

Black slavery, historians and textbooks

A study of the representation of enslaved people of African descent in Quebec's historiography and history textbooks

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Abstract

This thesis studies how *L'Esclavage au Canada Français: Histoire et Conditions de l'Esclavage*, written by Quebec historian Marcel Trudel in 1960, influenced the representation of slavery in Quebec's historiography, newspaper articles and textbooks since 1960. Textbook studies typically refer to Quebec's national narrative in abstract terms and rarely discuss how national historians influenced slavery's representation in textbooks. I show that Trudel's argument about slavery's relative benignity in French Canada dehumanized enslaved people while humanizing their bondage. His argument was based on a comparison of enslaved people's living conditions with the French Antilles and what is now the United States. This comparison became central to the scholarly debate and provided a blueprint for the narratives offered in textbooks and newspaper articles, which centred slaveholders and statistics rather than the experiences of enslaved people. Black history in the 1990s and early 2000s reversed this tendency and contributed to a limited introduction of Black voices within newspapers and textbooks.

Résumé

Ce mémoire étudie comment *L'Esclavage au Canada Français : Histoire et Conditions de l'Esclavage*, écrit par l'historien québécois Marcel Trudel en 1960, a influencé la représentation de l'esclavage dans l'historiographie, les articles de journaux et les manuels scolaires du Québec depuis 1960. Les études antérieures sur les manuels scolaires faisaient référence au récit national du Québec en termes abstraits et discutaient rarement de la manière dont les historiens nationaux ont influencé la représentation de l'esclavage dans les manuels scolaires. Je montre que l'argument de Trudel sur la relative bénignité de *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* déshumanisait les esclaves tout en humanisant leur servitude. Son argument était basé sur une comparaison des conditions de vie des esclaves avec les Antilles françaises et les États-Unis d'aujourd'hui. Par la suite, cette comparaison est devenue un élément central du débat scientifique et a fourni un modèle pour les manuels et les articles de journaux, qui mettaient l'accent sur les esclavagistes et les statistiques plutôt que sur les personnes asservies. L'histoire des personnes noires dans les années 1990 et au début des années 2000 a inversé cette tendance et a contribué à une introduction limitée des voix noires dans les journaux et les manuels scolaires.

To my grandmother, Marie-Anna Mathys-Schär (1923-2016)

*Pour m'avoir donné l'amour des livres et
m'avoir montré la valeur de la curiosité.*

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Introduction

The Quiet Revolution was a pivotal moment for the definition of Quebec's collective identity. Following the Liberal provincial government's election in 1960, the Catholic clergy's influence on knowledge production and teaching practices waned in favour of a rising group of secular intellectuals and provincial civil servants. The Ministry of Public Education, created in 1964, defined teaching objectives through a centralized teaching curriculum and textbook approval process. As a secondary school subject, history allowed the state to instill in young French Canadians a sense of belonging to Quebec—a distinct, imagined community within Canada. The idea of Quebec as a nation within a nation was fully reinforced.

These developments were the culmination of French Canadians' discontent with the “established order which oppressed [them] economically and socially.”¹ For instance, French-speaking Quebecers were earning on average significantly less than English-speaking Quebecers and had fewer years of schooling.² The Quiet Revolution was “a form of collective dissent against” this political and economic system in place.³

Members of the “liberal sector of the petite bourgeoisie” were “the moving spirit behind” these developments because they felt oppressed by the English-Canadian social and economic elite and wanted “to increase the status and power of French Canadians within Quebec and of the province vis-a-vis the federal government.”⁴ The intellectual terrain for the Quiet Revolution was in evidence from the 1930s onwards; French Canadians were redefining themselves as *Québécois.e.s*, highlighting a shift from a French-Canadian identity towards a provincial one that excluded French-speaking people from outside the province.⁵ Historians who started their career in the post-Second World War years engaged in these discussions about Quebec identity and their scholarship was used to justify some of the Quiet Revolution's demands.⁶

¹ José E. Igartua, “Sixties in Québec,” in *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties*, by Gregory S. Kealey, Lara Campbell, and Dominique Clément, Canadian Social History Series (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 249.

² Canada, *Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism*, vol. 3A, v. (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1969), 24, 30, [//catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000237845](http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000237845).

³ Rosanne P Waters, “A March from Selma to Canada: Canada and the Transnational Civil Rights Movement” (PhD Dissertation, McMaster University, 2015), 141, https://macsphere.mcmaster.ca/bitstream/11375/17465/2/Waters_Dissertation.pdf.

⁴ Serge Gagnon, *Quebec and Its Historians: The Twentieth Century*, trans. Jane Brierley (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press/Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 2000), 41–42; Waters, “March from Selma to Canada,” 141.

⁵ Jean Quirion, Guy Chiasson, and Marc Charron, “Des canadiens français aux québécois : se nommer à l'épreuve du territoire?,” *Recherches sociographiques* 58, no. 1 (2017): 154, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1039934ar>.

⁶ Gagnon, *Quebec and Its Historians*, 41–42, 175.

The works in question came from a new generation of historians who started their career in the 1947 and 1948 respectively established history institutes at Laval University and the University of Montreal. These institutes became the basis for two historical schools that diverged over the interpretation of the Conquest, the integration of New France into British North America in 1760, and the future of French Canadians. The *École de Laval* developed under the influence of Arthur Maheux, first president of the *Institut d'histoire et de géographie*. The school argued that the Conquest protected French-Canadian culture from the impact of the French Revolution and stressed the internal weaknesses of French Canada. In contrast, the *École de Montréal*, under the influence of Lionel Groulx, saw the Conquest as the origin of the economic and social problems of the post-war years caused by the economic, social, and cultural oppression of French Canadians within Canada. The logical conclusion of Groulx's argument was for the members of the *École de Montréal* to regain more control over provincial affairs and, in some intellectual circles, separation from Canada. Marcel Trudel, the first secretary of the *Institut d'histoire et de géographie* at Laval University, was part of the development of the *École de Laval* through his "self-critical and anti-clerical" historical writing, which stressed the internal weaknesses of the French-Canadian society and opposed Quebec independence.⁷

Marcel Trudel, born in 1917 in St-Narcisse, Quebec, initially wanted to become a Greek teacher and studied as a Catholic priest to do so. However, he was not religious enough and abandoned this path for a university education in Greek and French literature, where he was recruited as a history professor at Laval University. Due to the anti-clerical character of his work and his engagement in an organization that demanded a more secular society, Trudel did not fare well with the religious elite in control of Laval University at the time and moved to Ottawa in 1965, where he dedicated the rest of his career to the study of the history of New France. As a result, he became known as "Monsieur Nouvelle-France."⁸ His work was recognized for its methodological rigor and opposition to church-approved narratives.

Before his move, Trudel wrote a book on the history of slavery in French Canada. With this publication, which was the first study on the topic based on extensive archival research, Trudel included enslaved people in colonial Canada's social landscape and addressed the historical erasure of slavery by influential French-Canadian historians. *L'Esclavage au Canada Français : Histoire et Conditions*

⁷ Ronald Rudin, *Making History in Twentieth-Century Quebec* (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 138, <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442676916.138>.

⁸ Georges Lamont, "Marcel Trudel, Yves Beauchemin, et Jean Béliveau proclamés Grands Montréalais," *La Presse*, February 15, 1994, sec. A; "Marcel Trudel, historien," [marceltrudel](http://www.marceltrudel.ca/index.html), July 6, 2011, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110706185029/http://www.marceltrudel.ca/index.html>.

de l'Esclavage was published in 1960 by *Les Presses Universitaires Laval*. It became a classic on slavery in French Canada⁹ and remained the most comprehensive study on the topic for half a century. The book established that roughly 4,000 people were enslaved in French Canada. Of those enslaved, two-thirds came from Indigenous nations in today's American Midwest (with whom New France was at war) and one-third were of African descent. The attempts of the colonial administration to bring enslaved people to the colony directly from the African continent were unsuccessful. Enslaved people of African descent were thus trafficked to the colony predominately from the United States and the French Antilles.¹⁰ Trudel argued that the enslavement of Indigenous and Black people had been a common feature of New France's society, and most social groups enslaved people from the end of the seventeenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Trudel follows up on his work in 1990 with the *Dictionnaire des Esclaves et de leurs Propriétaires au Canada Français*, which was a reference work for information on enslaved people and slaveholders. In 2004, he published a slightly revised edition of his 1960 classic, called *Deux siècles d'esclavage au Québec*. Only in 2012, after Trudel's death, was this edition translated into English under the title *Canada's Forgotten Slaves: Two Hundred Years of Bondage*. Through this translation, the 1960 work became available for the first time in English.¹¹

Besides *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, few studies of the experiences of Black people in Quebec were published in the period under study. Those that did appear, remained rather marginalized and thus had a limited impact until the 1990s. The studies on Black Canadian history that were published in the 1970s and 1980s focused little empirical attention on Quebec.¹² Still, this newer scholarship showed that Black people did not disappear from the territory between the end of slavery

⁹ In this thesis, I will use the terms that authors use to talk about and delimit the territory of what is now known as Quebec. It is important to note that the territorial framework used by scholars might not neatly overlap with the territory of the Province of Quebec today.

¹⁰ Marcel Trudel, *L'Esclavage au Canada Français: Histoire et Conditions de l'esclavage* (Québec, Canada: Les Presses Universitaires Laval, 1960), 34–35. The colonial administration succeeded in obtaining permission by Louis XIV in 1689 to receive slave ships directly from Africa. However, the War of the Spanish Succession as well as changes in the organizational structure of the *Compagnie des Indes* caused delays in the granted transports to New France and eventually led to the abandonment of the plan.

¹¹ Marcel Trudel, *Dictionnaire Des Esclaves et de Leurs Propriétaires Au Canada Français*, Cahiers Du Québec. Histoire (Ville LaSalle, Québec, Canada: Hurtubise HMH, 1990); Marcel Trudel, *Deux siècles d'esclavage au Québec*, Nouv. éd, Les cahiers du Québec Collection histoire 139 (Montréal: Éd. Hurtubise HMH, 2004); Marcel Trudel, *Canada's Forgotten Slaves: Two Hundred Years of Bondage*, trans. George Tombs, Dossier Quebec (Montréal, QB: Véhicule Press, 2012).

¹² Dorothy W. Williams, *The Road to Now: A History of Blacks in Montreal*, Dossier Québec (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1997); Daniel Gay, "Marcel Trudel, Deux siècles d'esclavage au Québec, Montréal, Hurtubise HMH, 2004, 405 p. (Cahiers du Québec, Histoire.)," *Recherches sociographiques* 46, no. 3 (2005): 562–65, <https://doi.org/10.7202/012483ar>; Afua Cooper, *The Hanging of Angélique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Montréal* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2006); Frank Mackey, *Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760 - 1840*, Studies on the History of Quebec 21 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, 2010); Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal* (Montreal, CANADA: MQUP, 2010), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/mcgill/detail.action?docID=3332444>.

and the liberalization of anti-Black immigration policy in the 1960s, although they experienced racial discrimination in employment and housing, which they resisted through political action.¹³ They lived predominantly in Montreal and Quebec and contributed to the development of the French-Canadian society, for instance, through their work on steamships, in railroad construction, as porters, as well as through their promotion of Jazz music.¹⁴ In the 1960s, the immigration of Haitians to Quebec increased the number of Black people¹⁵ in the province, and organized resistance to deportation efforts and discriminatory social and economic measures, including taxi regulations, allowed the community to oppose discrimination more effectively.¹⁶ Black Quebecers today are a linguistically, culturally, and economically diverse group.¹⁷ Despite their long history, Black people's experiences have been marginalized and erased from Quebec's collective memory.¹⁸

The marginalization of historical knowledge of Black history in Quebec, despite the historical and contemporary Black presence, raises several important questions:

- (1) when and how did *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* increase awareness on slavery in French Canada, as one aspect of this history and;
- (2) what limitations resulted from the almost solitary influence of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* on public discourse and the subsequent historiography on slavery in New France.

In this thesis, I study how the circulation of both the content and approach of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* across Quebec's historical, mediatic, and educational spheres shaped the narrative around the enslavement of Black people in Quebec. To do this, I analyze the ways in which *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* was received and discussed since its publication in 1960 in Quebec's scholarship on slavery, newspapers, and textbooks.

¹³ Williams, *Road to Now*; James W. St. G. Walker, *Racial Discrimination in Canada: The Black Experience*, Historical Booklet / Canadian Historical Association; No. 41 (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1985), <http://www.collectionscanada.ca/cha-shc/002013-111.01-e.php?q1=H&interval=100>.

¹⁴ Williams, *Road to Now*, 33, 47, 76.

¹⁵ Following Dorothy Williams, I choose to use the term "Black people . . . to denote black African ancestry." Williams, 10. Blackness provides a conceptual framework in which to explore the experiences of enslaved people brought to the Americas through the Transatlantic slave trade with later experiences of free migration and the nature of anti-Black racism in Quebec today.

¹⁶ Williams, 145.

¹⁷ Arnaud Bessière, *La Contribution Des Noirs Au Québec: Quatre Siècles d'une Histoire Partagée* (Québec: Publications du Québec, 2012), 142.

¹⁸ Charmaine A. Nelson, *Slavery, Geography and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2017), 59-69, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315087917>.

I argue that since its publication in 1960, when *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* first drew attention to the history of slavery in what is present-day Quebec, it has served as a common reference point for empirical evidence. Moreover, it has informed opinions about the significance of slavery and its characteristics in all subsequent discussions of the topic whether in newspapers, historical studies, or textbooks. I show that ongoing debates about the degree to which slavery was violent in French Canada are based on Trudel's argument that slavery was "humane" in Quebec and thus different from slavery in rest of the Americas. I also highlight that Trudel's focus on the aggregate experiences of enslaved people operates in tension with later scholarship that focused on the lived experiences of individual enslaved people.

On the importance of framing the "self" and the "other"

This thesis reflects on the construction of national narratives and the ways in which historians influence this construction through the circulation of their work in mediatic, academic, and educational spheres. National narratives define nations and who belongs, and who does not belong to that nation.

According to Benedict Anderson, nations are "imagined political communit[ies]," in which members perceive themselves as members of the nation without knowing all other members.¹⁹ Imagined communities are "inherently limited"—*limited* in the sense that "no nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind."²⁰ Anderson also highlights that imagined communities are "inventions," whose distribution was facilitated by print media.²¹ These inventions need to create a common idea of the past and present to create adherence.²² Part of the constitution of the imagined communities is thus the invention of a narrative of the community's past.²³

This narrative is referred to by some scholars as a national narrative. Maria Grever, professor for historical theory and methodology and Tina Van der Vlies, a PhD candidate in education research, defined national narratives as follows:

[National narratives are] (often canonized) stories about a nation's origin and achievements, and the perceived characteristics of a national community, produced

¹⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. ed (London ; New York: Verso, 2006), 6.

²⁰ Anderson, 6–7.

²¹ Anderson, 37–39, 62–63.

²² Anderson, 156–58.

²³ Timothy Stanley, "The Struggle for History: Historical Narratives and Anti-racist Pedagogy," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 19, no. 1 (April 1998): 42, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0159630980190103>.

to make sense of past events and to create cohesion in the present with a view to the future.²⁴

A national narrative is thus inherent in creating a sense of belonging to a nation through establishing not only common characteristics but also serving as a collective understanding of the past that informs the interpretation of the present and provides a certain direction for the future. A national narrative thus communicates a collective group identity, which ultimately provides a sense of national identity over time.

James V. Wertsch, an anthropologist, shows that these narratives do not have to be overly specific. Rather, their importance lies in their narrative structure that can be applied to other events and does not necessitate a detailed understanding of these events. Wertsch calls this the “deep memory” of the nation:

[Schematic narrative templates] are schematic in the sense that they exist at an abstract level and involve little in the way of concrete detail, and they are templates in the sense that their abstract form provides a pattern that is applied to multiple events, thereby creating several specific narratives.²⁵

The abstract nature of national narrative templates allows them to be so impactful and resistant to change. This resistance to change was already pointed out by French scholar Ernest Renan in 1882 when he wrote “l’oubli, et je dirai même l’erreur historique, sont un facteur essentiel de la création d’une nation.”²⁶ By their very nature, national narratives resist, occlude or deny information that might contradict their core messaging. This resistance to contradicting information is exactly what schematic narrative templates allow for:

A past that is imagined through narrative templates is one in which interpretation relies heavily on abstract-meaning structures not anchored in specific places, times, characters, or events. Information—especially information that contradicts these schemas—is routinely distorted, simplified, and ignored.²⁷

Even though historical research frequently conflicts with these narratives, as noted by French scholar Ernest Renan, narratives (and their proponents) resiliently resist any fundamental revisions of their core messaging.²⁸

²⁴ Maria Grever and Tina van der Vlies, “Why National Narratives Are Perpetuated: A Literature Review on New Insights from History Textbook Research,” *London Review of Education*, July 1, 2017, 287, <https://doi.org/10.18546/LRE.15.2.11>.

²⁵ James V. Wertsch, “Collective Memory and Narrative Templates,” *Social Research* 75, no. 1 (2008): 141–42.

²⁶ Ernest Renan, *Qu’est-ce qu’une nation ?* (Paris: Bordas, 1988), 13.

²⁷ Wertsch, “Collective Memory and Narrative Templates,” 143.

²⁸ Renan, 13.

This resistance explains partially nations' difficulties (and in some cases resistance) to being inclusive—to allow people who were conceived as alien to subsequently become part of the nation.²⁹ As per Anderson's definition, nations are always "limited." Timothy Stanley, an anti-racist scholar and historian of education in Canada, continues this line of argumentation by stating that the self-definition inherent in national narratives at the same time constitutes the "other." Stanley explains in more detailed language how emplotment necessitates the establishment of national boundaries and creates the preconditions for racialization:

In so far as a narrative presupposes a subject whose story can be told, by claiming a history as their own, people constitute their own subjectivity, remaking themselves as members of a fictive community. Yet, at the same time, others are excluded from the narrative and from its community. Thus, by excluding certain people and their real or imagined pasts from the narrative community, historical narratives themselves discursively and culturally construct the exclusions and inclusions of racisms.³⁰

Since national narratives resist change, they create the exclusionary character of nationalism, which makes it difficult for groups previously conceived as "not of the nation" (and thus "other") to become considered part of the nation.

As a result, those involved in constructing and perpetuating national narratives, such as historians and textbook editors are also, either implicitly or explicitly, engaged in constructing exclusions.³¹ The education system has a particularly privileged position in promoting national narratives since curriculum and textbook approval processes are state-governed and their content is widely diffused through the school system. The narrative promoted by the education system acts as a state-endorsed, official narrative.³² In that capacity, textbooks function as "ideological vector[s]."³³ Debates over the content of history textbooks and curricula are thus also ideological debates over the collective identity and membership of the imagined community.³⁴ In this sense, it is not only important

²⁹ Carmen Poole, "Not of the Nation": Canadian History Textbooks and the Impossibility of an African-Canadian Identity," *Southern Journal of Canadian Studies* 5, no. 1 (December 2012): 93.

³⁰ Stanley, "Struggle for History," 42.

³¹ Stanley, 42; Grever and van der Vlies, "Why National Narratives Are Perpetuated," 286.

³² Centre de recherche-action sur les relations raciales, Fo Niemi, and Éric Normandeau, "Enseigner l'histoire Dans Une Société Multi-Ethnique et Pluri-Culturelle : Mémoire Présenté Au Groupe de Travail Sur l'enseignement de l'histoire" (Montréal: Centre de recherche-action sur les relations raciales, December 1995), 3.

³³ Johanne Lebrun et al., "Past and Current Trends in the Analysis of Textbooks in a Quebec Context," *Curriculum Inquiry* 32, no. 1 (January 2002): 69, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-873X.00215>; J. C. (Tina) Van der Vlies, "Why National Narratives Are Perpetuated: A Literature Review on New Insights from History Textbook Research," 288, accessed September 1, 2020, <https://core.ac.uk/reader/154420430>.

³⁴ William F. Pinar, "Notes on Understanding Curriculum as a Racial Text," in *Race, Identity, and Representation in Education* /, ed. Cameron. McCarthy and Warren. Crichlow (New York: Routledge, 1993), 60, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015035318735>.

to study, as has been done, “what is *not* in textbooks, or present in distorted ways” but also the “narrative structure *within textbooks*.”³⁵

The narrative structure in which textbooks are written necessitates that people are represented either as historical actors or as people who are acted upon. The definition of representation proposed by Cameron McCarthy, Professor of Education Policy, is particularly useful because it allows us to understand the full scope of the power that the person who represents the narrative and the people within it holds. McCarthy states that:

By representation I refer not only to mimesis or the presence or absence of images of minorities and third world people in textbooks. By representation I refer to the question of power that resides in the specific arrangement and deployment of subjectivity in the artifacts of the formal and informal culture. This is what Louis Althusser (1971) calls the “mise-en-scene of interpellation”—the way in which the orchestration of cultural form in textbooks and in the popular culture generates the capacity to speak for whole groups, to arraign these groups, as it were, before a deeply invested court of appeal, draining social life of its history and naturalizing dominant/subordinate relations in the process.³⁶

In this sense, representation constitutes power relationships that are deeply impactful exactly because they represent reality in a way that naturalizes these relationships. These comments also apply to the question at hand in this thesis; The way in which slavery and enslaved Black people are represented has the capacity to make the ownership of some people seem natural.

Such historical representations, however rooted they may be in empirical evidence, do not happen in a vacuum, they have real-life consequences for the people associated in various ways to those who are represented. For instance, the marginalization of Black people in textbook narratives can seriously damage their identity formation and lead, for instance, to higher drop-out rates, which have severe social and academic consequences.³⁷ An inadequate representation thus has consequences beyond the experience of Black students in Quebec’s schools where Anti-Black racism remains an issue.³⁸

³⁵ Van der Vlies, “Why National Narratives Are Perpetuated,” 295.

³⁶ Cameron McCarthy and Warren Crichlow, eds., *Race, Identity, and Representation in Education* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 295, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015035318735>.

³⁷ George J. Sefa Dei, *Reconstructing ‘Drop-Out’: A Critical Ethnography of the Dynamics of Black Students’ Disengagement from School* (Toronto; University of Toronto Press, 1997), http://link.library.utoronto.ca/eir/EIRdetail.cfm?Resources__ID=1064645&T=F; Poole, “Not of the Nation,” 96.

³⁸ Rachel Zellars, “Blackness, Exclusion, and the Law in the History of Canada’s Public Schools, Ontario and Québec, 1850–Present” (Dissertation, Montréal, Québec, Department of Integrated Studies in Education, McGill University, 2017), 23; Poole, “Not of the Nation”; Anne-Marie Livingstone, Celemencki Jacqueline, and Melissa Calixte, “Youth Participatory Action Research and School Improvement: The Missing Voices of Black Youth in Montreal,” *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue Canadienne de l’éducation* 37, no. 1 (2014): 283–307; Rosalind Hampton, “Black Learners in Canada,” *Race & Class* 52, no. 1 (July 1, 2010): 106, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396810371770>.

My study of the representation of slavery in Quebec textbooks aims to understand how the narrative on slavery is constituted and how Black enslaved people were represented to fit into Quebec's evolving national narratives. In order to study how narratives about slavery, or the lack thereof, fit into larger stories, it is important to consider the constitution of national narratives in Canada and Quebec and how scholars have understood representations of Black people in these narratives to date.

According to Stanley, the dominant Canadian national narrative opposes "Canadianness" to "alienness:"

The alien, the subaltern, do not have their stories included, since they, by definition, are not of the nation. Nor is past diversity visible within this binary because those beyond the gaze are ignored. Built into the gaze is a denial of the experiences and realities of many people who live in Canada. This in turn inhibits the questioning of the categories that constitute the nation; for example, that it might have been Europeans who were uncivilised and savage.³⁹

Part of this "past diversity" involves enslaved people, whose presence is denied within "the myth that Canada is historically not Black."⁴⁰

This myth is aligned with a Canadian national narrative which is partially constituted through a favourable comparison with the United States. Within this narrative, Canada is treated as morally superior in the face of the American slave system. According to George Elliott Clarke, Black Canadian Poet and literature professor, the consequence of this narrative template is that Canadians are unable to reconcile their identity as "good," "as opposed to the lawless, hot-tempered, impure, mongrel Americans, with their messy history of slavery."⁴¹ This inability was partially enabled through the circulation of another myth about Canada's past, the "North Star myth," in which Canada both served and was presented as the "promised land" to which formerly enslaved people fled through the Underground Railroad system, organized by formerly enslaved people and abolitionists.⁴²

³⁹ Stanley, "Struggle for History," 48.

⁴⁰ Winfried Siemerling, *The Black Atlantic Reconsidered: Black Canadian Writing, Cultural History, and the Presence of the Past* (Montreal, CANADA: MQUP, 2015), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/mcgill/detail.action?docID=3332876>; Maya Stitski, "Documenting and Reinterpreting the Excluded and the Forgotten: Black Canada's Histories and Literatures," *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* 36 (November 2016): 196, <https://doi.org/10.3138/topia.36.196>.

⁴¹ Cooper, *Hanging of Angélique*, xii.

⁴² Siemerling, *Black Atlantic Reconsidered*, 53.

Quebec's dominant national narrative, in its most limited form, recounts French colonizers cultural survival within and against English-speaking North America.⁴³ Jocelyn Létourneau, a historian of historical consciousness in Quebec, summarized the dominant national narrative as one that revolves “autour du pathos politique du Nous, de ses luttes pour assurer sa pérennité.”⁴⁴ This narrative has a dramatic story arch, which was strengthened in the 1960s through the interpretation that the Conquest marked the colonization of New France by British North America.⁴⁴ In this narrative, Black people are framed as the “other” who did not participate in the efforts related to French Canadian survival.

In the same line of argument, Pierre Vallières published his *N[****]s blancs d'Amérique* in 1967, in which he compared the condition of francophone *Québécois.e.s* in the province and within Canada with that of Black people in the United States in order to advance a narrative of oppression and colonialism (I discuss Vallières work and ideas in more detail in the thesis and its conclusion).⁴⁵ Beyond Vallières, Lionel Groulx and other important figures of the Montreal school described the position of French Canadians within Canada and in relationship to the United States as enslaved already before Vallières publication.⁴⁶ The emphasis on French Canadians as colonized meant that it was difficult to explain or reconcile understandings of French Canadians as colonizers slaveholders in their own right. The complexity of reconciling these two positions can be seen in the following 2019 opinion piece by Mathieu Bock-Côté, a sociologist on Quebec nationalism and columnist for *Le Journal de Montréal*:

Ce dont il est question ici, c'est du rôle de la majorité historique francophone dans la définition du Québec. Est-ce qu'elle représente le pôle identitaire fondateur du Québec ? Est-ce qu'elle constitue sa culture de référence et de convergence ? Elle ne le sera qu'en décidant de s'assumer dans ce rôle, sans honte.

Soyons honnêtes. On aura beau tricoter le récit historique le plus inclusif qui soit, on ne peut pas s'identifier à la fois aux gagnants et aux perdants de la bataille des plaines d'Abraham.

On ne peut pas se voir à la fois dans le rôle des travailleurs canadiens-français dominés et dans celui des patrons anglais du Golden Square Mile qui les dominaient.⁴⁷

⁴³ Jocelyn Létourneau, “Je Me Souviens? Le Passé Du Québec Dans La Conscience de Sa Jeunesse (2014): One Book in Four Pages,” accessed March 6, 2020, <http://www.tonhistoireduquebec.ulaval.ca/home/the-book/>.

⁴⁴ Mills, *Empire Within*, 6.

⁴⁵ Pierre Vallières, *Nègres blancs d'Amérique, autobiographie précoce d'un “terroriste” québécois*, Nouvelle édition revue et corrigée (Montréal: Éditions parti pris, 1969).

⁴⁶ Rudin, 70, 73, 101. The same comparison was made by Michel Brunet and Maurice Séguin. Lionel Groulx also made this comparison, in 1905.

⁴⁷ Mathieu Bock-Côté, “Ne Jamais Renier Notre Histoire,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, accessed December 3, 2019, <https://www.journaldemontreal.com/2019/06/29/ne-jamais-renier-notre-histoire>.

Bock-Côté clarifies that for him, reconciling a French-Canadian and English-Canadian identity is not possible.

One solution, advanced by sociologist Daniel Gay is to acknowledge Black history as an integral part of Quebec's history, which would allow for a national identity that is not solely focused on French Catholic Quebecers. Gay insists that:

Stopper la fabrication de l'oubli des Noirs comme acteurs historiques collectifs [permettrait d']élaborer éventuellement une vraie mémoire collective, c'est-à-dire une mémoire qui articule, plutôt que juxtapose, les autres mémoires québécoises.⁴⁸

For Gay, Quebecers multiple identities are not mutually exclusive. As such, Quebec history could discuss different narrative threads and not only recount the story of French colonizers and settlers on the territory of present-day Quebec.

How Textbook Debates evolved in Quebec

Numerous debates have taken place over the “right” way to include minorities in Quebec history teaching, while affirming Quebec's history as a distinct nation within Canada in the decades following the Quiet Revolution. In 1971, just after the political tensions of the October crisis,⁴⁹ when a standard curriculum for all confessional groups for secondary school education was first introduced, certain history teachers criticized the program for not talking about Quebec as a nation. Raymond Fortin, high school history teacher, argued that the curriculum was out of touch with the new generation of students shaped by the Quiet Revolution. He stressed that “ces jeunes, plus éveillés aux problèmes du Québec voient dans l'histoire du Québec leur histoire nationale.”⁵⁰ Rather than focusing on national history the new curriculum “se fai[sait] un malin plaisir de baillonner le maître sur tout événement survenu après 1960.”⁵¹ The second curricula reform in 1982 took place shortly after the first Quebec referendum for independence and introduced increased standardization. Since then, textbook editors have to obtain approval from the Ministry of Education for their textbooks and the contents of these books must comply with the approved teaching criteria, and the stated pedagogical objectives. Textbook editors thus are not entirely free to choose which historical events to include and

⁴⁸ Daniel Gay, *Les Noirs Du Québec, 1629-1900*, Cahiers Des Amériques ; Collection Histoire 9 (Sillery, Québec: Septentrion, 2004), 412.

⁴⁹ The October crisis was a political crisis in which the Federal government invoked the War Measures Act in order to handle the kidnapping of a diplomat and the Deputy Premier by members of the *Front de libération du Québec*.

⁵⁰ Raymond Fortin, “L'histoire Du Canada: Comment a-t-on Pu Fabriquer Semblable Programme?,” *Le Devoir*, May 29, 1971, 5.

⁵¹ Fortin, 5.

how to present them. Textbooks from different publishing houses retain therefore similar content.⁵² Paul-André Linteau, who co-authored one of the books analyzed in this thesis, mentioned in our interview that authors had some leeway to add material and choose a certain perspective, but it was nevertheless important to cover the topics identified in the curriculum.⁵³

In the 1990s, two opposing teaching priorities crystalized. National history advocates demanded that the narrative remained centered around the trajectory of the French Catholic majority⁵⁴ and Quebec nationalism. Robert Comeau, a Quebec historian, for instance, stated that:

“L’ouverture et la reconnaissance des autres communautés culturelles sont tout à fait souhaitables, mais encore faut-il que leur contribution soit intégrée à notre histoire nationale, une histoire basée sur nos racines françaises.”⁵⁵

Social history advocates, such as scholars who insisted on the multicultural history of Quebec and civil society activists, demanded a narrative that included the contributions and experiences of all social groups living on the territory of Quebec today, including Black and Indigenous people.⁵⁶ The report published by the *Centre de recherche-action sur les relations raciales* in 1995, posited that:

Qu’il faudra dépasser la construction du discours historique qui, au Québec, considère la culture francophone comme noyau central auquel viennent se greffer des histoires particulières, somme toute mineures et qui doivent être oubliées en cours d’intégration.⁵⁷

The conflict between these two positions became even more tense when the 2006 teaching curriculum produced by the Liberal government was published in its draft version and nationalists immediately criticized the program for its thematic focus and what they perceived as an “erasure” of Quebec

⁵² Michel Sarra-Bournet, “Conclusion: Enseigner l’histoire du Québec : avec ou malgré le ‘renouveau pédagogique’?”, in *L’enseignement de l’histoire au début du XXI^e siècle au Québec*, ed. Félix Bouvier (Québec, Québec: Septentrion, 2008), 164.

⁵³ Paul-André Linteau, Entretien sur l’Histoire de l’esclavage dans les synthèses historiques, March 23, 2020; Louise Charpentier et al., *Nouvelle histoire du Québec et du Canada* (Montréal, Québec: Éditions du Boréal Express, 1985).

⁵⁴ Jeremy Webber, “Just How Civic Is Civic Nationalism?”, in *Citizenship, Diversity, and Pluralism: Canadian and Comparative Perspectives*, by Alan C. Cairns and Professor of Political Science John C. Courtney (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2014), 87–107. I am using the term French Catholic majority and if historically applicable French Canadian in this context to refer to the heteroclite group that traces its ancestry back to early French colonizers and settlers. The usage of “Catholic” in this context does not imply that people practice Catholicism but refers instead to people’s cultural backgrounds.

⁵⁵ Robert Comeau cited in Éric Lafontaine, “S’ouvrir pour disparaître ?” *Quartier libre*, 29 octobre 1996, p. 11. cited in Sarra-Bournet, 146; Robert Comeau and Bernard Dionne, eds., *À propos de l’histoire nationale* (Sillery, (Québec): Septentrion, 1998).

⁵⁶ See for example, Marcel Trudel and Geneviève Jain, “Canadian History Textbooks: A Comparative Study,” Studies of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer for Canada, 1970); Centre de recherche-action sur les relations raciales, Niemi, and Normandeau, “Enseigner l’histoire Dans Une Société Multi-Ethnique et Pluri-Culturelle : Mémoire Présenté Au Groupe de Travail Sur l’enseignement de l’histoire.”

⁵⁷ Centre de recherche-action sur les relations raciales, Niemi, and Normandeau, “Enseigner l’histoire Dans Une Société Multi-Ethnique et Pluri-Culturelle : Mémoire Présenté Au Groupe de Travail Sur l’enseignement de l’histoire,” 4.

nationalism. At the same time, social history advocates demanded an even more inclusive history curriculum.⁵⁸ In 2018, the program was reviewed again to act upon the critiques about nationhood and national narratives, resulting in a partial return towards a more traditional, chronological narrative structure. This new curriculum and the resulting textbooks have been heavily criticized for their superficial treatment of the histories of various minority groups.⁵⁹

Chapter Overview

In chapter one, I discuss: (1) the literature on Canada's and Quebec's national narratives on slavery; (2) the literature that categorizes the evolution of Black Canadian history and my attempts to classify the evolution of Quebec's literature using these categories; as well as (3) the literature on textbook representations of Black people in Quebec. Each of these three bodies of literature represents one piece in the puzzle to understanding the circulation of representations of Black slavery in Quebec, although they refer to each other very little and always do so in fixed terms as though there has been no evolution in thinking in each of these domains. As such, the literature on national narratives on slavery says little about how discussions of slavery penetrate and are influenced by textbooks. For example, the historiography on Black Canadians shows the changing debate over how to acknowledge oppression all the while recognizing the agency of historical actors. It does not necessarily discuss how this scholarship impacts social representations of Black people more broadly, or how it is impacted by the national narrative by which it is shaped and challenged. The literature on textbook representations refers to the national narrative as a fixed and abstract category without discussing how historical scholarship might influence these representations as a source of knowledge that is included in textbooks. In my thesis, I mobilize these bodies of literature to study the circulation of representations of slavery across the historical, mediatic, and educational spheres.

Chapter two examines Marcel Trudel's intellectual trajectory, the context in which *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* was produced and its content circulated. For this, I study Trudel's memoirs, newspaper articles, and the academic scholarship that explored how he became an eminent New France historian at the University of Ottawa, whose scholarship opposed historians to whom he was close in the early days of his career, such as Lionel Groulx and Guy Frégault. This contextualization provides the foundation for my analysis of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*' central factual claims, the perspective the book adopts when talking about enslaved people, and its main arguments. My research

⁵⁸ Bock-Côté, "Ne Jamais Renier Notre Histoire."

⁵⁹ For a detailed discussion of curriculum reform, see discussion in Chapter Four.

shows that although Trudel challenged the narrative that slavery did not exist in New France, his work consolidated another narrative in which slavery in New France was presented as “humane” and fundamentally different from that which operated in other parts of the Americas. As such, without denying its important historical contributions, I argue that there is still much to critique in *L’Esclavage au Canada Français*.

In chapter three, I study the public and academic reception of *L’Esclavage au Canada Français*. To do this, I analyzed the following primary sources for what they retained from the book and how they summarized its central claims:

1. Articles in *Le Devoir* and *La Presse* that mention slavery in French Canada published between 1960 and 2019,
2. Academic reviews of *L’Esclavage au Canada Français* and Trudel’s subsequent publications on slavery,
3. The most cited historical works on slavery in New France including Frank Mackey’s *Done with slavery* and Afua Cooper’s *The Hanging of Angélique*.⁶⁰

I argue that *L’Esclavage au Canada Français* has been highly influential in framing public and academic discussions of slavery since 1960, despite the limited public and scholarly attention it received before the 1980s. Between 1960 and 1980, newspaper and academic summaries reproduced Trudel’s claim that slavery had been “humane” with little substantive engagement. As such, journalists and scholars restated Trudel’s argument that slavery was a “humane institution,” thus different than elsewhere in North America, and focused on the involvement of the Catholic church. As of the 1990s, journalists and scholars drew connections between the enslavement of people of African descent and present-day anti-Black racism. They discussed slavery to explicitly counteract the public discourse that framed Black people as recent immigrants who had no historical ties to the province. This development was paralleled in the historical scholarship at the time, which focused more on the experiences of individual enslaved people, including Afua Cooper’s *The Hanging of Angélique*, which was published to wide reception in 2006.

In chapter four, I analyze the representation of slavery within eight Quebec secondary school history textbooks published between 1960 and 2017. Through a detailed analysis of passages relating to slavery, I found an initial and enduring effect of *L’Esclavage au Canada Français* on the framing of slavery and the interpretations of its significance. First, textbooks restated the empirical evidence

⁶⁰ Cooper, *Hanging of Angélique*; Mackey, *Done with Slavery*.

Trudel provided about the number of people who were enslaved and the social status of slaveholders. Second, textbooks, until the 1980s, repeated Trudel's interpretation that enslaved people's living conditions in New France were better than those of enslaved people in the United States and the French Antilles, and comparable to those of domestic servants. Textbooks published after 2006 started to include more information that referred and named individual enslaved people and engaged less with Trudel's argument about slavery's "humanness." At the same time, these textbooks retained references to the rest of the Americas to show that the territory of Quebec was not an exception. As such, although Trudel's most problematic interpretations have disappeared from current history textbooks in Quebec, the influence of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* has not waned; textbooks retain its statistical information and basic narrative structure.

Data and Limitations

In secondary school, students solidify their own identity as well as their understanding of the collectives around them.⁶¹ In Quebec, this is also when they are exposed to the most comprehensive pre-university course on Quebec history. For this reason, I studied textbooks used in secondary schools to teach Quebec history, which would have to represent slavery as part of the required curriculum. I was particularly interested in connecting the contents of the textbook with evolving notions of nationhood in Quebec. In order to focus on the national narrative presented to French Quebecers, I excluded textbooks used in Quebec's English high schools.

In order to gain access to the public discourse around slavery, I analyzed newspaper articles that discussed the topic of slavery in Quebec. Newspapers shaped the public discourse substantially in the 1960s because "a substantial proportion of the population received its news, at least in part, from the pages of newspapers."⁶² At the same time, newspapers need to reflect to a certain degree the *Zeitgeist* in order to remain economically viable.⁶³ Their content is influenced by who is given the opportunity to voice their opinion and as such reproduces the relationships of power within society.

Although this study offers numerous insights about the enduring influence of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, it is beyond the scope of this study to: (1) to document in detailed empirical fashion

⁶¹ Monique Verhoeven, Astrid M. G. Poorthuis, and Monique Volman, "The Role of School in Adolescents' Identity Development. A Literature Review," *Educational Psychology Review* 31, no. 1 (March 1, 2019): 35–63, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-018-9457-3>.

⁶² Waters, "March from Selma to Canada," 35.

⁶³ Jerry W. Knudson, "Late to the Feast: Newspapers as Historical Sources," *Perspectives Online* 31, no. 7 (October 1993).

when and how the work entered textbook narratives and newspaper and academic articles; (2) how Black people are represented within the overall narrative of textbooks; and (3) how Indigenous enslaved people are represented in textbooks.

First, it is beyond the scope of this project to detail the process of print nationalism and the manner in which the knowledge offered by *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* entered newspaper articles, academia, and textbooks. I can only highlight that the knowledge circulated by showing its similar discursive forms, such as similarities in wording and emplotment. I cannot infer how the transfer exactly took place nor have I documented each and every incidence of transfer. Rather, I show connections between Trudel and specific authors or publications I analyzed.

Second, due to the COVID-19 pandemic taking place at the time that I was researching and writing this thesis, I had to rely on excerpts from selected textbooks on slavery that I collected during my research trips to *Bibliothèque et Archives nationale du Québec* (BAnQ *Collection nationale*). Without the entire textbook at my disposal, I could not study how Black people's enslavement fit into the overall narrative structure of the textbook. Thus, I cannot show how boundaries are drawn between the "us," the slaveholder, and "the other" the enslaved, beyond the analyzed excerpts. As I was specifically interested in representations of slavery, I did not explore passages related to the Underground Railroad and Loyalists emigration to Quebec. Both topics were excluded from this study although they may have contained peripheral discussions of the operation of slavery.

Third, this thesis examines only the representation of Black slavery in Quebec. Although fewer Black people were enslaved in contrast to Indigenous people, enslaved people of African descent were among the earliest Black people on the territory that is now Quebec and I am interested in how historical representations of these subjects resonate in the present. Nevertheless, the representation of these two groups merits a distinct analysis. Although comparisons within my thesis would have been interesting, I believe the subject of the similarities and differences in how Indigenous and Black slavery is represented merits a separate research project to do the subject justice.

Lastly, I also have to situate myself in this project. This thesis started as a research project in which I planned to study the impact of the historiography on the Second World War on Canada's evolving refugee policy. This project eventually took a different shape through Professor Madokoro's recommendation to investigate the reception of Quebec's historiography of slavery. My interest in the trajectory of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* was sparked by an article in which Marcel Trudel talked

about the book's reception.⁶⁴ Throughout my readings and research for this project, I questioned whether I should indeed study slavery in Quebec's national narrative. As a Protestant, Swiss-German woman, who grew up in Bern's countryside, I began with only limited knowledge about Black history, Quebec history and the relationship between the two. Despite the limitations and biases that my point of view brings to this project, I still hope that this thesis contributes to the conversation about the legacy of slavery in Quebec and its relationship to Quebec's evolving national narrative. In order to build a more inclusive national narrative in Quebec, we need to better understand how academic, public, and educational discourses have contributed to the perpetuation of anti-Black racism in Quebec. Through his historical research, Trudel, a French-Catholic historian, challenged the idea that "Québécois.e.s de pure laine" are as "pure" as they understand themselves to be. At the same time, Trudel produced a new narrative about slavery and engaged in his own enterprise of defining the relevance of this subject to French Canadian audiences. This tension within Trudel's own research supports the importance of engaging in these conversations and thinking critically about the social impact of the work of historians and the responsibilities that result.

⁶⁴ Danielle Pigeon, "Entretien Avec Marcel Trudel, Pionnier de l'histoire de l'esclavage Au Québec," *Cap-Aux-Diamants*, no. 79 (2004): 15–19.

Chapter One Historians, Black history and Textbooks

My thesis aims to understand how representations of slavery influenced by *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* circulated among the historical, mediatic, and educational spheres. To study this topic, I drew upon three different bodies of literature. First, discussions of Canada's and Quebec's national narratives on slavery allowed me to understand the narrative structure in which these representations took place. How did these narratives evolve since the 1960s and how were they related to identity questions? The literature on national narratives on slavery only marginally discusses how these representations penetrated and are influenced by textbooks. Scholars may refer to education as a space that can shape narratives but rarely use textbooks to study how these representations are reshaped. The scholarship on national narratives refer to past works and the emergence of narrative templates. They generally do not address the potential of contemporary historical writing to change these narratives. For instance, some scholars have discussed the influence of Fred Landon's scholarship on slavery without looking at more contemporary historical writers, such as James W. St. G. Walker, who challenged Landon's earlier narrative.⁶⁵

Second, the historiography of Black history in Canada and Quebec since 1960 allowed me to better understand how the perspective and information provided by *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* fits into the larger framework of Black history in Canada and Quebec. How did the literature on the representation of Black people evolve since the 1960s in Canada and Quebec? The historiography on Black Canadians and Quebecers shows how historical writing has evolved but does not discuss how this scholarship may impact social representations of Black people more broadly or how it is impacted by existing national narratives.⁶⁶

Third, the literature on textbook representation of racialized minorities in Quebec's textbooks provides the basis for my own research project. I inquire how other scholars studied representation and what other conclusions they drew from the same textbooks and curricula. The literature on textbook representation generally refers to the national narrative as a fixed and abstract category of literature, without discussing the impact of evolving historical scholarship as a source of information for textbook contents.

⁶⁵ Owen Thomas, "Cultural Tourism, Commemorative Plaques, and African-Canadian Historiography: Challenging Historical Marginality," *Histoire Sociale / Social History*, November 1, 1996, 433, <https://hssh.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/hssh/article/view/4763>; James W. St. G. Walker, "Allegories and Orientations in African-Canadian Historiography: The Spirit of Africville," *The Dalhousie Review* 77, no. 2 (1997): 167.

⁶⁶ Cooper, *Hanging of Angélique*, 69.

Each of these bodies of literature provides a piece of the puzzle and helps further understand the nature and circulation of representations of Black slavery in Quebec. These bodies of literature refer to each other in rather fixed terms as if national narratives, textbook representations, and historical studies were written independently. They rarely discuss how they engage with, and shape, one another. In my thesis, I mobilize these bodies of literature to study the circulation of the representation of slavery across the historical, mediatic, and educational spheres. I try to avoid referring to any of these categories as fixed, but rather I think of them as being reshaped by interactions with one another over time.

Canada and Quebec and their History of Slavery: A Difficult Reconciliation

Historians, textbook editors and journalists work within a dynamic, often national, backdrop. In Quebec, for many people this backdrop is what I refer to as Quebec's national narrative, which provides meaning for people identifying more closely with the trajectory of Quebec and regard Quebec as a nation within Canada.⁶⁷ At the same time, some people may identify more with the pan-Canadian national narrative, which provides meaning to the Canadian state's existence and Canadian society more generally. As such, when I refer to Quebec's national narrative, this narrative is the one shared by those who believe in the existence of a distinct Quebec nation.

Quebec's national narrative does not exist entirely distinct from the pan-Canadian national narrative. As such, it is important to discuss the most salient characteristics of both Canada's and Quebec's national narratives as they exist currently.⁶⁸ Ruth A. Frager and Carmela Patrias state that the pan-Canadian national narrative is based on the perception that Canadians are "different from Americans" and "tolerant of ethnic and cultural diversity."⁶⁹ The implication is that racism is not a problem in Canada. Canada defines itself "in stark contrast to the United States, as a 'raceless' place without a prominent history of divisions along 'racial' lines."⁷⁰ Within nineteenth century Canadian historiography this translated into a "tendency to define Canada against historical examples of racism

⁶⁷ Jocelyn Létourneau and David Northrup, "Québécois et Canadiens Face Au Passé : Similitudes et Dissemblances" 92, no. 1 (March 2011): 163–96.

⁶⁸ It is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a detailed analysis of the evolution of these national narratives beyond the question of slavery. The evolution of narrative templates in Quebec and Canada could be the subject of future studies.

⁶⁹ Ruth A. Frager and Carmela Patrias, "Transnational Links and Citizens' Rights: Canadian Jewish Human Rights Activists and Their American Allies in the 1940s and 1950s," in *Taking Liberties: A History of Human Rights in Canada*, by Stephen J. Heathorn and David Goutor (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2013), 139.

⁷⁰ Constance Backhouse *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto ; Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History by University of Toronto Press, 1999), 13.

in the United States.”⁷¹ This is most visible in the historiography of the Underground Railroad and slavery, which created the “North Star myth.”

The Underground Railroad . . . fostered a myth: that the North Star led not just out of slavery, but into freedom, equality, and full participation in Canadian life, that the Promised Land was fulfilled in Canada. The North Star myth entered the Canadian identity and became a major feature distinguishing Canadians from Americans: only south of the border were blacks subjected to violence, denied their citizenship rights, forced into residential ghettos. The moral superiority of the True North depended as much upon contrasting racial attitudes as on any other single factor.⁷²

What James Walker coined as the “North Star myth,” was influenced by the way in which slave narratives were edited. Editors focused on the experiences of enslaved people in the United States, Canada was represented as the free land, while Canadian slavery was not addressed.⁷³ Art historian Charmaine Nelson argues that as a result the Underground Railroad “provides Canada with a way of innocently rewriting its history of slavery as ‘absent’ through the act of accepting.”⁷⁴ This results in a “continuity of the moral capital of Canada’s antislavery image.”⁷⁵ For Nelson “[t]his ‘erasure’ of slavery from the national imaginary also erases the history of blacks, prior to and since, and renders blackness as illegitimate.”⁷⁶ Through their erasure from history, Black people’s right to belonging to Canadian society is denied.

According to Nelson, how the Underground Railroad system is remembered within the Canadian national narrative prevents any meaningful discussion of Canadian slavery. Eleanor Lucy Bird, an English literary scholar, nuances this assessment. She argues based on her analysis of nineteenth-century Canadian print media that it was possible for Canadians to “see [themselves] as anti-slavery and slaveholding at the same time.”⁷⁷ Bird highlights that rather than a straight-out erasure or “amnesia,” “the loss of memory of slavery in Canada as a repeated practice today” is one “that reflects a choice.”⁷⁸

⁷¹ Waters, “March from Selma to Canada,” 12.

⁷² Walker, *Racial Discrimination in Canada*, 6.

⁷³ Siemerling, *Black Atlantic Reconsidered*, 53.

⁷⁴ Charmaine A. Nelson, ed., *Ebony Roots, Northern Soil: Perspectives on Blackness in Canada* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 295.

⁷⁵ Eleanor Lucy Bird, “Canada and Slavery in Print, 1789-1889” (University of Sheffield, 2018), 318–19, <https://core.ac.uk/display/160748585?source=3>.

⁷⁶ Nelson, *Ebony Roots, Northern Soil*, 295.

⁷⁷ Bird, “Canada and Slavery in Print,” 314, 321.

⁷⁸ Bird, 321.

This narrative in which Canadians are presented as morally superior and racially tolerant is incongruent with Canada's history of anti-Black racism. Although it has not limited discussions of anti-Black racism, it limited extent to which non-Black Canadians have questioned their own racism. Canadians' engagement in human rights activism in the 1950s and 1960s was made possible precisely because "public discourse defined racism in limited terms." This allowed limited reform through human rights legislation to appear as an "acceptable" solution, especially when Canadians compared their situation to the violent resistance during the US Civil Rights movement.⁷⁹ Within this mindset, Canadians did not feel compelled to (re)consider racial inequality within Canada because their sense was that they were already so far ahead compared to the United States.⁸⁰ Rosanne Waters concludes that "this was one of the era's enduring contradictions: a global environment of anti-racism helps explain Canada's 'rights revolution,' just as it helps to explain its limitations."⁸¹

Another aspect of the Pan-Canadian national narrative provides context for this thesis: the "two founding races" narrative opposes the English and the French and their development within Canada and provides little space for other groups as historical actors. As critical race scholar Sunera Thobani has noted:

The definition of the nation as primarily bilingual and bicultural reproduced the racialized constructs of the British and French as its real ... (and also white) ... subjects.⁸²

George Elliott Clarke states similarly that "the original 'two solitudes' of Canadian nationalism – Anglo and Québécois – have never had a vision of Canada as anything but a white man's country."⁸³ Thus, people of French and English descent are considered the "real subjects" at the center of the narrative template, whereas other groups are either marginalized or erased. The Pan-Canadian national narrative is therefore constituted in important ways by (1) by distinguishing itself from the United States and (2) by focusing on the development of two distinct social groups, the English and the French.

Quebec's national narrative has largely developed independently, though occasionally in conversation, from the Canadian one. For instance, French Canadian and Quebec scholars have largely argued amongst themselves about the narrative that recounts their respective nation's story. In

⁷⁹ Waters, "March from Selma to Canada," 14.

⁸⁰ Waters, 14.

⁸¹ Waters, 14.

⁸² Sunera Thobani, *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada* (Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 145; Cited in Corrie Scott, "How French Canadians Became White Folks, or Doing Things with Race in Quebec †," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39, no. 7 (May 27, 2016): 1293, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2015.1103880>.

⁸³ George Elliott Clarke, "White Like Canada," *Transition*, no. 73 (1997): 106, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2935447>.

Quebec, this narrative was influenced by federalism and cultural survival, anti-colonialism as well as separatism.

Quebec's national narrative is framed by the idea that French Canadians had to fight for their survival in English-speaking North America.⁸⁴ This view remains prevalent. Historian Jocelyn Létourneau showed in his research project on young Quebecers' historical consciousness that 40% of young Quebecers still adhere to a negative view of Quebec's history, which they see as defined by French Canadians' struggle for survival.⁸⁵ Critical race scholar Corrie Scott argues that French Canadians were racialized during the nineteenth century; in the Durham report, for instance, published in 1839 and in satirical magazines, French Canadians were depicted as "backwards, ignorant, and unruly."⁸⁶ Historian Bryan Palmer summarizes the situation as follows:

As francophone Quebecers understood intuitively, they had been racialized historically from at the very least the time of Lord Durham in the 1830s. They bore the material scars of this subjugation in their depressed housing conditions, their lowly place on the national wage scale, and their coerced subservience to Anglo-American authorities.⁸⁷

Scott points out that it is important to recognize that French Quebecers experienced a history of oppression and racialization. Ignoring that fact disregards the constructed nature of "race":

In fact, minimizing French Québec's racialized past, or insisting that French Canadians are really white, actually reinforces stable, quasi-biological accounts of race, which of course, has always been about socio-economic relations, not just biology and not just culture.⁸⁸

Moreover, the social situation of *Québécois.e.s* who trace their ancestry to French settlers has changed today. As a result, Scott argues that:

French Québécois are . . . now part of the dominant racial grouping and have access to white privilege and the everyday unearned institutional and material advantages of being white.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Jocelyn Létourneau et al., "Le Mur des représentations : images emblématiques et inconfortables du passé québécois," *Histoire sociale / Social History* 48, no. 97 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.1353/his.2015.0043>; Létourneau, "Je Me Souviens? Le Passé Du Québec Dans La Conscience de Sa Jeunesse (2014): One Book in Four Pages"; Jocelyn Létourneau, "The Debate on History Education in Quebec," in *New Possibilities for the Past*, by Penney Clark (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 87, <http://qut.eblib.com.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=3412687>.

⁸⁵ Létourneau et al., "Le Mur des représentations"; Létourneau, "Je Me Souviens? Le Passé Du Québec Dans La Conscience de Sa Jeunesse (2014): One Book in Four Pages"; Létourneau, "The Debate on History Education in Quebec," 87.

⁸⁶ Scott, "How French Canadians Became White Folks," 1285.

⁸⁷ Bryan Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto, CANADA: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 339, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/mcgill/detail.action?docID=3268351>.

⁸⁸ Scott, "How French Canadians Became White Folks," 1294–95.

⁸⁹ Scott, 1293.

Importantly, Quebec's dominant national narrative contrasts with the social situation of this social group today, which still constitutes an important demographic group within Quebec. This creates a tension between the historical understanding transmitted by existing national narratives and the actual social position inhabited these *Québécois.e.s*.

The transnational discourse of anti-colonialism, which gained prominence in the 1960s, has heightened this tension. At the time, Quebec nationalists commonly conceived the "province's position in relation to Canada as akin to that of a colony."⁹⁰ Historian Sean Mills showed that this conception was related to global decolonization movements.⁹¹ This conceptualization provided a new vocabulary to the "two-founding races"-narrative, which now centered specifically around the tension between English Canadians, Anglophone Quebecers and Francophone Quebecers.⁹²

This anti-colonial discourse was nestled in a historiographical context, which erased non-French Canadians from the territory that is present-day Quebec. French-Canadian historians argued that French Canadians were "racially pure." This discourse is particularly present in François-Xavier Garneau's and Lionel Groulx's language.⁹³ By way of explanation, historian Allan Greer underlines that:

Earlier generations of historians liked to emphasize the homogeneous quality of French Canada's original stock: everyone was from France, they suggested, and everyone was Catholic; racial purity prevailed, and social harmony reigned supreme.⁹⁴

Greer has challenged this historical narrative by demonstrating that French Canada always was multicultural. He explains:

New France a homogeneous society? It only looks that way when you ignore the resident Native people, the African slaves, the English-American prisoners, the French Protestants, and the other minorities who lived there; and that is, of course, exactly what these conservative nationalist historians did.⁹⁵

For Greer, the denial of its multicultural character allowed for the erasure of Black people from the history of the early French colony. The legacy of accounts that represented the ancestors of French

⁹⁰ Waters, "March from Selma to Canada," 24.

⁹¹ Mills, *Empire Within*, 3-4.

⁹² Zellars, "Blackness, Exclusion, and the Law in the History of Canada's Public Schools, Ontario and Québec, 1850–Present," 49.

⁹³ For a more detailed discussion of Lionel Groulx and François Xavier Garneau's work and its influence on the narrative of slavery see Chapter Two.

⁹⁴ Allan Greer, *The People of New France*, Themes in Canadian Social History 3 (Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 76.

⁹⁵ Greer, 76.

Canadians as the only people present on the territory has made it difficult for others to see themselves in the history of Quebec, despite long histories of temporary or permanent settlement and encounters. As historian Jocelyn Létourneau asked “Quelle place pour les ‘Autres’ dans cette narration?”⁹⁶

This tension peaked with *Les n[****]s blancs d'Amérique*,⁹⁷ published by Pierre Vallières in 1967 in *Parti Pris*, which combined the conception of Quebec as a colony with “the view that there was a parallel between the marginalized position of African Americans in the United States and French Canadians.” As such, the experiences of “French Canadians mirrored oppressed and colonized populations around the world.”⁹⁸ Importantly, Vallières ideas were shaped directly by the American civil rights movement.⁹⁹ Vallières wrote his book from a prison in New York in which many Black Panther activists were incarcerated.¹⁰⁰ Waters has stressed the importance of these activists’ ideology on Vallières writing.¹⁰¹ Stokely Carmichael and other Black Panther activists related their struggle to the “global decolonization movements” and demanded “political and economic power,” and worked “on enhancing cultural pride and self-determination.”¹⁰² Vallières’ revolutionary text was highly influential particularly among *Front de libération du Québec* activists but its discourse was “widespread” beyond this more familiar context (for Quebec audiences).¹⁰³

Numerous scholars have engaged with the validity of Vallières’ comparison of French Quebecers with Black people in the United States and the consequences of the comparison for the relationship between Black Quebecers and the French Catholic majority.¹⁰⁴ José. E. Igartua and Corrie Scott, for instance, showed that, historically, French Canadians were economically and socially marginalized within Canada.¹⁰⁵ Waters asks tellingly: “If a parallel could be drawn between African

⁹⁶ Jocelyn Létourneau, “Éric Bédard, L’histoire du Québec pour les nuls (préface de Jacques Lacoursière), Paris, First Éditions, 2012, 394 p.,” *Recherches sociographiques* 54, no. 1 (2013): 173, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1015214ar>.

⁹⁷ Bruno Cornellier, “The Struggle of Others: Pierre Vallières, Quebecois Settler Nationalism, and the N-Word Today,” *Discourse* 39, no. 1 (2017): 35, 56, <https://doi.org/10.13110/discourse.39.1.0031>. I decided to follow Bruno Cornellier’s editing and redact the terms “nègre” and “negro” throughout the document with the exception of this footnote and the citation of the title of Vallières’s book. I also redacted the word “sauvage” in the same way whenever applicable. The term “sauvagesse” was redacted to s[*****]esse.

⁹⁸ Waters, “March from Selma to Canada,” 141.

⁹⁹ Waters, 141.

¹⁰⁰ Cornellier, “Struggle of Others,” 36.

¹⁰¹ Waters, “March from Selma to Canada,” 146.

¹⁰² Waters, 146.

¹⁰³ Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s*, 338; Waters, “March from Selma to Canada,” 148.

¹⁰⁴ Mills, *Empire Within*, 60. Cornellier summarizes this issue in the following terms: “I argue that Vallières’ racial analogy, and most notably his misguided conflation of exploitation and slavery, has the effect of de-racializing colonial history, of turning race into a politically insignificant (and acquirable) category within the settler colony, and of obfuscating the fact that national liberation for Quebecers (Quebecois) is itself predicated on the pursuit of a peculiarly malleable project of native dispossession and political co-optation.” Cornellier, “Struggle of Others,” 32.

¹⁰⁵ Igartua, “Sixties in Québec,” 249.

Americans and French Canadians, where did that leave African Canadians in the province?”¹⁰⁶ Thus, one of the paradoxes of the discourse was that it neglected grievances of the very people from whom activists borrowed their theories.¹⁰⁷ Cultural Studies scholar Bruno Cornellier argues that Vallières’ text is marked by an erasure of Black people from the province.¹⁰⁸ As such, the experience of anti-Black racism in Quebec was excluded from the debate although the Negro Citizenship Association, “Montreal’s main civil rights organisation” founded in 1951, was pushing at the time “for [antidiscrimination legislation]” in the housing market.¹⁰⁹

Corrie Scott further demonstrates the contradictions in Vallières’ argument. She argues that when Vallières states “je ne puis supporter d’être un n[****].”¹¹⁰ Vallières “declar[es] himself a ‘n[****]’ primarily to express that he doesn’t want to be one after all.”¹¹¹ As such, the comparison itself contains a certain racial undertone, which allowed “‘not quite white’ French Canadians [to] become white Québécois.”¹¹² Cornellier highlights the long-term impact of Vallières text for Quebec’s racial discourse:

It is not only a de-racialization of negritude that is affected by Vallières’ text but also a de-racialization of colonialism itself as well as a depoliticization of the whiteness of the Quebecois national reference altogether. . . . The appropriation of the struggle of others allowed and has already solved the “racial question” and absolved our whiteness: Not quite, not white (and yet so very white).¹¹³

As such, the comparison tells us something about French Canadians’ self-understanding, as in how Quebec’s national narrative template perceives their social standing regardless of the validity of the comparison that is being made. These scholars thus agree that this discourse over French Catholics’ historical oppression meant that it was difficult to have a meaningful conversation about Quebec’s history of slavery and more broadly about Black people’s presence in the colony.

¹⁰⁶ Waters, “March from Selma to Canada,” 147.

¹⁰⁷ Mills, *Empire Within*, 83.

¹⁰⁸ Cornellier, “Struggle of Others,” 40.

¹⁰⁹ Waters, “March from Selma to Canada,” 147; Mills, *Empire Within*, 97.

¹¹⁰ Vallières, *Nègres blancs d’Amérique*, 288.

¹¹¹ Scott, “How French Canadians Became White Folks,” 1291. According to Bryan Palmer, Vallières “would later acknowledge, the outrageous phrasing of his title, ‘white niggers,’ was in some ways a conscious device that allowed him to break through walls of a particular American construction.” Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s*, 339.

¹¹² Scott, “How French Canadians Became White Folks,” 1288–90.

¹¹³ Cornellier, “Struggle of Others,” 42, 54.

Nineteenth century historical writing was particularly focused on creating national histories. In the case of Canada and Quebec, Black people were essentially erased in the resulting narratives. In the following section, I analyze how this scholarship has evolved particularly since 1960, when Trudel published *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*.

In this first section on Black history in Canada, I investigate the way in which the historiography on Blacks in Canada discusses Black experiences specifically. For that, I rely on the categories developed by James W. St. G. Walker to describe how historians discussed Black people's agency, particularly vis-à-vis English Canadian society, as a measure of how well the experiences and histories of Black people themselves were understood.

James W. St. G. Walker distinguished first the "*Black Clients* orientation." This orientation or framework is exemplified in the historiography on the Underground Railroad system, which focused on the way in which white people contributed to the system. Black people have little agency in this context and are represented as "cooperative, loyal and grateful."¹¹⁴ Owen Thomas and James Walker both highlight the impact of Fred Landon, who wrote about Ontario's social history in nineteenth early twentieth century, had in this regard.¹¹⁵ Landon's scholarship was central to the development of the "mythology" around the Underground Railroad, in which once Black enslaved people crossed the border "Blacks prospered and worked side by side in harmony with their White neighbours."¹¹⁶ This perspective focused on "Canadian fair-play and hospitality" and portrayed Canadians as the "good guy[s]" compared to Americans.¹¹⁷ The focus in this writing lay on white assistance of fleeing slaves rather than Black experiences.¹¹⁸ Thomas highlights that this perspective "downplays the many problems that refugees faced once they arrived [in Canada]."¹¹⁹ Thomas argues that, in this early scholarship, "people of colour are effectively stripped of any agency and appear only as objects of White benevolence."¹²⁰ This scholarship did not consider Black communities in their own right, but emphasized their relationship with the dominant group instead. Thomas and Walker highlight the

¹¹⁴ Walker, "Spirit of Africville," 167.

¹¹⁵ Fred Landon, *Canada's Part in Freeing the Slave*, Reprinted from Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records (Ontario, 1919), <https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.85429>. Thomas, "Cultural Tourism," 433; Walker, "Spirit of Africville," 167.

¹¹⁶ Thomas, "Cultural Tourism," 433; Walker, "Spirit of Africville," 167.

¹¹⁷ Thomas, "Cultural Tourism," 436.

¹¹⁸ Harvey Amani Whitfield, "The African Diaspora in Atlantic Canada: History, Historians, and Historiography," *Acadiensis*, May 5, 2017, 219.

¹¹⁹ Thomas, "Cultural Tourism," 433.

¹²⁰ Thomas, 437.

long-term impact of this “North star myth,” which, according to them, has become part of Canada’s national narrative.¹²¹ Thomas calls this historiographical tendency “nationalistic back-slapping,”¹²² At the same time, the narrative of Black “atrophy” was created, which suggested that Black people effectively disappeared from Ontario after the end of slavery until the era of increased immigration in the 1960s.¹²³

The second orientation Walker shows is the “*Black Victims*” narrative, which “redefine[s]” “African Canadians . . . , from *Clients* to *Victims*” while retaining its focus on “white actors.”¹²⁴ This scholarship coincided with “the early movement for civil and human rights.”¹²⁵ Walker highlights that this scholarship contributed to an “understanding of systemic racism.”¹²⁶ A slightly modified take on the *Black Victims* orientation was what Walker calls the “*Achievers* orientation,” which focused on African Canadians’ contributions to “white society.” In this orientation, “African Canadians are central, their individual equality is recognized, and their contributions are celebrated, but to be classed as a contribution they had to do something in and for white society.”¹²⁷

In 1971, a particularly influential work was published by Yale historian Robin Winks. His book, *The Blacks in Canada*, became a seminal contribution to the field of African Canadian history.¹²⁸ The book provided an overview of the historical evolution of Black Canadians since slavery, up to 1969.¹²⁹ Legal scholar Constance Backhouse calls *The Black in Canada* “the first public glimmer of historians’ interest in race.”¹³⁰ However, Thomas, Walker, and Harvey Amani Whitfield all present significant criticisms of the book. For instance, they claim that Winks insufficiently supported his arguments with historical documents and uncritically used primary source material produced by “white observers.”¹³¹ Whitfield, a specialist on Black slavery in the Maritimes, also claims that “Winks viewed African Canadians as somehow deficient in comparison to their African American counterparts.”¹³² Walker similarly highlighted that Winks’ book is “a history of the Black man as an issue in white Canadian

¹²¹ Walker, *Racial Discrimination in Canada*, 6; Thomas, “Cultural Tourism,” 436.

¹²² Thomas, “Cultural Tourism,” 437.

¹²³ Thomas, 435.

¹²⁴ Walker, “Spirit of Africville,” 168.

¹²⁵ Walker, 169; Thomas, “Cultural Tourism,” 434; David C. Este, “Black Canadian Historical Writing 1970-2006: An Assessment,” *Journal of Black Studies* 38, no. 3 (January 1, 2008): 388–406, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934707306573>.

¹²⁶ Walker, *Racial Discrimination in Canada*, 168.

¹²⁷ Walker, “Spirit of Africville,” 169.

¹²⁸ Este, “Black Canadian Historical Writing,” 391–92.

¹²⁹ Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, 2nd ed., Carleton Library Series (Montreal, Que.; McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), xiv, <https://www.deslibris.ca/ID/400573>.

¹³⁰ Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto; Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History by University of Toronto Press, 1999), 13.

¹³¹ Whitfield, “African Diaspora in Atlantic Canada,” 222.

¹³² Whitfield, 221.

life.”¹³³ As such, the book appears difficult to categorize in the framework that Walker developed (he notably excludes it from categorization). The book seems to lie somewhere in between the trope of “*Black Victims*,” and that of “*Black Achievers*.”

The focus on Black culture and Black communities is what marked, according to Walker, the scholarship of the “*Black Community* orientation.” This third wave of scholarship was influenced by the Black Power movement and “coincided with and participated in the social history movement, the researching and writing of history from the bottom up.”¹³⁴ As such, according to Walker, “Black people were clearly not ‘recipients’ any longer, if they ever had been, and the focus moved to what they were doing and what they had done.”¹³⁵ Walker’s own scholarship on *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870*, published in 1976, provides an oft-cited example of this orientation. In *The Black Loyalists*, Walker focused on the ways in which Black people created community and a distinct Black culture in Nova Scotia.¹³⁶ *Black Loyalists* was influenced by American scholarship that “focuses on the collective nature of the African-Canadian experience and attempts to reconstruct Black culture.”¹³⁷ As such, the focus shifted to the “*Black community*” as the “subject” and in which the past is narrated “from the bottom up.”¹³⁸ This shift recognized Black people’s agency.¹³⁹ This “recognition . . . is something sorely lacking in much of the historiography.”¹⁴⁰ Whitfield credits Walker with illuminating “the role that discrimination played in shaping the lives of Black Loyalists who settled on the frontier of Nova Scotia.”¹⁴¹

In the 1990s, a historical framework Walker described as “*Black Survivors* orientation” gained popularity. This scholarship focused on how Black Canadians experienced and resisted discrimination, however Walker expressed concern that some of these studies had the tendency to present “black

¹³³ James Walker, “Review of Robin Winks, History,” *The Blacks in Canada: A Dalhousie Review* 50 (Summer 1971): 286.

¹³⁴ Walker, “Spirit of Africville,” 169.

¹³⁵ Walker, 169.

¹³⁶ James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870*, Dalhousie African Studies Series (London: Longman, 1976).

¹³⁷ Thomas, “Cultural Tourism,” 435.

¹³⁸ Thomas, 437.

¹³⁹ Thomas, 437.

¹⁴⁰ Thomas, 437.

¹⁴¹ Whitfield, “African Diaspora in Atlantic Canada,” 220. Daniel G. Hill’s *Freedom Seekers: Blacks in Early Canada* published 1981, is another example of what Walker described as “*Black community* orientation”. Hill, a sociologist with a career in public service in Ontario, insisted that a distinct Black culture developed in Canada through experiences of discrimination and racism. His study focused on Upper Canada while also covering Nova Scotia and Quebec. Daniel G. Hill, *The Freedom-Seekers: Blacks in Early Canada* (Canada: Agincourt: The Book Society of Canada Limited, 1981), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uva.x000321655>; Este, “Black Canadian Historical Writing 1970-2006,” 395.

people as objects rather than subjects.”¹⁴² Within this orientation “the focus is on black people but the perspective is back with the oppressor; African Canadian history becomes the story of persons living with discrimination.”¹⁴³ Walker stressed the tensions within the newer scholarship that tried to balance discrimination with agency, especially given the increased focus on Black women in historical studies at the time.¹⁴⁴

The scholarship on the history of slavery in Quebec is quite limited and Walker did not attempt to apply his categories to any of the existing works. As will be discussed below, Trudel quite closely adheres to what Walker outlined as the “*Black Victims* orientation.” He focuses predominantly on slaveholders and provides little agency to the enslaved.¹⁴⁵ Other studies included some information on slavery in New France such as Winks’ *Black in Canada* and Leo Bertley’s *Canada and Its People of African Descent* published in 1977.¹⁴⁶ In 1981, Paul Fehmiu-Brown, author and historian, published *Ces Canadiens Oubliés*, a two-volume book that recounted the history of slavery in a semi-fictional narrative and centered the experiences of Black people in what is present-day Quebec.¹⁴⁷

In the 1990s and early 2000s, a new generation of Black historians, focused on the experiences of Black enslaved people within a predominantly French Catholic society. These scholars started to write historical studies that focused more on the enslaved individual’s agency within a context of oppression. Easier archival access, new research methods, and better archival organization allowed this new generation of historians and sociologists to review Trudel’s conclusions.¹⁴⁸ Most of these studies adhere to either Walker’s “*Black Community*” or “*Black Survivor* orientation.”

Studies by Dorothy Williams and Daniel Gay, which discussed Black experiences in Quebec and Montreal respectively, adhered in particular to the “*Black Community* orientation”. Williams’s book *The Road to Now*, was based on the information she collected for her 1989 demographic study on Black Montrealers. It offered a description of how Black people lived in Montreal since slavery.¹⁴⁹ Daniel

¹⁴² Walker, “Spirit of Africville,” 170.

¹⁴³ Walker, 170.

¹⁴⁴ Thomas, “Cultural Tourism,” 438. For instance, there were public discussions and commemorations of Harriet Tubman, known for her political activism and work in the Underground Railroad and Mary-Ann Shadd Cary, a leading abolitionist, news-paper editor, and lawyer.

¹⁴⁵ See Chapter Two for a detailed discussion of *L’Esclavage au Canada Français* and how it adheres to the *Black Victims* orientation.

¹⁴⁶ Leo W. Bertley, *Canada and Its People of African Descent* (Pierrefonds, Que.: Bilongo Publishers, 1977).

¹⁴⁷ Paul Fehmiu-Brown, *Ces Canadiens Oubliés* (Sainte-Thècle, Québec: Editions Aquarius, 1981).

¹⁴⁸ Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France* (Chapel Hill, United States: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/mcgill/detail.action?docID=4321947>. Rushforth showed that Trudel underestimated the number of Indigenous people who were enslaved and the economic importance of slavery for the colony.

¹⁴⁹ Williams, *Road to Now*, 4.

Gay, sociology professor at Laval University, published an extensive sociological analysis, titled *Les Noirs du Québec* in 2004, which focused on Black people's experiences within Quebec society and whose discussion of enslaved people was largely based on the archival research and demographic information established by Marcel Trudel in 1960.¹⁵⁰ Gay analyzed interracial marriages and suggested that some French Catholics who trace their origin to French Canadian settlers have Black ancestors as well, a question that was raised initially by Trudel in *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*.¹⁵¹

Studies by historians Maureen Elgersman Lee and Afua Cooper focused more directly on individual enslaved women's experiences and resistance. Thus, they adhered most closely to what Walker described as a "*Black Survivor* orientation." Elgersman Lee studied the gender-specific experiences of Black enslaved women and the forms of resistance they adopted to fight their enslavement. Elgersman Lee's study compares early Canada with Jamaica.¹⁵² In *The Hanging of Angélique*, Afua Cooper explores slavery in New France within the context of the Transatlantic slave trade. This backdrop provides a rich context for her detailed analysis of Marie-Joseph Angélique's life. Marie-Joseph Angélique was an enslaved woman born in Portugal, who was convicted and executed on June 21, 1734 for having allegedly set fire to her owner's house, which caused Old Montreal to burn on April 10, 1734.¹⁵³

Historian Frank Mackey's *Done with Slavery*, which came out in 2010, adheres to some degree to both the "*Black Survivor*" and "*Black community* orientation" typology. Mackey studied the phasing out of slavery in the city of Montreal and concluded enslaved and free Black people lived alongside each other in Montreal at the turn of the eighteenth century. Mackey tried to enumerate and name all those who were enslaved in the city. His study thus engages with Trudel's data, however he takes care to highlight that the end of slavery was the result of enslaved people who challenged their enslavement in courts.¹⁵⁴ These works in general show that the perspective adopted within the scholarship shifted towards a stronger focus on enslaved people's experiences over the past few decades.

¹⁵⁰ Gay, *Les Noirs Du Québec*, 17-8.

¹⁵¹ Gay, 397-400.

¹⁵² Maureen Elgersman Lee, *Unyielding Spirits: Black Women and Slavery in Early Canada and Jamaica*, *Crosscurrents in African American History*, v. 6 (New York: Garland Pub, 1999).

¹⁵³ Cooper, *Hanging of Angélique*.

¹⁵⁴ Mackey, *Done with Slavery*.

Textbooks as ideological vectors provide a state-endorsed narrative which re-creates the imagined community in question.¹⁵⁵ Grever and Van der Vlies stressed that “the organization of historical knowledge sustains the perpetuation of national narratives in history textbooks.”¹⁵⁶ Scholars who analyzed textbook representation in Quebec frequently refer to an undefined “master narrative” or “grand narrative”. However, my sense is that this narrative is at the origin of textbook representations and it is one that hinges on notions of the important and unimportant, and related issues around inclusion and exclusion. Teachers see the transmission of the collective memory of their community at least as a partial teaching objective.¹⁵⁷

Analyses of the “master narratives” that guide textbooks contents have been shown to be largely exclusionary. In fact, LaGarrett J. King and Crystal Simmons suggest that in Canada as well as the United States “history textbooks . . . tend to marginalize the histories of those who are not wealthy, White, heterosexual, and male.”¹⁵⁸ Carmen Poole highlights that “the Canadian grand narrative”, as it is presented in textbooks, “by virtue of its whiteness, places Canadian black students in the category of ‘not of the nation.’”¹⁵⁹ This “othering” renders Black students identification with the imagined community impossible. In order to respond to these exclusions numerous efforts were undertaken in the United States to “improve Black history representation in the curriculum.”¹⁶⁰

In Quebec, no systematic study from 1960 to the present exists on the representation of Black people and slavery in provincial curriculum or textbooks.¹⁶¹ The studies which discuss the absence of Black history from textbooks rarely discuss the representation of slavery in detail and do not discuss

¹⁵⁵ See discussion in Introduction.

¹⁵⁶ Grever and van der Vlies, “Why National Narratives Are Perpetuated,” 287.

¹⁵⁷ Alexandre Lanoix, “L’identification à La Nation Dans Les Représentations Sociales Des Enseignants d’histoire Québécois,” *McGill Journal of Education* 52, no. 1 (August 14, 2017): 183, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1040810ar>.

¹⁵⁸ LaGarrett J. King and Crystal Simmons, “Narratives of Black History in Textbooks,” in *The Wiley International Handbook of History Teaching and Learning* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2018), 93, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119100812.ch4>.

¹⁵⁹ Poole, “Not of the Nation,” 93.

¹⁶⁰ George J. Sefa Dei, “The Role of Afrocentricity in the Inclusive Curriculum in Canadian Schools,” *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue Canadienne de l’éducation* 21, no. 2 (1996): 170–86, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1495088>.

¹⁶¹ A number of interesting studies on the representation of Indigenous allowed me to better understand the representation of colonization. See Sylvie Vincent and Bernard Arcand, *L’image de l’Amérindien Dans Les Manuels Scolaires Du Québec: Ou, Comment Les Québécois Ne Sont Pas Des Sauvages*, Cahiers Du Québec; 51 (Ville LaSalle, Québec: Hurtubise HMH, 1979), <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89058275215&view=1up&seq=10>; Gabrielle Arsenault, “La reconnaissance des peuples autochtones dans l’enseignement de l’histoire nationale à l’école secondaire au Québec, 1970-2010,” *Aspects sociologiques* 19, no. 1 (2011): 138–57; Adeela Arshad-Ayaz, “Representations of First Nations in Quebec History and Citizenship Textbooks,” in *Representation of Minorities in Textbooks: International Comparative Perspectives*, ed. M. Ayaz Naseem, Adeela Arshad-Ayaz, and Jesús Rodríguez Rodríguez (Santiago de Compostela: International Association for Research on Textbooks and Educational Media (IARTEM), 2016), 13–24.

the source of this knowledge. The studies discussed below provide a chronological overview of how scholars analyzed Black people's representation and the conclusions they reached from the study of Quebec's textbooks at different points in time. Most of the scholars who analysed textbook adopted an approach in which they analyzed the entire textbook for information on Black people or slavery respectively.

Ten years ago, Augustin Roland D'Almeida analyzed the historical representation of Black people in four textbooks in the nineteenth century. His analysis shows that references to Black history were rare and "surtout anecdotique tout en donnant l'impression qu'elle est occultée."¹⁶² D'Almeida used Daniel Gay and Marcel Trudel to correct historically inaccurate citations or omissions. However, he disregards the origins of the representations offered in the nineteenth century textbooks he studied.¹⁶³ Only one of the four textbooks D'Almeida analyzed, provided some detail on slavery. *Cours d'histoire du Canada*, published in 1865, mentions that slavery was less "severe" and significant in Canada than elsewhere:

Mais, tout comme les historiens nationalistes du Québec, [Jean-Baptiste-Antoine] Ferland tient toutefois à minimiser l'esclavage au Québec à comparer aux entités voisines : "Cependant, on voit qu'il y avait fort peu d'esclaves au Canada, et que la servitude y était beaucoup moins sévère que dans les provinces anglaises."¹⁶⁴

This excerpt overlaps with the historiographical debate, which is still taking place regarding the degree to which slavery was violent and comparable to the rest of the Americas.¹⁶⁵

Within their analysis of Indigenous representation in the 1970s, Sylvie Vincent and Bernard criticized the lack of discussion on slavery in the teaching materials they analyzed. As such, they argue that the textbook authors "doivent tous savoir, au moins depuis la publication de Marcel Trudel de *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, que le phénomène a existé et que son importance numérique fut assez appréciable."¹⁶⁶ Vincent and Arcand thus acknowledge that textbook representation hinges on the historical knowledge available. Vincent and Arcand were thus very critical of the way in which teaching materials represented slavery. For example, they took issue with the way that *Boréal Express*, a fictional newspaper intended to convey historical knowledge, for instance, "plutôt que de n'en rien dire, . . .

¹⁶² Augustin Roland D'Almeida, "La présence des noirs au Québec : état des lieux et examen de quatre manuels d'enseignement de l'histoire au XIXe siècle" (2010), 1, <https://corpus.ulaval.ca/jspui/handle/20.500.11794/21738>.

¹⁶³ D'Almeida, 64.

¹⁶⁴ Jean-Baptiste-Antoine Ferland, *Cours d'histoire Du Canada*, vol. 2-1663-1759, 2 vols. (Québec: Augustin Côté, 1865); Cited in D'Almeida, 70.

¹⁶⁵ See my analysis in Chapter Three of the historiography on slavery in Quebec.

¹⁶⁶ Vincent and Arcand, *L'image de l'Amérindien Dans Les Manuels Scolaires Du Québec*, 119.

préfère ça moufler ‘sous le tapis’ de la bonté du gouverneur et de l’objection morale du journal toute la question de l’esclavage amérindien en Nouvelle-France.”¹⁶⁷

Anti-racist scholar Jodie Glean studied the representation of African Canadians in the *Panoramas* textbooks used for the 2007 history curriculum.¹⁶⁸ Glean’s study focused on the representation of African Canadians and particularly the consequences of their marginalization on their sense of belonging and identity formation. Glean critiques the fact that the textbook failed to name “noteworthy” enslaved people such as Olivier le Jeune or Marie-Joseph Angélique. Glean argues that “naming enables a shift in the position of Blacks within the historical narrative from marginalisation to being central within the historical discourse.”¹⁶⁹ Glean showed that Black slavery was only mentioned in the section on “Population” but not in the section on “Economic Development.” On this basis, she concluded that “African Canadian history [was] . . . concomitantly acknowledged and dismissed within the Canadian historical narrative.”¹⁷⁰ This narrative organisation thus denied enslaved people’s contribution to the economic development of the colony.¹⁷¹

Thus, textbook representation of slavery was found to be insufficient if the topic was addressed at all. Canada’s and Quebec’s national narratives were found to focus solely on the history of English- and French-speaking people respectively, without discussing other groups. Black history in Quebec has evolved from scholarship that focused on Black people as clients to historiographical discussions of enslaved people’s experiences and resistance against the institution of slavery. I inquire in my thesis how these representations interact: Did the change in Black historiography parallel an increased focus on enslaved people’s experiences in textbooks? Did public discussions in newspapers on Quebec’s Black population translate into a better integration in textbooks? Did national narratives impact the way historians wrote about Black history?

¹⁶⁷ Vincent and Arcand, 119.

¹⁶⁸ Jodie Glean, “An Examination of the Representation of African Canadians in the Montréal High School History Textbook, *Panoramas* Volumes One and Two” (M.A. Thesis, Concordia University, 2011), <https://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/35886/>.

¹⁶⁹ Glean, 53.

¹⁷⁰ Glean, 56.

¹⁷¹ Glean, 56.

Chapter Two The Birth of a Classic

In 1960, Marcel Trudel published *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*. The book focused on slavery—a topic that had been marginalized and largely unaddressed within earlier mainstream Quebec historiography. In this chapter, I trace Trudel's intellectual and professional trajectory to contextualize the research and creation of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*. For my analysis, I used Trudel's memoirs published in 1986, articles written on his life in newspapers, and historiographers' discussions of post-war Quebec historians. Trudel's academic career was marked by a tension with the Catholic church and the dominant French-Canadian national narrative, which he worked on revising throughout his academic career through “rigorous” historical research.¹⁷² I further outline the context in which Trudel wrote *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, which was published in the early years of his career. I argue that *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* fitted well into Trudel's “anti-clerical and self-critical” approach to historical writing that started to mark his career in the mid-1950s.¹⁷³

After this contextualization, I analyze the approach, content, and perspective adopted in *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* to understand its evolving influence on Black history in Quebec as evidenced in newspaper articles and textbooks. In *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, Trudel studied the enslavement of Indigenous and Black people on the territory that is now known as Quebec. Trudel noted, “[c]e n'est pas la première fois que l'on traite de l'esclavage au Canada Français.” But he made clear, “jusqu'ici cependant, personne encore n'avait tenté d'écrire une histoire exhaustive de cet esclavage.”¹⁷⁴ Hence, Trudel aimed to explore all facets of the institution: from the arrival of the first enslaved person on the territory to the legal disputes at the end of it. He looked at enslaved people's living conditions and the motivations of slaveholders to possess slave labour.

In order to understand how *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* established the frames and empirical foundations for the representation of Black slavery within Quebec's subsequent scholarship, newspapers, and history textbooks, I analyzed Trudel's usage of primary sources and his main conclusions about the nature of slavery in French Canada. I also studied how *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* represented enslaved people and their agency and how Trudel constructed his arguments. Trudel used a wide array of primary sources, some of which were difficult to access. These archival documents were held by individual presbyteries and the archival records were often not catalogued. In addition, the clerics who worked there, controlled access to these archives. Exploring these facets

¹⁷² “L'historien Marcel Trudel honoré par le Conseil des arts du Canada,” *La Presse*, October 26, 1981, B12.

¹⁷³ Rudin, *Making History*, 138.

¹⁷⁴ Trudel, *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, Avant-Propos.

of how *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* was created enabled me to critically read summaries and interpretations of the book in newspaper articles and textbooks in the following chapters.

A Historian of and Against his Time

Marcel Trudel was born in 1917 in St-Narcisse, Quebec. Trudel named his memoirs “d’un autre siècle” to underline the degree to which he considered the way remnants of the *Ancien régime* shaped his upbringing.¹⁷⁵ At five years of age, he lost his mother and was adopted by an extended family in Trois-Rivières.¹⁷⁶ Three years later, his adoptive parents sent him to an orphanage due to a lack of space in the home and in order to educate him. As a result, he only went home for the holidays. Trudel recounts his negative experiences at the orphanage in his memoirs, where he and his peers experienced corporal punishment and poor material conditions.¹⁷⁷ Trudel would only stay in the orphanage for a year before transferring to the *Jardin de l’Enfance* behind the seminary, where he became “un petit monsieur de la ville.”¹⁷⁸ He recalls the disciplinary nature of the school, and its good quality of schooling.¹⁷⁹ In 1930, he entered the *Collège Séraphique* to become a priest. The new director expelled him five years later because he did not think Trudel was devoted enough.¹⁸⁰ As a result, Trudel entered the *Séminaire*, where Trois-Rivières’ middle-class children trained for liberal professions. While at the seminary, Trudel engaged in some Duplessis-era nationalist causes and wrote articles calling for the return to agricultural labour and the rejection of imperialism.¹⁸¹

In 1938, once his classical education was finished, Trudel entered the *Grand Séminaire* in order to train and fulfil his ambition to teach Greek and Latin. One year later, Trudel changed his mind again and pursued the secular academic path by enrolling at Laval University to study Greek and French literature. The Second World War prevented his plan to study in Paris.¹⁸² After his *licence*, Trudel taught at *Collège Bourget* in Rigaud to finance his PhD in French literature in which he explored Voltaire’s influence on Quebec’s intelligentsia. Completed in 1945, Trudel received harsh criticism for his dissertation because it showed Voltaire’s influence on prominent French-Canadian intellectuals such as François-Xavier Garneau. This argument was controversial because Voltaire was known for

¹⁷⁵ Marcel Trudel, *Mémoires d’un Autre Siècle*. (Montréal, Québec: Éditions du Boréal Express, 1986), 10.

¹⁷⁶ Trudel, 35–49.

¹⁷⁷ Trudel, 56–58.

¹⁷⁸ Trudel, 68.

¹⁷⁹ Trudel, 66–68.

¹⁸⁰ Trudel, 87.

¹⁸¹ Trudel, 110–11.

¹⁸² Trudel, 115.

his criticism of the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁸³ Trudel responded to critics of his dissertation that he had to write favourably about the Catholic Church and had to maintain an anti-Voltairean stance to make sure that his dissertation would be accepted.¹⁸⁴ At the time the University of Laval was under control of the Catholic church. This consideration shows that Catholic institution at which Trudel worked prevented a more anti-clerical approach in his scholarship from developing at the time.

From 1945 to 1947, he studied at Harvard University to prepare for his professorship in Canadian history at Laval University. While there, he familiarized himself with American historical methods and benefited from access to French scholars. He states in his memoirs that he caught up with the state of the art of historical scholarship while at Harvard: “Je devais me mettre à la page : ailleurs que chez nous, l’histoire comme discipline avait évolué dans ses méthodes et dans ses préoccupations.”¹⁸⁵ In 1947, he became professor of Canadian history at Laval University and was the first secretary of the newly established *Institut d’histoire et de géographie* from 1947 to 1954.¹⁸⁶ In this function, Trudel was central to building the first history program at a French-Canadian university.¹⁸⁷ In 1954, he replaced Abbott Arthur Maheux, known for his dispute with Lionel Groulx over the interpretation of the Conquest, as director of the *Institut*.¹⁸⁸

As such, Trudel was part of the first generation of what historian Ronald Rudin calls “lay professional[s],” “who viewed themselves as professionals engaged in a ‘scientific’ endeavour.”¹⁸⁹ In Quebec, history was institutionally established as a “separate discipline” that “was a profession to be carried out by experts with appropriate credentials—increasingly, the PhD” only in the 1940s.¹⁹⁰ He was, as such, part of the generation that drove the formation of an autonomous historical field in Quebec, particularly vis-à-vis the Catholic church. In the 1960s, Trudel argued that “pour écrire l’histoire du Canada français, il fallait être, premièrement Canadien français, et, deuxièmement

¹⁸³ François-Olivier Dorais, “Marcel Trudel et Guy Frégault : Regards Sur Une Amitié Intellectuelle,” *Recherches Sociographiques* 57, no. 2–3 (December 14, 2016): 528, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1038438ar>.

¹⁸⁴ Trudel, *Mémoires d’un Autre Siècle*, 270; Bernard Andrès, “Pour un nouvel éclairage sur les Lumières au Québec,” *Voix et Images* 16, no. 1 (1990): 138, <https://doi.org/10.7202/200880ar>.

¹⁸⁵ Trudel, *Mémoires d’un Autre Siècle*, 161; Rudin, *Making History*, 191–92. Of Trudel’s contemporaries, only Guy Frégault also went to the United States for his professional training.

¹⁸⁶ “Marcel Trudel”; Rudin, *Making History*, 69, 80; Trudel, *Mémoires d’un Autre Siècle*, 175; Louise Chevrier, “Confidences d’un historien : marcel Trudel, le grand défricheur de l’histoire,” *Histoire Québec* 14, no. 3 (2009): 6–8; Jacques Mathieu, “Marcel Trudel (1917–2011),” *Recherches sociographiques* 52, no. 1 (2011): 203–7, <https://doi.org/10.7202/045871ar>.

¹⁸⁷ Alan Hustak, “Quebec Historian Put the Facts before the Church-Approved Version of the Past,” *The Globe and Mail*, February 3, 2011, Special to The Globe and Mail edition, <http://v1.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/LAC.20110203.OBTRUDELATL/BDAStory/BDA/deaths>.

¹⁸⁸ Dorais, “Marcel Trudel et Guy Frégault,” 526; Rudin, *Making History*, 51.

¹⁸⁹ Rudin, *Making History*, 3, 15.

¹⁹⁰ Rudin, 3, 14.

catholique pratiquant.”¹⁹¹ In his memoirs, written in 1986, he stresses on numerous occasions how much he felt the church constricted his intellectual freedom in the early days of his career.¹⁹² Trudel expresses in his memoirs the disconnect he felt with the institutional dynamics at Laval University: “professeurs d’une institution du Pape, nous devions nous montrer “papophiles. . . . C’est dans cette atmosphère d’orthodoxie que j’arrivais en 1947.”¹⁹³ Further, he described the accepted narrative that was taught at Laval University as:

D’une génération à l’autre, on avait transmis en histoire les mêmes schèmes de pensée sur l’origine, le rôle et la nature du peuple canadien-français : les Français venus évangéliser et les Anglais commercer ; la mission providentielle des Canadiens français en Amérique : l’angélisme de nos personnages historiques.¹⁹⁴

This narrative promoted a coherent and positive image of French Canadians and their history.

In the early years of his career, Trudel was very involved in building up the study of history in Quebec. He “admired” Lionel Groulx particularly for his use of primary sources.¹⁹⁵ Roland Rudin argues that the conflict Trudel developed with Abbé Groulx, which he discussed in his memoirs, only developed later. Rudin argues that Trudel had a certain affinity with Groulx’s cultural nationalism, which influenced his work.¹⁹⁶ Through his membership in the directorial committee of the *Institut d’histoire de l’Amérique française* in 1948, which had been established by Groulx the previous year, he became acquainted with his peers at the University of Montreal, including Guy Frégault, Maurice Séguin and Michel Brunet.¹⁹⁷

Until the mid-1950s Trudel was “for all intents and purposes, a member of the ‘École de Montreal.’”¹⁹⁸ Rudin suggests that Trudel was alienated by English Canada due to a funding refusal from the National Research Council and his unsuccessful attempts to get the Canadian Historical Review to publish articles in French.¹⁹⁹ Trudel distanced himself from Maheux’s “benign” interpretations of the Conquest and his disregard for historical methods.²⁰⁰ The most influential evidence of Trudel’s proximity to the *École de Montréal* was the publication in 1952 of *Histoire du Canada*

¹⁹¹ Jean Basile, “Quand un historien accepte sa propre histoire - Une autobiographie de Marcel Trudel,” *La Presse*, January 2, 1988, F4.

¹⁹² Trudel, *Mémoires d’un Autre Siècle*, 170-3, 181-3.

¹⁹³ Trudel, 173.

¹⁹⁴ Trudel, 192.

¹⁹⁵ Trudel, 185; Rudin, *Making History*, 134.

¹⁹⁶ Rudin, *Making History*, 68, 85. Rudin argues that this can be explained by the historiographical context in the 1980 that was “busily marginalizing Groulx’s ‘scientific’ legacy.”

¹⁹⁷ Trudel, *Mémoires d’un Autre Siècle*, 184–87.

¹⁹⁸ Rudin, *Making History*, 136.

¹⁹⁹ Rudin, 83.

²⁰⁰ Rudin, 83.

par les textes, a collection of annotated primary sources on the history of New France for students, which he wrote together with Guy Frégault and Michel Brunet.²⁰¹ Frégault, his closest friend from the group, even offered him a position at the Université de Montréal, which Trudel, despite his growing disagreement with Maheux, refused due to the better pay and archival access at Laval University.²⁰²

In 1955, Trudel started to publish work that was marked by both an “anti-clerical and self-critical” approach that would become his trademark for the rest of his career, and which ultimately caused him to sever ties with the Montreal school.²⁰³ In these years, Trudel’s research focused on the British military regime between 1759 and 1764 and the American Revolution’s influence in Canada.²⁰⁴ His anti-clerical approach was evident in *Chiniquy*, published in 1955, a favourable biography of a former Catholic priest who renounced Catholicism.²⁰⁵ It was also on display in *L’Église canadienne sous le régime militaire* published in 1956, which addressed the internal weaknesses of the Catholic church in French Canada during the British military regime and established Trudel’s reputation as a historian.²⁰⁶

It was this “self-critical” character, the fact that Trudel did not shy away from addressing negative aspects of French Canadian society, that was at the origin of a rift with the *École de Montréal* and brought Trudel closer to Maheux’s and the Laval School’s interpretation of Quebec’s past, which was more critical of French Canadian society.²⁰⁷ Under Trudel’s influence alongside that of Fernand Ouellet and Jean Hamelin, *l’École de Laval*, grew more critical of the Catholic church as well.²⁰⁸ The 1963 version of *Histoire du Canada par les textes*, showed the divergence over the interpretation of the Conquest between Trudel and the Montreal school. In this version, Trudel included documents that showed positive consequences of the Conquest and highlighted the internal problems of New France that were not caused by the British Conquest.²⁰⁹ With that, Trudel took aim at the historical narrative

²⁰¹ Rudin, 136.

²⁰² Rudin, 85.

²⁰³ Rudin, 138.

²⁰⁴ Marcel Trudel, “Marcel Trudel: Bibliographie complète.”

²⁰⁵ Marcel Trudel, *Chiniquy* (Trois Rivières, Que.: Éditions du Bien Public, 1954), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015064366274>.

²⁰⁶ Rudin, *Making History*, 138–39; Mathieu, “Marcel Trudel (1917-2011)” ; Marcel Trudel, *Le Régime Militaire Dans Le Gouvernement Des Trois-Rivières, 1760-1764* (Trois-Rivières: Éditions du Bien public, 1952); Marcel Trudel, *L’Église Canadienne Sous Le Régime Militaire, 1759-1764*, Études de l’Institut d’histoire de l’Amérique Française 1 (Québec: Presses universitaires Laval, 1956), [//catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001416026](http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001416026); Marcel Trudel, *L’Église Canadienne Sous Le Régime Militaire, 1759-1764*, Études de l’Institut d’histoire de l’Amérique Française 2 (Québec: Presses universitaires Laval, 1957), [//catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001416026](http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001416026); François-Olivier Dorais, “Marcel Trudel et Fernand Ouellet : deux historiens face à la « crise du séparatisme »,” *Bulletin d’histoire politique* 25, no. 3 (2017): 126, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1039748ar>.

²⁰⁷ Rudin, *Making History*, 140.

²⁰⁸ Rudin, *Making History*, 129–34; Dorais, “Marcel Trudel et Guy Frégault,” 525.

²⁰⁹ Rudin, *Making History*, 137.

notably supported by Groulx that “characterized Quebecers as a people who had largely been left to struggle for their survival under both the French and the English regimes.”

His narrative was much closer to the arguments advanced by Maheux, who did not present the English as the enemy.²¹⁰ Maheux stressed the fact that the Conquest allowed the Catholic church to survive and to limit the influence of the French Revolution.²¹¹ The narrative he put forward was at odds with the period of self-affirmation and state-building that marked the Quiet Revolution.²¹² Further, Trudel’s self-critical research put him also at the center of the “generation of iconoclasts,” as he re-examined the legacy of Jacques Cartier.²¹³ Historians of the *École de Laval* highlighted the internal problems of New France, rather than focusing on the negative consequences of the Conquest by the English.²¹⁴

In contrast, the *École de Montréal* was not outspokenly critical of the clergy but of the British rule.²¹⁵ Trudel was particularly critical of the idea that history should be written in a way that would avoid any critique of ancestors. For Trudel, history should be “libre de toute idée préconçue, indépendante de toute utilité immédiate.”²¹⁶ Jean Basile, Canadian journalist and novelist, summarized Trudel’s position in an article for *La Presse* in 1982.

Comme historien, il ne croit pas, il n’a jamais cru à “notre histoire est une épopée”.
C’est dire qu’il n’est pas un disciple de Groulx et moins encore de Garneau.
L’histoire pour Marcel Trudel est une science. On ne doit pas la truquer pour
quelque but que ce soit.²¹⁷

Ronald Rudin argues that this idea of objectivity was typical for this generation of historians who believed “that the past could be known ‘as it really was,’ free of the biases of historian, if only proper, scientific methods were employed.”²¹⁸ For Trudel, studying primary sources “truthfully” and referencing them in footnotes was what constitutes good historical writing.²¹⁹

Trudel argued that this was at odds with the historical writing of the time, which maintained a patriotic image in which scholars had to protect the image of French Canadians. He declared: “Il ne

²¹⁰ Rudin, 55.

²¹¹ Rudin, 130.

²¹² Rudin, 140.

²¹³ Gagnon, *Quebec and Its Historians*, 46.

²¹⁴ Rudin, *Making History*, 93, 96.

²¹⁵ Rudin, 138.

²¹⁶ Trudel, *Mémoires d’un Autre Siècle*, 195–96.

²¹⁷ Basile, “Une autobiographie de Marcel Trudel,” F4.

²¹⁸ Rudin, *Making History*, 3.

²¹⁹ Marcel Trudel and Mathieu d’Avignon, “Connaître pour le plaisir de connaître”: entretien avec l’historien Marcel Trudel sur la science historique et le métier d’historien au Québec, *Entretiens* (Sainte-Foy, Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 2005), 4.

fallait pas ‘rabaïsser notre histoire.’”²²⁰ Trudel would be recognized as being “à l’origine d’un renouveau méthodologique” in Quebec’s historiography,²²¹ which would rely on Trudel’s goal to write “objective” and “true” history. As such, Trudel states on his website still in 2011 that he was “à la recherche de la “vraie” Nouvelle-France.”²²² As such, Gay summarized:

Des aspects inconnus ou peu connus de la genèse de la société québécoise, notamment l’existence et la dynamique de l’esclavage, le traitement inégalitaire des Amérindiens et des Noirs, les avantages socioéconomiques et politiques que la gestion de l’“institution servile” offre aux groupes dominants, et le processus de marginalisation de groupes plus faibles.²²³

In this sense Trudel’s work focused on aspects that concern marginalized groups within society that were negatively impacted by the economic and social system in place.

His historical writing put Trudel at odds with Lionel Groulx, whose scholarship was “chrétienne et patriotique” and centered on the development of French Canadians in opposition with other groups.²²⁴ As Gay explained:

[Lionel Groulx] tend à présenter le Canada français comme un modèle de pureté chrétienne et comme la victime perpétuelle de groupes hostiles coalisés contre lui, dont les Amérindiens et les Anglais. De plus, contrairement à Trudel, Groulx nie aux Amérindiens et aux Noirs le statut de groupe historique. Ce qui n’est pas surprenant puisqu’il prétend que le “petit peuple” canadien-français ne s’est développé que par ses propres moyens.²²⁵

Trudel’s historical writing thus became irreconcilable with that of Groulx, as Trudel opposed Groulx’s view that French Canadians were solely victims fighting against other groups but where themselves responsible for some of their problems.

In a project with Radio-Canada in 1963, Trudel expressed his disagreement with historical writing *à la Groulx*, with its focus on patriotism: “Il me semble qu’il est important de détacher de l’histoire non seulement cette question de formation morale [de l’esprit catholique] mais aussi cette question d’amour patriotique.”²²⁶ Otherwise the historian risks falsifying history by choosing “seulement ce que nos pères ont fait de bien.”²²⁷ As early as 1963, Trudel was expressing his belief

²²⁰ Basile, “Une autobiographie de Marcel Trudel,” F4.

²²¹ Trudel and Avignon, *Connaître pour le plaisir de connaître*, 2.

²²² Marcel Trudel, “Marcel Trudel, historien.”

²²³ Gay, “Deux siècles d’esclavage au Québec,” 565.

²²⁴ Gay, 564.

²²⁵ Gay, 566.

²²⁶ “L’histoire, instrument de formation ou d’information ?,” *La Presse*, avril 1963, 2.

²²⁷ *La Presse*, 2.

that historical writing could be objective and axiologically neutral. He restated the same view in his memoirs:

Se servir de l'histoire pour soutenir la cause fédérale, c'est se condamner, comme en pratiquant le nationalisme québécois, à ne pas atteindre son objectif d'historien.²²⁸

According to Trudel, writing history that was not neutral regarding the political status of Quebec was not good historical writing. There was a danger that historians might manipulate the historical record in order to support their ideas. For instance, Trudel questioned the idea of French Canadians "purity."

Lorsque l'on parle de la "pureté de nos origines", je pense que l'on tombe ou bien dans le pur racisme ou bien dans l'idéalisme. Qu'est-ce qu'il faut entendre par "pureté de nos origines"? Que nous sommes Français de sang pur? Est-ce que ça existe vraiment?²²⁹

Trudel therefore opposed a representation of French Canadians as solely French, Catholic, and "sans mélange des races."²³⁰

Despite these tensions with Groulx, Trudel retained a certain affinity with Groulx's cultural nationalism in which all French Canadians were part of the same group, all while rejecting the emerging nationalism evident in the discourse of modernity and progress in the early years of the Quiet Revolution.²³¹ As such, Trudel supported "la dualité nationale canadienne," however he rejected "très clairement le nationalisme plus intégral, celui qui conduit à l'indépendance."²³² He expressed these views publicly in 1961.²³³ Dorais maintains that Trudel thus "suit la polarisation du champ politique Québécois autour de la question nationale."²³⁴ As such, together with the *École de Laval*, he remained highly critical of the nationalism that marked the period of the Quiet Revolution.²³⁵ Nevertheless, throughout his life, Trudel rejected the "federalist" label to describe his own political views.²³⁶

²²⁸ Trudel, *Mémoires d'un Autre Siècle*, 195–96.

²²⁹ *La Presse*, "L'histoire, instrument de formation ou d'information?" 3.

²³⁰ Pigeon, "Entretien," 16.

²³¹ Dorais, "Marcel Trudel et Fernand Ouellet," 127–28. This would put him at odds with the redefinition of French Canadians living on the territory of Quebec as *Québécois.e.s.*

²³² Dorais, 126. In 1969, Trudel was part of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. He reviewed together with Genevieve Jain textbooks in use in Quebec and the rest of Canada. The objective of their report was to find ways to reconcile the conflicting historical narratives taught in Canadian schools.

²³³ Dorais, 126.

²³⁴ Dorais, 126.

²³⁵ Dorais, 126.

²³⁶ Marcel Trudel, "Action et réaction d'un consommateur sceptique," *Écrits du Canada français*, no. 80 (1994): 61.

Trudel's eventual departure from Quebec was related to another aspect of his political views: his anti-clericalism. In 1962, he assumed the presidency of the Quebec chapter of the *Mouvement laïque de langue française*. This movement called for the secularization of Quebec society. It specifically demanded more tolerance for non-Catholics and the establishment of non-confessional education.²³⁷ As a consequence of this engagement, he was removed "as chair of the history department" in 1964 and was not promoted. As a result, Trudel left not only Laval University but also the province, moving to Ottawa.²³⁸ In his memoirs, Trudel compares himself to Benjamin Sulte, a Canadian historian born in Trois-Rivières in 1841, who published in the 1880s a series on the history of French-Canadians, whose narrative was more invested in the life of "ordinary people," more critical of the church and invested in "liberal ideas."²³⁹ Trudel argued that he had to leave to free himself from the intellectual control of the Catholic Church just like Sulte: "Je pensais à l'histoire Benjamin Sulte qui avait dû quitter son Trois-Rivières pour trouver à Ottawa liberté et franc-parler."²⁴⁰ This citation shows again Trudel's need for intellectual freedom that he saw fulfilled in his move to Ottawa.

Trudel first chose to work at Carleton University before he became professor at the University of Ottawa because the latter was still under the control of the Catholic church when he arrived in Ottawa, though this changed over the course of the year.²⁴¹ Trudel taught at the University of Ottawa's history department until his retirement and dedicated his career to the history of New France.²⁴² His most important historical contribution was his research on the society of New France, particularly, his five-volume long *Histoire de la Nouvelle-France* published between 1963 to 1999 by *Fides*.²⁴³ For this work, he acquired the sobriquet "Monsieur Nouvelle-France."²⁴⁴

His move coincided with an important shift in Quebec's historiography, which further marginalized him from Quebec's historical sphere. In the 1960s, the study of post-Confederation history became the dominant research interest with its focus on the ways in which Quebec's development coincided with the rest of North America.²⁴⁵ As a result, Trudel's interest in New France

²³⁷ Trudel, *Mémoires d'un Autre Siècle*, 240–41; Rudin, *Making History*, 140–41.

²³⁸ Rudin, *Making History*, 141.

²³⁹ "Biography – SULTE, BENJAMIN (Baptized Olivier-Benjamin Vadeboncœur) – Volume XV (1921-1930) – Dictionary of Canadian Biography," accessed October 13, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio.php?id_nbr=7872.

²⁴⁰ Trudel, *Mémoires d'un Autre Siècle*, 251.

²⁴¹ Trudel, 244–45, 255–56.

²⁴² Trudel, 266.

²⁴³ Marcel Trudel, *Histoire de La Nouvelle-France*, vol. 1, 5 vols. (Montréal/Paris: Fides, 1963-1999).

²⁴⁴ Lamon, "Marcel Trudel, Yves Beauchemin, et Jean Béliveau proclamés Grands Montérégiens"; "Marcel Trudel."

²⁴⁵ Paul-André Linteau, "Un Temps Nouveau : Au Cœur d'une histoire en transformation," *Canadian Historical Review* 101, no. 1 (February 2020): 110, <https://doi.org/10.3138/chr.2019-0014>; Rudin, *Making History*, 173–75, 182; Gagnon, *Quebec and Its Historians*, 164.

was at odds with this new historiographical tendency, as was his ideological position which focused on critiquing New France's society as exceptional rather than akin to the rest of the continent.²⁴⁶

Nevertheless, Trudel continued his self-critical work until the end of his career. Mathieu d'Avignon supports that "Marcel Trudel a largement contribué, à cette rupture avec la 'belle histoire' des Canadiens français."²⁴⁷ Between 2001 and 2010, Trudel published another five volume series on *Mythes et réalités dans l'histoire du Québec*,²⁴⁸ dedicated to deconstructing Quebec's national myths. Towards the end of his career, it became easier to express views, especially those critical of French-Canadian society:

"Je pense que les gens sont prêts à entendre ce genre de choses maintenant. Mais quand j'ai commencé ma carrière en 1945, il y avait des choses dont on ne pouvait pas parler, des idées qu'on ne pouvait pas répandre"²⁴⁹

Ouellet highlights the degree to which *Mythes et réalités dans l'histoire du Québec* was Trudel's way of dealing with the stifling social system of his youth.²⁵⁰

For his life's work he was recognized with many prizes. In 1981, he received the Molson Prize, given out by the Canadian Council for the Arts to a person who distinguished themselves in social sciences and humanities due to "la haute valeur scientifique de ses écrits, son honnêteté intellectuelle, sa rigueur professionnelle, son objectivité et sa minutie."²⁵¹ He was named *Grand officier de l'Ordre national du Québec* in 2004 and Companion of the Order of Canada in 2008.²⁵²

Later in his career, he showed himself more critical of his own work and the capacity for historians to be objective.

"Les historiens, en général aujourd'hui, essaient de se montrer les plus objectifs possible. Mais tout le monde reconnaît qu'on n'y arrive pas de façon absolue. On a une certaine formation, on a vécu dans une certaine société. Par conséquent, on n'arrive pas à enlever tous les vêtements qu'on a été obligé de porter."²⁵³

²⁴⁶ Rudin, *Making History*, 170.

²⁴⁷ Trudel and Avignon, *Connaître pour le plaisir de connaître*, 16.

²⁴⁸ Marcel Trudel, *Mythes et Réalités Dans l'histoire Du Québec*, vol. 5 (Montréal: Hurtubise HMH, 2001-2010).

²⁴⁹ Caroline Montpetit, "Le déboulonneur de mythes," *Le Devoir*, November 18, 2006, <https://www.ledevoir.com/lire/123072/le-deboulonneur-de-mythes>.

²⁵⁰ Fernand Ouellet, "Mythes et Réalités Dans l'histoire Du Québec by Marcel Trudel (Review)," *The Canadian Historical Review* 83, no. 4 (2002): 585–87; Stéphane-D. Perreault, "TRUDEL, Marcel, Mythes et réalités dans l'histoire du Québec (Montréal, Hurtubise HMH, coll. « Cahiers du Québec, histoire », 2001), 325 p.," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 56, no. 3 (2003): 430–32, <https://doi.org/10.7202/007635ar>.

²⁵¹ *La Presse*, "Marcel Trudel honoré."

²⁵² "TRUDEL, Marcel, C.C. 1917 - 2011," *La Presse*, January 12, 2011, 9; "Marcel Trudel – Ordre National Du Québec," accessed October 10, 2020, <https://www.ordre-national.gouv.qc.ca/membres/membre.asp?id=332>.

²⁵³ Montpetit, "Le déboulonneur de mythes."

He acknowledged at this point that historians could not entirely escape their socialization.

In 1994, he also reflected critically on his own racist socialization and its consequences, when he discussed François-Xavier Garneau's tendency to exclude "tout ce qui n'est ni français ni catholique ni blanc."²⁵⁴

Sous la pression de ces lectures, ai-je été inconsciemment, comme bien d'autres au collège ou à un moment ou l'autre de ma carrière, aussi raciste que certains de nos maîtres à penser ? En tout cas, doué d'un esprit de contradiction (ce qu'on appelait *mauvais esprit* et qui me valut, comme à plusieurs d'entre vous (j'imagine), d'être mis à la porte du collège), j'eus comme réaction de chercher la contrepartie ; je me suis appliqué et j'ai amené la nouvelle génération d'historiens à produire une histoire qui ne fût plus une histoire idéalisée.²⁵⁵

In acknowledging the nature of his upbringing, Trudel also focused on the fact that he rebelled against these historians and countered this exclusionary narrative in his own historical writing. In other words, he opened the door to discuss his own racist biases and closed it again immediately.

Furthermore, Trudel insisted on distinguishing the racism from his childhood from those forms that lead to genocidal violence and segregation. As such, he believes that there is a difference between the type of racism with which he grew up and other types of racism:

Mais attention ! Quand nous parlons de racisme, ayons bien soin de situer ce mot dans son époque. Aujourd'hui, *racisme* évoque l'Holocauste, l'apartheid, les terribles "purifications ethniques". Le racisme de Groulx et des auteurs de son temps n'a rien de l'élimination physique, rien de meurtrier : il n'est que manifestation d'orgueil, une façon de se croire supérieur aux autres par le sang ou par l'esprit ; à ces autres qu'on est sûr de pouvoir regarder de haut, on refuse de se mêler, mais sans nécessairement vouloir les chasser ; la plupart du temps, ce n'est peut-être qu'exaltation oratoire.²⁵⁶

He thus argued that racism in French Canada did not aim to eradicate the racialized "other." These comments show that he acknowledged his own racist biases solely to a limited degree.

Trudel died on January 11, 2011.²⁵⁷ The obituaries published upon his death provide some insights into how Trudel's significance for the historical field in Quebec and Canada was assessed. Alan Hustak, an author and journalist for the *Montreal Gazette* who formerly worked for CBC summarized Trudel's *œuvre* in his obituary for the *Globe and Mail* under the title: "Quebec historian put

²⁵⁴ Trudel, "Action et réaction d'un consommateur sceptique," 58.

²⁵⁵ Trudel, 59–60.

²⁵⁶ Trudel, 59.

²⁵⁷ "Avis de Décès: Marcel Trudel, C.C. 1917-2011," *Le Devoir*, December 1, 2011, <http://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/2929602>.

the facts before the church-approved version of the past.”²⁵⁸ Trudel was recognized for his “objective” work that placed factual information above adherence to pre-existing narratives, particularly those put forward by the church. It also stressed that the guiding principle of his career was his opposition to the Catholic church in Quebec. George Tombs, a Montreal based journalist, translator, and historian, who translated Trudel’s work on slavery in 2012, added that he “was much more critical of French Canadians themselves.”²⁵⁹ As such, this obituary recognized both the “anti-clerical and self-critical” aspect of his work.

The two *La Presse* obituaries and the one published by *Le Devoir* make the same point and further support the importance of Trudel’s work in shaping Quebec’s historiography and for revising Quebec’s historical narratives. For example, the following obituary, which appeared in *La Presse*, stressed Trudel’s anti-clerical and self-critical work:

Marcel Trudel était notre plus grand historien. C’est lui qui a imposé une démarche scientifique à l’étude de l’histoire qui, avant lui, n’était que pure propagande idéologique et religieuse. Il s’est fait bien des ennemis quand il a osé démontrer que l’arrivée des Anglais avait eu aussi des effets bénéfiques pour les Québécois. Mais dire la vérité au lieu de perpétuer des mythes a un prix : il a dû s’en aller à Ottawa.²⁶⁰

Such obituaries highlighted the importance of Trudel’s work in deconstructing the church-approved narrative of Quebec history as well as his commitment to methodological rigor. This recognition was not new. In a 2006 profile piece, published five years before his death, Trudel was described as *Le déboulonneur de mythes*.²⁶¹ Trudel was remembered as an important figure in Quebec’s historiography and commentators evidenced varying degrees of familiarity with the nuances of his work. Certain themes obviously stood out, affirmed by Trudel himself even in passing. For instance, his funeral was non-religious, suggesting that his opposition to nationalist and clerical writing also translated into his personal religious beliefs.²⁶²

Marcel Trudel started his academic career in a climate of transition, which prepared the intellectual foundation for the Quiet Revolution. Trudel’s work, which was critical of French Canadians and by extension by Quebecers, was not well-received nationalist and separatist circles

²⁵⁸ Alan Hustak, “Quebec Historian Put the Facts before the Church-Approved Version of the Past,” *Globeandmail.Com*, February 3, 2011, Special to *The Globe and Mail* edition, <http://v1.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/LAC.20110203.OBTRUDELATL/BDASStory/BDA/deaths>.

²⁵⁹ Hustak, “Quebec Historian Put the Facts before the Church-Approved Version of the Past”; “About Us – Evidentia Channel,” accessed October 6, 2020, <https://www.evidentia.net/about-george-tombs/>.

²⁶⁰ André Michaud, “À bien y penser,” *La Presse: Forum*, January 15, 2011, Plus 7.

²⁶¹ Montpetit, “Le déboulonneur de mythes.”

²⁶² “L’influence de Voltaire au Canada - Marcel Trudel,” *FQS* (blog), January 22, 2012, <http://quebecoisdesouche.info/linfluence-de-voltaire-au-canada/>.

before the Quiet Revolution took place. His self-critical approach was difficult to reconcile with the political demand for self-affirmation. At the same time, Trudel's opposition to the church-approved narrative as importantly informed by his own experience with the stifling effects it had on his own academic endeavours and childhood. Trudel's work was also influenced by post-war historiographical tendencies to write objective and axiologically neutral history.

Trudel, in this sense, was both of his time—in his anti-clerical and scientific efforts—and against his time—in his self-critical historical writing. Tombs declares that in this sense:

[Trudel] wrote what might serve as his own epitaph when he described himself as “a living document of 20th-century Quebec, especially in the era before the Quiet Revolution.”²⁶³

He thus still acknowledged that he was influenced by the period in which he lived.

L'Esclavage au Canada Français, which will be discussed in detail in the next section, was written in a context in which critiquing the Catholic church and French Catholics was a sensitive matter. When he began research on the topic in 1955, Trudel had not yet established his thematic focus on New France. *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* was one of his first books in which he dedicated a significant portion to the study of New France's society, which would mark Trudel's work for the rest of his career. According to Trudel's own comments, *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* was a side project.²⁶⁴ Yet in the context of larger career, it does not seem surprising that he would dedicate a book to disproving the myth that slavery did not exist in French Canada. It ties in well with his opposition to follow the national narrative structure as it was established by his French Canadian historians.

L'Esclavage au Canada Français: Revising the Narrative on Slavery

The Context of Publication

Although some commentators later attributed the discussion of slavery in Quebec entirely to Trudel, he was not the first to write about slavery in French Canada. Numerous historians and lawyers wrote about the topic following the end of slavery. In 1859, Jacques Viger and Louis-Hippolyte

²⁶³ Alan Hustak, “Quebec Historian Put the Facts before the Church-Approved Version of the Past,” *Globeandmail.Com*, February 3, 2011, Special to The Globe and Mail edition, <http://v1.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/LAC.20110203.OBTRUDELATL/BDASStory/BDA/deaths>.

²⁶⁴ Trudel, *Mémoires d'un Autre Siècle*, 282.

LaFontaine already compiled a dossier with information on slavery.²⁶⁵ Viger introduced his collection of documents with the statement:

L'Esclavage a-t-il existé en Canada ?—Oui l'esclavage a existé en Canada.—Il y a existé par abus, dira-t-on peut être; mais toujours il a existé de fait et sous le gouvernement français et sous le gouvernement anglais.²⁶⁶

The comments by the editor who published the collection show that he believed in the importance of the topic beyond its most immediate legal function in a legal dispute that took place in Missouri, where the debate focused on whether slavery was ever legal in French Canada:

Nous nous empressons de le publier, parce que cette question de l'esclavage en Canada, très importante en elle-même, se trouve actuellement controversée dans l'État du Missouri et que d'elle dépend l'issue de procès intéressants chez nos voisins.²⁶⁷

Trudel himself referred to Benjamin Sulte's works as "la première étude qui traite vraiment la question [de l'esclavage] dans son ensemble."²⁶⁸ In 1915, O. M. H.-Lapalice published a study on Black enslaved people in Montreal.²⁶⁹ William Renwick Riddell also showed that slavery existed in his analysis of archival texts that dates from 1923.²⁷⁰

Despite this pre-existing scholarship, the public awareness of the existence of slavery was minimal. Historian Frank Mackey has argued that:

Every generation somebody comes up and repeats [that slavery existed in Quebec]. Everybody is astounded by it. People have to stop being astounded and sort of accept the fact.²⁷¹

Yet even though generations of scholars have discussed the history of slavery in French Canada, the "surprise" element that Mackey identifies endures. Frank Mackey, Marcel Trudel, and Robin Winks all attribute Quebecers' ignorance about slavery to one of the most influential French Canadian historians, François-Xavier Garneau.²⁷² Garneau denied the existence of slavery in Canada

²⁶⁵ Jacques Viger and Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine, *De l'Esclavage En Canada*, Mémoires et documents relatifs à l'histoire du Canada, 2 vols. (Montréal: Duvernay, 1859), <http://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/2983488>; Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 10; Siemerling, *Black Atlantic Reconsidered*, 35.

²⁶⁶ Viger and LaFontaine, *De l'Esclavage En Canada*, 1.

²⁶⁷ Viger and LaFontaine, II.

²⁶⁸ Benjamin Sulte, "L'esclavage En Canada," *Revue Canadienne*, no. 61 (1911): 315–34; Trudel, *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, xxiii.

²⁶⁹ O.M. H.-Lapalice, "Les Esclaves Noirs à Montréal Sous l'ancien Régime," *Canadian Antiquarian and Numismatic Journal*, 3, XII (January 1915): 136–58.

²⁷⁰ William Renwick Riddell, "Notes on the Slave in Nouvelle-France," *The Journal of Negro History* 8, no. 3 (1923): 316–30, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2713562>.

²⁷¹ Frank Mackey, Interview about his historical research on Black people in Montreal, February 10, 2020.

²⁷² Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 16; Trudel, *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, 149; Winks, 19.

in the first three editions of his *Histoire du Canada*.²⁷³ Garneau made the following comments on slavery in the first, 1846 published version:

Nous ne croyons pas devoir omettre de mentionner ici une décision du gouvernement français qui lui fait le plus grand honneur. C'est celle relative à l'exclusion des esclaves du Canada, cette colonie que Louis XIV aimait par-dessus toutes les autres, à cause du caractère belliqueux de ses habitants, cette colonie qu'il voulait former à l'image de la France, couvrir d'une brave noblesse et d'une population vraiment nationale, catholique, française, sans mélange de races.

Dès 1688, il fut proposé d'y introduire des n[****]s. Cette proposition ne rencontra aucun appui dans le ministère, qui se contenta de répondre qu'il craignait que le changement de climat ne les fit périr, et que le projet serait dès lors inutile. C'était assez pour faire échouer une entreprise qui aurait greffé sur notre société la grande et terrible plaie qui paralyse la force d'une portion si considérable de l'Union américaine, l'esclavage, cette plaie inconnue sous notre ciel du Nord qui, s'il est souvent voilé par les nuages de la tempête, ne voit du moins lever vers lui que des fronts libres aux jours de sa sérénité.²⁷⁴

Garneau thus created the myth that slavery was “inconnu” in Canada as compared to the American Union.²⁷⁵ This error was only rectified in the 1882 edition published by Garneau's son, Alfred Garneau. Still, in this edition, the involvement of the Catholic church is denied in a footnote while the existence of slavery was acknowledged. The footnote read: “On doit dire à l'honneur du gouvernement et du clergé canadien, qu'ils ont toujours été opposés à l'introduction des noirs en Canada ?”²⁷⁶ As such, Alfred Garneau created a new myth in this edition, which protected the clergy's image. Winks argued that he probably followed his father's instructions in this revision.²⁷⁷ In a similar fashion, Groulx denied that French Canadians had “mixed” with other people. In 1936, he wrote: “Il suffit à notre fierté d'avoir dans les veines le sang de France et de n'avoir que celui-là.”²⁷⁸ Thus he denied that some French Quebecers descended from enslaved people: “Ces métis n'avaient laissé parmi nous aucune descendance, leurs familles s'étant éteintes avec la fin du XVIIIe siècle.”²⁷⁹ Both Garneau and Groulx thus denied enslaved people's existence, and influence, in French Canada.

²⁷³ Siemerling, *Black Atlantic Reconsidered*, 35; 19; Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 16. Winks argued that Garneau in fact “choose deliberately to confuse his readers.” Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 19.

²⁷⁴ François Xavier Garneau, *Histoire Du Canada Depuis Sa Découverte Jusqu'à Nos Jours* (Québec: Imprimerie N. Aubin, 1846), 447–48, <https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.35265/452?r=0&s=1>.

²⁷⁵ Karlee A. Sapoznik-Evans, “Des Lacunes En Historiographie : La Vérendrye Dans Une Perspective de Relations Homme-Femme, de Relations Raciales et d'esclavage Au Début Du Canada Français, 1731-1749,” *Cahiers Franco-Canadiens de l'Ouest* 29, no. 2 (November 30, 2017): 460, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1042269ar>.

²⁷⁶ François Xavier Garneau, *Histoire Du Canada Depuis Sa Découverte Jusqu'à Nos Jours*, 90.

²⁷⁷ Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 19.

²⁷⁸ Lionel Groulx, *Notre Maître, Le Passé* (Montréal: Librairie Granger Frères Limitée, 1936), 258, <https://www.fondationlionelgroulx.org/IMG/pdf/lionel-groulx-notre-maitre-le-passe-2e-serie.pdf>.

²⁷⁹ Groulx, 258.

It was in this context of denial that Trudel published *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* in 1960. Daniel Gay highlighted that Trudel's book stood in stark contrast with the prevalent narrative created by Garneau:

En ce temps-là et même beaucoup plus tard d'ailleurs, dans certains milieux intellectuels et politiques, la distance n'avait pas aboli une certaine mémoire historique apparemment caractérisée par la "fabrication de l'oubli". Dans cette conjoncture de répression culturelle, *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* apparaît comme l'œuvre patiente et difficile d'un chercheur autonome et iconoclaste.²⁸⁰

Gay acknowledged Trudel's opposition to the repressive social system, which obfuscated Quebec's history of slavery. Trudel did not make explicit why he undertook his research project on slavery in this context (he didn't even consider his work on slavery as central to his career in 1986, when he published his memoirs). However, Gay's portrait of Trudel as an "autonomous" and "iconoclast" researcher fits well into Trudel's overall career.

Trudel started researching *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* in 1955, eight years into teaching at Laval University.²⁸¹ At this point his research started to become more anti-clerical. For instance, Trudel had published *Chiniquy* the year before and started to break ties with the *École de Montréal*.²⁸² The following year, in his book about the British military regime, Trudel also expressed criticism of the Catholic church. Trudel declared that *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* was written, in this context, "comme pour faire diversion" or even as "école buissonnière."²⁸³

Due to his other church critical publications, parish archivists were reticent to provide Trudel access to their archives when he inquired about slavery.²⁸⁴ Access was more easily granted, when Trudel asked for information on Indigenous people.²⁸⁵ However, even when he did so, he was

²⁸⁰ Pigeon, "Entretien," 16.

²⁸¹ He may have read American scholarship that discussed slavery during his stay at Harvard. Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* (New York: Knopf, 1946); Alejandro de la Fuente, "From Slaves to Citizens? Tannenbaum and the Debates on Slavery, Emancipation, and Race Relations in Latin America," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 77 (2010): 154–73; Gilberto Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves (Casa-Grande & Senzala): A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization*, trans. Samuel Putman, 2nd ed., Casa-Grande & Senzala (New York: Knopf, 1956), //catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001448414. Frank Tannenbaum's work as well as that of Gilberto Freyre distinguished the type of slavery that existed in the United States with that in Latin America. They argued that Latin American slavery, particularly the system in place in Brazil had been more "mild." The work of these scholars who posited that slavery in Protestant countries was different than those under Catholicism could have influenced Trudel's interpretations. The circulation of these comparative slavery studies on the idea of Canadian slavery's "humanness" should be further studied. Winks retained some of these claims in his 1971 work.

²⁸² Trudel, *Chiniquy*.

²⁸³ Trudel, *Mémoires d'un Autre Siècle*, 282.

²⁸⁴ Trudel, *Mémoires d'un Autre Siècle*, 212; Montpetit, "Le déboulonneur de mythes."

²⁸⁵ Trudel, *Mémoires d'un Autre Siècle*, 212.

informed that “il n’y a pas eu de S[*****]s *icitte* !”²⁸⁶ Although Trudel stressed in his memoirs that he received little support for his study, *L’Esclavage au Canada Français* was funded in part by the Conseil des Arts du Canada.²⁸⁷ The State considered thus the project already in 1960 to be relevant enough to receive financial support.

*The New Narrative on Slavery*²⁸⁸

Within *L’Esclavage au Canada Français*, Trudel countered the narrative on slavery developed by national historians such as Garneau and Groulx. In response to these scholars, Trudel developed a new narrative on slavery which acknowledged and affirmed the existence of slavery in what is today known as Quebec, however, it was also a narrative that insisted that slavery was “humane” in French Canada.²⁸⁹ This argument was based on a non-critical analysis of primary sources produced by slaveholders and state-institutions, including matrimonial, christening, and burial records as well as legal documents such as sales contracts.

In addition to proving the existence of slavery, Trudel countered the church-approved and nationalist narrative put forward by Xavier-François Garneau and Lionel Groulx. As such, Trudel discussed (1) the involvement of the Catholic church in slavery, (2) the difference between French and English slaveholding practices, and (3) the fact that children were born in and out of wedlock between enslaved people and French Canadians. His interest in these three questions aligns with the assessment that his historical scholarship was both anti-clerical and self-critical.

First, Trudel stated that: “à aucun moment . . . le clergé n’a manifesté une opposition officielle”²⁹⁰ to contradict Alfred Garneau’s denial of the church’s involvement in slavery. The involvement of the Catholic church in slavery was still a sensitive topic in 1960. Trudel introduced his discussion of the church’s involvement in slavery by citing Garneau’s claim that the church opposed slavery. He said “comme il importe d’établir s’il y a vraiment des groupes d’individus (nous pensons, par exemple, au clergé) qui ont refusé par principe d’asservir des êtres humains.”²⁹¹

²⁸⁶ Pigeon, “Entretien,” 18.

²⁸⁷ Maurice Lebel, “Chronique: A la faculté des lettres de l’université Laval,” *L’action catholique*, December 16, 1960, 4.

²⁸⁸ Trudel’s work appears to develop a new colonial narrative in that it produces and reproduces a highly problematic representation of Indigenous people. As this is beyond the scope of this project, I do not discuss Quebec’s complex relationship to colonialism and the Indigenous people living in the same area. This discussion, however, merits further analysis.

²⁸⁹ Nele Sawallisch made a similar argument in her article about Trudel’s legacy. She argued that Trudel re-shaped the historical narrative in place, but that the new narrative “holds the danger of romanticizing slavery.” Sawallisch, “Trudel’s Legacies,” 16.

²⁹⁰ Trudel, *L’Esclavage au Canada Français*, 149.

²⁹¹ Trudel, 126; Trudel, *Mémoires d’un Autre Siècle*, 71.

Second, Trudel examined whether it was the French or the English who enslaved the most people. Trudel argued that this question was relevant because “on croyait que l’esclavage s’était développé surtout après la conquête” and was thus “surtout une institution anglaise.”²⁹² He summarized this belief and contradicted it: “les Canadiens français ruinés par la guerre ou supplanté par les commerçants anglais vont disparaître du catalogue des esclavagistes. Or les Canadiens français demeurent.”²⁹³ This assessment countered the interpretation of the Conquest held by the *École de Montréal* that French Canadian society was “good” and that the English were “bad.” As evidence of how contentious this point was, Serge Gagnon, a Quebec historian trained at the University of Laval, who taught at the University of Ottawa, argued that Trudel’s use of statistics was biased. He maintained that Trudel’s conclusion that “l’esclavage a été pratiqué chez nous beaucoup plus par les Canadiens français que par les Anglais,” was based on a disregard for the make-up of society—many more French than English-speakers lived on the territory after the Conquest.²⁹⁴ Gagnon concludes that “it was the British, not the French Canadians, who owned proportionately more slaves during the first decades of British rule.”²⁹⁵

Third, Trudel answered the question “Les Canadiens ont-ils du sang d’esclaves ?”²⁹⁶ in the affirmative and thus showed that some “Québécois de souche” have ancestors who were enslaved. This claim directly countered Garneau and Groulx’s argument that French Canadians were “pure” with no “mélange des races.”²⁹⁷

Trudel addressed further research questions that he believed could allow for a more nuanced and broader discussion of slavery from the perspective of the enslaved; Are enslaved people treated differently than non-enslaved people before the law?²⁹⁸ What were enslaved people’s living conditions?²⁹⁹ Were these living conditions better than in the French Antilles? Which social group enslaved the most people? Did slaveholders treat their slaves well? Did they break up families?

L’Esclavage au Canada Français attempted to reveal the life of “ordinary people,” which would become a more prominent approach in the decade following the book’s publication with the growth in social history studies.³⁰⁰ This focus on “ordinary people” can be seen in Trudel’s attention to the

²⁹² Trudel, *L’Esclavage au Canada Français*, 134–36.

²⁹³ Trudel, 134–36.

²⁹⁴ Gagnon, *Quebec and Its Historians*, 44; Trudel, *L’Esclavage au Canada Français*, 319.

²⁹⁵ Gagnon, *Quebec and Its Historians*, 44.

²⁹⁶ Trudel, *L’Esclavage au Canada Français*, 278–91.

²⁹⁷ See my discussion in the section on the context of publication for *L’Esclavage au Canada Français*.

²⁹⁸ Trudel, 232.

²⁹⁹ Trudel, 160.

³⁰⁰ Eileen Ka-May Cheng, *Historiography: An Introductory Guide* (London: Continuum, 2012), 112–13.

living conditions of the enslaved to which Trudel dedicated an entire chapter of analysis. He looked at their legal status, their relationship with their slaveholders and their life expectancy.³⁰¹ However, the limitations of the archival records and Trudel's use of social history methodologies resulted in an argument that was quite generous towards slaveholders and which supported the idea that slaveholding was relatively "humane." He supported this point through comparing the institution with the physical violence enslaved people were subjected to elsewhere in the United States and the French Antilles. Although he qualified the argument on numerous occasions, he still maintained it.

Based on sources that largely came from the perspective of slaveholders, Trudel implied that the treatment of enslaved people in the Antilles was the "norm," whereas in Quebec, their treatment was "superior." He defended this point based on the lack of proof of physical violence towards enslaved people. In fact, this presumed absence of physical violence allowed Trudel to argue that enslaved people were "nearly normal" members of society in French Canada. For him, French Canadian slaveholders were defeating slaveholding "norms" in two ways; they treated enslaved people not only "better" but nearly like all other members of society.

This differentiation shared certain characteristics with Garneau's claim that there was no slavery in French Canada. In both cases, French Canadians were represented as "better" than the colonies elsewhere in the Americas. In Trudel's narrative French Canadians remained "better," although not entirely disengaged in slavery, they were at least more "humane" than the rest of the Americas.³⁰²

Trudel was not the first who argued that slavery was more "humane" in French Canada.³⁰³ He quotes Benjamin Sulte, who without studying the same archival research, came to a similar conclusion. Sulte stated that "nos esclaves . . . étaient simplement des domestiques formant partie de la famille de leur maître."³⁰⁴ Trudel adds: "Sulte aurait dû nuancer son affirmation, mais il n'en reste pas moins qu'elle donne à peu près le climat de notre esclavage."³⁰⁵ Although Trudel argued that Sulte should have "nuanced" his argument, Trudel himself restated in the chapter tellingly titled "les enfants traités comme enfants adoptifs," an equivalent argument with minor qualification. In 1916 already, Hector Berthelot and E.-Z. Massicotte wrote in their overview of Montreal's history that:

³⁰¹ Trudel, *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, VIII.

³⁰² This comparison also resembles the narrative that the relationship between French Canadians and Indigenous people were better than in the rest of what is today Canada. See discussion in Garneau, 447–48.

³⁰³ Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 14; Hector Berthelot and E.-Z. Massicotte, *Montreal, Le Bon Vieux Temps* (Montréal: Librairie Beauchemin, 1916), 35.

³⁰⁴ Benjamin Sulte, "Réponses: L'esclavage Au Canada," *Bulletin Des Recherches Historiques* 3 (1897): 6.

³⁰⁵ Trudel, *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, 164.

L'esclave canadien n'était pas traité, par son maître, comme celui qui a été dépeint par Mme Harriet Beecher Stowe dans la case de l'Oncle Tom. Son travail n'était pas pénible et sa conduite n'était pas abjecte comme celle des noirs dans le Sud. L'esclave de M. Desrivères était considéré comme l'enfant de la maison.³⁰⁶

This quotation distinguished enslaved people's conditions in Canada with those in the "South" and compared them to those of non-enslaved biological children. Trudel made the same distinction and comparison in *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*. Although Trudel did not cite Berthelot and Massicotte in his bibliography and thus may not have been familiar with the book, he made the same connections. This parallel argumentation shows that the comparison fitted well into the narrative structure, in which colonial Canada was morally superior to the United States. William Renwick Riddell also stressed the fact that slaveholders treated their slaves "humanely."³⁰⁷

Trudel restated the argument that slavery was "humane" on at least three different occasions in *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*.³⁰⁸ Trudel argued first that because enslaved newborns were given to a caregiver, they were "traités comme des enfants adoptifs."³⁰⁹ He acknowledged that this could have been in the economic interest of the slaveholder too: "est-ce chez le maître une réaction de paternelle humanité ou souci de cheptel ? Peut-être les deux."³¹⁰ Although he acknowledged that these other reasons may have played a role, he maintained his argument.

Second, Trudel deduced that slavery was "humane" from the high number of people who attended a 12-year-old Indigenous enslaved girl's funeral. Trudel stated "nous ne connaissons pas d'autres exemples, mais ils suffisent à nous convaincre, une fois de plus, du caractère tout humain de notre esclavage."³¹¹ A single, archival record written by a priest was considered enough to support his claim.

Third, Trudel reiterated that slavery was "humane" and "familial" because enslaved people frequently were given the last name of their slaveholder upon their baptism. He determined that "[c]'est là un autre trait humain et familial de notre esclavage."³¹² He described this as a "privilege." He does not qualify compared to whom this was a privilege. Was this a comparison with enslaved people elsewhere in North America or the Caribbean?

³⁰⁶ Berthelot and Massicotte, 35.

³⁰⁷ Riddell, "Notes on the Slave in Nouvelle-France," 321, 324.

³⁰⁸ Trudel, *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, 165, 189, 325.

³⁰⁹ Trudel, 164.

³¹⁰ Trudel, 164.

³¹¹ Trudel, 188.

³¹² Trudel, 325.

Trudel insisted that there was no legal basis that regulated the relationship between slaveholder and the enslaved in New France. Trudel then argued that enslaved people were better treated in French Canada than elsewhere in the Americas and enslaved people's living condition matched domestic servants':

Au Canada français, . . . le Code noir n'a jamais été promulgué Toutefois, les Canadiens s'y sont conformés assez rigoureusement et sont même allés jusqu'à le dépasser, donnant à leur esclavage un petit air patriarcal, un certain caractère familial ; bien souvent, l'esclave ne se distingue pas du domestique et, en bien des cas, on le considère comme un enfant adoptif.³¹³

Immediately after this outline of slavery's "familial character," Trudel reminded his readers that "cela ne doit cependant pas nous faire oublier que l'esclave fait partie des biens meubles."³¹⁴ This qualification was not a deviation from the overall argument offered in *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*.

Trudel qualified his argument about "humane" enslavement on two more occasions. He supported that "(l)' esclavage au Canada Français ne porte pas que des marques d'humanité" in the context of the absence of enslaved mothers' names from the burial records of their children.³¹⁵

He reiterated this assessment in regard to the destruction of families through slave trade:

La famille n'était pas tout à fait démolie puisque les plus jeunes allaient continuer de vivre avec leurs père et mère, mais il reste que se faire séparer de sa famille quand on n'a que 5 ou 6 ans, c'est subir un sort inhumain³¹⁶

Despite Trudel's qualification of his central argument about the "humane treatment" of enslaved people in French Canada he still maintained his claim.

Trudel repeated the argument also regarding the *Code noir* in Louisiana:

Il y a dans ce Code noir une part admirable d'humanité : l'esclave est assuré d'un minimum d'entretien, il doit recevoir une éducation catholique, on n'a pas le droit de l'abandonner quand il se fait vieux, on ne peut vendre séparément le père, la mère et les jeunes enfants ; du fait d'un mariage avec un Blanc, l'esclave devient libre ; en général, l'affranchi jouit des mêmes droits que le sujet naturel et sans avoir besoin de lettres de naturalité. On considère donc l'esclave comme un être humain et cet esclave peut éventuellement s'intégrer dans la société des Blancs avec les mêmes droits et privilèges.³¹⁷

This extract provided us also with a potential definition of what Trudel understood as "humane treatment;" It meant being treated "comme un être humain."

³¹³ Trudel, 321.

³¹⁴ Trudel, 321.

³¹⁵ Trudel, 267.

³¹⁶ Trudel, 273.

³¹⁷ Trudel, 162–63.

Trudel reiterated his argument about slavery's "humanness" in his comparison of enslaved people's living conditions as well as their legal treatment with those who were not enslaved. Trudel argued, as such, that enslaved people's living conditions were comparable to those who were not enslaved:

Leur servitude mise à part, les esclaves du Canada français sont soumis à des conditions de vie qui ne diffèrent pas tellement de celles de leurs maîtres et ils participent aux sacrements de l'Église de la même façon que les personnes libres.³¹⁸

This comparison was again qualified, it only applied if people's enslavement was disregarded. Trudel's used that term "privilege" to relate the treatment of enslaved people to that of unenslaved people. He further made clear that from him enslaved people in French Canada were "privileged" compared to elsewhere.

Mais ces esclaves, qui semblent posséder au Canada français un état privilégié, jouissent-ils devant la loi de certaines prérogatives des hommes libres ?³¹⁹

Trudel does not clarify what his understanding of "privilege" exactly is. Compared to whom was it a privilege? In regard to what aspects of their life? It appears that he understood that enslaved people in French Canada were treated better than enslaved people were treated elsewhere in the Americas. In this sense, he appears to have used the term to indicate that they were privileged in regard to the condition enslaved people "normally" had. In this passage, he further attempted to compare the legal treatment of enslaved people and unenslaved people within French Canada. He argued that the punishments received by enslaved people were either equal or "milder" than those received by free people. For instance, some enslaved people were "only" deported when locals were being executed for the same crime. Harsher punishments were seemingly not necessary because the small number of enslaved people did not threaten society.³²⁰

Trudel argued based on these conclusions that slavery in French Canada was marked by the "intégration normale" of the enslaved into society. This conclusion appeared at the end of the chapter on the crimes committed by the enslaved and the punishments they received:

En tout cas, cette égalité de l'esclave et de l'homme libre devant la loi et, en même temps, cette grande rareté de criminels démontrent, une fois de plus, l'intégration normale de l'esclave dans la société canadienne.³²¹

³¹⁸ Trudel, 232.

³¹⁹ Trudel, 232.

³²⁰ Trudel, 231.

³²¹ Trudel, 231.

Trudel did not define what “intégration normale” meant, however, it appears to relate again to the fact that they were treated like other members of society and not differently as Trudel seemed to have expected.

Trudel thus argued that enslaved people were treated “humanely” by slaveholders; that their living conditions were not fundamentally different from those of other people and that they were thus, to a certain degree, “normal” members of society.

These conclusions were facilitated by the way in which Trudel worked with primary sources. Trudel did not discuss the limitations of his source material, which did not allow him to directly access the enslaved’s experiences. Trudel solely relied on the slaveholders’ accounts of the events in question. He took this information provided by primary sources at face value: for instance, Trudel attributes the delayed christening of enslaved people to three factors; the linguistic barrier, the possible “opposition entêtée” against their baptism; as well as their lack of mental capacity. He supported this last point by citing the account of a white settler about the limited mental capacity of an enslaved woman:

Philippe Aubert de Gaspé, qui en raconte l’histoire, attribue ce retard à un manque d’intelligence : ‘La Grosse (je ne lui ai jamais connu d’autre nom) avait en effet l’esprit très borné, sans être pourtant idiote. Elle ne s’exprimait qu’avec difficulté, et à l’aide d’un patois de son invention.’³²²

For him, this showed “tout simplement l’inaptitude de l’esclave à comprendre et retenir quoi que ce soit.”³²³ As such, he retained Gaspé’s reasoning. At no point did Trudel acknowledge that enslaved people might have had spiritual beliefs before their enslavement.³²⁴ Similarly, in his discussion of the arson trial against Marie-Joseph Angélique, Trudel was convinced that Angélique set the fire although her confession was extracted under torture.³²⁵ A more critical engagement with the available sources might have moderated these conclusions.

Trudel used his primary sources’ language within his own writing. For instance, Trudel stated that “évidemment, quand on parle de n[****]s, comme lorsqu’on parle d’animaux, il faut tenir compte de certaines conditions: l’âge . . .” to determine the sales price.³²⁶ On few occasions, his use of language as a form of sarcasm, such as in the former example appears highly derogatory to today’s reader. Trudel used throughout the *L’Esclavage au Canada Français* the terms “n[****]” and “s[*****]” without

³²² Trudel, 196.

³²³ Trudel, 196.

³²⁴ Trudel, 248, 196.

³²⁵ Trudel, 227–28.

³²⁶ Trudel, 117.

brackets to refer to Black and Indigenous people respectively.³²⁷ Beyond using racist terms to describe racialized groups, Trudel reproduced formulations that objectified the enslaved. For example, Trudel stated that “un n[****] qui ne coûte que 200 livres doit être une bien pauvre marchandise puisque le n[****] peut aller jusqu’à au-delà de 2’000 livres.” or later “un n[****] vaut deux s[*****]s”.³²⁸ These statements were made by Trudel outside of quotations. Trudel also used again himself language that is usually used to refer to animals. For instance, he described a group of enslaved people as a “troupeau”. Trudel argued that “Ces mesures répressives, si légèrement teintées d’humanité, protégeaient la petite population des Antillais contre l’immense troupeau des esclaves.”³²⁹ Even more tellingly, Trudel referred to enslaved children whose birth record did not state who was their father that they were “cheptel.”³³⁰ The word “cheptel” clearly highlights a status attributed to enslaved people which was equivalent to that of the livestock a slaveholder possessed. Interestingly, while earlier Trudel tried to argue that they were treated “humanely;” in this context, he referred to them as “cheptel,” which was supported by the sales announcement and inheritance reports in which enslaved people were listed along with livestock.

Trudel judged enslaved people’s value based on their sales prize, their work performance and how successfully they navigated their insertion into society after their manumission. Trudel highlighted that “l’expérience démontrait en tout cas que le n[****] valait mieux que le s[*****], puisqu’il résistait plus facilement aux maladies courantes.”³³¹ In this example, Trudel attributed value to human beings and their life on the basis of value judgments made by the slaveholder. On the basis of the work placements that Black people found after their manumission, compared to Indigenous people, Trudel concluded that “quand nous les considérons dans leur vie de liberté, nous remarquons la même supériorité du n[****] sur le s[*****]”³³² As such, Trudel determined the value of human life on the basis on which they were valuable for the slaveholders. This perspective denied enslaved people’s experiences and value outside their enslavement and productivity.

³²⁷ Marcel Trudel, *Initiation à La Nouvelle-France; Histoire et Institutions*. (Montreal: Holt, Rinehart et Winston, 1968), 155, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.c057932802&view=2up&seq=6>; Vincent and Arcand, *L’image de l’Amérindien Dans Les Manuels Scolaires Du Québec*, 120. Vincent and Arcand highlighted that at least as of 1968 Trudel “est conscient du sens péjoratif que peut avoir le mot ‘s[*****]’”. Ce qui ne l’empêche nullement de l’utiliser plus loin sans autre commentaire, ni même la protection des guillemets.” Winks used the term “n***o” in his 1971 published work. He highlighted that he was made aware that he should not use the term anymore, but the book was already being printed at the time and he was only able to change the usage made in the title. In 1960, Trudel did not appear to have seen any problem in using this language.

³²⁸ Trudel, *L’Esclavage au Canada Français*, 119–20.

³²⁹ Trudel, 213.

³³⁰ Trudel, 262.

³³¹ Trudel, 181.

³³² Trudel, 252.

Trudel showed a more critical attitude toward the historical record when he discussed the relationship of white women with enslaved men than when the issue concerned enslaved women. As such, when Trudel discussed the trial of a “girl” who left with an Indigenous man for Acadia, Trudel questioned whether she did so willingly and as such, questioned whether she consented to the move. He said “Nous ignorons si le juge ajouta foi à toute cette histoire d’une fille qui décide tout à coup de suivre un panis jusqu’en Acadie.”³³³ In contrast, whenever he talked about sexual relationships between enslaved woman and men regardless whether they were enslaved or not he did not discuss their consent. In his enumeration of children born out of slavery, Trudel stated that four “propriétaires . . . ont cédé aux charmes de leurs esclaves...”³³⁴ In this example, the male slaveholder was acting upon “the object” which was his slave. In a further example that opposed a Black enslaved man and an Indigenous woman, only the preferences of men are discussed. He assessed that “mais de ce petit nombre de mariages [entre hommes noirs et femmes autochtones], on pourrait peut-être conclure que le n[****] n’éprouve pas un goût très vif pour la s[****]esse.”³³⁵ This example showed again that Trudel attributed little agency to enslaved women. In even more extreme language, Trudel stated in regard to enslaved children born whose father was unknown that “c’est le maître lui-même qui trouve amusant d’augmenter son cheptel à peu de frais...”³³⁶ The usage of the term “amusant” in this context entirely disregarded the sexual violence inherent in these relationships. As such, enslaved women are not considered as equivalent to free woman and Trudel did not discuss their sexuality from their point of view.

When Trudel discussed enslaved people’s acts of resistance, it became clear that he did not consider them as fully rational and political subjects. As such, Trudel denied enslaved people’s political agency. In his interpretation, Marie-Joseph Angélique, for instance, either sought revenge for her slaveholder’s plan to sell her or attempted to facilitate the escape with her partner. He did not see her actions as a form of resistance against the institution of slavery as such. He stated “c’est un crime individuel tramé contre une seule personne, la veuve Francheville, pour favoriser une intrigue amoureuse.”³³⁷ Similarly, enslaved people who fled their slaveholder were not portrayed as opposing the institution of slavery as such, but as engaging in individual acts to gain control of their own life.³³⁸

³³³ Trudel, 222. This example also shows that a “girl” could only mean a white girl. “Panis” was a term frequently used in French Canada to describe enslaved Indigenous people regardless of their origins.

³³⁴ Trudel, 262–66.

³³⁵ Trudel, 274.

³³⁶ Trudel, 262.

³³⁷ Trudel, 229.

³³⁸ Trudel, 190.

Trudel acknowledged they may have tried to flee due to bad treatment, which was also the only occasion on which he acknowledged that enslaved people may have experienced physical violence—the only form of violence Trudel appeared to take seriously—and that he did not know whether this was the case based on his primary sources. Trudel says “bien des esclaves désertent sous le régime anglais : nous ignorons . . . s’ils désertent à la suite de mauvais traitement ou parce qu’ils veulent organiser leur vie comme ils l’entendent.”³³⁹ Furthermore, Trudel argues that “à aucun moment de notre histoire, il n’est fait mention d’une insurrection armée (ni même de projet) de la population esclave. Il y a des crimes, mais il s’agit d’actes isolés dirigés contre des individus.”³⁴⁰ Trudel denied to a certain degree the political character of these acts, and thereby failed to recognize enslaved people’s decision-making capacities.

In the discussion of the crimes committed by enslaved people, Trudel showed a certain degree of understanding for enslaved people’s experienced and tried to empathize with their situation:

Sur les 3,604 esclaves que le Canada français a connus, dans une période de 123 ans, il ne se serait donc trouvé que 18 criminels. Il s’agit pourtant d’esclaves, n[****]s et s[*****]s, qu’on a tirés de leur milieu naturel pour les réduire en servitude dans une société qui n’est pas la leur, et d’esclaves qui n’ont reçu tout juste que les rudiments de l’instruction chrétienne. On s’attendrait normalement de leur part à une résistance brutale aux lois ordinaires de la société dans laquelle, bien malgré eux, ils ont été transplantés. Or sur près de 4,000 esclaves, à peine une vingtaine se classent parmi les criminels.³⁴¹

He was surprised by this fact because he expected enslaved people to resist their bondage more violently. Trudel showed a certain understanding that they were forced into slavery and thus would expect enslaved people to commit crimes to resist their enslavement.³⁴²

The usage of the first-person plural throughout showed that Trudel identified himself with the slaveholders, for instance he titled one chapter “nous voulons des n[****]s.” In this sense again, Trudel clearly was closer to the perspective of the slaveholder than the enslaved in his work.

In sum, with *L’Esclavage au Canada Français* Trudel opposed the pre-existing narrative on slavery that Quebec’s national historians, Groulx and Garneau, supported. He replaced this narrative with a new one influenced by other historians’ scholarship such as that of Benjamin Sulte, who acknowledged the existence of slavery, but argued that slavery was “humane” in French Canada and thus different than in the rest of the Americas. Trudel’s reliance on primary sources produced by the

³³⁹ Trudel, 190.

³⁴⁰ Trudel, 229.

³⁴¹ Trudel, 230.

³⁴² This excerpt seems to imply that more Catholic education made enslaved people less violent.

slaveholders reproduced their perspective in his own work. As such, slaveholders are presented as “humane,” while the intrinsic violence of enslavement is downplayed. This approach dehumanized and objectified enslaved people once more. Their reduction to chattel status and the absence of their subjectivity did not prevent Trudel from making judgments about their experiences.

Trudel was “balancing” in *L’Esclavage au Canada Français* as scholars arguably still do today, “the demands of [the historical] profession and society.”³⁴³ His book was researched and published in the period that prepared the intellectual terrain for the Quiet Revolution. His work is marked by a breaking with previous social codes, as such, Trudel started critiquing the Catholic church, while his work retained certain characteristics of the society in which he grew up; Trudel objectified enslaved people, used the racist language of the time, and remained in his analysis on the side of the slaveholder. Although Trudel’s work started to be interested in the life of the “enslaved,” it remained more sensitive to the perspective of the slaveholder. As such, I would argue that it resembled most James W. St. G. Walker’s “*Black Victims Orientation*,” which represented “black characters [as] do-ees” and presents “Black history . . . as the story of what was done *to* black people.”³⁴⁴ While Trudel’s approach laid the foundation for a new historical narrative on slavery, which continued to objectify the enslaved while humanizing slaveholders, Trudel’s interest in the lives of the enslaved presented a glimpse at the social history developments to come in the following decades, ones which would slowly start re-shaping the dominant historical narrative.

³⁴³ Rudin, *Making History*, 12.

³⁴⁴ Walker, “Spirit of Africville,” 168.

Chapter Three Trudel's legacy: from indifference to praise and critical re-assessment

The publication of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* marked a change within Quebec's narrative on slavery. In this chapter, I look at the influence *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* exerted on understandings of the relevance and nature of slavery. Between 1960 and 1965, the book's content was summarized in a few newspapers and academic reviews in essentially the same language and with the same arguments that Trudel himself presented; both the existence of slavery and notions of slavery as a relatively "humane institution" in French Canada were in wide circulation. Trudel's work essentially represented the sole reference for discussions of slavery. It was only in the late 1980s that Trudel's work received renewed attention and the relevance of Quebec's history of slavery was more critically discussed. The reception of *Deux siècles d'esclavage*, Trudel's new edition of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* was marked by a critical re-assessment of Trudel's legacy, which acknowledged the importance of Trudel's work, while critiquing its central arguments. This re-assessment marked a paradigmatic shift in which scholars started to pay much more attention to the lived experiences of enslaved people and to challenge notions of slavery as ever "humane".

To begin, I summarize my study of the mediatic and academic reception of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*. I analyzed how newspaper articles from *Le Devoir* and *La Presse* published between 1960 and 2019 summarized Trudel's work and engaged with its central claims. I further studied the academic reviews that were written on *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* and Trudel's subsequent publications on slavery to see how historians evaluated Trudel's work at different points in time. I also studied how the most cited historical works on slavery in New France engaged with Trudel's central claim that slavery was "humane."

The analysis of the legacy of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* legacy on the understanding of slavery in what is present-day Quebec provides insight into the way in which the perception of enslaved people has evolved over time in Quebec. It also shows how larger discussions within the historical profession, such as the entry into the field of social history and critical race studies changed the way in which historians and journalists discussed slavery.

Unchallenged reception and apathy

In the first years after the publication of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, commentators recounted its central claims faithfully and insisted on the ways in which Trudel broke with the narrative

put forward by Garneau and Groulx. Journalists and scholars insisted that slavery had existed in New France and that the church had been involved in the institution.

In fact, Trudel's only other publication on slavery until 1990 discussed the Catholic church's involvement in slavery. This focus on the Catholic church was the framing he chose to present his work at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association (CHA) in 1961. Trudel used the opportunity to dispel Garneau's claim that the Catholic church had not been engaged in slavery.³⁴⁵ At the same time, he presented his own understanding of the historical record that slavery was "familial" and "humane" in French Canada. He excuses the churches' lack of opposition to slavery by declaring that the church was in no position to challenge the State and that in most cases the church still treated enslaved people like human beings.³⁴⁶

In his presentation to the CHA, Trudel also discussed the responsibility of French Canadians for the institution; Trudel clarified that slavery had to be understood in the colonial context and that French-Canadian ancestors should not be blamed for having engaged in the practice:

Pour comprendre l'histoire de l'esclavage au Canada Français, nous devons nous replacer dans le XVIII^e siècle et nous constatons alors que l'esclavage est un fait social qui n'a rien d'anormal ; que sa pratique loin de discréditer le propriétaire . . . S'étonner ? Se scandaliser ? il faudrait, commettant le même anachronisme, reprocher à nos ancêtres d'avoir pris trois mois à franchir l'Atlantique.³⁴⁷

By insisting that contemporary critiques were anachronistic and did not take into consideration the context of the time, Trudel absolved French Canadian ancestors from any responsibility. His comparison of slaveholding practices with the time it took to cross the Atlantic appeared as a particularly detached argumentation.

The content of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* was also accessible in a cheaper and shorter version put together by Jacques de Roussan in 1963, which summarized Trudel's conclusions.³⁴⁸ This book project was probably sparked by a six-page article Trudel wrote for *Perspective* (a magazine published by the newspaper *Le Soleil*) on the basis of his conclusions from *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁵ Marcel Trudel, "L'attitude de l'Église Catholique Vis-à-Vis L'Esclavage au Canada Français," *Rapports Annuels de La Société Historique Du Canada* 40, no. 1 (1961): 28–34, <https://doi.org/10.7202/300579ar>.

³⁴⁶ Trudel, 32–3.

³⁴⁷ Trudel, 34.

³⁴⁸ Marcel Trudel and Jacques de Roussan, *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* (Montréal: Horizon, 1963); Jacques Pigeon, "L'Esclavage au Canada Français," *La Presse*, *Page(s) corrigée(s)*, mai 1963; Georges-Émile Giguère, "Marcel TRUDEL: L'Esclavage au Canada Français," *Relations*, November 1964. I was unable to access and consult this copy due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

³⁴⁹ Marcel Trudel, "L'Esclavage au Canada Français," *Le soleil: Perspectives*, October 21, 1961, 2–4, 30–33.

Initial mediatic reception

Immediately after the publication of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* a number of newspaper articles summarized the book's content and conclusions. My research shows that the book was awarded multiple academic recognitions, which newspapers reported on. He received the *Prix Raymond Casgrain* in 1961 for *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, an award issued for the best history book published by a historian connected to Laval University. The article on the award ceremony provided no content overview of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*.³⁵⁰ For his research on slavery, Trudel was one of twelve recipients of the "concours du *Conseil des humanités canadienne*" in 1960.³⁵¹ This pan-Canadian body which supported academic research in humanities and social sciences thus esteemed that his work was of value for Canada.³⁵² The *Prix Duvernay* was bestowed on Trudel in 1966 for his research on the military regime and New France. The article cites *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* among his many accomplishments. This award from the *Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste* recognized accomplishments in literature.³⁵³ When Marcel Trudel and Fernand Ouellet were inducted into the Royal Society of Canada in 1968, the summary of the event simply cites *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* as one of his works.³⁵⁴ None of the articles that discussed these awards contained a meaningful summary of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*. The article about the Molson Prize that was bestowed on Trudel in 1980 does not even mention *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* among Trudel's major accomplishments.³⁵⁵

Beyond these articles written for different award ceremonies, *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* was referenced in few newspaper articles in the early 1960s. I could not find any traces of outspoken resistance to the topic in the analyzed material. I argue that this period was marked by a lack of interest in the history of slavery in French Canada generally, perhaps as a result of the tensions with the decolonisation discourses in Quebec, which considered Quebec as a colony and considered Quebecers as victims rather than perpetrators of oppression.³⁵⁶ Articles from the period, however, were ready to

³⁵⁰ "Prix Raymond Casgrain au professeur Marcel Trudel," *La Presse, Édition provinciale*, avril 1961, 12.

³⁵¹ Raymond Grenier, "Humanités canadiennes," *La Presse*, juin 1961, 5.

³⁵² "Conseil de Recherches En Sciences Humaines Du Canada | l'Encyclopédie Canadienne," accessed September 25, 2020, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/fr/article/conseil-de-recherches-en-sciences-humaines-du-canada>. This council was the predecessor of the SSHRC.

³⁵³ "M. Marcel Trudel reçoit le Prix Duvernay 1966," *La Presse*, décembre 1966; "Le prix Ludger-Duvernay (littérature)," Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal, accessed September 25, 2020, <https://ssjb.com/ssjb/les-grand-prix/le-prix-ludger-duvernay-litterature/>. The same award was bestowed upon his contemporaries from the *École de Montréal* (Guy Frégault in 1944, Lionel Groulx in 1952, and Michel Brunet in 1970).

³⁵⁴ "Marcel Trudel et Fernand Ouellet sont reçus à la Société Royale du Canada," *La Presse*, avril 1968.

³⁵⁵ *La Presse*, "L'historien Marcel Trudel honoré par le Conseil des arts du Canada," B12; "Molson Prizes," Canada Council for the Arts, accessed September 28, 2020, <https://canadacouncil.ca/443/funding/prizes/molson-prizes>.

³⁵⁶ Waters, "March from Selma to Canada," 24.

recognize that the clergy was involved in slavery. This recognition of the clergy's involvement may again be explained by the context, during the Quiet Revolution this information fit into the growing secularization movement.

Only two newspaper articles discussed *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* and Trudel's article presented to the Canadian Historical Association in detail. Others solely mentioned the publication without any further information.³⁵⁷ I found these articles through digital in-text search in the archives of the BAnQ for the terms "L'Esclavage au Canada Français," as well as "Marcel Trudel" and "esclavage."

Beyond these awards, Trudel's work on slavery retained little journalistic interest. Only two articles provided a more detailed presentation of Trudel's work, while some more articles referred to *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* in the context of articles that concern other works. The narrative on slavery that was presented in these two articles resembled Trudel's although they downplayed even further the violence of slavery in what is today Quebec; slaveholders were presented as "benevolent" and the articles insisted on the different and more "humane" living conditions of enslaved people in French Canada.

The first and main article on *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* was published in 1961 in *Le Devoir*. It was written by Charles-Marie Boissonnault, a journalist trained in history and geography at Laval University between 1947 to 1948.³⁵⁸ His proximity to the Laval school could explain why he wrote the article. Boissonnault dedicated half a newspaper page to summarize the content of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*.³⁵⁹ He was very favourable of Trudel's work and methodology and stressed the importance of Trudel's critique of "l'autorité des témoins."³⁶⁰ This journalist, who was no stranger to historical methods, considered Trudel's source criticism to have been sufficient. He did not make explicit in which context such criticism was pronounced by Trudel.³⁶¹ Further, the commentary the

³⁵⁷ "Le Québec et les Amérindiens: les dossiers chauds," décembre 1978, La Presse édition, <https://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/2776150>. The first time Trudel's work is mentioned to discuss a contemporary issue was concerning Indigenous people's condition in Quebec published in 1978. On the condition of Black people, no comparable article appears to have been published before the 1980s.

³⁵⁸ "Boissonnault, Charles-Marie," Archives Association of Ontario, accessed July 15, 2020, <https://www.archeion.ca/boissonnault-charles-marie-1902>. Boissonnault was at Laval when Trudel was secretary of the history and geography institute.

³⁵⁹ Charles-Marie Boissonnault, "Nouvel ouvrage de Marcel Trudel: L'Esclavage au Canada Français," *Le Devoir*, March 18, 1961, <http://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/2756501>; "Boissonnault, Charles-Marie."

³⁶⁰ Boissonnault, "Nouvel ouvrage de Marcel Trudel," 10–11.

³⁶¹ My analysis of Trudel's book led me to a different conclusion, perhaps because of the expectations that scholars had about primary sources at different points in time.

journalist made based on Trudel's work simplified the latter's arguments and euphemized the institution and objectified the enslaved.³⁶²

Most strikingly, Boissonnault contrasted the "benevolence" of French-Canadian slavery with that of Indigenous slavery, which was equalled to that of Roman emperors known for the cruelty with which they treated their slaves. Boissonnault argued that:

Si l'Iroquois semble . . . avoir les conceptions de Néron et de Caligula, les Blancs de la Nouvelle-France sont plus humains. Ces "[*****]s" ne paraissent pas, une fois acquis par les Français, être traités exactement en esclaves . . .³⁶³

Boissonnault thus highlighted the suggestion that French Catholics treated enslaved people better than was the practice among Indigenous peoples. Further, the journalist also distinguished French-Catholic slaveholding practices from those of enslavers that worked in the Atlantic slave trade. He defended this distinction based on a story of two enslaved Indigenous girls who were given by their slaveholder to a Catholic sisterhood to be educated, and Trudel who defined enslaved people as "entré parmi la population française à titre d'esclave."³⁶⁴ Boissonnault contended: "Voilà qui est loin de la conception des négriers, n'est pas ? Il est bon de conserver cette définition dans son esprit durant toute la lecture de *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*."³⁶⁵ It is not quite clear whether Boissonnault wanted the reader to keep in mind Trudel's definition of slavery or rather the point that slavery was much different from the Atlantic slave trade in French Canada.

Boissonnault discussed enslaved people's living conditions and restated Trudel's argument that they were treated "habituellement comme un enfant adoptif et il faut que reconnaître qu'il s'attache sincèrement à son maître, du moins dans la majorité des cas cité par M. Trudel."³⁶⁶ Although in this last sentence Boissonnault showed that this was not always the case, he maintained that "en Nouvelle-France, l'esclave est un simple domestique."³⁶⁷ Boissonnault went as far as calling enslaved people's life "idyllique," while acknowledging that Indigenous enslaved people died young.³⁶⁸ The article also discussed that in most cases the punishments that enslaved faced were equivalent to those of free people.³⁶⁹ Boissonnault still acknowledged that children born by enslaved women were the property

³⁶² The article is particularly racist with regard to Indigenous people. Although this subject is not the object of this study, this article shows the degree to which Trudel's work could be manipulated by the author.

³⁶³ Boissonnault, "Nouvel ouvrage de Marcel Trudel," 10–11; Trudel, *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, 10.

³⁶⁴ Boissonnault, "Nouvel ouvrage de Marcel Trudel," 10–11; Trudel, *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, 10, 16.

³⁶⁵ Boissonnault, "Nouvel ouvrage de Marcel Trudel," 10–11.

³⁶⁶ Boissonnault, 10–11.

³⁶⁷ Boissonnault, 10–11.

³⁶⁸ Boissonnault, 10–11.

³⁶⁹ Boissonnault, 10–11.

of the slaveholder of the mother.³⁷⁰ Yet Boissonnault appeared emotionally disengaged with this fact. Their chattel status did not appear to conflict—in his mind—with his assessment that enslaved people's lives were “idyllique.” This assessment showed that if Trudel's argument was accepted without attention to its important qualifications, it lent itself easily to euphemized representations of slavery.

Boissonnault also included the information that some French Quebecers have ancestors who were slaves. The journalist considered that this information would not be appreciated by some of his readers:

D'ailleurs, son livre se termine sur une question que d'aucune ne goûteront guère : quelle proportion de sang indien et de sang noir se trouve “dans le groupe ethnique des Canadiens français d'aujourd'hui ?”

The journalist thus expected some French Quebecers to adhere to racist ideas put forward by Garneau and Groulx about the “pureté des races” of French Canadians.

As such, Boissonnault, the only journalist who produced an in-depth discussion of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, published a highly problematic article on the basis of the Trudel's main conclusions. Under these circumstances, Trudel's work could hardly have been very successful in reshaping the public narratives about slavery.

Still, the work did influence the narrative around slavery as it involved the Catholic Church. Due to the historical context, a negative reaction to Trudel's work from Catholic newspapers may have been expected. However, in Maurice Lebel's review for *L'action catholique*, the Greek literature professor at Laval University spoke highly of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*.³⁷¹ He called it “un ouvrage marqué au coin de l'érudition” and Trudel a “chercheur-né [qui] suggère des sujets de recherche, hausse les horizons et ouvre des fenêtres sur notre histoire, nos origines et notre évolution.”³⁷² As such, the professor judged that Trudel's work opened new research avenues and did not react negatively to it.

The Catholic church's involvement in slavery sparked the interest of mainstream media as well, including *La Presse* in 1961. In an article that appeared in June of that year, Trudel's work was compared to that of Alex L. Murray, a Canadian historian who published a study on the Canadian Protestant churches' involvement in slavery.³⁷³ The article illustrated the delicate balancing act of

³⁷⁰ Boissonnault, 10–11.

³⁷¹ “Maurice Lebel – Ordre National Du Québec,” accessed October 5, 2020, <https://www.ordre-national.gouv.qc.ca/membres/membre.asp?id=116>.

³⁷² Lebel, “Chronique: A la faculté des lettres de l'université Laval.”

³⁷³ “Selon deux historiens Les Eglises protestantes du Canada furent plus anti-esclavagistes que l'Eglise catholique du Canada français,” *La Presse*, juin 1961, 16.

commentators in discussing the church's involvement without being overtly critical. The article summarized Trudel's intervention at the Canadian Historical Association in 1961. It highlighted Trudel's central argument first, namely that not only did the church not oppose slavery, the church "en a même profité."³⁷⁴ After the article outlined that enslaved people were excluded from priesthood and that the church missed the opportunity to oppose the institution of slavery, it immediately provided arguments which removed the responsibility from the church. It noted that enslaved people could still participate in service and that the church "a, pour sa part, considéré l'esclave comme un homme."³⁷⁵ The article argued further that:

Il faut cependant, avant de lui lancer le blâme, se rappeler la position de l'Église qui, sous le régime français, est dans l'État. A partir du 18^e siècle en effet, l'Église canadienne connaît une longue période de soumission et de stagnation. L'État ayant donné un caractère légal à l'esclavage, l'Église canadienne laisse faire. Sous le régime anglais, que pouvait faire une Église dépourvue, dont la situation sociale était misérable ?³⁷⁶

As such, the church was presented as exempt from any guilt because it was not in a position to oppose slavery. The article restated Trudel's comparison of blaming the Catholic church for its involvement in slavery with the time it took French colonizers and settlers to cross the Atlantic.³⁷⁷ This article thus spent as much time critiquing the Catholic church as it did explaining that the church was, in fact, not responsible. Mirroring Trudel's approach, this article presented a "digestible" version of Quebec's narrative on slavery.

In taking the ideas from *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* and introducing them to the mainstream public, these newspaper articles give some sense of Trudel's influence on the historiography as well as public sentiment. The simplified versions of his arguments presented in the sparse newspaper coverage absolved French-Catholic descendants from all guilt because the experiences of enslaved people in the colony were comparatively "mild." Even more striking is the fact that very few journalists considered the history of slavery in French Canada worthy of sustained attention or dialogue.

Academia

In response to the publication of the first edition of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* only two academic reviews were published and academic studies on slavery that focused on French Canada

³⁷⁴ *La Presse*, "Églises protestantes plus anti-esclavagistes que l'Église catholique," 16.

³⁷⁵ *La Presse*, 16.

³⁷⁶ *La Presse*, 16.

³⁷⁷ *La Presse*, 16; Trudel, "L'attitude de l'Église Catholique," 34.

remained very limited.³⁷⁸ The most detailed review was published by Jean Hamelin in the *Revue de l'Histoire de l'Amérique Française* in 1961. Hamelin had oriented his studies towards history under Trudel's influence and became one of the key members of the *École de Laval* as a professor at Laval University in 1957. His relationship with Trudel may explain in part his participation and the nature of his review. The *Revue de l'Histoire de l'Amérique Française* was the most prominent journal on the history of New France and Trudel himself had been engaged with it in the late 1940s and early 1950s.³⁷⁹ The review was favourable and cognizant of Trudel's contribution to the field. Hamelin particularly praised Trudel's methodology, which allowed for the establishment of a primary source body on slavery in New France and a collection of demographic information on enslaved people that had not existed previously.

Hamelin first acknowledged that Trudel revised the existing knowledge on slavery in French Canada—particularly that slavery did not exist (Hector Garneau and Groulx), or that no slave sales took place (Benjamin Sulte)—which Trudel contradicted with data based from his archival research.³⁸⁰ Hamelin started his discussion of the content with the comparison that less people were enslaved than in the “colonies voisines” because slavery was not an economic necessity.³⁸¹ Hamelin stated that Trudel's data on slaveholders “ne manquent pas d'intérêt”³⁸² The fact that more French than English slaveholders lived in French Canada was a “fait à remarquer.” This statement about French-Canadian slaveholders was thus positively received by this member of the *École de Laval*, the school which generally supported Trudel's self-critical research. He quoted Trudel's list of social groups that engaged most in slavery and noted that there were slaveholders among many social groups, including clerics.³⁸³

After a very short outline of the demographic information established on the enslaved, Hamelin discussed Trudel's attempt to establish the nature of enslaved people's living conditions. Hamelin quoted at this point Trudel's central claim that slavery was “familial” and that enslaved people were treated like adoptive children:

Cependant l'Auteur est persuadé que les Canadiens se sont conformés au Code noir de la Louisiane, allant même jusqu'à “donner à leur esclavage un petit air patriarcal,

³⁷⁸ Winks' *Blacks in Canada* was one of the few pieces of scholarship published during this period.

³⁷⁹ Lionel Groulx, “Pages liminaires,” *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 1, no. 1 (1947): 3, <https://doi.org/10.7202/801340ar>.

³⁸⁰ Jean Hamelin, “TRUDEL, Marcel, L'Esclavage au Canada Français. Histoire et conditions de l'esclavage. Les Presses Universitaires Laval, 1960, 432 p.,” *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 14, no. 4 (1961): 604, <https://doi.org/10.7202/302083ar>.

³⁸¹ Hamelin, 603.

³⁸² Hamelin, 604.

³⁸³ Hamelin, “L'Esclavage au Canada Français,” 605. Trudel, *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, 320-321.

un certain caractère familial ; bien souvent, l'esclave ne se distingue pas du domestique et, en bien des cas, on le considère comme un enfant adopté'.³⁸⁴

He retained this argument without using the term "humain" and outlined a list of factual information which was meant to illustrate enslaved people's living conditions:

Parmi les principales constatations de nature à nous montrer la condition de vie de l'esclave, retenons les suivantes : les quatre-cinquièmes des esclaves sont baptisés et souvent le propriétaire se fait un point d'honneur de servir de parrain ; il accède au nom de famille ; lors de son mariage, l'esclave est souvent affranchi ; les esclaves sont généralement illettrés ; l'esclave a des privilèges : il peut servir de témoin à des cérémonies religieuses, se défendre devant les tribunaux, jouir de l'habeas corpus ; l'esclave meurt très jeune, la plupart ne voient pas leurs vingt ans ; au point de vue professionnel, l'esclave indien est surtout domestique tandis que le noir se distingue dans plusieurs métiers.³⁸⁵

Even as Hamelin acknowledged regardless that enslaved people were illiterate and died young, he insisted on a rather positive reading of the primary sources. While recognizing that it would have been nice to have a more detailed assessment of people's lived experiences, he noted the limitations of the sources that Trudel had access to:

Certes, on aurait aimé pénétrer plus intimement dans la vie de l'esclave, trouver un exposé plus systématique de sa condition. Cependant il ne faut pas s'en prendre à l'Auteur qui ne peut faire dire davantage aux sources que ce qu'elles disent. Il faut, au contraire, le féliciter d'avoir su tirer le maximum d'une documentation aussi disparate.³⁸⁶

He defended the limitations of Trudel's work on the basis that the historical record did not allow for a more detailed analysis.

Hamelin later summarized *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* in his 1967 booklet on the history of French Canada in following terms:³⁸⁷

Le professeur Trudel a recensé 2'000 esclaves en Canada durant le régime français. Ils ont condition de domestiques. On les considère comme des ornements. Il est de bon ton d'avoir son esclave.³⁸⁸

In this review, he more directly compared the living conditions of enslaved people to those of domestic servants. Although he thus did not retain the term "humane," he essentially maintained Trudel's comparisons that slavery was different in French Canada, that enslaved people were treated

³⁸⁴ Hamelin, "L'Esclavage au Canada Français," 605; Trudel, *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, 321.

³⁸⁵ Hamelin, 606.

³⁸⁶ Hamelin, 606.

³⁸⁷ Jean Hamelin, *Le Canada Français: Son Évolution Historique 1497-1967* (Trois-Rivières: Le Boréal Express Ltée., 1967).

³⁸⁸ Hamelin, 19.

like adoptive children and that their living conditions were further comparable to that of domestic servants.

A second much shorter review was published in the *Revue Dominicaine*, a religious publication that attempted to be “plus doctrinale, plus scientifique, mieux adaptée aux besoins des intelligences modernes, et revêtue, en quelque sorte, des armes dont se sert à notre époque l’apologétique chrétienne.”³⁸⁹ Author Antonin Lamarche’s review of *L’Esclavage au Canada Français* was favourable of Trudel’s book particularly its documentation and insisted on the “humanness” of slavery in French Canada:

Notre premier esclave amené à Québec par Kirke en 1629, est un négroillon du Madagascar, vendu cinquante écus, puis donné en cadeau, devint ensuite, en compagnie d’un petit s[*****], élève du jésuite Le Jeune qui n’aurait pas sacrifié ses deux écoliers “pour le plus bel auditoire de France” (p. 3).

Nous voyons des s[*****]esses vendues comme esclaves et placées chez les Dames de la Congrégation pour leur instruction (p. 10). Il apparaît que n[*****]s et s[*****]s acceptés comme esclaves étaient le plus souvent traités comme des enfants adoptifs et leur éducation se confondait avec celle des enfants légitimes.

On trouve des esclaves dans toutes les classes sociales : gouverneurs, juges, agriculteurs, clergé et communautés religieuses. Aucune loi pour eux si ce n’est le Code noir des Antilles auquel on se référerait dans des cas particuliers. En général c’est la loi de la charité qui prime.³⁹⁰

Trudel used the example of two enslaved Indigenous girls educated by a Catholic sisterhood in the introduction of *L’Esclavage au Canada Français*. This example was readily seized upon by reviewers in the popular press as well as in academic circles, and thus shaped reader’s understanding of slavery. Further, Trudel’s argument that enslaved people were treated like adoptive children was reiterated on more than one occasion. The Catholic publication thus acknowledged that the Catholic church was engaged in slavery but declared “charity” as the guiding principle of slavery in French Canada. The involvement of the Catholic church was therefore rendered more palatable as it was aligned with Christian values. The article concluded that *L’Esclavage au Canada Français* was “un grand livre qui fait pâlir ‘la noblesse de nos origines.’”³⁹¹ As such, Lamarche directly addressed Garneau and Groulx’s discourse on the “racially pure” origins of French Canadians and confirmed that Trudel dispelled this myth.

³⁸⁹ La Rédaction, “Revue dominicaine,” *Revue dominicaine*, January 1915, 3, <http://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/3452741>.

³⁹⁰ Antonin Lamarche, “Review L’Esclavage au Canada Français de Marcel Trudel,” *Revue dominicaine*, March 1961, 124.

³⁹¹ Lamarche, 124.

In 1971, historian Robin Winks published *The Blacks in Canada* and engaged directly with Trudel's argument about the "humanness" of slavery. He argued that "despite these 'humane and familial traits' found in slavery as practiced in New France, the slaves themselves cannot have thought the system so agreeable, for there were numerous attempts to escape, especially by Negroes."³⁹² Winks thus argued on the basis of enslaved people's escapes that from the perspective of the enslaved, Trudel's argument that slavery was "humane" and "familial" was far less convincing. However, Winks himself in the same book, reiterated the claim that slavery was "humane" in Canada.³⁹³ Thus, this critique remained very limited.

Trudel's view on the initial reception of L'Esclavage au Canada Français

Trudel commented in interviews and in his memoirs on the initial reception of his work on slavery. His perspective to some degree contrasts with what I found through my research. Trudel declared that the book fell "flat." This assessment might be explained by the fact that Trudel expected the book to receive more attention in the public and academia than it did. Trudel highlighted that:

En 1960, j'ai donc publié mon étude et je me suis dit : "Ah! Ça va faire un tonnerre! Ça va avoir un succès fou, ça va bien se vendre, etc. Assez curieusement, le livre est tombé à plat ! À tel point que l'Université Laval, qui avait publié le volume, a décidé de le mettre au pilon dès 1975-1976. Je pense que l'ouvrage avait été tiré à 1 000 ou 1 500 exemplaires et il leur en restait quelque 600 ou 700 sur les bras."³⁹⁴

The very few articles I found on Trudel's work certainly support his impression that it was not a "tonnerre" in the early 1960s.

Trudel also stressed that he received little support from his peers. He expressed his disappointment with Lionel Groulx in this regard in an interview in 2004:

Et curieusement aussi, l'Université Laval ne m'a jamais demandé de donner des conférences là-dessus. Ils ne m'ont pas rejeté, mais ils ne m'ont pas appuyé non plus. Même le chanoine Groulx s'est contenté de me sourire quand je l'ai revu, sans plus. Alors, comment expliquer cette indifférence devant l'esclavage?³⁹⁵

Trudel explained the "indifférence" with which his work was received to the dominance of Garneau and Groulx's historical narratives:

³⁹² Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 14.

³⁹³ Winks, 13–14, 17, 51. The parallels in Trudel's and Winks's argument about slavery's comparative "mildness" would be an interesting topic for further inquiry. Winks states most tellingly that "if slavery in New France was among the most benevolent expressions of the institution in North America, nonetheless it was slavery." Winks, 17. In direct contrast to Trudel, Winks also explicitly cited Frank Tannenbaum's *Slave and Citizen*. Winks, 12.

³⁹⁴ Pigeon, "Entretien avec Marcel Trudel," 16.

³⁹⁵ Pigeon, 16.

Selon moi, c'est parce que toutes les ouvertures sur la réalité historique étaient bouchées. Bouchées par François-Xavier Garneau et bouchées par Groulx.³⁹⁶

This quotation shows that Trudel was frustrated with the tenacity with which existing narratives continued to dominate Quebec's public life. Efforts to rework Garneau and Groulx' narratives marked his entire career, especially in the later years when he published a series to expressly dispel myths about Quebec history.

As I will discuss below, Trudel's reflections point to three different issues that were raised when *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* was first published; (1) a focus on the fact that the clergy was involved in slavery, (2) the idea that Trudel's book described the "enslavement" of French Quebecers in the province, and (3) resistance to his work from the right and the conservative clergy, which resisted the revision of the historical narrative as it involved the Catholic Church.

First, there was an initial interest from the public, when Trudel first gave "des interviews à la radio et aux journaux" on *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, which was limited to the clergy's involvement. Trudel says in this regard in his memoirs:

Je parlais d'évêques et de prêtres qui avaient eu des esclaves. Même si je précisais que, dans une société où l'esclavage allait alors comme de soi, le clergé n'avait eu que 1.6% des esclaves, on ne retenait que l'affirmation sans ses nuances (ce qui faisait nouvelle).³⁹⁷

The articles I discussed in the mediatic reception for this period support this focus on the church's involvement. This focus fitted well into the *Zeitgeist* which was marked by the secularization movement—Trudel recounted that he gave these interviews during a campaign from the *Mouvement laïque de langue française*, over which he presided at the time. The public thus did not appear interested to learn that slavery existed in what is today Quebec in general, solely that the church was involved. This interest may indicate that some circles at least were familiar with the revisions made by Garneau's son who suggested that slavery had existed but that it had not involved church participation.

Second, other commentators, who only read the title, thought that the book discussed the conditions in which French Quebecers lived under the Duplessis government and the dominance of the Catholic church. Trudel stated that:

D'autres sans prendre la peine de lire, pensaient que mon livre portait sur l'esclavage des Québécois sous les puissances ecclésiastiques et sous le gouvernement Duplessis.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁶ Pigeon, 15–16.

³⁹⁷ Trudel, *Mémoires*, 242.

³⁹⁸ Trudel, 242.

If we consider that numerous Montreal school historians had described French Canadians as “esclaves” this understanding is easily understood in the context of the time. It also foreshadows the discussion around Vallières’ description of French Quebecers as “les n[****]s blancs d’Amérique.”

Third, Trudel faced resistance to revise the narrative or the “belle histoire” by “clergy” and the “right.” Trudel recounts:

Mais c’est là que le clergé et les gens de droite m’attendaient. Pour eux, Voltaire, Chiniquy, l’esclavage, tout cela faisait partie d’un même programme pour éclabousser l’Église et, du même coup, notre “belle histoire.”³⁹⁹

In this context, Trudel also summarized the resistance he received against his works published at the time that were particularly critical of the church. Although I found no proof of outspoken resistance against Trudel’s work from these groups before the 1990s, this might explain what Trudel considered low sales numbers because his work faced indifference from, and was not promoted by, important academic figures. The remaining copies of the original printing of *L’Esclavage au Canada Français* were destroyed in 1975, which indicates that at the time interest in the book had not yet started to increase. In contrast, in his memoirs *L’Esclavage au Canada Français* is listed among the “vaches grasses,” that Trudel published early in his career.⁴⁰⁰ As such, the book certainly sold some copies although not as many as Trudel hoped or expected.

In his memoirs, Trudel underlined that besides clerics and conservatives, people on the left criticized his work too:

Pourtant mon étude sur l’esclavage est écrite en toute impartialité ; il n’y a de charge contre qui que ce soit, pas même contre l’esclavage, indifférence qu’on n’a d’ailleurs pas manqué de me reprocher...⁴⁰¹

As such, Trudel shows in this context that he was critiqued for the lack of moral judgment against slavery that he brought forward. This critique of Trudel, however, appears to have been expressed not immediately upon its publication since my research shows that the first academic critiques of his interpretations appeared in the early 1970s.

My analysis of the reception of *L’Esclavage au Canada Français* before 1980, showed that Trudel’s work did not receive significant scholarly nor mediatic attention upon its initial publication. The articles that discussed the work were overwhelmingly published by people who either were directly personally connected to Trudel or who knew him through the network at Laval University.

³⁹⁹ Trudel, 282.

⁴⁰⁰ Trudel, 301.

⁴⁰¹ Trudel, 282.

For the first years following its publication, reviews of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* focused predominantly on presenting a narrative which suggested slavery had been better in French Canada and thus absolved French Catholic ancestors from some of the responsibility of their involvement in slavery and the fact that the Catholic church was involved.

Re-affirmation of relevance and critical assessment

In the second half of the 1980s, Black history received more mediatic attention. As a result, *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* was used by journalists to highlight the fact that Black Quebecers' had lived on the territory for much longer than was "commonly" understood. Journalists argued that Black people had as much a right to claim ancestry in the province as did other ethnic groups. Trudel gave conferences on various aspects of slavery such as the involvement of specific presbyteries⁴⁰² and was invited to contribute to public history projects such as the documentaries produced on the life of Marie-Joseph Angélique.

There was also a growth in the number of works on Black history in Quebec. The Quebec government funded the first Black history research projects. The recipients of funding were Daniel Gay and Dorothy Williams who received it for their research on Black Quebecers and Black Montrealers respectively.⁴⁰³ Their focus was largely a social history approach that documented the lives of individuals and communities and both worked with the information established by Trudel on slavery. By the end of the 1990s and the early 2000s, works published on the history of Blacks in Montreal, Quebec and New France critically engaged with the content of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, which suggests that forty years after its publication the book had become a seminal work that required all subsequent scholars to at least acknowledge its ideas and evidence.

This renewed interest coincided with Trudel's subsequent publications on slavery, which fostered additional mediatic and academic responses. Trudel published two more works on slavery following his retirement from the University of Ottawa. In 1990, he finally published *Le Dictionnaire des Esclaves* for which he had to redo the research due to the loss of his records on his research on slavery in French Canada during the move of the material from Laval University to Carleton University. Despite this discouraging setback, the fact that he redid this work on enslaved people and

⁴⁰² Cyrille Felteau, "Les gens de hier - À Longueuil, au temps des esclaves...", *La Presse*, March 30, 1986, sec. Cahier A Opinions, 1, <http://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/2757842>.: Without access to Trudel's archives I can only rely on the conferences which were reported in the news to determine to which he was invited.

⁴⁰³ Williams, *Blacks in Montreal*; Daniel Gay, "Les Empreintes Noires Sur La Neige Blanche," 1988.

slaveholder's demographic information suggests that Trudel considered the topic important enough to warrant this effort. The dictionary provided few new comments and consisted of some corrections or precisions of the data presented in *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*. It essentially became a reference work with which to study who had been enslaved and who had been a slaveholder in early French Canada.

In 2004, Trudel published a re-edition of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, titled *Deux siècles d'esclavage au Québec*. This edition made the book again accessible as it had not been reprinted since 1963. Historian Brett Rushforth argued in his review that the re-edition of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* was sparked by "a growing interest in slavery and indigenous history."⁴⁰⁴ The new edition was published by *Hurtubise* and included a CD-ROM with the dictionary published in 1990. Some of the most explicitly racist language was removed but the central arguments about the "humane" nature of slavery remained intact. All the academic reviews analyzed for this chapter contended that the book contained few revisions and was rather a reprint than a new edition of his 1960 book.⁴⁰⁵ Trudel himself states in an interview that he maintained most of the work as it was while undertaking the "corrections qui s'imposaient."⁴⁰⁶ He argued that little revision was necessary because he wrote his study "assez librement," which probably refers to the fact that he believed himself to have been quite independent from external influences and therefore free of bias and influence, for instance from the Catholic Church.⁴⁰⁷

Only in 2012 was Trudel's work translated and thus available for the first time in English. The translation of the re-edition of 2004 was named *Canada's forgotten slaves: two centuries of bondage*.⁴⁰⁸ The translator, George Tombs, published the translation in the year following Trudel's death.⁴⁰⁹ It was published by *Véhicule Press*, an English language publishing house based in Montreal which publishes fiction and non-fiction.

Renewed Mediatic interest in Trudel's scholarship on slavery

On the occasion of the announced publication of Trudel's *Dictionnaire* and presentations Trudel gave in the late 1980s, the first newspaper articles on Trudel's work were published, which

⁴⁰⁴ Brett Rushforth, "Deux Siècles d'esclavage Au Québec (Review)," *The Canadian Historical Review* 86, no. 2 (June 21, 2005): 373–75, <https://doi.org/10.1353/can.2005.0114>.

⁴⁰⁵ Rushforth, 374–75.

⁴⁰⁶ Pigeon, "Entretien," 19.

⁴⁰⁷ Pigeon, 19.

⁴⁰⁸ Trudel, *Canada's Forgotten Slaves*.

⁴⁰⁹ "About Us – Evidentia Channel."

provided a more in-depth analysis and who in some ways did no longer retain Trudel's arguments that slavery was "humane."

Cyrille Felteau, for instance, who studied social sciences and humanities at the same time as Marcel Trudel at Laval University,⁴¹⁰ wrote a report about the presentation Trudel gave to Longueuil's history society in 1986 on its presbytery's involvement in slavery. Felteau reported that Quebecers knew that the American Civil War led to the abolition of slavery, but were unaware that slavery existed in Quebec:

Tout le monde sait qu'il y a un peu plus d'un siècle, il fallut une guerre civile de cinq ans et au moins 500'000 morts pour que soit aboli l'esclavage des Noirs aux États-Unis. Ce que l'on sait moins, cependant, c'est qu'au cours du XVIII^e siècle le Canada français connut lui aussi l'esclavage, non seulement des Noirs, mais des Amérindiens. Jusqu'à ces dernières années, beaucoup de nos historiens traditionnels ont été étrangement muets (ou, à tout le moins, très discrets) devant cette "page sombre" de notre histoire collective. La plupart ont tout simplement ignoré ou encore, jeté un voile pudique sur ce sujet délicat, sinon tabou. L'un des tout premiers qui aient osé aborder et creuser le sujet, le professeur Marcel Trudel, a étonné et scandalisé maintes bonnes âmes, en publiant, en 1960, son excellent ouvrage : *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, qui fait toujours autorité. Il le complètera bientôt par un Dictionnaire des esclaves où seront cités nommément les quelque 4 074 Noirs et Amérindiens ayant vécu en état de servitude en Nouvelle-France à la fin du régime français et au début du régime anglais.⁴¹¹

Felteau stressed the fact that the knowledge of slavery in French Canada appeared to have been suppressed. On a similar note, Françoise Jaussoin, a freelance social science journalist wrote a half-page-long overview on slavery in New France in *La Presse* in 1988,⁴¹² in which she indicated that slavery might not be common knowledge among her readership. The comment reads as follows: "Des esclaves au Canada ? Oui. 11 y en a eu environ 4 000 en 125 ans, à partir du XVIII^e siècle jusqu'à la fin du XVIII^e siècle."⁴¹³ In a sidenote, Jaussoin referred to the dictionary that was about to be published and, as such, the article might have been meant to advertise Trudel's work. Jaussoin marketed Trudel's book to "tous ceux qui voudront savoir si leur famille compte un esclavagiste ou un ancêtre esclave."⁴¹⁴ This comment was not only in line with earlier articles about some of the ancestry of present-day French Canadians, but also Trudel's own objective to prove that enslaved people still had

⁴¹⁰ "Fonds Cyrille Felteau," Advitam, accessed September 28, 2020, <https://advitam.banq.qc.ca/notice/581682>.

⁴¹¹ Felteau, "Les gens de hier - À Longueuil, au temps des esclaves...", 1.

⁴¹² Françoise Jaussoin, "En 125 ans, 4000 esclaves au Canada," *La Presse*, août 1988, B6.

⁴¹³ Jaussoin, B6.

⁴¹⁴ Jaussoin, B6.

descendants in Quebec.⁴¹⁵ Also echoing Trudel, Jaussoin insisted on the “humanness” of slavery. The article further highlighted that slaveholders “ne . . . maltraiteront pas trop [leurs esclaves].”⁴¹⁶ For instance, the number of Black enslaved people was referred to as “ridiculement infime.”⁴¹⁷ Again, the article focused on the social origins of the slaveholder and stated ironically that “La classe des commerçants et marchands-bourgeois est la plus gourmande.”⁴¹⁸ While she minimized the violence inherent in slavery, Jaussoin mentioned Marie-Joseph Angélique by name and explained the events that led to her execution:

L’esclave qui a écopé de la plus lourde peine s’appelait Angélique. Noire, amoureuse, elle était persuadée que sa maîtresse voulait la vendre, la séparant ainsi de l’homme qu’elle aimait éperdument, un Blanc. Afin de fuir, elle met le feu à la maison, sans savoir qu’elle allumerait ainsi l’incendie le plus spectaculaire de Montréal. L’amant s’enfuit, elle est attrapée et sera pendue puis brûlée. Une punition somme toute bien douce pour l’époque et pour une ville ravagée.⁴¹⁹

The phrasing “afin de fuir” attributed some agency to Angélique. Angélique knew that she would be sold and burned the house in order to facilitate her flight. As such, she resisted the institution of slavery. In this way, Jaussoin went beyond Trudel’s primary focus though it is clear that she was indebted to his work and arguments in the overall approach of her article.

Importantly, throughout this later period, slavery’s historical relevance was denied only in the context of the canonization of Marguerite d’Youville in 1990. There was an acceptance that there had been slavery in French Canada, however when it became public that d’Youville would be canonized, *La Presse* ran an article that informed its readers about d’Youville’s involvement in slavery. In reaction to this article, two letters to the editor in *La Presse* explicitly denied the importance of slavery, whereas a Catholic nun outright denied that d’Youville was a slaveholder. These commentators demonstrated that slavery was still not yet common knowledge, otherwise such denials should have been impossible. At the same time, the exchange also supports the idea that the history of slavery was seen as shameful and as something that should not be raised to tarnish the image of Quebec. The letters to the editors resembled the opposition to countering “la belle histoire” that Trudel faced in the 1960s and 1970s:

⁴¹⁵ Trudel, *L’Esclavage au Canada Français*, 278–91.

⁴¹⁶ Jaussoin, “4000 esclaves au Canada,” B6.

⁴¹⁷ Jaussoin, B6.

⁴¹⁸ Jaussoin, B6.

⁴¹⁹ Jaussoin, B6.

Des historiens ont récemment laissé entendre que Jean-Paul II en canonisant mère Marguerite d'Youville, avait élevé à la sainteté une esclavagiste. Voici deux lettres en contre-partie :

Dans un milieu esclavagiste, le meilleur remède n'est pas de forcer les maîtres à renvoyer leurs esclaves, mais à les traiter comme des êtres humains, à les faire instruire et à les aider à prendre place dans une société bien organisée. On cherche en vain, sur la carte et à travers l'Histoire, les États libéraux qui ont jamais fait cela.

Mme d'Youville, en ayant les esclaves achetés par son mari, n'a fait que les traiter suivant les principes évangéliques et dans les limites de la loi civile de son temps. Mais son plus grand crime est certainement d'avoir recueilli les enfants jetés sur les glaces du Saint-Laurent et dont se débarrassaient les jeunes bourgeoises de l'époque, victimes de soldats en maraude, à la veille de leur rapatriement en France, après la capitulation de 1763. Edmond Robillard, o.p.⁴²⁰

This first letter to the editor was a re-purposing of Trudel's claim that enslaved people treated "humanely" and, as such, like adoptive children. As such, the author suggested slavery allowed enslaved people to be integrated into society. D'Youville appeared as a person who saved abandoned enslaved children. She supported her enslaved children through providing them an education—a similar discussion appeared in *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*—the decision of Courcelle to educate his Indigenous enslaved women.

The second letter cited Trudel as an "enemy" of Quebec and further reiterated the good things D'Youville did for the community. The commenter did not deny the existence of slavery but denied the responsibility of d'Youville for the institution. The second letter read as such:

Prions-nous pour nos ennemis, me suis-je dit en lisant la dépêche de la Presse canadienne reproduite par La Presse du 5 décembre à propos, qui faisait dire aux historiens Howard Adams et Marcel Trudel qu'on aurait dû trouver personne plus honorable que mère d'Youville comme première sainte canadienne. C'est comme si ces historiens voulaient culpabiliser sainte Marguerite d'Youville et l'Église catholique canadienne en rappelant cette époque difficile de notre histoire. Toute personne sensée et bien informée sait que ce n'est pas l'esclavage qui a motivé son action charitable, mais bien son amour de Dieu, qui l'a poussée à soulager la misère des pauvres et des malades qui avaient besoin d'être secourus et aidés.⁴²¹

Trudel's work became even more immersed in the debate when he, and his scholarship, were cited to affirm that d'Youville had indeed enslaved people.⁴²² Trudel was called "la plus grande autorité

⁴²⁰ Edmond Robillard, "La boîte aux lettres, n.t.," *La Presse*, décembre 1990.

⁴²¹ Robert Gagnier, "La boîte aux lettres, n.t.," *La Presse*, décembre 1990.

⁴²² "Marguerite d'Youville, Propriétaire d'esclaves En Nouvelle-France," *La Presse*, December 6, 1990, sec. B5, <https://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/2170396>.

en ce qui concerne la Nouvelle-France” and he was quoted as saying said that the sisterhood was: “tout à fait dans l’erreur... La famille de mère d’Youville en avait (des esclaves) et elle en a réservé quelques-uns pour son usage personnel et elle en a eu d’autres à son service dans son hôpital et ailleurs’.⁴²³ Another article published two days later quoted the sisterhood in order to argue that these claims were a “calomnie.”⁴²⁴

This public debate reflected how in the 1990s, there was greater interest and activism around Black history in Quebec and how, at the same time new scholars as well as the general public got engaged in discussions on slavery whereas previously Trudel had been a relatively lone voice. on. The lack of inclusion of Black history in Montreal’s 350-year anniversary festivities was denounced in 1992 by Clifton Ruggles.⁴²⁵ Ruggles, a Black history teacher for the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal and Concordia University as well as columnist for the *Montreal Gazette*, denounced the lack of inclusion of information about Black people’s employment by the railway.⁴²⁶ The author argued that Dorothy Williams’s work in particular could have provided the basis for an inclusion. The article noted the irony of having an exhibition at the *Bonsecours* Market, with its railway access, without referring to the employment of Black men by the railway.⁴²⁷ Ruggles criticized the exhibit for erasing earlier histories noting that “according to information provided at the exhibit, blacks did not arrive until the wave of Haitian immigration in the 1960s.”⁴²⁸

Commentators continued to attribute Trudel with having raised awareness of the existence of slavery while no longer restating Trudel’s argument that slavery was “humane.” Commentators gained empirical evidence from *L’Esclavage au Canada Français* but reframed the significance of what they learned. Dany Laferrière, for instance, a Haitian-Canadian author and member of the *Académie française*, published a half-page article in *La Presse* in 2007 titled “Un esclave dans le placard,” to refer to the fact that the knowledge about slavery was hidden away in Quebec. Laferrière stated:

⁴²³ *La Presse*.

⁴²⁴ Jules Béliveau, “Les Soeurs Grises Nient Que Leur Fondatrice Se Soit Livrée Au Trafic Des Esclaves,” *La Presse*, décembre 1990, sec. A7, <https://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/2170405>.

⁴²⁵ Clifton Ruggles, “Black . . . and Invisible; Blacks Have Been Part of Montreal for Hundreds of Years. Why Weren’t They Included in a Major Exhibit Marking the City’s 350th Anniversary?,” *The Gazette (Montreal, Quebec)*, October 17, 1992, sec. Weekly Review, ProQuest.

⁴²⁶ Ruggles; Mark Abley, “Black Community Loses a Voice: Columnist Ruggles Dies at 46,” *The Gazette*, January 3, 1998, ProQuest, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/433236760/D34FCA2B5E904F6FPQ/1?accountid=12339>.

⁴²⁷ Ruggles, “Black . . . and Invisible.”

⁴²⁸ Ruggles.

Je ne veux pas jeter de l'huile sur le feu, et ce n'est surtout pas le moment. Mais il faut bien que nos jeunes gens l'apprennent d'une manière ou d'une autre : il y a eu des esclaves aux Québec.⁴²⁹

Laferrière's article, written based on an encounter with Trudel, Paul Fehmiu-Brown and Daniel Gay, provided an overview of the established historical knowledge about slavery. His overview did not engage in the comparison of slavery's characteristics as more "benevolent" in today's Quebec. Laferrière also mentioned the absence of slavery from the history curriculum.

Similarly, Tetchena Bellange, in an interview about her documentary on slavery and specifically Marie-Joseph Angélique, *Les mains noires*, expressed her surprise to learn about slavery only from Trudel's work and not in school where she was taught the "North Star myth."⁴³⁰

Un jour, je suis tombée sur un reportage où l'historien Marcel Trudel parlait de l'esclavage en Nouvelle-France et de Marie-Josèphe Angélique. Ça m'a profondément choquée. Je n'avais jamais entendu dire qu'il y avait eu de l'esclavage ici, où je suis née. Ce qu'on m'avait appris en histoire est que ce pays avait été un havre de paix pour les esclaves américains qui traversaient la frontière pour être libres.⁴³¹

In line with earlier commentators, Trudel's work was where the filmmaker and actress first learned about slavery and contributed to the initiative to make a documentary on slavery. To a certain degree it was thus Trudel and as such *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* that allowed slavery to be taken out of the figurative closet by those who were speaking up from Quebec's Black population about their own erasure from Quebec's history.

In an article from 2014 about the English translation of *Deux siècle d'esclavage*, Trudel's work was celebrated for its opposition against "generations of historians and church leaders had nurtured the myth that slavery, if it had existed at all, had been imported into the province by the English after the conquest of 1760."⁴³² This article by Robert Everett-Green, a feature writer for *The Globe and Mail*, even attributed his departure from Laval University to his work on slavery. Everett-Green wrote: "nobody could refute Mr. Trudel's careful research, so he was ostracized professionally, and in 1965 left his post at the University of Laval for a less frosty berth at the University of Ottawa."⁴³³ This

⁴²⁹ Dany Laferrière, "Un esclave dans le placard," *La Presse*, février 2007, 10.

⁴³⁰ *Les Mains Noires : Procès de l'esclave Incendiaire = Black Hands : Trial of the Arsonist Slave* (Bel Ange Moon Productions, 2010), <http://www.mainsnoires.com/videos.php>.

⁴³¹ André Duchesne, "Trois questions à... Tetchena Bellange," *La Presse*, août 2010, 2.

⁴³² Robert Everett-Green, "200 Years a Slave: The Dark History of Captivity in Canada," *The Globe and Mail*, February 28, 2014, sec. Opinion, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/200-years-a-slave-the-dark-history-of-captivity-in-canada/article17178374/>.

⁴³³ Whether he was indeed professionally ostracized is not clear from the primary sources I was able to look at due to the lack of physical access to Trudel's archives due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The comments Tombs made in the

article highlighted a perspective that became highly prevalent in articles after Trudel's death, in which Trudel was celebrated for having unearthed the truth about slavery and as thus having singlehandedly raised awareness about the historical presence of Black people in Quebec.

The analyzed articles recognized Trudel as the authority on slavery in New France. Only in recent years, have other scholars such as Daniel Gay, Frank Mackey and Afua Cooper gained comparable recognition. The publication of Afua Cooper's *The Hanging of Angélique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Montreal* in 2006 changed the discourse on slavery in New France. After 2006, according to English scholar Winfried Siemerling, the story of Angélique also gained "increased francophone attention in exhibits and other media."⁴³⁴ The significance of Marie-Joseph Angélique as a historical figure lied not only in her story but also in the fact that her historical record had been preserved. Siemerling called her trial records "the most detailed account based on a slave's statements in eighteenth-century New France that we have."⁴³⁵ Her trial record provided a unique historical testimony of slavery in New France.⁴³⁶ More and more, articles also referred to other people involved in drawing attention to the topic of slavery through public history projects.⁴³⁷ A 2018 CBC series, for instance, did not only refer to Trudel's dictionary but interviewed among others Afua Cooper and Brett Rushforth on the topic of slavery.⁴³⁸ As such, the nearly solitary influence of Trudel waned in the discourse on slavery in New France as new scholars and their approaches gained influence in academic and public circles.

Academic Reviews of Trudel's Work

While *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* gained relevance in the public discourse, a similar development took place in academia. The surging scholarship on slavery and Black history in the

introduction of the translation, however, indicate that at least from Trudel's perspective he had been to a certain degree censored. *Canada's Forgotten Slaves*, 8.

⁴³⁴ Siemerling, *Black Atlantic Reconsidered*, 187; George Elliott Clarke, "Raising Raced and Erased Executions in African-Canadian Literature: Or, Unearthing Angélique," *Essays on Canadian Writing*, no. 75 (Winter 2002): 30; Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 91–119. These authors provide detailed discussions of the increased interest in Marie-Joseph Angélique and the relevance of her testimony.

⁴³⁵ Siemerling, *Black Atlantic Reconsidered*, 34.

⁴³⁶ Siemerling, 407.

⁴³⁷ For Example: Jean-Christophe Laurence, "Le Combat de Tchika: Croisade d'un Congolais pour la mémoire de l'esclave Marie-Josèphe Angélique," *La Presse*, février 2011, sec. Cahier A; Jérôme Delgado, "Âme noir sur les murs," *La Presse*, November 17, 2001.

⁴³⁸ Kyle G. Brown, "Canada's Slavery Secret: The Whitewashing of 200 Years of Enslavement | CBC Radio," *CBC*, February 18, 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/canada-s-slavery-secret-the-whitewashing-of-200-years-of-enslavement-1.4726313>.

1990s engaged with the interpretations offered in *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*. To understand how these scholars received Trudel's work, I first analyzed the academic reviews of Trudel's works on slavery and second studied how the new scholarship that was published in the 1990s and early 2000s engaged with Trudel's narrative on slavery.

In 1991, when Daniel Gay was working on his research project on Black Quebecers, he reviewed the *Le Dictionnaire des Esclaves*. Gay used the new empirical data to qualify the arguments Trudel made in *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*. Gay disagreed with Trudel and stated that “l'esclave est une marchandise pure et simple” and thus was neither “humain” nor “familial.”⁴³⁹ Gay indicated that the dictionary's biographical data on enslaved people “contribue plutôt à faire éclater ce mythe retors de l'exemplarité essentialiste ou providentielle de ‘notre esclavage.’”⁴⁴⁰ Thus, the idea of a French-Canadian-specific slavery was a “myth” according to him. Nevertheless, Gay valued the material Trudel had assembled and hoped that “contrairement à son prédécesseur de 1960, le *Dictionnaire* ne soit pas écrasé sous le rouleau compresseur de la censure.”⁴⁴¹ Gay thus contended that the earlier version had been censored. As a sociology professor at Laval University who worked on Black history, Gay arguably had a good insight in the resistance towards studying Black history that marked Quebec's academic sphere at the time.⁴⁴²

The 2004 edition of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* was reviewed with somewhat similar results by four scholars with different research foci – which supported the idea that the scholarship on slavery started to become a more broadly discussed research field. Brett Rushforth is an authority in regard to the Indigenous slave trade and its relationship to the French empire in North America.⁴⁴³ Gilles Havard works on Indigenous-settler relationships in New France. He reviewed *Deux siècles d'Esclavage* in the *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*. Kevin Brushett is a Canadian historian who focuses on early twentieth century diplomatic history and reviewed the translation published in 2012 in the *British Journal of Canadian Studies*. Daniel Gay reviewed the re-edition as well and was the only scholar who worked on Black history. He published his review in *Recherches sociographiques*. These reviews highlighted that the content of *Deux siècle d'esclavage* was extremely similar to that of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*

⁴³⁹ Trudel, *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, 165, 189, 325; Daniel Gay, “Marcel TRUDEL, Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires au Canada français,” *Recherches sociographiques* 32, no. 2 (1991): 262–67, <https://doi.org/10.7202/056614ar>.

⁴⁴⁰ Gay, “Dictionnaire des esclaves,” 265.

⁴⁴¹ Gay, 267.

⁴⁴² Although there was some debate around the degree to which Trudel faced resistance in the 1960s, I did not find much evidence for this in the primary sources I analyzed.

⁴⁴³ Brett Rushforth, “‘A Little Flesh We Offer You’: The Origins of Indian Slavery in New France,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (2003): 777–808; Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France*.

and only few minor changes were made, as such, they frequently reviewed both books in the same breath as they considered the re-edition a simple reprint.⁴⁴⁴

The scholars acknowledged that value and importance of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* for drawing attention to what is today Quebec's history of slavery and the value of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* and its re-edition as a reference work. They stressed that in the context of the time, *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* presented an innovation. Gay underlined in his review that Trudel's opposition to a romanticized narrative of Quebec's past, which denied the existence of slavery "figure parmi les 'petites révolutions' de l'époque."⁴⁴⁵ Rushforth recognized that *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* had been a "bold proposition."⁴⁴⁶ Rushforth contended that "for the past half-century, . . . *Esclavage au Canada français* has remained the only scholarly study of Amerindian and African slavery in early Canada."⁴⁴⁷ Trudel thus showed "remarkable foresight . . . to see Canadian slavery as an important and viable topic for scholarly research."⁴⁴⁸

Despite these reservations, reviewers recognized the value of Trudel's empirical evidence as the basis further analysis. For instance, Rushforth argued:

Trudel was the first to compile the foundational ordinances, court decisions, and royal decrees that governed the practice of slavery in New France. Trudel also established, for the first time, the demographic and geographic distribution of known slaves, as well as the identity and social profile of their masters. In short, this book provides the only available outline of the contours of this slave system. Thus, as a handbook, research guide, or data set meant to show the existence of slavery in early French Canada, this text succeeds admirably. . . . But like many pioneering projects, Trudel's work is only a beginning, an empirical foundation in search of an interpretive framework.⁴⁴⁹

Similarly, Harvard called the re-edition an "ouvrage de reference."⁴⁵⁰ Gay argued that Trudel's works "constituent des travaux incontournables; ce sont des références."⁴⁵¹ Rushforth stressed that "historians would profit from investing enough time in the *Dictionnaire* to draw their own conclusions rather than relying on Trudel's monograph to do that work for them."⁴⁵²

⁴⁴⁴ Rushforth, "Deux siècles d'esclavage au Québec," 373-5.

⁴⁴⁵ Gay, "Deux siècles d'esclavage au Québec," 565.

⁴⁴⁶ Rushforth, "Deux siècles d'esclavage au Québec," 373.

⁴⁴⁷ Rushforth, 373.

⁴⁴⁸ Rushforth, 375.

⁴⁴⁹ Rushforth, 373.

⁴⁵⁰ Gilles Havard, "TRUDEL, Marcel, Avec La Collaboration de Micheline D'ALLAIRE, Deux Siècles d'esclavage Au Québec (Montréal, Hurtubise HMH, Cahiers Du Québec, Coll. « Histoire », 2004), 408 p.," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique Française* 59, no. 1-2 (2005): 183, <https://doi.org/10.7202/012746ar>.

⁴⁵¹ Gay, "Deux siècles d'esclavage au Québec," 564.

⁴⁵² Rushforth, "Deux siècles d'esclavage au Québec"; Kevin Brushett, "Canada's Forgotten Slaves: Two Hundred Years of Bondage by Marcel Trudel (Review)," *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 28, no. 2 (October 3, 2015): 225-26.

Havard and Gay insisted – as was the case with the mediatic reception – on Trudel’s opposition to the idea that French Canadian society was “racially pure.” Havard supported that “de façon salubre” the section on “unions mixtes” has been significantly revised for the re-edition.⁴⁵³ Havard and Gay underlined the importance of Trudel’s work on the shared genealogy of French Quebecers and Black Quebecers.⁴⁵⁴ Gay stressed that this allowed to resist the argument that Black Quebecers were not “authentiques” or “vrais” members of Quebec society.⁴⁵⁵

All of the reviewers were, to different degrees, critical of Trudel’s work and argued that although *Deux siècles d’esclavage* provided important data, its interpretations were born of a particular time and place. This assessment was particularly based on their sense that the book had not sufficiently engaged with more recent scholarship on slavery.

The scholars pointed out that Trudel revised its language and replaced the terms “n[****]s” and “s[*****]s” with “noirs” and “Amérindiens,” but pointed out this replacement did not take place throughout and that it did not concern other problematic arguments:

Bien que dépoussiéré, l’ouvrage de 1960 n’est pas totalement actualisé. . . . Certains termes désuets, voire racistes, ont heureusement disparu. . . . Mais on pourra regretter que ce toilettage lexical n’ait pas été accompli de fond en comble.⁴⁵⁶

Gay added that, in addition to the replacement, some but not all problematic statements were removed. Statements like “[le n[****]] rêve manifestement d’égaliser le Blanc” have been removed.⁴⁵⁷

Beyond these changes, reviewers insisted that the book remained very similar to the 1960 edition and was a “version légèrement corrigée,” “partiellement actualisée et globalement plus fouillée” or even as Rushforth as the harshest critique contented: “the book’s text remains virtually unchanged, making this a reprint rather than a revised edition of the earlier work.”⁴⁵⁸

The reviewers critiqued the content of the work and considered it not up to date with the historical standards of the time. Rushforth exclaimed that “if Trudel’s basic facts have stood the test of time, his interpretations belong much more to the 1950s than the 2000s.”⁴⁵⁹ Rushforth criticized Trudel for not contextualizing his research within the “indigenous context of the slave trade” but

⁴⁵³ Havard, “Deux siècles d’esclavage au Québec,” 183.

⁴⁵⁴ Havard, “Deux siècles d’esclavage au Québec,” 183; Gay, “Deux siècles d’esclavage au Québec,” 267.

⁴⁵⁵ Gay, “Deux siècles d’esclavage au Québec,” 267.

⁴⁵⁶ Havard, “Deux siècles d’esclavage au Québec,” 181.

⁴⁵⁷ Gay, “Deux siècles d’esclavage au Québec,” 563-4; Trudel, *L’Esclavage au Canada Français*, 252.

⁴⁵⁸ Rushforth, “Deux siècles d’esclavage au Québec”; Gay, “Deux siècles d’esclavage au Québec,” 562; Havard, “Deux siècles d’esclavage au Québec,” 180.

⁴⁵⁹ Rushforth, “Deux siècles d’esclavage au Québec,” 373.

more broadly that “he [does not] address many of the questions that have driven recent scholarship on slavery, including any analysis of race or gender.”⁴⁶⁰ As such, he criticized that:

[Trudel] evaluates slaves’ intimate relationships not in terms of slave communities, families, or friendships, but merely as a measure of ‘the slave’s moral or immoral behavior’ [le comportement moral ou immoral de l’esclave].⁴⁶¹

Havard in a similar vein criticized the lack of discussion of recent scholarship in *Deux siècles d’esclavage*:

Though it was in its day a considerable work of social history, it rarely engages with the flood of literature on the lives of slaves and masters that has emerged since.⁴⁶²

Thus, Havard considered that an engagement with this new scholarship may have changed some Trudel’s interpretations.

Another critique Havard advanced was the usage of the first-person plural and the arbitrary exclusion of Louisiana, which reminded Havard of nationalist writing by Lionel Groulx made him wonder whether it was “cette même posture nationaliste qui le conduit à restreindre géographiquement son étude de l’esclavage au seul Canada - et à délaisser la Louisiane.”⁴⁶³ Havard thus contended that Trudel also engaged in nationalist historical writing by limiting his study to the territory that nearly exclusively to the territory that is present-day Quebec.

The biggest issue of contention, however, was that Trudel retained his argument that slavery was “familial and humane” in French Canada. The reviewers rejected this interpretation to different degrees; Rushforth highlighted that these interpretations were not necessarily accurate based on Trudel’s primary sources. As such, he pointed out that “despite his accurate assessment of slaves’ tragically high mortality rates, for example, he nevertheless describes slavery in early Canada as a ‘very humane’ system.”⁴⁶⁴ Rushforth’s disagreement thus was not based on the data but on Trudel’s interpretations. Havard pointed out that “Trudel’s claims that Canadian slavery was more benign than elsewhere, including, it seems, in sexual relations between slaves and masters” did not take into consideration more recent scholarship.⁴⁶⁵

Gay reformulated his earlier critique of Trudel’s argument about the “humanness” of slavery:

Un jugement, qui ne rallie pas tous les suffrages, se rapporte à “l’air d’humanité” que Trudel croit percevoir dans “notre esclavage”, c’est-à-dire l’esclavage canadien-

⁴⁶⁰ Rushforth, 374.

⁴⁶¹ Rushforth, 374.

⁴⁶² Brushett, “Canada’s Forgotten Slaves,” 265-66.

⁴⁶³ Havard, “Deux siècles d’esclavage au Québec,” 181-82.

⁴⁶⁴ Rushforth, “Deux siècles d’esclavage au Québec”; Trudel, *Deux siècles d’esclavage au Québec*, 175.

⁴⁶⁵ Brushett, “Canada’s Forgotten Slaves,” 265-66.

français et catholique, par rapport à celui pratiqué dans d'autres pays. Ce thème de la supposée spécificité culturelle de l'esclavage surprend.⁴⁶⁶

Gay thus questioned the relevance of this comparison. In contrast, Havard suggested that Trudel's argument that slavery was "familial" may not apply broadly, while defending the comparison with the rest of the Americas because slavery was not as violent in what is today is Quebec as it was elsewhere in the Americas:

Trudel parle de l'"affection réciproque des maîtres et des esclaves" (p. 180) et qualifie même l'esclavage canadien de "familial" (p. 330). Cet adjectif ne s'applique sans doute pas à toutes les situations et ne rend pas compte du déracinement ou de la marginalité de nombreux esclaves, mais force est de constater que les Africains et les "Panis" du Saint-Laurent ne subissent pas la violence des maîtres inhérente aux sociétés esclavagistes.⁴⁶⁷

Havard did not outline what he considered to be the "violence . . . inhérente aux société esclavagistes." As such, he acknowledged that slavery was inherently violent beyond physical violence but not that this violence was the same as in the rest of the Americas.

A further critique mentioned by these scholars was that Trudel argued in favour of slaveholders' benevolence instead of the experience of the enslaved. Rushforth, for instance, pointed out that:

And if slaves were immoral, their masters rarely were. They cared for slaves' bodies, and especially their souls, with true Christian sentiment. Even while he acknowledges that masters and mistresses often delayed their slaves' baptisms until the last possible moment before death, Trudel still asserts, 'At the same time, one cannot even speak of the indifference of these masters regarding the Christian education of their Amerindians and Blacks' [On ne peut tout de même pas parler de l'indifférence de ces maîtres à l'égard de l'éducation chrétienne de leurs Amérindiennes et Noirs] (187). Instead, slaves had a difficult time understanding even their masters' best efforts to teach them about Christianity.⁴⁶⁸

Trudel blamed the enslaved for their slow Christian education instead of the slaveholders. Gay, similar to Rushforth, highlighted Trudel's differential treatment of slaveholders compared to the enslaved, particularly what concerns the morality of their respective behaviour:

On peut en dire autant de celui de "l'immoralité de l'esclave [amérindien et noir]" . . . , alors que l'immoralité des maîtres, attitude que laisse supposer la violence exercée par certains d'entre eux, n'est à aucun moment mise en évidence ou condamnée. De plus, Trudel donne la malheureuse impression que la soi-disant "immoralité" de l'esclave est un fait de nature plutôt que la réaction normale de

⁴⁶⁶ Gay, "Deux siècles d'esclavage au Québec," 565.

⁴⁶⁷ Havard, "Deux siècles d'esclavage au Québec," 183.

⁴⁶⁸ Rushforth, "Deux siècles d'esclavage au Québec," 374.

celui-ci face à un système de domination qui le pousse à transgresser les interdits sociaux édictés précisément par les propriétaires d'esclaves.⁴⁶⁹

Gay and Rushforth thus critiqued both that the work focused more on slaveholders than the enslaved's perspective.

One review by Yves Laberge, a sociologist at the University of Ottawa, who studied at Laval University, and was a politician for the Conservative Party of Canada took a different stance.⁴⁷⁰ In his review for the *International Review of Social History*, Laberge brought in the comparison with the United States and to a certain degree recreated or at least supported the validity of the "North Star myth" in his review:

The presence of slaves in Canada has always surprised most people, even Canadians, who associate slavery with the United States, seeing the Canadian border as a safe refuge for escaped US slaves who wanted to be free. This is not false. As Marcel Trudel explains, slaves were not common in Canada, at least not like the millions of African slaves living in the United States over three centuries.⁴⁷¹

As such, Laberge did not point out in his review that some interpretations may have represented a problem and that the field had evolved beyond Trudel's work. Significantly, Laberge was also the only scholar who reviewed the book who does not work in the field, which may explain why he appeared less critical of Trudel's work.

Overall, reviewers acknowledged the relevance of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, although they criticized that Trudel did not engage more with recent scholarship. They contend that engaging with this scholarship would have led him to re-evaluate his assessment that slavery in French Canada had been "humane." Nele Sawallisch, who holds a PhD in history on Black Canadian literature, executed a similar research project on the reviews written based on Trudel's work, and she argues that scholars retained a favourable assessment of Trudel's work although they pointed out numerous shortcomings because of his position in the historical field.⁴⁷² I would argue that in the academic reviews I looked at here, with the exception of Yves Laberge all the scholars expressed significant concern with the re-edition, all the while trying to acknowledge Trudel's contribution to the field that the 1960 version presented.

⁴⁶⁹ Gay, "Deux siècles d'esclavage au Québec," 565.

⁴⁷⁰ "Le Parti conservateur déniché un candidat," *Radio-Canada*, December 16, 2005, <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/287621/conservateur-charlevoix>.

⁴⁷¹ Yves Laberge, "Trudel, Marcel. Deux Siècles d'esclavage Au Québec. Suivi Du: Dictionnaire Des Esclaves et de Leurs Propriétaires Au Canada Française Sur CD-ROM. Avec La Collaboration de Micheline D'Allaire. [Cahiers Du Québec.] Éditions Hurtubise HMH Itée, Montréal 2004. 405 Pp.," *International Review of Social History* 50, no. 2 (August 2005): 293–94, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859005011971>.

⁴⁷² Sawallisch, "Trudel's Legacies," 89.

Discussion of Trudel's Work in Later Scholarship

No comparably comprehensive work on slavery in French Canada was published until the early 2000s. However, already in the late 1980s and early 1990s, new scholars published studies on certain aspects pertaining to slavery on the territory that is now Quebec. The lack of earlier in-depth scholarship on slavery may be related to the resistance that all scholars who were interested in slavery experienced and recount in their respective books. Trudel mentioned that he had trouble accessing archives because the archivists were convinced that no information on Indigenous people was in the archive.⁴⁷³ Elgersman Lee “remember[s] calling a prestigious Canadian library and requesting information about sources on slavery, only to be told that there had been no slavery in Canada.”⁴⁷⁴ Mackey described a similar experience with the Montreal city archive in our interview.⁴⁷⁵ Gay was told outright by a graduate student that the topic was not worth studying.⁴⁷⁶

Despite these discouraging experiences, these scholars researched Black slavery in French Canada. Trudel appears to have contributed to the development of Quebec's slavery studies. Fehmiu-Brown, one of the first Quebec scholars to address the question after Trudel, called Trudel his “mentor” and stated that he was “le premier contemporain qui a écrit abondamment sur la présence des Noirs sur notre territoire.”⁴⁷⁷ Gay stated that Trudel had been at the origin of his interest in the history of Black Quebecers. The first sentence of his 2004 book, *Les Noirs du Québec*, reads: “c’est la lecture attentive de *L’Esclavage au Canada Français* . . . qui m’a incité à m’intéresser davantage à la question des Noirs du Québec.”⁴⁷⁸ Afua Cooper’s *The Hanging of Angélique* which came out in 2006 too referred to Trudel’s work “as a foundational text in Black Canadian history.” She declared, “Trudel made our work easier with his research on slavery in Canada and his several publications on the subject.”⁴⁷⁹

In this section, I will discuss how this scholarship engaged with Trudel’s work more specifically. I analyze the tensions between scholars who follow Trudel’s argument that slavery had been “humane” in French Canada, and those who counter this argument as well as question comparisons made with slaveholding practices in the rest of the Americas. I selected Afua Cooper’s

⁴⁷³ Pigeon, “Entretien,” 18.

⁴⁷⁴ Elgersman Lee, *Unyielding spirits*, xi.

⁴⁷⁵ Frank Mackey, Interview about his historical research on Black people in Montreal, February 10, 2020.

⁴⁷⁶ Gay, *Les Noirs Du Québec*, 15.

⁴⁷⁷ Tetchena Bellange, *Les Mains Noires-Bonus: Mentor Marcel Trudel* (Bel Ange Moon Production, 2011), <http://www.mainsnoires.com/videos.php?v=-dJg6kgHY-k>; Fehmiu-Brown, *Ces Canadiens Oubliés*.

⁴⁷⁸ Gay, *Les Noirs Du Québec*, 9.

⁴⁷⁹ Cooper, *Hanging of Angélique*, 308.

The Hanging of Angélique published by HarperCollins in 2006 and Frank Mackey's *Done with Slavery* published by McGill-Queen's University Press in 2010 to illustrate these respective positions.⁴⁸⁰ Aside from Trudel's scholarship, these two works are the most extensive research projects on Black slavery in what is present-day Quebec.

Cooper used Trudel's work as a springboard for her own research on slavery. This usage was coherent with the suggestion made in academic reviews of *Deux siècle d'esclavage* to use the book as a source of data rather than to retain his arguments. She thus used Trudel's factual information and statistical data but did not retain his conceptual interventions.⁴⁸¹ Her book focused on the life of one enslaved Black woman, while arguing that the institution of slavery in New France was part of a transatlantic and continental network of commerce, which included Black bodies.⁴⁸² Through her close reading of Marie-Joseph Angélique's trial transcript, Cooper excavated enslaved people's lived experiences. Cooper argued that although "Canada might not have been a slave society—that is a society whose economy was based on slavers—but it was a society with slaves."⁴⁸³ Cooper argued that the trial record may be the "the first slave narrative in North America,"⁴⁸⁴ as it documented Angélique's experience with her enslavement from her own perspective. Cooper highlighted that in a context in which Black female voices are absent from the historical record, "[Angélique] demanded her place in history and made visible the enslaved as a thinking, feeling, intelligent, and complex human."⁴⁸⁵

Cooper's gendered analysis and discussion of enslaved people's resistance to slavery resembled, in its theoretical underpinnings and arguments, Elgersman Lee's book on Black enslaved women in colonial Canada and Jamaica. This 1997 book stemmed from Elgersman Lee's dissertation and was characterized by an intersectional approach, which insisted on the importance of considering the intersection of different forms of oppression: to be enslaved, Black and a woman.⁴⁸⁶ French Canada was only a part of her project but she had brought forward a discussion of gender absent from earlier scholarship on French Canadian slavery.⁴⁸⁷ For instance, Elgersman Lee stressed that the

⁴⁸⁰ Numerous interesting works on Black people in Quebec were excluded from a more detailed analysis because they were either: not limited to Quebec (Winks), were addressing mostly the period after slavery (Williams), were largely based on Trudel's material (Gay), or were more focused on Indigenous than Black slavery (Rushforth), or are solely a synthesis of other scholars' work (Bessière).

⁴⁸¹ Cooper, 78.

⁴⁸² Cooper, 71, 73. *The Hanging of Angélique* provides a much more detailed analysis of the origins of enslaved people. Cooper highlights that enslaved people were brought to the colony through the English colonies but also "from the West Indies, from Africa, and from Europe." She also argues that slavery existed due to a labour shortage in the colony.

⁴⁸³ Cooper, 68.

⁴⁸⁴ Cooper, 293.

⁴⁸⁵ Cooper, 306.

⁴⁸⁶ Elgersman Lee, *Unyielding spirits*, xv.

⁴⁸⁷ Elgersman Lee, 116.

proximity in which slaveholders lived with their enslaved women in French Canada could have facilitated sexual abuse.⁴⁸⁸ She concluded that “Black sexuality and reproduction” became “public property” in early Canada.⁴⁸⁹ Cooper cited Elgersman Lee to support her comments on the condition of enslaved women:

White men owned Black women’s bodies and what came out of those bodies. Black women were regularly subjected to sexual assaults by their owners and other White men. If the women were impregnated and had children, these children inherited the status of their mothers and were enslaved. . . . One of the most dehumanizing aspects of slavery was the loss of control that Black people, especially women experienced over their bodies.⁴⁹⁰

Elgersman Lee also stressed the resistance in which enslaved women engaged in both Jamaica and Early Canada. What they had “in common was the rejection of their chattel status.”⁴⁹¹ As such, “even in slave societies where slavery was categorized as mild, Black [enslaved women] . . . challenged their chattel status.”⁴⁹² Elgersman Lee suggested that the “most common form of resistance in Lower Canada and Jamaica” was running away from their slaveholder.⁴⁹³ Cooper discussed these frequent escapes by enslaved people also as forms of resistance to the institution.⁴⁹⁴ She contextualized these “steps to wreak revenge on their owners” by comparing it to other colonies in which they reacted similarly by running away or being disobedient.⁴⁹⁵

Cooper’s perspective on the study of slavery (much like Elgersman Lee’s approach), opposed Trudel’s narrative and approach. Rather than providing an overview of the average experience of enslaved people in New France, Cooper focused in detail on Angélique’s life. Through the narrative of Angélique’s life, Cooper demonstrated not only the consequences for Angélique’s life of her enslavement, but also how she resisted her bondage. *The Hanging of Angélique* powerfully contradicted earlier accounts, such as Trudel’s book, where slavery was presented as “mild” or “humane” in Canada. Cooper broke with Trudel’s tradition and its focus on numbers, averages and slaveholders by placing the experience of a Black enslaved woman at the center of her study.⁴⁹⁶ In focusing on gender issues, Cooper challenged several of Trudel’s interpretations. For instance, she argued that the fact that

⁴⁸⁸ Elgersman Lee, 80.

⁴⁸⁹ Elgersman Lee, 168.

⁴⁹⁰ Cooper, *Hanging of Angélique*, 90.

⁴⁹¹ Elgersman Lee, *Unyielding spirits*, 101.

⁴⁹² Elgersman Lee, 107.

⁴⁹³ Elgersman Lee, 104.

⁴⁹⁴ Cooper, *Hanging of Angélique*, 79, 100.

⁴⁹⁵ Cooper, 81.

⁴⁹⁶ Cooper, 174, 291.

children of enslaved women who died in childbirth were cared for by a wetnurse may have had more to do with paternity than with any sense of humanitarianism.⁴⁹⁷ She further argued that Trudel euphemized sexual abuse in his discussion of the “liaison de débauche:”

One commentator on Canadian slavery makes light of the sexual abuse that Black women faced when he casts them as seducers whose charms (hapless) White men cannot resist.⁴⁹⁸

As such, Cooper was critical of key dimensions of Trudel’s interpretations in particular of the claim that slavery had been “humane.”

Of relevance for her own work was the fact that Trudel was the first (of several) to mistakenly suggest that Angélique set fire to run away with her lover. She argued that:

By emphasizing love as Angélique’s primary motive, these writers not only rob her of the agency that she exhibited in her quest for liberty, they also diminish the violence inherent in slavery. For them, Angélique did not flee because she found her enslavement humiliating, awful, suffocating; she fled because she was “in love.” If we take this reasoning one step further, it is easy to conclude that slavery could not have been so bad. . . . [Trudel and his cohorts] refuse to see that Angélique was an enraged woman who wished to run away from enslavement not because of Thibault, but because of slavery itself.⁴⁹⁹

This citation clearly outlines Cooper’s belief that historians had downplayed the intrinsic violence of slavery. Cooper disproved Trudel’s interpretation by outlining that Angélique mentioned her relationship not even as a secondary motive during the trial. In fact, Cooper argued “that the bondswoman was bent on revenge” towards her “mistress.”⁵⁰⁰ Cooper declared:

[Angélique] had decided that she was going to take fate into her own hands by burning down her house of bondage. The Black slave woman from Portugal, whose body was an item of commerce in the hands of Whites, . . . she whose name changed so many times over the course of her short life, whose body was whipped by Madame Francheville and perhaps used by Sieur Francheville, would have her revenge.⁵⁰¹

This passage supported her argument that for Angélique slavery was not “mild,” particularly since she was at least physically if not sexually abused.⁵⁰²

⁴⁹⁷ Cooper, 80.

⁴⁹⁸ Trudel, *L’Esclavage au Canada Français*, 258; Cooper, *Hanging of Angélique*, 90.

⁴⁹⁹ Cooper, *Hanging of Angélique*, 289.

⁵⁰⁰ Cooper, 290.

⁵⁰¹ Cooper, 291.

⁵⁰² Cooper, 99.

Cooper challenged the interpretation that slavery was “humane” put forward by earlier scholars.

The fact that these slaves were fleeing their enslavement reveals that, even if Canadian slavery has been considered to be “mild” by some historians, the victims found it harsh enough. . . . Comments on the “mildness” of Canadian slavery trivialize the lives of the enslaved and rob them of their humanity.⁵⁰³

Here, Cooper is referring to Marcel Trudel and William Renwick Riddell. Cooper thus challenged Trudel’s interpretation of the “humaneness of slavery.” To do so, Cooper contrasted the perspective of the slaveholder and the enslaved: “slaveholders may have thought they were ‘good masters,’ but the slaves themselves thought otherwise, as amply demonstrated by those who ran away.”⁵⁰⁴ As such, it was the focus on the slaveholders’ perspective that permitted the interpretation that slavery was “humane” in New France to persist.

Frank Mackey, on the other hand, came to similar conclusions as Trudel regarding the living conditions of enslaved people, although he expressed criticism of Trudel’s work. In contrast to Cooper’s approach to historical research, Mackey was much less engaged with critical race theory and intersectionality. Nevertheless, the influence of social history methods can be felt in his work. *Done with Slavery* was based on extensive archival research and attempted to study the lives of free and enslaved Black Montrealers under the British regime between 1760 and 1840. Mackey argued that looking at this limited number of individuals, approximately 400 people, presented “a unique opportunity to look at slaves in detail, case by case.”⁵⁰⁵ As such, Mackey established how these 400 individuals acquired freedom and what they did afterwards. He outlined the contours of the slave system in Montreal, its legality, and the difficulty of reliably enumerating enslaved people. He assessed the living conditions of the enslaved, he retraced how enslaved people gained their liberty, the professions they acquired after their liberation, their political allegiances, and their relationship with non-Black Quebecers, such as in their work relationships and interracial marriages.⁵⁰⁶ Mackey’s study of slavery addressed similar questions to Trudel. However, he delimited his study to the British regime after 1760, and to the city of Montreal. Most importantly, he also discussed those who were no longer enslaved in much more detail than Trudel. About half of his book was dedicated to how slavery ended and to the life of formerly enslaved and unenslaved Black people in Montreal.

⁵⁰³ Cooper, 86–87. Riddell for instances argued that slaveholders treated their slaves “humanely.” Riddell, “Notes on the Slave in Nouvelle-France,” 321, 324.

⁵⁰⁴ Cooper, 99.

⁵⁰⁵ Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 107.

⁵⁰⁶ Mackey, 6–14.

In pursuing this aspect of his work, Mackey corrected some of Trudel's factual errors about Black slavery in Montreal. Trudel, for instance, had wrongfully assumed that every Black person on the territory before 1834 was enslaved.⁵⁰⁷ In fact, free Black people lived in Montreal as early as 1760. Mackey compared his list of enslaved people to that of Trudel. He demonstrated that Trudel had double counted some enslaved people, those he counted were never enslaved or he mistakenly believed they were Black.⁵⁰⁸ On this basis, Mackey concluded that "there are such flaws in [Trudel's] enumeration of black slaves that it cannot stand."⁵⁰⁹

Mackey showed further that the Abolition Act of 1833 was irrelevant for slavery's abolition in Lower Canada. The institution had been phased out after the end of the eighteenth century. The last written proof of enslavement in Quebec dates back to 1799. An enslaved woman called Charlotte, who fled her slaveowner in 1798, challenged her enslavement in court after she was caught in Missouri and was reclaimed by her alleged owner and was consequently declared "free" because slavery was never written into law in Lower Canada, according to the presiding judge.⁵¹⁰ Thus Mackey argued that the end of slavery resulted not from "white abolitionists nor political heroes, but a few Montrealese slaves who, in seeking their freedom put the courts on the spot."⁵¹¹ The greater attention to enslaved people's experiences and agency represented a key difference between Trudel's and Mackey's work. Mackey stressed that it was enslaved people who altered the legal environment through challenging their bondage in court. Mackey thus looked in more detail at how enslaved people resisted their enslavement.

Besides these differences, Mackey came to remarkably similar conclusions in regard to the relevance of slavery and enslaved people's living conditions.⁵¹² Analyzing slavery in French Canada is necessary regardless of the number of people that were enslaved, particularly because it was a "mainstream affair, however slight the number of slaves."⁵¹³ He also believed—as Trudel did—that the legal treatment enslaved people received revealed the overall nature of slavery in French Canada. Thus, although Mackey did not cite Trudel, his conclusions were extremely similar to those of the latter. For instance, when he concluded that "it was as if, in the eyes of the court, Jacob [an enslaved man] had

⁵⁰⁷ Mackey, 97.

⁵⁰⁸ Mackey, 98–100.

⁵⁰⁹ Mackey, 13.

⁵¹⁰ Mackey, 47.

⁵¹¹ Mackey, 78.

⁵¹² For example, Mackey writes, "if the matrimonial bond was sacred, the slave family unit was not, and children were sometimes separated from their parents." Mackey, 123.

⁵¹³ Mackey, 109.

been a common offender, which he was under the law: it made no distinction between whites and blacks.”⁵¹⁴

Similarly, Mackey’s interpretation of slavery as “humane” largely followed that of Trudel. Mackey argued that Canadians have a mistaken idea of slavery because of the influence of the American chattel system:

For most Canadians, the word slavery, thanks to the overwhelming weight of US cultural productions, evokes lurid scenes of black exploitation drawn from the nineteenth-century American South. . . . The thought of a twelve-year-old slave girl enrolled in the boarding school of the Ursuline nuns at Quebec in 1772 does not quite fit this picture.⁵¹⁵

Mackey thus argued that slavery was different in Quebec than elsewhere in the Americas. He supported this with the same argument that Trudel used in his introduction, specifically the example of enslaved children educated by Catholic nuns.⁵¹⁶ In the same vein, he equated enslaved people’s living and working conditions to that of domestic servants:

[Black enslaved people] were usually employed in domestic service, or something akin to it – working in inns and taverns, for instance. They were housed not in slave huts but in a room in the master’s house. . . . In terms of the tasks they performed . . . there was no difference between slaves and servants. The term “servant” was loaded, however, when used to refer to blacks: it was a job title that might denote a hired servant or mask a slave.⁵¹⁷

Where a similar argument from Trudel was made using limited analysis of primary sources, Mackey supported this equation by suggesting that if slavery’s characteristics had been different—arguably more violent—the institution could not have been so easily forgotten.⁵¹⁸

The mere fact that, as early as the 1830s, the historical fact of slavery in Quebec could have been largely forgotten or denied strongly suggests that the reality of slavery in this northern colony was different from what it was elsewhere in the Americas, notably in the southern United States and the West Indies, not only in terms of scope and duration but also with respect to its societal impact and its legacy.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁴ Mackey, 126.

⁵¹⁵ Mackey, 108.

⁵¹⁶ Trudel, *L’Esclavage au Canada Français*, 10.

⁵¹⁷ Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 116–17.

⁵¹⁸ Trudel, *L’Esclavage au Canada Français*, 164.

⁵¹⁹ Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 109.

Mackey thus implied that since slavery was different in Montreal, it did not have the same long-term consequences. This argument contradicted much of the scholarship on slavery and the suggestion that it was slavery, which laid the foundation for contemporary systemic anti-Black racism.

Mackey argued that due to the small number of enslaved people “Quebec society needed neither to concoct elaborate justifications of slavery, nor to crack the whip and turn slavery into a full-blown system of racial rules and laws”⁵²⁰ Mackey demonstrated this claim with a news article from 1771, which underlined the “harmonious relationship” between Black people and the rest of society:

The greatest Harmony and the best Understanding now subsists between both Sexes – The Black and White mingling together in Nocturnal Assemblies form an undistinguished Band, where, throwing off the painful Restraint of Ceremony, our Youth freely unbend their Minds from the Labour of the Day, by indulging themselves in innocent and inoffensive Diversion.⁵²¹

The quoted article was taken by Mackey at face value without any discussion of the potential distortion by the journalist. This usage of the quotation showed that Mackey (like Trudel) relied on primary sources written by non-Black people without questioning their potential biases.⁵²² Critics of Mackey’s work have underscored this point repeatedly.⁵²³

Mackey reiterated slavery’s “humanness” also concerning its end.

A case might be made that . . . the manner in which slavery was abolished in Quebec turned out to be one of the most humane and least contentious. If the courts and legislature did not order slave-owners to free their slaves immediately, masters nevertheless were left without the legal power to restrain them or to claim their unpaid labour. At the same time, the slaves were not turfed out all at once to fend for themselves, . . . when many of them – young children, the old and feeble – were ill equipped to do so.⁵²⁴

This argument resembled Trudel’s claim that putting enslaved people on the street would have been “inhumane.”

⁵²⁰ Mackey, 120.

⁵²¹ Mackey, 120.

⁵²² When Mackey looks into potential labour discrimination after the end of slavery, he questions whether just because there are no records it does not mean that none has existed. Thus, he questions whether it is valid to conclude that something did not take place based on its absence from the historical record in some contexts. Mackey, 120, 212.

⁵²³ George Elliott Clarke, “Black Then: Blacks and Montreal, 1780s-1880s (Review),” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 76, no. 1 (March 27, 2007): 434, <https://doi.org/10.1353/utq.2007.0038>; Arnaud Bessière, “Frank Mackey, L’esclavage et les Noirs à Montréal. 1760-1840, Montréal, Hurtubise, collection « Les Cahiers du Québec », 2013, 662 p.,” *Bulletin d’histoire politique* 23, no. 1 (2014): 304, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1026518ar>; Barrington Walker, “Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760–1840 (Review),” *African American Review* 44, no. 3 (2011): 518–20, <https://doi.org/10.1353/afa.2010.0025>.

⁵²⁴ Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 77.

Like Trudel, Mackey argued that if someone entered slavery voluntarily it was proof that slavery was not violent:

The most striking feature of his contract, of course, is the mere fact that he struck such a bargain, entering into bondage of his own accord, weighing the risks and concluding that the prize was worth the sacrifice of his freedom. He knew that he was not signing his life away – or the lives of his wife and any children they might have – because physical violence played little part in slavery in Quebec. There were . . . few, if any, whips and chains. The one case of wanton physical abuse by a Montreal master that has come to light in the forty-odd years that slavery yet had to run involved the savage whipping of a young white apprentice, not a black slave, in 1790.⁵²⁵

In this context, the absence of proof of physical violence allowed him to conclude that slavery was less violent in Quebec.⁵²⁶ Mackey did not explicitly engage with the existing scholarship established by Elgersman Lee nor Cooper who challenged this argument. Although, he still to a limited degree acknowledged that in absence of physical abuse, enslaved peoples' condition itself was what he called “demeaning and “dispiriting.”

The experience was still a far cry from imported notions of slavery as a physical hell on earth. This is not to say that it was heaven: it was demeaning and dispiriting, and the hell of it was psychological. We can only wonder, for instance, how frequently Louis Antoine and his wife, made to feel inferior by their slave status, itself founded on a view of them as innately debased because they were black, found themselves praying under their breath for [their slaveholders'] death, their family's passport to freedom, and how that made them feel.⁵²⁷

As such, Mackey recognized to a certain degree the negative effects of enslavement beyond physical violence. This quotation is an example of why it is difficult to engage with Mackey's work who provided rarely a clear overall argument and changed his position on a certain argument from one primary source analysis to another. Arnaud Bessière had the same issue with argued Mackey's style, which does not allow readers to deduce Mackey's main arguments easily.⁵²⁸ Mackey's writing thus made the analysis of his central claims more difficult.

Certainly Mackey was more favourable to Trudel's claim that slavery was “humane” than Cooper, although he stated in his introduction that these arguments were irrelevant.

Never mind arguing that there were more slave-owners among one group than another, that those of a given religious persuasion, language, or culture were more

⁵²⁵ Mackey, 122.

⁵²⁶ Mackey, 126.

⁵²⁷ Mackey, 125.

⁵²⁸ Bessière, “Frank Mackey, L'esclavage et les Noirs à Montréal. 1760-1840, Montréal, Hurtubise, collection « Les Cahiers du Québec », 2013, 662 p.,” 307.

“racist” than another, that slavery in Quebec was mild because it was not murderous, or that is was an anomaly of no consequence, given that slaves were relatively few. Virtually everyone, “good” and “bad,” was complicit, whether by active involvement, tacit acceptance, tolerance, indifference, or blindness.⁵²⁹

Despite these comments about the shared responsibility for slavery within society, Mackey still advanced the argument that slavery was “mild” and therefore different from the rest of the Americas.

Mackey’s understanding of enslaved people’s resistance appears disconnected with the historiography on slavery, especially the works written by Elgersman Lee and Cooper. Mackey argued that enslaved people who fled their slaveholder were, in fact, not resisting their enslavement.

While they may have been looked on as heroes to some extent, fugitive slaves were, at another level and by definition, people born into a degraded state who had fled from their problem rather than fight it.⁵³⁰

This citation to a certain degree made enslaved people responsible for their own condition. As such, Mackey contradicted the scholarship which considered fleeing a form of resistance:

It is difficult for us to leap back more than 200 years and grasp that what is unquestionably evil to us was not so then. It is tempting but simplistic to believe that, had we been alive in the days of slavery, we would have fought it, and that, had we been slaves, we would have resisted our situation spiritedly.⁵³¹

Similar to Trudel, Mackey denied that fleeing their enslavement was a way “to overturn the established order.”⁵³² It was rather an expression of their “dissatisfaction with their lot.”⁵³³ He further argued that enslaved people engaged in no “violent acts of resistance” On territory of present-day Quebec.

The idea that slaves in Quebec might have engaged in violent acts of resistance such as arson, poisoning their masters, sabotaging of equipment, or just constant shirking or feigning illness, as sometimes occurred in slave societies, is wholly unsubstantiated.⁵³⁴

Crucially, he did not cite Elgersman Lee or Cooper’s research on resistance. George Elliott Clarke critiqued the lack of discussion of other scholars work and Mackey’s willingness to disregard their conclusion with, what Clarke called, other educated “guesses.”⁵³⁵ Barrington Walker took issue with Mackey’s lack of discussion of interdisciplinary scholarship such as Critical Race Theory.⁵³⁶ As such,

⁵²⁹ Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 6.

⁵³⁰ Mackey, 98.

⁵³¹ Mackey, 109.

⁵³² Mackey, 120.

⁵³³ Mackey, 120.

⁵³⁴ Mackey, 120.

⁵³⁵ George Elliott Clarke, “Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760–1840 (Review),” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 81, no. 3 (November 7, 2012): 685–87, <https://doi.org/10.1353/utq.2012.0032>.

⁵³⁶ Walker, “Done with Slavery,” 519.

Mackey's work was met upon its publication with a much cooler and more critical reception than it had been the case for *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, despite the books' similarities. As such, the historiographical field had evolved since 1960 in its understanding of how research on slavery should be undertaken.

Arnaud Bessière, professor at Laurentian University, issued a synthesis of Black history sponsored by the Quebec government in 2012. His analysis largely followed Trudel's and Mackey's interpretations, while retaining arguments advanced by Gay and Greer, who largely agreed that there were institutional differences in the type of slavery that existed in French Canada and the rest of the Americas.⁵³⁷ Bessière's book was published as a public history project to provide readers with a reliable synthesis of Black history in Quebec. *La Contribution des Noirs au Québec* must be mentioned here because it followed so closely Trudel's and Mackey's conclusions. Bessière described enslaved people's relationship with their slaveholders as "bons."⁵³⁸ Bessière compared the living conditions of enslaved people in Canada with those of enslaved people on plantations in the Southern colonies and concludes that "au Canada, le tableau apparaît beaucoup moins sombre, même s'il semble que les Noirs meurent assez jeunes, autour de 25 ans en moyenne".⁵³⁹ Bessière did not consider slavery itself as violent but mentioned examples of physical violence against enslaved people. Bessière closed his description of the condition of enslaved people with "ce portrait ne veut pas donner l'impression que la situation des esclaves noirs était idéale"⁵⁴⁰ The usage of the term "idéale" here showed the degree to which these scholars struggled to reconcile their favourable comparison of slavery with elsewhere in the Americas without euphemizing the institution of slavery. Bessière's work was nearly as complex as Mackey's in the way in which it talked about enslaved people's conditions:

Si le contexte social et économique de la colonie a probablement favorisé en partie ces relations "bienveillantes" et a permis, plus globalement, à certains Noirs de vivre comme toute personne libre, on se surprendra tout de même de la réelle ouverture dont fit preuve la société canadienne à l'époque à l'endroit de ceux que les textes officiels considéraient pourtant comme de simples "biens meubles".⁵⁴¹

The passage supported that enslaved people had a relatively good relationship with their slaveholder. Bessière went as far as claiming that French Canadian society showed a "réelle ouverture."⁵⁴² This

⁵³⁷ Bessière, *La Contribution Des Noirs Au Québec*, 42, 66.

⁵³⁸ Bessière, 61.

⁵³⁹ Bessière, 53–54.

⁵⁴⁰ Bessière, 66.

⁵⁴¹ Bessière, 67.

⁵⁴² Bessière, 67.

representation to a certain degree euphemized the institution of slavery and perpetuated a narrative based on Trudel's work.

A contentious debate erupted during a panel discussion at McGill University in 2015 on whether slavery in what is present-day Quebec could be favourably compared to other types of slavery elsewhere in the Americas, which put into light the two different viewpoints on Black slavery in Quebec.⁵⁴³ In her blog post on the dispute, Zellars argued that Charmaine Nelson, Darryl Leroux and herself start their research with different questions.

Most significantly, you forgo an analysis of the entrenched nature of white supremacy, which is coterminous *always*, with the control of its historical script. This is why it was possible for you to distinguish the histories of forced Christianization in New France from other regions as some kind of equalizing gesture between the enslaved and slave owner. To undertake such an endeavor, you must first ask a question which allows you to seek that conclusion as a correct answer. In distinction, Charmaine made it clear that another type of question, one that honors the enslaved, begins by asking what religions and spirituality the enslaved already possessed and further, to ask if they wanted to be baptized at all?⁵⁴⁴

The research questions that Zellars, Nelson and Leroux answered lead in turn a substantially different characterization of the type of slavery that existed on the territory of present-day Quebec than Mackey had defended. During the panel discussion Mackey allegedly argued that slavery in Quebec was “temperate” and thus distinct “in kind” from the United States.⁵⁴⁵ Zellars responded to this by outlining that:

I had hoped that we would not descend into a place of ranking the distinctions between slavery in Quebec and the United States or the Caribbean. Your insistence on a distinction of kind and a temperate slavery in Quebec was painful to hear. Slavery is, if nothing else, a denial of humanity—an insistence on a racial caste, a permanent gash between chattel and Human. While the details of difference matter historically, . . . the details of difference matter far less when anti-Blackness is the subject at hand.⁵⁴⁶

In her book on slavery published in 2017, Nelson expressed her concern with the relevance of the comparison of the institution of slavery and its characterization:

⁵⁴³ Peter Zhi, “A History of Anti-Blackness,” *The McGill Daily*, February 23, 2015, <https://www.mcgilldaily.com/2015/02/history-anti-blackness/>; Rachel Zellars, “Dear Mr. Mackey,” *The Queerest Mothering* (blog), accessed January 22, 2020, <https://thequeerestmothering.wordpress.com/>; Frank Mackey, “L’histoire En Noir et Blanc à l’école,” *JQSI, Le Magazine*, November 19, 2018, <https://jqsi.qc.ca/?L-histoire-en-noir-et-blanc>.

⁵⁴⁴ Zellars, “Dear Mr. Mackey.”

⁵⁴⁵ Zellars.

⁵⁴⁶ Zellars.

Generations of white historians of Canadian slavery as well as the lay public have been prone to downplay the nature of slavery in New France (if they acknowledge it at all) and to mis-characterize it as more humane than other forms (particularly that of tropical plantation practices like Jamaica).⁵⁴⁷

Gay on the other hand declared that:

L'esclavage n'a ni nationalité ni spécificité culturelle : il n'est ni catholique, ni protestant, ni arabe, ni francophone, ni anglophone. De plus, aucun esclavage n'est "meilleur" qu'un autre.⁵⁴⁸

As such, these scholars who worked on slavery took issue with Trudel's comparison and stressed the importance of being more careful with contrasting the characteristics of slavery in different places.⁵⁴⁹

I only found one academic example in which a scholar openly criticized the conversation about slavery that took place in Quebec's society in the early 2000. Charles-Philippe Courtois, a Quebec historian, highlighted that:

C'est dans cet esprit que les commémorations officielles de l'État québécois, du côté législatif comme judiciaire, et en liaison avec l'école, abordent la question, voire, sous le registre d'une culpabilité propre à la Nouvelle-France. Micheline Labelle nous a même présenté cette commémoration comme un travail salutaire du Québec pour appréhender sa diversité au même titre que les autres nations occidentales qui ont vécu et animé cette traite des Noirs, mais, rappelons-le, il est assez ridicule de mettre la responsabilité québécoise en la matière sur un pied de comparaison avec les États-Unis, la France et l'Angleterre, comme si le Québec avait connu une économie esclavagiste...⁵⁵⁰

As such, although some scholars such as Mackey may not have fully adhered to the critical history on slavery that was put forward, Mackey clearly believed in the importance of unearthing the question in contrast to Courtois. The latter essentially absolved Quebecers from any responsibility because of the type of slavery practiced in Quebec, which according to him could not be compared to that practiced elsewhere in the Americas.

I have demonstrated that Cooper and Mackey both engaged with Trudel's central arguments but came to different conclusions. Cooper based her analysis on Angélique's trial records and extensive archival research, and she therefore demonstrated that slavery was not inherently different

⁵⁴⁷ Nelson, *Slavery, Geography and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica*, 60.

⁵⁴⁸ Gay, *Les Noirs Du Québec*, 82.

⁵⁴⁹ Bessière, "Frank Mackey, L'esclavage et les Noirs à Montréal. 1760-1840, Montréal, Hurtubise, collection « Les Cahiers du Québec », 2013, 662 p.": Bessière questions the comparison's validity in his review of Mackey's work too.

⁵⁵⁰ Charles-Philippe Courtois, "Pour Un Rééquilibrage de l'historiographie et de La Représentation de La Nouvelle-France Dans l'enseignement de l'histoire," *Bulletin d'histoire Politique* 18, no. 1 (2009), <https://www.bulletinhistoirepolitique.org/le-bulletin/numeros-precedents/volume-18-numero-1/pour-un-reequilibrage-de-l%E2%80%99historiographie-et-de-la-representation-de-la-nouvelle-france-dans-l%E2%80%99enseignement-de-l%E2%80%99histoire/>.

in French Canada, Mackey stressed that slavery was different and less physically violent than elsewhere, although he provided much more space for enslaved people's experiences and their agency than Trudel had. Within Mackey's work Trudel's framing of the topic persisted. This narrative thus has not fully disappeared from the scholarship though as the foregoing suggests, it is increasingly contentious.

Even in the 1980s, Trudel was aware of this trend. Trudel attributed the public and academic interest in the topic of slavery in the 1980s to the end of the Quiet Revolution. He underlined that he received much more requests for presentations on slavery as of the 1983:

C'est seulement à partir de 1983 qu'il y a eu des demandes de conférences sur l'esclavage au Québec. Les mentalités avaient changé, la Révolution tranquille était passée. Donc, à partir de ce moment-là jusqu'à aujourd'hui, Donc, à partir de ce moment-là jusqu'à aujourd'hui, j'ai donné 42 conférences sur l'esclavage, ce qui fait quand même une fréquence assez élevée en vingt ans ! Les demandes me venaient de partout, mais surtout des sociétés historiques et des gens de l'Université du 3^e âge. C'était à la mode.⁵⁵¹

Although he does not claim to be the one who initiated the change. Trudel referred to the fact that many of the actors told him that they had studied his work:

En tout cas, depuis 1960, disons plutôt depuis 1990, je constate qu'il y a eu un réveil. J'ai probablement contribué à ce réveil, mais je n'en suis pas responsable. Il y a plusieurs collaborateurs de ce mouvement qui m'ont dit : "Je vous ai lu, j'ai trouvé ça intéressant, etc."⁵⁵²

This assessment about Trudel's significance is consistent with the information I presented in this chapter. Academic and non-academic commentators alike discussed Trudel's significance for their own public history and research projects.

Sawallisch argued that Trudel's seminal status in the field allowed for the perpetuation of "romanticizing" representations of slavery. For her, "the question is not to dismiss Trudel completely, but to accept the ambiguity of his legacy."⁵⁵³ The academic consensus that appeared in the studies I analyzed is that Trudel's work has to be critically re-assessed; Trudel's work remains significant, but his interpretations do no longer stand the test of time. These critiques show that a paradigmatic change has taken place, so that expressing the idea that slavery was "humane" or "mild" has become much more contested as is shown by the critical reception of Mackey's work on slavery.

⁵⁵¹ Pigeon, "Entretien," 17.

⁵⁵² Pigeon, 19.

⁵⁵³ Sawallisch, "Trudel's Legacies," 99–100.

Chapter Four The evolution of textbook representations of enslaved people

Until the mid-1960s, what students learned in Quebec's history courses varied widely since history curricula were confession- and language-specific. However, most textbooks adhered to a narrative that represented the struggle for survival of two different groups-referred to at the time as "races"- the French and the English within North America. Other groups were either presented in highly racist language or absent entirely.⁵⁵⁴ In 1964, Quebec's Ministry of Public Education was created, which subsequently established one standard teaching curriculum in 1970. At the time, this curriculum did not yet provide a list of mandatory topics to be addressed in textbooks. As such, textbook content continued to vary widely across the province until the 1982 curriculum reform, which transferred to the ministry the responsibility for approving textbooks and thus gave it greater power to create more uniform history teaching materials across the province. The ministry reformed the high school Quebec history course four times in the period following the publication of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*; in 1967, 1982, 2007, and 2016.⁵⁵⁵ The name of the history course changed with each reform but targeted the same age group of teenagers, between 14 to 16 or Grades 9 and 10.

In this chapter, I inquire about the narrative of slavery adopted by successive generations of textbooks and whether this narrative shares similarities with Trudel's approach. To study the evolution of textbook representations of slavery, I first analyze the context in which these curriculum reforms took place and the resulting textbook content regarding elements that pertain to Black history and slavery. After this analysis, which provides a better understanding of how textbooks were produced at different points in time, I explore the passages which mention slavery in nine textbooks and relevant teaching material.⁵⁵⁶ In making my selection of texts to study, I focused my attention on those considered relevant by specialists on Quebec textbook history, such as Félix Bouvier, as well as those

⁵⁵⁴ D'Almeida, "La présence des noirs au Québec."

⁵⁵⁵ The Quebec history course was consecutively called *Histoire 412* (1967), *Histoire du Québec et du Canada* (1982), *Histoire et éducation à la citoyenneté* (2006) and *Histoire du Québec et du Canada* (2017). I only studied the curricula, which were published for the *formation générale*-track

⁵⁵⁶ I analyzed the following textbooks : Denis Héroux, Robert Lahaise, and Noël Vallerand, *La Nouvelle-France* (Montréal: Centre de psychologie et de pédagogie, 1967), <http://archive.org/details/lanouvellefrance0000hero>; Denis Vaugois, Jacques Lacoursière, and Jean Provencher, *Canada-Québec : Synthèse Historique 1534-1968* (Montreal: Editions du Renouveau pédagogique, 1968); Charpentier et al., *Nouvelle histoire du Québec et du Canada*; François Charbonneau, Jacques Marchand, and Jean-Pierre Sansregret, eds., *Mon histoire* (Montréal: Guérin, 1985); Sylvain Fortin et al., *Fresques A et B: Histoire et Éducation à La Citoyenneté, 2e Cycle Du Secondaire, 1ère Année* (Montréal: Graficor, Chenelière Éducation, 2007); Andrée Thibeault, *Repères: histoire et éducation à la citoyenneté : manuel de l'élève, 1re[-2e] année du 2e cycle du secondaire* (Saint-Laurent: Edition du Renouveau Pédagogique, 2007); Julie Charette et al., *Périodes: histoire du Québec et du Canada : des origines à 1840 : 3e secondaire : manuel de l'élève*, CEC, 2016; Marie-Andrée Courval, Luc Dujardin, and Guylène Labonté, *Parcours du Québec et du Canada: histoire, des origines à 1840 : 3e secondaire* (Les éditions CEC, 2017).

which provided a substantial discussion of slavery. I also analyzed relevant additional teaching material where applicable. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, I had to limit my analysis to extracts collected during a first research trip to BAnQ. Although publishing houses do not provide access to sales statistics and the ministry does not collect this data either, I tried to include the different publishing houses in my analysis to gain a more comprehensive idea of what textbook representation overall looked like, while excluding English-language history textbooks due to my explicit focus on slavery narratives in French Canada.⁵⁵⁷

After a first reading of the selected excerpts, I determined that the following questions were relevant to understand if, and how *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* influenced textbook contents:

- Is the factual information presented based on Trudel's work? Is it based on the scholarship of other historians?
- Are the living conditions of enslaved people compared to; domestic servants, the general population or to that of enslaved people elsewhere in the Americas?
- How do textbooks refer to Black enslaved people and describe their origins?
- Are enslaved people represented as part of the social hierarchy of New France?

The discussion of these questions allows me to understand to which degree textbooks adhered to the narrative on slavery advanced in *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* and to track the evolution in how slavery was represented to generations of Quebec high school students.

Curriculum Reform: Narrating the Nation

A high school history curriculum represents a snapshot of the dominant narrative that Quebec's society has of its origins. The debates around curriculum content thus show to which degree this narrative is contested. Throughout the four curriculum reforms that took place since 1960, the central themes of contention were about how to adequately represent Quebec nationalism and whose story should be told in the textbooks; Should the narrative focus on a "French-Canadian core," or should it recount the story of all people living on the territory? As such, curriculum debates coincided with debates about Quebec's identity and its political status.⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁷ Québec (Province), Ministère de l'éducation, Direction générale de l'enseignement élémentaire et secondaire, *La Civilisation Française et Catholique Du Canada : Guide à l'intention Des Maîtres de 11e Année Pour l'année 1967-1968 : Cours Général et Scientifique*, 1966, <http://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/3476220>.

⁵⁵⁸ Debates took place in 1971 shortly after the October crisis, in 1982 after the failed referendum and the repatriation of the constitution, in 1996 a year after the second, nearly successful referendum, in 2006 after the publication of a curriculum perceived to erase the nation and thus within the growing tension over immigration that led to the creation of the Bouchard-Taylor in 2007 and which continued thereafter.

Before the creation of the Ministry of Public Education, Protestant and Catholic school boards offered history teaching and education. In 1966, the ministry published a new curriculum for French-Catholic schools, which it amended in the following year.⁵⁵⁹ Denis Vaugeois, a Quebec historian and *Parti Québécois* politician, was responsible for developing the 1966 curriculum. In 1966, the high school history course was made optional and only became compulsory again under René Lévesque's *Parti Québécois* government in 1976. The 1966 course aimed to introduce students to history as an academic discipline.⁵⁶⁰ The curriculum focused much attention on specific individuals such as Samuel de Champlain (Trudel's bibliography on Champlain from 1956 was cited).⁵⁶¹ In 1970, the ministry reformed this curriculum and adopted the first, non-language-specific curriculum.⁵⁶² The curriculum narrowly focused on the opposition between the French and British empires and mentioned neither slavery nor the presence of Black people.⁵⁶³ The document provided an overview of topics to be addressed and did not prescribe textbook contents. As such, teachers and school boards still had a great deal of discretion in the teaching of historical subjects.⁵⁶⁴ For this reason, textbooks written before this curriculum reform remained in use throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s.⁵⁶⁵

From 1960 to 1982, textbooks were approved by religious school boards while the Ministry of Education's role was restricted to suggested teaching materials in the curriculum. The content and outlook of the textbooks thus varied widely. However, the recommended teaching materials contained, for instance, *Boréal Express*, founded by Jacques Lacoursière and Denis Vaugeois, for which Trudel wrote a preface and *Histoire du Canada par les textes*, which was written by Trudel in collaboration with Guy Frégault and Michel Brunet.⁵⁶⁶ These materials circulated in most schools despite the

⁵⁵⁹ Québec (Province), Ministère de l'éducation, Direction générale de l'enseignement élémentaire et secondaire, *Document "C."*

⁵⁶⁰ Direction générale de l'enseignement élémentaire et secondaire, II.

⁵⁶¹ Direction générale de l'enseignement élémentaire et secondaire, 24–25; Marcel Trudel, *Champlain*, Collection classiques canadiens 5 (Montréal: Fides, 1956).

⁵⁶² Félix Bouvier et al., *L'Histoire nationale à l'école québécoise: Regards sur deux siècles d'enseignement* (Québec: Les éditions du septentrion, 2012), 486–87, https://banq.pretnumerique.ca/ressource_by_media_identifieur/9782896647323; Sarra-Bournet, 149; Jean-François Cardin, "Les historiens et le dossier de l'enseignement de l'histoire : chronique d'un passage du centre vers la marge," *Bulletin d'histoire politique* 14, no. 3 (2006): 53–74, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1054463ar>.

⁵⁶³ Québec (Province), Ministère de l'éducation, Direction générale de l'enseignement élémentaire et secondaire, *Document "C,"* 27–28.

⁵⁶⁴ Arsenault, "La reconnaissance des peuples autochtones," 144.

⁵⁶⁵ Bouvier et al., *L'Histoire nationale à l'école québécoise*, 489; Daniel Moreau, "Les réformes de l'enseignement de l'histoire nationale, du rapport Parent au rapport Lacoursière," *Bulletin d'histoire politique* 14, no. 3 (2006): 34, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1054462ar>. For instance: Paul Émile Farley and Gustave Lamarche, *Histoire Du Canada; Cours Supérieur*, 4th ed. (Montreal: Librairie des Clercs de St. Viateur, 1945).

⁵⁶⁶ Québec (Province). Direction générale de l'enseignement élémentaire et secondaire. Service des programmes, *Histoire 41: Plan d'études*, Ed. rev. et corr. (Québec: Le Service des Programmes, 1971); Albert Tessier et al., *Le Boréal Express : Journal d'histoire Du Canada - Régime Français (1524-1760)*, Le Boréal Express Lté (Sillery, (Québec), 1967), <https://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/3209838>; Guy Frégault and Marcel Trudel, *Histoire Du Canada Par Les Textes*,

differences in textbooks. Trudel said in his memoirs that *Histoire du Canada par les textes* was one of his most financially successful books.⁵⁶⁷

When the ministry published the uniform curriculum in 1970, francophone history teachers perceived it as a “tentative exagérée de faire la promotion du fédéralisme canadien par le ministère de l’Éducation du Québec,”⁵⁶⁸ as the new curriculum had removed “toute couleur nationaliste.”⁵⁶⁹ *La Presse* article summarized the issue of contention with the following question: “mais ne pouvait-on pas accorder plus de place aux Canadiens français ?”⁵⁷⁰ In response, the government produced follow-up documents without essentially changing the character of the original texts.⁵⁷¹

In 1982, the *Parti Québécois* government reformed the 1970 curriculum, amid tensions about the first failed Quebec referendum and with the collaboration of history teachers.⁵⁷² This curriculum was “le premier programme unique à être véritablement implanté aussi bien dans les écoles de langue française que de langue anglaise.”⁵⁷³ Bouvier summarizes that the program adhered to a “global history” approach that replaced the former “political history” approach.⁵⁷⁴ Since 1982, the ministry’s curriculum prescribes both textbook contents, learning objectives, and approved textbooks directly.⁵⁷⁵

The curriculum’s teaching objectives included the goal that students learn about the “collectivité à laquelle il[s] apparten[nent] afin d’en découvrir la nature et la diversité.”⁵⁷⁶ Within this teaching objective students were to learn about “la dimension pluraliste du passé québécois en

Edition revue et augmentée (37e mille), vol. 1 (Montréal et Paris: Editions Fides, 1963); Linteau, “Un Temps Nouveau,” 109. At the time, Frégault was *sous-ministre des affaires culturelles*, which may have favoured the book’s inclusion in the recommended materials list.

⁵⁶⁷ Trudel, *Mémoires*, 299.

⁵⁶⁸ Félix Bouvier, “Les mutations accélérées se poursuivent: les années 1970-1983 au secondaire,” in *L’Histoire nationale à l’école québécoise: Regards sur deux siècles d’enseignement*, ed. Michel Allard, Paul Aubin, and Marie-Claude Larouche (Québec: Les éditions du septentrion, 2012), 346, https://banq.pretnumerique.ca/resource_by_media_identifieur/9782896647323.

⁵⁶⁹ Fortin, “L’histoire Du Canada: Comment a-t-on Pu Fabriquer Semblable Programme?”

⁵⁷⁰ Jacques Coulon, “Les Professeurs d’histoire En Colère,” *La Presse: Perspectives*, June 19, 1971, 10.

⁵⁷¹ Bouvier et al., 487.

⁵⁷² Olivier Lemieux, “Le Discours Historique Comme Objet Politique : Regard Sur l’enseignement de l’histoire Du Québec Du Niveau Secondaire de 1967 à 2012” (Université de Sherbrooke, 2014), 3, https://savoirs.usherbrooke.ca/bitstream/handle/11143/5454/Lemieux_Olivier_MA_2014.pdf?sequence=5&isAllowed=y; Félix Bouvier, “Les années 1960 ou des mutations accélérées à l’enseignement secondaire,” in *L’Histoire nationale à l’école québécoise: Regards sur deux siècles d’enseignement*, by Félix Bouvier et al. (Québec: Les éditions du septentrion, 2012), 347.

⁵⁷³ Arsenault, 144; Sarra-Bournet, 149; Cardin, “Les historiens et le dossier de l’enseignement de l’histoire : chronique d’un passage du centre vers la marge”; Québec (Province) Ministère de l’éducation, *Histoire du Québec et du Canada 4e secondaire: formation générale et professionnelle* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère de l’éducation, Direction générale du développement pédagogique, Direction des programmes, Service du secondaire, 1982), <https://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/39935>.

⁵⁷⁴ Louise Charpentier (2010), unpublished and unedited text provided on 21 May 2010 by email. Cited in Bouvier, “Les mutations accélérées se poursuivent: les années 1970-1983 au secondaire,” 367.

⁵⁷⁵ Earlier textbooks were approved by the confessional school boards concerned.

⁵⁷⁶ Québec (Province) Ministère de l’éducation, *Histoire du Québec et du Canada 4e secondaire*, 11.

soulignant l'apport de tous les groupes à l'histoire collective."⁵⁷⁷ Despite this acknowledgment of the nation's diverse origins, the overview of the social structures and daily life in New France and Lower Canada described in the curriculum did not mention slavery.⁵⁷⁸ Hence, it was left to authors and editors to determine whether they considered Black enslaved people part of "la dimension pluraliste du passé québécois."⁵⁷⁹ Already, teachers critiqued the curriculum for including more material than what they could meaningfully cover in class.⁵⁸⁰ Structurally, they had limited time to cover additional material, including the subject of slavery.

In the 1990s, the government commissioned two reports on how to modernize the 1982 curriculum. The report *Se souvenir et devenir* by Jacques Lacoursière, a Quebec historian, was shaped by "trois tendances lourdes : la diversification ethnoculturelle de la population québécoise, l'histoire sociale et le socioconstructivisme."⁵⁸¹ The 1996 report recommended "que l'on fasse, dans les programmes *Histoire du Québec et du Canada I et II* une place équitable aux communautés culturelles au regard du rôle qu'elles ont joué dans l'histoire."⁵⁸² "La population noire" was mentioned among the groups who should be provided with more space.⁵⁸³ The report's alleged refusal of a national narrative and its adherence to multiculturalism meant that it was greeted with considerable controversy.⁵⁸⁴ Among the individuals consulted were Sylvie Vincent who had critiqued the limited discussion on slavery in textbooks in 1979 and Denis Blondin who wrote a book on racism in Quebec's textbooks in 1990.⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁷⁷ Ministère de l'éducation, 11.

⁵⁷⁸ Ministère de l'éducation, Cf. Unité 2.2 et 4

⁵⁷⁹ Ministère de l'éducation; Bouvier, "Les mutations accélérées se poursuivent," 371. The accompanying teaching guide provided teachers with additional material on the history of "groups culturels" and "des autochtones."

⁵⁸⁰ Bouvier, "Les mutations accélérées se poursuivent," 371.

⁵⁸¹ Sarra-Bournet, 143; Québec (Province). Groupe de travail sur l'enseignement de l'histoire, "Se Souvenir et Devenir : Rapport [Ressource Électronique] / Du Groupe de Travail Sur l'enseignement de l'histoire" (Québec: Ministère de l'éducation, 1996), ix–x, <http://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/41824>. : The commission consisted of numerous historians and history teachers : Louise Charpentier, history teacher and Christian Laville, didactician were among its members, and Denis Vaugois. Jean Provencher, another Quebec historian quit the commission.

⁵⁸² Québec (Province). Groupe de travail sur l'enseignement de l'histoire, "Se Souvenir et Devenir : Rapport [Ressource Électronique] / Du Groupe de Travail Sur l'enseignement de l'histoire," 74.

⁵⁸³ Groupe de travail sur l'enseignement de l'histoire, 49.

⁵⁸⁴ Some historians, including Michel Sarra-Bournet, defended national history and its advocates. They argued that national history should not be conflated with nationalist history. Sarra-Bournet, 146.

⁵⁸⁵ Québec (Province). Groupe de travail sur l'enseignement de l'histoire, "Se Souvenir et Devenir : Rapport [Ressource Électronique] / Du Groupe de Travail Sur l'enseignement de l'histoire," 77–78; Vincent and Arcand, *L'image de l'Amérindien Dans Les Manuels Scolaires Du Québec*; Denis Blondin, *L'apprentissage Du Racisme Dans Les Manuels Scolaires*, Collection "Education" (Montréal, Québec: Editions Agence d'Arc, 1990).

Among the organizations consulted for the report was the *Centre de recherche-action sur les relations raciales*.⁵⁸⁶ The centre had previously prepared a report for the Lacoursière commission in 1995. The report proposed that the curriculum should adopt a civic history approach, which should “s’applique et implique tous les habitants de ce bout de terre.”⁵⁸⁷ This civic approach broke with the national history approach adopted in the 1982 curriculum, “qui, au Québec, considère la culture francophone comme noyau central auquel viennent se greffer des histoires particulières, somme toute mineures et qui doivent être oubliées en cours d’intégration.”⁵⁸⁸ The report appears to have informed the recommendation made by the *Lacoursière* report for “une représentation réaliste, juste et historiquement correcte des faits et incidents concernant les diverses communautés ethnoculturelles et autochtones et leurs rôles ou places dans l’évolution du Québec, avant et après la Confédération.”⁵⁸⁹ The report referred explicitly to Black history and stated that “à titre d’exemple l’esclavage, qui a marqué les premiers 200 ans de la Nouvelle France, doit être mentionné.”⁵⁹⁰ Slavery thus for the first time was mentioned in curriculum debates as a topic that ought to be included in Quebec’s history classes.⁵⁹¹

The *Inchauspé* report, published in 1997 was supposed to make recommendations on how to reform the school system and curricula in Quebec.⁵⁹² The report stressed that national history “enracinée dans l’histoire et la culture nationale, . . . doit s’ouvrir aux apports d’autres cultures à sa propre culture, aux lectures différentes que l’on peut en faire.”⁵⁹³ In opposition to the *Lacoursière* report, the *Inchauspé* report insisted on the importance of teaching national history.⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁸⁶ Québec (Province). Groupe de travail sur l’enseignement de l’histoire, “Se Souvenir et Devenir : Rapport [Ressource Électronique] / Du Groupe de Travail Sur l’enseignement de l’histoire,” 78. : Other organizations listed that may have demanded a better inclusion of Black history in the history course were the *Conseil de l’unité des Noires et des Noirs du Québec* and the *Conseil national des citoyens et citoyennes d’origine haïtienne*.

⁵⁸⁷ Centre de recherche-action sur les relations raciales, Niemi, and Normandeau, “Enseigner l’histoire Dans Une Société Multi-Ethnique et Pluri-Culturelle : Mémoire Présenté Au Groupe de Travail Sur l’enseignement de l’histoire,” 6.

⁵⁸⁸ Niemi, and Normandeau, 4.

⁵⁸⁹ Niemi, and Normandeau, 9.

⁵⁹⁰ Niemi, and Normandeau, 9.

⁵⁹¹ Québec (Province) and Ministère de l’éducation, *Some Missing Pages: The Black Community in the History of Québec and Canada : Primary and Secondary Source Materials*. (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère de l’éducation, 1996). I was not able to consult this document due to the COVID-19 pandemic.: In 1996, also a first education guide for Black history was produced in Quebec.

⁵⁹² Paul Inchauspé, “Prendre Le Virage Du Succès : Plan d’action Ministériel Pour La Réforme de l’éducation,” Rapport du Groupe de travail sur la réforme du curriculum (Québec: Ministère de l’éducation, 1997), <https://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/40016>.

⁵⁹³ Bouvier et al., *L’Histoire nationale à l’école québécoise: Regards sur deux siècles d’enseignement*, 491.

⁵⁹⁴ Josiane Lavallée, “Paul Inchauspé (dir.), Réaffirmer l’école: Prendre le virage du succès. Rapport du Groupe de travail sur la réforme du curriculum, Québec, Ministère de l’Éducation, 1997, 137 p.,” *Bulletin d’histoire politique* 7, no. 1 (1998): 195, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1060307ar>.

On the basis of the recommendations in the *Inchauspé* report but more importantly those made by the *Lacoursière* report, the Liberal Government drafted a curriculum reform in 2006, which aimed to contribute to students' "structuration de l'identité."⁵⁹⁵ The reform immediately attracted negative media attention.⁵⁹⁶ The new curriculum adopted a social constructivist approach and favoured that students learn competencies rather than factual information.⁵⁹⁷ Slavery was included among the *éléments de connaissances*. These were mandatory learning objectives that had to be studied in class and mentioned in textbooks. In the same section on "population et peuplement," other *éléments de connaissances* included "immigration française," "immigration de Loyalistes" and "immigration d'Haïti."⁵⁹⁸ The draft also mentioned *the Rocher Nigger*, among the "repères culturels." This rock marked the location of a Black cemetery, where allegedly enslaved people were buried in Saint-Armand, Québec.⁵⁹⁹ The new curriculum thus retained the recommendations made by the *Centre de recherche-action sur les relations raciales* to include slavery among the learning objectives.

The controversy was sparked by the curriculum's alleged anti-nationalist stance. Historians, teachers and journalists took issue with the erasure of the term "nation" and in extension national history from the curriculum.⁶⁰⁰ Michel Sarra-Bournet, a Quebec historian, argued that the curriculum was not only questioning "l'enseignement nationaliste" but "l'histoire nationale" as such.⁶⁰¹ Paul-André Linteau, Quebec history professor at the Université de Québec à Montréal, claimed that the curriculum was marked by an "absence à peu près totale de profondeur historique."⁶⁰² Sarra-Bournet in a similar vein called the approach, with its focus on ethnocultural diversity, a "distorsion historique."

Si l'enseignement de l'histoire doit répondre à des impératifs de pertinence contemporaine, il ne doit pas mener à la distorsion historique, fût-ce au nom du "vivre ensemble."⁶⁰³ . . . En d'autres termes le passé ne peut refléter le caractère pluriethnique du Québec actuel.⁶⁰⁴

⁵⁹⁵ Québec (Province) and du loisir et du sport Ministère de l'éducation, *Programme de formation de l'école québécoise: enseignement secondaire, deuxième cycle: parcours de formation générale, parcours de formation générale appliquée* (Québec: Ministère de l'éducation, du loisir et du sport, 2007), 8, <http://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/1903543>.

⁵⁹⁶ Québec (Province), Ministère de l'éducation, du loisir et du sport, *Histoire et Éducation à La Citoyenneté: Document de Travail*, 2006, <http://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/56516>; Sarra-Bournet, 150.

⁵⁹⁷ Sarra-Bournet, "Conclusion: Enseigner l'histoire du Québec," 150.

⁵⁹⁸ Québec (Province), Ministère de l'éducation, du loisir et du sport, *Histoire et Éducation à La Citoyenneté: Document de Travail*, 86.

⁵⁹⁹ Ministère de l'éducation, du loisir et du sport, 86.

⁶⁰⁰ Jacques Beauchemin et al., *Le sens de l'histoire: pour une réforme du programme d'histoire et éducation à la citoyenneté de 3e et de 4e secondaire - rapport final à la suite de la consultation sur l'enseignement de l'histoire*, 2014, 11–12.

⁶⁰¹ Sarra-Bournet, "Conclusion: Enseigner l'histoire du Québec," 143.

⁶⁰² Paul André Linteau, "La Transformation de La Société Multiculturelle Au Québec (1945-2000)," in *Vers La Construction d'une Citoyenneté Canadienne*, ed. Jean-Michel Lacroix (Paris: Presses Sorbonne nouvelle, 2006), 22.

⁶⁰³ Sarra-Bournet, "Conclusion: Enseigner l'histoire du Québec," 153.

⁶⁰⁴ Sarra-Bournet, 153.

Overall, these scholars' argument was that the story line should include racialized minorities' history within a narrative centered around "le noyau français."⁶⁰⁵

Teachers and some scholars also took issue with the anachronistic structure in which students studied the entire period from the foundation of New France to the present in the first year and restudied the period four times in the second year from different perspectives. In 2007, with some revisions the contested curriculum was adopted and this structure was maintained and slavery remained among the compulsory teaching contents.⁶⁰⁶

Charles-Philippe Courtois, a Quebec historian, critiqued the 2007 curriculum for including the conversation about slavery solely under the New France section but not in the one pertaining to the British regime. He attributed this representation to the influence of Jocelyn Létourneau, history professor at Laval University, whose career has focused on identity formation and historical consciousness in Quebec, "sans oublier l'éminent Marcel Trudel, dont l'influence, manifestement, est distillée dans ce nouveau cours."⁶⁰⁷ For Courtois, the new curriculum focused too much attention on the negative aspects of New France.⁶⁰⁸ In contrast, Létourneau disagreed that the curriculum defended a federalist stance.⁶⁰⁹ He argued instead that new curriculum was one where the "history of Quebec is no longer presented on the basis of the canon of a francophone nation struggling for political recognition and resisting outside domination."⁶¹⁰ This detour from the "painful narrative" what Létourneau called "the essential key to its identity" caused these reactions.⁶¹¹

This debate was not resolved and as a result, in the 2019-2020 school year the contested curriculum was replaced.⁶¹² The new curriculum reverted to a chronological narrative in which slavery

⁶⁰⁵ Gilles Boulet, Jacques Lacoursière, and Denis Vaugeois, *Le Boréal express: journal d'histoire du Canada, 1524-1760* (Québec: Septentrion, 2009), Page de présentation, <http://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/2395712>.

⁶⁰⁶ Québec (Province) and Ministère de l'éducation, *Programme de formation de l'école québécoise*.

⁶⁰⁷ Courtois, "Pour un rééquilibrage de l'historiographie."

⁶⁰⁸ Courtois.

⁶⁰⁹ Félix Bouvier, "Bilan du débat relatif au programme histoire et éducation à la citoyenneté du deuxième cycle de l'ordre d'enseignement qui a eu cours au Québec en 2006-2007," Commission de consultation sur les pratiques d'accommodement reliées aux différences culturelles (Chicoutimi: J.-M. Tremblay, 2008), 8, <https://doi.org/10.1522/030023979>; Jocelyn Létourneau, "Absolument pas fédéraliste! Révéler aux élèves la complexité historique du Québec, ce n'est pas aseptiser leur mémoire mais leur donner les moyens d'aiguiser leur intelligence," *La Presse*, mai 2006.

⁶¹⁰ Létourneau, "The Debate on History Education in Quebec," 87.

⁶¹¹ Létourneau, 88.

⁶¹² Québec (Province) and Ministère de l'éducation et de l'enseignement supérieur, *Programme de formation de l'école québécoise: enseignement secondaire: histoire du Québec et du Canada: troisième et quatrième secondaire*, 2017, <https://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/3278953>.

and newly also slavery's abolition were part of the *éléments de connaissances*.⁶¹³ *La Coalition pour l'histoire*, an advocacy group for national history, expressed its satisfaction with the new course.

Tous les élèves québécois, y compris ceux issus de l'immigration, auront enfin droit à un véritable cours d'histoire du Québec avec notre récit national restauré, nos événements majeurs et nos figures marquantes réhabilités.⁶¹⁴

The advocacy group favoured the political and national history approach that the 2017 curriculum adopted, which represented the “figures marquantes” of Quebec’s “récit national” as well as the separatist movement⁶¹⁵

Others, including Sarah Dorner, parent and professor of Engineering at *Polytechnique Montréal*, and Robert Green, a history professor, argued that textbook coverage of Black slavery was inadequate.⁶¹⁶ In 2017, Sarah Dorner, informed *CBC* that she was concerned by the fact that *Panache*, an elementary school history textbook, published by *Chenelière Education*, discussed slavery in the United States but not in Canada. Dorner said:

Kids are going to come out of there thinking, that's something that happened elsewhere,” Dorner told *CBC* Montreal’s *Daybreak*. “That’s othering the history when in fact we have our own local [history].⁶¹⁷

This quotation highlights that for Dorner, Black history is Quebec history and that the controversy involved other levels of schooling beyond high school as well.

Robert Green, a history teacher in an English-language high school in Montreal, was particularly critical of how textbook representation of Black history and slavery.

Aside from a few references to the existence of slavery in Quebec, the only mention of an actual black person is a box describing the life of rebel slave Marie-Joseph

⁶¹³ Québec (Province) and Ministère de l'éducation et de l'enseignement supérieur, 28, 39, 68.

⁶¹⁴ cohiadm, “Le nouveau cours d'histoire du Québec au secondaire approuvé par le ministre de l'Éducation,” Text, August 10, 2017, https://www.coalitionhistoire.org/contenu/le_nouveau_cours_dhistoire_du_quebec_au_secondaire_approuve_par_le_ministre_de_leducation.

⁶¹⁵ cohiadm, “Membres,” Text, November 16, 2009, <https://www.coalitionhistoire.org/contenu/membres>.; Gilles Laporte, Éric Bédard and Mathieu Bock-Côté. The coalition is also supported by La Fondation Lionel-Groulx.

⁶¹⁶ Giuseppe Valiante, “Quebec High School History Textbooks Are ‘Fundamentally Flawed,’ Should Be Removed: Committee,” *The Globe and Mail*, November 29, 2018, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-quebec-high-school-history-textbooks-are-fundamentally-flawed/>; Giuseppe Valiante, “Quebec Once Again Changing High School History Textbooks, Second Time since 2016,” *CTV News*, June 20, 2018, <https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/quebec-once-again-changing-high-school-history-textbooks-second-time-since-2016-1.3982150>; Rebecca Ugolini, “‘Racist’ Grammar Book Stirs Controversy in Black Community,” *CBC News*, October 25, 2015, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/ardoise-grammar-book-racism-haiti-1.3286709>; Benjamin Shingler, “Quebec Has No Plans to Change History Curriculum despite Scathing Review,” *CBC News*, November 30, 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-history-jean-francois-roberge-1.4927887>.

⁶¹⁷ “Textbook Raises Questions about Representation of Slavery in Quebec Curriculum,” *CBC News*, September 22, 2017, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/textbook-slavery-curriculum-quebec-1.4301989>.

Angélique. While this story has in recent years been the subject of an entire book, play and documentary film, the textbook dedicates fewer than 50 words to it.⁶¹⁸

Yet Jean-François Roberge, incumbent Minister of Education, considered the critiques a matter of opinion in his response to the expert report commissioned by the English-Montreal School Board in 2018, which called for the revision of the 2017 curriculum and the withdrawal of *Reflections.qc.ca*, a English-language history textbook in use. *Montreal Gazette* quoted Roberge's defense of the curriculum and the textbook:

The current history books were written and approved by a lot of history experts, so I don't think I will take back the books. . . . If you only consider those experts, of course it does not look good. . . . But other experts have other interpretations. There's a lot of debate, and I don't think we have to take those remarks as the only truth.⁶¹⁹

Beyond the textbooks, there was also the issue of the curriculum's structure. As Robert Green noted:

Textbook omissions are only part of the problem. The official list of topics that serves as the basis for the ministry exam does not contain a single one related to black history. The list is also so long that it leaves teachers almost no time for anything else. Even those who believe in the importance of teaching black history are likely to be discouraged, for fear of not adequately covering exam material.⁶²⁰

These comments show that, from a teacher's perspective, there is not much leeway in the classroom to cover material not included in the official curriculum.

The ongoing debates over the content of history teaching demonstrate the contested nature of how to adequately represent Quebec history in high school courses. Should textbooks focus on the history of its citizens of French descent at its "core" or focus on all groups from a multicultural perspective who live on the territory equally? The tension has not been resolved. Textbooks translate curriculum contents into teaching materials for students. My subsequent analysis of textbook excerpts on slavery shows how these tensions translated at different points in time into different narratives about slavery.

⁶¹⁸ "Black History Gets Short Shrift in New Quebec Textbooks," *Montreal Teachers 4 Change.Org* (blog), February 20, 2018, <https://montrealteachers4change.org/2018/02/20/black-history-gets-short-shrift-in-new-quebec-textbooks/>.

⁶¹⁹ Philip Authier, "Quebec's Education Minister Won't Yank Controversial History Textbooks," *Montreal Gazette*, November 30, 2018, <https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/quebecs-education-minister-wont-yank-controversial-history-textbooks/>.

⁶²⁰ "Black History Gets Short Shrift in New Quebec Textbooks."

Before 1960, textbooks focused on high officials, missionaries, and *coureurs de bois* responsible for the colony's political and military development due to their courage in exploring "uninhabited" land.⁶²¹ This white-male-driven narrative persisted in textbooks throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s. There was very little space for Black people in this framework.⁶²² Marcel Trudel and Geneviève Jain showed that the most influential textbook for this period, *La Civilisation Catholique et Française au Canada* perpetuated the "two founding races" narrative, which insisted on the French-Canadians fight for cultural survival against the English enemy.⁶²³ *Mon pays*, another French-Catholic textbook from 1956,⁶²⁴ represented Black people among undesirable immigrant groups:

L'immigration se faisait comme d'habitude au compte-gouttes, mais non plus au filtre ; en tout, trois ou quatre mille immigrants d'assez mauvais choix : engagés, soldats vicillissants, braconniers, faux-sauniers, criminels, jeunes libertins, transfuges anglais et quelques n[****]s.⁶²⁵

Black people appeared as the last and presumably least desirable immigrant group.

After the 1966 reform, textbooks engaged with the post-Second World War scholarship. Textbooks such as *Mon Pays* retained a political history approach and focused on individual male figures, such as Samuel de Champlain or Jean Talon, to drive the narrative.⁶²⁶ *La Nouvelle-France*, the first textbook I analyzed, was published by three Quebec-based historians, Denis Héroux, Robert Lahaise, and Noël Vallerand, in 1967. Bouvier ascertained that Trudel's scholarship had influenced the book's content.⁶²⁷ Lahaise may have known Trudel's work through his doctoral studies at Laval University.⁶²⁸ The textbook contained a section on domestic servants and enslaved people at the end of its overview of New France's society:

⁶²¹ Marcel Trudel and Geneviève Jain, *L'histoire Du Canada; Enquête Sur Les Manuels*, vol. 5, Études de La Commission Royale d'enquête Sur Le Bilinguisme et Le Biculturalisme (Ottawa: Imprimeur de la reine, 1969).

⁶²² D'Almeida, "La présence des noirs au Québec," 1.

⁶²³ Gérard Filteau, *La Civilisation Catholique et Française Au Canada: Manuel d'histoire à l'usage Des Écoles Secondaires*, Notre Civilisation (Montreal: Centre de Psychologie et de Pédagogie, 1960), 135, 227; Trudel and Jain, "Canadian History Textbooks: A Comparative Study," 32.

⁶²⁴ Olivier Maurault, "PLANTE (abbé Hermann) et MARTEL (abbé Louis), *Mon Pays* — Synthèse d'histoire du Canada. Aux Éditions LaFlèche, Trois-Rivières, 1956.," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 10, no. 3 (1956): 443–45, <https://doi.org/10.7202/301783ar>. The book was directed at students in "cours classiques" the highest, secular secondary education level at the time.

⁶²⁵ Abbé Hermann Plante and Abbé Louis Martel, *Mon Pays: Synthèse d'histoire Du Canada* (Trois-Rivière, Province du Québec: Editions la Flèche, 1956), 106.

⁶²⁶ Plante and Martel, 106.

⁶²⁷ Bouvier, "Les mutations accélérées se poursuivent," 356.

⁶²⁸ "Robert Lahaise," *Septentrion*, accessed October 8, 2020, <https://www.septentrion.qc.ca/auteurs/robert-lahaise>; Jean-François Nadeau, "Décès de l'historien Robert Lahaise, spécialiste de la Nouvelle-France," *Le Devoir*, juin 2018, <https://www.ledevoir.com/societe/530405/deces-de-l-historien-robert-lahaise-specialiste-de-la-nouvelle-france>.

C. Les domestiques et les esclaves

Une fois son contrat signé le domestique connaissait généralement un sort peu enviable : soumis à de nombreuses charges moyennant un faible salaire – de 100 à 150 livres par an – ils devaient respecter son engagement sous peine du carcan ou de la fleur de lys ! Sa seule consolidation était d'être logé, nourri et habillé aux frais de son maître. Peu de Canadiens étaient ainsi disposés à troquer leur liberté contre cette piètre sécurité. Devant ce fait et face à la pénurie constante de main-d'œuvre, l'État se résolut à légitimer la pratique de l'esclavage. Le premier esclave noir de l'histoire de la Nouvelle-France fut vendu à Québec en 1632. Il faudra pourtant attendre le début du XVIIIe siècle pour voir le mouvement prendre une certaine ampleur. Au total, en 150 ans d'histoire, la colonie comptera près de 4,000 esclaves. Ces pauvres types provenaient de deux groupes ethniques bien distincts : les Indiens Panis et les noirs, pour la plupart importés des Antilles.

Le statut légal de l'esclave le menait théoriquement à la pire sujétion ; en pratique toutefois le paternalisme des maîtres faisait de lui l'égal du domestique, salaire en moins. Il était généralement baptisé et portait le nom de famille de son maître ; on lui laissait le privilège de choisir son prénom, et pour se consoler, plusieurs choisissaient de grands noms comme César, Jupiter, Louis XIV ; malade, il était soigné à l'hôpital comme tous les autres citoyens ; fautif, on le jugeait comme tout le monde selon la coutume de Paris ; enfin mort, on l'inhumait dans le cimetière commun.

Malgré tout, l'esclave demeurait un objet que l'on achetait, que l'on échangeait ou que l'on vendait. Le prix variait en fonction de la jeunesse, de l'habileté et de la vigueur physique du sujet ; il se situait aux environs de 900 livres. On retrouvait des propriétaires d'esclaves dans toutes les classes de la société, aussi bien chez les hauts fonctionnaires et les membres du clergé que parmi les seigneurs ; les bourgeois en possédaient environ le tiers. L'esclavage survécut à la conquête, mais périclita rapidement par la suite. Au début du XIXe siècle la pratique avait complètement cessé.⁶²⁹

The textbook provided empirical evidence about slavery, including the number of enslaved people (close to 4,000), enslaved people's sales prices (900 livres) as well as details about the class and profiles of the slaveholders. The book described enslaved people's origins as "noirs, pour la plupart importés des Antilles," which acknowledged that they were "imported" like a commodity. This information was based on Trudel's data.

The authors reiterated Trudel's argument that enslaved people's living conditions were comparable to those of domestic servants. They discussed this comparison's limitations twice, first by stating that slaves were not remunerated, and second by arguing that "malgré tout, l'esclave demeurait un objet que l'on achetait."⁶³⁰ As such, they retained some of the precision of Trudel's argument.

⁶²⁹ Héroux, Lahaise, and Vallerand, *La Nouvelle-France*, 182.

⁶³⁰ Héroux, Lahaise, and Vallerand, 182.

Further, the excerpt also referred to enslaved people as “des pauvres types,” which suggests that the authors tried to empathize with their situation.

Despite these qualifying statements, the section maintained the argument that slavery in Quebec was much less “bad” than the legal status would have allowed. Their lives were also compared to that of non-enslaved people in general, with references to “la même justice pour les esclaves que pour les personnes libres.”⁶³¹ The choice of a first name was considered a “privilege,” just as Trudel considered enslaved people’s usage of their slaveholder’s last name.⁶³² In the 1999 edition of the textbook, the comparison with domestic servants remained intact but term “privilege” was removed from the passage.⁶³³ As such, it appears that the scholars considered the usage of the term privilege no longer adequate to describe enslaved people’s situation.⁶³⁴

The passage cited above clearly constituted a summary of Trudel’s work, with some minor discrepancies. One notable difference was that the section did not compare enslaved people’s living conditions with those of enslaved people in the rest of the Americas. The section solely discussed the situation in New France. This passage further failed to mention an enslaved person by name; Olivier Le Jeune was introduced without being named and without specifying his origins. No information on the consequences of enslaved people’s chattel status appeared in the section either. It solely confirmed that enslaved people were “objects” without further discussion of the social consequences of their condition. At the same time the passage made it clear that “Canadiens” and “Black” were mutually exclusive categories as evidenced by the statement that “peu des Canadiens étaient ainsi disposés à troquer leur liberté.”⁶³⁵

In contrast, Jacques Lacoursière and Denis Vaugeois’s *Canada-Québec: synthèse historique 1534-1968* published in 1968, the most widely used history textbook in the 1970s,⁶³⁶ did not provide a

⁶³¹ Trudel, *L’Esclavage au Canada Français*, 243.

⁶³² Trudel, 325.

⁶³³ Robert Lahaise and Noël Vallerand, *La Nouvelle-France 1524-1760*, Nouvelle édition revue et corrigée 2 après 1977 (Montréal: Lanctôt Editeur, 1999), 241. For the 1999 edition the term privilege was replaced with “pour se consoler” and “conquête” was changed to “défaite.” If the later adjustment was in line with the historiographical re-interpretation of the events of 1760, the former may indicate that the term privilege was not considered adequate anymore to describe the condition of an enslaved person.

⁶³⁴ Nadeau, “Décès de l’historien Robert Lahaise”; Trudel, *Dictionnaire Des Esclaves et de Leurs Propriétaires Au Canada Français*; Trudel, *Deux siècles d’esclavage au Québec*: Lahaise would also be involved in publishing for the *Éditions Hurtubise* in the collection *Cahier du Québec*. Trudel’s studies on slavery, *Le Dictionnaire des Esclaves* and later *Deux siècle d’esclavage*, were published by Hurtubise in this collection.

⁶³⁵ Héroux, Lahaise, and Vallerand, *La Nouvelle-France*, 182.

⁶³⁶ The book was used in University departments in the 1980s. Bouvier, “Les années 1960,” 358.

summary on slavery. Lacoursière et al. simply referred to enslaved people as immigrants.⁶³⁷ The authors finished their list of different immigrant groups with: “on doit ajouter à ceci un certain nombre d’esclaves noirs ou panis.”⁶³⁸ This framing ignored the forced movement of enslaved people, treating them alongside those who came to the territory willingly. Even in the same book’s 2015 editions, they simply indicated that Black people in Quebec were “peu nombreux” and referred readers to Bessière’s book *Les contributions des noirs au Québec*.⁶³⁹

Boréal Express, was listed as supplementary teaching material in the 1967 curriculum. This publication was the brainchild of Jacques Lacoursière and Denis Vaugois and was published as a newspaper that might have appeared in New France. Trudel wrote the preface for the publication in 1962, which shows that he was familiar with the project and its authors.⁶⁴⁰ *Boréal Express* contained an article on slavery, which was supposed to imitate how it would have been written in 1672. The article stated:

POUR VOS ESCLAVES : le ROUGE vaut-il le NOIR ?

Québec (DNC) – Les Kirke furent les premiers à avoir amené en Nouvelle-France un esclave noir. Le n[****] Olivier LeJeune est mort, il y a déjà plusieurs années. Depuis ce temps la colonie ne comptait pas d’esclaves en titre. Mais depuis l’an dernier, le gouverneur Courcelle possède deux esclaves poutéoutamises. Les Iroquois lui donnèrent ces deux S[*****]esse pour apaiser sa colère. Au lieu de les prendre à son service et de les traiter comme de vraies esclaves, le Gouverneur a placé ces deux filles chez les Sœurs de la Congrégation. Elles ont depuis appris la langue et les manières françaises. Une des deux est même sur le point d’épouser un Français.

Nous ne pouvons que louer le geste de Monsieur de Courcelle. Mais le temps viendra peut-être où le commerce de l’ocre deviendra florissant. Le nombre d’esclaves noirs ne fait qu’augmenter aux Antilles. Nous croyons que la Nouvelle-France pourrait se passer de ce genre d’esclavage.⁶⁴¹

The news item asked “le ROUGE vaut-il le NOIR ?” This comparison paralleled Trudel’s differentiation of the “worth” or “value” of Black and Indigenous enslaved people as a work force for

⁶³⁷ Vaugois, Lacoursière, and Provencher, *Canada-Québec*, 147. This was a revision of an earlier successful textbook of Farley and Lamarche’s *Histoire du Canada cours supérieurs* which was considered as “le Manuel d’Histoire par excellence.” Bouvier et al., *L’Histoire nationale à l’école québécoise*, 482.

⁶³⁸ Vaugois, Lacoursière, and Provencher, 147.

⁶³⁹ Jacques Lacoursière, Jean Provencher, and Denis Vaugois, *Canada-Québec: 1534-2015*, Nouvelle édition mise à jour (Québec: Septentrion, 2015). This 2015 version was not approved anymore by the Ministry to be used in schools.

⁶⁴⁰ Gilles Boulet, Jacques Lacoursière, and Denis Vaugois, *Le Boréal express: journal d’histoire du Canada, 1760-1810: Régime britannique* (Québec: Les éditions Le Boréal express, 1962), <http://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/2222660>.

⁶⁴¹ Tessier et al., *Le Boréal Express*, 122.

their slaveholder. As such, this question was aligned with Trudel's usage of the verb "valoir."⁶⁴² The book further mentioned Olivier LeJeune by name.

The news item in question was that Governor Courcelle had sent the two Indigenous girls he enslaved to school. The passage contended that this behaviour was "commendable." The governor did not treat enslaved people "comme de vraies esclaves."⁶⁴³ This reference to how enslaved people were supposedly "normally" treated in opposition to the treatment they received in New France repeated Trudel's same argumentation from *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*.⁶⁴⁴ This news item is largely based on Trudel's discussion of Courcelle's treatment of the two Indigenous enslaved girls that were given to him by Iroquois in the introduction of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*.⁶⁴⁵ That *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* was used in the newspaper may be due to Trudel's relationship to the publication.

What was more remarkable about the excerpt is that it supported an abolitionist stance in 1672. Trudel, on no occasion, referred to such a stance. This information was not based on *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* and reflected an effort to further attenuate the reader's negative judgment of French colonial society based on the information that slavery existed in New France. In fact, this seemed to be the general thrust of the article. The slaveholder was treated as "good" as a result of the focus on his "paternal" behaviour and perspective. It remains important to consider that the authors wanted to recreate the perspective of the time, though they notably did not think about this from enslaved people's perspectives. Instead, they sought to underscore a sense of opposition to slavery and a sense of slavery in New France as a benign institution. This simplification was also a distortion.

Textbook excerpts on slavery published in this first decade, discussed Trudel's central factual information and arguments in a manner similar to the author himself. Trudel presented slavery in his university textbook published in 1968. In his summary, he insisted on the number of people that were enslaved, the places where most enslaved people lived, the social groups who enslaved people and their living conditions, which he compared to those of domestic servants and adoptive children, while retaining the qualification that this was only possible "si l'on fait abstraction de l'achat et de la vente."⁶⁴⁶ The initial incorporation in textbooks thus resembled the themes that were highlighted within newspaper and academic scholarship and largely also those mentioned by Trudel himself. Textbooks focused exclusively on the slaveholder's perspective and did not invoke enslaved people's

⁶⁴² Tessier et al., 122; Trudel, *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, 14, 122, 181.

⁶⁴³ Tessier et al., *Le Boréal Express*, 122.

⁶⁴⁴ See my discussion on this in Chapter Two.

⁶⁴⁵ Trudel, *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, 10. I mention this same example in my discussion of the mediatic reception of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*. See Chapter Two.

⁶⁴⁶ Trudel, *Initiation à La Nouvelle-France; Histoire et Institutions*, 156.

perspective on their enslavement. The textbook excerpts attenuated the violence intrinsic in slavery as an institution and supported the idea that slaveholders acted humanly; the textbooks contended that enslaved people were treated better than expected.

Towards a Coherent Narrative of Slavery

The 1982 curriculum required that textbooks be approved by the Ministry of Education and provided a more comprehensive overview of the material that teachers had to cover. It also insisted more on the inclusion of the contribution of different social groups and not only the French Catholic majority to the development of the colony without mentioning neither Black people nor slavery explicitly as learning contents.⁶⁴⁷

Nouvelle histoire du Québec et du Canada, published in 1985, was co-authored by Louise Charpentier, a high school history teacher who coordinated the 1982 reform, as well as Paul-André Linteau and René Durocher, both well-known historians. The book's passage on slavery at the end of the chapter on New France's society read as follows:

Tout comme les autres colonies d'Amérique, le Canada connaît l'esclavage. On achète des esclaves noirs ou des Amérindiens panis de la vallée du Mississippi pour suppléer au manque de main d'œuvre. Cependant, au Canada, on compte beaucoup moins d'esclaves que dans les colonies de plantation de sucre ou de tabac puisqu'il ne s'y trouve pas de grandes exploitations agricoles. Parmi les 2087 esclaves recensés sous le Régime français 80% sont des Panis.

Les grands personnages de la colonie, les communautés religieuses, les marchands surtout en possèdent comme domestiques. C'est pourquoi ils vivent en plus grand nombre à la ville, en particulier à Montréal. À la campagne, leur sort est plus difficile car ils s'occupent des durs travaux de la terre.

Comment s'effectue l'achat d'un esclave ? On peut voir d'après le contrat qui suit certains aspects de la transaction.

“Par devant les notaires royaux en la prévôté de Québec, fut présent Hugues Jacques Péan, écuyer, seigneur de Livaudière, chevalier de l'ordre militaire de Saint-Louis, major de la ville et du château de Québec, lequel de son bon gré et volonté a... reconnu... avoir vendu à sieur Joseph Chavigny de la Chevrotière, capitaine et propriétaire du bateau la Marie-Anne, ... une s[*****]esse ... nommée Thérèse, âgée d'environ treize à quatorze ans... Le dit seigneur de la Chevrotière prend pour le servir, la reconnaît pour être seine, et n'être point estropiée en aucune façon, l'ayant fait visiter... cette vente faite pour et moyennant... trois cent cinquante livres...”⁶⁴⁸

⁶⁴⁷ Québec (Province) Ministère de l'éducation, *Histoire du Québec et du Canada 4e secondaire*, 11.

⁶⁴⁸ Extrait des archives judiciaires de Québec cited in Charpentier et al., *Nouvelle histoire du Québec et du Canada*, 99.

The factual information covered in the passage addressed the same areas of concern identified in the 1967 curriculum. It provided information about the number of enslaved people and the slaveholders. The passage provided no information on Black people's background (such as where they were originally from and how they were brought to the colony).

The sales contract of an enslaved Indigenous girl between two French Canadians that outlined the age and health status of the enslaved girl was included after the general comments about slavery. This excerpt could have allowed students to draw their own conclusions about the characteristics of slavery. However, the questions that students were asked to answer based on this contract focused solely on the perspective of the slaveholder:

A quelle classe sociale appartiennent l'acheteur et le vendeur de l'esclave Thérèse ?
Quels détails de ce contrat vous frappent davantage ? Pourquoi ? À qui peut-on
comparer l'esclave dans ce texte ?⁶⁴⁹

If the first question focused the attention again on the social group of the slaveholder, the third, asked students to reproduce the objectification of enslaved people as it asked to what (object) the enslaved person could be compared. The accompanying teaching guide suggested as an answer that the Indigenous girl was talked about "comme s'il s'agissait d'une bête de somme."⁶⁵⁰ No question inquired about the perspective of the enslaved and no example of a Black enslaved person were presented to students. Comparatively, in a section about Quebec's industrialization, the same textbook asked the students to "compare[r] les conditions de travail de l'artisan et celles du travailleur d'usine."⁶⁵¹ In this context, the focus was not on the factory owner but the workers. A similar approach was missing from the passage on slavery.

The limited number of enslaved people was explained by the absence of plantations in French Canada, in contrast to elsewhere in the Americas. The comparaison used an argumentative structure ("Tout comme les autres colonies . . . Cependant, au Canada . . .") that distinguished slavery in Canada from slavery elsewhere in the Americas. Trudel employed the same approach to distinguish the living conditions of enslaved people in French Canada from those elsewhere in the Americas. Conversely,

⁶⁴⁹ Charpentier et al., 99.

⁶⁵⁰ Louise Charpentier et al., *Nouvelle Histoire Du Québec et Du Canada: Guide Pédagogique (Édition Provisoire)* (Anjou: CEC, Boréal Express, 1985), 21-2-3.

⁶⁵¹ Louise Charpentier et al., *Nouvelle Histoire Du Québec et Du Canada*, 2e éd (Montréal, Qc, Canada: Centre éducatif et culturel, 1990), 235, https://archive.org/details/nouvellehistoire0000unse_k4q5/page/24/mode/2up.

Charpentier solely used the comparison on the basis of the number of people that were enslaved and did not use it to distinguish living conditions.⁶⁵²

Aside from this single passage on slavery, the textbook erased enslaved people from the social fabric of French-Canadian society. *Nouvelle histoire du Québec et du Canada* discussed the “dualité ethnique du Bas-Canada,”⁶⁵³ within which no other social group beyond the French and English existed. Enslaved people were absent from the initial teaching guide and textbooks’ overview of the social hierarchy at the time.⁶⁵⁴ Only in the 1990 version were students asked to “compléter [la pyramide sociale] en faisant analyser le document sur l’esclavage.”⁶⁵⁵ This question shows that the authors reconsidered their presentation and acknowledged enslaved people’s existence within French-Canadian society. However, the textbook’s timeline still contained no reference to Black people and slavery in French Canada and it only mentioned le début de la traite des esclaves entre la Guinée et les Antilles” et “la formation d’un parti abolitionniste aux États-Unis.”⁶⁵⁶ The textbook later also contended that Quebec society had changed from the “[société] québécoise de vieille souche essentiellement francophone et catholique,” to the “l’émergence d’une nouvelle société multiethnique, multiconfessionnelle, multiraciale ?” In doing so, it distinguished between the old (French, Catholic and mono-racial–white) and the new (multiracial) society and, as such, to a certain degree again denied enslaved people’s historical existence on the territory.

François Charbonneau, Jacques Marchand, and Jean-Pierre Sansregret, *Mon histoire: cahier de l’étudiant*, published in 1986, mentioned slavery in three sentences, as part of a table of immigrant groups. The following excerpt described the “immigrant” group “esclaves:”

Surtout des Amérindiens et un millier des Noirs. Ne pratiquant pas de grandes cultures comme dans les colonies du Sud, l’esclave est moins utile. Demeurent un signe de prospérité pour leur propriétaire.⁶⁵⁷

The origin of enslaved people was not even broadly defined. The passage referred vaguely to “un millier des Noirs.” Passages on other immigrant groups on the same page provided information on

⁶⁵² Louise Charpentier and Denise Monette, *Nouvelle Histoire Du Québec et Du Canada: Guide d’enseignement*, 2e édition (Anjou, Québec: Centre éducatif et culturel inc., 1992), 21-22. The teaching guide used as examples for the persistence of slavery today, sexual trafficking and forced labour camps in Mexico and the United States; neither referred to explicitly to the fact whether slavery persisted in Canada.

⁶⁵³ Charpentier et al., *Nouvelle Histoire Du Québec et Du Canada*, 1990, 176.

⁶⁵⁴ Charpentier et al., *Nouvelle Histoire Du Québec et Du Canada: Cahiers d’activités*, 60.

⁶⁵⁵ Louise Charpentier and Denise Monette, *Nouvelle Histoire Du Québec et Du Canada: Guide d’enseignement*, 2e édition (Anjou, Québec: Centre éducatif et culturel inc., 1992), 69.

⁶⁵⁶ Charpentier et al., *Nouvelle Histoire Du Québec et Du Canada*, 32, 392.

⁶⁵⁷ François Charbonneau, Jacques Marchand, and Jean-Pierre Sansregret, *Mon histoire: cahier de l’étudiant* (Montréal: Guérin, 1986), 81.

the immigrants themselves. For instance, for the “engagés,” the salary and the duration of the indenture contract were clarified.

The passage was written once again from the slaveholder’s perspective; The passage compared the number of enslaved people to the Southern colonies—just like Charbonneau—and was explained by the reduced labour needs due to the absence of large-scale agricultural exploitation. The passage judged that enslaved people were “moins utile,” which reduced enslaved people to their productivity as labourers. Further, the insistence that enslaved people were a sign of prosperity centred again the slaveholder’s perspective. Trudel argued in *L’Esclavage au Canada Français* already that Black enslaved people were a marker of social status for the owners, he even called Black enslaved people an “article de luxe.”⁶⁵⁸

Between 1982 and 2006, the summaries of slavery in the textbooks under study were less directly influenced by Trudel and did not provide detailed information on slavery. During this period, a narrative template appeared more clearly, which retained some key aspects that already marked Héroux et al. in 1967, which outlined the factual information on the number of enslaved people and slaveholders’ social group and distinguished Canada from elsewhere in the Americas. Both Charbonneau et al. and Charpentier et al. retained a perspective centred around slaveholders as well as the colony’s economic needs rather than the enslaved’s perspective and needs. Although groups beyond French and English Canadians were increasingly included in textbook contents after 1982, the subject of slavery does not appear to have been part of this development.

A Standardized Narrative of Slavery

The 2007 curriculum included slavery among the compulsory learning objectives. As a result, the textbook contents resembled each other more. Among other similarities, they used the same structure. With the new curriculum, students studied, in the first year, the history of the territory that is present-day Quebec from the Indigenous people that have lived and still live on the territory. In the second, this overview was studied in depth from different thematic foci. As such, there were two textbooks that were included in the course *Histoire du Québec et éducation à la citoyenneté*. The first referred to slavery in passing, while the second provided a more detailed presentation of the topic. The passage

⁶⁵⁸ Trudel, *L’Esclavage au Canada Français*, 322.

of the new curriculum also coincided with the publication of Afua Cooper's *The Hanging of Angélique* and paralleled an increased interest in Marie-Joseph Angélique's story.⁶⁵⁹

Fresques, a textbook published by *Chenelière Éducation* in 2007, thus contained a book for year one and a book for year two. The book for year two, written by Christophe Horguelin, textbook editor, historian and contributor for *Le Devoir* published in 2008, contained a more extended passage on slavery titled "les exclus de la société Canadienne" in the thematic unit on "Population et peuplement":

La perspective de travailler comme domestique dans une colonie de développement est loin de séduire les colons. Les tâches sont considérables, le salaire, maigre, et la liberté d'action presque nulle. Pour remédier à la pénurie de main-d'œuvre, l'administration royale légalise la pratique de l'esclavage. On compte entre 2000 et 3000 esclaves durant le régime français. La majorité d'entre eux appartiennent à diverses nations amérindiennes ennemies des Français, dont les Panis (Pawnees) originaires de l'ouest du Mississippi. Les autres sont originaire d'Afrique. Dépouillés de leurs droits et de leurs libertés, ces hommes, femmes et enfants peuvent être achetés et vendus. La plupart d'entre eux travaillent comme aides domestiques auprès d'un haut fonctionnaire, d'un officier, d'une communauté religieuse ou d'un riche marchand.⁶⁶⁰

The start of this excerpt resembled the passage in Héroux et al. published in 1967. As such, the existence of slavery was attributed to a shortage of voluntary labourers due to the working conditions of domestic servants. According to the authors, the legalization of slavery solved this shortage. The passage thus, to a certain degree, acknowledged that working as a domestic servant was not a desirable position.

The factual information used in earlier textbooks, such as the number of enslaved people, an approximate reference to their background, and the slaveholders' social groups once again in this textbook. The passage solely discussed the number of people enslaved under the French regime. It retained the central factual information on enslaved people that had been established by Trudel in *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*.

As evident in the section above, the textbook discussed enslaved people's living conditions, chattel status, and referred to the fact that they lost their liberties through their enslavement. The passage acknowledged that enslaved people were human beings beyond their bondage and were not always already enslaved. Trudel's comparison of enslaved people's living conditions with that of

⁶⁵⁹ Cooper, *Hanging of Angélique*; Denyse Beaugrand-Champagne, *Le Procès de Marie-Josèphe-Angélique* (Outremont, Québec: Libre Expression, 2004).

⁶⁶⁰ Christophe Horguelin et al., *Fresques 1 et 2: Histoire et Éducation à La Citoyenneté, 2e Cycle Du Secondaire, 2e Année* (Montréal: Graficor, Chenelière Éducation, 2008), 40.

domestic servants was not represented in the passage; it referred solely to the fact that they worked as domestic servants without equalizing the two. This new framing of slavery does not contain Trudel's long-standing comparison.

Also deviating from Trudel's focus, the passage does not compare the condition of slaves in New France with the state of enslaved people elsewhere. Instead, it included information on slavery in French Louisiana and an excerpt from the 1709 ordonnance of Intendant Raudot, which legally secured slaveholders' property rights.⁶⁶¹ As such, slavery in New France was discussed within its historical boundaries and not solely those of present-day Quebec.⁶⁶²

Further, the passage referred to the fact that there were enslaved people from African descent in New France. This excerpt was marginally more detailed than those of earlier textbooks, such as Charbonneau et al. from 1985, which simply referred to Black enslaved people as "Black." In contrast, the textbook did not discuss the diverse trajectories through which people of African descent were brought to the territory of present-day Quebec.

The textbook for the first year from the same series directed by Sylvain Fortin, a history high school teacher, finished an overview of Quebec's social hierarchy with the following passage:

De plus, sur une période de 125 ans, on compte près de 2500 esclaves amérindiens et environs 1000 esclaves noirs. Les esclaves, qui ne disposent d'aucune protection juridique, sont exclus de la hiérarchie sociale.⁶⁶³

This passage clarified that enslaved people were historically not considered full members of society, as illustrated in the pyramid used to portray the social hierarchy in the eighteenth century, which presented "noblesse" and "clergy" at the top of the pyramid and the "Tiers état" at the bottom without reference to enslaved people. The textbook made this exclusion explicit and arguably challenged it by asking students to categorize enslaved people as "exclus" from New France's society.⁶⁶⁴ The textbook thus problematized the historical erasure of enslaved people.

The most remarkable difference in the 2007 textbook was that it mentioned an enslaved person, Marie-Joseph Angélique, by name, something textbooks had not done previously. However, although pictural depictions accompanied the passages, *Fresques* provided only limited biographical information. The description of Marie-Joseph Angélique's life read as follows:

⁶⁶¹ Horguelin et al., 40.

⁶⁶² The passage highlights that the clergy, "les frères Chauvin de Montréal" enslaved people in very high numbers in Louisiana. The textbook illustrates this passage with a map of Chopitoulas. Horguelin et al., 40.

⁶⁶³ Fortin et al., *Fresques A et B*, 92.

⁶⁶⁴ Sylvain Fortin, *Fresques: histoire et éducation à la citoyenneté, 2e cycle du secondaire, 1ère année Cahiers d'activités* (Montréal: Graficor: Chenelière Éducation, 2007), 41.

En 1734, un incendie détruit une quarantaine d'habitations à Montréal. Accusée d'être responsable de l'incendie, Angélique, une jeune esclave noire, est condamnée à mort. Toutefois, les historiens doutent de plus en plus de la culpabilité de la jeune femme.⁶⁶⁵

Within this excerpt, Angélique was portrayed as an individual who was possibly wrongfully convicted. Angélique was a victim of New France's society, which mistreated her. Neither her lived experience of enslavement nor her potential motives for setting fire to old Montreal were discussed.

Fresques thus presented a different narrative of slavery than earlier textbooks. It did not retain Trudel's arguments, which supported his belief that slavery was "humane" in French Canada and humanized enslaved people through the acknowledgement that they were once free and became enslaved and the discussion of Angélique's experience.

Andrée Thibeault's *Repères: histoire et éducation à la citoyenneté* published in 2007 contained a more detailed description of slavery in New France. The passage contextualized slavery within Black history in Quebec more generally as well as within the larger colonial history of the French empire; it mentioned the Loyalist emigration, the Underground Railroad and slavery in the French Antilles. Further, Angélique appeared as a figure of resistance. The excerpt on slavery was a full page:

Tout au long du Régime français, l'esclavage est répandu dans les colonies principalement dans les Antilles françaises. Autour de 1660, la principale culture de ces colonies, la canne à sucre, exige une main-d'œuvre importante. Les Amérindiens sont progressivement remplacés dans les plantations par des esclaves venus d'Afrique. En Nouvelle-France, il y aurait eu plus de 4000 esclaves, dont environ 1400 Noirs venus des Antilles et 2600 Amérindiens, appelés "panis" du nom d'une tribu amérindienne de la région du Missouri, aux États-Unis. Les premiers esclaves noirs de la Nouvelle-France travaillent principalement à Montréal dans les environs comme domestiques pour de riches familles et des membres du clergé. La première mention de l'esclavage des Noirs en Nouvelle-France remonte à 1628. Olivier Le Jeune, un jeune garçon de six ans originaire de Madagascar, arrive à Québec en 1628 et est vendu un an plus tard à un prêtre. Après la Révolution américaine de 1776, des milliers de loyalistes émigrent au Canada, emmenant parfois avec eux leurs esclaves. Près de 3500 esclaves obtiennent leur liberté en se ralliant à la Grande-Bretagne. La plupart s'installent en Nouvelle-Ecosse et au Nouveau-Brunswick.

Si certains propriétaires n'hésitent pas à inscrire dans des actes (des testaments, par exemple) la possession d'esclaves, plusieurs négligent de le faire. Aussi, plusieurs Noirs sont inhumés sans que soit précisée leur condition sociale. C'est pourquoi il est difficile d'avoir une idée exacte de leur nombre.

En 1709, l'ordonnance de l'intendant de la Nouvelle-France, Jacques Raudot, reconnaît l'esclavage dans la colonie. La loi sur les esclaves qui s'applique en Nouvelle-France s'inspire du *Code noir*, un ouvrage publié en 1685, sous Louis XIV,

⁶⁶⁵ Cette œuvre de Marie-Denise Drouin date du XX^e siècle. Fortin et al., *Fresques A et B*, 93.

pour régler l'esclavage dans les Antilles françaises. Dans ce livre, les esclaves sont définis comme une marchandise qui peut être vendue ou échangée.⁶⁶⁶

The section provided a more detailed discussion of enslaved people's backgrounds than earlier passages and less detail on some of Trudel's main topics such as enslaved people's living conditions and the social class of the slaveholders. Moreover, *Repères* did not reiterate Trudel's central argument about slavery's "humanness." This section appeared to have been much less influenced by Trudel's interpretations than previous works.

The contextualization, with which the excerpts started, mentioned that slavery "est répandu dans les colonies principalement dans les Antilles françaises." This passage highlighted that slavery was particularly common and numerically relevant in the Antilles. The author did, however, not use this to directly compare slavery in New France with that in the French Antilles, as was the case in earlier textbooks. Regardless the passage conveyed the idea that New France was better than the French Antilles due to the lower number of enslaved people.

Compared to earlier scholarship, there was no discussion of enslaved people's living conditions in this textbook. There was also no indication of the violence inherent in slavery. Instead, any violence was euphemized as suggested by the choice to use the term "venus d'Afrique," which implied a voluntary character to enslaved people forced removal to Canada.⁶⁶⁷ The verb "travailler" did not convey that enslaved people were forced to work and thus offered a euphemized portrayal of enslavement. The textbook engaged with the limitations of the primary sources at historians' disposal in regard to slavery. However, rather than making closing comments about the difficulty to know more about enslaved people's experiences, it closed with a focus on their number. The second paragraph could as easily close with "that is why we know very little about them." As such, the passage did not acknowledge the limitations of the historical scholarship in regard to its interpretations but solely in regard to its factual information.

The passage mentioned Olivier Le Jeune by name and provided a short biography of Marie-Joseph Angélique, which counteracted to a certain degree this limited portrayal of slavery. Angélique's life was summarized as follows:

Marie-Joseph Angélique est une esclave noire née vers 1710 au Portugal. Elle est la propriété de Mme de Francheville, la veuve d'un riche marchand montréalais. Mariée à un esclave, elle a eu trois enfants morts en bas âge. En 1734, Marie-Joseph est la première esclave de la Nouvelle-France à participer à une manifestation

⁶⁶⁶ Thibeault, *Repères*, 30.

⁶⁶⁷ Thibeault, 30.

publique contre l'esclavagisme. Apprenait que sa propriétaire souhaite la vendre, elle décide de s'enfuir en Nouvelle-Angleterre.

Selon la légende, elle met feu à la résidence de sa maîtresse . . . Marie-Joseph est capturée, emprisonnée et jugée devant le tribunal de Montréal. L'accusation s'appuie sur le témoignage d'une enfant de cinq ans qui doit avoir vu Marie-Joseph allumer l'incendie. La sentence tombe . . . La peine est sévère : elle est condamnée à être pendue sur la place publique. A-t-elle été accusée à tort pour son présumé rôle dans l'incendie ? Les historiens remettent aujourd'hui en question sa culpabilité.⁶⁶⁸

The passage stresses that fleeing from her enslavement was the first “manifestation publique contre l'esclavagisme.” The interpretation that running away and arson were forms of resistance to slavery gained traction in Elgersman Lee's and in particular through Afua Cooper's scholarship.⁶⁶⁹ This passage may have been influenced by Cooper's work. The passage retained the idea that Angélique indeed had agency and took a decision based on the information that she would be sold. However, Angélique's experience with slavery was not discussed in its worst facets, the passage contained no reference to the physical abuse she endured.

The first accompanying question asked “Comment sont considérées les esclaves en Nouvelle-France ?”⁶⁷⁰ This question focused once again on the perspective of the slaveholder and not the enslaved, similarly to the questions that accompanied the 1985 textbook *Nouvelle histoire du Québec et du Canada*. It probably aimed to make students discuss enslaved people's chattel status. However, the limited discussion of the violence inherent in slavery did not allow students to discuss the consequences of slavery beyond Marie-Joseph Angélique's experience.

The last question asked students whether “ces pages vous [the students] ont-elles permis de vous faire une opinion sur l'existence de l'esclavage en Nouvelle-France ?”⁶⁷¹ This question did not ask students to discuss what they learned about slavery but rather to argue whether slavery existed or not in New France. The editors deemed the very question of slavery to be one for debate, although the passage did not contain any material that would allow for such a contestation. This appeared similar to the debate about the existence of slavery in which Trudel engaged with Garneau and Groulx when he first published *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* and the denial that Marguerite d'Youville was a slaveholder in the 1990s.

⁶⁶⁸ Thibault, 30.

⁶⁶⁹ Cooper, *Hanging of Angélique*, 79; Elgersman Lee, *Unyielding Spirits*.

⁶⁷⁰ Thibault, *Repères*, 31.

⁶⁷¹ Thibault, 31.

Within the discussion of the American Revolution the language did justice to the agency of enslaved people, on one hand, who through “se ralliant à la Grande Bretagne” and the lack of agency of enslaved people, on the other, who were brought (“emmener”) by their slaveholder to Canada.

A note separate from the main text mentions the Underground Railroad:

Le ‘chemin de fer clandestine’ (*Underground Railroad*) est le nom donné au réseau de sentiers secrets et de maisons d’accueil empruntés par les réfugiés des États esclavages du sud des États-Unis. Grâce aux personnes qui opéraient ce réseau d’évasion, tant des Noirs que des Blancs, des Canadiens que des Américains, près de 20 000 esclaves ont pu atteindre le Canada. Les esclaves fugitifs s’établissaient principalement dans le Haut-Canada. Très démunis à leur arrivée, ils s’engageaient comme travailleurs agricoles.⁶⁷²

The discussion of the Underground Railroad historically replaced the territory that is present-day Quebec within Canada and the developments of slavery that marked the rest of the country. The presentation was highly simplified. Quebec was not mentioned, nor is the discrimination that some refugees experienced once they were in Canada.

The textbook further mentioned the 1793 Upper-Canada legislation that phased out slavery in Upper Canada. It stressed that this law provided the legal foundation for enslaved people to obtain their freedom by fleeing to Canada—meaning solely Upper-Canada:

Par cette loi, le Canada devient une terre d’exil pour les esclaves américains en fuite. Entre 1800 et 1865, près de 20 000 esclaves fuient au Canada par le “chemin de fer clandestin”. Ce n’est qu’en 1833 que l’esclavage est aboli dans l’Empire britannique.⁶⁷³

This textbook omitted that Lower Canada failed to pass similar legislation, although the class focused on Quebec history and makes it appear as if the legislation had applied also to Lower Canada. The “north star myth” thus, framed here, as “le Canada devient une terre d’exil,” was reproduced in this passage.⁶⁷⁴ The accompanying questions demonstrated the problem with this omission, the textbooks asked “en 1793, quelle position le Haut Canada adopte-t-il au sujet de l’esclavage ?”⁶⁷⁵ This question could have allowed students to engage in a conversation about the limitations of such an act. Without any information on the absence of such legislation in Lower Canada students may have gained the idea that the abolitionist stance also applied to Lower Canada at the time. In the overall focus of the

⁶⁷² Thibeault, 30.

⁶⁷³ Thibeault, 31.

⁶⁷⁴ Walker, “Spirit of Africville.”

⁶⁷⁵ Thibeault, *Repères*, 31.

textbook on Lower Canada this omission would only have made sense, if the writer attempted to paint a more favourable picture of Lower Canada than the historical reality allowed for.

Beyond textbooks, the centralized ministerial exam at the end of year four in 2009 included a more nuanced question on slavery:

À l'aide des interprétations de François-Xavier Garneau et de Marcel Trudel (décrite dans des textes remis à l'élève), quelle est la situation de l'esclavage en Nouvelle-France selon ces deux historiens ?⁶⁷⁶

The task demanded students to summarize Garneau and Trudel's position on slavery without taking a stance on who was right. Jean-Philippe Warren showed in his analysis of ministerial exams that the goal was for students to show that they were able "de relever les différents points de vue et valeurs des acteurs ou des témoins de l'histoire québécoise."⁶⁷⁷ Garneau's interpretation of slavery did not appear in the textbook excerpts that I analyzed. However, the ministerial exam asked students to discuss the interpretations of Trudel and Garneau rather than those of more contemporary scholars, such as Afua Cooper or Frank Mackey. This suggests a considerable delay in the history courses' engagement with historiographical debates.

The textbooks approved for the 2007 curriculum provide a more detailed analysis of slavery. Neither of them euphemized nor humanized slavery to the degree of earlier textbooks. This change was mainly achieved through the absence of comparisons of enslaved people's living conditions with that of other social groups inside or outside of the territory of present-day Quebec and the inclusion of Marie-Joseph Angélique as a historical actor, who experienced violence inflicted by the slaveholding society. Trudel's influence beyond providing evidence for the existence of slavery had decreased. As such, Trudel's narrative of slavery was revised somewhat, and replaced with a narrative that focused more on enslaved people rather than slaveholders.

A Partial Return to Trudel's Narrative

The 2016 curriculum was published to remedy the critiques that were advanced against the 2007 curriculum, namely that it did not sufficiently center the history of Quebec as a nation.

⁶⁷⁶ "L'histoire avec un grand «H»," *Le Devoir*, accessed February 13, 2020, <https://www.ledevoir.com/societe/education/291005/l-histoire-avec-un-grand-h>.

⁶⁷⁷ Jean-Philippe Warren, "Enseignement, Mémoire, Histoire: Les Examens d'histoire de 4e Secondaire Du Secteur de La Formation Générale Au Québec (1970-2012)," *Historical Studies in Education / Revue d'histoire de l'éducation* 25, no. 1 (April 1, 2013): 46, <https://doi.org/10.32316/hse/rhe.v25i1.4308>.

Julie Charette et al.'s *Périodes* published in 2016, dedicated a double page to slavery and an additional passage to its abolition. The overview of New France's society discussed enslaved people as "subalternes."⁶⁷⁸ The long central passage on slavery provided a historical overview of slavery in the French empire and the *Code noir*, which highlighted how the code went beyond legalising slavery. It organized the slaveholding society and controlled enslaved people's lives:

À parti de 1685 Louis XIV autorise l'esclavagisme dans les colonies françaises. Dans les Antilles et en Louisiane, on utilise de nombreux esclaves africains dans les plantations de canne à sucre, de tabac, et d'indigo. Dès 1724, le *Code noir* est appliqué dans ces colonies. Ce code autorise et réglemente l'esclavage, notamment en ce qui concerne les relations maîtres-esclaves et les châtiments corporels.⁶⁷⁹

After this introductory paragraph, the textbook outlined a broad overview of slavery in Canada:

Depuis la fin du 17^e siècle, il y a aussi des esclaves d'origine africaine au Canada, surtout dans les villes. Plusieurs d'entre eux sont des domestiques, d'autres font différents métiers. Contrairement aux esclaves des colonies du Sud, ceux du Canada sont rarement assignés aux travaux des champs, car on y pratique surtout une agriculture de subsistance qui ne nécessite pas le recours à une main-d'œuvre extérieure. Les propriétaires d'esclaves au Canada sont surtout le gouverneur, l'intendant, les officiers de l'armée et les marchands. Issus de l'élite de Québec et de Montréal, ils ne possèdent, généralement, qu'un seul esclave. Les communautés religieuses possèdent aussi des esclaves.⁶⁸⁰

The excerpt above focused on the areas in which enslaved people were forced to labour and the social group to which slaveholders belonged. Statistics of the number of people who were enslaved appeared on the same page. This factual information remained close to what was included in *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, as did the argument of why slavery existed in the first place.

Trudel's influence was even more apparent in the textbook's discussion of enslaved people's living conditions:

Quelles sont les conditions de vie de ces esclaves au Canada ? Peu de documents révèlent leur quotidien. On sait qu'ils vivent chez leur maître, qui leur procure nourriture et vêtements, et qu'ils doivent obtenir sa permission pour se déplacer. Les historiens estiment que les conditions de vie des esclaves au Canada sont généralement moins dures que les conditions de vie des esclaves des plantations de la Louisiane et des Antilles. Le *Code noir* n'est pas appliqué au Canada. Néanmoins, les esclaves sont privés de leur liberté. Ils sont considérés comme des "marchandises" et peuvent être vendus ou légués en héritage.⁶⁸¹

⁶⁷⁸ Charette et al., *Périodes*, 195.

⁶⁷⁹ Charette et al., 198–99.

⁶⁸⁰ Charette et al., 198–99.

⁶⁸¹ Charette et al., 198–99.

Although the excerpt insisted that French Canada was treated “better” it recognized that enslaved people were still commodified. This narrative template resembled the representation of slavery as it appeared in contemporary newspapers as well as in Trudel’s book. The textbook authors nuance Trudel’s argument all the while retaining its core. Notably, Trudel and his work were mentioned explicitly.⁶⁸² *Deux siècle d’esclavage* was mentioned to explain the difficulty of obtaining reliable statistics on enslaved people and their living conditions. Julie Charrette wrote that “peu de document révèlent [le] quotidien [des esclaves].”⁶⁸³ This statement showed a recognition that students might be interested in the daily lives of slaves and that access to this information was limited, something that earlier textbooks had ignored.

Péri[o]des also explained the origins of Indigenous people and discussed the Indigenous slave trade. The passage was introduced in a way that clarified the textbook editor’s assumption that students knew about the enslavement of people of African descent but not that of Indigenous people.

Au Canada, les esclaves ne sont pas uniquement des hommes ou des femmes d’origine africaine. La majorité des esclaves sont en fait des Amérindiens, surtout des Pawnees, appelés “Panis”, originaire du centre des États-Unis actuels. Parmi les esclaves amérindiens, il y aussi des Renards, des Sioux ou des Arkansas, nations avec lesquelles les Français ne commercent pas ou bien contre lesquelles ils sont en guerre.

Les Français achètent ces esclaves amérindiens directement dans les colonies britanniques ou encore de leurs alliés amérindiens de l’ouest, comme Illinois. D’ailleurs, les nations amérindiennes à l’ouest de la Nouvelle-France se font la guerre pour capturer des esclaves qu’elles vendent aux Français.⁶⁸⁴

Black enslaved people’s background as well as how they were brought to French Canada was not discussed in comparable detail. This lack of attention to Black people’s background may be explained by the *Péri[o]des*’s reliance on Trudel, who had not inquired into the origins of enslaved people of African descent.⁶⁸⁵

As with other contemporary textbooks, the text mentioned Marie-Joseph Angélique, which points again to the influence of Afua Cooper’s scholarship. In this case, the text outlined the violent condemnation by the judicial system: “condamnée à mort et torturée, elle avoue le crime après qu’on

⁶⁸² Charette et al., 199.

⁶⁸³ Charette et al., 198–99.

⁶⁸⁴ Charette et al., 198–99.

⁶⁸⁵ Nelson highlights that “Focusing on Quebec from the moment of British conquest (1760), this article argues that this heterogeneity was a hallmark of the enslaved population of Quebec, which was composed of African Canadian, African American, African Caribbean, African-born, and indigenous enslaved peoples.” Charmaine A. Nelson, “A ‘Tone of Voice Peculiar to New-England,’” *Current Anthropology*, September 22, 2020, 14, <https://doi.org/10.1086/709976>.

lui ait brisé les os des jambes. Le 21 juin 1734, elle est pendue à Montréal avant d'être brûlée."⁶⁸⁶ While the passage also discussed Angélique's resistance towards her slaveholders, it failed to evoke her motive for resisting her enslavement and therefore appears ambivalent about the idea of slavery as having been more "humane" in present-day Quebec than elsewhere in the Americas.

Francis Campeau et al. authored and edited *Mémoire.qc.ca* published in 2016, whose English translation has been criticized for its discussion of minorities and slavery.⁶⁸⁷ It included the following passage on slavery:

On retrouve aussi des esclaves en Nouvelle-France. Entre 1700 et 1760, on en dénombre environ 2000 dans la vallée du Saint-Laurent. La majorité des esclaves sont Amérindiens. La plupart appartiennent à une nation établie à l'ouest de la rivière Missouri : les Panis. Les esclaves panis sont souvent des canotiers pour les marchands. Les esclaves noirs sont moins nombreux. La majorité d'entre eux travaillent comme domestiques dans les familles de la haute société ou pour des communautés religieuses.⁶⁸⁸

Neither the subject of where Black people came from nor how they found themselves on the territory was discussed in this passage. They were simply "retrouver" on the territory according to the textbook, which avoided any discussion of how enslaved people were brought to the territory.

In addition to focusing on where enslaved people were forced to labour, the following passage provided some information on their social status within New France's society:

Les esclaves ne possèdent aucun droit et sont considérés comme un bien appartenant à leur propriétaire. Ils ne disposent d'aucune protection juridique et ne font partie d'aucun des trois ordres qui composent la société en Nouvelle-France.⁶⁸⁹

Mémoire.qc.ca noted that enslaved people were excluded from the three "orders [Noblesse, clergé et tiers état] qui composent la société en Nouvelle-France."⁶⁹⁰ The depiction of this social hierarchy on the same page lacked any reference to enslaved people. Neither of the two questions based on the information of the chapter asked students to discuss slavery, and one of them asked students: "Quels sont les trois ordres qui composent la société en Nouvelle-France."⁶⁹¹ Thus students were asked to retain the information around the three social groups but not who was excluded from this

⁶⁸⁶ Charette et al., *Péri[od]es*, 198.

⁶⁸⁷ The report concluded that "There is no development of Black history, which dates back to the French regime, and the issues of Black and Aboriginal slavery are conspicuous by their absence." This was not the case for the French original that was translated. Copp et al., "An Independent Report on Textbooks," 4.

⁶⁸⁸ Courval, Dujardin, and Labonté, *Parcours du Québec et du Canada*, 103.

⁶⁸⁹ Francis Campeau et al., *Mémoire.qc.ca: des origines à 1840 : histoire du Québec et du Canada, 3e secondaire* (Chénelière, 2016), 103.

⁶⁹⁰ Campeau et al., 103.

⁶⁹¹ Campeau et al., 103.

representation. A discussion of enslaved people's exclusion from this social hierarchy would only take place if teachers explicitly asked their students to discuss this aspect.

Marie-Andrée Courval, Luc Dujardin, and Guylène Labonté's *Parcours du Québec et du Canada: histoire, des origines à 1840* retained or even re-instated some characteristics from Trudel's work, which focused on comparison and used euphemizing language:

Comme les colonies américaines et les colonies françaises des Antilles et de la Louisiane, la Nouvelle-France a des esclaves. On a recensé environ 3500 pendant toute la durée du Régime français.⁶⁹²

The short paragraph normalized slavery on the territory of what is present-day Quebec within the Americas and particularly the French Empire. "Comme" referred to the fact that New France was no different to other places in the French Empire and as such, removed some of responsibility from those Quebecers who had ancestors who were slaveholders.⁶⁹³ This new form of Trudel's comparison of slavery with the rest of the Americas absolved Quebecers from their responsibility for slavery. The usage of the verb "to have" indicated the status of enslaved people as "property," however, without other linguistic additions this appeared as an unproblematic reproduction of their chattel status.

Courval et al. introduced the characteristics of Black slavery in present-day Quebec in the following way:

Les autres esclaves sont d'origine africaine. Ils viennent des colonies anglaises voisines, les Antilles françaises ou de la Louisiane. La plupart des esclaves travaillent dans les villes comme domestiques. Les propriétaires sont des marchands, des administrateurs ou des membres du clergés.⁶⁹⁴

The formulation "viennent de" showed that euphemizing language was not specific to one publishing house, *Edition du Renouveau Pédagogique*, which had published a similar presentation in *Repères* in 2007. However, compared to *Mémoires.qc.ca* this outline was more detailed.

The textbooks approved for the 2017 curriculum retained some elements of Trudel's euphemized representations of slavery. The excerpts included for this curriculum provided a longer and more detailed overview of slavery than former textbooks, but this did not prevent them from reproducing arguments that had been disproven by more recent scholarship. Textbooks were thus still influenced by Trudel's work, though they incorporated new scholarship, such as the work of Afua Cooper, to varying degrees.

⁶⁹² Courval, Dujardin, and Labonté, *Parcours du Québec et du Canada*, 103.

⁶⁹³ In opposition to what I had expected, textbooks hardly stress the difference between French and English slaveholders, which could have been expected from Trudel's work and some of the reception.

⁶⁹⁴ Courval, Dujardin, and Labonté, 103.

Conclusions

In conclusion, textbook excerpts on slavery evolved significantly over the sixty years covered in this analysis. Texts still retained empirical evidence from *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* especially data about the number of enslaved people and the slaveholders' social groups, as well as a contextualization of slavery within the French empire. Frequently this contextualization presented slavery as "less bad" in French Canada; either quantitatively or qualitatively. Traces of Trudel's argumentation that slavery was "humane," which to a certain degree, humanized slavery and dehumanized the enslaved, persisted in textbooks. Although Trudel's interpretative conclusions have lost traction in textbooks since 2006, Charette et al. still claimed that slavery was less "dure" in French Canada than the rest of the French empire.

Despite these similarities, interpretations and linguistic choices as well as the depth of analysis varied across time and even among textbook approved for the same curriculum. These differences show that publishing houses and textbook editors can influence how they discuss slavery. The inclusion of Marie-Joseph Angélique, as a historical actor as of 2006, reflects the entry into textbook narratives of the more recent scholarship and public history projects on slavery. The inclusion of Marie-Joseph Angélique with a name, frequently accompanied by a pictural representation, broke with earlier textbooks, which aggregated enslaved people's experiences.

My analysis of Quebec high school history textbooks published since 1960 showed that the information in *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* and to a lesser degree Trudel's interpretations constituted the foundation for textbook discussions on slavery. The book had thus an initial and enduring influence on the way slavery was taught in Quebec schools. Textbooks only slowly reflected changes in the historiography on slavery that took place in the 1990s. Due to Trudel's legacy and the politics around the creation of curriculum reforms and history textbooks, students learned that slavery existed while simultaneously being told that it was not important for Quebec's collective memory. As such, the limitations of the existing historiography translated into simplified and problematic representations of slavery in textbooks intended to teach, but also foster, a sense of national identity amongst Quebec students.

The legacy of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, an assessment

Beyond a doubt, *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*, published in 1960 at the onset of the Quiet Revolution, has had a lasting influence on how the significance of slavery within Quebec history is understood. The book was published by a scholar, Marcel Trudel, who distinguished himself through his critical and anti-clerical approach to historical writing. Its reception is revealing on three planes: the first was how little interest the topic of slavery attracted until the 1980s, the second was how the media reception was clearly interested by the onset of the Quiet Revolution as revealed in the interest and insistence on the Catholic Church's involvement and finally, the reception of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* shows the importance of historical networks, as most of the early reviewers were associated with the *École de Laval* where Trudel was still a member.

The treatment and perception of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* changed over the intervening years. Within a social context in which other members of Quebec society insisted on their inclusion in national historical narratives, and with the growing academic scholarship on Black history and slavery, *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* served as a foundation for critical research by a new generation of historians who focused on enslaved people's experiences. These scholars opposed Trudel's interpretation that slavery was "humane" in French Canada and questioned the validity of the comparison Trudel had made between slavery in French Canada and other parts of the Americas. Frank Mackey appears as a notable exception to this trend as he concluded his work on slavery using some of the same source material as Trudel did, and draws some of the same conclusions, although he disagreed with some of Trudel's empirical evidence, especially his manner of counting, which conflated free and enslaved people. Unlike Trudel, Mackey was criticized for these conclusions, demonstrating the shift in the scholarship and the possibility of considering slavery as "humane" in any degree. Although, Trudel's narrative that slavery was "humane" and different in type from elsewhere in the Americas can still be found in some places; its influence has generally waned.

Where it has proved rather enduring, is in the curriculum and textbooks used to teach history in French to high school students in Quebec. As early as 1967, textbooks in Quebec relied on Trudel's work. This reliance has had a lasting, dual effect: representations of slavery have focused on statistics, slaveholders and legal considerations and the language used in these textbook narratives frequently re-objectified the enslaved.

Until the curriculum reform in 1982, textbooks borrowed the language and interpretations directly from Trudel and as such retained his most problematic linguistic choices such as the usage of the term "privilege." After this reform, textbook representations were less obviously a direct summary

of *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*. Notably, after 2006, the new scholarship on slavery and Black history gained some consideration in textbooks. In parallel, Trudel's interpretation of the "humaneness" of slavery in French Canada also lost traction, together with his comparisons of enslaved people's living conditions with those of domestic servants. Textbook passages also insisted less on a slavery's "different" nature in French Canada and focused more, on the common features of colonial societies in the Americas, removing some of the seemingly exceptional qualities of slavery in French Canada.

Beyond *L'Esclavage au Canada Français*

This thesis has shown *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* had an initial and lasting influence on the understanding of slavery in Quebec within newspaper articles, historical scholarship, and in textbooks. The thesis that in Quebec society enslaved people received an exceptional treatment relates to a larger debate within Quebec's national narrative and cannot be ignored. Discussions need to start with the way in which Quebec's narrative of slavery overlaps with the national narrative in general.

Since 1960, when Marcel Trudel first published *L'Esclavage au Canada Français* to the present, discussions about anti-Black racism refer to Black slavery in French Canada to highlight the historical presence, contributions and experiences of Black people within what is today Quebec, the demographic profile as well as the social standing of French Quebecers has changed.

Despite these developments, scholars and other commentators still refer to the lack of knowledge on slavery in Quebec. This thesis allowed me not only to see that the topic had been publicly discussed since the 1960s, and that it had been included in high school textbooks since 1967 but that interest had also increased notably since the 1980s. In my mind, this means there is more at stake than the issue of "not knowing" for Quebecers have had ample opportunity to learn about the history of Black people. It is a question of engagement. The debates taking place around Bill C-21 of Black Lives Matter, and the ongoing controversies surrounding high school history curricula show that these discussions are far from resolved. One cannot unsee the frequency with which, Quebec nationalists refer to Quebec's distinct history, all while the differently constituted group that supports a more inclusive historical narrative refer to commonalities which Quebec shares with the rest of the Americas in regard to its treatments of racialized minorities. These debates center the question: "What kind of history does the future of Quebec hold – and for whom, and created with what aim and what collective meaning?"⁶⁹⁵

⁶⁹⁵ Létourneau, "The Debate on History Education in Quebec," 94.

What is important to highlight here is that arguments that resemble the comparison that Vallières made in *N[****]s blancs d'Amérique* have not disappeared. Recently in the debates around Black Lives Matters, multiple opinion pieces appeared that draw attention to the “racisme anti-qubécois.”⁶⁹⁶ Throughout my work on this thesis, Vallières’s book remained at the back of my mind. I wondered in particular whether the constitution of Vallières comparison is related to the discussion around the euphemistic representation of slavery in *L’Esclavage au Canada Français*. Within a context in which French Canadians’ collective identity was constructed by some around their victimhood and oppression at the hands of English Canada, a meaningful discussion of French Canadians’ own involvement in anti-Black racism and genocidal violence against the Indigenous population in Quebec seems difficult. I question whether Vallières’s comparison of French Canadians with Black people in the United States, in fact, was constituted in part by the difficulty of engaging with Quebec’s involvement in slavery.

French Canadians involvement in these forms of oppression would be incoherent with the narrative template Quebec’s national historians have mobilized. *L’Esclavage au Canada Français* was a product of a specific time and social dynamics. It was written from the perspective of a self-identified French Canadian with a specific experience with the power dynamics at play during his lifetime within Quebec and Canada. While *L’Esclavage au Canada Français* was important for the empirical evidence it offered, particularly around the existence of slavery in French Canada, it reproduced certain colonial and racist attitudes towards slavery and marginalized Black people’s experiences within Quebec further, through objectifying the enslaved and euphemizing their enslavement. The comparisons and worldviews inherent that permitted the writing of *L’Esclavage au Canada Français*, have circulated within the academic, mediatic and educational spheres and can be traced to documentations published today. However, we also see that these narratives are shifting and being re-shaped through the efforts of still marginalized, racialized scholars, and public opinion makers.

⁶⁹⁶ “Groupe de travail sur le racisme : attention au racisme anti-qubécois,” *FQS* (blog), June 19, 2020, <http://quebecoisdesouche.info/groupe-de-travail-sur-le-racisme-attention-au-racisme-anti-quebecois/>.

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