Whose values, who's valued? Race and racialization in Québec¹

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Abstract: The first week of February 2014 saw the tragic deaths of two young people in Québec: Naïma Rharouity, a Muslim woman and mother of two who died following an accident in a metro station and Alain Magloire, a Black man and father of two killed by the Montreal police. Muslim women and Black men are racialized within Québec society in significantly different ways from one another, in life as in death. This article analyzes the reactions to and representations of these two deaths in the specific context of Québec and how they fit into heavily racialized scripts. A Muslim woman is strangled to death when an escalator catches her clothing; her hijab is blamed, making her a victim of her culture and dead because of the scarf she wore on her head. A Black man holding a hammer outside a metro station is deemed as so dangerous, violent, and threatening by armed police officers that he is shot dead. Both were victimized but also blamed for their untimely deaths. The challenges these stories pose disrupt assumptions and demand alternative narratives about racialized bodies. This article reveals the different processes of racialization of Muslim women and Black men, and argues that exposing the internal logic of this comparison promotes critical understanding of the ways in which racialized scripts shape and influence our lives. This further highlights ways to work towards building stronger solidarities to resist and challenge narratives that demand tragic endings for racialized bodies.

¹ In this article, we use the settler-colonial terms common today to refer to the Indigenous lands collectively known by many original peoples as Turtle Island; when referencing nations and national ideas therefore we use the words Québec, Canada, the United States, and North America.

Keywords: racialization, comparative racialization, police violence, Québec, Charter of Values, Alain Magloire, Naïma Rharouity

Introduction

During one of the coldest weeks in winter 2014, two tragic deaths took place in Montreal, Québec's largest city. On Thursday, January 30th, a Muslim woman—Naïma Rharouity—died accidentally when her clothes became entangled in the escalator as she entered the Fabre metro station in the city's north end. Then on Monday, February 3rd, a Black man named Alain Magloire was murdered by the SPVM (City of Montreal Police Service) outside of another metro station, near the city's main bus terminal. Both Magloire and Rharouity were in their 40s, both were parents of two children, and both were racialized by Montreal, Québec, and Canadian societies. This article analyzes reactions to and representations of these two very different deaths published by mainstream news outlets in order to draw out some of the ways in which processes of racialization in Québec operate and are operationalized.

Our analysis looks at how Rharouity's deadly accident and the shooting of Magloire by police were rapidly taken up in public discourse in ways that cast them into pre-existing scripts that racialize and deracialize them. In both cases, these processes of racialization are informed by gender, religion/culture, mental health status, and immigration histories. A Muslim woman is reported to be strangled to death on an escalator, her hijab is blamed, making her a victim of her culture, oppressed—and in the end, dead—allegedly because of this particular kind of scarf; a Black man holding a hammer in the middle of the day outside the bus station of a major Canadian city is deemed so dangerous, violent, and threatening to a group of armed police officers that they hit him with a police cruiser and then shoot him dead. In different, yet overlapping and mutually constitutive ways, both Rharouity and Magloire were cast as victims while also implicitly blamed for their untimely deaths.

Québec Contexts and Comparative Racialization

In this article we juxtapose narratives surrounding the deaths of Naïma Rharouity and Alain Magloire to reveal and examine how public discourse functions in the racialization of Muslim women and Black men. Processes of racialization are always simultaneously gendered and enacted in relation to one another; Muslim men and Black women are also

scripted into racializing discourses, as are Indigenous peoples and other racialized groups beyond the scope of this discussion. Moreover, the categories of “Muslim” and “Black” are not distinct, separate, or mutually exclusive. While recognizing the layered identifications, experiences, and constructions of people who identify and/or are identified as Black Muslims, we analyze discourse surrounding Rharouity’s death here to call particular attention to the ways in which Islam itself, or “Muslimness,” is racialized, particularly for hijab-wearing women. This means that whether or not a Muslim woman identifies and /or is racially coded as Black, brown, white, or otherwise, the hijab itself functions as a racial and racializing signifier.

Differences in the reporting of the Rharouity and Magloire deaths reveal how racism and processes of racialization targeting different groups in Québec should be understood as relational and mutually constitutive, rather than parallel or competing. We argue that the value attributed to different groups and people through processes of racialization is not always explicit. We therefore follow Lisa Marie Cacho’s (2012) proposal to work comparatively in order to center “relational, contingent, and conditional processes of devaluation,” in order to examine the ways in which “valorization, devaluation and revaluation...work interdependently to reify value and relations of inequality as normative, natural, and obvious” (p. 17). We show how articles published in the local and national press about Rharouity’s and Magloire’s deaths demonstrate how each is racialized and devalued, deracialized and re-valued, through predetermined scripts intended to make them legible within the so-called secular and intercultural socio-political contexts of Québec.

Our analysis demonstrates how public discourses both reflect and reinforce racialized ruling relations of neoliberal capitalism.² We emphasize the specificities of the Québec context in the winter of 2013-2014, particularly the links between Bill 60 (informally referred to as the Charter of Québec Values) and the ongoing colonial shoring up of state power. We situate our reading of how different forms of racialization are mutually constitutive alongside recent scholarly work that examines antiracist and anticolonial efforts on Turtle Island in relation to one another, as one shared struggle (Amadahy & Lawrence, 2009; Patel, 2012; Patel, Moussa, & Upadhyay, 2015; Thobani, 2007). Our analysis thus highlights how settler colonialism and neoliberal capitalism continue to rely on racial categorization that is only attainable by one group through devaluing another Other (Cacho, 2012; Hong & Ferguson, 2011). Finally, the particular cases of Rharouity and Magloire speak to how racialization is never strictly about

² “Ruling relations” refers to the complex of activities through which social life under capitalism is organized into spheres, professions and institutions, and mediated across various sites through particular texts and discourses (Smith, 2005).

“race” as a fixed category of identity. As Black and other critical feminists have long theorized, it is intersecting, interlocking relations of class, race, and gender that uphold the current patriarchal, white hegemonic, colonial capitalist system (Bakan & Dua, 2014; Crenshaw, 1991; Hill Collins, 2009; Taylor, 2017).

The “Charter of Values”: Racism and Racialization in a Divided Society

The middle of winter is almost always cold in Montreal, but the political and social climate in 2014 had already significantly chilled by the fall announcement and aggressive promotion of the “Charter of Québec Values” or, as it was officially named, the “Charter affirming the values of state secularism and religious neutrality as well as the equality between women and men, and providing a framework for accommodation requests.” The Charter proposed to ban “ostentatious religious symbols” for all public employees at work (“Bill n°60,” 2013). It was denounced publically by many in Québec for its racist framing and inevitably racist impact, particularly in how it would disproportionately affect Muslim women who wear the hijab. Supporters of the proposed legislation widely understood it as inspired by similar French laws and many invoked republican values in the defence of what was promoted as a move towards a more “secular” Québec.³ While critics and scholars pointed out how this invocation of France often was more ideational than historically accurate (Côté & Mathieu, 2016; Meunier, 2016), the connection to France was powerfully resonant in a nationalistic campaign that emphasized a binary opposition between “secularism” and “religion,” and used its anti-religion stance as a means of mobilizing barely coded anti-immigrant, and specifically anti-Muslim, rhetoric. Subsequent scholarly work has critiqued the Charter and discourses around it from a number of angles, including for its implicit and explicit racism (e.g., Bakali, 2016; Mugabo, 2016; Nadeau & Helly, 2016).

Situated in the aftermath of the student movement of the so-called 2012 *Printemps érable* (Maple spring) in Québec, debates surrounding the Charter garnered a great deal of attention. There was significant protest and mobilization against the Charter in Montreal by Muslim groups, but also by a range of activists, academics, and community organizations. For example, a coalition called “Together Against the Xenophobic Charter” issued a community declaration signed by 27 groups and organized demonstrations opposing it. The student movement had exposed the public-at-large to spectacles of state violence directed at those who

³ For an overview of these debates, see Chapters 14-17 in Meunier, 2016.

took to the streets day and night for months to fight the Liberal government's tuition hikes.⁴ While participants were divided on whether or not the unseating of the Liberal Party and election of the Parti Québécois represented a victory for that movement, young people in particular were politically engaged and increasingly aware of a shared neoliberal agenda across political parties. The deaths of Rharouity and Magloire took place within a context of not only state-sponsored anti-Muslim sentiment and hostility, but also increased police surveillance and violence. Austerity measures also threatened education, healthcare, and other social services—sectors directly impacted by the Charter.

Racialization does not function the same in all times and places, or for all groups. While both Black men and Muslim women may be referred to as “racialized” within a society that positions whiteness—and in particular white men—as the universal norm, this does not have the same meaning or effects for both groups. Both may be understood against a dominant culture that casts them as essentially Other; however the processes by which they are valued and devalued racially within Québec, as elsewhere, works differently.

The racialization of people of African ancestry as “Black” in North America is deeply tied to colonialism and the transatlantic slave economy. Between the 17th and 19th centuries, dispossessed and dislocated Africans were taken from their homelands and brought to Turtle Island to provide slave labour for the settler colonial project of eliminating Indigenous peoples from the land. French and English settlers in what became Canada benefited enormously from commodifying and claiming land, trading and exploiting the labour of slaves, and dealing in a range of merchandise produced on plantations in the American South and Caribbean. The ongoing settler colonial nation-building project thus continually dispossesses Indigenous peoples, while perpetuating a pervasive anti-Black racism that situates Black people in Canada as perpetual outsiders (Coulthard, 2014; Day, 2015; McKittrick, 2007; Simpson, 2014; Walcott, 2011; Walcott, 2014).

The movement of people across the border constructed between the United States and Canada has also shaped the construction of racial difference as part of nation building. The border is inherently colonial, without regard for pre-existing Indigenous territories and patterns of migration (Simpson, 2014). Immigration and citizenship laws have been and continue to be used to institutionalize and normalize racialized patterns of restriction and

⁴ ‘Printemps érable’ makes a phonetic word play on, ‘Printemps arabe’ (Arab Spring), referring to the uprisings of the previous year, and suggesting Québécois young people's increasing awareness of and identification with resistance movements around the globe elsewhere. On the limits of this “sonic solidarity” see Hampton and Hartman (2017). Racialized student activists played an important part in the Québec movement, making critical links between neoliberalism, state violence and everyday experiences of racialized communities while critiquing the ways in which race and racism impacted the movement itself. See Hampton (2012); Palacios, Hampton, Ferrer, et al. (2013); and Ferrer, Hussain, Lee, and Palacios (2014).

privilege, inclusion and exclusion (Cacho, 2012; Walia, 2013; Walker, 2012). The border has aided in constructing Canada as normatively white, both conceptually through imagining slavery, racism, and Black presence overall as “American problems”; and materially through controlling Black and other racialized people’s entry from the United States into Canada (Miles, 2015; Miles & Holland, 2006; Smith, 2003).

The ways in which Blackness is racialized are linked to but distinct from the racialization of Islam. As noted above, these two forms of racialization are always gendered, and can and do co-exist for those who are racialized as Black and as Muslim. The hijab has come to operate within North America as a racializing and racialized symbol (Al-Saji, 2010; Naber, 2000), hence our emphasis on understanding how the Muslim head covering in and of itself is racially coded in Canada—similar to how various physical characteristics (skin colour and hair texture, for example) are taken as visible markers of Blackness. As Nadine Naber (2000) has shown, the hijab came to be coded as a “non-white” symbol as part of the “racialization of religion,” a process through which Christianity became “white” in North America. The racialization of religion in this way is deeply linked to historical processes that insisted on a distinction between Arab Christians and Arab Muslims when determining racial belonging in the United States for the purpose of citizenship under the racial prerequisite laws (Gualtieri, 2009; Morsy, 1994; Naber, 2000). In Canada today, Muslims *as Muslims* are racialized as non-white; at the same time, they are rarely imagined or identified as Black. Racialization is always a reductive process, hence simultaneous processes of racialization often exclude the complexity of multiple, relational identities. Consequently, even when phenotypically they might be dark-skinned or trace their origins in the African continent, Muslims are not imagined to inhabit both categorizations, Black and Muslim, and are forced into one or the other category (Abdul Khabeer, 2017; Mendes, 2011; Mugabo, 2016).

To understand the complexities of the racialization of people as “Muslim” and “Black” in the Québec and local Montreal contexts where Alain Magloire and Naïma Rharouity lived and died, we must also situate their stories in relation to two competing yet entangled colonial discourses. These discourses sustain the pervasive myth of the English and French as Canada’s two founding nations that obscures recognition of the historic and ongoing violent practices of settler colonialism (Haque, 2012; Thobani, 2007). Consequently, unpacking racism in Québec requires working through the ways in which political battles for colonial supremacy are enacted through these discourses, which are often framed as “language debates.” In Québec especially, the denial of racism is primarily enacted through overdetermined battles over French language rights, part of a strong history of (an always

assumed white) Québécois struggle against the English—and in more nuanced critiques, the French elite—for “their” province.

As the period of the Charter shows, maintaining the discussion of race as politically taboo in Québec and Canadian societies while racist policy and practice by politicians and political groups continues apace can be politically effective. The construction of the dominant social-political struggle as that between English and French within Québec, as well as between (presumed French-speaking) Québec and the (presumed English-speaking) rest of Canada reinforces the denial of colonialism by obscuring the fact that Indigenous peoples are the original peoples of this land. The reduction of the transnational slave economy to plantation slavery in the American South serves this historical erasure well and has been instrumental in constructing myths of Canadian whiteness, innocence, and benevolence. Finally, assumptions about Canada’s benevolence and welcoming nature inform narratives of “good” immigrants and refugees—newcomers who follow the rules, seek assimilation, are grateful, and recognize “they are lucky” to be here. This group is constructed in contrast with “bad” or “illegal” migrants who are assumed to threaten the stability of the nation, who do not share Canadian/Québec values, do not express gratitude, and/ or who seek to “take advantage” of Canadian/Québécois resources and generosity.

Québécois nationalism and whiteness. Contemporary nationalism in Québec has been shaped by a history of social-economic domination by British/English Canada, under which the French Québécois were not always considered white (Cornellier, 2017; Vallières, 1969). As Corrie Scott (2015) demonstrates, the French were racialized in many of the same ways associated with contemporary racism: described as lazy, backwards, ignorant, uncivilized, and insufficiently driven to make money. It was only following the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s that the Québécois became what was popularly referred to as “*maîtres chez nous*” (masters of our own house), with “access to white privilege and the everyday unearned institutional and material advantages of being white” (Scott, 2015, p. 14). Indeed it was the Québécois achievement of “whiteness” in this way that shifted the rhetoric regarding the French and English “races” to that of a language debate and matters of white European cultural difference (Haque, 2012; Scott, 2015).

Another way that Québec nationalism has secured its claim to whiteness is by defining a policy of “interculturalism.” Designed to mirror Québec’s claim to be a society distinct within Canada, interculturalism was defined by its founding theorists as distinct from official Canadian multiculturalism. As Québécois sociologist Gérard Bouchard (2011) explains, while multiculturalism promotes the idea of many “ethnocultural groups placed on equal footing,”

interculturalism conceives of and manages diversity as “a relationship between minorities from a recent or distant period of immigration, and a cultural majority that could be described as *foundational*” (p. 442, emphasis in original). Despite these distinctions, as hampton (2016) argues elsewhere, both policies “are aimed at managing ‘cultural’ difference—particularly that of immigrant newcomers and racialized Others—without disrupting the dominant Québec/Canadian status quo” (p.65; see also Fleras, 2012). It is thus important to recognize the specifics of the interculturalism model—especially that it defines some groups as foundational, and others as required to assimilate in relation to them—while remembering that both interculturalism and multiculturalism prioritize the interests of ongoing competing colonial nationalisms in how they relate to ethno-racial Others. Recognizing this definition of difference as a matter of “culture” is crucial in the analysis of the racialization of Muslim women and of the hijab, as demonstrated in the first case study explored below.

Naïma Rharouity

Montreal’s bitter winter cold is particularly relevant to the story of Naïma Rharouity’s death, because of the scarf (“foulard”), which rapidly became its focus. The media coverage of Rharouity’s death also reflects the chilly social climate for Muslims in Québec, who at the time were increasingly shut out of how the Parti Québécois and its supporters were defining notions of belonging within the province. This anti-Muslim sentiment was very much bolstered by the mobilization of colonial nostalgia, part and parcel of a neoliberal agenda also stimulating renewed anti-Black racism (“Black community,” 2012), as well as accelerated attacks on Indigenous peoples and sovereignty (Lakoff, 2013; Mann, 2014). Public statements betraying open hatred for Muslims were frequent in Québec during the fall of 2013 and early 2014 (Riley, 2013; Riley, 2014). The reported incidences of anti-Muslim racism, and in particular those directed at women wearing hijabs, “surged” according to both the Montreal Council of Muslims and the Québec Coalition against Islamophobia (“Augmentation de l’islamophobie,” 2013). Within the context of ensuring Québec’s place at the neoliberal winners table Indigenous, immigrant, and other racialized communities are only as useful as the Indigenous land and resources that can be taken from them and the exploitable labour they can provide.

This chilling, racist climate towards Muslims shaped and informed the reaction to and aftermath of Rharouity’s tragic death at the bottom of the escalator stairs. As the media latched on to the story on January 30th, 2014 and diffused it intensively in the following days,

rather than the loss of a young woman's life connected to safety and security issues in the metro system, the focus was on the furor over her scarf. What *kind* of scarf was she wearing (on a day when the temperature was well below zero)? Was she indeed “strangled by a hijab” as the *Journal de Montréal* headline put it? Or had it been, as commentator Julien Day (2014) joked with bitter irony, a “foulard pure laine [‘dyed-in the wool’/purebred scarf]”?⁵

Racialized Scripts for Muslim Women: Culturalization of Violence

As noted above, the role of the scarf—headscarf, veil, or hijab—is central to the racialization of Muslim women in North America. Muslim women's head coverings, as has been shown again and again, are used symbolically to stand in for “culture” and for “oppression” more generally, and often have been a focus for white feminists who assume the quest of liberating their Muslim “sisters” (Abu Lughod, 2013). “Culture,” in turn, is used as a catchall term that can reference race without addressing racism and the politics of racialization. What Naber (2000) calls the “racialization of religion” is operative here, wherein symbols of religion are used to mark and code difference onto Muslim women's bodies. Interlocking relations of gender, ethnicity, and religion thus construct Muslim women as Other—“visible minorities” in the language of the state—and as victims of their (different, inferior) culture (Razack 2007; Thobani, 2007). When Muslim women experience domestic violence, for example, it is often explained through supposed cultural norms and values, as Dana Olwan (2013) has shown in her analysis of so-called “honour crimes.” The use of culture as the primary explanatory device for violence in Muslim communities in Canada posits “Muslim culture” as inherently violent—enacted by always already dangerous, violent Muslim men and passive, victimized Muslim women—a script so prevalent today as to be almost a cliché (Jiwani, 2006; Patel, 2012). Hence, though Rharouity's death is due to an escalator accident, the idea of a Muslim woman being killed by her culture is the favoured narrative from the onset of the press coverage, exemplified in the *Journal de Montréal's* sensationalist headline, “Strangled by her hijab” (Deland, 2014).

Once the suggestion is made that Naïma Rharouity was strangled by not just any scarf, but by her hijab as a metonym for her culture, this narrative remains at the forefront. References to Rharouity's hijab linger in the public discourse, even after police and coroner's reports challenge their veracity (“La mort de Naima [sic] Rharouity,” 2014). Her death is associated with her headscarf—the most powerful signifier for Islam in Québec amidst the

⁵ “Pure laine Québécois/e” is a common expression used to refer to those assumed to be of “pure” French Canadian ancestry.

contentious debates regarding the Charter. Sensationalist right-wing pundit Ezra Levant links her death to “honour crime,” in provocative statements released the same week, but later removed from the now defunct Sun News network’s website. Azeezah Kanji cites him as having said at the time, “‘When I hear a woman wearing a veil is killed...my horror reflexes are 'Oh my God, is this an honour killing?’” (Kanji, 2014). Ultimately Muslim “culture” (including religion) and “cultural communities” are posited as the “place” where violent Muslim men and victimized Muslim women are produced and nurtured. Culture thus becomes viewed as a site of what Cacho (2012) calls “spatial disablement,” promoting tendencies (constructed as non-normative and threatening to “real” [read: white] Canadians) to which racialized people are predisposed by ancestry. In other words, the assumption that Rharouity’s accident was caused by her hijab resonates because it functions as a signifier of both culture-as-race (her assumed nature) and culture-as-space (where her assumed natural impulses are nurtured and activated). Once her hijab is proven to have been irrelevant to her accident, however, the discourse surrounding Rharouity makes her publicly mournable through dislocating her from the space of her culture and locating and relatively valuing her as a “good” immigrant newcomer in Québec.

Post-mortem claims to Naïma Rharouity’s humanity invoke in particular the intersection between her gender and role as a “good immigrant.” She is not simply a “Muslim,” but a “Muslim woman” and a mother; a “model” immigrant in Québec; it is repeatedly reported that she is French-speaking and from Morocco, and that “she wanted to integrate” (“Naima [sic] Rharouity,” 2014). Further examining these narratives below, we show how they are mobilized to reinforce and uphold white hegemony and the settler colonial social organization of Québec and Canada. We provide examples of three specific and related aspects of the reporting of this case: 1. The overtly racist commentary published in some of the French-language news and social media; 2. The insistence on the importance and role of the hijab in her death; and 3. A condemnation of Québec racism, largely in English-language media, that relies on liberal universalism to ascribe value to Rharouity and her life.

1. Killed by her culture. The most virulently racist reactions to Naïma Rharouity’s death appeared in French-language news and social media, beginning with the *Journal de Montréal* provocatively claiming that she was “strangled by her hijab.” Over the day of the accident, the media frenzy around her scarf and “what kind of scarf it was” increased. In the following days, many French-language websites, Facebook, and Tumblr pages, blogs, and

media outlets disseminated racially charged commentary about Rharouity's hijab and Muslim identity, while others denounced these reactions.

The depth and detail of racist commentary need not be repeated here; it is archived on the Tumblr, *Le chercheur masqué* under the title "Story of a scarf" (Charlebois, 2014). This blogger documented early comments posted on the Facebook pages of major French-language media outlets in Québec reporting on this story (Huffington Post, TVA Nouvelles, and le Journal de Montréal), highlighting how "professional" journalism and social commentary overlap and interact in shaping public discourse. Charlebois (2014) notes that many of the most egregious comments were deleted by moderators of the Facebook pages, and that while the comments he records represent a statistical minority of those posted, they are by no means anomalies—they are numerous, easy to find and completely uninhibited.

The rhetoric Charlebois captures clearly blames Rharouity's death on her being a Muslim woman. She is patronized as a victim of her culture:

It's very sad what has happened, but on the other hand if she did not have the hijab she would be alive. This re-launches the debate. If she was married and it was her husband who forced her to wear it, then it is he who is culpable [for her death] in my eyes.

(Charlebois, 2014)

She is dismissed as disposable and her culture/religion is criminalized and ridiculed: "One less veil"; "One less terrorist in Montreal"; "Where was Allah?" Repeatedly, her death is posited as inevitable due to her culture, underscoring the inadmissibility of Muslim women in Québec and broader Canadian society: "It's a shame for this woman, but she had a hijab and now we see why we do not want the hijab in Canada"; "Another excellent reason to ban the veil!!! Too dangerous in Canada!! In their country it's okay, they have camels, but here we have metros!"⁶

A number of people reacted to stories that blamed the accident on Rharouity's hijab and the subsequent explosion of racist commentary with "shame." One example is Marieve Ruel's (2014) passionate, if somewhat overwrought, letter published in *Le Devoir*. Firmly denouncing Islamophobic racism, this letter insists on remembering Rharouity as a woman who died in a tragic accident. However, Ruel's rhetoric continually draws upon tropes of Québec nationalist belonging in ways that further highlight the Othering and racialization of Rharouity in her death. In her repeated use of the words "we" and "us" ("nous")—as in "Today, we lacked humanity"—Ruel underlines that Rharouity, like other Muslims in Québec who might be mourning her and are certainly affected by, rather than perpetrators of,

⁶ We have translated the comments cited here into English. All were originally written in French and are among those documented in screen shots available on Charlebois's Tumblr.

anti-Muslim racism, are not a part of this collective “we.” Denouncing “us” (nous) as “vicious” (vicieux), she leaves no space for Muslims to be part of the “we, the Québécois.” There were also other, more substantive French-language critiques such as Julien Day’s (2014) sardonically sharp and accurate takedown of racist commentators in the magazine *Voir*, Samir Ben’s deconstruction of the xenophobia in reactions on his wordpress blog (lemontrealdz.wordpress.com); and Rima Elkouri’s (2014) op-ed in *La Presse* which tied the rumour regarding the role of Rharouity’s hijab and reporting of it directly to the Charter. Excluding Muslims from the “we,” reaffirms their Otherness and inability to obtain full membership in the collective society. This is done in conjunction with denouncing interpersonal racism, thus preserving the liberal white Québécois and Canadian self-concept as “good” and humane, while detracting attention from the racialized inequity that continues to structure Québec and Canadian societies. Rharouity and her Muslim brothers and sisters can join Québec society as desirable “new immigrants” only insofar as they can be de-racialized and incorporated into the periphery of a Québécois settler society.

2. A stubborn insistence on the hijab. The second major trend in the French-language coverage of Rharouity’s death is the insistence on the significance of her hijab, even in stories that do not blame it for her death or that acknowledge it was not the cause of her accident. In the English-language reporting, on the other hand, most mentions of the hijab appear in the context of denouncing racism and/or Islamophobia. In several cases the Anglophone news media remark critically on the coverage of the story by the French press as part of their reporting of the incident, as discussed below. At first glance, this noticeable difference might seem to lend credence to the claims of *National Post* writer Ethan Cox (2014) that there is something Québec-specific and politically motivated about the racism of French-language news media. We analyze and critique the English-language reports below, and in doing so emphasize that the racialization processes Rharouity undergoes in the various English and French media are co-constitutive, part of the historical and ongoing settler nationalisms in Québec and Canada, and scripted onto the social-political battleground of the Parti Québécois’ proposed Charter.

The role of the police as a state institution in relation to that of the media takes a prominent position in the reporting published on the day following the accident. Independent journalist Judith Lussier (2014) asserts it was actually the police who started the rumour that Rharouity’s hijab had caused the accident. Lussier claims that her former colleague Maxime Deland, who “broke” the story for the *Journal de Montréal*, overheard a conversation “to the effect that the woman had strangled herself with her hijab,” which he later confirmed with

another police source before going to press. Concerned with defending Deland's reputation, Lussier points the finger at the police who did not state that the hijab was responsible but also did not explicitly deny that this was the case in a misguided attempt, she imagines, to "protect" the public from the "ordinary racism" that the story generated. *La Presse* invokes the authority of the police in order to suggest a link between Rharouity's identity as a Muslim and her death: "The police confirmed that the victim was wearing a hijab, but would not confirm whether this was actually the piece of clothing that got stuck in the escalator" ("L'identité de la femme," 2014). *Le Devoir* similarly invokes the police, noting that they "did not contradict" the inflammatory media reports, and highlighting these reports themselves as part of its story ("Fin tragique," 2014).

Several days later, Radio-Canada remains faithful to this style of reporting, invoking the initial police response in its opening line, even after the police consistently had clearly refuted it: "The theory of strangulation by scarf, initially invoked by the police, remains a possibility" ("La mort de Naima [sic] Rharouity," 2014). Reading these reports together, the French-language press as an institution can be seen as closing ranks and redirecting negative attention to the police, while remaining stubbornly bound to the premises of the racial script assigned to Rharouity in their reporting.

Rharouity's hijab is attributed so much social-political meaning in Québec that whether or not it had anything to do with her accident—and the coroner's report affirmed it did *not*—it was the presumed signifier of Rharouity's identity and cause of her death. The conflation of the person with the clothing she wears is a crucial feature in the racialization of religion in the case of Islam (Al-Saji, 2006; Naber, 2000). Therefore, even as this particular scarf is so thoroughly vilified, debated, and discussed, it is never dismissed. As one writer put it at the time of the coroner's report more than eight months after her death:

Never has a bit of cloth been so *famous* as the one on that infamous January 31st. We needed to know. That she had died had become secondary for some people. The veil replaced the human being. The debate went so much further. It went far beyond what it should have. That what was so frightening about it. (Ghaya, 2014)

While the initial *Journal de Montréal* headline was heavily critiqued, mainstream media outlets like *Le Devoir* and Radio-Canada kept less openly racist interpretations—subtly laden with racialized significance—of what had happened alive. Explicit racism and more nuanced racial Othering work in tandem to naturalize racial categories and processes of racialization. Hence, in the final section about Rharouity, we turn our attention to how the English-language media reporting drew on and enacted processes of racialization through

liberal narratives of integration and universality that not only lack explicitly racist tones of some of the French language reporting, but that are assumed to be *antiracist*.

3. Motherhood, “integration,” and liberal values. In the discussion of Naïma Rharouity’s death thus far, we have identified some differences in English- and French-language reporting. In some ways they are different, but we argue that they are mutually constitutive, as part of colonial discourses of racialization. It is not simply that French-language media’s overreaction to this story is more racist or that francophone politicians were more willing to instrumentalize this story about a hijab for political purposes at a time of division and discord in Québec. In order to understand how processes of racialization work and contribute to racism, it is crucial to further unpack the dominant narratives of the English-language reporting, which rely on a liberal humanist ideology, claiming to value all lives in a universalist frame. These reactions value Rharouity through her shared humanity, claiming her as a human-even-if-Muslim by highlighting her role as a “good mother” and a model immigrant who “wanted to integrate” into Québec society.

The liberal premise that all people should be treated “as humans” is very much the dominant discourse of English-language media in Canada, and it is challenging to unpack because of the subtler ways in which racialization works within it. Central to the racialization of Muslim women is to mark them as inherently oppressed by, submissive to, and defined by religion and culture. Because of this specific form of racialization, one of the ways to demonstrate the value of a Muslim woman’s life can be to appeal to universal humanity. Post-mortem constructions of Naïma’s Rharouity’s identity are framed in this way by her surviving family members and others who claim her life as valuable. For example, a relative responding to the hateful comments in the comments to news articles, says, “A person who is dead is a human being, whether Muslim or not, a human being. How can people say stuff like that?” (“Hurt runs deep,” 2014). In an interview with *Global News* Sama Al-Obaidy, a Muslim woman who just weeks prior had been subjected to a racist attack in the metro in which another woman tried to forcefully remove her hijab (“Hijab-wearing woman,” 2014), asserts that “At the end of the day, we all have the same values and we all have the respect for human life” (Lau, 2014).

The problem with the constant invocation of Rharouity’s humanity is that proponents of this narrative assume particular liberal norms and values as universal. Here gender, religion, and/or culture must be invoked in very particular ways that reinforce the racialization of religion and the hegemonic social discourses around it. Rharouity must be constructed as a

“good mother” and a “good immigrant”, as exemplified in the *Gazette* report wherein her brother is quoted as saying,

She wanted to be a part of Québec society, to thrive in a democracy where she could give her family a better life. And she had a lot to offer, she was an educated woman with a university degree and a great work ethic. (Curtis, 2014b)

Appealing to dominant Québec political discourses, her brother tells us that Rharouity volunteered at a centre helping other immigrants, and “took French classes even though she already spoke French. She wanted to learn how to speak it just like the Québécois, that’s the kind of person she was” (Curtis, 2014a). He speaks against some stereotypes of Muslim women—as passive, uneducated, and backwards—and in so doing reinforces the notion that immigrant belonging is circumscribed by respectability within certain social boundaries.

In order for this woman’s life to matter, her specificity as a Muslim woman, an immigrant, a Moroccan woman, a Québécoise woman of Moroccan origin, and so on, must be filtered through racialized discourses of belonging (Razack, Thobani, & Smith, 2010; Thobani, 2007). These discourses are at times explicitly racist and posit Muslim women’s very existence at odds with that of the “pure” Québécois. Her belonging is predicated on her having modeled herself in accordance with the dominant norms and values of white Québec. At the same time, as family members plea for the recognition of Rharouity’s human and social value, they refuse suggestions that her death as a Muslim woman was inevitable: “I can’t accept this happened to her” states her brother, “It doesn’t matter if it’s a Québécois, an immigrant, or a homeless person. It’s unacceptable that this happened” (Curtis, 2014a).

We now turn to the circumstances and reporting surrounding the death of Alain Magloire. As we show, some of the same racial schemes that appear in the Rharouity case are mobilized in the post-mortem construction of his identity as well. As a Black man killed by police, Magloire is initially constructed as a dangerous aggressor, a construct that works both in relation and in contrast to the script assigned Rharouity as the victimized Muslim woman. Following his death, Magloire is also racialized and deracialized in the media as his family and friends seek to revalue him through appealing to normalized and normalizing liberal middle-class notions of “respectable citizens.”

Alain Magloire

Just as the reporting on Rharouity's escalator accident was fading from the headlines, the story of another tragic death was beginning to unfold on the morning of February 3rd, 2014. Alain Magloire was confronted by four SPVM officers on a downtown street following a conflict with staff members at a nearby hostel where, on January 31st, Magloire had rented a room for five nights. The fifth police officer on the scene, Denis Côté, arrived to find three of his fellow officers "had their guns drawn and were ready to shoot," so he decided to "improvise" and drove his car into Magloire "to try to neutralize him and hopefully prevent his colleagues from having to use lethal force" (Wilton, 2015c). After Magloire jumped to avoid the full impact and rolled over the hood of the car, Constable Mathieu Brassard fired four shots into his chest and killed him. In the days, weeks, and months following this shooting, Magloire's killing became something of a *cause célèbre*, particularly in relation to mental illness and homelessness in Montreal. Left unaddressed in the construction of Alain Magloire's identity following his murder by police is the question of race. The narrative of who Magloire was shifts from that of an aggressive, homeless man in his 40s who was "known to police," and who had been wielding a hammer and breaking windows; to that of a victim of a mental illness that resulted in the tragic ending of his life.

"A human being in distress": Narratives of Racialization and Deracialization

The glaring omission in the discourse around the killing of Magloire is the colour of his skin. That is, how was Magloire perceived and treated by the police—as well as others—*because* he was a Black man? Only a handful of reports identify him as a "Black man" or as having "dark skin," although the initial description of Magloire that police received described him as "very big, with dark skin and wearing an eye patch" (Santerre, 2014). Indeed, he was a big man; standing six feet, six inches "he could not go unnoticed" (Cameron & Santerre, 2014). Black men are often assumed to be dangerous and are disproportionately subjected to police harassment and violence in Montreal, as in Canada more broadly (Austin, 2013; Maynard, 2017). How did Magloire's body—how it looked, what it represented—impact the ways in which police perceived him?

Montreal-based activist Alexandre Popovic (2015) stands out as a critical exception to the general silence around the issue of Magloire's perceived race. In the conclusion of his report on the Magloire case, Popovic calls attention to the complete lack of empathy demonstrated by the officers intervening with Magloire on the morning of February 3rd. Drawing a comparison to a similar case months earlier—Donald Ménard on November 11th,

2013—in which police had attempted to deescalate the situation and reassure the man in crisis even after he had assaulted an officer, Popovic asks why the officers made no similar efforts with Magloire. He asserts that “fear of the Black man” may have played a role: “They did not see a human being in distress in front of them, but a threat they needed to quickly control” (Popovic, 2015, p. 38).

Testimonies given by the police who were at the scene confirm this perception of Magloire and are consistent with narratives by other white police officers attempting to justify the unnecessary killing of Black men. The police officer who shot Magloire, Officer Brassard, testifies that it had been “a question of life and death” (Muisse, 2015; Wilton, 2015c); that Magloire had been “in attack mode” and that “his eyes showed a lot of anger” (Muisse, 2015). Jeanne Bruneau, a police officer of 18 months at the time of the incident, testifies that she “feared for her life” and had been “ready to shoot” during the incident (Wilton, 2015a). Denis Côté, the 31-year veteran officer commended for his attempt to “defuse the situation,” did so by driving his police cruiser into Magloire (Rocha, 2015a). After Magloire had been shot four times in the chest, Côté and another officer found it appropriate to handcuff him “to ensure he was no longer a danger” before “assessing Magloire’s injuries” and removing the handcuffs to attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation (Wilton, 2015c).

At least two witnesses to the shooting contradict police claims that Magloire posed a threat to the lives of the officers on the scene (Rocha, 2015b; Santerre, 2014). One witness reports feeling that Magloire was in the process of trying to get away and did not charge at the police (Santerre, 2014). Video footage from surveillance cameras released months later seems to confirm this (“Alain Magloire’s last minutes,” 2014). Magloire is shown walking up the street carrying his backpack, and then as officers approach and close in on him, he removes his backpack and places it off to the side. He then turns towards the officers as they form a semicircle around him, three of them with their guns drawn. The hammer in his hand is not raised as Magloire walks towards the police and they back away from him and into the street. Magloire’s attention then turns to two approaching police cars, one of which runs into him.

The national identity of Canada, as constructed in contrast to the United States, tends to be imagined as non-violent and therefore racial violence—and, in particular, anti-Black racism—is seen as an American issue irrelevant to the Québec and Canadian contexts. However, the police accounts, contradicting witness reports, and video footage of the moments before the killing of Magloire are consistent with other narratives surrounding police killings of Black men in recent years, both in Canada and in the United States. In the same year of Magloire and Rharouity’s deaths, for example, the police murders of Black men and boys such as Mike Brown, Tamir Rice, Laquan Macdonald, John Crawford, and Eric Garner

in the United States received huge media attention, leading to a massive growth in the Movement for Black Lives. Important differences between these contexts—such as the greater access to guns and frequency of gun violence in the United States compared to Canada (“America’s gun culture,” 2018)—tend to overshadow their similarities.

Across borders, conceptions of Muslim women as oppressed victims of culture and of Black men as aggressive, dangerous victimizers are constructed in relation to one another and shape the perceived identities and stories told about these groups of people. Moreover, part of the power of this racialization process is in its self-perpetuating logic, as evidenced in ongoing and renewed efforts to monitor and control the movement of communities deemed to require state surveillance and disciplining those communities in order to keep them under control (Spence, 2012; Walcott, 2014). As Rharouity’s accident is taken as evidence of the necessity of the Charter and need to control the mobility of Islam, the killing of Magloire is constructed as a story about a Black man who was itinerant, and not where he was “supposed” to be. In Canada as in the United States, the police are the frontline institution tasked with monitoring and preventing such movement. Racial profiling by the police in Montreal, particularly against Black men, is so well established—including by an *internal* study of the SPVM in 2010 (Chung, 2010)—that since 2011 police chief Marc Parent has had to publicly acknowledge the problem on more than one occasion (“Freddie James’s racial profiling complaint,” 2015; Leclair, 2013; see also “Montreal racial profiling,” 2014; Nelson, 2014). The number of complaints of racial profiling made to the Québec Human Rights Commission increased “by 52.1% between the fiscal years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013” (Leclair, 2013).

A powerful analysis of racialization and police violence by scholar and poet Fred Moten speaks to the relations we seek to highlight. In the wake of the police killing of unarmed Black teenager Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in the United States, Moten argues that rather than attempting to kill the individual person Mike Brown, Officer Darren Wilson was shooting at “insurgent Black life walking down the street ...in a way that he understood implicitly constituted a threat to the order that he represents and has sworn to protect” (Kelley & Moten, 2014, 5:38). As Moten highlights, Black bodies are understood as dangerous and perceived as inherently threatening, all the more so when they are in motion. Magloire was not where it was assumed he should be—in the “care” of the state or with a family member—but on the street, in motion, insurgent, and in these ways, self-governing. Following his death (which renders him immobile), attempts to regain Magloire’s humanity, complexity, and social value are done only through the erasure of his racialized identity as a Black man.

1. De-racialized re-valuation as “the perfect victim.” The public discourse surrounding the killing of Magloire reveals a failure to engage race as an issue, as if by an unspoken collective decision—as if it is “common sense” that racism, and Magloire’s racialization as a Black man, played no role in his killing; as if his big, renegade Black body did not trigger deeply internalized stereotypes about Black men in the police officers who confronted him. As we discuss below, “race-blind common sense” (Razack, Thobani, & Smith, 2010) has powerful resonance in Québec and Canada more broadly, reinforcing white social imaginaries and national identities, while making no sense—common or otherwise—to Black people who are made well aware of their racialization.

The deviance and criminality embedded within the racialization of Black men means that in order for Magloire’s life to be valued after his death, his “Blackness” had to be withdrawn from the public discourse. As Cacho (2012) argues, it is possible to ascribe “(readily recognizable) value to the racially devalued” (p. 148, parentheses in original) through explicitly or implicitly disavowing relationships to categories of deviance and non-normativity. This argument resonates strongly as value is assigned to Magloire’s life post-mortem, as in the case of Rharouity, through foregrounding aspects of his life commonly accepted as indicators of a “good citizen.” However, Magloire’s worth is more difficult to recuperate—he was Black, considered homeless, used drugs, and suffered from mental illness. In order to assign him value, then, Magloire’s personhood must be retrieved from the “production and naturalization of race, criminality and irrationality as co-constitutive” and tightly bound together (Cacho, 2012, p. 64). In detracting from Magloire’s racial identity and homelessness, liberal ideology can cast his condition of mental illness as sympathetic—as something that can happen to “good” members of the collective “we.” This involves distancing Magloire from familiar notions about violent Black men killed by police. This is likely made more achievable in this case because Magloire’s brother Pierre, the spokesperson for the family, appears to be white. Even more significant perhaps, Magloire’s father is identified as René Magloire, a high profile attorney, political advisor, and former Minister of Justice and Public Security in Haiti. René Magloire’s social-political status in both Québec and Haiti troubles the dismissal of his son as the imagined Black man who gets killed by police. For example, a formal public notice of sympathy for René Magloire and his family issued on February 6th by the Haitian Minister of Justice and Public Security, describes Alain as a “young academic,” who was “just as talented as his father” (Ministère de la Justice, 2014).

Within days of the fatal shooting of Magloire, his mental illness—rather than police violence—effectively becomes the perceived cause of his death and the main focus of

reporting on the case. Magloire's illness is described as a "small bomb" that "exploded in his head" one day (M-C. Gagnon, 2014) and questions are posed about if and how he could have "been saved" had he received better health care (K. Gagnon, 2014). Magloire was the fourth person in mental health distress—the third of whom was considered homeless—killed by Montreal police since 2011 (Allard, 2015; Corriveau, 2014). Matthew Pearce, chief executive officer of a local homeless shelter where Magloire had previously resided argues that the shooting of Magloire is "a health services matter" and that "our healthcare system needs to be scrutinized as much as the police" (Muisse, 2014). Leading up to the 2015 coroner's inquest, Pearce explicitly states that Magloire's death was the result of his not receiving the mental health treatment he required and notably, calls for a shift in attention away from the issue of Magloire's homelessness and towards "the fact that being mentally ill causes homelessness" (Kelly, 2015; see also Muise, 2014; "No charges," 2013). Such comments, layered atop of the other indicators of normalized value and paired with assertions that "mental illness resides in most families" (Kelly, 2015), resituate Magloire and what happened to him in relation to the collective "us/ we," thus increasing the potential to generate public concern and support for those who live with mental illness and programs addressing their needs.

This story takes place within broader contexts of the Québec government's neoliberal economic policies, including spending cuts and the increasing privatization of health and social services. In order for the public conversation about Magloire's death to be denaturalized and mobilized in this context to effectively call for better services, he is required to serve as "the perfect victim." As one friend of Magloire notes, "You couldn't find a better guy. What happened to him was an injustice. He changed people's lives when he was with us and now that he's gone, maybe he can change society" (Curtis, 2014c). For Magloire to "change society" he has to be re-imagined as potentially part of Québec society. Hence, family and friends depict Magloire as a "good citizen"—an intelligent, good natured, athletic, and charming person from an accomplished, supportive family; a homeowner, a husband, and the father of two daughters; someone who had worked with disabled children and had a Master's degree in molecular biology ("Brother of Montreal shooting victim," 2014; Curtis, 2014c; "Homme abattu," 2014; Ministère de la Justice, 2014; Muise, 2014; "Police shooting," 2014). According to this narrative, Magloire was rendered incapable of maintaining his normative role in society by mental illness—something that could happen to any of "us." This revalorization of Magloire studiously avoids mention of race. This is what we mean by the revaluation of people through their deracialization once they are dead—and thus immobilized and no longer a "threat." Similarly to how Rharouity's life is valued through universalism,

erasing her hijab and her Muslim “cultural difference,” Magloire must not be seen as Black in order for his life to find meaning in this context.

For mental illness to be treated as a social issue, it has to be seen as both an illness that can afflict anyone, as well as an illness one cannot be found at fault for having. It is this tension between the “us/we” as being sympathetic and concerned about the other and our own potential vulnerability that we draw attention to here. In much of the discourse surrounding the killing of Magloire, it is a normative, benevolent “we” that is separate from but concerned about those one writer describes as “the walking wounded left to wander our streets” (Curran, 2014). To become socially grievable, Magloire has to be distanced from racialized masculinity (Cacho, 2012) and re-imagined as a respectable, generally law-abiding citizen—“not a career criminal” (Curran, 2014)—whose mental illness caused him to step outside of normative society and thus eventually, inevitably, come into conflict with the police. Magloire’s Blackness remains in the subtext of this script, assumed to have predisposed him to this set of circumstances. Hence Magloire’s father and others who knew him must insist that he was not violent (Cameron & Santerre, 2014; “Police shooting,” 2014), and to emphasize that he had been carrying a hammer and other tools on the morning of his death because he was doing volunteer construction work at a nearby homeless shelter (Curtis, 2014c).

Magloire’s death thus becomes a rallying point from which to renew calls for improved access to mental health services, better police training (and technology) for dealing with the homeless and people in mental health crisis, and for a civilian agency to oversee investigations into police killings (Curtis, 2014c; “Police shooting,” 2014). The shooting is investigated by the Sûreté du Québec (the provincial police force of Québec), and based on their report the Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions announces in September 2014 that none of the officers involved will face criminal charges related to Magloire’s death. A coroner’s inquest is called and held from January to March 2015, to “examine the question of how emergency interventions are handled involving people suspected of having mental health problems” (“Inquest into police shooting,” 2015). Within this context Magloire’s brother Pierre states in an interview with CBC News that he does “not necessarily believe the officers acted in bad faith” when they shot and killed his brother. He affirms that the police in this case must have perceived Alain Magloire as a threat and calls for police to receive “proper training to deal with individuals who are mentally ill.” (“Alain Magloire’s brother,” 2014)

That Magloire suffered from mental illness was used to construct him as the “perfect,” faultless victim. However, as a relative of Magloire’s suggested and we also argue here, what made Magloire the “perfect victim” was that “he was dark-skinned and he lived on the streets [and]...we live in a society where that counts as two strikes against you” (Curtis, 2014c). In

other words, it is the interlocking effects of his mental illness, social class status, *and race* that overdetermine Magloire's death at the hands of the police.

2. "Go ahead, shoot me." The public critique of the police that does emerge from the Magloire case focuses primarily on improving their capacity to intervene with people experiencing mental health crisis. Reporting on the coroner's inquest highlights testimony by at least two police officers and one additional eyewitness that Magloire told police to shoot him and that he did not care if they did (Lalonde, 2015a; Lalonde 2015b; Wilton, 2015a). The witness is said to have warned Magloire during the incident, "Why don't you drop your hammer? They're armed and could shoot you" (Wilton, 2015a).

Here we wish to call attention to and disrupt the normalizing of encounters with the police as always potentially fatal for particular populations. When Alain Magloire reportedly says, "Go ahead, shoot me" (Wilton, 2015b; see also Voorhees, 2015), this should not be explained away as indication of a so-called "suicide-by-cop." The conflation of people who are suicidal with people who, under the extreme stress of a confrontation with police, claim a final defiant posture in the face of state power is highly problematic. Magloire's "go ahead, shoot me," much more likely announces his awareness of the disposable role he has been assigned within the social script that is unfolding and ultimately plays out. As a criminalized Black man displaying irrational behaviour, the police did not view him as among those they should protect, but rather as someone they must protect others *from* (Cacho, 2012). An intersectional analysis and critique is needed to unpack the assumption of the inevitability of the police murdering a person who fits Magloire's "profile." Such a critique is needed in order to account for the value of people who are imagined outside of the dominant "we" and perceived to always already pose a threat to social order. Analyzing the murder of Alain Magloire by the SPVM and the construction of a post-mortem identity that (re)values him by deracializing him lends us tools to think through how society not only values people differently, but also how people are valued in conjunction with and against each other. His friend's statement that his death can "change society" remains an open question: In what ways will this police murder generate and inform tangible change in how racialized people live, if at all?

Conclusion: Resisting Racializing Scripts and Building Situated Solidarities

Drawing together the narratives surrounding the tragic deaths of Naïma Rharouity and Alain Magloire reveals a great deal about how the racialization of different groups functions

dialectically through liberal discourses that both obscure and reinforce racism. Regardless of who they were, the identities of Rharouity and Magloire were pre- and over-determined by racialized and racializing scripts that “lock the every day reality of minoritarian, colonized and dehumanized groups of people into repeatable, recognizable, and stylized representations” (Ibrahim, 2014, p. 112). It is these representations that come up in encounters with the devalued Other—an assumed passive Muslim woman killed by her culture; an assumed aggressive Black man killed in order to protect society—the racialized victim and the racialized aggressor, co-constructed and posited outside the “we” of the dominant white social imaginary.

Following their deaths, the narratives of Rharouity and Magloire resist these racialized scripts, but only through a liberal politics of valuation that erases difference and prioritizes a universal individualism. Rharouity and Magloire thus have to be imagined as fixed individuals in relation to an imagined normative national community of individuals brought together by common social values and social problems, rather than self-determining members of particular social (sub)groups. What if Rharouity had not been a wife and mother; what if she had been an activist who critiqued Canadian immigration policies and practices? Would her death have been less tragic and more acceptable? What if Magloire had not been a husband and father; what if he had left high school and never attended university? What if he had been living on the streets for much longer? Would his death then have been so predictable as to not be worth noting? Would his life have mattered?

Ascribing legible social value to Rharouity and Magloire required the implied devaluation of the non-normative—racialized, poor, criminalized, nonconforming—Other, demonstrating that value is only read and understood relationally, against that which is not valued (Cacho, 2012). These processes work both implicitly and explicitly, within and between devalued groups, setting up intragroup notions of “good” and “bad” members as well as “oppression Olympics” between groups vying for the recognition of their struggles. When such social hierarchies are normalized, racialized social relations and oppressive state structures and systems are left unchallenged. Comparative analysis reveals commonalities and differences within and between devalued communities, not to pit against one another but the opposite: to reveal the relational mechanics of racialization that uphold white settler colonial class hierarchy towards building situated solidarities across differences. This requires that the ways in which “value and its normative criteria are naturalized and universalized” must be destabilized and rejected (Cacho, 2012, p. 149) and models for resistance must be built that are grounded in local contexts and critical analyses of how social relations shape daily lives, scripting Canadians into particular racialized, classed, and gendered roles. It requires that

these scripts be rejected and flipped, imagining human value beyond the limits of the liberalism and capitalism that characterize Québec and Canadian societies; imagining human value that is not contingent on racist exclusion, racialized, or deracialized belonging.

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