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Assembling the Afro-Métis Syllabus: Some Preliminary Reading¹

*For George Augustus Borden (1935-2020)*²

Résumé

Cet essai part de l'idée que, malgré la certitude assurée avec laquelle le gouvernement du Canada décrit et circonscrit la 'nation métisse'—sa prétendue classification généalogique—la définition affirmée n'est qu'un gambit régional, racial et juridique qui ne peut ni repousser les autres nations métisses ni les priver de leurs 'possessions' ou de leurs caractéristiques comme le proclament leurs patriotes. L'établissement qui décide de l'identité ou de la nationalité 'métisse' est autant anhistorique, provincial, et classiste qu'il ne peut maintenir sa marginalisation sentencieuse et apartheidiste des autres Métis, y compris ceux de l'Est du Canada ou ceux qui se nomment eux-mêmes 'Afro-Métis'. Dans son encerclement féroce de la nation métisse et la tentative de repousser les 'étrangers' ou les 'faux' qui pourraient chercher à empiéter les privilèges constitutionnels des Métis étatistes et officiels, la bureaucratie de la Couronne oublie qu'une nation n'est jamais seulement ce qu'elle conçoit d'être, mais qu'elle engendra toujours des peuples hybrides qui peuvent former de différents 'micro-États', dans ce cas-là également métis, sans être identiques à la nation métisse, ni sur le plan de la juridiction géographique ni sur celui de l'histoire culturelle. Ainsi, cet article remet en question l'usage monopoliste de la notion de 'Métis' pour désigner les personnes descendant d'ancêtres européens et autochtones liés à la traite des fourrures, ayant opéré entre l'Ontario et la Colombie-Britannique, et considère plusieurs textes qui promettent une identité 'afro-métisse'.

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- 1 Portions of this article appeared in my op-ed, "Métis and/or Afro-Métis: Who do you think you are?" (See Clarke 2019 in my references.) Too, the paper was given, in different forms, before two audiences: 1) As "Reconciling First Nations and Afro-Métis: Discovering Troy B. Bailey's *The Pierre Bonga Loops*: or the Truth Is in the History," for Encounters with Imaginaries and Transcultural Imaginaries in Canada and the Americas, at the University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg, MB, on September 30, 2017; and 2) as "Assembling the Afro-Métis Syllabus: Some Preliminary Reading," for the Association of Italian Canadian Writers, at the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences 2021, hosted by Dr. Joe Pivato, via Zoom, on June 3, 2021. I am grateful to these audiences for their queries.
 - 2 "Captain" Borden was a proud Africadian poet, never hiding his multiple ethnic inheritances. Born in New Glasgow Nova Scotia, he had a military career, but self-published many books exalting his culture, his people, and condemning racism, usually in quite piercing rhyme.

Abstract

This essay proposes that, despite the self-assured certitude of the Government of Canada's description and circumscription—its would-be even genealogical compassing—of the "Métis Nation," the asserted definition is only a regional, racial, and lawyerly gambit that cannot repulse other Métis nations nor erase them of their "possessions" or characteristics as their patriots pronounce. The Establishment ruling on "Métis" identity or nationality is so ahistorical, provincial, and classist that it cannot sustain its sententious, apartheid-marginalization of other Métis, including those of Eastern Canada or those naming themselves "Afro-Métis." In its ferocious encirclement of the Métis Nation, to try to fend off those 'outsiders' or 'fakes' who may seek to encroach on the constitutional privileges of statist and status Métis, the Crown bureaucracy forgets that no nation is ever only what it conceives itself to be, but always engenders hybrid peoples who may form distinct 'statelets,' in this case also Métis, and not at all identical to the Métis Nation in either geographical jurisdiction or in cultural history. Thus, this paper challenges the monopolist usage of Métis to designate persons descended from European-and-Indigenous fur-trade-related ancestors, active between Ontario and British Columbia, and considers several texts that forward an "Afro-Métis" identity.

Preamble to a Provisional Author-Reader Treaty

Although the paper that you now unfold sallies against a statist definition of who is "Métis" and who not, and may strike some eyes or ears as an insolent fusillade, an insulting battery upon a perfectly fine proper noun and adjective, I assure you—readily—that my dispute with bureaucratic diction is, in no way, a dispute with Métis people, or their glorious language, culture(s), and their community. *Pas de problème!* Yes, I do nag at the monopolizing of "Métis"; i.e., I question the shibboleth that pretends that it only befits a mixed-race polity that the 'Guv-mint du Canada' now favours, while that same party continues to decry other *métis* peoples *via* both a blood-quantum whitewash and a wishful-thinking declension of the metamorphosis-inclined morpheme. But what true scholar shall acquiesce to the official disassembling—dismemberment—of yet another disempowered, Canuck, racialized minority? (Is not a scrupulous scholar mindful when forced to contest blind arrogance—the habitual sin of sinecured politicians, fat asses plunked at desks, their porcine mugs nosing screens, grousing as they browse? Anyway, yes-men are forever no good.)

On *Métissage* and/or Mixed Messaging

Only one human invention is wholly indestructible: an idea. Thus, as soon as Caucasian—paleface—French explorers, slave traders, fur traders, interlopers, refugees, settlers, soldiers, voyageurs, merchants, and even missionaries began to find their black and brown, yellow and red, lovers, spouses, or rape victims conceiving ivory- or brown- or gold-complected children, those gents (and/or *les Filles du Roy*) conceived

of two primary labels for their offspring: Mulatto or Métis.³ The idea that pallid, paternal loins, and “Coloured” maternal loins may yield new human beings who may be classified as Mulatto or Métis, is one that has persisted for five centuries now, but which has been consecrated as a pseudo-state in, eccentrically, Canada, but *only west* of Québec, where provincially based Métis “nations” meet federal approval. These Métis “nations” tend to consist primarily of peoples of Indigenous (Amerindian) and Caucasian European admixture, possessing a distinct cultural heritage, thanks to French—or Scottish—voyageurs, establishing bases and Indigenous-mothered⁴ families and a “collective consciousness” across a swath of what was once indifferently—and undifferentiatedly termed—the “Northwest,” covering territory from northern Ontario to British Columbia (“Métis Nation”). According to the Library and Archives Canada, these peoples alone constitute a Métis “Nation” and/or provincial “nations”—as if an adjective related to the fruits of miscegenation can be consecrated as a state (even if with an initial-minuscule “s”). Yet, there is no nation on earth termed “Mulatto” or “Coloured”⁵; however, mixed-race populations termed “Mulatto” have played major roles in the history of Haiti and Brazil⁶ or—as Creoles⁷—in the history of Louisiana, Sierra Leone (as “Krio”—also called Creoles⁸), and other states. We know that “Coloured” was an official category for mixed-race persons in apartheid South Africa (Robinson).

In Canada, however, *the Métis Nation* (or subsidiary “nations”) are defined as possessing these specific characteristics:

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- 3 White supremacist settler states tend to fetishize the pale phallus as the magic wand yielding the “half-breed,” the *métis*, the mulatto, the *mestizo*, thus minimizing the potential—or the threat—of the nigrescent phallus to also sire mixed-race progeny. Yet, rendered obscene—literally off-stage—is the apparition of Indigenous males coupling with either European or African women and engendering offspring who are automatically seconded to a ‘white’ or a ‘black’ category. Far easier it is to enumerate Euro-fathered ‘half-breeds’ and ‘mulattoes’ (see Winks 11). The reason is related to the different class stratifications assigned to the kin of Parents-of-Colour. Angela A. Gonzales observes, “*hypodescent* assigned racial identity based upon any known black ancestry” (such as the ‘one-drop rule’), while “Indian identity followed the logic of *hyperdescent*, which required a minimum amount of Indian blood, usually one-quarter or more” (2009, 64, her emphasis). In other words, the Indigenous male mated with an African woman must sire a ‘black’ child, while the *métis* offspring of a Caucasian mother may be assigned whiteness.
 - 4 While the non-Native male and Native female pairings were perhaps the most common denominators of a Métis clan, one cannot omit the possibility for Indigenous male and Caucasian—or African—female households, no matter what nomenclature would have proved most popular with statisticians.
 - 5 In contrast, the name of the nation-state of Macedonia has become, in French, a word meaning a “mixed salad,” or a “mixture,” i.e., *une macédoine*.
 - 6 See Whitten 1999.
 - 7 A term with a chequered—black and white—history; sometimes referring to aristocratic whites or to all mixed-race progeny or to upper-class blacks, especially in Louisiana. See Bennett 1999.
 - 8 See “Krio” 1999.

Distinct Métis communities developed along the fur trade routes. This Métis Nation Homeland includes the three Prairie provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta), as well as parts of Ontario, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories and the Northern United States. (“Métis Nation”)

Although this clerkish designation may suffice for those who see themselves as adherents to a Métis “nation” of the aforementioned genealogical, geographical, and generic entrepreneurial statuses, some ontological perils threaten the settled (i.e., ‘settler state’) definition. For starters, French and Scottish interlopers and/or adventurers were not the only males to impregnate Indigenous women (one hopes, consensually, if not also affectionately).⁹ Indeed, a slew of African/Black/Negro fur traders also sired children with Indigenous partners.¹⁰

According to Frank Mackey’s history of Black Montréal, the fur trade was “one of the principal channels through which black slaves reached the city, or left it, as can be seen from the numerous references in this book to blacks owned or trafficked by fur traders” (Mackey 2010, 197).¹¹ So, he insists pithily, “Some of the voyageurs were black” (197);¹² and then provides bios for a black quartet of fur traders, brothers Étienne and Pierre Bonga, and the latter’s sons, George and Stephen¹³ (198–201). The first-generation brothers Bonga travelled from Montréal to Nord-Ouest Ontario, and then to Manitoba.¹⁴ Pierre Bonga had four children “by a woman of the Indian country” (Mackey 198). Clearly, the only way that Pierre Bonga, *et al.*, can be blocked from being viewed as full-blooded Métis (so to speak) is due the absence of a white European forebear. Mackey also alerts us to the historicity of “Glasgow Crawford (alias Glasco, Crawford Glasgow), husband of Phillis Araquandie (Arakwente), a Mohawk from Kahnawake, [who] was another black man from the Montreal area engaged in the fur trade...” (199), and who spoke “English, French & Iroquois fluently” (199). Were

9 The instability of the statist definition of “Métis” is due precisely to its imbrication in white supremacist and patriarchal ideologies, so that we are asked to forget that African men also produced Métis children and to ignore reproductive acts between Indigenous men and white and/or black women.

10 Writing of “Black Voyageurs,” LeVoyageur asserts, “Intermarriage [“with Indian tribes”] meant that African-American men became part of the widespread racially and culturally métis (literally ‘mixed’ or creole) network that included towns throughout the Great Lakes, Illinois, Illinois country, and Canada” (LeVoyageur 2013). Vitaly, LeVoyageur places “African-American men” in a “métis” and/or “creole” matrix (not a “mulatto” one); moreover, his geographical sense of the fur-trade must encompass Québec (as part of the “Great Lakes”), if not also the St. Lawrence River, which would thus extend central Canadian fur-trade networks into Maritime Canada.

11 This point suggests that the fur trade was a branch of the slave trade (and vice versa). Thus, it is impossible to segregate out the African paternity (or maternity) of some Métis children; not unless one wants to truckle to Caucasian-South African praxis under *apartheid*.

12 Richard W. Hill Sr. also insists: “slaves were critical to the operation of the fur trade” (2009, 100).

13 Their irrefutable photos appear in the text (Mackey 2010, 200; 201).

14 This fact disrupts the ridiculous, Establishment pretense that the fur trade was never operative within Québec.

his children (Mackey 199) half-breed, Mulatto, or Métis? For his part, Colin A. Thomson indicates that “Many [prairie] Whites believed that Black men learned Indian [sic] languages and dialects very quickly, and were particularly attractive to Indian women” (61). Next, he records the exploits of Alberta’s “Nigger Dan” Williams, who, brandishing a Bible, never hesitated to baptize Indians” (62); and whose wife was the daughter of the Beaver (Nation) chief (62). Alberta’s Henry Mills (whose Blackfoot name was “Sixapekwan” or “Black White Man” [71]), wed a Blackfoot wife (71); their son, David, garnered an “Indian name” – Scabby Bull (71) – and won “a Blood bride, Poosa” (71). Thomson dubs him a “Black-Indian frontiersman” (72). Thomson also showcases the criminal Jesse Williams, whose wife was “a Sarcee Indian woman known only as ‘Religious’” (73). Williams was eventually tried, convicted, and hanged for murder, while his associates—“two ‘half-breeds’ and two ‘squaws’”—were threatened with lynching (Thomson 73). In his history of blacks in British Columbia, Crawford Kilian reports significantly that both fur-trading companies competing for Indigenous-trapped, Pacific coast furs (namely, the Hudson Bay Company and the North West Company) were “colorblind, and had often employed Blacks, Indians, and Metis [sic] of French-Indian ancestry” (30).¹⁵ Kilian also informs us that B.C. Governor James Douglas (who had invited African-Americans to settle in the territory) was himself of mixed-race background, a consummate fur trader (note this fact), and then married “the half-breed daughter of the Chief Factor” (31). Their children would be—because mixed African, European, and Indigenous—“Afro-Métis.” On November 6, 2019, Canada Post issued a stamp to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the Red River Resistance (I prefer Rebellion), of 1869-70, a demand for recognition of Métis rights that led to the founding of Manitoba as the first Western province to enter Confederation (“Red River Resistance”). The domestic-circulated stamp features a photograph of Louis Riel’s Métis-inspired, “provisional government,” whose members included Pierre Poitras, Sr., apparently black, but born to a Canadian¹⁶ and a Métis woman; Poitras himself later wed a Métis bride (“Pierre Poitras” 2021, 38). He served as the Honourable Member for Baie St-Paul and Prairie du Cheval Blanc in the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia and, in that capacity, seconded the motion that accepted Terms of Confederation allowing Manitoba to join the Dominion of Canada in 1870 (“Pierre Poitras” 2021, 40). Thus, one Father of Confederation may have been, in reality, “Afro-Métis.” Given the proven labour of black men—voluntary and involuntary—in the fur trade and given their own fostering of Indigenous-birthed children, it cannot be possible to bar their progeny

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- 15 Only the most limited or racist intelligence could imagine that no member of this trio of cultures ever courted and married or simply impregnated a woman or women from one (or both) of the other fur-trade communities. And what of Black (or White) women bearing children for Red men?
- 16 Poitras’s father worked as an engagé (“Pierre Poitras” 2021, 38), “a French-Canadian man employed to canoe in the fur-trade as an indentured servant” (“Engagé”). Given the frequent employ of blacks in this capacity (recall the Bonga men), as well as the usage of “indentured servant” as a synonym for *slave* (LeVoyageur 2013), this could be the origin of Poitras *fil’s* *not-camera-shy* “blackness.”

from any form of Métis nationhood. (Ditto for children borne by black women for Indigenous men.)

However, the bureaucratic definition of *Métis* is also imperilled geographically. Just as black men were engaged in the Métis-child-producing fur trade (if we follow the governmental assessment), so was the traffick itself pursued within both Nouvelle-France¹⁷ (as Mackey notes) and Atlantic Canada¹⁸ and also down the other major tributary of Nouvelle France—the Mississippi River to New Orleans.¹⁹ (It was not only a Hudson's Bay, Great Lakes, or Pacific Northwest business activity.) The geographical restriction on the denotation of Métis is as tricky to impose as is the genealogical (racial) prohibition. Then again, what are we to do with the inconvenient nomenclature that declares the existence of Métis in Sénégal (H. Jones 2013) or in Vietnam (Firpo 2017²⁰)? Should the Government of Canada declare these Métis peoples to be imposters as it has done regarding those of Québec and Acadie?²¹ The Canadian bureaucratic denotation of Métis is so untenable as to be magical thinking—or, better, make-believe *apartheid*.

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- 17 LeVoyageur observes that the fur trade began “in 17th century New France,” then grew to encompass “a massive swath of North America,” a territorial allotment that must defy the geographical limits of the Library and Archives Canada denotation of “Metis.” To top all off, LeVoyageur lists the Black traders as consisting of “slaves, freedmen, escaped slaves, and *Black Métis*...” (LeVoyageur 2013, my emphasis).
- 18 See, for instance, Gwyn 2003. Gwyn identifies a vigorous fur trade in Nova Scotia, 1780s-1860s, as well as a mid-18th-century fur-trade centred on the upper Saint John River Valley in New Brunswick.
- 19 A Louisiana website affirms that the state’s “French Period (1685-1764)” population numbered Africans, Indigenous peoples, plus “Quebecer [sic] fur traders (‘pelletiers,’ in French) and military officers, military officials from France, a handful of women (as wives for those Quebecers and French officers) from France and Québec...” (“Louisiana Myths: The Octoroon” 2021, n.p.). One presumes that if French or Québécois fur-traders produced—with Indigenous women—Métis offspring in Ontario, the same genitalia yielded the same results in Québec—or in Louisiana—even in Nova Scotia.
- 20 Significantly, Christiana Firpo applies “*métis*” to “Afro-Vietnamese” persons as well as (white) French-Vietnamese and other mixed-race combos (Firpo 2017).
- 21 Witness the despicable spectacle of Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Carolyn Bennett who, in June 2019, while celebrating the signing of Federal-authorized, self-government agreements with Métis Nation branches in Ontario, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, deplored “so-called Métis groups that have cropped up in Quebec and Atlantic Canada claiming Aboriginal rights to hunt and fish, suggesting that they do not qualify as Métis” (Forrest 2019). She drew cheers and applause from *status* Métis when she said, “I think there are significant concerns of people handing out Métis cards to people who are not Métis.” Bennett alleged, “research is showing that people misunderstand what capital-M Métis are,” i.e., that claiming an Indigenous ancestor is not enough to prove Métis heritage. Thus, once more, a government – not unlike *apartheid*-era South Africa – posits that it can affix – or annihilate – cultural and/or racial identity. But Bennett’s later sentence nixes her effort to excise the “so-called Eastern Métis”: “This is why ... nations will determine who their members are.” (Forrest 2019, n.p.). Precisely! Nations – plural – will decide who is or are Métis, not government(s).

Let us consider the occupation determinant of Métis status; i.e., that only those descended from French and Scottish fur traders, active between Hudson's Bay and the Pacific Ocean, have any right to the term. But what if the fur trade was itself utterly imbricated with the slave trade in colonial Canada? What then? Mackey has recorded the fact of enslaved black voyageurs, and Robin Winks testifies that white French slave masters had household broods reflective of Indigenous moms on one hand and African mamas on the other (Winks 1997, 11). This assertion urges intemperate questions: The Frenchman who impregnated a Panis woman could father potentially a *Métis*? But not the same Frenchman who impregnated an African? In that case, he sired a Mulatto? The issue is not theoretical. Winks observes that the colonial French enslaved Indigenous and African peoples and had cavalier intimacies with both: "The French settlers especially were attracted to Indian women, and 75.9 percent of all panis [Indigenous] children were *batards*, while only 32.1% of Negro children were born out of wedlock" (11). He accepts that "Indian and Negro blood was mixed with French Canadian" (11). Sticking with the matter of occupation, what of the Mi'kmaq fishers of Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon?²² Presuming that some of their women bore children for French—the relocated Acadian as well as long-entrenched Basque—fishermen ensiled on those French possessions, were the children not Métis, or were they disqualified because a) the father was principally a fisher, not a fur trader; b) the trade occurred outside the purview of the Hudson Bay Company; or c) the father was Spanish (but, let's say, from Biarritz (France)); or d) all of the above reasons? It is likely a good thing that Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon remain in French hands, thus relieving the Government of Canada from having to wrap its head around these questions.

Si, there is a distinction between Métis and Mulatto. Yes, but that distinction is made by us. It was not at all dogma to the French, who applied the terms interchangeably.²³ Wherever French pricks (excuse the pun) penetrated and inseminated and impregnated "Natives" (of Africa, the Americas, and Asia) and/or *Noires*, the resultant live

22 Brandon Morris reports that "Many Mi'kmaq, French, and Acadians from Île Royale [Cape Breton Island] relocated to southern Newfoundland and Saint-Pierre and Miquelon after the fall of New France" (2012, 88). The Mi'kmaq hunted and fished—but also travelled easily between southern Newfoundland and Saint-Pierre and Miquelon (89). We also read that "Relocation" to these North Atlantic isles "facilitated the continuation of *kinship connections* between the French, Mi'kmaq, and Acadians" (89, my emphasis), including the baptisms of Mi'kmaq—and perhaps *métis*—children by "Catholic priests stationed at Saint-Pierre and Miquelon" (89), while their godparents were often French or Acadian (89). By the way, Morris also registers "a large number of mixed marriages ... between Mi'kmaq and Acadians" (28), partly because both groups entertained the same economy: "fishery and fur trade" (28). So, were their offspring Métis or not?

23 Notably, in *The Creoles of Louisiana* (1884), George Washington Cable points out that the white Nouvelle-France founders of New Orleans, Louisiana, sought "mastery over two naked races" (2005, 36)—one Black, one Red, yes, but also fielded an integrated army, "white, red, and black" (35). Opportunities for interracial amours were thus not lost on the Creoles, a term that suited both "colored" gentry as well as Europeans of French or Spanish descent, who had—at their service—"comely Yaloff and Mandingo boys and girls, the shapelier for their scanty dress..." (Cable 46).

births would be classed as mulattos and quadroons, métis or métif and octoroons, *et cetera*, to suit a sophisticated scale of racial categorization (and stratification), operative in Louisiana as well as in Saint-Domingue (now Haiti) and – I say – Nouvelle-France (Québec) – given its Indigenous and African slave populations. Eye a chart drafted by Frederick Law Olmsted, demonstrating how “the French of the Southern [United] States classify the colored people, according to the greater or less preponderance of Negro blood...” (Reuter 1969, 12). One spies the categories of Metif²⁴ (designating offspring both “white and Quadroon”) and “Meamelouc” (designating offspring both “white and metif”) (12). So, the French thought *métis*, at times, described persons of some Black/African/Negro/Noir heritage, not only those of Indigenous and European conjunction.²⁵ In addition, as Canadians have been reminded recently, governmental arbitration regarding who is “Indian,” Inuit, or Métis, is often merely political, never ethical, and seldom even anthropological. Thus, in 1956, the Government of Canada declared the Sinixt Nation “extinct,” leading to holdouts and remnants of the original inhabitants being pushed off lands in British Columbia, and relegated to a reserve in Washington state, U.S.A. After a decade-long court battle, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled, 7-2, on April 23,²⁶ 2021, that—lo and behold—the Sinixt are *not* extinct (Stefanovich). Given this history of Canadian governments deciding arbitrarily who will be Indigenous and who not, I prompt my Indigenous and Métis brethren and sistren to refrain from permitting any settler authority the political warrant. Only peoples should determine their culture(s) and their attributes. Otherwise, one opens the door to being dispossessed and/or “exterminated” by bureaucratic fiat—with consummate disregard for history, science, or morality. Likewise, people who believe themselves to be Métis should appreciate that history and genealogies have

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- 24 Métif and Métis (Métive and Métisse) are the same words, though as one Louisiana cultural website advises, the spelling difference was “due to the colonial S within and at the end of words which resembled a lower-case F, also similar to the German ß but with a longer stem...” (“Louisiana Myths: The Octoroon” 2021, n.p.). Why did racial admixture charts circulate in the French Empire? Well, its fur traders and soldiers and scarce white wives (plus “other” women pressed into serving “as wives”) kept spawning persons of various hues and tribes and free or slave status. Surely, French soldiers and traders (also slave-traders) roamed throughout North American French territory, fathering black Métis (the Octoroon) as well as rouge Métis, sometimes in Nouvelle-France, sometimes in Nouvelle-Orléans, sometimes in the Nord-Ouest (also a Haitian topography, not just Canadian), and sometimes even in Nouvelle-Écosse. In sum, *métis* is too unstable a term – racially and geographically – to be monopolized by one group of Prairie-to-B.C.-based Canadians (with Ontario permitted a nominal presence). Indeed, the Louisiana website “warns” that *métis* could refer to anyone “with ambiguous features and fair skin” and that it may even have “functioned as ... a physical descriptor, cultural descriptor (for folks who *lived among the Indians*...), and genealogical disclaimer” (“Louisiana Myths: The Octoroon” 2021, n.p., my emphasis). The term is too promiscuous to be delimited.
- 25 In October 2014, at the International Slavery Museum, in Liverpool, England, I encountered a similar chart, specifying “Métif/Octoroon,” as the epithet for the offspring of a Caucasian father and a Quadroon woman (grandchild of a Mulatto).
- 26 The Bard’s birthday. And so, it’s poetic justice?!!

created more than one Métis nation, and one of them may be “Afro-Métis.” In other words, there is no one-size-fits-all determinant, and anything too rigid must be eschewed.

Approximations and Proxies

Mind film critic Michael Sicinski’s resonant sagacity: “Every space...is hybridized from the start” (2020, 28). Thus, as soon as one begins to demarcate *the* Métis Nation—shadow statelets soon materialize. The reason is gloriously plain: Every nation is only an approximation of itself; and each fanciful conceptualization contains multiple, proxy nations—I mean, conglomerations of minorities. One authority to sound here is Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who was not just a foe of Francophone Québécois ethnocentrism or nationalism, but moved, through his government’s statement on “Indian Policy” (known colloquially as the “White Paper”), to abolish unilaterally all treaties between the Crown and First Nations and assimilate Indigenous Canadians into the Canadian populace as, in effect, just another ethnicity, with no special claims (“1969 White Paper”). Though Trudeau deserved righteously the hellacious condemnation that cannonaded his way—a reaction so fierce that the White Paper was instantly shelved, he was nevertheless prescient about the plight of nationalists in founding a state—with uncontested borders—whether geographic, linguistic, or cultural. *Or*—let us add—in quotation marks—“racial.” Thus, in “New Treason of the Intellectuals” (1996), to use the English title, Trudeau writes within the brilliant enlightenment and overcasting shadow of the French Jewish intellectual, Julien Benda, to reject the Québécois sovereignty project. Essentially, he wonders, *who—what* people(s)—may constitute the state:

The State of India is a sovereign republic. But there are no fewer than four languages officially recognized there (which include neither English nor Chinese nor Tibetan nor the innumerable dialects). There are eight principal religions, several of which are mutually and implacably opposed. Which nation are we talking about? And just what independence should we take as an example? (Trudeau 1996, 152)

Trudeau verifies “the polyethnic nature of the new [African] states” (152) and then the variegated citizenry of Algeria, whose population is “French, Spanish, Italian, Jewish, Greek, and Levantine,” plus “Berbers, Kabyles, Arabs, Moors, Negroes, Tuaregs, [and] Mazabites...” (153). Trudeau’s irreproachable insight is that no nation-state is only constituted by the racial, linguistic, or religious majority of its citizens. In this sense, the nation is only ever an ephemeral emanation of its chimerical self-conceit, its propagandistic self-aggrandizement. P.E.T.’s analysis also indicates that even the long-historied states, such as the United Kingdom, cannot be defined *solely* on the basis of language or race or religion. Having once been the seat of an oceanic and

globe-straddling empire, the U.K. boasts brown, black, and gold-complected, English-speaking and Anglican Church-attending citizens. Still others are Catholic, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim; still others speak Gaelic or Welsh; and so on.²⁷ So the “United Kingdom” that forwards English, Christianity, soccer, cricket, and fish-n-chips as its showpiece characteristics, projects, really, only a mass hallucination of its *true* character. The fact is, the minority groups within the majority constitute proxy nations that interrupt the would-be blanket proclamation of an honestly representative, mass identity. No matter how a nation defines itself, its minorities corrode the naïve, nativist, or nationalist credo. Furthermore, no nation—not even The Vatican—can posit the 100 percent, genealogical or genetic “purity” of its citizenry. Shrugging, P.E. Trudeau states, “the nation is not a biological reality” (156). If all the preceding is sensible, then no singular Métis nation can exist, and certainly not one consisting solely of French, Scottish, and Indigenous admixture. There must be *other* proxy Métis nations that render the “official” Métis Nation only a phantasm of its incipient—but always disjointed—consolidation. (Understand me: This point is incontrovertible!) The reproductive engendering of Métis people cannot be policed—at least not without a grave and crushing *Tyranny*, which must impinge most viciously upon women (i.e., human beings who can bear children). Indeed, every woman who decides for herself with whom she might seek to procreate is a real-and-present threat to any state whose coherence depends upon its ability to coerce or cajole reproductive coitus from persons of the same “identity,” ethnicity—or religion or language, *et cetera*. Thus, the statist, marquee demarcation of Métis, dismissing the possible presence of Québécois, Acadian, and other Atlantic Canadian Métis, or to render as illegitimate those Métis children sired by non-Caucasian/European parents, is itself an exercise in a kind of cultural genocide by dictionary means: The Oxford and the Larousse put to the service—let us say—of squatter-class convenience and/or the ego satisfaction of state-sponsored Métis. (And who is to say that notions of *White Supremacy* are not also implicated?²⁸)

27 Even “Canada” itself is a hodgepodge of Indigenous “First Nations” and ethnically (and/or linguistically) defined principalities and wards, from Francophone Québec to Gaelic Cape Breton; from Ukrainian Saskatchewan to Icelandic Manitoba; from Russian Castlegar to Finnish Thunder Bay....

28 Leave it to Margaret Atwood to urge a controversial observation that should not be controversial: “many Natives are more white, genetically, than they are Native” (37). Yes, her science is doubtful, because *culture* does not depend on genes, eh, but on socialization. Still, it’s a tad odd that métis who look white strive to forbid the use of the term *Métis* by métis who look black. Dorothy Mills-Proctor holds that “Many Red-Black people are quantitatively more Indian than Black, [but] because of their African features it is difficult for them ... to claim ... Indian blood” (108). Historian Wendell Nii Laryea Adjetej reports that “Indigenous people who are part white or white-passing aren’t dismissed as bad white actors or ‘settlers’ [even when] involved in controversy. They retain their indigeneity regardless” (Adjetej 2020, n.p.). However, a “double standard, rooted in white privilege, reveals a particular disdain for Black-Indigenous (or Afro-Métis) persons who *are* read as illegitimate or settlers” (n.p., his emphasis). It seems that white supremacist racism erases the

In his monograph critiquing Caucasians who claim Indigenous DNA and thus identity, *Distorted Descent: White Claims to Indigenous Identity* (2019), Social Justice academic Darryl Leroux, takes umbrage with “the contemporary trend of Canadians of European descent claiming Indigenous identity based on the alleged existence of a long-ago Indigenous ancestor” (Guha 2021, 226). According to Julia Guha’s review of Leroux, he does not chastize those whites asserting “genuine Indigenous identity [whose ancestors were] deprived of their status under provisions of the Indian Act...” (226). Rather, Leroux pooh-poohs those “guilty of what theorist Circe Sturm has called ‘race shifting’—in other words the adoption of Indigenous identity either for material advantage such as to legitimize land claims or acquire additional rights, or to psychologically absolve themselves [of white settler crimes]” (226). There is something to that; just consider Archibald Stansfeld Belaney (1888-1938), the British-born adventurer, who shipped himself to the Dominion of Canada, masked himself as Indigenous, dubbed himself Grey Owl, married first an Ojibwa wife and then took a Mohawk Iroquois “wife” (in the classic, common-law style of the voyageurs), and emerged as an *avant-garde* conservationist (“Grey Owl”). Applying Leroux’s classification system, Belaney/Grey Owl projected “aspirational descent”—a claim to Indigeneity “based on the retroactive indigenization of a European ancestor” (Guha 2021, 226). Given that Belaney/Grey Owl did work as a trapper and attested his parentage as being that of a Scottish father and an Apache mother (“Grey Owl”), he enacted a Métis identity (and one justified by his fur-trade occupation and his invented Scottish-and-Indigenous heritage). Of course, Belaney/Grey Owl was a faux Métis, a counterfeit, Indigenous man, though one who—*ahem*—spearheaded conservation. Still, he was practicing “race-shifting,” though the advantages accrued to him were not so much about assuaging imperialist/colonialist guilt as they were winning fame, the ardent administrations of at least two women, and an excellent portrait by the celebrity photographer Yusuf Karsh (1936). But Grey Owl is still a first-class example of, I will say, “white settler self-indigenization” whose intent is to “benefit white people [ultimately] at the expense of Indigenous peoples” (Leroux 2019, 29).

I sympathize with Leroux’s consternation regarding phony Métis, but his methodology—polling or trawling “forums of on-line genealogical databases,” wherein participants chat breezily about “Indigenous women as sexually available or promiscuous” (Guha 2021, 226), but disregard the [Indigenous] women “they claim as ancestor” (227), is research open to the spurious, the specious, the impulsive. Then again, Leroux also lambastes supposed Métis who adhere to “western’ notions of identity and belonging, for which a single ancestor hundreds of years in the past may suffice [for a claim to be made],” thus spiting “Indigenous notions of belonging, which require kinship relations” (227). Next, he invalidates “the very existence of the so-called

existence of an Afro-Métis cohort within the Eurocentric-derived conception of the Métis. So, some Métis who look white, in looking upon Métis who look black, see red (I pun)...

‘eastern métis’” (227) by insisting that a Métis identity “entails ‘ongoing kinship relations’ with other Indigenous communities in the Prairies, as well as a ‘political history of resistance to the Canadian government (118)’” (qtd. in Guha 2021, 227).²⁹ The base irritant for Leroux is that too many Canadians “desire to rewrite the colonial narrative as as one of ‘multicultural *métissage*.’ The effect ... is to undermine Indigenous political sovereignty through the attempt to racialize it” (227).

There is much to unpack in Leroux’s critique, but I begin with his own implicit sense that there is one valid, Métis identity that is Prairie-situated and connected to opposition to the Federal government (which ought always to be opposed—by everyone, everywhere, anyway). Lookit! Leroux’s determinations sacrifice “Métis” British Columbia and Ontario to prioritize Prairie provinces. Furthermore, the idea that every true Métis is Riel reborn—I mean, is a die-hard opponent of Ottawa’s power—is a nice endorsement of radicalism, one that could align, for instance, the Doukhobors—the Sons of Freedom—with the Children of Riel. Thus, it is too vague to serve as a decisive factor in assigning Metis identity. Leroux plumps for a narrow definition of who can be Métis, and that has two collaboratively, collaterally damaging effects: 1) he challenges the geographic borders of the statist designation; 2) he suggests that kinship and shared values are what sustain an identity. Sweetly then, Leroux provides an opening for all other “Métis” to define themselves according to *their own* kinship and cultural connections.

One more thing: The phenomenon that Leroux describes as “race shifting” is a practice indulged in primarily by *the Canadian Government*—up to and including Pierre Trudeau’s White Paper which sought to disassociate Indigenous peoples from their cultures and assimilate them into either an English or French and Protestant or Catholic base as just ‘regular Canadians.’ Naturally, the *raison d’être* of the Residential School industry was to ‘civilize’ and Christianize Indigenous children to whitewash and brainwash them into a European ‘norm.’ Leroux is right that some white folks assert falsely an Indigenous or Métis heritage, but these miscreants have before them the steady example of governments that extinguished treaty rights to hunt and fish and harvest natural resources in order to pass those rights on to citizens who were loudly Caucasian, proudly European, and undoubtedly empowered. I think we need to be scrupulously cautious before we start designating who is a fake Indigenous person and who is authentic, when the Government of Canada strove—for at least a century—to transform actual Indigenous peoples into *faux* Caucasians.

The latter point highlights yet another fault line in Leroux’s analysis—and that is the extent or not of “multicultural *métissage*” in colonial Canada. Leroux suggests, says Guha, that there were not many marriages between French men and Indigenous

29 The mortal fault in this argument is that it upholds the Prairie-biased, statist definition of the Métis Nation, thus obliterating the centuries of intermarriage and kinship relations among, in particular, Atlantic Canadian Acadians and Mi’kmaq (see Morris 2012). So, Leroux maintains the untenable notion that European/Indigenous admixture fostered a single, Northwest Canada situated, Métis cultural and pseudo-geopolitical entity. That idea is sheer balderdash, hogwash, rot.

women, and I will presume that that is true, *if* what we mean by “marriage” are church or state-sanctioned unions. However, there was another form of marriage common among fur traders and other frontier outdoorsmen and it was, to use the French, *marriage à la façon du pays*, that is to say, in English, unadulterated, common-law hook-ups. I do not presuppose that these romantic liaisons were due to promiscuity on the part of Indigenous women, but rather were pursued to the pleasure of (mainly) European men. Such unions were never official marriages, and many were likely transitory arrangements—good for a season or two—or until a child was born or until a fortune was made or a profit realized, and then the gent could sail back to Europe—perhaps to wed his childhood sweetheart? However, there was yet another form of coupling conducive to creating mixed-race offspring, and that was, of course, the institution of slavery, wherein a master or male friends or relatives or an overseer could beset an African or Indigenous woman and beget upon her a child—i.e., living capital for the slave trade.³⁰ Leroux does not examine this fact, but it—*ahem*—“race-shifts” the burden of “racialization,” from Indigenous or African women, to the (principally) European men who sired these children and then dubbed them “Métis” or “Mulatto.” In other words, it was white-settler regimes that decided that the most desirable Black and Red people were those whose tints were adulterated; that the closer they could come to being white, the better class of human being they were. (Thus, M. Leroux, the first “race-shifters” were the slave masters and the fur traders who were certain of one thing: Their mixed-race offspring were a shade other than white.) Face the fact! The Métis and/or Mulatto and/or Octoroon Nation is one created by bastardy, sometimes papered over by the notion of a “country” marriage, but always existing in an ill-defined state of illegitimacy. Slow have been empowered Caucasians to legitimize *all* of the semi-Indigenous bastards of *their* settler-state. Crucially, the only clear and present endangerment of Indigenous political sovereignty is a Canuck *White Supremacism* that opposes such governance.

Another issue: While Maritime Métis who claim descent from the Maximum Leader of *the* Métis Nation, i.e. Louis Riel, may be deluded or fraudulent, their tentatively touched up genealogies do not invalidate the existence of “eastern Métis,” if we bear in mind that French and Scottish (and other European and African) genitals ventured upon consenting (or coerced) Indigenous women’s genitals all about the Americas, in various occupations—fishery, fur trade, forestry, mining, *et cetera*, whelping *métis* globally, but creating—declareth the Government of Canada—only one *endorsed*,

30 *Par exemple*, Winks upbraids those historians of slavery in New France who tabulate few interracial marriages, for they neglect “those liaisons undertaken without the sanction of the church” (1997, 11). Reviewing the available statistics, Winks sees, “of 573 children of slaves [either Indigenous or African], 59.5 percent were born outside of any form of marriage, and while in many cases the parents may have been of the same race, the entry in the registers—*pere inconnu*—no doubt covers many white men too” (11). Anyway, when did *métissage* ever require the blessing of clerics?

Métis Nation. (Lo! Whenever absurdity is given governmental force, injustice is the result.)

If we understand that peoples engender peoples, regardless of government studies and directives and bulletins and laws, it is probable that different forms of Métis peoples developed in different regions—around different occupations—and with different histories. Therefore, the *métis* people do not descend only from Louis Riel and the Red River Colony or even Batoche, but rather from those—North, South, East, and West—who reject settler-state attacks on their Indigeneity—even if they are (literally) bastards—and so tout unblushingly the heritage. For this reason, Moncton, Halifax, Sydney, Yarmouth, the Gaspé, *et cetera*, all of these places are bases for other *métis* peoples, whose territorial latitude and longitude may never be confined to any single space in North America. In the end, the *approximate* Métis Nation counts within itself—to its own chagrin—a white proxy nation, a Québec proxy, an Atlantic proxy, and even an Afro (or Afro-Métis) proxy. *Quel horreur!*

Truly, some are horrified. In a 2018 Canada Press article, Jarvis Googoo, “a non-practising lawyer in Halifax and a Mi’kmaw from We’koqma’q First Nation,” kvetches that the sudden appearance—as he (and others) see it—of “newly identified Metis [sic]” is suspect: “Where were these Metis [sic] people all this time?”³¹ That is to say, where were they (and he likely has in mind white Métis) when Indigenous people were resisting colonization and speaking out “about the horrors against Indigenous Peoples [sic]”? (Bundale 2018, n.p.). Googoo also articulates what he views as the real impetus for the quadrupling (on the Canadian Census between 1996 and 2006) for self-reported Métis in Nova Scotia specifically: “jobs, education and awards programs geared towards Indigenous Peoples are an important piece of [Truth and Reconciliation efforts].” He feels that having newfangled Métis “flood those programs is a step backwards” (n.p.). Some of the so-called eastern Métis are condemned as “rights grabbers,” trying to cash in on turn-of-21st-century Supreme Court judgments extending constitutional, Indigenous resource cultivation rights (forest, fur, fish) to Métis.³²

31 Theda Perdue posits the erasure of interracial Indigenous (or Métis) people, in relation to other Indigenous people, as the outcome of “Indians [sic] transform[ing] the racism they had learned under European tutelage into a nationalist struggle for sovereignty” (2009, 33). Hence, the specific evil of *White Supremacism* is that it can lure some Indigenous people into an alliance with settler governments to rule out the existence—*racially*—of other Indigenous or Métis people.

32 Then again, what about the probable undercounting of Métis people(s)? For instance, given that “the Indigenous population in Toronto has historically been drastically undercounted in official Statistics Canada data,” due to both “self shame” among potential respondents and an “inorganic,” census process (Carter 2021), there must be a certain percentage of “eastern” Métis who have avoided being numbered for similar reasons. Indeed, Indigenous Canadians are more likely to self-identify when “societal and legislative changes that prioritize Indigenous issues” can lead respondents to “feel more comfortable doing so” (Carter 2021, n.p.). Far from the self-aggrandizing impulse that Leroux ascribes to “race shifters,” the expansion of the numbers of Métis—everywhere—may also simply be the result of folks feeling a necessity to reassert a long-repressed heritage.

Leroux upholds this critique, advising that the expansion of self-declared Métis has occurred primarily since the Supreme Court, pro-Métis rights decisions of 1996 and 2006 (Bundale 2018). Well,, his inference is merely guesswork. How many of those who are now self-identifying as “Métis” are seeking actively to exercise the rights to which the Supreme Court now suggests they are entitled? Still, even if the answer to that question were 100 percent, it would not nullify the validity of any individual assertion to a Métis identity, even if it is *not* congruent with the definitions of *Métissitude* (to coin a term) vaunted by the apostles and disciples of Riel. As I have already demonstrated, multiple definitions of Métis peoples (plural) are available due to the events of history and interracial, family formations. Bear in mind that Daphne Williamson, “an aboriginal lawyer who works with the Nova Scotia Wampanoag community and Acadian Metis [sic] groups in the province, says the community didn’t disappear—it was disrupted and dispersed during the Acadian Expulsion” (Bundale 2018, n.p.).³³ Furthering this perspective, Karole Dumont, “chief of the Council of the First Metis [sic] People of Canada,” insists, “If you could pass off as white you did” (n.p.). “Metis [sic] families ‘hid in plain sight,’ Dumont says, and while they didn’t ‘advertise’ their Indigenous roots, they continued living as Metis [sic] in secret” (n.p.). One consequence of the prevailing “ideology of white supremacy” is to posit notions of ‘blood quantum’ and ‘one-drop rules’ that deny Indigenous kinship to *other* Indigenous or Métis peoples, thus harming “tribal well-being” (Klopotek 2009, 89), and activating behaviours supportive of “a racial formation with whites at the top of a racial hierarchy...” (89) In other words, for some Indigenous and Métis to employ white-settler-government measurements of *race* (derived from the Darwinian pseudoscience of the Victorian era) to rule other self-identifying Métis as illegitimate, they—we—“disown our own kin, undermining the most basic human bond and principles of tribal people” (89). Thus, persons who are black, brown, tan, gold, or cream in complexion, who live east of Ontario (or even west thereof), cannot be willy-nilly excised from asserting a Métis identity. It is a truth inescapably impossible to dismiss.

Identifying the Afro-Métis

I have begun my discourse on the origins of Afro-Métis by rehearsing the claims of ostensibly European—Caucasian Acadian—Métis, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous objections to their self-identification, because similar arguments could be advanced against Afro-Indigenous peoples, starting with that signal interrogative, “Where were you people all this time?” (Bundale 2018, n.p.) I believe there are two related answers: First, hiding in Mulatto invisibility (uh-huh), and, secondly, repressing conscientiously our Indigenous origins. Definitely, we have always existed, though seldom has there been an interest in acknowledging this truth.

33 Evidence for this point is provided by Cable 2005, who tells us the Creoles of Louisiana are, in part, “the children of those famed Nova Scotian exiles whose banishment from their homes by British arms in 1755 has so often been celebrated in romance; they still bear the name of Acadians” (3-4).

Earlier in this paper, I documented the involvement of black men *in* the fur trade and *with* Indigenous women, but there is other evidence about related intercourse (I pun) in Nova Scotia. We have census records from 1871 and 1881, stipulating the presence, in Nova Scotia, of black-and-Indigenous households (Census 2019). There is at least one photograph, “Camp of Micmac Indians, Elmsdale, Nova Scotia” (1891), by E.R. Faribault, which depicts clearly a black woman, Mi’kmaq women and children, a Mulatto or possibly Afro-Métis woman, and two men—husbands perhaps—who are either Mi’kmaq or Métis. A biography of Susannah Bundy Smith—“Mom Suse” (1883-1988), “Matriarch of the Preston Area Black Communities” in Nova Scotia, describes her as being “of dual race, she was Metis [sic]” (Willis 2010, back cover).



Fig.: “Group of Mi’kmaq in front of a wigwam at their camp in Elmsdale, Nova Scotia.” [Original caption: “Camp of Micmac Indians, Elmsdale, Nova Scotia.”] Library and Archives Canada. R15665-0-1-E, Accession number: 1969-120 NPC. Item 3368577. Electronic. Accessed on October 5, 2021. (Faribault 1891)

Turning to Dorothy Mills-Proctor, one finds in her novella-length memoir, “Born Again Indian: A Story of Self-Discovery of a Red-Black Woman and Her People” (2010), the thesis that Black and Red couples undertook Herculean efforts to hide this biracial and bicultural heritage from their children. According to Mills-Proctor, the blended African and Indigenous households would *pretend* that a child’s light(er) complexion was due to a Caucasian or European ancestor (47). The reason for this deception was the hope that Negrophobia and anti-Indigenous prejudice could be mitigated if a child or children were passed off as part-white, rather than part-Indigenous; well, it

was better to be considered a Mulatto rather than a half-breed (48).³⁴ She also goes on to say, “To be sure, there were black Indians in other parts of Canada but not as many as in Nova Scotia” (49).

In 2010 when Proctor-Mills published her essay on Black-Red or Red-Black identity, especially in Nova Scotia, she was a solo pioneer, a trailblazer. However, recently, there has been an explosion of interest in this particular, Canadian intersection or conjunction, so that what was once merely an anecdotal factoid has become an autobiographical, historical, philosophical, and a socio-political means of understanding oneself and one’s racialized community, repressed as it is within an irredentist, white supremacist context. Few may use the term *Afro-Métis* (although its usage is increasing), but many are highlighting their African and Indigenous heritage.

Thus, Tiffany Lethabo King, in her *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies* (2019), repositions the vast sweep of Paul Gilroy’s *Black Atlantic* (which is really interested in a kind of classical NATO arrangement of interests, i.e., African Americans affianced to Western Europe) to study the shorelines—the shoals—of the Caribbean and the Americas (including Canada) where African and Indigenous peoples first made contact. Curiously, despite musing on Cherokee/Creek and Black “erotics” (King 2019, 141-174), King never chances the possibility of fusion inherent in the word *métis*, which itself never appears.³⁵

In her 2020 post in *Social Policy*, Karina Vernon opposes “violent colonial and capitalist state apparatuses that target Indigenous, Black, and Black-Indigenous people for exploitation and death,” and seeks “Black art” (n.p.) to counter this aggression. Turning to African-Canadian scholar and writer Wayde Compton, and his speculative short fiction, *The Outer Harbour* (2015), Vernon sights the possibility for “an alternate future world born of the strength of solidarity between Black and Indigenous people” (2020, n.p.). One story narrates the personal-is-political dilemmas of a couple, “Fletcher, a Snohomish-Salish activist and his Black girlfriend, Jean,” who, as a “displaced’ Black” is wary of collapsing “the difference of her Blackness into his Indigeneity” (n.p.).³⁶ Vernon attests that “The Black Emancipation project on Turtle Island

34 Governments augmented this subterfuge. In the United States, “People of mixed black, white, and Indian ancestry were classified as mulatto by the 1910 census. . . .” (Klopotek 2009, 88). In addition, “An Indian community with even a small degree of black ancestry is much less likely to have been acknowledged as Indian than a community with even greater degrees of white ancestry. . . .” (86).

35 King (2019) prefers to juxtapose Black and Native as parallel lines—to be thought of in tandem, congruently, but seldom in relationship to the fructitude of conjoined, reproductive bodies. Only at the conclusion of her chapter on “Black and Native erotics” does she laud the arrival—for *fictitious* characters—of “fully Black and Cherokee children” (174, her emphasis).

36 Although some Indigenous men and African women must have had congenial relationships in the colonial (and slaveholding) era, strikingly, the notion is more explored in fiction than in history or sociology. So, Compton’s protagonists are a contemporary register of this pairing, while African-American filmmaker Julie Dash’s film, *Daughters of the Dust* (1991), depicts an Indigenous

has—until now—been largely predicated on fighting for inclusion and belonging in a colonial state apparatus on [stolen] land...” (n.p.). Although Vernon is reading Compton and reflecting on his characters and plot, she seems, nevertheless, to disregard (perhaps with Compton) the connections between the late 1960s Black Power movement in the United States and the beginnings of a Red Power Movement in Canada, both energized by Malcolm X’s charismatic radicalism, to oppose oppressive state mechanisms (Palmer 2009, 396–400). Arguably, a vision for Black liberation that affirms “Indigenous political sovereignty” (Vernon 2020, n.p.)—is progressive, but not original. Ultimately, Jean abandons a Canada that has never accepted her presence and rows “across the surface of the Salish Sea, toward a new political imagination” (n.p.), i.e., to a just-born island where Fletcher is also, presumably, settling.³⁷ Vernon feels that Jean acts out of the urges of her experiences as a Black woman—and not in cahoots—eh?—with Fletcher’s Indigenous politics. Yet, in the non-fictitious world of the couple, there must be some degree of political harmonization or the romance is impossible. Even so, the plot that Vernon outlines, in her reading of Compton, is not one of “Black-Indigenous” conjunction, but of a separate Black person and a separate Indigenous person, agreeing, to maroon themselves together in an act of anti-racist solidarity.

Etanda Arden’s 2020 article, also writ for *Social Policy*, upbraids “the erasure of Black Indigenous identity in Canadian education” (Arden 2020, n.p.). Her essay canvasses identity fusion and confusion. Born in Yellowknife (NWT) in 1983 to an 18-year-old Dene and a gone-off Black man, Arden was raised by her mother and two siblings “(from previous relationships)” in Thunder Bay (ON). In this city, in her childhood, she felt displaced by complexion (more Black than Indigenous) as well as by her Dene affiliation, and so felt alienated and insecure in her identity.³⁸ Studying Aboriginal Community Advocacy in college at age 32, increasing cultural pride began to decrease prior “feelings of inferiority”. But there was still a vacancy in her developing critical consciousness and self-confidence: “sometimes Black oppression was discussed as a comparison to Indigenous oppression”; generally, “the relationship between the two groups was never mentioned, nor was the possibility that there could also be a Black-Indigenous mixed-race identity”. Yet, Arden submits “If Afro-Indigenous perspectives were incorporated into Indigenous curriculum [,] it would not only fight against the erasure of Indigenous and Black history in Canada but also educate my classmates and teachers about the scope of Indigenous identity and impacts of

male with, claims King, “erotic appeal among heterosexual African American women (and perhaps others)...” (2019, 166).

37 This seems to recapitulate the utopic ending of Dash’s pic, wherein an ensiled Cherokee male and a Black woman gallop on horseback together away from a potential future of different displacements within mainland capitalist (and white supremacist and patriarchal and industrial) modernity.

38 In her bio for her article, Arden self-identifies as “Afro-Indigenous” (Arden 2020, n.p.).

colonization." Later, she interrogates us, "Why isn't it common knowledge that Indigenous and Black histories have intersected and intertwined throughout the history of colonization in the Americas?" Poignantly, she fears there can be no real solidarity so long as her dual heritages must be subsumed within a catch-all Indigeneity: Family and friends say "Indigenous-looking people experience racism just like Black-looking Indigenous people or that white-passing Indigenous people experience feelings of exclusion from Indigenous communities just like Afro-Indigenous people. I don't think these comparisons are true." Finally, she warns, "Overlooking non-European mixed-race Indigenous experiences and histories ... works to keep the colonial hierarchies in place..."

Likewise afflicted by alienation from Indigenous community is Meni Kurtis Brooks-L'nug, who, in an e-mail to me of February 14, 2019, confirms, "I am currently aiming to have our population of Indigenous Blacks of Nova Scotia recognized by the Canadian government as a distinct people" (n.p.). Simultaneously, he deplores the failure of the "Mi'kmaq" to affirm their kinship with Afro-Métis Nova Scotians ("Indigenous Blacks"):

Me & my kind are children of what is today referred to as the Mi'kmaq Nation by the government of Canada; though we are not counted among [Mi'kmaq] ranks. We are the lost children of the Mi'kmaq severed by generations of deliberate coercion & prohibition of our traditions...
(Brooks-L'nug 2021, n.p.)

His disaffection and suit for solidarity reflects the reality upon which Brian Klopotek comments: "Indians who appear to have black ancestry bear a unique burden in being discriminated against even within their own tribes and families" (2009, 89). Indeed, "Doubts about tribal authenticity that are linked to accusations of blackness are placed on their shoulders, or more accurately, on their faces" (89). Brooks-L'nug's e-mail evinces Klopotek's finding: "Perhaps the most difficult rejection to deal with comes from other Indians" (88).

In an interview with urban (Toronto) gardener Isaac Crosby, who is "Anishinaabe and Black," author Oscar Baker III comes out as "Black and Mi'kmaw from Elsipogtog First Nation," and attests to the empowerment that he felt in "hearing others that looked like me talk about the anti-Black racism they face in Indigenous communities and the anti-Indigenous comments they overhear when people don't realize they're Indigenous" (Baker III 2021, n.p.). In regard to self-naming, Crosby "prefers the term Indigenous with Black ancestry because he wants to honour his connection to the land first, but he also uses Black Indian" (n.p.). Also crucial to the interview is Baker III's understanding that the "historic 'one drop rule' in the United States reclassified many dark-skinned Indigenous people and those of mixed ancestry as Black. Only the white

Indigenous were allowed to stay Indigenous, and Indigenous people with Black ancestry have faced that erasure since" (n.p.).³⁹

Karmella Cen Benedito De Barros, in her introductory, editorial blog to a Special Black History Month 2021 Issue of *Room* considering the meanings of "Black-Indigenous" and "Afro-Indigenous," quotes significantly a "Black Indigenous Queer Femme," namely Cheyenne Wyzard-Jones, who states that "where solidarity lies is understanding that Black-Indigenous Nations exist" (De Barros 2021, n.p.). A graphic within the De Barros editorial declares,

PEOPLE WITH MIXED BLACK/AFRO-INDIGENOUS ANCESTRY ARE OFTEN
SUBJECT TO BOTH ANTI-BLACK, AND ANTI-INDIGENOUS RACISM WITHIN
MANY COMMUNITIES AND SOCIAL SPACES
(De Barros 2021, n.p.).

Wyzard-Jones echoes Arden and rejects the parallel-in-tandem study strategy of a scholar like King: "Black-Indigenous are the start to Black and Indigenous solidarity for me because you have to acknowledge the Blackness that coexists within Indigeneity inherently, rather than looking at it as two separate experiences coming together" (De Barros). This Wyzard-Jones interview quotation helps me to pivot toward—or to reinforce—two ideas undergirding this paper: 1) The existence of an Afro-Métis or Black-Indigenous "Nation" (albeit in metaphor) and the rectitude of that "national" characterization.⁴⁰ 2) Secondly, the persistence of Negrophobic racism that cannot permit acknowledgement of an Afro-Métis status.

The Rationale for the Morpheme *Afro-Métis*

Intriguingly, it is Afro/Black/Indigenous women who have thought most profoundly about nomenclature and what terms might work best to represent folks of African and Indigenous mixed-blood, including *Afro-Métis*. But may I justify my usage of the term? First, as P.E. Trudeau would argue, no nation is reducible to biology; secondly, Métis persons descend at times from a black parent; thirdly, the Métis people cannot be confined to the so-called Prairie "Northwest" nor the Pacific North West; fourthly, the French utilized a slew of colourful words (I pun) to identify the brown or tan offspring of a voyageur or a slave master. Nevertheless, the term *Afro-Métis* is an eccentricity. After all, why must we spell out the blackness of the mixed-race, Indigenous person? Cannot blackness be presumed to be present within a *métis* subject?

39 Gabrielle Tayac states that "The topic can be excruciatingly controversial in both Native and African American communities" (2009a, 18).

40 Before I pivot from nomenclature to literature, I must register the name of the Delaps Cove *Black Indian* Pioneer Society, of Annapolis County, Nova Scotia, representing the Tribe of Medabankeajet-Black Mi'kmaq (Anonymous 2014, my emphasis). Gabrielle Tayac critiques "Black Indian," however, for it may obfuscate "the complexities of tribal affiliation and African American identity as well as the historic ties to aboriginal landbases" (2009a, 16).

Assuredly. Still, in political or cultural reality, the blackness of the *métis* person is often nullified, due to the governmental definition that posits that only a white male's semen authorizes a Métis child. Justly then, "Afro" or "Black" serves to clarify the African presence within the tacitly Indigenous body or the collective body that is a nation.

A similar necessity wrought the invention of the coinage, "Blackcreole," in the Louisiana context, due to white Creole refusing to acknowledge their "Coloured" cousins. In his breezy, bracing, page-turning memoir on the subject, Maurice M. Martinez (2017) reports that *Blackcreole* evolved to fill a void: To identify the marginalized offspring of mixed-race romance deemed "*too white to be black and too black to be white*" (9). Or, to put it another way, the *Blackcreole* is too white in appearance to be considered truly black and too black in lineage to be accepted as a Creole—if even as so-called *gens de couleur*. Martinez registers duly that, in Louisiana, "Blackcreoles experienced centuries of bipolar assimilation through '*Plaçage*' relationships" (9). These post-midnight affiances of aristocratic French/Acadian/Creole masters with black women of all hues (from indigo to ivory), whether slave or free, sired the Coloured citizenry of Louisiana who Martinez dubs *Blackcreole* (9). Notably, these liaisons resemble French fur trader trysts (or amours) with Indigenous women—with the single exception of the lower, economic class of the male fornicator. The Métis (and Afro-Métis—some) are fostered *via* unofficial marriages—the so-called *mariage à la façon du pays*,⁴¹ while the "NOLA" (New Orleans, Louisiana) "Blackcreole" is born through *mariages de la main gauche*, or 'left-handed marriages'—i.e., engendered by the Coloured mistresses of the white European gentry. Yet, we will recall—as does Martinez—that Creoles did not restrict themselves to solely one "race" of women, and could father children with an enslaved black as much as with an "Indian." Thus, they invented systems of classification (befitting a "pigmentocracy" [35]) wherein, for instance, "Métif" designates the 1/8th "Negro" Octoroon (Martinez 2017, 22). In the end, for Martinez, the saga of race-mixing and subsequent blurs in cross-fertilizing, colour-line affiliations mandate the use of *Blackcreole* as the premier way to highlight the underlying black fact of the white-passing or light-complected, mixed-race personage (9).⁴² Similarly, *Afro-Métis* exists to designate that niche in Afro-Indigenous Canadian⁴³ identities.

Sure, the term may be disputed and spat upon: That can be the fate of any racial/ethnic epithet. Especially what ensues due to insolent moaning, gasps; the grunts

41 By the way, just as Leroux and company critique white-looking Acadians claiming Indigenous ancestry (whose reasoning is that, previously, Métis *they* had to pass for white), so does Martinez classify one group of *Blackcreoles* as "Passablanc" (2017, 11).

42 Likewise, in his anthology of African-American poetry gleaned from francophone Louisiana newspapers, Clint Bruce dubs the authors "Afro-Creole" so as to emphasize "the reality of black African ancestry—to varying degrees—and the African element in Louisiana Creole culture..." (2020, 3).

43 Intriguingly, *Canadian*, says Martinez, has emerged—at least in NOLA—as a euphemism for *Black* or *African-American* among those whites who would disguise their racism (2017, 11).

and groans of the crooning honeymoon; the devious odysseys of adulterers (*braccianti*, plutocrats, Lumpenproles, *bourgeoises*, Nanas, Lolitas, Galas, Beatrices-as-Muses); the muttered pleasantries—ambient profanities and profane flamboyance—in the boudoir (that crummy Eden); the candid, candied fecundation prosecuted therein, maybe Caliban tugging Miranda—or vice versa (at last). Even from horror, can beauty be derived, argues Ian Fleming's villain, Blofeld (in *Spectre*, Mendes 2015, 1:48:50). Fine. But what I will examine now is a series of texts that one could teach to either explore or to attempt to trouble the concept of Afro-Métis.

Assembling the Afro-Métis Syllabus

At the precise commencement of listing some texts befitting an Afro-Métis syllabus, I'll name one that could be disqualified: *A Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, a Black (Now going to Preach the Gospel in Nova-Scotia), Born in New-York, in North America* (1785). John Marrant's text is the first African-Canadian text in English, and it was popular, experiencing twenty-one printings immediately (Clarke 2002, 328). Reasonably, one could lead off an Afro-Métis syllabus with Marrant (1755-1791), for his Christian salvation testimonial narrates his captivity among the Cherokee (a First Nation quite imbricated with Africans—including as their slaveholders).⁴⁴ During his time among the Cherokee, Marrant comes to resemble his captors—and then benefactors—in garb and ways: "My dress was purely in the Indian stile [sic], the skins of wild beasts composed my garments, my head was set out in the savage manner, with a long pendant down my back, a sash round my middle without breeches, and a tomahawk by my side" (Marrant Fire 45). So complete is his transformation, his mother cannot recognize her son: "The singularity of my dress drew every body's eyes upon me, yet noone [sic] knew me" (Marrant 1991, 46). Eventually his true identity is disclosed and he is restored to his family.

I would follow up on Marrant's odyssey among the Cherokee by peeking at Sophia Pooley's enslavement to the Mohawk military strategist, politico, and slaveholder, Joseph Brant, or Thayendanegea (1743-1807). In her biographical sketch—as-told-to Benjamin Drew, she reports that she was stolen from her parents and brought to Canada [Upper Canada, but Canada West in 1856] when she was but 7 years old (she is in her 90s when she speaks with Drew). She is sold to Brant and becomes his slave, but at age 12 is cashed in by him, vended to an Englishman, for the fine sum of \$100, but not until after suffering abuse from Brant's third wife. She remains with her Anglo master for 7 years and then 'steals herself away.' Still, she was with Brant long enough that she says, "I used to talk Indian better than I could English" (see Drew 2000, 192-194).

44 In 2021, the Cherokee Nation acknowledged that descendants of those blacks that their ancestors enslaved qualify as Cherokee. Look up Harmeet Kaur 2021. But see also Tiffany Lethabo King on Black and Cherokee *potentially* radical eroticism in fiction and film (2019, 141-174).

My Afro-Métis syllabus would include Marrant and Pooley because their stories recover the once-and-still-disappeared fact of Indigenous and African contact, beginning centuries ago. To introduce these texts, I would remind students that the Transatlantic Slave Trade—the depopulation of Africa to serve European enterprise and imperialism, was, in fact, a humanitarian response to the partly deliberate and partly inadvertent *Genocide* that was first laying waste the Indigenous nations of the Caribbean and South America. To clarify that truth, I could direct the class to peruse Bartolomé de Las Casas's *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (1542).

Leapfrogging over the various histories detailing black involvement in the fur trade and co-enslavement with Indigenous people in Nouvelle-France (which would include Fortress Louisbourg on Île Royale—or Cape Breton Island), I would land in the 20th Century and regale students with poetry by George Augustus Borden (who has acknowledged his mixed heritage of “black, native Indian, and Dutch” (Clarke 1991, 24)), his poet-playwright brother Walter, and also by the poets Peter A. Bliss Bailey and Maxine Tynes.⁴⁵ No, they do not use the term, *Afro-Métis*, but that does not position them as beyond the pale (I gotta pun). Study, for instance, Tynes's poem, “Chameleon Silence”: “I feel very Indian tonight / very Micmac / Kuakiutl / Huron,” and also “Black” (qtd. in Clarke 1992, 75). But the persona's Blackness has Indigenous roots: “you don't hear the roots and leaves / of my words / hanging like black veins from my lips” (qtd. in Clarke 1992, 75). Her identity, she suggests, is both indigenous to Africa and Native to Canada: “tonight this Black woman sleeps on / the blood-carpet of broken treaty-dreams of long ago,” and with this realization, she knows, “Indian woman, / you are me” (75). The progressive, Africadian singer-songwriter Faith Nolan (1957-), who has also identified as Black-Indigenous, has composed a song for slain—assassinated—American Indian Movement heroine Anna Mae Aquash (1945-1975).⁴⁶ By reading selections from the Boyd Brothers, Tynes, and Nolan, I would stress that, even before current documentation of Black-Indigenous connections, the Afro-Métis identity has always been present in the literature, no matter how vociferously repressed.

Although Vivian Willis's bio of Africadian matriarch Susannah Bundy Smith—“Mom Suse” (1883-1988)—consists of snippets of historical factoids, transcribed recollections, plus true-life episodes rendered as *imagined* dialogue and narrative, one encounters much telling orature⁴⁷ or folklore:

We [Mom Suse and husband] lived in harmony with the Indians [sic] and inter-married in the backwoods of New Road [Preston (NS)]. Dating back from the late 1800's, Mi'kmaq and Black folks sold our wares regularly in town [Dartmouth or Halifax (NS)]. Unfortunately, a time came when the government herded all full-blooded Indians to a 'reservation of

45 G.A. Borden (1935-2020), Walter Marvin Borden (1942-), Bailey (1953-), Maxine Tynes (1949-2011).

46 See “Anna Mae Aquash” in Clarke 1992 (121-122).

47 See Chinweizu/Madubiike, *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature*, Volume 1 (1983).

segregation' in Shubenacadie. We lost our husbands, wives, and wives with children, including grandparents, etc.⁴⁸Only God understood our duel [sic] sufferings. Since then, our community has continually mourned the loss of our native heritage. (Willis 2010, 31).

Willis's text is disarmingly charming because it is irreproachably amateurish. However, its thesis is perfectly germane to my syllabus: Mom Suse's Afro-Metis and Africadian life is narrated *via* a consistent juxtaposition of Black and Indigenous histories in Nova Scotia. For instance, an interlocutor states, "the last Nova Scotian to be executed was an Indian from Shelburne County. An Everett Farmer, they say he died in '32..." (Willis 2010, 72). Everett Farmer was, indeed, the last person hanged for murder in Nova Scotia; however, he was Black (whatever his "Indian" admixture), and he perished in 1937. Mom Suse and family are sometimes wrong about facts, but are always right in illustrating, "What else is new in Nova Scotia? The black man and the Indians always used as scapegoats" (72). Mom Suse also lauds Indigenous people for helping African ancestors to survive: "I am reminded of the great indebtedness we have to the Indians of New Road. It was the mid 1800's when the authorities left us in the backwoods with next-to-no provisions.... The God [sic] Lord sent us to where the Indians lived. They, in their kind wisdom shared with us; *they* taught us how to survive" (107). Mom Suse continues on to condemn Residential Schools, which had the effect of returning Indigenous pupils home "in an Indian body, but with a white man's mind" (145).

Dorothy Mills-Proctor's ground-breaking essay or memoir-as-manifesto, "Born Again Indian" (2010), was a long-delayed follow-up to her fantastic caper-memoir (as Dorothy Proctor), *Chameleon: The Lives of Dorothy Proctor* (1994). Both works embroider her identity as a Red-Black (Africadian) woman (b. 1940s?), but *Chameleon* narrates adventures that are "true"—but only "to the best of Ms. Proctor's recollection" [vi]. That her white-male co-author, Fred Rosen, may have sought to spice things up, is also plausible. Then again, by her own account in *Chameleon*, her life as a sex-worker, drug-dealer, prisoner, and undercover (police) agent involved serial bouts of addiction that could easily have altered her memory. (Too, Proctor was one of the Canuck prisoners experimented upon, in the 1960s, to research the effects of LSD and electro-shock "therapy."⁴⁹ As a child, she writes, she was also subjected to wanton psychological and sexual abuse. If some elements of her memoir seem incredible, it may be because her recollection of facts was hazy enough to demand their filling in by spectacular invention.) The importance of her "True Crime/Biography" (front book flap) stems from her assertion of her Afro-Métis roots as the source of her ability to be able to assume several racial/cultural guises: "I am a product of the Civil War. My

48 This taxonomy of dispossession suggests that some husbands were Indigenous, and thus the wives left behind were African.

49 See "Dorothy Proctor."

paternal great, great grandfather was a slave who made it to Canada through the Underground Railroad. His son married a Mic Mac Indian [sic]" (2). We soon read, "Some of my other relatives were Asians, Blacks, Caucasians and Indians. Some were very rich, others were very poor, most were somewhere in between and many were criminals" (3).⁵⁰ The brutality, illiteracy, and poverty of her home life, her childhood, made her adept and resourceful—even if *via* crime—to find ways to dodge bullets and prosper. Her memoir centralizes her ability to pose or pass as Sikh, Chinese, Jamaican, Italian. This "race shifting" (shall we say) talent allows her to survive as a shady lady and succeed as a secret agent. Proctor's first publication feels more like a Blaxploitation flick than anything else,⁵¹ which may explain why her next publication, "Born Again Indian," is straightforward, expository prose. Still, in teaching her memoir, I would alert my class to the *Chameleon* in Proctor's book title and the use of "Chameleon" by Tynes; it suggests the transiting among identities that is also the lot of Martinez's *Blackcreoles* (and that Etanda Arden also describes for her Black and Indigenous self).

My next choice for Afro-Métis-related materials would be a long poem by Afro-Trinidadian-Canadian writer Claire Harris (1937-2018), i.e., "Sister (Y)Our Manchild at the Close of the Twentieth Century" (1996), a complex, feminist and experimental meditation on 1980s and 1990s invasions or bombings and/or cruise-missile assaults by the United States (principally) on "Iraq ... Panama ... Grenada ... Somalia ... Bosnia ..." (58). Harris is not Afro-Métis, but she is intrigued by the role played by Canadian soldiers of Indigenous background in war crimes perpetrated in Somalia, specifically, the 1993 torture and beating death of 16-year-old Shidane Abukar Sharone at the fists of Master Corporal Clayton Matchee, a Cree, and Private Kyle Brown, part-Cree (presumably Métis).⁵² Harris ponders the irony of two Indigenous—Canadian—soldiers, themselves the brown and beige sons of oppressed people, torturing to death a Somali "Native"—a black boy, himself the son of a nation once-colonized by European states, and now a starving, warlord-ravaged wreck. Harris juxtaposes "scalped Blackfoot Crow / their raped tortured women and the babies' / brains pinkish-grey moss on virgin pines" (59) with the "baby boy [Indigenous] man" (60) who "goes with his good Canadian buddies our Airborne [Regiment]" to Somalia (61), hoping for "a chance for a confirmed kill" of a Somali (62). Harris scrutinizes the irony of violent, anti-Indigenous settler occupation of Canada and the oppressed, Indigenous sons internalizing so much of that white-supremacist, imperialist

50 Fascinatingly, Gabrielle Tayac, mentions a 1912 article from *The Washington Star* that describes "a group of people in Prince George's County [Chesapeake Bay area] with the surname, 'Proctor' who have brown complexions and straight black hair and trace their ancestry back to the old Piscataway empire" (2009b, 104). Dot's ancestors?

51 Or perhaps she could be aligned with the Trickster figure native to much Indigenous spirituality and creativity.

52 See Amad 2018.

perspective that they can then go to Somalia and assault and murder blacks, the Indigenous people there.⁵³

Closing in on the new century and millennium, I would ask the class to pick up Lorena Gale's play, *Angélique* (2000), dealing with Canada's rebel slave, Marie-Josèphe Angélique (1705-1734). The play centres on the Negress of Madeira (Portugal) and her fate—to be blamed and executed for a destructive conflagration that she may not have ignited—but had good reason to do so. A sub-plot features an Indigenous woman. Indeed, the equally enslaved Manon projects jealousy toward Angélique because an enslaved black male, César, who is used by his master to impregnate Angélique, has deeper feelings for the Madeira maiden (unreciprocated) than he has for Manon (I.viii, 16-18). Angélique becomes César's "mistress" (I.vii, 14) and pregnancy and birth and sudden infant fatalities occur (Angélique commits infanticide upon her first-born child—and perhaps upon all her offspring). In 1.xiv, an intimate scene between César and Angélique, he tells the anecdote of "this slave and his Indian wife" (28) who run away eleven times and who, on their last attempt, are found frozen to death, their dying embrace of each other as tight as is a tongue stuck fast to a rimed, steel rod (30). The image is one of African-Indigenous alliance, which Angélique desires, but Manon rejects (II.iv), for she believes that Angélique has alienated César's affections (50-51). Later, in II.vii, Manon informs Angélique that *she* is "where I belong"—in her *Native* land (54). Her Indigeneity separates her status decisively from Angélique's, who is a forced immigrant to an alien land. In II.viii, Manon sings an Indigenous blues song about her unrequited love for César, but she is also "*shovelling hot coals into a bucket*" (56), an indication that she may be the arsonist. Then, in II.xv, Manon becomes one of Angélique's capital-case accusers (63). Although Gale (1958-2009) was on record as possessing Asian, African, and Aboriginal inheritance (Clarke 2009, 263), her play pursues the strategy that Vernon sees for Compton: To avoid collapsing the differences between "Blackness [and] Indigeneity" (Vernon 2020, n.p.).

A knack for building alliances, but also for respecting "race"-organization, political distinctions, shows up in *Burnley "Rocky" Jones: Revolutionary* (2016), by Jones (1941-2013) and co-author (and editor) James W. St. G. Walker. Jones is definitely African-Nova Scotian (Africadian) and defiantly anti-racist, but never finds it easy to treaty with Indigenous peoples, although he does succeed. In drafting the Transition Year Program at Dalhousie University, 1969-70, to allow black high-school dropouts or those with low high-school grades or those who graduated only with a "General" diploma (constituting a high school pass, but not university-entrance-level education), to have a chance to enter Dalhousie (after a remedial year of prep courses), Jones is forced by state-funders to include Indigenous people. But Mi'kmaq leaders object to what they perceive to be the use of Department of Indians Affairs

53 "Matchee was reported to have bragged that, 'the white man fears the Indian and so will the black man'" (Amad 2018).

funds to help “subsidize” black students, and the Union of Nova Scotian Indians is critical of the lower success rate for “Indian” students (159). Jones faces mirror pushback in establishing, as of 1989, again at Dalhousie, the Indigenous Blacks and Mi’kmaq (IBM) program to help Africadians and Mi’kmaq students access Dalhousie Law School. Jones uses the phrase “indigenous Black” (168) to distinguish the long-resided Africadians in Nova Scotia from Black newcomers, but this terminology raises hackles with Indigenous groups.⁵⁴ Despite these tensions, Jones did construct effective Indigenous and Black coalitions. Thus, when I attended Jones’s wake in 2013, I witnessed “both African drumming and Mi’kmaq chanting” and saw Jones himself, “garbed in an African robe in his casket, [holding] an eagle feather in one clenched fist” (qtd. in Jones & Walker 268).

Troy Burle Bailey’s *The Pierre Bonga Loops* (2010) is a documentary poem—in the tradition of Anglo-Canadian poet George Bowering and African-Canadian poet Wayne Compton—seeking to recover the lost history of the Afro-Métis fur-trader Pierre Bonga⁵⁵ (discussed earlier). The poems are historic because Bailey writes openly as an “Afro-Metif” about an Afro-Métis figure. Employing photos, drawings, fragments of historical research from archives, as well as imagined, first-person reportage from Bonga himself, Bailey—a native of Manitoba (but with Nova Scotian roots)—labours to resituate Bonga among the ranks of Métis and to position him as an ironic philosopher of economics, anthropology, “race,” and politics. A typical poem—“KakaBonga Falls”—unfurls thus:

I tripped across the name “KakaBonga Falls” somewhere in Ontario. The “Historian Kenneth W. Porter has established that [these] black men were represented among the trade’s entrepreneurs, voyageurs and hunters: Any picture of the racial aspects of the fur trade of that period which omits the Negro [sic] is so incomplete as to give a false impression, for representatives of that race were to be found in all three groups connected with the trade” (24). Katz. [sic]
 And I don’t know if I crossed mountains finding the massive *mer* Must check writings of Peter Pond.... (138)

Employing the discontinuous lyricism and fiesta of allusions and quotations that typify the epic approach of Ezra Pound’s *Cantos* (1998), *The Pierre Bonga Loops* is monumental in every way, and I do not do it justice here. What Bailey achieves, *via* carefully sifting archives and then letting the persona Bonga range freely across the Northwest and across eras, is to let him repeal the whitewash that has disappeared him and his lineage so that he speaks boldly to us, resurrecting an Afro-Métis history that Bailey will no longer permit to remain obscure(d).

54 See Paula C. Madden *and* my riposte, “Indigenous Blacks: An Irreconcilable Identity?” (2011).

55 ca. 1777-1831.

The text anchoring my syllabus is also the last chronologically. I refer here to Richard Atkinson (with Joe Fiorito) and his memoir, *The Life Crimes and Hard Times of Ricky Atkinson: Leader of the Dirty Tricks Gang, A True Story* (2017). Because this essay is long enough, I will not venture much further except to say that Atkinson (1955-) also proclaims himself “Afro-Metis” [sic] (80), due to his being—like Dorothy [Mills-]Proctor—from “a big mixed-race clan, black, native, and white, from Nova Scotia” (6). Like “Rocky” Jones, Atkinson develops a radical critique of race and class; unlike Jones, but like Proctor-Mills, Atkinson applies his smarts to crime, especially bank-robbing.⁵⁶ He loved knocking over banks, and fleeced “roughly seventy” (357). But he also spent “Half a life in jail” (358)—and will be “on parole until August 26, 2035 at 9:00 a.m.” ([366]). His narrative is exceedingly colourful, and merits comparison to *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965).

May Métis and Afro-Métis Now Marry in the Dictionary?

To move toward a conclusion, the Afro-Métis syllabus could be much longer than I indicate above. However, I think it should include testimonials by Black people who lived with or were enslaved (held captive) by Indigenous peoples (this is necessary because, for instance, descendants of Blacks held by the Cherokee Nation are now legally considered Cherokee, a decision reached only in 2021). It should also include writings by Black Canadian authors exploring Indigenous histories and cultures. And writings by Indigenous authors intrigued by Black identities and histories. Of course, Afro-Métis or Black-Indigenous authors would be included, whether they self-identify or not. Moreover, the texts should be multi-generic, including plays, songs, poetry, fiction, non-fiction, and even screenplays, films, documentaries, and music, wherever Canadian examples can be found. But I end where I began: Only ideas are indestructible. No matter whether others ever take up the idea of an Afro-Métis syllabus and ever teach such a course, the texts pre-exist the classification—as do we the people ourselves.

Megwich. Selah.

56 If crime narratives pepper the Afro-Métis syllabus, it is because the authors have been criminalized and marginalized, anyway. Here is the mutual experience of African-Canadians and Indigenous peoples: To be stopped, questioned, accused, convicted, jailed, or simply beaten or Tasered or murdered.

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