

This pamphlet has been produced as part of a discussion group on the subject of **race treason**, happening in Minneapolis every Wednesday at 7PM. Discussions happen at The Landing Strip, which is located at 2614 30th Ave S.

This text will be the topic of discussion on **July 13th, 2022**.

More info can be found here: racetreason.noblogs.org

SEPARATING SEPARATISMS

LIAISONS

Secondly, there is the crucial fact that the fragmentary escapes the categories of colonial understanding, which can only comprehend it as savagery either to train or exterminate. Paradoxically, this implies an absence of operational distinctions specific to Western culture within the fragment. The fields and disciplines which are integral to Western culture, namely the political, cultural, and religious, seem impossible to dissociate in the fragmentary perspective—which is infinitely divisible by the effect of another fragment, and not of that which advances into a totalizing bloc. Hence the singular opacity yet thriving character of the fragment in the eyes of settlers. On this point, there is no doubt that the most powerful moments in recent political history, such as the separatist decolonization of the Front de libération du Québec with respect to Quebec, owed their vigor and strength of conviction to their surprising capacity to hold together revolutionary politics and counterculture in one experimental movement. In this period, when independence was achieved by the deed, it was understood that autonomy requires—at the very least—not to be disarticulated by external categories, and therefore not to respond to the language of the enemy.

Finally, if there is really a tradition that we will never cease to carry on this continent, it is perhaps precisely our lack of traditions specific to the territory. That is to say our properly *immigrant* character. Let us not forget that the latter is distinguished from the colonist precisely through its minoritarian and un-constituent character, by its own impropriety. But what would it mean to (re)take charge of our immigrant condition, the one that was once the lot of renegades fleeing the old continent infested with plague and famine? At the very least, this would imply inquiring once more about the uses and languages specific to this place, which would become foreign once again through our stay.

But above all, to assume our immigrant past could lead not to national appropriation but to a secret passage between indigeneity and exile. Because the continent, rediscovered by exiles, might very well approach the freshness that was always already felt by the first. Whereas the Indigenous people see themselves as sojourning in the territory, no less than exiles, beyond—or rather below—all property, at the root of indigeneity, there is perhaps no self-sufficiency but rather the constant need to renew the link, to keep contact. And thereby becoming-people, irreducibly minoritarian.

“History, in short, is what *separates us from ourselves*
and what we have to go through and beyond
in order to think what we are.”

—Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*

To launch this new venture, *Liaisons*, we propose to share a series of local hypotheses from a transnational, revolutionary perspective. It has been said of the global era that it has allowed us to see “the entire world in a fragment.” Every corner of the earth takes on an exemplary significance, which communicates a situated instantiation—and yet virtually universal—of the same world system. Even so, if the evolution of the system matters to us, it is less so for us to understand the system itself, but rather to understand what it seeks to attack. Ultimately, this enemy can only be explained by what it can’t keep from destroying in order to grow. Partisan research thus must start by collecting from the rubble of the ruins of history, the living—friend and revolutionary alike—who never cease to resist their own unmaking. This foreclosure forces us to confront the most monstrous entanglements in order to find who, exactly, are our historical friends. Let us hope that by trying to unravel the ones that ensnare Quebec, others may be inspired to attack their own “national” demons, knowing that it is there where the critical details are hidden.

The situation in our corner of the world is indissociable from its history, invisible and yet so present. Crucially, “our” territory was the theater of the inaugural conflict of modernity, in the catastrophic meeting of foreign worlds. It was this shock, and the ensuing genocide, that illuminated the Enlightenment, which has never ceased to infiltrate the crooks and crannies of the globe. The clash between indigeneity and immigration has ravaged every part of the world, which further fuels the fire of current populist tensions. But the form it took here—that of the colonized colonizer—has produced a discontinuity between two secession movements: Quebecois and Indigenous. It is from this disconnect, from its separation between different separatisms on the same territory, that we wish to explore.

I: COUNTERFEIT

In 2012, we were struck by a student strike of an unprecedented scale. It overtook all of Quebec and provoked splits in every sector—even dividing families. In that instant, our reality was both transfigured and took on a more real consistency: the territory seemed, for a rare moment, inhabited. Everything was happening as if it was reaching a threshold: mass demonstrations, riots, a state of emergency, casserole movements, repression.¹ Then in the end, elections.

Capitalizing on the ambivalence of the casserole movement—whose insurgent character was confounded with the desire for reconciliation—the Parti Québécois, a nationalist-independentist political party that was “neither left nor right” won the bet *in extremis*. The rule of the Parti Québécois was a pathetic display, a series of operations seeking to deploy social rifts around an entirely different polarity, and thus convert the popular anger into a national unity. It attempted to institute a “Charter of Values” focused on “secularism,” but clearly directed against cultural particularities (read: women wearing veils) and Canadian multiculturalism.

Despite the fact that this government did not last long—it was a brief pause of a year and a half in fifteen years of liberal rule—the effect of its ethnocultural repolarization with a republican-populist flavor continues to be felt to this day. The ascent of the intra- and extra-parliamentary xenophobic Far Right has not stopped, even as the memory of the strike has slowly been reduced to the charismatic figure of its principal student leader, who became a media star and soon after took the reins of a leftist, populist party inspired by Syriza and Podemos.

During the institutional reframing of the strike, we witnessed the systematic elimination of its eruptive and fragmentary character in order to transform the division into a new call for the unification of the People—be it the populism of the Far Right or of the left-wing media. The clearly grotesque nature of this outcome drove us to think through its historical basis. Along the way, Quebec was overwhelmed by the duration of the conflict, darkened by a profound instability that allowed us to see at what point the reaction

1. Inspired by the Chilean *cacerolazos*, hundreds of people took to the streets every day banging pots and pans in protest against police repression.

to track down all that escapes it in order to bind it to its never-ending technological growth. That is the defining aspect of liberal colonialism—British style, the only style, after all, that has really worked—to let the local powers go about their business as long as they continue to pay tribute to Empire. The fragment could not escape the reach of Empire, and thus remain a fragment, except by dividing itself at the slightest approach, showing still another side of the coin, twisting in on itself like a Möbius strip. The narrative of Quebec identity that considers the historical phenomenon of trappers—these fur traders who once deserted French colonies and disappeared into the woods to join in Native ways of life—as the proof of some privileged link between the French and Native populations often neglects to acknowledge that those who deserted would risk the death penalty if they returned to civilization. Only a faction can combine with another faction. Society, as a whole, is incorrigibly homogenous.

However, if we must admit a fragmentary character in the French colonization of the continent, it is contingent on the cowardly manner in which this colonization was conducted. As a mercantile settlement without any will to populate (contrary to New England), the first French-Canadians were extremely dispersed and vulnerable on the territory, which delayed the progression of homogenization for some time. This was true not only in their relationships with the Indigenous peoples, but among themselves. The first “inhabitants,” as they were called, did not speak the same imperial French that is familiar to us now, but Breton, Poitevin, Norman, and Occitan—without even taking into account the Irish, German, Finnish, and other peoples that immigrated to the new continent before disappearing into a single English-speaking bloc.

This fragmentary legacy highlights three things that we will outline in conclusion. First, there exists the eminently fragmentary character of orality, prior to the unification of language through print. This not only applies to spoken language, but also to the nature of story, which in the oral tradition is subjected to the contamination of contact and the fate of mistranslation. In written history—the Hegelian journey of the Spirit, at the end of which lies the synthetic horizon of the State and its New Man—there is a whole forest of spoken histories, event-based and situational chronicles, each time repeated, born anew.

In this case, everything seems to oppose Quebecois and Indigenous separatisms, except their common opposition to the British Crown. Historically, it was only for the sake of its collapse that they converged, if only periodically, centuries ago, at the cost of fratricidal wars with other Indigenous people. This is why the question of alliance is extremely delicate. More often than not, it amounts to the minority people only strengthening the ranks of the stronger element. The Two Row Wampum, created by the Iroquois in the seventeenth century, sought to delineate their relationship with white settlers. This beaded belt, setting a juridical precedent for the Iroquois, shows two parallel lines, which represent the respective rivers of two peoples, each standing in their own vessels: the Natives in their canoe and the settlers in their ship. Thus the alliance first and foremost requires the recognition of an unalterable heterogeneity: to be a shaman overnight—to play the sorcerer’s apprentice, in short, apart from one’s own cultural baggage—is no less colonialist than pressuring for development. We will have to find within our own boat that which will make it sink. For it could only be self-sabotage: the so-called “sovereignist” tendency, irresistibly inclined to unify itself into a self-identical homogenous society, is the worst enemy of its poor parent—the separation of a minoritarian people.

This means that the fault line even passes through the notion of autonomy itself, which can have either a constituent or destituent form. These are two respective ways of grasping the absence of a People, either trying to reach it by synthesis or subtraction. Here lies the crux of the problem of the Quebecois People, being a minority in Canada but a majority in its own right. In one gesture of declaring independence, in this case, it may simultaneously evade the oppressor, and (all the better, they will say) oppress its own minorities. We must believe that the separatist problem is eminently a question of scale. And thus it points to the logistical consistency of governance—the scope of power being in proportion to its technical capacity to reach the territories it intends to subjugate.

To the extent that colonialism is opposed to all tradition, tradition can only appear to us in a fragmentary state, not just in the sense of ruins doomed to wither if they are not revived by contact, but also in the sense that it holds divisibility as an essential characteristic. If the current tendency of capital seems to lean toward fragmentation, this can only be explained by its will

had deep “roots.” Once menaced, the semblance of order revealed itself as the crystallization of a precarious historical compromise.

This hypothesis put us on the path of the past, in search of the tragedy of which the farce of 2012 would have been just the repetition. In the first place, it seemed crucial for us to take a retrospective look at such prior conflicts on the territory, to better understand the conditions of possibility as much as the emergence of their containment. To consider, in other words, how “the call to the people,” a corollary of all mass mobilization, may allow a minoritarian people as well as a majoritarian People to occupy the terrain. Which underground communication made it possible for the plebeian energy of the 2012 strike to be so rapidly captured and reconverted into nationalist familialist resentment? This question is clearly not unique to Quebec and could equally address what happened in the aborted revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, or Turkey.

Just as the populist mobilization had disguised the plebeian demobilization during the strike, the order that had preceded it had once been based on the camouflage and sealing of past conflicts, crystallized in social and institutional forms, but which were also equally cultural, psychological, and economic. Thus, to think through the longer-term story is also to think through the eternal return of its *counterfeiting*: both a triumphant falsification and plebeian counter-use. This is what we started doing with the Anarchives Collective, dedicated to exploring the forgotten archives of the revolutionary movement in Quebec. In excavating these ruins, which have received little attention, we have been surprised by the traces of an almost unknown legacy: a network of insurrectionary autonomy whose momentum had been thwarted by nothing short of a large-scale military intervention. This history had not been passed on to our generation except in the form of a cautionary tale, declared “terrorist” by the state to cover with the veil of tragedy the ways through which this past still speaks to us. We have discovered that there were many more affinities with our desires and forms of life than we could have suspected. In short: we were not alone, not on this territory, nor in this history.

Since 2013, through the Anarchives Collective, as well as a few public exhibitions and discussions, we have tried to continue that which the strike started—bringing a latent ungovernability into contact with its

past forms—by reaching the spectral outlines of a plane of revolutionary consistency in Quebec. We have grasped this history, which they have taken to calling “separatism,” as fragmentary remnants, which we must excavate through a work of anarcheology, to clear the many strata that make up our present situation.

If we approach the question of nationalism here, it is because it stands irreparably in front of us as soon as we address the relationship between history and territory. Often unbeknownst to their very creators, revolutionary situations are always accompanied by a counter-history punctuated by eruptive events—a counter-time—whose continued existence is incarnated in forms of adherence to territories—traditions—as so many ways to make use of and to inhabit it. Territory is not simply a place circumscribed by borders, even symbolic ones, but carries a plurality of ways to inhabit a given geo-biological assemblage. Emanating from the territory, these ways of inhabiting maintain a spectral presence, a retrievable one. Thus, any counter-history is, from the outset, counter-geography. But if the official history tends to spatialize time by folding in on a chronological timeline, the practice of counter-history—the anarchivistic—is an attempt at the temporalization of space, in order to restore it to the possible ways of inhabiting it. It acts, in sum, by extricating a counter-historical time, a time of *tradition*.

Opposite the study of these small territorialities stands—in a homogeneous bloc—the occupation and then the development that we call “colonial,” to which the narrative of the winners pays homage. Within this bloc, particularism and universalism—trying to threaten us with their infernal alternative—become the guarantors of each other, bound to each other’s becoming where everything is done to prevent the fragmentary secession of imaginaries and practices singular to a place.

II: PLANE OF CONSISTENCY, 1970

In the collections of comrades’ archives from times past, we have discovered a genuine plane of consistency, a network at the same time dense and diffuse, that from 1963 to 1970 was spread throughout the territory to the point that separatism was no longer a national question, but an existential one. For a brief yet dazzling moment, the program of the separation of the province of Quebec from the Canadian federation

rare examples of an adherence between spoken word and territory, of which they are the symbolic and sonic expression. Some Mohawk traditionalists say that their language tunes to the telluric frequency of the territory from which it originates, echoing its plants, animals, and uses at the specific resonance of a given geographical constitution.

Could it be that the structure of Indigenous languages themselves contain something that resists the colonial matrix?⁴ This would explain both the colonizers’ relentless effort to exterminate these languages that are unfit for trade, as well as their astonishing survival five hundred years after contact. The practice and memory of these languages has become essential not just for cultural transmission and the history of a people, but also as a real support for the match between a mode of life and a vision of the world—a shared truth.

On the other hand, the fact that colonization and the operationalization of language is still ongoing even within our own Indo-European languages allows us to believe that they might carry something else, something like a mode of living that resists—a nomadic language inhabiting the perpetual movement of the verb. We would have to break open our language from within (using as much etymology as poetry) to see how Indo-European languages could only have become colonial through the force of a long history of struggles crystallized in language. This still leaves its traces in even the smallest of our statements.

V: JUNCTION

It is up to us to distinguish this originally animist “accursed share” presumed at the basis of any culture, and that which is a part of the colonizer mentality, in the sense of a perceptive structure able to project an abstract space-time and extract an isolated noun to which it can fix its infrastructures.

4. An inquiry would be needed on the role of tonal and verbal languages, largely present in the Indigenous world and in which intonation plays a determining role in meaning, which marks the recalcitrance of these worlds to colonization. The agglutinant or polysynthetic character of these languages suggests that a non-ownership conception of territory could be carried within their structure, which presents a surprising absence of subjects as much as objects. These are replaced by a potentially infinite agglutination of adjunctions, prefixes, and suffixes, which situate the expressed reality in relation to a series of symbolic orders: temporality, localization, gender (often much more numerous than the two sexes), position of locution, etc. Thus, these languages might well conjure the possibility of landing on a substantive noun having full ownership over itself: they would discern their object by its contours, a game of mirrors and cross-references where narration identifies the living reality.

Against the tradition of contact—against all tradition—particular to a territory, colonialism had to substitute an empty and abstract space to make place for the infrastructures that would take the place of traditions once held in the flesh. This relegation of contact to infrastructures would tend toward an inexorable monopoly, which continues to be pursued today through those infrastructures that we fallaciously call “virtual.” By forcibly changing relations—which then become “social”—to make themselves the go-betweens, the infrastructures and facilities obstructed the possibility of contact in favor of this inextricable entanglement of optimization that we call technology. Evidently, the maintenance of this system of interdependencies presupposed and required the constitution of a state to ensure its functioning. In this way, contact turns out to be more separatist than infrastructure, insofar as it immediately and entirely carries in its smallest fragments the entirety of a culture.

This phenomenon is the logistical setback of the materialism applied by Benedict Anderson in his reading of the emergence of modern nationalism (*Imagined Communities*). If Anderson reveals the determining role of print capitalism—first and foremost the daily newspapers—in the constitution of the homogenous time and language through which a national entity can be imagined, his focus on the field of representation leads him to underestimate the infra-symbolic material conditions that allow it to unfold. Newspapers, which inculcate the feeling of a quotidian continuity in a given cultural unit, would be nothing without the roads—and eventually the trucks—that distribute them to the four corners of the “imagined” nation.

Benedict Anderson’s analysis—which attributes the imagination of the nation primarily to the unification of language brought about by mass printing—allows us to pinpoint what, in separatism, “makes a difference.” In effect, in indigeneity, it is not only because of the extrinsic links between the different dialects, whose contact only increases their heterogeneity by creating Creoles and Pidgins, but also the internal articulation of languages that creates the possibility of a “nation.” The encounters between Europeans and Native Americans is so recent that Native languages have been able to keep their structure relatively safe from colonial syntaxes. In spite of modern attempts to annihilate their use of their own languages by educating Native children in colonial residential schools, the vestiges of these languages offer

came to mean the separation of the “Quebecois People” from itself, revealing the *separatist* line of fracture within families, workplaces, etc. This break, which traversed the entire province, brought to light a multitude of existences and territories linked by a *de facto* independence: a collective autonomy inextricably material, ideological, and cultural, that diffusely grouped everything that differed from national unity to integrate a transversal alliance of movements of workers, students, and counterculture. The *nation* referred less to the entire population than to taking part in the separatist party. As writer Malcolm Reid states in his book *The Shouting Signpainters*: “A nation called Quebec was emerging from the snack bars of the east end of Montreal where it had been trapped under the name French-Canada. It was painting slogans on the walls, bombing federal buildings and monuments, flowing into the street . . .”

Since its formation in 1963, the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ) fought for national independence, mobilizing by any means necessary to that effect. In 1969, bombs exploded across the territory every two weeks—including at the Montreal stock exchange, in the mailboxes of rich anglophone neighborhoods, in a factory on lockout, or at an armory. The decentralized structure of the FLQ made it a particularly difficult target for the police to pin down. Its multiple cells, which seldom knew each other, each had their own broadcasting outlets—as many as ten distinct publications, addressing themselves to students, workers or the unemployed.

In 1970, after an extremely tense year in Montreal, where the power of the revolutionary movement had led the liberal government to ban assemblies (using laws of emergency in many ways similar to those used in 2012), the FLQ launched an operation aimed at expanding outside the metropolis to the distant regions of Quebec. In order to connect to embryonic struggles in different parts of the territory, FLQ cells opened a series of spaces across the province, strategically situated on the road taken by vacationers in the summertime. Some of these places, like the Maison du Pêcheur on the Gaspesian coastline or the Ferme du Petit Québec Libre in the Eastern Townships—initially established by the Free Jazz Ensemble of Quebec, whose musical experimentations colored political ones—attracted hordes of young people to issues of counterculture as well as activists in the area, and provoked aggressive confrontations with local bigwigs. The proliferation

of these gathering points augmented the potential to form a movement by providing a series of zones of open condensation.

In the summer of 1970, having extended its decentralized network from Montreal to the whole province, and benefiting from considerable support from the general population despite its violent tactics, the network of the FLQ and its allies gave the authorities serious cause for concern. This was especially true since its conception of independence did not involve the idea of constituting a state—and hence, any possibility of political negotiation—but rather obtaining independence promptly and through action, instantiated through a network of communes, armed groups, and popular committees. Moreover, this network was tuned into struggles on an international level, through its alliances with the National Liberation Front in Algeria (where the FLQ had an “embassy”), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Black Panther Party and various groups of the American New Left, in a unique confluence where the most ardent nationalists turned out to be the most significant internationalists. It was at that moment that the concept of a “nation” became more of a call for genuine experimentation than an institutional demand.

In September 1970, following a hot summer throughout the province, the Liberation cell of the FLQ kidnapped the British diplomat James Richard Cross, demanding the liberation of their political prisoners in exchange for his release. The FLQ followed the example of their Palestinian comrades—with whom many of their members had trained—choosing kidnapping as a strategy for mounting tension. Faced with the authorities’ refusal to negotiate, the FLQ’s Chénier cell doubled the stakes by kidnapping the minister of labor, Pierre Laporte, known for his links with the mafia and his crackdowns against the labor movement. In response, on October 16, 1970, the Canadian government, directed by Pierre Elliott Trudeau (the father of current prime minister Justin Trudeau), decreed the War Measures Act, instituting a state of emergency suspending civil rights and sending the Canadian army into the streets of Quebec. Some five hundred arrests and warrantless searches of the extreme separatist Left were made. Within weeks, this vast shock operation succeeded in criminalizing all the militant organizations—even locking up union leaders—and scaring away their partisans, provoking a demoralization of the revolutionary movement.

bodies having traveled—through an effort hardly imaginable to us—up to “their” territory. As a result, the relationships found themselves to be highly exposed, in all of their vulnerability, as well as—if we are to think in terms of power relations—their violence.

Our hypothesis is that the reason for this necessity of contact in a nomadic-animist regime, which makes Native separatism an ungovernable tradition in the eyes of the imperial powers, lies in its self-destituent nature. The art of proximities, as a situation-oriented ethics, is a mode of non-government characterized by the material impossibility of a concentration of prestige beyond a certain threshold that would enable it to reach subjugated subjects. This is the nature of what Pierre Clastres calls the “continual effort to prevent chiefs from being chiefs, it is the refusal of unification, the endeavor to exorcise the One, the State” (*Society Against the State*). Here, there are no more subjects than there are objects, but one purely subtractive multiplicity (Deleuze’s “n – 1”), where decisions (under the traditional horizontal systems pillaged by American democracy) *take the time they need*.

This idea is crucial in order to grasp the intrinsic difference between destituent separatism and constituent sovereigntism. In a “materialist” perspective—in a sense much broader than Marxism understands it—the constitution of a mode of government capable of projecting and imposing its operations on distant peoples must be understood through the material means by which it spreads and enforces itself. If relations, within the mode of non-government proper to a time of tradition, are held in the flesh, the governmental regime of colonial time must *disincarnate* them. Which is to say, turn them into inert matter, disanimate them. Animism, however, does not know any “matter” as a separate category: matter is always already there, living and shaped in a way that is inseparable throughout all relations—familial, ritual, political, or hunting. The first colonists, who landed on Turtle Island imbued with a scholastic-intellectual tradition, had only such inanimate matter on their minds, most of their thought struggling to distinguish it from the soul. Thus, from the outset, they searched for that which they could develop on this continent, an attitude that only intensified over time, while 95 percent of Americas’ Indigenous population was annihilated. Only then could the romantics mistake a cemetery for a “wilderness” (William M. Denevan, *The Pristine Myth: The Landscape of the Americas in 1492*).

It is necessary to take the full measure of what differentiates this nomadic conception of territory, defined by usage without claims to property, from modern nationalism, on which Quebecois nationalism is dependent, as well as much of anticolonialism (through Marxism). In the absence of borders—and against those who traverse numerous communities in their hearts (provoking daily conflicts between the border guards and the traditionalists who refuse colonial passports), the nomadic mode of impropriety involves an intensive dose of circulation. It is only through perpetual movement beyond one’s “plot of land” that nomadism can hope to attain an exhaustive understanding of the interdependence of natural processes in their smallest ramifications, an intelligence whose spiritual counterpart is animism, and whose political consequence is the rejection of development.

Nothing could be further from progressivism, obviously. Yet it is not any more conservative than progressive, since this nomadic conception by definition is in constant movement. For in the absence of movement, all that is solid melts into air: the trail of hunting tracks would be lost, the animals would not offer themselves anymore, the connections with other peoples would be poisoned, and isolation would lead to entropy. Songs and stories would soon be lost if a continual remembrance, a migration of thought in the mode of transmission, did not constantly call them back to memory. So goes the movement of tradition, which is forgotten as soon as it loses contact with the other to bring the self back to its original otherness. Such a practice, lost to some, will return to them through others, who will lose it in turn if the first ones do not come to remind them. This is because nomadism is the quintessential form-of-life of contact, which revives tradition at the point of touch: the time of tradition is carried in the flesh.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, if the nomad is the “one who does not depart” (*A Thousand Plateaus*), the tradition’s necessity for contact is far from confining beings to their immediate environment: on Turtle Island, the fluxes were considerably distended, at the level of the river network that supplies most of the continent, from the Yukon to the Mississippi. But the fact is that despite the distance, these relations passed inevitably through touch. For example, the presence of Cherokee culture (from the southeastern United States) among the Potawatomi (based at the south of the Great Lakes) would not have occurred without the movement of real

The three letters FLQ soon became nothing more than a foil that History strove to reduce to a few political hotheads to cover up the vast array of those silenced by the state of emergency. October 1970 broke the alliance that was constructed among heterogeneous forms. The most striking example is the rupture that took place between the Far Left and the counterculture, the former of which later took the form of a rigid Marxism-Leninism, and the latter of which was characterized by a return to the land and a mystic new-age delirium.

III: AMPHIBOLOGY

Some forty years later, the hateful nationalist capture of the 2012 strike replayed this drama that formerly tore apart the independentist movement of Quebec. At the heart of the dispute was the Parti Québécois, a strange object that was both the culmination and the failure of a long maturation of the separatist movement in the 1960s. Between its foundation in 1968, when it was eager to exclude left-wing revolutionaries, and 1976, when it came to power, the Parti Québécois managed to capture the independentist forces and set itself up as a point of reference to replace revolutionary networks with its five-year plan of accession to constitutional independence. After handing over the independentist struggle to the state, which would “solve” the national question by developing infrastructures and Quebecois identity with language protection laws, the Parti Québécois progressively fell back on its old xenophobic foundations.

This nationalization of separatism ensured that all protests would therefore come up against post-Catholic familialism as the main form of Quebecois populism. Entirely extinguished by the institutional forces of the Parti Québécois, the nationalist movement gradually abdicated all willingness to address the question of autonomy except through the lens of incorporated economic independence or state independence acquired by means of a referendum—both attempts in 1980 and in 1995 were major failures. And as independence became a simple demographic-electoral question, everything that the separatist movement was able to put in place, in terms of capacities to immediately carry out independence, was relegated to the dustbin of history.

In the long story of Quebecois nationalism, this failure has been meta-bolized in the form of resentment against foreigners; within the referendum framework in which nationalism was compromised, the growing number of new arrivals to Quebec could not signify anything but the loss of a future independence referendum. The words of Quebec Premier Jacques Parizeau on the night of defeat in 1995, laying blame on “the money and the ethnic vote,” created the xenophobic monster that has taken root in the historical depths of Quebecois nationalism, obviated in the decolonial detour of the 1960s only to return to the clerical-nationalism popular in the 1930s.

For that reason, if it is a question of measuring this failure—by the concerted effort of police repression and recuperation by referendum—it is advisable to make an additional inquiry into the archeology of struggle, in order to see how the division of what the FLQ was holding together was rooted in an older division, at the very origin of the modern movement for sovereignty. In the case of Quebec—except Montreal in certain regards—this modern movement dates back only as far as the beginning of the 1960s to what is called the Quiet Revolution, when the liberal party repatriated from within the state what was once under the purview of the clergy—first and foremost the education system. Before this secularization, Quebec paid the price of its defeat to its British occupiers, sinking into a long cultural lethargy, falling back on its Catholic faith, openly hostile to Protestant industrial development, but obviously submitting to British authorities. Feudal and ultramontane ideologies of *terroir*² that were promoted by the clergy then confined French-Canadians to powerlessly break their backs on their meager plots of land, banning any subversive literature, all to maintain an aggressively natalist politics to quickly populate a number of remote regions from land clearing committed by colonizers. From its infancy, in the post-war years, separatism had to position itself as breaking equally from the Canadian state and the institutions of the Great Darkness, which kept the Quebecois in a pusillanimous and stifling “colonized mentality.”³

2. Particularly in the century between the 1840s and 1940s, *terroir* designated a specific set of values promoted in Lower Canada’s literature, emphasizing a rural lifestyle centered on land, family, language, and religion.

3. The Great Darkness was a period of Quebec’s political history marked by patronage and corruption, during the conservative reign of Quebec Premier Maurice Duplessis from 1936 to 1939 and from 1944 to 1959.

the earth, such that the exclusive right to make decisions that concern terrestrial life are reserved for women, men playing the protective role of the sun.

First of all, among the Iroquois, matrilineality means that the man, once married, must move to the family of his spouse and all their children belong to this maternal home through the clan system—which constitutes just another level of separation. Based on the maternal house, the clan indicates family belonging through animal spirits: turtle, bear, and wolf being the three main clan families in several northern nations. These animal figures carry not only a symbolic line of descent, but a veritable *ethos*, implemented by the traditional systems of government as a specific responsibility vis-à-vis their communities. Accordingly, the bears have the tendency to be in charge of provisions, where the wolves have a penchant for politics. But the most interesting is without doubt the fashion in which the clans, beyond their filiation and exogamous function, intersect not only the communities themselves, but also linguistic families. Thus an Anishinaabe beaver is bound by a spiritual affinity with an Iroquois of the same sub-clan, bypassing their national, cultural, and genetic belonging: ethical affinity supplants ethnicity.

As we see it, far from a modern conception associating territoriality with community confinement, the essentially fragmentary character of the Indigenous conception of “a people” is associated with a large capacity for mobility. Just as the gendered polarization is not necessarily associated with sex, territorial belonging is not limited to lineage. Very much to the contrary, the way in which Indigenous peoples name themselves overcomes the genetic divide, moving it to the level of their traditional mode of living, which embraces the specific uses of a given territory, in all its shapes and forms. To the generic name of “veritable human beings” (*Onkwehonwe* in Mohawk, *Anishinaabe* in Algonquin, etc.) follows a definition linking them to the soil: the Mohawks are “those of the land of flint,” as the Senecas are “those of the big hill,” the Oneidas “those of the standing stone.” Thus the people does not just designate the territorial fraction of a generic species, of which indeed only the white men—these souls without bodies—are excluded. At this point, and from this perspective, it can no longer be a question of “Nation,” a concept that emerges from *birth*. The blood-right is invalidated by the earth (mother), to which human beings belong.

society. Vast and numerous territories, extending far beyond densely populated zones, drawing a completely different geography made up of reserves, hunting grounds, and contested zones, whose consistency—unlike national territory—is fiercely heterogeneous.

Not only are there a good dozen Indigenous “nations” that cut across “Quebecois” territory, but these nations break down into more than fifty communities, each having its own dialect and habits and customs. Moreover, these communities often find themselves separated into a number of different factions, at least in part because of the effect of colonial blackmail. The coexistence of traditional structures of governance and state-imposed band councils as its unique agent and interlocutor form the matrix of this Indigenous factionalism, further complicated by the historical stratification of multiple forms of cultural and religious reconciliation. In the Mohawk reserve of Kahnawà:ke, for instance, one counts no less than four longhouses (traditional community centers) for a population of less than ten thousand inhabitants, some following the Iroquois Kaianerekowa (The Great Law of Peace), others the code of Handsome Lake marked by Quaker influence—and this doesn’t even include the Christian churches and the official Band Council. Decidedly, separatist multiplicity—a double-edged sword—is inseparable from Indigenous culture.

This, at least, tells us the history of the American continent, which one can reread as a single push to impose a homogenous conception of territory and government on Indigenous populations that are resolutely fragmented and, subsequently, ungovernable. Few historians today dare to affirm the validity of any of the treaties formerly passed between the heavily armed colonial forces and a handful of so-called “chiefs” who were handpicked and awarded the title on the spot.

There could be no central government on the territory of most of the northern pre-Colombian Indigenous peoples for the simple reason that the territory was conceived of as anything but a kingdom, on account of an impossibility that was as much logistical as symbolic (the two going together). From one end of the continent to another—on Turtle Island—one phrase continues to ring true: “the earth does not belong to us, we belong to the earth.” Some add: “as we belong to our mother,” the feminine principle having, in the territory of a matrilineal people, an intrinsic connection with

In this regard, it proved that separatism must first and foremost separate from its own society.

In the mid-sixties, the deadly yoke of the closed off French-Canadian finally gave way to the decolonial wave that shook the imperial world order. Eager for new platforms in a country untouched by counterculture, a group of young intellectuals and artists founded the magazine *Parti Pris* in 1963. The historical interest of this magazine is that it recognized not only its political and economic affinity with colonized peoples from Cuba to Vietnam, but also its psychological and spiritual affinity. This solidarity with colonized peoples led *Parti Pris* to understand their people as a “minoritarian society” who “never had a history: the history of others replaced it” (Paul Chamberland, *De domination à la liberté*).

Yet, if it was the impetus of the Quiet Revolution, *Parti Pris* failed to carry its own separatism to full realization, still haunted—like a good portion of other decolonialists of the epoch, Frantz Fanon included—by certain humanist-universalist reflexes, where a minority can only be realized and fully flourish by acceding to the majority. Thus, even if *Parti Pris* critiqued the impossibility of the colonized to understand themselves as separate from “the existence of its correlate, the majority”—that is to say the colonizer—whose project was described as “the building of a society founded on the suppression of a minority,” this didn’t stop *Parti Pris*, in turn, from enjoining the colonized to “the suppression of their minority status,” toward the resolution of their contradictory being in order to reach the fullness of a majoritarian People.

As for the “socialist” character of the independentist project, it came to mean nothing more than a potentially infinite process of socialization, that is to say a perpetual extension of the state’s reach, aimed at the cultural homogenization of a conquered territory. As a result, the critique made by *Parti Pris* against reactionary French-Canadian institutions gradually turned into a simple call for their modernization. Instead of becoming the so-called “Cuba of the North,” we have found ourselves as merely the American Norway.

In the early seventies, the deployment of latent industrial capacities in Quebec *converted separatism into sovereignty*, at once getting rid of all its fragmentary character. Thus the exploitation of resources, the

establishment of distribution networks, and the construction of dams and highways materially embodied the national imaginary, providing the founding image of its national identity: the heroic tale of the brave Quebecois people taming the forces of nature to appropriate its powers and develop its infrastructures. Quebecois nationalism, after all, ended up acceding to the “majority”—by way of the great path of territorial appropriation and logistical-institutional majority.

But what was deployed in concrete and steel across the territory took hold *in place* of the separatist plane of consistency: energy independence, nationalized under the slogan “Masters in our own home!” After the October Crisis of 1970, in search of construction projects that could put the youth to work to take them away from the dangerous “negativity of unemployment,” the Quebec government launched the most extensive hydroelectricity project in its history: the James Bay Project. As with each crisis in the history of Quebec, the counterinsurgency strategy compensated with further advances in the backcountry. As it was growing up, the Quebecois People gave itself the right to expropriate the Indigenous inhabitants of the territory, justifying their colonial advances as having “much to catch up on” compared to other modern nations. The victimized rhetoric of nationalism thus served to silence the existence of other peoples. In opposing the pillaging of their ancestral lands through judicial contestations or physical blockades, the Native people, in turn, came to put the brakes on the great deployment of the Quebecois nation.

IV: SEPARATING SEPARATION

In the summer of 1990, Quebec lived through another big traumatic uprising of a character that nationalists have neglected to take into account in the whole period of glory of their Quebecois nationalism. When a golf course in the village of Oka, a suburb of Montreal, planned an extension into the neighboring pine forest of Kanehsatake, in Kanien’kehá:ka territory, the Mohawks reacted strongly by blocking the main road linking their reserve to the French-Canadian village of Oka. In solidarity, the community of Kahnawà:ke, another Mohawk reserve in the area, blocked a bridge that led to the Island of Montreal and that passed through their territory. In the

shootout that ensued, a police officer was found dead. The police retreated in panic, and their vehicles were set on fire and piled on the barricades.

Thus the Canadian Army took the place of the police, as is often the case in conflicts with Indigenous populations in America (Wounded Knee in 1973, Gustafsen Lake in 1995, etc). Faced with *Natives*, no half-measures: the foreign and impenetrable character of their resistance forces the colonial society to treat them as a foreign nation, which could not be overcome by a simple police operation. In this case, the Oka Crisis saw the Canadian Army encircle the Mohawk barricades with tanks, mortars, machine guns, and helicopters, until their adversary, at the end of their food supplies, was exhausted.

Now, in the surrounding Quebecois society, this crisis of almost three months would be the scene of a strong reaction of suburbanites, who responded to the blockade of the Mercier Bridge by staging racist riots, burning the effigies of Native people, and assaulting Mohawk families who took flight during the conflict with stones. These demonstrations of racial hatred, encouraged by certain “patriotic” media outlets, revealed to what point Quebecois society is keen on well-functioning infrastructure. Under the slogans “Masters of our own home!” (which had first served the nationalization of electricity) and “Quebec for the Quebecois,” Quebecois nationalism in this way turned into anti-Indigenous reaction, assuming—as far as possible from separatism—the point of view of a majority society bent on suppressing all dispute.

If the course of the history of revolutionary independentism ruptured in October 1970, it was in 1990, during the Oka Crisis, that the parentheses definitively closed. Confronted with an internal separatism, the Quebecois people reacted with a violent tension, accompanied by outpourings of racist rage and cheers for the police and the army. The Quebecois minority, finding a constant in the history of anticolonial nationalisms, inept in its language and profoundly lulled by feelings of victimization, transformed all the more easily into a mass of hatred and resentment when faced with another difference that challenged its hard-won national unity.

On the anarchivistic level, the study of the Oka Crisis has brought us to explore the existence, within the province of Quebec, of territories that already have a *de facto* autonomous existence, separate from the majoritarian