Québec decided that they preferred being called Québécois. The poet Paul Chamberland wrote the following translation in regard to the changing vernacular: “We will use the terms Quebec and Quebecer rather than French Canada and French Canadian. The language bias masks a transformation of realities. Quebec will no longer be a province, but a country [...]” This key shift in self-identification further distinguished Québec cultural identity within Anglo-Canada and signaled a transition to a new kind of self-affirmative nationalism. From “Canadian,” to “French-Canadian,” to “Québécois,” the

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28 Ibid.

Québécois of French Canadian heritage have sought to keep their culture alive, symbolized through this vital transition in terminology.

Coming out of the Quiet Revolution’s celebration of Québécois French and cultural pride in the 1960s, Bill 22 in 1974 made French Québec’s official language. And in 1977 the French Language Charter, known as Bill 101 (Loi 101), “changed the linguistic face of Quebec.”\footnote{Ibid.} Bill 101 enforced the following: “French had to be used throughout the government administration, in labour relations, on commercial signs, and by professional corporations.” Moreover, “immigrants to Quebec of whatever language were to send their children to French schools.”\footnote{Jacques Lacoursière, \textit{A People's History of Québec}, 182.} My lived experience of Bill 101 was informed by this clause.

The following two chapters are dedicated to Joyce Wieland’s \textit{Pierre Vallières} (1972) and Michèle Lalonde’s “Speak White.” Wieland’s work as a whole explores her conception of Canadian nationalism and her film \textit{Pierre Vallières} (1972) addresses the relationship between Québec with the rest of Canada, as well as the internal frictions within the province as seen through the mouth of Vallières himself. In turn, “Speak White,” performed by Lalonde in 1970 at Nuit de la Poésie, has lived on in the collective consciousness of Québec cultural pride and identity ever since. “Speak White” captures Vallières’s radical rhetoric as well as the revolutionary anti-colonial, anti-imperialist sentiment of the 1960s. Both cultural productions aid in the understanding of Québec as a province and an identity.
CH 1: Joyce Wieland’s *Pierre Vallières* (1972)

“It was about dealing with the mouth of a person that was put in jail without trial for three years…” said Joyce Wieland regarding her experimental short film, *Pierre Vallières* (1972).

The work depicts the talking mouth of Québec revolutionary, Pierre Vallières. Vallières was a member of the Front de Libération du Québec, a violent nationalist, separatist group. The camera tightly frames Vallières’s mouth, ever so often hovering to the left or right, further abstracting the image. In the first few seconds of the work, it is almost impossible to distinguish the dimly lit parting lips, obscured by Vallières’s mustache. When he begins speaking, his mouth starts moving and one is immediately able to situate the image with a talking mouth. The mouth is speaking to us. “The mouth is about language,” Wieland says herself. Wieland has cancelled out all visual distractions to enforce her point. One is confronted with the mouth, the words, and the message, auditorily and visually. Vallières’s thick Québécois French accent is center stage. Of his mouth, Wieland has stated the following:

> The teeth and the particular lower-class kind of accent are imbued with a kind of working-class speech. The teeth of a poor man. And the rolling of the tongue and lips--the whole thing is about what is a mouth. And what is this man, because he is an orator, and very good at it.

His language, viscerally transmitted to the viewer through his lips and rolling tongue, is the subject. The claustrophobia of the frame insinuates: “this political figure and his words are too big

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33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.
for the frame.”35 His face is not needed—his mouth and his words are more than enough to get his message across within the constricted frame. Wieland refers to the film as a “mouthscape,” a term she invents to further emphasize the singularity of the mouth.36 The film is not a landscape, it is a mouthscape—a fitting, defining term that speaks to the mouth as space, contested through language and subject matter. The mouth serves as a space and identity. Vallières becomes the mouthpiece of his people through the subjugation of his identity to further the projection of his words as representative of a population. The mouth is the point of reference and the focal point of the work.

Moving away from formal qualities, his rhetoric is divided into three monologues that he transitions from seamlessly. He begins with the condition of working class francophones, then to the condition of women, and finishes with the layered colonization of Québec through the examination of native and Acadian populations.

If one wanted to simply know what Vallières had to say, one could read his book, White N*****s of America (Les Nègres Blanc d'Amérique),37 in which he explicates the topics he discusses briefly in the short film. Given the alignment of class along language-lines in Québec’s social system, Vallières’s mother tongue is the root of his oppression. Wieland accentuates Vallières’s source of oppression by purposefully isolating his mouth, forcing the viewer to feel the gravity of his language as the informant to his identity. Thus, the short film goes beyond rhetoric

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37 Original title in French and originally published in 1968.
by visually and auditorily mirroring the oppression Vallières experiences as a Québécois. Parallel to the controversial equation Vallières makes in his book, of his language in Canada with black skin in the United States, Wieland uses her camera to frame and accentuate Vallières’s experience of oppression by alienating his mouth and his voice—reflecting a prevalent aesthetic choice of constriction in Wieland’s experimental films achieved through framing. Language and subject matter, transmitted through Wieland’s work, are not mutually exclusive—his language is the guiding force within the narrative, the identifier of Québec nationality, at the forefront of his experience of oppression within Canada.

Throughout the piece, Vallières addresses his fellow French Québécois, positioning himself among them, under the crushing power structures of Québec and Canada; it is clear he is speaking to his people as he calls on them for action and unification. Yet, Wieland has a different audience in mind as she includes English subtitles that linger above Vallières’s mouth, not below, throughout the movie, providing the translation of his words. Vallières’s language is divided into three different levels of discourse: the English translation (subtitles), the sound of the Québécois French, and the visual movement of his lips and tongue. The English subtitles, whilst functionally providing translation and understanding for non-French speakers, inscribe the very “linguistic difference with which Vallières is preoccupied onto the image in a very literal way.” It is important to note that the work is an entirely different experience for the viewer depending on if they speak French, English or both. As Lauren Rabinovitz has argued, because the “mouth’s rhythms are not synchronous with the subtitles’ text, a disparity exists between the image of the

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38 M. McLarty, “The Experimental Films of Joyce Wieland,” 94.


40 Ibid, 178.
moving mouth and the written word that heightens an awareness of text and visual as distinct components.” For the anglophone, this awareness is most distinct; the textual and visual components are disjointed, heightening the anglophone’s “sense of sound as a discrete yet interdependent part of the cinematic system.” For the francophone, the audio complements the visual but contrasts with the text, which has little meaning. Moreover, the francophone is most directly aware of the nuances of accent and the implications of class. For the bilingual, the work in and of itself is a space of contestation—the audio and the textual do not always correspond in direct translation. With the moving mouth bolstering the audio, French is reinforced as subject and object through the image of the mouth and the sound of the French, but the experience of the work incites a level of overstimulation as the bilingual understands the audio, the words articulated by the mouth, and the English subtitles.

Given the crucial role of translation in understanding the piece, I have included my own English translations when quoting Vallières’s words as some of his slang and filler words are omitted in the subtitles. Translation is never neutral, but I want to use the English subtitles provided in the work along with my own understanding of French to attempt to understand Vallières and Wieland’s intentions to the fullest possible extent.

The short film is so simple that one forgets it is made by an artist as a work of art: it has a purpose beyond its existence as a political message—Wieland and Vallières have their own respective stakes. It is functioning in turn as a representation of French Québécois identity through the centering of language as subject and object of focus—we hear, see, and feel his articulation.

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42 Ibid.
of language and accent. Wieland’s aesthetic choices reinforce both identity formulation and political propaganda. Her isolation of his mouth mirrors the ostracizing of Québécois French in Anglo Canada, with its mainstream bourgeois cultural norms, whilst providing a faceless rallying cry for working class Québécois to identify with. Moreover, her restriction of the frame mirrors her aesthetic strategies in most of her other film works (Catfood (1967), Rat Life and Diet in North America (1968), Handtinting (1967), Sailboat (1967), Water Sark (1964), Dripping Water (1969), Reason Over Passion (1993)). The use of close-ups, the fragmentation of action, and the virtual absence of establishing shots or long shots speaks to a “strong sense of containment” and her exposition of the “limitations of the cinematic medium.”

Pierre Vallières (1972) as a work of art speaks to Wieland’s intentions within the medium of film through its blunt aesthetic choices—most clearly represented through the tight framing and cropping—whilst simultaneously amplifying a political message of Québécois oppression, which reflects Wieland’s larger mission to understand and dissect Canadian national identity, reflected in her exhibit “True Patriot Love.” The film thus has layered meaning, enforced through its visual qualities, Vallières’s words and identity, and the encapsulation of the Québec language through the mouth.

The content of the film, of Vallières’s speech, reinforces the effects of these aesthetic devices. Vallières begins by explaining the situation in Mont Laurier where many working-class francophones live and work. Vallières refers to the working class experience of his community living in Mont Laurier as “vraiment catastrophique.” In early 1972, Vallières said that around 70 to 75% of the population was on unemployment insurance, welfare, or another form of govern-

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ment aid. He refers to the only employer, Bellerive Plywood, as a concentration camp that employs many women for only $1.35/hour and forces employees to work a minimum of 49 hours a week in awful working conditions. Vallières describes his duty in the area to rally people together in an effort to become autonomous in the face of traditional government and “messiahs” who manipulate the population to serve the advantage of a small minority. His rhetoric is driven by an “us” and “them” dialectic—he rarely expounds upon the forces of power that oppress and discriminate, yet he continuously creates the distinction. He ties his work to his commitment with the Parti Québécois, a political party geared towards the national pride and independence of Québec. He talks about many forms of repression in Québec that people have to prepare for through strategic unity in striving for liberation. Shifting from content to form, Wieland’s formal strategies reinforce Vallières’s monologue as his mouth comes into focus when he speaks of liberation after a brief blurred sequence. The camera transitions to a position slightly below Vallières’s mouth, making it feel as though he is speaking to a public beyond oneself—as if others are present. The hair follicles under his lip are visible. Light from a window behind the camera reflects off of Vallières’s white teeth and the camera begins shifting slightly in and out of focus. Vallières reflects back on the past ten years of the Québec liberation movement, which, he notes, has not witnessed much progress because the revolutionaries have yet to control any social, political or economic instruments necessary for complete autonomy. “C’est cette victoire là, que nous devons obtenir ensemble et c’est pour l’obtenir que nous avons un besoin urgent de nous unir,” Vallières says with conviction. Vallières is calling on his francophone peers to join together in revolution to create “a true independent peoples’ power.” Again, the angle of the camera and the

45 “It is this victory that we have to obtain together and it is for the future that we have an urgent need to unite together” (translated by me).
wording of his statements makes it seem as though he is addressing a crowd beyond the frame. The formal aspects are reinforcing his use of “our”—his wording—to produce a sense of audience beyond those watching the film in the gallery (or wherever). It is a rallying cry for uprising. He calls for “our” liberation, he speaks to “our” repression and exploitation (“...comme on a toujours été”46). “We must win it together,” he says. He speaks to the urgency of the matter and a “power outside our own.”

In the moments of the film between the segments covering each topic discussed by Vallières, we hear the camera starting. After Vallières’s monologue on Québécois working class conditions, the film cuts to a grey screen, then a black screen with lingering English subtitles. It feels as though there are technical difficulties, but the voice continues to subsume one’s attention. Muffled voices are audible from the background and a series of beeps recenter his mouth. Wieland seems to be speaking to him, “ok?” she says. “Ok,” he responds, before continuing his speech. This small detail included in the work feels intentional. It makes the speech feel intimate—there are no media, lights, or camera crew present. Vallières speaks his truth and Wieland is there to capture it. In her film notes, Wieland discusses the process in the following passage:

> Everything which happened is recorded on the film. It was a one shot affair I either got him on film or I missed. Danniele held his head in position while I looked through the lense. I had to signal to her with my hand to bring him into focus and she had to hold him there as best she could because once the camera rolled the shutter action would nearly all but obliterate what I could see of focus.47

Again at time stamp 20:09, we are aware of the camera and it's scope of perception. Vallières stops talking, the lighting shifts to a blue-grey hue. He licks his lips, the camera cuts incoherently

46 “Like we always have been…” (translated by me).

47 Wieland, “Notes From The Filmmaker,” 124.
to the metal bar of his glasses, as if by mistake. The screen cuts from black to white with occasional bursts of light, common to 16mm film. Again, we can hear Wieland talking to Vallières as the screen is black. It feels as though we are behind the scenes. “Yeah Ok?” she asks, “ok,” he replies, inhibited by a language barrier. Then, “clap!” she says. One of the two women on Wieland’s film crew, Judy Steed recording sound or Danielle Corbeil acting as translator, claps to initiate the next shot. The scene cuts to blue at 21:09. “What is he supposed to be doing?” Someone asks in the background so quietly one almost misses it, as Vallières’s lips move in the absence of his voice. Again, there seems to be an error. A series of exchanges are audible in the background but specific words cannot be deciphered. Finally, “Ça va?” he asks “Oui,” someone responds, as he probably did not understand what the three person, all female, English-speaking, film crew were discussing. He continues his monologue: “On m’a souv-” and he is cut off by a clap, as he started speaking too soon. Again, “on m'a souvent demandé pourquoi j’avais intitulé mon livre, Nègres Blancs d’Amérique...” and he is off, flowing uninterrupted, the show continues after another brief cutting of the cinematic allusion. The technical noises that the viewer can hear forces one to consider the materiality and restrictive boundaries of film in addition to providing the sense of intimacy. Film is unable to capture “all of life, all of man” because it cannot exceed the limits of observable matter. This intentional inclusion of the behind the scene process creates a veil of intimacy and makes one aware of the presence of Wieland and her artis-


49 “I have often been asked why I titled by book White N****s of America...” (translated by me).

tic agency within the cinematic medium. She makes her presence known as “the creator of the illusion”51 through the transparency of the cinematic process that the viewer is given.

Vallières’s second monologue is about women’s liberation. He says that, “on m’a dit que je n’avais pas parler suffisamment….”52 His mouth is now tightly framed, front and center. One can see dirt in between his teeth as his lower lip moves up and down. He says right off the bat, there is no equal society where women are oppressed by the structures of patriarchal society. Vallières goes on to say that “je suis convaincu que les femmes doivent s’organiser entre elles”53 and together women must aggressively assert themselves “pour aider toute la collectivité à se libérer de toute les formes de domination et de répression.”54 Here, he creates a distinction between the Québec separatist movement and the Feminist movement. Women must collectively liberate themselves through force to help the larger collective of oppressed from vectors of power within Québec and Canadian society—but it is on women to do so and they must aggressively take the reins. And this internal organization amongst women is often against men, which is “tout à fait normal,”55 in Vallières’s words. He expresses his desire to examine in his next book, from “un perspective de mâle,”56 the implication of women’s aspired liberation for men in relation to the efforts among Québécois to obtain “notre indépendance et pour construire le socialisme.”57 Again, he creates a distinction between women’s liberation and working class French Québécois libera-

52 “I was told that I haven’t spoken about it enough” (translated by me).
53 “I am convinced that women must organize amongst themselves” (translated by me).
54 “To help everyone liberate themselves of all forms of domination and repression.” (translated by me).
55 “Completely normal” (translated by me).
56 “A male perspective” (translated by me).
57 “Our independence and for the construction of socialism” (translated by me).
tion. He acknowledges the specific oppression of women, but simultaneously seals them out of the Québec revolutionary movement as he calls on them to work on their own independence, reflecting a larger presence of hypermasculinity within the Québec separatist movement of the 1960s.

Vallières establishes a connection between the condition of women and that of colonized people, claiming that, like colonized people, women must exert violence to achieve their goals. By highlighting women’s oppression, here through the comparison with colonized people, he lacks intersectionality as he implies there are no colonized women but simply two mutually exclusive categories. His conception of liberation echoes the French thinker Frantz Fanon’s call to violence, reiterated by Jean-Paul Sartre, in the early 1960s at the culmination of the violent disintegration of the French colonial Empire. Vallières directly references Frantz Fanon in the short film as an essential writer in studying the practice of militant anticolonialism and learning from external struggles. He says it is crucial to read key revolutionary texts to ensure that, once socialism has been established after the revolution, women are not still oppressed and exploited to the advantage of the economy. In Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), violence is put center stage of the decolonization process through the characterization of the colonial world as one of deep division, a society that is only salvageable via the freeing of the colonized through violence. The core notion of violence that these French thinkers advocated aligns with Vallières’s views in this slightly later moment, especially when he directly references colonized people, the condition of women, and the necessity of violence to inspire deep rooted change.

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Fanon and Sartre also make strong connections between capitalism and colonialism through the model of colonized versus colonizer paralleling proletariat versus bourgeois, thereby broadening the fight for independence. Large themes present in Sartre’s *Colonialism and Neo-colonialism*, published in 1964, and Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*, published in 1961, have strong resonances with Vallières rhetoric of violence, his model of “us” versus “them” power play, and the crushing impacts of capitalism that he speaks of in Wieland’s work. Fanon initially creates the connection between the colonial struggle and the proletariat through the title of his book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, which is a quote from the infamous song of the proletariat, the French socialist anthem, *L’Internationale*. Thus, he channels one battle to name another—the battle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie becomes the battle of the colonized against the colonizer. Sartre makes the claim that all natives of underdeveloped nations must unite, quoting Fanon and also Marx and Engels directly from the *Communist Manifesto* when they called on all workers of all countries to unite. Sartre and Fanon are taking the fight of the proletariat, a class struggle—informing by the Hegelian dialectic disseminated in France to them through Alexandre Kojève—and redirecting the same logic and energy into the colonial context, which Vallières is indirectly placing within the context of Québec liberation. Fanon and Sartre are implying there is an international coalition of colonized; the fight in Vietnam, Algeria, Senegal, are all the same fight for independence. Fanon directly connects capitalism and colonialism as he thinks in terms of struggle to the death (Hegelian structures of thought permeated through Sartre), which inevitably involves violence.

As the French empire had just gone through the process of being violently dismantled in the mid twentieth century, it makes sense that Vallières is following these influential French
thinkers in their conception of decolonization. As noted, Fanon places violence at the center of his conception of decolonization, arguing that violence is necessary because the process of decolonization is a process by which a species morphs into another—the colonized becomes a Man. To make this transfer, there is no way around violence. The world of the colonized and the colonizer is by definition a world of violence divided in two, partially spatially, but this division permeates every aspect of life. Only one border exists and it is always a site of extreme violence. Again, Fanon contrasts the world of the colonized to the capitalistic model, in which the negotiation between the state and the individual is mediated by a variety of authority figures. Fanon claims that in the colonial world there is only one interaction for the colonized and it is with the policeman or the soldier—violence is never mediated through an intermediary. There is only ever direct violence in the colonial world. The moment when the colonized discovers their own humanity as opposed to animality or otherness imposed by the colonizer, they begin sharpening their weapons, as self-awareness is the introduction to violence and the struggle to the death commences.

It is interesting that Vallières references Fanon regarding the condition of women—by creating a connection to colonized peoples—projecting the violent archetype of the decolonization model onto the women’s liberation movement. Vallières goes on to say: “je crois le mouvement de libération des femmes est celui qui place le problème de la libération à son niveau le plus profond et sans doute à son niveau le plus déterminant pour l’ensemble de l’humanité.”

59 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 8.

60 Ibid.

61 “I think the women’s liberation movement is the one that places the problem of liberation at its deepest level and without a doubt at its most determining level for the whole of humanity” (translated by me).
Here, it is clear that, by placing the women’s movement at the pinnacle of liberation for all of humanity, he is arguing that the method of violence and aggression to incite change permeates all other liberatory movements, including the independence of Québec. Lorne Weston in “The FLQ: The Life and Times of A Terrorist Organization,” quotes Vallières who stated the following:

“Even if violence is a phenomenon detestable in itself, it is nonetheless true that for exploited and colonized people like ourselves, freedom grows out of the barrel of a gun.” Vallières wrote this in 1969 while he was in prison in Montréal, sentenced to life on charges of murder and theft of explosives.62

After discussing the condition of women and moving on to the question of race and colonization, “pourquoi le mot nègres?”63 Vallières asks himself in reference to the title of his book. “C’est qu’en fait les Québécois sont dans la même situation au Canada anglais que les noirs aux États Unis,”64 Vallières says in response to his own question. Lazy, backward, uneducated, no sense of the economy, bad-mannered, are (my translated) stereotypical words Vallières uses to connect the condition of black Americans to that of working class French Québécois. In his book, White N*****s of America: The Precocious Autobiography of a Québec “Terrorist,” Vallières states that the American civil rights and black power movements in the 1960s garnered attention in Québec among French Canadians, “for the workers of Quebec are aware of their condition as n*****s, exploited men, second-class citizens.”65


63 “Why the word negro?” (Translated by me) Asking himself in reference to the title of his book: Les Nègres Blanc d’Amérique. Title translated to English as White N*****s of America by Joan Pinkham.

64 “In fact, the Québécois are in the same situation as blacks in the United States” (translated by me).

white men (in the US) who discriminate against the black man are “doubly n*****s” because these white men are “victims of one more form of alienation—racism—which, far from liberating them, imprisons them in a net of hate or paralyzes them in fear of one day having to confront the black man in civil war.”\(^6\) He goes on to claim that there is no “black problem” in Québec, but the only difference between black people in the United States and Québécois of French Canadian heritage is “the color of their skin and the continent they came from.”\(^7\) In an attempt to form international solidarity, awareness and/or provocation, Vallières is omitting the stark reality and specificity of the American enslavement of black bodies that characterizes the foundation of the US and cannot be taken out of context or used to explain the condition of white people elsewhere; whether they are also oppressed or not, in the context of Euro-American culture, whites suffer an entirely different form of oppression that is not rooted in race. Furthermore, anti-Black American racism is unique to the United States. Its specificity is rooted in the history of slavery, begetting the institutional, foundational, reproducing nature of its poisonous powerhold that informs every aspect of American history and culture.

Vallières goes on to say that, just as black Americans discovered “Black is beautiful,” (he says in English with a thick accent), “les québécois ont découvert que le Québec est beau, que les québécois sont beaux, ils sont heureux de l’être.”\(^8\) Vallières is appropriating the phrase, “Black is beautiful” to empower his francophone peers. The phrase started in the US with the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, and later was adopted by Black Consciousness movement


\(^7\) Ibid.

\(^8\) “Québécois have discovered that Québec is beautiful, that Québécois are beautiful, and they are happy to be” (translated by me).
in South Africa. The slogan was brought to fame by Steve Biko, a South African activist, and widely spread in the late 1960s in the United States, “challenging the very notion of difference” and creating a “belief in oneself as agent of change” among Black people—a crucial moment in the Black liberation movement in the US. In Biko’s words: “You are challenging the deep roots of the Black man’s belief about himself...When you say, ‘Black is Beautiful,’ what in fact you are saying to him is: Man, you are okay as you are; begin to look upon yourself as a human being.” Vallières’s utilization of this slogan to bolster French Québécois collectivity directly speaks to the problem of merging different struggles for liberation and equality. “Black is beautiful” used to empower black Americans, for example, discouraged lightening or straightening hair to reject assimilation into white culture. The premise of the slogan—directly linked to race—cannot be borrowed to apply to white people as it is so rooted in blackness.

In the film, Vallières says the English Canadians conquered the French (“us” he specifies) and established the same prejudices that the Americans imposed upon Black people. Again, Vallières lists a series of racist stereotypes of black Americans and claims they are the same as those imposed upon French Canadians: that they have a poor culture, they are unsanitary, they are lazy, they depend on others, and they do not like working. He says it is because of these racist misrepresentations that Québécois in Canada have been treated like Black people in the US. Yet, he fails to fully acknowledge that these racial stereotypes coming from the US stem from 250 years of slavery on American soil and are used to reinforce the subjugation of Black people in the

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70 Steve Biko quoted in Ibid., 4.


United States. This is not to say that French Canadians were not institutionally oppressed and discriminated against, because they absolutely have been, but Vallières stumbles down a problematic path in attempting to reinforce the discrimination of Québécois through the naming of a different form of oppression that is rooted in racism specific to another country. Yet, in doing so, Vallières is opening up his audience through the analogy of race and language as sources of oppression. He even says that it may seem bizarre to Europeans or people from other continents to hear about colonized nations in North America—namely, the Québécois who form a colony inside of “la forteresse impérialiste Nord-Américaine.” By using the condition of black Americans in comparison to that of Québécois, Vallières is providing a point of reference known to many to reinforce his argument and open up paths of solidarity. Just as Fanon and Sartre opened up the struggle of the colonized by channeling the battle of the proletariat—using one struggle to name another—Vallières uses the struggle for equality of black Americans, a movement highly visible around the world, to inform the struggle of working class Québécois. Moreover, it seems as though Vallières liked the attention his book titled garnered. The usage of the N word was bound to provoke and attract attention, given its incendiary connection to US racism and the Black struggle. Vallières’s usage of the racial slur parallels that of certain white intellectuals in the US, such as Norman Mailer with his notorious “White Negro” essay from 1957 and in broader popular culture, John Lennon and Yoko Ono’s song, “Woman is the N*****r of the World” from 1972. Thus, Vallières is playing into a larger cultural trend to garner attention.

It is also important to root Vallières rhetoric in the context of the 1960s in an attempt to understand his intentions. Quoted in Moyra Davey’s book I Confess, Dalie Giroux provides im-

73 Vallières in Pierre Vallières, directed by Joyce Wieland (1973), timestamp 24:00. “the North American imperialist fortress” (translated by me).
important insight into the historical resonance of Vallières’s racial metaphor and the solidarity that came with it:

C’est que c’est une appropriation et que c’est injuste envers les gens qui ont subi l’esclavage, d’une part, et d’autre part, disons la dimension queer, c’est qu’il y a une exotisation de la lutte noire, j’irais même jusqu’à dire un désir, un fantasme de la libération noire, à laquelle on veut s’assimiler. Ceci étant dit, c’est une critique qu’on peut faire en 2018, évidemment, mais ça reste quelque chose d’extrêmement courageux, même si c’est maladroit, même si c’est inapproprié…mais c’était en même temps un geste de solidarité,…et puis c’était une philosophie de la pauvreté au sens où on disait: les personnes qui sont estimées les plus basses dans l’empire raciste nord-américain, nous on se sent solidaires, nous on se sent près de ces gens-là.74

Giroux, a French Canadian professor of political theory at the University of Ottawa, provides a well-rounded critique of Vallières by grounding his words in the 1960s and explaining the appropriation and the power that came with them. Moyra Davey goes on to explain in her book that Giroux provided harsh critique of Vallières’s writing for his “appropriation for the black struggle and his treatment of women.”75 Yet, Giroux’s explanation of Vallières’s gesture of solidarity helps to understand his rhetoric in a more meaningful way.

The last portion of Vallières’s monologue is dedicated to the Acadian Nation and the “Indian” Nation. Indigenous people have barely survived the genocide that has been committed by “whites,” he says. Here, for the first time, Vallières does not create a distinction within the category of white—Franco and Anglo are grouped together in their crimes against humanity, inflicted

74 Dalie Giroux in Moyra Davey, I Confess (Brooklyn and Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada and Dancing Foxes Press, 2020), no page number for this section. “It is that it is an appropriation and that it is unfair to the people who were subjected to slavery, on the one hand, and on the other hand, let’s say the queer dimension, is that there is a exoticization of the black struggle, I would even go so far as to say a desire, a fantasy of black liberation, to which we want to assimilate. That being said, this is a criticism that can be made in 2018, obviously, but it's still something extremely courageous, even if it's awkward, even if it's inappropriate ... but it was at the same time a gesture of solidarity, ... and also it was a philosophy of poverty in the sense in which we said: the people who are considered the lowest in the racist North American empire, we feel united, we feel close to these people” (translated by me).

75 Davey, I Confess, 60.
upon native communities in Canada (further speaking to the problematization of appropriating the Black liberation movement…). He goes on to say: “plusieurs de nos ancêtres à nous qui sommes des nègres blancs d’Amérique ont été aussi des assassins d’Indiens, des massacreurs d’Indiens.”\(^{76}\) Vallières acknowledges the French Québécois as white settlers who decimated native communities. He describes the curious position of French Canadians, initially colonizers, who become colonized after 1760. He brings up an extremely important distinction between black Americans and Québécois, slicing into his previous argument, as Black people were never colonizers but were perpetually oppressed by the decimating forces of colonization and slavery. Vallières says that he hopes the liberation of the Québécois will contribute to the liberation of Acadians, of people of mixed blood, and of “Indians.” Although, he notes we will never be able to undo the trauma and destruction inflicted upon native communities and culture. Even though Québécois are not free, Vallières explains, they still bear the burden of the massacre of native peoples residing in their province. Their French ancestors were “aussi terribles que ceux anglophones qui sont venus par la suite.”\(^{77}\) Vallières calls for the demystification of history in relation to the French regime, especially of the period before 1760. He claims that if the French colonizers had allowed the continued prosperity of native culture without their intervention and attempted to build something with them, French Canadians would have given Canada other values than those of money, capital and the “American Way of Life” that has led to their demise.

Vallières ends his powerful monologue on the condition of native people of Québec with the following statement: “Y ont peut jamais refaire l’histoire malheureusement, mais peut-être

\(^{76}\) “Many of our ancestors who are American white negroes were also Indian murderers, Indian killers” (translated by me).

\(^{77}\) “Just as terrible as the english speakers who came next” (translated by me).
que les leçons du passé vont nous aider à bâtir l’avenir sur d’autres bases que celles du colonialisme auquel nous aussi nous avons participé en tant que conquérants à une certain épique et que nous avons subit par la suite en tant que conquis.”

He finishes by exposing Anglo and Franco colonialism, but makes a point of distinguishing between them by highlighting the subsequent colonization of the French by the British after 1760—this distinction speaks to the layered and complex nature of Québécois identity.

After this final line, we hear the clicking of the camera and the shot cuts to a wintery Canadian landscape that occupies the remaining two minutes before the end title screen. The camera pans from side to side in a slightly jerky manner as if it was a test shot with no subject in mind. We continue to hear the sounds of the camera, aware of Wieland’s ongoing presence and influence over the image. The stillness of the landscape contrasts with the slightly twitchy camera. The landscape is barren. It feels as though Wieland is simply transitioning through a series of static photographs. No human life can be seen, only the land in its jarring state of desolation in the depths of Québécois winter. Pierre Vallières’s heavy, powerful words seem to linger in the air and one is faced with silence as if Wieland is providing a time and space for reflection on what has been said. A thick wave of snow obscures the last shot and it cuts to the credits. “PIERRE VALLIÈRES” appears in capital letters, centered on the screen.

This last series of landscape shots depict Wieland’s grappling with Canadian consciousness and identity, and this exploration is capped by Vallières’s name. The inclusion of the silent landscape provides a sense of questioning or, as Lianne McLarty argues: “it seems as though

78 “Can’t unfortunately redo history, but perhaps the lessons of the past will help us build the future on other bases than those of colonialism in which we too participated as conquerors at one time and which we subsequently suffered as conquered people” (translated by me).

Wieland herself is trying to find the link, and in doing so, trying to define Canada.” The viewer is presented with the brute physicality of the weather and landscape after Vallières’s commanding monologues, also left to make sense of Canada and its complex set of cultural identifications and signifiers. In Wieland’s film notes she describes the ending as the following:

This film mouthscape shows all the process of making the film, camera breakdown, Vallières pulling away after shots, and the final emptying of the camera...I had over fifty feet in this magazine so I turned the camera around on the tripod and had it look out the window at the snow while it emptied itself.

Thus, Wieland reveals that the seemingly intentional space of reflection provided by the ending landscape shot is merely a part of the technical process transposed throughout the short film. Yet, I would assert that she chose to include the landscape shot in the final cut for a reason, as she stated the following in regards to her exhibit, True Patriot Love: “we have to get to the very essential thing now, the land, and how we feel about it.” In the same interview with Pierre Théberge, Wieland claims she over-identifies with Canadian land, “I have a very grand relationship, because...I feel it as a direct extension of myself…” and she goes on to state: “What is done to it is done to me…” Hence, the final landscape shot, in juxtaposition with the mouthscape, provides a space under a veil of neutrality as it is undefinable and bleak. Yet, one can conclude that this is a final attempt for Wieland to interject herself into the work and encourage the viewer to do the same. By showing the landscape, she is showing how she feels. She is showing what is

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81 Wieland, “Notes From The Filmmaker,” 124.
82 Ibid.
at stake. It is the land that connects her to Vallières and the oppressive power structures governing the land that he speaks of. Moreover, the landscape adds a feeling of sincerity and profundity to both Vallières’s monologues and Wieland’s artistic presence by forcing the viewer to grapple with silence and space after a prolonged period of claustrophobia and auditory stimulation.

Wieland stated the following: “there is something that comes alive in Canada in the winter, there is something undefinable.” The last shot embodies this sense of the undefinable. In turn, it provides space to come to one’s own conclusions.

In giving a radical political figure a platform, a man deemed a domestic terrorist, Wieland arguably articulated a set of views on Québec separatism and, de facto, thus on Canadian nationhood and identity. Viewers of the film have had different takes on Wieland’s level of sympathy towards Vallières. Some view her exposition of his alienated mouth as unsympathetic. But Wieland herself claimed the use of the mouth was “subject” because it is isolated, and denied that she was being unsympathetic. Catherine Russel, in her book *Experimental Ethnography*, argues that Wieland has notably given Vallières a space to speak and be heard, yet her “subtle critique” of his beliefs is embodied in the constricted and tightly framed format of the work, which, Russel argues, subverts the documentary effect. Wieland’s aesthetic strategy subverts a sense of the film as simply or only conveying documentary “truth.” In this sense, Wieland’s critique is embodied in the way in which Vallières is presented through the exposed intimacy of his mouth. In addition, Russel claims that “the image of Vallières’s mouth bears a strong resem-

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84 Wieland, “Interview with Joyce Wieland,” In conversation with Théberge & Snow, no page number.

85 Holmes-Moss, Wieland, and Stevenson, "JOYCE WIELAND: Interview and Notes on 'Reason Over Passion' and 'Pierre Vallières',' 120.

blance to a vagina...she has imposed a feminist perspective onto Vallières’s discourse.” However, in an interview with Barbara Stevenson, when asked about the general description of her work as feminist, Wieland responded “I don’t know.” Stevenson went on to ask her: “Do you have difficulty with that term: ‘feminist’? Wieland responded: “Well, if it were true, I’d have a hard time accepting it.” Thus, to view Pierre Vallières (1972) as the potential symbolic representation of a vagina seems far-fetched or at the very least unintentional on Wieland’s behalf. An artist doesn’t have to self-identify as a feminist herself in order for her work to have feminist effects.

Russel goes on to describe the “intimate close-up” of Vallières’s tobacco-stained teeth and tangled mustache as a potential indication of his working class status but also as a “sensuous and almost erotic dimension” of the film. Russel suggests there is an erotic element to the work that is conveyed through the isolation and details of the mouth. To counter this claim, I would argue that the film encourages us to view the mouth as voyeurs, compelled by the sincerity of his words that function in a humanizing way, rather than simply associating the mouth with the erotic. The mouth is not sensual; if anything it is rather unpleasant to look at. Vallières’s difficult, working-class life weighs on the image. It does not feel erotic, but reveals his struggles and speaks to his sense of subject-hood constructed by this mouth and rhetoric.

Russel also suggests that Wieland’s gendered gaze is intended as subversion. It is unclear how Russel would define Wieland’s gendered gaze, but it could be considered as a reversal, via Wieland’s “masculine” power and control over Vallières’s rhetoric within her artistic agency.

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89 Russel, *Experimental Ethnography*, 179.

90 Ibid, 180.
—a larger reversal of the male/agent vs. female/object gendering of the gaze structure. Russel claims that the contradiction in *Pierre Vallières* is located in the difference between “Vallières’s militant revolutionary politics and Wieland’s politics of representation.”\(^91\) Wieland’s loyalty to structuralist filmmaking speaks to her anti-interventionist approach—“signified by the completeness of film fragments marked by reel ends”\(^92\)—that is put up against politically charged rhetoric, producing an “audio-visual language.”\(^93\) Wieland is broadcasting his voice but cutting it off from his body and from the urgency of history.\(^94\) Thus, she allows his argument to be heard, but provides a certain degree of distance from a wholistic view of him as a speaking subject by isolating and enlarging the mouth and divorcing it from life. In isolating the mouth, Wieland presents us with Vallières’s humanness in the intimacy of his stained teeth, overgrown mustache, and exposed pores. His lips evoke “a sense of realness and humanness,” which makes the film feel less about “radical Québécois nationalism associated with the man” and more about “the effects of capitalism and colonialism” on oppressed groups.\(^95\) In turn the “grotesqueness,” as Kristy A. Holmes calls it, allows the viewer to feel Vallières’s personhood: he is a “real human being,” rather than only a “radical separatist” as alluded to above.\(^96\) Wieland needed to shed light on Québécois identity and the separatist movement to explore and understand Canadian nationhood in its entirety in the 1970s as she was working on larger conceptions of Canadian nationality in


\(^{92}\) Ibid.

\(^{93}\) Ibid.

\(^{94}\) Ibid.


\(^{96}\) Holmes, “Joyce Wieland As Cultural Worker,” 267.
her other work. She does so in a way that allows distance and criticism whilst simultaneously providing an intimate, humanizing portrait of a revolutionary figure who holds controversial claims.

Wieland viewed herself as a “cultural worker and activist” and her art as “cultural production.” Thus, Pierre Vallières can be understood as a Canadian cultural production and a presentation of a facet of Canadian culture and identity that Wieland has curated to some degree through framing and other aesthetic choices. Through the short film, Wieland is exploring radical New Left political group ideology, notably in the work of the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) as entangled with Vallières. However, Holmes makes an important point that “this is not to suggest her work can be understood as supportive of the FLQ’s souverainiste beliefs, but rather that it was sympathetic to their anti-capitalist and anti-colonialist causes.” Thus, Holmes reaffirms Russel’s take on Wieland’s control and the role of subversion within the work. In turn, I believe Wieland did not neutrally shoot Vallières and leave the work at that, thereby agreeing with all of his rhetoric and beliefs. She carefully executed the short film to allow a voice to be heard within the constriction of her artistic agency and her vision in which the mouth serves a purpose external to both Vallières and Wieland. The mouth provides a perspective, auditorily and visually, that is essential to understanding Québec and thus Canada at large. Wieland complicates the souverainiste political conversation by helping humanize Vallières, making him a mouthpiece for unification among Québécois, and, through his rhetoric, emphasizing layered colonization and the oppression of Québécois of French Canadian heritage. Wieland uses the mouth to under-

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97 Holmes, “Joyce Wieland As Cultural Worker,” 260.

98 Ibid, 264.
stand, to humanize, and to represent layered meaning through language, specifically evoking the tension between English and French. Wieland valued Québec as an essential part of the Canadian nation and made that clear in her other work, such as *I Love Canada - J’aime Canada* (1970), a quilted collage spelling the words of the title both English and French next to each other.\(^99\) In her exhibition, *True Patriot Love*, Wieland handwrote marginalia in the catalogue in both French and English, thus symbolizing that both cultures are essential to her vision of Canada.\(^{100}\)

“Is there going to be a country left?”\(^{101}\) was a recurring question posed by Wieland in regard to Canada in the mid to late twentieth century. Wieland feared the encroachment of the “American takeover,” capitalism, and threats to the environment.\(^{102}\) Much of her work exploring Canadian nationhood and identity is tied to her sense of historical urgency to save Canada because she felt it was in danger: “I realized that the statistics looked terrible in terms of Canada surviving as a nation,” she said.\(^{103}\) In *True Patriot Love*, Wieland wanted to create a sense of unity and portray the “beauty of everything and be as positive as possible” in relation to Canada. In portraying Canadian land though the categorization of its ecology in the exhibition book, Wieland wanted people to see themselves in the land and in turn rediscover themselves and feel their responsibilities towards the land.\(^{104}\) Vallières’s anti-capitalistic, anti-colonialist goals very much coincide with Wieland beliefs and fears about the future of Canada. Moreover, She did not

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\(^99\) Holmes, “Joyce Wieland As Cultural Worker,” 264.

\(^{100}\) Ibid, 265.

\(^{101}\) Holmes-Moss, Wieland, and Stevenson, "JOYCE WIELAND: Interview and Notes on ‘Reason Over Passion' and 'Pierre Vallières’," 117.

\(^{102}\) Ibid.

\(^{103}\) Ibid.

\(^{104}\) Wieland, “Interview with Joyce Wieland,” In conversation with Théberge & Snow, no page number.
want Québec to separate from the rest of Canada: “I feel that way but not in the way that Trudeau would feel it or the way those people were acting about it-the government, I mean. But I felt for no intellectual reason at all that it should have all remained one.”105 Wieland wants Québec to remain a part of Canada, not for political or economic reasons, but because she values Québécois culture as an integral part of the country at large and she makes this clear by engaging with Vallières and giving him a platform. Wieland herself stated that she works with and for the people of Canada and that is what her work is about. Thus, by elevating Vallières through her film, she is working with an important facet of Canadian culture in the 1960s and providing representation for the francophone experience of oppression in Canada, thereby working with and for the people.

Vallières discusses the historical struggle between Francophones and Anglophones and his lived experience of oppression as a French Canadian. Wieland’s work functions at this level of disseminating culture and history through Vallières’s rhetoric. It also reflects the tension between English and French through the visual and auditory qualities of the work, heightened by the juxtaposition of English subtitles with the French language spoken by the mouth of a francophone Québécois. Moreover, it is relevant that the very process of the work itself embodies this historical tension and powerplay between Francophones and Anglophones. When Wieland met Vallières, he refused to speak to her in English, reversing the traditional power dynamic. Danielle Corbeille, as translator, had to act as an intermediary.106 The refusal to speak English reflects larger cultural trends in Québec and more notably Montréal, where Anglophones and


Francophones fight for a linguistic and cultural powerhold. Vallières stood his ground. Wieland was in his apartment, his space, in Mont Laurier. She sought him out and came to him. By speaking French, Vallières is making a point beyond the rhetoric presented in the film. He is keeping his culture and language alive by not succumbing to the infiltration of English. His anti-colonialist beliefs are rooted in his everyday reality through the tension of language. His way of refusing Anglo Canadian oppression is by speaking French unapologetically. Everyday, it is in these small moments of confrontation, here between Vallières and Wieland, in which the weight of history reenters the area and the Anglo-Franco dynamic is reinscribed into the fabric of the city and province.
Michèle Lalonde wrote “Speak White” for the Québécoise actress, Michelle Rossignol, to perform at a fundraising event, Chansons et poèmes de la résistance in 1968. The event was to raise money for Pierre Vallières and Charles Gagnon, members of the FLQ, who had been arrested in the US and extradited to Québec. The poem immediately struck a deep cord among the audience. Lalonde explained in an interview with La Presse that none of the works included in the event were allowed to directly reference Vallières’s book, Nègres blancs d’Amérique. At the time, Vallières’s book was banned from circulation because it was considered a call for armed revolution. However, Lalonde claimed her poem “completely echoes” Vallières’s book. She explained the title of his book justified her appropriation of the expression, “Speak White.”

Thus, Lalonde’s poem grew out of Vallières’s rhetoric and contains the same themes he speaks of in Wieland’s work.

Michèle Lalonde’s poem “Speak White” (1968) bears the title of the common racist slur directed towards Francophones speaking their mother tongue in public, rather than English, the language of power and privilege in Anglo dominated Canada. The slur insinuates: speak English, the language of the boss and the colonizer. Lalonde’s poem speaks from the position of oppression experienced by French Québécois of the time and takes on the charged racial slur as title. “Speak White” means to speak English within Québec. Whiteness is associated with class, power, and privilege. However, a broader characterization of the “white” language is established in the poem, extending beyond the English language. In addition, she mentions speaking “pure” French, German, and Russian, alluding to the notion that English is and of itself is not the essen-

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tial problem, but rather the power hierarchy established through class distinctions and colonialism, a pyramid informed by race. As English is the language of the dominant colonizer in Canada, it inherently expresses power. Yet, Lalonde complicates the opposition between English and French by characterizing the insidious oppression experienced by colonized people as enforced by the “white” language. Thus, Lalonde is using a widely known slur in Québec and broadening its implications through a sarcastic tone. “Speak White! C’est une langue universelle. Nous sommes nés pour la comprendre,” she says.\textsuperscript{108} The “white” language is a universal one of dominance that “we,” colonized people, are born to understand.

In 1970, Lalonde performed her poem, “Speak White,” at Nuit de la Poésie. Her performance became famous and continues to circulate in academic and cultural spaces. In the performance, she speaks in French, except for the phrase 'Speak White' and other English phrases and names: brass tacks, freedom and democracy...“be civilized,” as if these concepts only exist for Anglophones. When she does speak English words, she speaks with a thick Québécois French accent. The only video of Lalonde’s performance frames her tightly, shifting from profile to head-on, without revealing the larger context.\textsuperscript{109} The audience can be heard at the beginning, applauding her and at the end, erupting in screams and cheers as she walks out of frame. The poem takes on a different existence as a performance. Lalonde uses the historical power play between Anglophone and Francophone within Québec as subject matter and as a method of transmission, as she switches between languages to further animate the friction between English and French.


\textsuperscript{109} All subsequent citations from the poem are taken from this video rendition of Lalonde at the Nuit de la poésie.
Similar to Vallières’s monologues, Lalonde’s recitation exists as a dual entity as the language bolsters the subject matter and holds the weight and meaning of the narrative, acting on a linguistic level and a content level. As her performance progresses, she speaks faster, louder, closing her eyes, and holding her head up high. She has the poem memorized. The performance makes the poem deeply personal as she physically stands in for the “we” that carries the narrative of the poem. The rhythm then shifts again from fast and aggressive to slow and sad. The room is silent and her words vibrate loud and clear. Her face is moved by emotion, clenching her jaw, raising her eyebrows, and shaking her head. She is speaking to someone, something, a power greater than herself and her audience. She never smiles or moves her body. Her gaze is fixed and she barely blinks at times. Her words feel lived and heavy. The poem is the performance and the performance is her lived experience, mirroring her language as informant to her identity and shaping her relationship to her surroundings.

Once again language is racialized, a dynamic fundamentally informed by colonialism and one that, as we have seen, Pierre Vallières, Québec revolutionary, extensively reference in his monologues in Joyce Wieland’s *Pierre Vallières* (1972). Vallières’s very act of refusal to speak English with Wieland during the conception and production of the work speaks to this legacy of oppression. In turn, Lalonde tackles many of the topics discussed by Vallières in her poem, namely colonialism, imperialism, and the dire consequences of a particular form of capitalism, aligned with ethnic oppression, inflicted upon Francophone Québécois communities. Similar to Vallières, Lalonde attributes blackness to poverty and the Francophone fight for liberty, and whiteness to power and colonization. Lalonde writes in relation to the condition of oppressed Francophones in juxtaposition with previous colonies of the French Empire, such as St-
Domingue, the Congo, and Colonial Algeria, as well as mentioning Little Rock, Watts, Washington, London, the Boston Tea Party, and Vietnam, historical reference points, places, and events, for people in Québec and beyond to anchor her argument. In doing so, “Speak White” enters an international playing field and the struggle of Francophones in Québec becomes relevant to colonized and oppressed people outside of Québec and Canada who also experience the “white” language of power and exploitation. Just as Vallières used the condition of black Americans in the United States as a point of comparison for Francophones in Anglo-Canada in the 1960s, Lalonde uses far-reaching movements of liberation and uprising against colonial, imperial, and capitalistic power as evidence of the “white” language’s profound hypocrisy in relation to boastful “democracy” and “freedom.” The white language that Lalonde identifies is English, yet she goes on to speak of a “pure” and “white” French that also embodies the language of the colonizers, bolstered by her examples of previous French colonies.

In marking certain iterations of French a colonial language, Lalonde is integrating the Québécois struggle into a long tradition of oppression at the hands of colonial powers, thus creating solidarity among oppressed people around the world. Her poem ends with the following lines, in English, then in French: “We are not alone. Nous savons que nous ne sommes pas seuls.” The “we” here is Francophones in Anglo-Canada, but also colonized people fighting for liberation all over the world in struggles erupting with vigor in the 1960s. Both Vallières and Lalonde are utilizing a method of solidarity formation established by French thinkers Frantz Fanon and Jean-Paul Sartre, whose work informed the connection between the colonial struggle and that of the proletariat to cement lines of solidarity and understanding between different

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110 “We know that we are not alone” (translated by me).
groups of oppressed people in the 1960s. Vallières does so directly in referencing the writing of Fanon; Lalonde does so indirectly by simply broadening the fight by extending the umbrella of oppression to all those under the iron hold of the “white” language of colonization and power. Vallières and Lalonde bolster the Québécois Francophone struggle by establishing a sense of understanding among oppressed people, in addition to deepening a collective sense of the urgency of action within Québec.

The emphasis on orality in Lalonde’s poem and Wieland’s film reiterates the importance of language as deeply informing of one’s experiences within the world and as essential to Québec identity at large. Both Lalonde and Vallières are channeling the friction between the two opposing languages and cultures in Québec through an oral performance that embodies their experiences of historical discrimination as colonized people within Canada. They were both riding on the wave of liberatory energy exiting the 1960s, the world stage for social movements and identity based civil rights.

We are watching her perform after the fact and the poem lives on in this oral format. We do not have to have been there to understand the historical weight of the moment or the urgency of her words that take on a deep personal tone as the Francophone/Anglophone tension persists to this day. Although the Quiet Revolution seeping through the cultural and political fabric of Québec at the time was the motivating context of the poem, which would have added a feeling of deep resonance to the audience. The Quiet Revolution in Québec was a “time of dramatic social change” in which a period of rapid secularization took place, as the state took over the “social welfare, educational, and health systems.”

ed the conservative reign of Maurice Duplessis as Premier of Québec in the 1930s and again from 1944-1959 had allowed for a “cultural effervescence that celebrated the Canadian language and identity.” The counterculture movement of the 1960s added to the revolutionary energy in Québec, specifically among young people and in the arts and performance. Thus, “Speak White” was very much in tune with the countercultural momentum of the time; it is an exposition of oppression and in turn a celebration of identity, specifically articulated through the celebration of the Québec French accent.

Taken outside of the heat of the moment and existing on film (now available on video via Youtube), the orality of the poem lives on as an essential part of the poem's message and presence. “Speak White” is a manifesto, but Lalonde has revolutionized its essence, as “the subject matter of the manifesto is language itself.” The medium of the manifesto takes on a new relevance because Lalonde has placed language at the center stage. Thus, by performing the poem, Lalonde is able to embody the poem and allow it to attain its full potential through speech. In taking on Québécois French as the focal point of her work at large and specifically in “Speak White,” Lalonde has broken the “commonly accepted rule that, in a manifesto, the message is more important than its medium, that the manifesto’s language is merely an instrument to convey its message, political or otherwise.” She uses language and speech as medium and message. The oral nature of the performance heightens the oppression Lalonde describes as she speaks the

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113 Ibid, 67.


115 Ibid.
language of the oppressed. In turn, Lalonde plays with translation. She integrates English into the poem, which provides a stark juxtaposition in rhythm, sound, and understanding. Rather than providing translations, the languages coexist within the same sentences: “mais, quand vous really speak white...quand vous get down to brass tacks….” The poem is made for a Québec audience, Anglophone, Francophone, bilingual, but familiar with both languages as she weaves between the two, yet in referencing world events she broadens and blurs the intended audience even further.

“Speak white!” she says over and over, leading each stanza. Lalonde’s repetitive order to “speak white” is directed towards those who speak and embody the language of the colonizer, not Québec Francophones, as she directs her statements towards those holding power and privilege in Québec and beyond. Thus, she claims the slur, historically addressed at Francophones, and flips it on its head. Lalonde uses the power of “speak white” to punctuate her argument and add historical weight. Her usage of pronouns, sarcasm, and irony in the poem allows the reader/listener to follow the construction of her argument. She begins with the following line: “Speak White. Il est si beau de vous entendre parler de Paradise Lost ou du profil gracieux et anonyme qui tremble dans les sonnets de Shakespeare.”

Ironically, Lalonde references John Milton’s Paradise Lost and Shakespeare’s suspected lack of authenticity, as sounding “si beau.” She continues with the sarcastic, ironic tone she began with: “Nous sommes un peuple inculte et bègue,” she says. Lalonde is directly referencing the 1838 report by the British investigator, Lord

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116 Translated by Herring: “Speak white
It sounds so good when you Speak of Paradise Lost
And of the gracious and anonymous profile that trembles
In Shakespeare's sonnets.”

117 Ibid: “We’re an uncultured stammering race.”
Durham, in which he claimed Québécois of French Canadian heritage have no history or culture. Thus, the poem takes on another level of personal resonance beyond the initial utilization of “speak white,” as Francophones are familiar with the oppressive language Lalonde is intentionally appropriating. Lalonde continues to do so throughout the poem: “Nous sommes un peu durs d’oreille. Nous vivons trop près des machines et n’entendons que notre souffle au-dessus des outils.” Here, she references the dire effects of the capitalistic system on Francophone communities, extensively discussed by Vallières in his first monologue on the working conditions and unemployment rates in Mont Laurier. The “nous”/we Lalonde is employing is Francophones in Québec. A “nous” and “vous” (“us” and “them”) dialectic is firmly established. Sometimes she directly evokes Québec Francophones, for example when she references the sorrows of Émile Nelligan, and other times she enlarges the scope of “nous” to encompass other communities of oppressed people by referencing larger events and places: “Speak white and loud! Qu’on vous entende De Saint-Henri à Saint-Domingue.”

In turn, Lalonde broadens the confines of the “white” language to represent the language of oppression and power more generally speaking, outside of Anglo-Canada. She does so directly in the following passage: “Speak white! Parlez-nous production, profits et pourcentages. Speak white! C’est une langue riche. Pour acheter. Mais pour se vendre. Mais pour se vendre à perte

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118 Translated by Herring: “We're a bit hard of hearing
We live too close to the machines
And we only hear the sound of our breathing over the tools.”
d’âme. Mais pour se vendre.” Here, she associates English with capitalism and in turn, references cheap, commercial America. And again: “Speak white! Tell us that God is a great big shot. And that we’re paid to trust him,” she says in English. This stanza references the phrase, “In God We Trust,” printed on American money and speaks to US money paying Québécois workers and businesses, perpetuating the capitalistic model of exploitation in Québec, Canada, and on American soil. Lalonde refers to Francophone existence as “une vie de peuple concierge,” translated by Albert Herring to “a race of servants.” “Tell us about democracy and freedom,” she says in English, as if these concepts only exist for Anglophones. This line is extremely and powerfully ironic, since the English and Anglophones talk about these concepts all the time but rarely practice them.

Michèle Lalonde’s performance of “Speak White” continues to live on in the collective consciousness of Québécois. A decade after her performance at Nuit de la Poésie, her poem was adapted into a short movie by Pierre Falardeau and Julien Poulin bearing the same title. It was released in 1980 by the National Film Board of Canada (NFB)/Office National du film du Canada. The NFB is Canada’s national, public, digital media distributor and film producer, which speaks to the impact and importance of Michèle Lalonde’s poem on the construction and preservation of Canadian identity, specifically that of Québec. Her work was memorialized by the Canadian government through film. The actress Marie Eykel reads Lalonde’s poem over a series

119 Translated by Herring: “Talk to us about production profits and percentages
Speak white
It's a rich language
For buying
But for selling
But for selling your soul
But for selling out.”

of images. Lalonde’s performance was four and a half minutes long. The choice to employ another Québécois woman’s voice to narrate the film allowed the filmmakers to elongate the prose and craft the rhythm of the voice around the visual component that defines the short film.

The movie, like the poem, is about oppression and exploitation at the hands of those in power. The short film provides visual accompaniment to the poem’s prose and forces the viewer to confront the tragic reality of Lalonde’s words. The orality at the forefront of Lalonde’s work is met with dark and violent visual imagery. Language is no longer the focal point. The raw and bleak reality of human brutality takes center stage, through irrefutable photographic evidence. The photographs cannot be contested. Lalonde’s “Speak White” is grounded visually and its previous ambiguities are cemented through images. The far-reaching impacts of the “white” language are visually depicted and those imposing the brutality are shown in places all over the world. But, concrete context of the images is absent. Lalonde’s poem stands in to narrate, providing the sole frame of reference. The black and white photographs move quickly. Some linger in the mind of the viewer, others are more fleeting. The feelings of powerlessness, pain, and suffering form the isolated theme that carries the narrative and connects the photographs together. Some images can stand alone, others provide contrast for the larger argument of hypocrisy.

The still-image movie juxtaposes representations of high-class society, wealth, workers, hate groups and police/military violence. Deep and slow piano music scores the short film, setting the atmosphere at the opening credit. Eykel scowls “Speak White” over a black screen, the words are written in white, capital letters. The infamous words enlarge and consume the whole screen, moving beyond the frame. Her tone is angry. The images begin to scroll by, fading in and out, one after another. Each image is only visible for a few seconds. The filmmakers use zoom to
move in and out of the images to create a seamless narrative and point to details of each photograph. The viewer is inundated at first with images of wealth and leisure society. Rich, white people are depicted on horses, with their pets, polished, and dressed well. Men with top hats smile at the camera. Women in fur coats and feathered hats, long tailored dresses, holding umbrellas, gather in masses. Men are playing polo (specifically a signifier of aristocrats in England), galloping on horses, with huge mansions framed in the background. A man swims in a pool, as a woman kneels beside him, offering him champagne. A portrait of a Catholic cardinal appears, a comment on the collusion of the Catholic church with the Anglophone power brokers. Couples are sprawled on a field, with a picnic and a servant. A portrait of the queen lingers on the screen, paired with the line: “Toute l’importance des crumpets Ou du Boston Tea Party.”121 Then, the tone shifts. Again, the words “Speak White” dominate the screen, paired with Eykel’s commanding words, as if there is no photograph that could stand in its place. Images of factories workers are interjected amongst tightly framed images of bosses, cigars dangling from their mouths. The pace of the poem slows. An image of a young girl working in a fabric factory lingers as the words, “Et n’entendons que notre souffle au-dessus des outils” are recited in the background.122

After juxtaposing images of wealth and poverty, the film introduces photographs of confrontation. Images of KKK members reappear. One depicts a hoard of men in white cones and gowns holding American flags and marching in Washington. Images of Nazis officers flashes the screen, referencing Lalonde’s mention of the “étoile jaune” (yellow star). Photographs of police and military violence inflicted on civilians in France, Germany, Russia, the Congo, and Vietnam

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121 Falardeau & Poulin 1980, 1:14 to 1:19.
122 Falardeau & Poulin 1980, 1:40 to 1:47.
are paired with Lalonde’s prose. Images of dead people, images of assassinations, arrests, and prisons. Recognizable images of the American civil rights movement show black Americans being brutalized by white police officers. “Be civilized” is shouted over an image of two KKK members with their white hoods obstructing their faces, specific signifier of the US and its particular anti-black racism. The camera pans out to a larger group, all with white pointed hoods concealing their identity. Some of them are on horses, all staring at the camera through their eye holes, standing in front of a huge cross planted in the ground. A photograph of hands in the dirt pans upwards to the eyes of a field worker. The filmmakers are playing with the irony of Lalonde’s prose by interjecting images of the desecration of humanity at the hands of the white language of oppression.

After the six minute film, one is left with the weight of worldwide injustice with no sense of salvation. Lalonde’s poem provides a glimmer of hope and sense of collective power by concluding the poem with the following line, “We are not alone.” The static nature of the photographs and the irrefutable violence and pain represented visually, do not allow for the same sense of hope. The last stanza of Lalonde’s poem is paired with intimate, singular images of oppression. “How do you do?” Ekyel recites; a photograph of a white woman’s face consumes the screen, notably Dorothea Lange’s most famous photograph from the Works Progress Administration photos, a key reference for Americans. She is looking into the distance, beyond the camera. Her eyes are wincing, her face is stern and aged with toil. Two children hang on her shoulder, burrowing into her neck, faces turned away from the camera. But she looks on, her hand pulls at her face as if she is unaware of the two children grasping at her body. “We are doing all right, we are doing fine,” echoes over the next shot: the face of white male laborer. His face is splattered
with dirt and mud, he looks to the side. He is wearing a hard-shelled construction helmet. The shot zooms inwards, framing him tightly, cancelling out all potential external context. His head is tilted down, he appears unbelievably sad. Eykel goes on, “[w]e are not alone...nous savons que nous ne sommes pas seuls.” The screen goes dark; the poem has been recited in its entirety. We are left with the lingering, tightly framed image of this anonymous man’s face. These two final images of a man and a woman do not evoke the sense of solidarity Lalonde fostered in her poem. Both photographs are singular, isolated, and anonymous.

The filmmakers are altering the level at which “Speak White” attains meaning. Lalonde’s performance connected her personhood to the position of oppression that she articulates. Her voice is subsumed by the visual field of reference. The short film literalizes what is more powerful through her words. The construction of meaning in the film relies on visual stimulation as the words echo in the background. The images are presented as evidence, thus as fact. The camera is represented as capturing truth and its presence is hidden. The movie destabilizes the orality of the poem and introduces the position and perspective of the camera. Yet, we do not know who controls the camera, who took the photographs. We only know who curated them. The credits reveal the photographs came from a series of organizations, namely: Les Archives Nationales du Québec, Le journal La presse (Montréal), Les Archives Publiques du Canada, Liberation News Service (New York), l’Organisation des Nations Unies, The Guardian (New York), Claremont Research Center (New York), Museum of the City of New York, Avery Library (New York), Library of Congress (Washington), and the National Archives, (Washington). Many of these organizations are connected to institutional power structures. The camera, treated as a neutral intermediary, nonetheless defines the meaning conveyed by the movie. In creating a visual accompa-
niment to the poem, the work moves away from the Francophone conditions specific to Québec. Language and speech, as symbolic mediums of transmission, are minimized by the contribution of visual stimulus. The movie lacks the resonance of the unfettered voice of Lalonde, a Québécoise woman, who has lived the reality of the poem and whose passion in performing it to her audience in 1970 (the height of the Quiet Revolution) conveys this experience.

The short film is one of the many reiterations of Michèle Lalonde’s original inception of “Speak White.” Carmen Ruschiensky in “Revisiting ‘Speak White’: A lieu de mémoire Lost and Found in Translation,” argues that Lalonde’s performance at Nuit de la Poésie is a lieu de mémoire, “both emblematic of an era and continually generating new forms and interpretations.”

“Speak White” deals with the core dynamic between Anglophones and Francophones in Québec that lives on to this day. There is still anger and a need to push for the survival of Québec Francophone culture, which allows for the continued relevance of “Speak White” as site of memory and proliferation. Ruschiensky describes lieu de mémoire as “constituted through the very fact of their recreation, reiteration, and transformation,” as well as emerging as an “objectively shared external form” intersecting with subjective experience, which together form the basis of cultural memory. “Speak White” exists within the collective, cultural memory of Québécois. Moreover, it plays a role in forming a newly empowered Québécois identity at this moment of the Quiet Revolution, one that is then re-promoted by the Québec government.

Pierre Nora, the French historian, developed the concept of the lieu de mémoire. In “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” Nora creates a fundamental distinction be-

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124 Ibid, 83.
tween memory and history. Memory is deemed “life,” as it exists in a constant state of flux, susceptible to appropriation and distortion, unaware of the remixes that proceed it, and able to be “long dormant and periodically revived.” In stark opposition, history is “the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer.” Memory ties us to the “eternal present” as a “perpetually actual phenomenon,” whereas history is a mere “representation of the past.” Nora continues to hone in on his conception of memory as a multi-layered anomaly that exists outside of a linear temporal timeline—outside of intellectual historical production. Memory is for the collective and for the individual, and importantly: “blind to all but the group it binds.” Thus, through this concept, he creates the potential for a collective consciousness established through shared memory and shared trauma. Nora identifies another distinction between memory and history, through the way in which each manifests itself: memory is grounded in the concrete—“spaces, gestures, images, and objects”—whereas history is inseparable from the progression of linear time. With this being said, one is able to understand the ways in which les lieux de mémoire are conceived. As aspects of memory fade, some elements survive and remain as reconstituted sites of recollection under the weight of history; they transform and deform the site of memory through time. Thus, les lieux de mémoire are “remains” that come about through this push and pull between memory and history. In Nora’s (translated) words, les lieux de mémoire are conceived from “moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then

126 Ibid.
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid, 9.
129 Ibid.
returned; no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded.”

“Speak White” as a cultural production exemplifies Québécois culture at the pinnacle of the Quiet Revolution, amassing the undercurrent of revolutionary energy, the overt Québec pride surrounding language, along with the Anglo-Franco tension as the backbone of the work. Thus, it is an undeniable lieu de mémoire: absorbed, reconstituted, transformed, and invested with a profound will to remember that has persisted through the decades through ongoing references and reiterations. Through her work, Lalonde viscerally transmitted the feeling of oppression experienced by Québécois of French Canadian heritage. Her ability to eclipse the energy of 1960s revolutionary Québec in a single performance and poem allowed “Speak White” to exist as a lieu de mémoire that has inspired other creators and intellectuals and has remained a key reference point of the Québécois Francophone struggle for cultural survival.

As much as “Speak White” exists within the archives of Québécois history, it remains a binding site of memory and metamorphosis, victim to continuous forms of up-cycling and hybrid reiterations (ex: “speak what…”), thus pulled out of archival memory. Within the field of memory, Nora creates a further distinction between lived memory and external, signified memory, notably manifested through our age’s obsession with the archive, which attempts the counteractive feat of the conservation of the present and the preservation of the past. The modern emphasis placed on relentless archival forms of remembering has transformed modern memory into an archival memory defined by fear of disappearance and hallowed memory foundations—“no so-

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131 Ibid, 13.
ciety has ever produced archives as deliberately as our own.”¹³² “Speak White” exists as a cultural site of excess meaning recoiled within itself, but its archetypal form remains open to transformation and re-appropriation, which makes it a site of memory by way of its malleability across decades.

Ruschiensky traces the various reiterations and remixes of “Speak White” produced after its original inception in 1968, which provide evidence of its categorization as a lieu de mémoire. One of the more prominent takes on “Speak White” was articulated by the Italian-born Montrealer, Marco Micone, who wrote “Speak What” in 1989. Micone directly references “Speak White,” taking on the same integral dynamic between opposing pronouns signaling the dichotomy of boss vs. oppressed. Yet, he adopts a new master as the oppressive force in his reproduction of “Speak White.” The table turns as the Québécois of French-Canadian heritage becomes the collective oppressive boss imposing a draconian reign through language restriction of its own.

Micone directly references Lalonde’s “Speak White” in the first stanza:

It is so nice to hear you speak
of La Romance du vin
and of L’Homme rapaillé
To Imagine your coureurs des bois
poems in their quivers¹³³

“La Romance du vin” is a reference to the poem of famous Québécois poet, Émile Nelligan (1879-1941), who Lalonde references when she speaks of “les chants rogues de nos ancêtres Et le chagrin de Nelligan….” Micone’s usage of the term “Homme rapaillé” is a direct reference to


the work of Gaston Miron (1928-1996), an influential writer, poet and intellectual of Québec’s Quiet Revolution. Both Miron and Nelligan are cherished as Québécois cultural icons. “Coureurs de bois,” meaning “runner of the woods,” is an old term for traders of French-Canadian origin, who operated at the forefront of early North American fur trade. Thus, in the opening lines of his poem, Micone is directly addressing Québécois of French-Canadian heritage as the other, the “you”. He uses French to overtly signal his audience. He uses terminology not only to hone in on his target audience, but to make the Francophone world appear as a bygone order of few remarkable cultural productions in his undertaking of antiquated terminology. Micone’s next stanza begins with the following line: “we are one hundred peoples who came from far away to share your dreams and your winters.” Here, the “we” introduces the positionality of Micone, as he inhabits the voice of immigrants who have come to Québec in pursuit of brighter futures and far-reaching “dreams.” The implication of “dreams” alludes to the archetypal notion of North American immigration posited as a beacon of light and possibility. Yet, this land is home to insurmountable forms of oppressive institutional and economic barriers to those who are not white and born on North American soil. Micone suggests that all Québec immigrants share in the dreams of the Québécois of French Canadian heritage, who equally understand the desire to pursue the North American dream against the pushback of dominant vectors of power.

“You sound more and more like them…” Micone states in English, leading us to infer who is represented under the pronoun “them”—Anglophones, the masters in “Speak White” by Lalonde. The “you” is pointing to Québécois of French Canadian heritage. “Do you remember the noise of the factories?” He asks. In doing so, Micone has placed the immigrant class in the

place of the factory, a position previously occupied by Québécois of French Canadian heritage in “Speak White,” alluded to by the recollection of the factory sounds. The Québécois now (after the Quiet Revolution) occupies the position of the Anglophone, the boss heading the power structure. Micone writes, “we speak the language of silence and powerlessness.”135 “We” represents immigrants, and the oppressed language Micone speaks of is the various languages spoken by these diverse immigrant communities. “We will speak to you with our bastard verb and our broken accents of Cambodia and El Salvador of Chile and Romania of Molise and Peloponnese until our last breath speak what.”136 Micone adds a global dimension by listing these places where refugees are coming from. He broadens a coalition of oppressed peoples experiencing alienation of the French language barrier through immigration.

Micone asks to “impose us your language and we will tell you the war, torture, and misery we will tell our death with your words….”137 He wants the Québécois to be aware of past trauma experienced by various immigrants and refugee communities, who have come to Québec to seek a better life. The imposition of language barriers further disenfranchises these already struggling communities. The last two-line stanza of the poem states the following: “we are one hundred peoples who came from far away to tell you that you are not alone.”138 Here, it feels as though Micone wants the Québécois of French Canadian heritage to relate to the sense of alienation and oppression experienced by immigrants. Micone attempts to create solidarity among factions of immigrants within Québec, collectively isolated by a language barrier and language

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136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid.
laws. Ruchiensky argues that the last stanza is reflective of Micone’s desire to “acknowledge collectively shared memories of suffering and humiliation, rather than setting them in opposition and competition.” Ruchiensky argues that the last stanza is reflective of Micone’s desire to “acknowledge collectively shared memories of suffering and humiliation, rather than setting them in opposition and competition.”

Micone is creating solidarity among immigrant communities whilst attempting to garner sympathy and understanding from Québécois in regard to the condition of estranged immigrants.

Similar to Lalonde’s “Speak White,” “Speak What” is written primarily in French. The only words in English are the repeated statement “speak what,” and the following line quoted in part above: “vous souvenez-vous du vacarme des usines and of the voice des contremaîtres you sound like them more and more.” It is noteworthy that in Micone’s criticism of the imposition of the French language and Québec’s treatment of immigrants, he chose to write the poem in French. He hones in on his audience through the subject matter, but also the very choice of language signals the intended reader. As Lise Gauvin brings to light in “Manifester la Différence: Place et functions des manifests dans les littératures francophones,” there is a paradox at the forefront of Micone’s work through the very title: he is giving an order in English to the Québec community from the immigrant community. After the initial English in the title, French takes over for the rest of Micone’s poem.

Ruchiensky argues that both “Speak White” and “Speak What” function as manifestoes, with an intertwined relationship as the latter appropriates the original lieu de mémoire. Both works are calling for action. “Speak White” is addressing both Anglophones and Francophones,

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139 Ruchiensky, “Revisiting ‘Speak White’,,” 73.
galvanizing the latter into action. “Speak What” groups these two communities together as one gatekeeping power structure. Ruchiensky states that an essential component of manifestos is their reiteration of something external. Thus, “Speak White” as a lieu de mémoire is bolstered by its nature as a manifesto in conversation with later reiterations modeled on its format. In Ruchiensky’s words: “‘Speak What’ translates ‘Speak White’ through parody and transposition, and reconstructs it as a memory site through reiteration.”

Micone’s “Speak What” requires the reader’s previous knowledge and experience with Lalonde’s “Speak White.” Without the context of “Speak White,” “Speak What” does not have the same effect of transposition. “Speak What” encourages the reader to return to the original lieu de mémoire to capture the entire conversation that is bridge through the two works. Ruchiensky concludes that, “as confrontational as it is, ‘Speak What’ seeks to build bridges rather than borders.” Lalonde herself begged to differ as she claimed Micone’s work plagiarized her writing. Yet, Lise Gauvin highlighted the absurdity of this accusal as Micone’s poem is clearly supposed to be read as a direct response and reference to Lalonde’s work. Rather, in agreement with Gauvin, I argue it should be understood as a kind of remix that alludes to the nature of “Speak White” as an essential site of Québec cultural remembrance that understandably generated further reiterations of its powerful message.

As “Speak White” continues to generate new forms of meaning, its core remains closed within itself as a part of the project of building collective consciousness within the formation of Québécois identity. “Speak White” provides a gateway to the breakthrough in prideful self-identification within the Québécois community of the 1960s, remaining caught up in the wave of cul-

142 Ruschiensky, “Revisiting ‘Speak White’,,” 75.

143 Ibid.

144 Ibid, 74.
tural recognition and revolutionary energy of the decade. The nature of “Speak White” as a site of memory as well as the encapsulation of a specific time speaks to the foundational nature of Québécois historical consciousness and collective identity, irrevocably intertwined with a past of oppression. In *A History for the Future: Rewriting Memory and Identity in Québec*, Jocelyn Létourneau reflects on the historical experience of Québécois of French Canadian heritage, the burden of the past, and the ways in which collective memory holds an important function within Québécois identity and impacts the framework of the future. His writing allows for a deeper understanding of the subject matter of “Speak White,” as well as the way in which it functions as a site of cultural production post-inception.

Létourneau describes the tragedy of Québécois of French-Canadian heritage as a community bogged down by memory and history—carrying their past like a cross. He discusses the duty of memory, the poverty of memory, the cult of memory, and the revolution of memory that is needed to break out of cyclical trauma.

Létourneau’s philosophy of memory manifests itself through its obligations, its “poverty,” and necessitates a reformation to propel Québec towards a more productive future. I have come to the conclusion, through Létourneau’s model of memory, that *les lieux de mémoire* contribute to a cult of memory through their attachments to the past, whilst simultaneously breaking the mold through reiterations and transformations aiding in the so-called revolution of memory by opening up the possibility of change and evolution. Micone’s work embodies the revolution of memory by establishing an alternative mode of thinking via a cornerstone of Québec cultural memory, Lalonde’s “Speak White.”

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Létourneau explains the ongoing duty of memory as the following: “In order to exist now and in the future, Quebecers have a duty to remember their sorrows, to bear in their turn the suffering of their ancestors, an immemorial suffering by the stigmata of so many tragic events.” \(^ {146}\) Thus, memory is characterized as a burden, transmitting intergenerational trauma and impacting productions of the present and future. He goes on to explain that the “national story” of the Québécois is always expressed in terms of “sorrows and grievances,” which informs the ongoing formation of a collective cultural identity and inhibits future progress. \(^ {147}\) He poses the question, “are Quebecers eternally in mourning or trying to escape from the injunction to remember —‘Je me souviens’ (I remember) —that defines their relationship to the world?” \(^ {148}\) Are Québécois forever mourning past memories or trying to escape the burden of remembering? Létourneau places the act of remembering and the conception of memory at the core of Québécois collective identity: the impervious desire to never forget aspects of the past, which sticks to conceptions of the future and molds Québécois collectivity and self-expression. Létourneau poses the following question: “The Anglo-Franco tension makes the country. If it disappears because we forgot our history what will happen?” \(^ {149}\) This question propels the duty of remembering forward. The implications of forgetting are too dangerous; carrying the memory forward is necessary to continue existing. The past cemented as memory ensures the present moment and impacts articulations of the future: “It seems there is one thing that is impossible for Quebecers to forget, and that is hav-

\(^ {147}\) Ibid.
\(^ {148}\) Ibid, 9.
\(^ {149}\) Ibid.
ing been the victims of the other.”¹⁵⁰ The inhabiting of the position of “other” carries the duty of memory and inscribes itself on the present and future. Létourneau claims that by remembering the past, it leads to “the ancestors’ domination of the world of the living,” further obscuring the self.¹⁵¹ Thus, an underbelly of burden and pain characterizes the duty of memory that suffocates the present self and inhibits positive remembering to build a successful future. Québécois of French Canadian heritage perceive “their progress as a prelude to disaster rather than a sign of success” because of the constraint of a memory of suffering.¹⁵²

Létourneau’s solution to the cyclical nature of Québécois memory is a revolution of memory. He defines this challenge as the following: “not to opt for a memory based on resignation or contempt for the past.”¹⁵³ Yet, there must be a way to deal with the trauma of past generations, whilst simultaneously living the present and organizing for the future. Létourneau claims that the only way to truly honor one’s ancestors it “to be accountable to the future.”¹⁵⁴ Létourneau fears the reality of Québécois cultural memory because “without this effort of renewal, the future is condemned to being nothing but an eternal return, as if caught in the trap of a founding imperative.”¹⁵⁵ The relationship between ancestor and contemporary person must be reversed for a memory advocating for the future: “it is the ancestors who must show solidarity with the goals of the contemporary people, and not the opposite.”¹⁵⁶


¹⁵¹ Ibid, 12.

¹⁵² Ibid, 15.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 10.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 12.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 13.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.
They must be transformed to meet the “new needs, unforeseeable by the ancestors, that arise in building the present.” What Létourneau refers to as “intergenerational transmission” (the transformation of meaning for the past to meet the exigencies of the future) speak to the nature of lieu de mémoire. In this context, I would argue that “Speak White” stands in as a site of memory that is regenerated to re-capture the needs of a changing collectivity.

As Pierre Nora argued, lieux de mémoire only exist “because of their capacity for metamorphosis” and the potential for “endless recycling of their meaning.” Létourneau discusses the need to reform the burden and cult of memory that plague the Québécois community in a similarly transformational way. He states: “Renovation is not a betrayal of the past; it is an updating of the old in keeping with the challenges and constraints of the present. It is what allows the old to endure.” The nature of Québécois memory must be re-centered to allow for the possibility of future improvements: “There is an art of inheriting that consists in updating what is transmitted, conserving it while modifying it.” Heritage can thus lead to freedom as opposed to an endless cycle of suffering.

“Speak White” inhabits the question of the Anglo-Franco struggle that propels the duty of memory forward in Létourneau’s work. Yet, “Speak What” puts a wrench in the works by complicating the historical narrative of the Anglo-Franco dynamic. “Speak White” carries and conveys pain and anger, recalling the turmoils of the past whilst simultaneously acting as a contemporary site of memory reformation. It is in its capacity to generate new forms of meaning


160 Ibid.
through works, such as “Speak What,” that “Speak White” is able to transcend Létourneau’s notion of the duty of memory and contribute to the ongoing narrative of Québécois identity. The renewals of “Speak White” allow for a reformed future that speaks to the exigencies of the present moment, enabled by its nature as a lieu de mémoire.
Conclusion: Beyond the Language Binary

Language is the conduit to the essence of culture. Québécois French is the bedrock of Québec’s cultural pride, subsumed within Anglo-North America. Both “Speak White” and Pierre Vallières (1972) are in French and about French, as a way of actively preserving Québécois identity and amplifying a message of urgency regarding cultural survival and historical oppression. Through the analysis of “Speak White” and the previous chapter dedicated to Pierre Vallières (1972), Québec identity is expounded upon from a foundational, transitional period in which a newfound feeling of pride was born, anchored in Québécois culture and language. These two cultural productions necessitate a foundational understanding of the historical context of Québec to comprehend the nuances of meaning in both film and performance. The Anglo-Franco struggle defines the explicit push and pull of Québec history, against the backdrop of the underlying amnesia in relation to the theft of Indigenous land.

Collective Québécois identity breaches the generative and reproductive identity legitimized by authorities and provincial, federal governments that have enforced a founding story of “New France,” and the Francophone and Anglophone world based on the idea that the land was not previously inhabited. Native communities inhabited the provincial region long before both colonial powers established cultural strongholds in Québec. What do we make of the lack of empathy for cultural diversity when it comes to non-white people? Millennia-old native languages, such as Iroquois, are dying off, but their erasure is not met with the same urgency as the Québécois Francophone fight for linguistic and cultural survival.

The film Québékoisie (2014) explicitly addresses exactly this issue as Mélanie Carrier and Olivier Higgins travel on bike from Québec City to Natashquan, a 630 mile feat, to learn
about Québec culture and identity through the lives those on Innu and Mohawk reserves. Through their journey, they unravel the erroneous myth of “frenchness” put forth by the French Catholic Clergy in the early twentieth century and bolstered by the government, which claimed that the ancestors of French Canadians were from France with exclusively French ancestry—a complete lie, exposed by the intermingling of French Canadian and Indigenous peoples. In turn, they unravel the colonial mindset they were taught in Québec schools. Québecoisie (2014) presents an alternative way of thinking about Québécois identity beyond its limiting, uniform label to enforce larger vectors of power in Québec society.

In the film, Québec identity is defined outside of the Anglo-Franco struggle and re-centered around the notion of “métis”—a person of French-Canadian and Indigenous descent. Serge Bouchard, Québécois anthropologist, explains in the film that “les canadien-français sont des métis,” but that the inherent “métis” in les québécois was euthanized as if it never existed. Bouchard further explains that the story of North America is a scandalous lie, which neglected the fact that the French mixed with Indigenous communities: “they fell in love with the country and its native women.” The full extent to which both natives and Québécois are mix-raced has been historically brushed under the rug. “L’origine métis, l’exploit métis, et la grandeur métis” was written out of history books as a result of scientific racism. Indigenous contributions to Québécois culture have been expunged from collective memory. Also cited in the film, Hélène Vézina, a demographer, conducted a series of studies in which she compared the French-Canadi-

161 Serge Bouchard in Québecoisie, directed by Mélanie carrier and Oliver Higgins (2014). “French-Canadians are métis” (translated by me).

162 Ibid, “Ils sont tombés amoureux du pays et de ses femmes indigènes…” (translated by me).

163 Ibid, “métis origin, métis achievement, and métis greatness…” (translated by me).
an gene pool in four regions of Québec: Lac Saint-Jean, Montréal, North Shore, and the Gaspé Peninsula. Vézina discovered that in all four regions, at least 50% of the Québécois of French-Canadian heritage have an Indigenous ancestor in their family tree. Interestingly, Montréal had the highest percentage, with nearly 85%.\(^{164}\) In doing this kind of research, there are probability and ratios involved, which presents the complicated question: when is someone considered Indigenous? At 5-10-20-50-100% native blood? There is no formal answer to this question, which brings forth the arbitrary nature of identity tied to nationhood and racial purity.

The interrelation of Québécois of French-Canadian heritage and Indigenous identities is reinforced in \textit{Québékoisie} (2014) as a leading attribute of Québécois culture and identity. Mélanie Carrier and Olivier Higgins break down the binary of Québec culture to allow for the interjection of Indigenous culture, the absence of which has contributed to the cultural impoverishment of Québec.

After digesting the works of Lalonde and Wieland and understanding the historical narrative of Québec, \textit{Québékoisie} (2014) presents an unearthing of Québec identity and culture from an alternative perspective that has long been neglected. Contrary to how Québec nationalism has been articulated to date, the film asserts that the conservation of intrinsic Indigenous identity is essential to Québec culture.

Québec identity is nuanced and extends beyond the confines of the dichotomy between the Québécois of French Canadian heritage and Canadian of British heritage—beyond Anglophone and Francophone. Yet, the lack of Indigenous visibility due to the reality of reserves and re-education, allows for a profound lack of visibility that has informed the binary in Québec cul-

\(^{164}\) Hélène Vézina in \textit{Québékoisie} (2014).
ture and pushed First Nations into a closed box outside of Québec culture. The Francophone insistence on ignoring Indigenous people and politics simply reinforce the Anglo-enforced binary of Anglo/Franco that disempowered them from 1759 onward. Wieland’s work, Lalonde’s poem/performance, and Québékoisie (2014), all offer ways of understanding the Québec issue—beyond that binary.
Fig. 1. Still from Joyce Wieland’s *Pierre Vallières* (1972) [16 mm].

Fig. 2.
to create a future built

Fig. 3.

on other bases than those of colonialism,

Fig. 4.
in which we once participated

as conquerors

Fig. 5.

Fig. 6.
and to which we later succumbed as conquered.

Fig. 7.

Fig. 8.
Fig. 9. Scan from Joyce Wieland’s art book/show catalogue, *True Patriot Love / Véritable Amour Patriotique* (1971).

Fig. 10.
Fig. 15. Still of Michèle Lalonde’s Performance of “Speak White” at Nuit de la Poésie (1970).

Fig. 16.
Fig. 17. Still from *Speak White* (1980) directed by Pierre Falardeau & Julien Poulin, National Film Board of Canada.

Fig. 18.
Fig. 19.

Fig. 20.
Fig. 21.

Fig. 22.
Fig. 23.

Fig. 24.
Fig. 25. Still from *Québékoisie* (2014) directed by Mélanie Carrier and Olivier Higgins.

Yet there are over 56 Aboriginal communities in Québec.

Fig. 26.

These women bear the scars of history,
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