

Treason of the Black Intellectuals? - George Elliott Clarke, Athabasca University, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, English-Canadian Writers

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For Burnley A. ("Rocky") Jones¹

Preamble

Because analysis often originates in pain, the feeling of crisis lashing the flesh, this essay--a combination of accusation and confession--commences with three anecdotes illustrative of the agonies that have provoked its being. First, in the summer of 1979, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, during a provincial black youth conference I had helped to plan, a young, male representative of a Toronto, Ontario, group billed as the Black Youth Community Action Project, frustrated by our joyously disorganized, even anarchic, proceedings, rose and exclaimed, "There are too many mulattoes here." His allegation shocked me, for he was, if not mulatto himself, then, certainly, of mixed-race descent. But his words also stung me, for, though my parents are of African, Negro heritage, my mother is less obviously so, with the consequence that my skin colour is, to borrow a phrase from my mother, "tantalizingly tan," not beautifully black. (For some folks, then, my thought is as suspect as my colour.) Still, this incident marked at least one treason of a black intellectual: the refusal of that young Torontonion to extend solidarity to all self-identifying children of the African diaspora, not just to those whose gene pools had not been adulterated by European admixture. My second proof of arguable treason transpired in Toronto, in July 1997, when, following a dramatic reading of my verse-play, *Beatrice Chancy* (pub. 1999), which treats slavery in early 19th-century Nova Scotia, a (presumably) mulatto poet, renowned in Toronto, looked me flat in my ochre eyes and said, damningly, "It's a mulatto play." I remain mystified as to the identity of the target of her imprecation, whether it was me or the mixed-race heroine of the tragedy. Perhaps she meant to denounce both author and character. Even so, her act of treason lay in her implication that the mixed-race reality, whatever it is, cannot be reasonably interrogated or critiqued by any truly black-oriented artist or intellectual.² My third case of implicit race treason unfolded in Ottawa, Ontario, at Carleton University, where, during the summer of 1997, I was researching the MacOdrum Library's holdings of African-Canadian titles. One afternoon there, I overheard a conversation between a fortyish white woman and a twenty-something black woman, in which the former assured the latter, with unequivocal aplomb, that white Canadians respect Caribbean-born blacks, but not the Canadian variety, for the first are pugnacious, while the second are

passive. In this episode of black intellectual treason, neither myself nor the black student disputed the white woman's supercilious claims. But my own silence was the rankest treason.

I admit that these charges of treason are facile, even glib. After all, the archetypal young black man who castigated the corrupting influences of "mulattoes" was adhering to a Garveyite ideal of blackness: He was voicing a black nationalism that eliminates those who lack the right amount of melanin. Ditto for the middle-class Marxist poet, who was likely the captive of her reading of the Trinidadian intellectual C.L.R. James's reading of the Haitian Revolution, one which casts mixed-race blacks as pernicious aristocrats-in-a-hurry and as devious, Kerenskyite, reactionary defenders of the slaveholding status quo.³ Call this the Toussaint-L'Ouverture-position, in honour of the god of those wanna-be black nationalists who suspect mixed-race blacks of being congenital traitors.) Lastly, the young black woman who failed to challenge her interlocutor's claim alleging the inferiority of indigenous African Canadians was likely respecting that timeless black bourgeois vision which counsels prudent silence in the face of any white aggression. Thus, for her, nothing momentous was at stake in the white woman's 'rap.' In defence of all of these alleged traitors, I will stress that their positions are eminently politic: all of them can be identified with one species of nationalism or another.

This fact highlights a devilish norm: the necessary attractiveness of nationalism for any minority that feels itself down-trodden. All Canadians understand this truth. Indeed, impressive examples of this defensive thinking are flamingly visible in Québec, where both the francophone majority and the anglophone minority define themselves as embattled communities. Witness Josée Legault's alarmist 1992 catalogue of these "threatening" traits of the so-called "Anglos-Québécois": "La langue anglaise, la domination économique des anglophones, de même que leur culture politique propre, qu'ils considéraient supérieure à celle des francophones, étaient au coeur même de leur identité collective" (58). In reaction, some English-speaking Quebeckers, especially the impassioned *partitionistes*, feel that they must defend the English language in Québec by, as Charles Taylor disdainfully puts it, "speaking of fundamental rights to such things as commercial signage in the language of one's choice" (176). Then again, the entirety of English-speaking Canada often images itself as a squeezed minority--culturally and economically--vis-à-vis the 'Great Satan' to the south, a sentiment accorded baritone expression in George Grant's cataclysmic polemic, *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism* (1965). Given these compelling, domestic models of combative minorities, it is natural that Black Canadian intellectuals should agree that nationalism is a prerequisite for *la survioance du peuple noir*, as well as for our political empowerment and prosperity.⁴

Thus, a never-quite-vanquished nationalism remains a poignantly unavoidable source for frictions between the articulation of group identities--those persistent fictions--and individual negotiations of either more-or-less orthodox cultural allegiance or cosmopolitan openness (even assimilationism). For most minority entities, then, a measure of cultural nationalism--or group unity--has been a prize element of their steady existences as quote-unquote communities. The hazard of nationalism--its tendency to decay into fallacious myths, misty romanticisms, and blood-rite fascisms--persists, then, despite the globally swaddling and homogenizing embrace of IBM and Coca-Cola.

Black intellectuals possess no immunity against the potentially toxic allure of nationalism. Rather, we have been notorious for being either 'too' doctrinairely race-conscious, or nation-conscious (consider Malcolm X), or for not being conscious 'enough' (consider Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.). In fact, no meditative scholarship of African-Canadian culture and literature can refuse to limn the contours of its nationalism. For one thing, African-Canadian intellectuals and cultural nationalists must interrogate the complication that Canada's only legitimized nationalisms emanate from the cultural institutions of the federal state; the cultural, economic, and political state apparatus of Québec; and--though with less effective power--the cultural, economic, and political organs of The First Nations. Whether we like it or not, black nationalisms in Canada must be either domestic-oriented or other-worldly. If rooted in Canadian realities, they may exercise some provenance. If not, then their backers risk enduring the condemnation lodged by African-American intellectual Harold Cruse against his peers in *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (1967): "If an army on the battlefield were conducted the way the Negro movement is in America, its general staff would be beset with mutinies among its troops, sacked by higher authority for incompetence, investigated for suspected sabotage and quite probably shot for treason" (415). But can African-Canadian intellectuals avoid the paralyzing confusions that Cruse cites for our African-American counterparts?: "The Afro-American nationalists cannot make up their minds whether want to emigrate, separate, migrate, or simply sit still in the ghettos admiring each other during the quiet lulls between uprisings" (441). The question may be insoluble.

I.

This essay takes as its incitement the work of the first xx-century intellectual to accuse others of treason: Enter the French Jewish philosopher, Julien Benda. Born in 1867, Benda obtained political consciousness during the dirty, anti-Semitic Dreyfus Affair, a scandal which became the target of his first philosophical publication, *Dialogues à Byzance* (1898). From the first, Benda was animated by a reasoned and beneficent anti-racism--or anti-nationalism. Suitably then, his polemical monograph, *La Trahison des clercs* (1927), translated by Richard

Aldington and published, in Britain, as *The Great Betrayal* (1928) and, in the United States, as *The Treason of the Intellectuals* (1928), is an unforgiving indictment of race-identified European intellectuals. Benda flays those who, in the 1920s, became slavish disciples of nationalism and sycophantic defenders of its dictatorial proponents, including Benito Mussolini (1883-1945) in Italy and Maurice Barrès (1862-1923) in France. Benda's arch nemesis is, as he warns us from the first page of his text, "those passions termed political, owing to which men rise up against other men, the chief of which are racial passions, class passions and national passions" (1). He denounces, damns, "this desire of the 'clerk' [or intellectual] to feel himself determined by his race and to remain fixed to his native soil to the extent that it becomes in him a political attitude, a nationalist provocation" (48). Benda is most vexed by those scholars and writers who act as cheerleaders for their race or ethnicity. His example is one "German master" who feels that "A true German historian ... should especially tell those facts which conduce to the grandeur of Germany" (55). Benda wants us to disparage those who would claim that "this universal is a mere phantom, that there exist only particular truths" (77), such as those he enumerates in a quotation from Barrès as "Lorraine truths, Provençal truths, Brittany truths, the harmony of which in the course of centuries constitutes what is beneficial, respectable, true in France..." (77). For Benda, intellectual nationalists like Barrès, Mussolini, Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), Gabriel D'Annunzio (1863-1938), and "the immense majority of German thinkers" (60) resemble Macbeth's Weird Sisters: they stir a cauldron bubbling tyranny and hysteria. Backwardly and inhumanely, these defrocked clerics "...have praised the efforts of men to feel conscious of themselves in their nation and race, to the extent that this distinguishes them from others and opposes them to others, and have made them ashamed of every aspiration to feel conscious of themselves as men in the general sense and in the sense of rising above ethnical aims" (60-61). *Touché*.

Given Benda's ferocious indictment of the violence-prone illogicality --or profanity--of nationalism, it is reasonable that, some thirty-five years after Benda's broadside appeared, Pierre Elliott Trudeau was moved to domesticate (I will say *nationalize*) Benda for his own French-Canadian--and linguistic 'mulatto' --intellectual interests, publishing, in his historic scholarly work, *Le Fédéralisme et la société Canadienne-française* (1967), his fabulous--or scandalous--essay, "Nouvelle trahison des clercs" (1962), or, in Patricia Claxton's translation, "New Treason of the Intellectuals" (1968). In this *Cité libre*-originated document, Trudeau trounces Québec politicians and *philosophes* for "throwing themselves headlong--intellectually and spiritually--into purely escapist pursuits" (168). That is, the "self-deluding passion" (168), the fantasy of nationalism, the desire to transform Québec into a veritable nation-state, an independent country based on a racialized collective. Instinctively, Trudeau resists--and resents--this tendency, for, with Benda, he declares, that "a nationalistic movement is by

nature intolerant, discriminatory, and, when all is said and done, totalitarian" (169). Dangerously, it leads to sterile dreaming and self-hobbling passivity. Trudeau tells Québécois that "Anglo-Canadians have been strong by virtue only of our weakness. This is true not only at Ottawa, but even at Québec, a veritable charnel-house where half our rights have been wasted by decay and decrepitude and the rest devoured by the maggots of political cynicism and the pestilence of corruption" (167). In one excoriating quip, Trudeau exorcises the rationale for nationalism: "It is not the concept of *nation* that is retrograde; it is the idea that the nation must necessarily be sovereign" (151), especially that nation which is based on race--or language--as opposed to "ethnic complexity" (153). Always petty, nationalism "can find no room above itself in its scale of values for truth, liberty, and life itself" (157); worse, its intelligentsia becomes "propagandists for the nation and the propaganda is a lie" (157). At this juncture, Trudeau quotes French historian Ernest Renan's rejoinder to nationalism, that "Man is bound neither to his language nor to his race; he is bound only to himself because he is a free agent, or in other words a moral being" (159). Here Trudeau affirms his debt to Benda, whom he uses the same quotation from Renan in *Treason* (47). As well, Renanesque diction structures Trudeau's later essay, "The Values of a Just Society" (1990), where he gives the liberal view of humans as beings "not coercible by any ancestral tradition, being vassals neither to their race, nor to their religion, nor to their condition of birth, nor to their religion, nor to their collective history" (364). In the end, for Benda and Trudeau, their mutual desire to spoonfeed hemlock to shifty intellectuals is driven by a hatred for all nationalism in one and a special loathing for Québec nationalism in the other.⁵

Trudeau and Benda are not lonely white apostles of anti-nationalism. Some black intellectuals also dread the lustre of the nationalist dream. African-American writer, folk singer, and political activist Julius Lester, in *Fallen Pieces of the Broken Sky* (1990), complains that a vision of black exceptionalism "correlates collective identity with intellectual and emotional perception and comes dangerously close to equating biology with human values" (246). North of the 49th Parallel, the African-Canadian writer, André Alexis, charges in his 1997 article, "Crossroads," that "In the black Canadian community, ... it's pretty common these days to hear some version of the idea that black people, African, as well as members of the 'black Diaspora,' have both a shared history of oppression at the hands of Europeans, and a shared consciousness based on that oppression; that there is a global African culture to which black people have access" (34). Alexis explains that this incorrigibly mystical notion of a global black connectedness "follows from Afrocentrism, a distant cousin of Negritude, [thus allowing] black Canadians [to feel] they have a special, racial insight into the culture of black Americans or Africans or Haitians that transcends local language and culture" (34). Alexis foregrounds his distrust of the accuracy of such claims, including the associated assertion that "African, black American and black Canadian cultures

are subgroups of Black Culture" (34). One hears, in Alexis, an echo of Trudeau, particularly in his dismissal of the 'magic' and 'mysticism' in which nationalism enjoys dressing itself. But Alexis also follows Trudeau by mauling ethnic nationalism.¹ Controversially then, in his 1995 article, "Borrowed Blackness," Alexis submits that "there's an absence I feel at the heart of much black Canadian art. I miss hearing black Canadians speak *from* Canada" (20).² Triumphantly, Alexis annihilates black nationalism based on shared history and replaces it with a Pan-Canadian nationalism emanating from nineteenth-century, quasi-Herderian ideas about soil and consciousness. Although Trudeau would have no time for the naïf Herderianism in Alexis's lament, he himself noted that previous politicians had "deplored the absence of a pan-Canadian national feeling" ("Values" 376), a fault he attempted to repair by erecting Canadianism upon the celebration of and adherence to abstractions like justice and freedom and strategic symbols such as the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Indeed, Trudeau enshrines the Charter in "the grand tradition of the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen and the 1791 Bill of Rights of the United States of America" ("Values" 363). A tad egotistically, he casts the Charter as "a new beginning for the Canadian nation [for] it sought to strengthen the country's unity by basing the sovereignty of the Canadian people on a set of values common to all, and in particular on the notion of equality among all Canadians" ("Values" 363). For his part, Alexis would save the Black Canadian intellectual by having him or her embrace icons of Canadiana, while Trudeau would save the French-Canadian intellectual by asking him or her to swoon over federalism and the constitution (*circa* 1982).

These views are vulnerable to critique. Thus, in his *Black Like Who?: Writing Black Canada* (1997), Rinaldo Walcott broadsides Alexis for de-emphasizing blackness and luxuriating in Pan-Canadianism. Nevertheless, Walcott himself obeys a shibboleth of liberalism: "Nation-centred discourse can only be a trap that prohibits black folks from sharing 'common feeling,' especially when common actions and practices of domination seem to present themselves time and again in different spaces/places/nations" (136). Against big nation chauvinism--in this case, Alexis's version of Canada's--Walcott would like to set a catholic Pan-Africanism. Even so, Walcott strangely--even painfully--ends up backtracking toward Alexis's position, proclaiming that "Thinking carefully about a *Canadian* grammar for black might help us to avoid the painful and disappointing moments of an essentialized blackness" (139, *my italics*). Yet, he fails to notice that Alexis's "Borrowed Blackness" article struggles--despite its explicit Euro-Canadamania--to articulate a "Canadian grammar for black."

But where Trudeau (*pace* Benda) and Alexis (*pace* Trudeau) decry the treasonous obtuseness and irrationality of bare-faced nationalists, Walcott seems to fear--in open flouting of his otherwise universalist desires--that black nationalism remains a weak phenomenon. Commenting on writers Dionne Brand and M.

Nourbese Philip, he posits that they "make us perform, and in our performance acknowledge, that blackness cannot constitute Canadian-ness in contemporary nation-state narratives" (113). Yet, this is the very attitude that Alexis rejects; he seeks to harmonize blackness and Canadianness. When Walcott declares that "Black Canadian is a counter-narrative or utterance that calls into question the very conditions of nation-bound identity at the same time as national discourses attempt to render blackness outside the nation" (120), he seems both anti-nationalist, *à la* Trudeau, and nationalist, *à la* Alexis, in his insistence on "Black Canadian" as a necessarily disruptive identity. Still, his definition omits the troublesome Canadianism to which Alexis subscribes. Certainly, Walcott never addresses Alexis's adamant refusal to look anywhere else for his identity than in his own backyard.⁸ Worse, Walcott frustrates his own later summons to "black Canadian artists and critics" to articulate a grammar of black that is located within Canada's various regions, both urban and rural" (148). In contrast, Alexis's position--like Trudeau's--could be described as a kind of Booker T. Washingtonism--that is to say, self-reliance, or finding one's identity, not in past history or a lost culture but in current socio-economic realities. This stance forces Walcott to disparage Alexis for not being Afrocentric enough; that is to say, for committing a kind of treason against blackness. Sensing Alexis's basic conservative liberalism, Walcott drums him out of a Pan-Africanist consensus, finding that Alexis's "refusal to seriously engage the conditions of black diasporic identifications is puzzling" (135).⁹ Walcott even stresses that "Black people in Canada can and do identify with black people in the Caribbean, Brazil, South Africa, America, and the rest of the world; and such identifications are valid. These identifications are the stuff of which the conditions for a nomadology of blackness is [sic] constituted" (135). There is no space here for Alexis's Canadacentrism, given Walcott's assertion that black people in Canada identify with other black people around the globe.¹⁰ One must be wary, however, of drawing any defining lines around *blackness*: the concept is too malleable for containment. *Blackness* is not just skin colour, but a polysemous consciousness.

The temptation to draw such lines is irresistible, though, and Rinaldo Walcott offers a stark example. He opens *Black Like Who?* by declaring that the terms "African-Canadian and African American carry with them a particular connotation which is very much related to distancing oneself from the black urban poor and working class" (xiv).¹¹ To use *African Canadian* is, then, tantamount to playing an Uncle Tom or an Aunt Jemima, that is to say, *un vendu*. For Walcott, the privileged term is *black*--and not even with a majuscule *B*. Perilously, if not merely confusedly, Walcott's subtle allocation of black identity--or belonging--to those who prefer *black* as opposed to those who prefer *African Canadian* or *African American* is sudden proof that Benda is as right now as he was seven decades ago, to declare that "Our age is indeed the age of the intellectual organization of political hatreds" (21).¹² If, as Benda states, "Neither Pius XIV nor

Napoleon apparently thought of using literary criticism in support of the social system in which they believed" (57), Walcott surely does. He must be numbered among those (post-) modern scribes who would proudly confess that "We are not in the least the servants of spiritual things; we are the servants of material things, of a political party, of a nation. Only, instead of serving it with the sword, we serve it with the pen. We are *the spiritual militia of the material*" (Benda 57). Perversely, by stooping to an unexamined, facile black nationalism and Pan-Africanism, to support his reading of certain African-Canadian writers *into* or *out of* an African (or black) aesthetic, which is, treacherously (if not simply lazily), never defined, Walcott is a capital candidate for the charge of treason.

However, before I call for the firing squad or, rather--to cite Canadian custom--the hangman, I must confess that Walcott's zigzags underscore the issue that is nagging, this paper, namely, the question of the relationship between blackness and Canadianness; indeed, whether there can be any real relationship between these identities, even, for that matter, whether any fusion (as opposed to the usual confusion) can be negotiated between the Scylla of one and the Charybdis of the other. It is far too easy to emphasize one identity to the near-exclusion of the other, so that Alexis stumps for "Canadianness," while Walcott plumps for "blackness." Paradoxically though, this disjuncture is where African-Canadians live out their lives. Our history is nothing less than the problem of the definition of our identity. Hence, at the conclusion of *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (1970), American historian Robin Winks asserts that "Canada had fragmented [the Negro] and set him [sic] apart from black America. Canada might now [in the 1970s] give cause to a younger generation to answer the fundamental question, were they Negro Canadians or Canadian Negroes?" (483) Or: were they blacks who happened to be Canadian or were they Canadians who happened to be black? The distinction is determinative, with a critic like Walcott staking out the first perspective and a writer like Alexis taking the latter.¹³

Crucially though, no analysis of African-Canadian literary nationalism will proceed very far that is only interested in painstakingly isolating 'black' elements in texts, for the 'Canadian' influence and context must also be scrutinized. Accordingly, Canadian literary scholar Enoch Padolsky posits that "In order to obtain credibility on issues of Canadian differences (such as ethnicity, multiculturalism, and race relations), [post-colonial theorists] will have to engage the 'language and political analyses' developed locally and nationally in Canada over a number of decades, and test their insights in the cauldron of 'Canadian history and politics'" ("Olga" 27). Padolsky's neo-nationalist assertion is applicable immediately. For one thing, if, as Trudeau states, "Anglo-Canadian nationalism produced, inevitably, French-Canadian nationalism" ("New" 163), it is equally true that, as African-American scholar Wilson Jeremiah Moses reports, "black nationalism [may] be seen as a byproduct of the slavery experience" (16)

and as "largely a reaction to attitudes of white supremacy..." (25). Because French-Canadian and black nationalisms are both defensive or reactive in origin, they also seek, at least from a liberal perspective, to crush diverse bodies of people into a single, homogeneous, monolithic mass, thus suffocating the vitality of difference. Hence, Trudeau, in combat with Québécois nationalism, declares that "Quebec is not a *nation*. It's a multinational entity whose government should govern for the good of every citizen, not just one linguistic group or religious group" (*Essential* 105). In fact, "A province is not a nation but a mix of diverse people, differentiated by religion, culture, and mother tongue" (*Memoirs* 73). To paraphrase Trudeau, then, a "race" is not a nation "but a mix of diverse people." African-Canadian scholar David Sealy supports this insight, noting "discussions that centre on African authenticity or African personality elide the diversity of Black diasporic histories, and with it 'the diverse ways in which Black diasporic subjects have selectively appropriated, incorporated, European ideologies, culture, and institutions, alongside an 'African' heritage'" ("Canadianizing" 91). Sealy knows that "The search for an originary univocal 'Black' source precludes the plurivocality of 'blackness'" ("Canadianizing" 91).

The main danger of the provincialist--or racist--approach to nationalism is the tendency of its proponents to romanticize the nation, sometimes with negatively ironic results. Trudeau suggests as much in the analysis of French-Canadian nationalism that he puts forward in his 1956 essay, "The Asbestos Strike." For him, "to oppose a surrounding world that was English-speaking, Protestant, democratic, materialistic, commercial, and later industrial, [French-Canadian nationalism] created a system of defence which put a premium on all the contrary forces: the French language, Catholicism, authoritarianism, idealism, rural life, and later the return to the land" (43-44). Trudeau believes that this nationalism overcompensated for marginality and tipped Québec society toward a folkish fascism, a *Kitsch* corporatism, which made a virtue of perceived backwardness. Yet, black nationalism, in its Romantic guise, also indulges in authoritarianism and racial clichés. Moses points out that as the ideology developed in the nineteenth century, "An authoritarian collectivist ideal was evolved, a belief that all black people could and should act unanimously under the leadership of one powerful man or group of men, who would guide the race by virtue of superior knowledge or divine authority towards the goal of civilization" (21). Not only was this nationalism dictatorial, it also agreed with the Rousseauesque stereotype that "nature had actually been kinder to the sensitive gentle African than to the stolid, frigid European" (Moses 25). While classic Québécois nationalism venerates Louis Hémon's agrarian romance *Maria Chapdelaine* (1914) and the folk figure, Ti-Jean, standard black nationalist mythologies allot passion, sensuality, naturalness, and warmth to blacks, thus reinforcing racial clichés, and, most mischievously, promoting anti-intellectualism. See, for instance, Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul On Ice* (1968) and its

hype about blacks "personifying the Body and [being] thereby in closer communion with their biological roots than [white] Americans, [and] provid[ing] the saving link, the bridge between man's biology and man's machines" (186). Such hallucinations can be debilitating, helping to siphon off creative energies into wasteful, escapist myths. Cruse depicts the perils of racial romanticism masterfully:

The mere fact of self-identification, of the ideology of pro-blackness, the glorification of the black skin, the idealization of everything African, the return to the natural quality of African hairstyles, the rediscovery of black female beauty, or the adoption of African tribal dress--all of these phases and moods signify a return to the root origins of self which can also be made into protective mystiques. If these black mystiques are suffused with contempt for, a hatred and a rejection of, everything white, instead of being channeled into positive trends of action, such mystiques are capable of veering off into dangerous nihilistic fantasies of black supremacy that have little to do with the actualities of the real world. In this world of fantasy there will be a pecking order of blackness--"I am more black and more pure than thou"--in which case the enemy ceases to be whiteness but other less black breeds. (439-440)

If *péquistes* are hazardous, then so are *noiristes*. Cruse even suggests that "the readiness of most Black Nationalist trends, to lean heavily on the African past and the African image, is nothing but a convenient cover-up for an inability to come to terms with the complex demands of the American [or Canadian] reality" (554). Yet, cultural nationalism is desirable, especially on the cultural front, for "The basic impulse behind all creativity is national or ethnic-group identity..." (Cruse 221).

II.

Djanet Sears's Governor-General's Award-winning drama, *Harlem Duet* (1997), shouts a principal black nationalist theme: the corrosive effect of black-white intermarriage on black identity and unity. In one speech, Her--an emblem of black womanhood--mourns Him's love for a white woman:

Once upon a time, there was a man who wanted to find a magic spell in order to become White. After much research and investigation, he came across an ancient ritual from the caverns of knowledge of a psychic. "The only way to become White," the psychic said, "was to enter the Whiteness." And when he found his ice queen, his alabaster goddess, he fucked her. Her on his dick. He [was] one with her, for a single shivering moment became...her. Her and her Whiteness. (91)

Worrisomely, Sears replicates Cleaver's sexist racial archetypes, namely his sketch of the "Ultrafeminine" (the white woman) and the "Supermasculine Menial" (the black man), and for his express purpose, that is to say, to lobby for black, heterosexual solidarity (Cleaver 163-175). But Sears also recalls Frantz Fanon's argument, in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1965)--the translation of his *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952)--that the black man who loves a white woman also loves white civilization.¹⁴ Pushed a little, such sentiments can slide toward fascism.

Yet, I would never want to accuse Sears of that, or even of Benda-defined treason, for her work complicates allegations of either liberalism or nationalism. One value of her play is that she presents a sense of the cultural debates occurring in African-Canadian communities, thus avoiding both cant and rant. See this dialogue between an anachronistic Othello (Shakespeare's Othello, but before he marries Desdemona) and Billie (who is, in this play, Othello's first--and black--wife):

OTHELLO: When I was growing up.....in a time of Black pride--it was something to say you were Black. Before that, I'd say... My family would say we're Cuban... It takes a long time to work through some of those things. I am a member of the human race.

BILLIE: Oh, that's a switch. What happened to all that J. A. Rogers stuff you were pushing. Blacks created the world, Blacks are the progenitors of European civilization, gloriana... Constantly trying to prove you're as good, no, better than White people. White people are always the line for you, aren't they? The rule...the margin...the variable of control. We are Black. Whatever we do is Black.

OTHELLO: I'm so tired of this race shit, Billie. There are alternatives--

BILLIE: Like what? Oh yes, White.

OTHELLO: Oh, don't be so--

BILLIE: Isn't that really what not acting Black, or feeling Black means.

OTHELLO: Liberation has no colour.

BILLIE: But progress is going to White schools...proving we're as good as Whites...like some holy grail...all that we're taught in those White schools. All that is in us. Our success is Whiteness. We religiously seek to have what they have. Access to the White man's world. The White man's job.

OTHELLO: That's economics.

BILLIE: White economics.

OTHELLO: God! Black women always--

BILLIE: No. Don't even go there...

OTHELLO: I... You... Forget it!

BILLIE: (*Quietly at first.*) Yes, you can forget it, can't you. I don't have that...that luxury. When I go into a store, I always know when I'm being watched. I can feel it. They want to see if I'm gonna slip some of their stuff into my pockets. When someone doesn't serve me, I think it's because I'm Black. When a clerk won't put the change into my held-out hand, I think it's because I'm Black. When I hear about a crime, any crime, I pray to God the person who they think did it isn't Black. I'm even suspicious of the word Black. Who called us Black anyway? It's not a country, it's not a racial category, it's not even the colour of my skin. And don't give me this content of one's character B.S. I'm sorry...I am sorry...I had a dream. A dream that one day a Black man and a Black woman might find... [...] Let's... Can we just get this over with? (55-56)

Sears's dialogue shifts between liberal and nationalist perspectives, with Othello taking the universalist and individualist liberal positions and Billie adopting black pride and separatist rhetoric. (Billie lampoons, nicely, the integrationist stance of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's famous "I Have a Dream" speech of August 28, 1963.) Both characters *are* intellectually treasonous: Othello, because he wants to abandon 'blackness'; Billie, because she assumes an essentialist black identity. But what saves this play from falling into the trap of treason is its scrupulous fidelity to a 'black-bottom' empirical realism. What I mean is that the dialogue between Billie and Othello echoes conversation that, with few changes, could be heard in any intra-black community debate about race and belonging in Canada. Sears narrates the struggle between, in African-American philosopher Cornel West's apt phrasing, the philosophical "alternatives of meretricious pseudo-cosmopolitanism and tendentious, cathartic provincialism..." ("Dilemma" 135). In a sense, Sears has turned her gaze "as firmly and in a sense disinterestedly as possible on concrete human behaviour," to steal a phrase from Canadian literary scholar John Fraser (*Violence* 116). Significantly, even if one reads *Harlem Duet* as 'protest' art, it succeeds in performing the task that Fraser sets for such work: that it "see both the ridiculous or evil aspects of the [ideas] under attack and their strengths--that is, not to reduce them, for the sake of propaganda or of one's peace of mind, to the merely ludicrous or grotesque" (*Violence* 139). In this case, Sears dramatizes two persistent black political positions, without ridiculing either of them, though she seems to lean more toward Billie's race pride commitment than towards Othello's integrationist (or

assimilationist) dream. Even though Sears is specifically writing as a black playwright for a black audience,¹⁵ her nationalism never impedes her ability to present the liberal position, with an emphasis--really--on sympathy. Like Cruse, she knows that "when the Negro creative artist turns his back on the imperatives of the ethnic culture *he is also turning his back on ethnic politics, ethnic economics, in fact, on practically the entire range of problems inherent in the inner-group reality of Negro existence*" (296). Yet, Sears's cultural nationalism is carefully balanced; she allows a liberal viewpoint equal weight.¹⁶ Still, the question of the position of black identity (or consciousness) *vis-à-vis* Canadian or American identity is never raised, though the play is set in Harlem and Billie is Canadian by birth. Hence, *Harlem Duet* would appear to confirm Alexis' worries regarding the potential Americanization of African-Canadians, a fear that participates in white English-Canadian nationalism.

III.

Sears's writing proves that a hard anti-nationalist position can find no credence among African-Canadian intellectuals. We tend to refute the anti-nationalism of Benda and Trudeau. Our thought has more in common with that of the late political philosopher George Grant, who was perhaps the most eloquent English-Canadian critic of Trudeau's anti-nationalism. In *Lament for a Nation* (1965), Grant warns that liberalism, if taken to its logical conclusion, would result in the disappearance of Canada as an independent state: "The belief in Canada's continued existence has always appealed against universalism" (85). Ignoring such criticisms, Trudeau maintains that, ultimately, all nationalisms must wither in the truly liberal society. In "New Treason of the Intellectuals," he prophesizes that, "In Canada, ... there is, or will be, a Canadian nation in so far as the ethnic communities succeed in exorcising their own respective nationalisms. If, then, a Canadian nationalism does take form, it will have to be exorcised in its turn, and the Canadian nation will be asked to yield a part of its sovereignty to a higher authority, just as is asked today of the French-Canadian and English-Canadian nations" (155 fn). Such a view would find few adherents among African-Canadian intellectuals, nor does it jibe with Grant's Tory-starved nationalism. In a 1970 passage, Grant refers to Trudeau as "our 'show-biz' technocrat" (Introduction viii). In a 1974 letter, he labels him "a kind of Canadian Kennedy-- a shallow politician who makes people think this vulgar society has a slick patina to it" ("Pierre" 103). Grant's lacerating comments arise from his sense that Trudeau's appeal to "universalism in a Canadian setting means integration into a smooth functioning continental system" ("Pierre" 104). Principally, Trudeau was, for Grant, a glitzy Trojan horse, importing corrosive Americanizations into Canadian political administration and the style of public life.¹⁷

Ironically, Grant, like Trudeau, honours Benda's Platonism, though Grant steers Platonism to a defence of nationalism.¹⁸ Then again, both Benda and Grant are classical humanists. Benda deplures "Political passions rendered universal, coherent, homogeneous, permanent, preponderant..." (7); elsewhere, he claims that "political passions show a degree of universality, of coherence, of homogeneousness, of precision, of continuity, of preponderance..." (22). His statements reveal a Platonist abhorrence of passion over reason, but also an abhorrence of the universality of passions. Grant, likewise, hates the push toward universality, remonstrating that "The universal and homogeneous state is the pinnacle of political striving. 'Universal' implies a world-wide state, which would eliminate the curse of war among nations; 'homogeneous' means that all men would be equal, and war among classes would be eliminated" (*Lament* 53). For Grant, "The masses and the philosophers [or *clerks*] have both agreed that this universal and egalitarian state is the goal of historical striving" (*Lament* 53). For him, the treason of the intellectuals is their abandonment of cultural particularities for the dream of a unified, global, liberal-capitalist state. In union with "classical philosophers," Grant suspects that "the universal state will be a tyranny" (*Lament* 85-86). Hence, he defends Canadian nationalism as one small obstacle to the erection of such a state. For Benda, though, the impulse to create the universal state represents, not the destruction of nationalism, but rather its transmutation into what he calls "this imperialism of the species" (162). When Grant critiques the coming of "the world-wide and uniform society" (*Lament* 54) as the result of the arrogant, scientific "conquest of nature" (*Lament* 54), when he writes, disparagingly, that "Man will conquer man and perfect himself" (*Lament* 54), thus rejecting God, he traces Benda, who has already raised the alarm. At the conclusion of *Treason*, Benda writes (in language that licenses Grant's) that "It is Man, and not the nation or the class, whom Nietzsche, Sorel, Bergson extoll in his genius for making himself master of the world" (162). He warns that "the abolition of the national spirit with its appetites and its arrogance" and its transformation into universalism would simply mean the reconstitution of nationalism in "its supreme form, the nation being called Man and the enemy God" (163). Benda fears that this state would be a de-spiritualized Hell:

Thereafter, humanity would be unified in one immense army, one immense factory, would be aware only of heroisms, disciplines, inventions, would denounce all free and disinterested activity, would long cease to situate the good outside the real world, would have no God but itself and its desires, and would achieve great things; by which I mean that it would attain to a really grandiose control over the matter surrounding it, to a really joyous consciousness of its power and its grandeur. And History will smile to think that this is the species for which Socrates and Jesus Christ died. (163).

The problem for Benda is not, in the end, nationalism *per se*, but rather the internationalization of materialism. Here, again, Grant makes common cause with Benda. Although he feels that nationalism serves to impede impieties, that is to say, the globalization of greed, pride, lust, and the scientific dismissal of the eternal and the spiritual, Grant, like Benda, dreads the outcome of this secular struggle between universal materialism and religious spirituality. Appropriately then, Grant cites the identical quotation from the German philosopher Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), *Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht*, or "World history is world judgment" (*Lament* 89), as does Benda (93) to voice, like his philosophical forebear, the pessimistic expectation that international disputes will continue to degenerate into blood-curdling wars. The conclusion of *Lament for a Nation* echoes Benda too closely for coincidence. When Grant remarks that "Those who loved the older traditions of Canada may be allowed to lament what has been lost" (96), but that "it is also possible to live in the ancient faith, which asserts that changes in the world, even if they be recognized more as a loss than a gain, take place within an eternal order that is not affected by their taking place" (97), he reprises the wisdom of Benda. That philosopher, quoting Italian historian Francesco Guicciardini (1483-1540), allows that "a citizen who witnesses the end of his country cannot feel so distressed at her misfortune with so much reason as he would lament his own ruin" (44), but also sees that "above their nations there exists a development of a superior kind, by which they will be swept away like all other things" (44). He recognizes, like Grant, that "The ancients, so completely the adorers of their States, nevertheless placed them beneath Fate" (44). Arguably, Grant is a better acolyte of Benda than Trudeau, for he shares with Benda a crucially religious impulse; that is to say, a distrust of materialism. Trudeau, while agreeing with Benda's anti-nationalism, essays to combat nationalism by affirming a secular or material or pragmatic universality. But Benda knows that this programme will only internationalize nationalism, thus worsening it, and Grant feels similarly. Thus, Grant attacks what he terms "the American Empire" (*Lament* 5) as "the heart of modernity" (*Lament* 54), while Benda rejects any role for the intellectual as a complicit ally of imperialism: "It remains to determine whether the function of 'clerks' is to secure empires" (39). Ultimately though, Benda provides no practical programme for eliminating nationalism; he asks, merely, that intellectuals strive for a spiritual universalism, or humanitarianism, "to set up a corporation whose sole cult is that of justice and of truth" (41), avoiding any crippling allegiance to their states or to the things of this world. Grant believes, contrastingly, that a dedication to the local, the particular, the nation, is one way of accessing the good. Still, their exalting of the ancients over the modern philosophers (that is to say, their espousal of a religious classicism), unites them in opposing the pragmatic functionalism that a Trudeau must endorse. Thus, Trudeau read Benda for his attack on nationalism, while ignoring his anti-universalism; Grant read Benda in reverse order, thus permitting a defence of nationalism.

IV.

Not surprisingly then, nationalism--especially of the cultural variety--remains viable, a fact that Black Canadian intellectuals understand. Hence, Trinidadian-Canadian writer M. Nourbese Philip has acknowledged in print her appreciation of Grant's *Lament for a Nation*.¹⁹ Moreover, her attack on the 1993 production of the American musical *Showboat* in North York, Ontario, reflected her espousal of a Grantian opposition to the "wholesale importation of American culture to launch, with the assistance of public funds, the opening of a multi-million-dollar civic center. In Toronto!" ("Blackness" 2) In addition, Philip grounds her observations of African-Canadian culture in an obvious black nationalism or Pan-Africanism (with a touch of Garvey in the margins). Hence, she does not hesitate--treasonously--to advance totalizing visions of black life. In her essay collection, *Frontiers* (1992), Philip admonishes her black readers that "Not to remember those things [i.e. European oppression]; to forget that what we now *appear* to share--education, religion, dress, legal institutions--are really tombstones erected on the graves of African customs, culture and languages, is simply to collude in our own erasure, our own obliteration" (19). Benda would likely have been mortified by Philip's open strengthening of black "national passions" by accenting "the determination of the peoples to be conscious of *their past*, more precisely to be conscious of their ambitions as going back to their ancestors, and to vibrate with 'centuries-old' aspirations, with attachments to 'historical' rights" (Benda 16). Philip stirs, in short, a dangerous "Romantic patriotism" (Benda 16). Like Philip, Trinidadian-Canadian poet and novelist Dionne Brand articulates an up-front nationalism, declaring that "All Black people here have a memory, whether they know it or not, whether they like it or not, whether they remember it or not, and in that memory are such words as land, sea, whip, work, rape, coffle, sing, sweat, release, days ... without ... this ... pain ... coming ... We know ... have a sense ... hold a look in our eyes ... about it ... have to fight every day for our humanity ... redeem it every day" (*Bread* 22). Again, she deviates from Benda; she feels herself--resolutely--"determined by [her] race" and remains "fixed to [her] native soil to the extent that it becomes in [her] a political attitude, a nationalist provocation" (Benda 48). Brand even speaks of seeking "a Black woman country" (*Bread* 130). Benda--and Trudeau--would have a fit.

I admit it *is* troubling to read in Philip, for instance, blunt annunciations of the surfacing in black dance of "African traditions of movement," or the presence of "the African aesthetic in painting, sculpture, or the plastic arts" (*Frontiers* 112), but only because their Africanness is *never* defined. There is not enough scrutiny articulated to lift such declarations from the domain of sentimentality and romanticism into the realm of revealed knowledge, or even fact. Likewise, when Brand concludes that Toronto's Bathurst Street subway station, in the 1970s,

represented "the nexus from which we all radiated, the portals through which we all passed, passing from Negroes into Blacks, from passive into revolutionary" (*Bread* 70), she is blithe, but also inexact. For, though her "we" enacts a warm gesture of inclusion for immigrant blacks, it simultaneously excludes the history of indigenous African Canadians. Worse, her charge that there is "no forgiveness from racial history" (*Bread* 71) appeals to an undefined race feeling, the inkling that this passion should be the basis for revolutionary action.²⁰ A similar priminery arises with Barbadian-Canadian writer Cecil Foster, who also lays claim to privileged access into the souls of black folk. Commenting on the conclusion of his interview with an African-Canadian activist lawyer, he reports that "Suddenly, it appears that I have penetrated the darkness. She lets more of her real self show through. In the end, this is what it really means to be black" (*Place* 97). Here Foster relies upon the hoary stereotype of emotional spontaneity to authenticate his interviewee as black.²¹ Many African-Canadian intellectuals peddle received ideas of blackness, despite the calls for universalism (and Pan-Canadianism) that emanate from other quarters of the political and cultural élite.

This *is* treason, especially if we apply the severe standards, the exacting Platonist measure of Benda, to Philip, Brand, Foster, and several other African-Canadian writers, for they exhort blacks "to feel conscious of themselves in what makes them distinct from others" (Benda 64). Hauled before the court of Trudeau, they would also face condemnation, for they have become "propagandists for the [black] nation and the propaganda is a lie" ("New" 157). But they would also face indictment from Alexis, who stresses, in "Crossroads," that "the insistence on racial connection to Black Culture makes race something of an aesthetic category, fetishizing 'blackness' as it manifests itself in song, movement, and poetry" (33). Worriedly, Alexis observes that "It doesn't take much imagination to see where that road leads" (34-35); yes, to a series of damaging interrogations:

Who's more black? Who speaks deepest for the diaspora? For Africa? (35)

In his 1995 article, "Borrowed Blackness," Alexis even claims that "I have the distinct impression that black Torontonians identify more passionately with America, not simply with black American culture but with black intellectual assumptions as well" (18). In his critique of the perceived treason of African-Canadian intellectuals, Alexis (*pace* Benda) questions the efficacy of their racial nationalism and the strength of their Canadian patriotism (*pace* Trudeau), but he also sides with Grant in demanding a--nationalist--attentiveness to Canadian space. Alexis summons African-Canadian artists to "sing, dance or write Canada for ourselves, to define our own terrain and situation" (17) and to produce "writing that is conscious of Canada, writing that speaks not just about situation, or about the earth, but rather *from* the earth" (20). So, one must combat parochial Pan-Africanisms or reductive black nationalisms with a pristine, vigorous, Black

Canadian or African-Canadian nationalism, if one likes. If Black Canadian intellectuals savour, like Alexis, classic, white-authored, Anglo-Canadian texts such as Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel*, Robertson Davies's *Fifth Business*, Mordecai Richler's *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, Brian Moore's *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*, W.O. Mitchell's *Who Has Seen the Wind*, and Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*--all canonical titles that Alexis names--they may also discover that one half of their souls is "shared by Margaret Laurence" ("Borrowed" 20).

It is tempting to sneer at Alexis's Pan-Canadian sensibility, his cultural Canadian nationalism, and Foster is quick to do so, charging that "Many [Caribbean-Canadian youths] do not consider their writings to be part of a Canadian tradition that reveres a Margaret Atwood, Robertson Davies, or Alice Munro" (*Place* 117). Instead, says Foster, "they lay claim to a proud tradition that produced international names like Derek Walcott and Bob Marley, some of the voices of the extended Caribbean society--a community that nurtures them in Canada" (*Place* 117). Like Alexis, though, Foster is partly right, but mainly wrong, for when African-Canadian artists and writers have discussed their influences, they reveal a sustained interaction with European-Canadian culture. If we consider African-Canadian film director Clement Virgo, his *Rude* (1995) sounds, at times, the conscious meditation on mass media pioneered by Atom Egoyan. Even Foster is not completely committed to the idea of a hermetic black tradition, for he feels that "When we seek isolation, we do little to improve our lot" (*Place* 309). African-Canadian culture is--as its hyphen suggests--already a synthesis: the dreamers of reaction, those who seek either a pure, pristine, unhyphenated Canadianism or a similarly spic-and-span Africanism, are too late. It is now impossible to understand Canadian blackness or black Canadianness without accounting for both African-Canadian cultural production and history and the ways in which blackness and Canadianness have already blended (and are blending). It is the duty of African-Canadian intellectuals to undertake this work. By doing so, they will effect a coalition between Malcolm X, say, and Trudeau, by subjecting racial romanticism to an adoring scrutiny.

For this reason, one must worry Walcott's unthoughtful proviso that Black Canadian intellectuals "can begin to refuse the seductions of 'firstness' and engage in critique, dialogue and debate, which are always much more sustaining than celebrations of originality" (xiv). This utterance pauperizes the value of research, specifically of historical inquiry. Yet, those who do not investigate history are fated to fake it, to mythicize it, to invent comforting half-truths rather than treat the objective realities of the African settlement of Canada, *via* slavery, resistance to slavery, pioneering, homesteading, and the xx-century experiences of labour and professional immigration, as well as fluxes of refugees escaping civil wars, invasions, famines, and other species of disaster. To refuse to inquire

into the history of the formation of the African-Canadian people is to opt for bewilderment, confusion, a veritable intellectual treason once again.

I lay this charge, however, against Walcott's *Black Like Who?*, a foppish work that disdains any grappling with the broad philosophies, socio-political and economic forces, and cultural *données* that touch all Canadians, no matter their race, gender, class, political orientations, religious beliefs, ethnicity, sexual orientations, or language. This decisive ignorance leads him into more-or-less nationalist error. In examining Brand's first novel, *In Another Place, Not Here* (1996), then, Walcott opines that one of the two protagonists, Elizete, "struggles to survive in the context of a hostile land" (46), a theme that could have been lifted straight from Atwood's *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972). Yet, only a few paragraphs later, Walcott insists that Brand's novel moves "beyond the discourse and literary tropes of 'roughing it in the bush' and 'survival' in a barren landscape..." (47). One must ask: Does Walcott think that Atwood's thesis applies to Brand or not? The question is pertinent, for, in his reading of Stephen Williams's film, *Soul Survivor* (1995), Walcott states that the sole interest of the film's protagonist, Tyrone, "is to survive" (130). Is Atwood applicable here as well?

Then there is the problem of African-Canadian conservatism to address, a condition of thought that Walcott never deigns to consider, though he alleges that Virgo's *Rude* is "locked within a socio-religious narrative steeped in the politics of conversion, [but failing] to register [a] politics of transfiguration..." (68-69). Walcott avoids asking why Virgo should have opted for a seemingly conservative bent as opposed to a pronounced, radical trajectory. Nor does he question the employment of a "conservative voice-over" in Williams's *Soul Survivor* (132). Yet, conservatism has always influenced African-Canadian life.²² Winks chronicles instance after instance of these tendencies. Before the rebellion of 1837-1838, "William Lyon Mackenzie, its Upper Canadian leader, noted that Negro settlers were 'opposed to every species of reform in the civil institutions of the colony,' that they were 'extravagantly loyal,' and that they were prepared to 'uphold all the abuses of government and support those who profit by them'" (149). In the British Columbia election of 1860, African Canadians "voted unanimously for [conservative, Hudson Bay Company] men rather than for reformers" (282). Later that century, Alfred Shadd twice ran unsuccessfully for office as a member of the Conservative Party (302). *The Provincial Freeman*, an Upper Canada, black, abolitionist newspaper, supported the Conservative Party after 1856, "likening the reform party of George Brown ... to the Locofocos in the U.S.: 'Clear Grit, Reform and Radical ... are words that belong to the vocabulary of Yankeedom'" (396). An early African-Canadian newspaper, *The True Royalist*, "while intended for Negroes," says Winks, "contained little news that was racial, rather discussing dissension within the church and preaching political

conservatism and obedience to the queen" (397). In the 1920s, the Montreal Negro Conservative League was founded, reports Winks, "to support the Tory party" (458). In addition, the first African Canadian elected to the House of Commons (in 1968), Lincoln Alexander, belonged to the Progressive Conservative Party. Nor are African-Canadian intellectuals of Caribbean heritage immune to Toryism. Barbadian-Canadian novelist Austin C. Clarke stood as a Progressive Conservative Party candidate in the 1977 Ontario provincial election. Cruse states that "West Indians are essentially conservatives fashioned in the British mold" (119).²³ Too, the communitarian tendencies in African-Canadian culture reflect a conservative inclination. Tending to this facet of black nationalism, Moses reveals that "The old patterns of [racial] mythology have not died easily because they have continued to serve as an inspiration for the black masses among whom the traditional black nationalist longings are still strong" (29). Given the persistent conservative leanings--or nationalist longings--among black intellectuals, it is astonishing that Walcott never engages the ideology.²⁴

Walcott's attempt to refute Alexis's "Borrowed Blackness" polemic is frustrated by his facile resort to nationalist assertion. He claims that Alexis's short stories are "representative of a black Canadianness constituted from various fragments of the nation, usually seen as outside blackness" (137), thus conscripting Alexis into a nebulous nationalism. But Walcott has no evidence to support the ambition--even though wisps of blackness score the generally non-black-specific fictions featured in Alexis's *Despair and Other Stories of Ottawa* (1995). For example, a remarkable instance of racialization occurs in "The Night Piece." The story's terminal sentence, "He went looking for the Soucouyant" (43) could easily be read as "He went looking for Trinidad." I say this because the story--which treats a blood-sucking night *piece* (or, in slang, *piece of ass*), or Soucouyant (a Trinidadian vampire)--represents the Canadianization of a Trinidadian legend. Importantly too, "The Night Piece" rehearses the identity tensions of the partially assimilated -- or Canadianized -- immigrant, in this case, the fifteen-year-old protagonist, Michael. At an Ottawa wedding party consisting of family and friends of family -- some of them presumably Trinidadian, Michael feels out of place, remarking, "Of course they remembered you, but why should you remember them?" (14). Like the story's other major character, Winston Grant, Michael suffers from a kind of racial forgetfulness. As for Winston, "his skin was a peculiar colour: brown beneath a translucent layer of grey, the colour of long illness or long convalescence" (15): he has the pallor of a winter-faded, brown-skinned man. Winston's very being is suggestive, then, of withered roots. His hands shake "like twigs" (17) and he is emaciated, "like a flattened straw" (16). Michael is similarly estranged from his Trinidadian past. When the renowned Trinidadian Calypsonian Sparrow (Francisco Slinger) sings, "One a de women started to beg. He bite she on she chest. He bite she on she leg..." (16), the lyrics refer to a male version of the vampiric fiend that is attacking Winston, but

Michael is unable to understand the song's warning: he lives outside of its culture. Winston is also alienated, so he is reduced to asking, "Who could expect to find a Soucouyant here, in this place, so far from where they usually apportioned death?" (29) Trinidad haunts these *emigrés* who have dared to try to forget their homeland. Winston even declares, "Really, it was just like his parents and their friends to bring a death so bizarre with them from Trinidad" (30). Tellingly, Winston's "condition had no name, unless you count *mal de pays*" (33), a malaise associated with exile (33). Notably, Michael falls under the Soucouyant's spell after the racial integrity of his family unit has been broken by his father's decision to take up "with another woman, a white woman with a French accent" (41). In another story, "The Third Terrace," a character sharing the same first name and birthdate as the author, tells of being a painter whose "canvasses ended up black from the false lines I drew on them..." (108), and he exhibits "two of my 'blackened' della Francescas in a school gymnasium" (108). It is amiable to read into, these two statements, ironic comments on both the tension-fraught black artistic relationship to European culture and on the Black Aesthetic demand that black artists produce 'black' art. If I am right here, it is doubtful that any European-Canadian writer would have bothered to so subtly raise these two concerns. Yet, there are other potential racial codes in the story. An erotic film company is called, leadingly, "White Films Production Co." (109), and in one of the films in which the artist participates, namely, "*The Master's Larder*" (a seeming allusion to slavery), he plays a "manservant" who is "costumed in black" (111). Even so, race is never becomes a paramount theme in the tale. Such is Alexis's style. In another short story, "My Anabasis," a section title, "Flight," alludes perhaps to the title of the second section of Richard Wright's classic, African-American novel, *Native Son* (1940). But there is a stronger relationship between that novel and Alexis's "Metaphysics of Morals," whose protagonist, Michael, suffers a "moral quandary" (71) that replicates--and deflates--that of Wright's Bigger Thomas. Having retrieved a glove dropped accidentally on a sidewalk by a sensual, pink-cheeked woman, Michael fails to return it to her because he fears to approach her. His fright, his flight from the woman, and his banal return home mirror, in fine, suggestive satire, the plot movement of Wright's exalted novel, in which Bigger smothers a white woman accidentally because he fears that his late-night presence in her bedroom will be misinterpreted by his employers (her parents) as a rape attempt. Alexis's story differs drastically from Wright's novel, but he is an astute enough writer to allow for a teasing correspondence between the two works. Although it is possible to 'out' Alexis as a black writer, the surface racelessness of his fiction betrays him as a ripe candidate for a charge of race treason.²⁵ Nevertheless, such charges must be complicated by the recognition that 'blackness' and 'Canadianness' are fluid, unstable identities. Thus, one is justified in asking critics of African-Canadian literature to undertake scrupulous research, close readings, and detailed

investigation before seconding any of these writers, willy nilly, to either nationalist or assimilationist agendas.

This point returns us to the question of the position of the African-Canadian intellectual. First, as this paper has attempted to illustrate, the tension between the liberal and nationalist options will not vanish anytime soon, for, as Moses asserts, "It is probably as true today as it was in the 1850s that all black people harbor some assimilationist daydreams along with black nationalist fantasies" (44). Nevertheless, African-Canadian intellectuals must reject the false "binary of Black or Canadian" ("Canadianizing" 101), as Sealy has it, and thus the false consciousness that Foster advances, as crystallized in his query, "Can a black person ever fully become a Canadian citizen?" (*Place* 210). Foster's mistake here is that the sentence can too easily be reversed, thus creating second-class black people within the putative black community. To the question posed by Philip, "how many identities can dance on a maple leaf" (*Frontiers* 17), the only appropriate answer is, as many as possible under the circumstances. To Walcott's thesis that *Black Canadian* should be read "as name/metaphor for the rhythms of black migration" (126), we must ask, are African Canadians always and only marginals and transients?²⁶ Just as we cannot accept an unthinking nationalism, either Canadian or black, neither can we accept the false notion that, as Jamaican-American scholar Orlando Patterson pleads, "To survive [Blacks] must abandon any search for a past, must indeed recognize that they lack any claims to a distinctive cultural heritage, and that the path ahead lies not in myth making and in historical reconstruction, which are always doomed to failure, but in accepting the epic challenge of their reality" (qtd. in Sealy "Canadianizing" 90). This prescription for black progress is a liberal lie that echoes Rinaldo Walcott's own jettisoning of history. I would not prescribe, though, any reckless nationalization of history, for, as Carl Berger notes, "a tradition of racism and a falsified but glorious past ... have always been the invariable by-products of nationalism" (qtd. in Wilson 665). Preferable here is West's notion that "the future of the Black intellectual lies neither in a deferential disposition toward the Western parent nor a nostalgic search for the African one. Rather, it resides in ... insurgent transformation of this hybrid lineage..." ("Dilemma" 146). Cruse invites a like synthesis, positing that "American Negro history is basically a history of the conflict between integrationist and nationalist forces in politics, economics, and culture, no matter what leaders are involved and what slogans are used" (564). If Cruse is right that "American Negro nationalism can never create its own values, find its revolutionary significance, define its political and economic goals, until Negro intellectuals take up the cudgels against the cultural imperialism practiced in all of its manifold ramifications on the Negro within American culture" (189), African-Canadian intellectuals must pay heed to apply our own cultural nationalism responsibly. African-Canadian political scientist V. Seymour Wilson submits that "Polyethnicity is the nation-state form of the future, and in Canada

we are destined to be more, not less, ethnically and racially diverse than we now are" (649). Thus, if we mean to have any role in constructing and interpreting African-Canadian culture, African-Canadian intellectuals will have to be even more cosmopolitan than we may already be.

To sum up, neither the liberalism of Benda, Trudeau, and Alexis, nor a reflex black nationalism--à la Walcott--or Canadian nationalism--à la Grant and, in one context, Alexis--answer to the complexities of African-Canadian culture. Rather, we must perform historiographic and sociological analyses of specific national and regional cultures. To refuse the validity of this approach is to claim that cultural manifestations such as gospel, *vaudou*, and reggae are merely spontaneous, *ex nihilo* creations, just gestures of that brand of unplanned creativity that 'objective' academics too often ascribe to African-heritage cultures, thus reducing our rebellions to riots. A persuasive cultural nationalist scholarship can only rise from a basis of enlightened, forensically critical self-scrutiny. The point is not that we have committed occasional intellectual treasons, the point is that we have not been treasonous enough. What I mean here is that it is the precise task of African-Canadian intellectuals to determine the imperatives of African-Canadian culture (or cultures) and to build economic, political, and cultural institutions that will allow us a measure of autonomy, pride, and independence in our dealings with all other interest groups in the society. If this work means that we violate conventional notions of the place of so-called visible minorities in Canadian society, well, *tant pis*. As Cruse points out, it is our fundamental calling to "evolve creative and artistic policies that will govern cultural programs, organizations and self-sustained and -administered research institutions" (518), or risk seeing and having our identities continually being defined by others. Either African Canadians are an assembly of miniature nations, or we are nowhere. We must understand that we are creating, for instance, an African-Canadian literature, one that is a branch of Canadian literature, but which also maintains definable, Africanist oral/linguistic strategies, as well as a special relationship to song, rhythm, and a specific history. After all, "If there is no such a thing as a Negro writer or a body of Negro Literature, then, it follows, there is or can be no such thing as a Negro psychology or a distinctly Negro sociology, or a Negro political theory or a particular kind of Negro cultural theory that has relevance to [Canadian] society as regards the Negro situation in [Canada]" (Cruse 247). Because African-Canadian culture exists, its black intellectuals owe it the beguiling gifts of critique and assessment.²⁷

None of the above evacuates Benda's thought entirely. His work remains, as Edward Saïd finds, the model of intellectual commitment, the pristine type of "a being set apart, someone able to speak the truth to power, a crusty, eloquent, fantastically courageous and angry individual for whom no worldly power is too

big and imposing to be criticized and pointedly taken to task" (8). According to Saïd, the work of Benda-like intellectuals like Fanon and the Martiniquan poet Aimé Césaire cautions us that "loyalty to the group's fight for survival cannot draw in the intellectual so far as to narcotize the critical sense, or reduce its imperatives, which are always to go beyond survival to questions of political liberation, to critiques of the leadership, to presenting alternatives that are too often marginalized or pushed aside as irrelevant to the main battle at hand" (41). But the task of criticism does not necessarily estrange the intellectual from his or her community: "Intellectual work only estranges us from Black communities when we do not relate or share in myriad ways our concerns" (hooks "Black" 162). One aspect of this sharing must be the recognition that we cannot analyze African-Canadian culture until we apply such scrutiny to ourselves, without flinching, without pity. We must practice a treason that betrays itself constantly. In turn from Rinaldo Walcott to Derek Walcott: "To betray philosophy is the gentle treason / of poets..." ("XII" 22).

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Notes

¹This paper originated in three public lectures presented, in chronological order as 1) the Munroe Beattie Lecture at Carleton University, in Ottawa, Ontario, on February 6, 1998; 2) a Plenary Session co-lecture for the annual meeting of the Association for Canadian and Québécois Literature at the University of Ottawa, on May 30, 1998; and 3) the Third Annual Seagram Lecture at McGill University, in Montréal, Québec, on November 19, 1998. I am thankful for the sharp audience questions that have sculpted its views.

Burnley "Rocky" Jones (1937-) is an Africadian community leader and a proud black intellectual. He has never shrunk from debate or controversy.

²Her bizarre charge reminds me of a situation that American critic Aldon Lynn Nielson jeers as "the ludicrous spectacle of one comfortable bourgeois writer denouncing other comfortable bourgeois writers for being comfortably bourgeois" (99).

³In his history, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938), James depicts mulattoes as white-lusting wanna-bes. Worse, they are reactionary, anti-black racists:

Even while in words and, by their success in life, in many of their actions, Mulattoes demonstrated the falseness of the white claim to inherent superiority, yet the man of colour who was nearly white despised the man of colour who was

only half-white, who in turn despised the man of colour who was only quarter white, and so on through all the shades.... It all reads like a cross between a nightmare and a bad joke. (43)

For James, the "Mulattoes who were masters had their eyes fixed on Paris" (Appendix 394). They lusted after white approval, never that of blacks.

⁴French-Canadians, English-Canadians, and African-Canadians are not alone in articulating forms of group identity and identification. For instance, Irving Massey, in his 1994 consideration of English, French, and Yiddish Canadian literature, points out--perhaps nostalgically--that "A powerful centripetal communitarianism was the outstanding feature of [Yiddish-speaking Montreal in the 1930s]." This community solidarity was exemplified by "the hegemony of Yiddish as a lingua franca, which helped to reduce potential conflicts over politics, social class, and religion..."(48).

⁵Trudeau is not categorically opposed to abstract nationalism, or even to the concept of the sovereign state. In 1997, in an interview published in *Cité libre*, he states that "Malgré ses limites, un état souverain peut essayer de corriger les injustices du marché et il doit le faire" (9). In *Toward the Just Society* (1990), Trudeau defended his government's record in part by arguing that it had succeeded in giving the "Canadian nation ... its very own constitution" with a Charter of Rights and Freedoms, thus laying down "Firm foundations for a national identity" (379). It is not nationalism *per se* that Trudeau detests (as is the case with Benda), but ethnic nationalism. His Pan-Canadianism--like black Pan-Africanism--is a liberal response to 'petty nationalism'. He extolls Pan-Canadianism to combat Québécois nationalism. Here it is prudent to cite Lord Acton, one of Trudeau's major philosophical influences, on his opposition to nationalism:

It overrules the rights and wishes of the inhabitants, absorbing their divergent interests in a fictitious unity; sacrifices their several inclinations and duties to the higher claim of nationality, and crushes all natural rights and all established liberties for the purpose of vindicating itself. (qtd. in Christiano 49)

Trudeau espouses similar views in "New Treason of the Intellectuals," asserting that the nation-state is "a kind of magic [that nationalists call] forth to fill in for [a] lack of discipline in pursuing the true ideals..." (174).

⁶Alexis is not the only African-Canadian Trudeauite. In his novel, *Erzulie Loves Shango* (1998), Haitian-Canadian scholar and writer Max Dorsinville ascribes to his Québécois character Denise Dupuis feelings of dissatisfaction with Québec's "tribal spirit of conformity":

She had found the name for it in her readings: "the wigwam complex." She agreed with the essayist who had coined the term, Pierre Elliott Trudeau. She had been enlightened by his essay, "The New Treason of the Clerics." In it, she had discovered what lay behind the siege mentality of [her town]....(139)

In *Riot* (1995), Ottawa-born playwright Andrew Moodie presents a character, Alex, who, in his closing speech, rhapsodizes over "Pierre Trudeau," who "was the coolest. We had no idea why, he just was, he was the coolest" (93).

⁷African-Canadian writer Cecil Foster agrees, here, with Alexis. In his work, *A Place Called Heaven: The Meaning of Being Black in Canada* (1996), Foster wonders whether African Canadians "can have a community without their own heroes and myths, when they must borrow from other societies [i.e. the United States and the Caribbean], rather than venerate and elevate their own" (19). His questioning is sparked by his record of an Afrocentric ceremony in which none of the African "spirits invited to move among us"--including those of Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, Malcolm X, Nelson Mandela, and Marcus Garvey--would qualify, he realizes, "as a typical Canadian hero" (17).

⁸# Paradox afflicts Walcott's claim that "In Canada, black identities must be rooted elsewhere and that elsewhere is always outside Canada" (122). If true, why should we bother to protest mainstream narratives that construe blackness as an alien quality?

⁹The urge to blacklist seemingly 'white-identified' authors like Alexis is suspect. Aldon Nielsen warns, "Surely there is something deeply wrong with critical definitions that might have the end effect of repressing the reality of a black poet by viewing him and his work as being sited outside of black reality" (16). But Nielsen's proviso is stymied by Frantz Fanon's notion that black--or "native"--intellectuals must strive to ascend a scale of 'virtue', escalating from "the first stage [in which] the 'native intellectual gives proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power'" (the likely 'stage' of Alexis), to "the second phase [in which] 'we find the native is disturbed; he decides to remember what he is' ... [thus] 'creating literature of just-before-the-battle'" (Cliff 27). In the "third phase, which [Fanon] calls 'the fighting phase' ... the writer will 'shake the people'" (Cliff 27). Rinaldo Walcott would like to boost Alexis from the Fanonian first to the third phase, but a Nielsenian "black reality" must also include the 'first-phase' stance of an Alexis.

¹⁰Yet, emigrants from majoritarian black societies--in Africa and the Caribbean--do not necessarily possess a race consciousness. In *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (1967), Harold Cruse alleges that "West Indians are never so much in love with Caribbean heritage, or never so vehement in defending the West

Indian image, as when they are indulging these sentiments from afar in England or North America" (438). Cruse notes that "most of the West Indians from [Pan-Africanist leader Marcus] Garvey's homeland in Jamaica leave home not to return to Africa but to emigrate to the British Isles" (360). Or, one may add, to go to Canada or the United States. As for Africans, Cruse argues that those who live in Western societies "become passionately attached to the ways of the cosmopolitan West, the high standard of living, the creature comforts of the affluent society" (555). Cruse is harsh, but Ghanaian-Canadian writer Henry Martey Codjoe confesses that "Until coming to Canada, the question of my racial identity was not something that I had thought about. After all, I grew up in an all-Black country where the issue of race or racism was not something that was on my mind" (231). Antiguan-born Dub poet Clifton Joseph also acknowledges, in a deliberately little-punctuated style, that "In my case, I didnt learn anything about being Black as an idea/concept/consciousness (in/school) in antigua" (14). Speaking of the experiences of himself and other young West Indian immigrants in Toronto in the mid-1970s, Clifton says, "We weren't 'Black' where we came from in the west indies, but in toronto we had to confront the fact that we were seen as 'Black,' and had to check out for ourselves what this blackness was" (17). A sister Antiguan-Canadian intellectual, Althea Prince, who arrived in Canada in 1965 at the age of 20, recalls her shock at learning that the reason she and her sister were attracting "negative attention" in an airport coffee shop was "because we are Black" (*Being* 28). Exposure to white Canadian racism led Prince and her friends "to develop a collective consciousness about the police and about our rights as residents in Canada" (*Being* 33) and to establish various black-centred organizations (*Being* 33).

¹¹To be consistent, Walcott should dismiss African-American poet C. S. Giscombe's reasons for his self-identification: "I'm African-American, a phrase I like because the last 2 syllables of each word are the same & in that I see two near-identical dark faces" (qtd. in Nielsen 21).

¹²Nationalism always spawns debates over nomenclature; so, admittedly, Walcott's position is nothing new. To give one example, while Benda and Trudeau, in 'dissing' nationalistic intellectuals, like to speak of their "treason," African-American theorists--perhaps because of the determining influence of the 'family' trope in their debates--prefer to use less inflammatory terms, such as, in the case of Cruse, *crisis*, or, in that of Cornel West, *dilemma*, as in his essay, "The Dilemma of the Black Intellectual" (1992). From the perspective of Walcott, then, my choice of terminology could be suspicious, for, by employing *treason*--and not *crisis* or *dilemma*-- in the title of this essay, I am signalling--am I?--support for white Canadian and, thus, European traditions rather than diasporic African--i.e. *black*--ones. But our contemporary task, to be righteous, cannot credit such inane fears. It is, says Jean-François Lyotard in

Tombeau de l'intellectuel (1984), "séparer l'intelligence de la paranoïa qui a fait la 'modernité'" (22).

¹³The distinction even replicates that which pertains to the francophone citizens of Québec, as summed up in Ramsay Cook's portrait of the province's archetypal native sons, the federalist Trudeau and the indépendantiste René Lévesque: "For the *francophone canadien*, Trudeau, Canada was central; for the Québécois, Lévesque, Canada was marginal--at best" (356). In this sentence, one could substitute the Canada-identified Alexis for Trudeau, the black-identified Walcott for Lévesque.

¹⁴Fanon sums up this psychology (psychosis?) in one searing image: "I marry white culture, white beauty, white whiteness. When my restless hands caress those white breasts, they grasp white civilization and dignity and make them mine" (*Black* 63).

¹⁵In her introduction to *Harlem Duet*, Sears offers the following assertions:

I have a dream. A dream that one day in the city where I live, at any given time of the year, I will be able to find at least one play that is filled with people who look like me, telling stories about me, my family, my friends, my community.... I must write my own work for the theatre. I must produce my own work, and the work of other writers of African descent. (14)

¹⁶Benda tolerates the nationalist feelings of "the poets, the novelists, the dramatists, the artists" (54), for they "may be permitted to give passion, even wilful passion, a predominant place in their works" (54). He cannot see why "they should exclude national passion or the spirit of party from their vibrant material" (50).

¹⁷American sociologist Kevin Christiano shadows Grant's critique of Trudeau's thought, stating that "The language of liberalism ... is by its nature and design wildly ill-suited to formulating identity, for to accomplish that goal, one must speak of history and destiny in ways that circumvent, if not obliterate, the individual. One must speak, if not mythologically, then at least sociologically" (69). In failing to resort to such grounded, communal speech, Trudeau and his allies may have supported "the prospect of a real national community for Canada, [but] on a level so ethereal, so abstracted from common life and experience, as to be more a creature of intellectual debate than a recognizable ground for order" (72).

¹⁸Grant's absorption of views equivalent to Benda's Platonism is apparent in his comment that "Philosophy is always and everywhere the enemy of the opinions

of any society, however much philosophers may have to conceal that enmity" ("Northrop" 361).

¹⁹In a 1995 article, "Signifying Nothing," Philip states that "the profound changes [Americanization] that had begun in Canada in the sixties had more to do with the fundamental reorganization of the Canadian political system that George C. [sic] Grant described in his brilliant and prescient work, *Lament for a Nation* [1965]" (8).

²⁰Walcott proposes that "what is characteristically complex about Brand's work is that it offers no orthodoxies on blackness" (38). Balderdash! When Brand recounts the anecdote that "Once a Czech émigré writer, now very popular in the 'free world', looked me dead in my Black eyes and explained the meaning of jazz to me" (*Bread* 20), she is appealing--albeit humorously--to the black nationalist orthodoxy that white folks ain't got no business commenting upon black folks's art.

²¹In a May 4, 1997, newspaper article, "Black stars rising," Foster, assuming a nationalist stance, rebukes me for allegedly stating in my Introduction to my edited anthology, *Eyeing the North Star: Directions in African-Canadian Literature* (1997), that "black Canadian writing is not political" (13). He advises that "Mr. Clarke probably needs to talk to all those young book buyers and students who are looking for, and finding, very strong political meaning in the books they are reading" (13). His commentary evinces an implicit understanding of what young, black book buyers seek, which is presumably some homogenized--or harmonized--black nationalist nostrums. However, Foster misrepresents what I did say: not that African-Canadian literature is apolitical, but that it is too various to be enslaved to any single political viewpoint: "Bluntly, no African-Canadian intellectual has been able to shepherd his or her sistren or brethren along a single ideological path" (Introduction *Eyeing* xvi).

²²This fact should be better understood. African-Canadians have followed a model applicable--historically--to most Canadians; that is to say, seeking reform within established institutions. In his *History of Canadian Political Thought* (1966), G. P. deT. Glazebrook notes that, in the xix-century, "Virtually every political reformer in British North America was ... a believer in the British system of government (as he interpreted it), and realized too that the British parliament and government were the sources of political power" (83).

²³I cannot resist reporting here the delicious inquiry, addressed to me in 1997 by Foster, demanding to know why I think his work displays Toryism. Yet, in his 1998 novel, *Slammin' Tar*, Foster justifies my thesis. His main narrator, Brer Anancy, a spider, is himself a conservative recollection of the African tradition of

the fable. But this spider sounds suspiciously akin to classical Tories. He expresses a craving for authoritarianism, for "a leader, with a strong, firm hand on the reins" (204). He confesses that "I am an old-fashioned male, and I like, in most cases, for things to remain they [sic] way they are. I am for known systems and order" (261). He even says, "Call me a staunch conservative if you like, but I believe there are some tried and tested things with which you just shouldn't mess" (116).

²⁴Walcott's evasion of historical realities aligns him with Trudeau, for whom, as Christiano declares, "democratic equality requires the impersonality of universalism, so it effaces history" (48-49). But Walcott not only fails to assess the conservative aspects of African-Canadian history, he is also oblivious to the radical intellectual effort represented by such neglected works as *Let the Niggers Burn!* (1971), an essay collection, edited by Dennis Forsythe, on Montréal's Sir George Williams University Affair of February 1969 (during which black and white students trashed a computer centre to protest the racist grading of black students), or *The Black Experience in the White Mind: Meditations on a Persistent Discourse* (1995), a study of racial representations in art, compiled and edited by Roger McTair. Of this pair, Forsythe's text is ascerbically bracing, arguing that the "'Sir George Williams Affair' ... witnessed the escalation of a conflict from a small internal charge of 'racism' by six Black students against a Professor ... to a highly charged collective episode that shook the West Indies, ruffled the world, and boomeranged black consciousness one step further towards a consolidation called 'Peoplehood'L" (3).

²⁵In other stories, too, Alexis satirizes such staples of African diasporic literature as the moment of self-recognition as *black*. For instance, in "Horse," the protagonist awakens and recognizes "my own poor body": "How homely I was.... Of course, I had realized some time before that I was a negro, but this 'niggeriness' still surprised me. My hair was like a cone of wool. My mouth hung open and the side of my face was white with spittle" (*Despair* 152). In "The Road to Santiago de Compostela," Alexis satirizes the idea of African *otherness* by introducing a presumably African family, the M'Kolos, about whom "It was rumoured that they'd been cannibals 'back where they came from', but, as with all such rumours, this was something of an exaggeration" (*Despair* 221). Ironically, as it turns out, "The M'Kolos ... 'come from' Glencoe [Ontario], which is not known for its man-eaters, and in all their lives they knew only one cannibal" (*Despair* 221).

²⁶Here Philip would depart from Walcott's black universalism. In *A Genealogy of Resistance and Other Essays* (1997), she insists that "True poetry--a poetry of truth--depends very much upon ... a rooting in place..." (58). Philip argues--in terms reminiscent of Alexis--that "In the absence of such a bond, we remain

forever adrift from all lands, all places, wanderers unable to attach ourselves truly to any one place" (*Genealogy* 66).

²⁷If the culture exists, then so must some nationalism. "Like the elephant, nationalism exists, and must be accepted" (Glazebrook 322).

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