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Absent Black Women
in Dany Laferrière's *How to Make Love to a Negro*[1]

About the woman of colour I know nothing about her.
—Frantz Fanon *Black Skin, White Masks*

Although numerous critics have noted the absence of black[2] female characters in Québécois writer Dany Laferrière's first novel, *How to Make Love to a Negro*, few critics have looked in depth at the implications of the black woman's absence in the book.[3] Daniel Coleman underlines the problematic nature of her absence with a provocative series of questions in his book, *Masculine Migrations: Reading the Postcolonial Male in "New Canadian" Narratives*:

> Certainly, the black woman is a silent figure in Laferrière's text. How are we to interpret Vieux's silence about her? Why do black women play no significant roles in this text? Are they too sacred to be submitted to parody? Or are they so insignificant in Vieux/Laferrière's paradigm that they merit no attention? (76)

But Coleman's extensive examination of the text necessarily revolves around that which *is* included in the text rather than what is not included. Coleman concentrates on the racial and sexual parodic[4] allegory involving the dynamic between the white man and woman, and the black man or "Black Stud" (Laferrière 94)/rapist—the three "types" or "typological figures" (Coleman 56) that compose a triangulated narrative of stereotypical, black/white "racialized sexuality" (Coleman 58). This narrative foregrounds the main character Vieux's desire to "fuck"[5] systematically every white woman he meets as a way of getting back at repressive colonial history and black oppression.

Critic Cameron Bailey further problematizes the black woman's absence by remarking that just as she has no presence in the text, neither do white

francophone Québécois—all the white characters in the book are anglophones and the francophones are all black. In effect, the novel operates in a strange vacuum that disregards elements such as white francophones and black women who "do not fit Laferrière's plan" (86) to expose and counter the power relations that occur when a black male francophone immigrant decides to get back at white men by fucking white anglophone women.

In his book, *Odysseys: Mapping African-Canadian Literature*, George Elliott Clarke obliquely suggests the place of black women in Laferrière's novel:

> Crucially, references to Black nationalist icons pervade [the novel]. Though few Black women appear . . . , Vieux catalogues an Afrocentric, religio-historical figure —'the Egyptian princess Taiah' (15)—and vital cultural signifiers—Ella Fitzgerald (69), Bessie Smith (70, 77) [sic][6], and Tina Turner (74). The text is rife with allusions to jazz performers, Fanon, and Cleaver, and the 'blackest' cult figure of them all, Malcolm X (74). (173)

So according to Clarke's observation, black women *do* "fit Laferrière's plan" but in a very specific and disembodied way, a way that recalls Coleman's suggestion that perhaps they are too "sacred" and can only be referred to in theory.

All these critics emphasize that the black woman *should* be in this text, but for some unfathomable reason or reasons, she appears to be left out. In this paper I propose that, in spite of her marked *physical* absence, the black woman does have a presence in *How to Make Love to a Negro*, but an ambiguous presence—she "haunts" this novel in the same way the fluorescent cross on Mont-Royal "haunts" (88) the view outside the narrator's window. Unlike the cross, however, her presence is not necessarily oppressive, and possibly serves as a counterpoint to the white, anglophone, Christian dominant culture that surrounds Vieux. As Clarke has already suggested with his references to Tina Turner, Ella Fitzgerald and Taiah, the black woman's role in the novel is to sing the background music; I suggest that she also presides as a central feature in the set decoration—the elephant in the room that no one will speak of. In this tale of inter-racial, ostensibly mutual, sexual exploitation, black women have no role in the "fantasies" (56) in this text—even as readers, black women are what critic Pamela Banting refers to as "the neglected constituency" (21)—but the black woman's presence/absence dominates the narrative.

Although she is never included as a potential character or acknowledged as a potential reader of the text, the black woman's notable absence makes

the novel possible. Her inclusion would collapse the ultimately flawed, ideological house of cards that designates Vieux's fucking of white women as a revolutionary, political act against racism and colonialism. She undermines Vieux's purposeful assumption of the "Black Stud" (94) myth as a legitimate bid for white privilege because her mere existence in this text would defy the "Black Stud" type; it would ground him in a larger community rather than allow him to remain as a single black man against a white (racist) world. Vieux has other black, single, male friends in the novel, but suddenly for example he would have girlfriends, mothers, or sisters. Also he would have to acknowledge problems that face other black people besides himself and that could also implicate *him* (one example being his disregard for black women as human beings rather than ideals). In this "parody" of racialized sexuality, the black woman can exist only in limited ways, ways that are not traditionally beneficial to a patriarchal black resistance that insists that the "struggle for black liberation [is] largely . . . a struggle to recover black manhood" (hooks, *Black Looks* 106) – a position that Vieux seems to espouse in his attempt to wreak vengeance for all black people through his cock. In the realm of types and "stock figures" (Coleman 64) dictated by the "overdetermined discourse of [black/white] racialized sexuality" (Coleman 72), the black woman's position is virtually guaranteed to result in the betrayal of the black man and therefore (according to some activists in the struggle for black liberation), "black resistance" in general.

Eldridge Cleaver in *Soul on Ice* and Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* propose that white women operate as a lure to black men, a means of countering and accessing white privilege. Consistent with such analysis, the novel's narrator, Vieux, embarks on a quest to bed every white woman he encounters in order to share in and mock white privilege. He further configures women as "types" and not as individuals by giving them nick-names preceded by "Miz": for example, Miz Literature is his most frequent sexual partner. He lets the fallacy that "the struggle for black liberation [is] largely a struggle to recover black manhood" take *him* to bed. Unlike Cleaver in *Soul on Ice*, however, Vieux does not rape the white women, but occupies more the position proposed by Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* of engaging in consensual sex. As Fanon hypothesizes or fantasizes before rejecting the notion, "I wish to be acknowledged not as black but as white. Now . . . who but a white woman can do this for me? By loving me she proves that I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man. I am a white man" (63). For Cleaver, the white women he lusts after and rapes to

achieve some semblance of white power are "The [irresistible] Ogre" (6). Prior to his official rejection of white women as lovers, Frantz Fanon, unlike Eldridge Cleaver, writes about how the white woman's "love takes me onto the noble road that leads to total realization" (63). Vieux takes the middle road between Cleaver and Fanon—he does not rape white women, nor does he love them or expect to be loved by them. His currency is race "hatred" (19) channeled into fantastic, consensual sex. As Vieux points out, "America loves to fuck exotic. Put black vengeance and white guilt together in the same bed and you [have] a night to remember! . . . If you want to know what nuclear war is all about, put a black man and a white woman in the same bed" (18-19). As far as Vieux is concerned, seduction is more effective than rape or love because seduction results in "nuclear" sex and therefore a more thorough—albeit limited—subversion of white male dominance through underlining white women's frustration with "the medicine-dropper sex of conventional unions" (18). Vieux "possesses" these women sexually, but also relies on what he believes will be the inevitable comparison between inferior sex with white men and the superior sex with "Black Studs." And although for most of the novel Vieux firmly espouses the belief that he can access white privilege by sleeping with white women, eventually Vieux and the novel, like Cleaver and Fanon, reject inter-racial sex as a means of achieving "whiteness"[7] and the power associated with it. (But, as I shall demonstrate, Vieux's rejection is strictly of physical bodies, not bodies written on the page.)

The "Black Stud's" time is over, as David Homel (the English translator of *How to Make Love to a Negro*) reminds the reader in the preface to the English translation; the novel "begins by pronouncing a funeral elegy for the myth of the Great Black Lover" (8). Playing the myth out to its very end is just one way that Laferrière signals the demise of the "Black Stud" as a figure of threat. Although his sexist sexual exploits seem separate from his writer's block and devotion to his typewriter, both are attempts to escape his lot as a displaced immigrant in Montréal. Besides sleeping with every white woman he meets, Vieux's other quest is to write the next great American[8] novel – a novel whose publication will ensure him of world-wide fame and will rescue him from poverty and from the apartment he lives in with his friend Bouba. Vieux is in Hell, even *below* Hell. Beelzebub lives upstairs and makes his presence known in the form of pink dust falling from the ceiling, and in the vocal racket of his sexual activities. When the muslim Vieux looks out the window, he sees the giant fluorescent cross on

Mont Royal: "I sit down in my work chair, turn my back on the typewriter and gaze stupidly on that lousy cross that haunts my window" (88).

The only time Vieux discusses black women, he states that "With his own woman the black man might not be worth the paper he's printed on, but with a white woman, the chances of something happening are good" (94). Even though he thus rationalizes their presence out of existence in the novel and gives their "ownership" to either himself or white men, black women must appear in the Montréal streets Vieux travels down when he leaves his apartment, but they do not register in his "fantasy" world, a world that will become the basis of the novel he writes in the second half of the book. The implausible absence of black women in Vieux's Montréal is a reminder that all the characters are "types" and are therefore unstable constructions in the racial "communities" (Chow 35) of white women and men and black men.

Interestingly, the black women who do appear—Bessie Smith, Billie Holliday, and Ella Fitzgerald—appear when Vieux finally sits at his typewriter; they sing to him in perhaps the same way a muse (or a siren?) would. Billie Holliday makes Vieux feel "like you've got a rope around your neck" (70); Bessie Smith is associated with "Two hundred years of desire thrown together, boxed in, piled up and sent down the Mississippi in the hold of a riverboat" (78); Ella Fitzgerald sings "Lullaby of Birdland" (69). The black woman is not allowed a body in this book—even when Vieux refers to Tina Turner, it is only because a woman he has nick-named Miz Punk is dancing like her (74). The only body a black woman has is the white woman imitating the absent black woman, but she *is* allowed a voice of sorts; she is a cheerleading squad Vieux takes for granted as he attempts to write his way out of Hell. She remains without a body, spectral, for to have her appear in a physical way, for her to enter the text as a character, however peripherally, would seriously disrupt the neat, triangular relationship Vieux has set up between white women and men and black men. It is not that she is too "sacred" or too "insignificant" that she is left out—it is that she is too *dangerous*.

Coleman discusses at length the typology of the black female in the "discourse of [black/white] racialized sexuality" when he restates Abdul Jan Mohammed's assertion that "The discourse of racialized sexuality derives from the white master's strategy of avoidance [of his rape of the black female slave] . . . . The pathological discourse of racialized sexuality, then, avoids its open secret by creating a new mythological story: the red-herring story of the black rapist's lust for the white virgin deflects attention away

from the hidden deeds of the white master rapist" (59). Coleman states that in effect, "If the master's rape of the black woman is the subtext for the discourse of racialized sexuality, the black man's putative rape of the white woman serves as its pretext" (62). In the narrative of typologized racialized sexuality, the black woman makes the black man vulnerable through her sexual exploitation by the white men who rape her. The black woman cannot "certify male dignity for the African man" (60) and so one possible reason she is left out of the novel is because she needs to be protected by the black male writer. And although in the novel white women appear to be complicit in the taboo sexual transaction, they are also victims of sexist typology; Coleman quotes Michele Wallace's summing up of the history of the racist, sexist typology when she describes the origin of the white woman's role as pawn in the power struggle between white and black men: "Early colonial men had needed partners in labor. Now the patriarchs of a plantation system needed a crown to their glory, the symbol of their success, a constant reminder of their strength and power. In the process the Southern woman was slowly transformed into an expensive, delicate, impractical pet" (Wallace 136). In the patriarchal, racist dialogue that ensues between black and white men, both black and white women are exploited and treated as currency. Vieux's attempts to parody and topple the stereotype of black men vehemently lusting for white women too conveniently excizes black women from his fantasy world. Vieux perpetuates black women's exploitation by refusing even to acknowledge it.

The stereotypical roles available to the black woman "type" are limited and self-defeating; unless she is excluded and/or made "sacred" and therefore asexual and untouchable, then she has no choice but to participate in the betrayal of her male counterpart, to be what critic Rinaldo Walcott describes in his examination of the "hood film" *Soul Survivor*, "a part of the emasculating apparatus of black men" (109). One choice is that she be the victim of the white man who has raped her and thereby work to underline the black man's ineffectiveness as a protector. Another common stereotype that fits in with the paradigm of the "Black Stud," is the black female "ball-breaker" (Walcott 109), who "because the black woman's master was the slaveowner, and not her husband, she became abusive to her husband, overly aggressive, bossy, domineering" (Wallace 139). Because she is contemptuous of her black male partner, she refuses to respect him and participates in his humiliation and oppression.

The other alternative, of course, is the black woman's own sexual potential for consensual miscegenation. In Laferrière's novel, a black woman with sexual desires would lead to chaos in the world that favours the "Black Stud" and which equates "black liberation" with restoring faith in black men's role as patriarch in the black community. Rey Chow discusses the awkward presence in the "Black Stud"-white woman equation when she takes apart Frantz Fanon's hypotheses about miscegenation:

> The ultimate danger posed by the Negress and the [female] mulatto is . . . not their sexual behaviour per se, but the fact that their sexual agency carries with it a powerful (re)conceptualization of community. . . . Because women are, with their sexual behaviour, powerful agents in the generation of a different type of community, the [black] male intellectual senses cannot trust – cannot bond with – them. He cannot trust them because he cannot control the potentiality that ensues from their acts of miscegenation. . . . [W]omen, because they are understood to possess a potent sexual agency, stand as an obstinate stumbling block in the way of revolutionary thought. (Chow 48-9)

Black women who could potentially fuck black men, white men, other men, or women, are an unknown, unwelcome variable in Vieux's world. He cannot conceive of black women fucking white men as parody in the same vein as his own parody; there is no such thing as a female "Black Stud." Neither can he imagine black women fucking other non-white men who would then dissolve the fantasy world of exclusively black/white antagonism *and* show black women to have independent sexual desires. There is little in *How to Make Love to a Negro* to suggest that Vieux feels actively threatened by black women's capacity for miscegenation, but his heavy leaning on Fanon's theories of sex with white women as a means of attaining white power suggests that this fear of the black woman as a traitor, as a carrier of internalized racist "poison" (Fanon 62) so carefully articulated by Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*, might be implicit in Laferrière's active exclusion of black women from the text. If Vieux can be a "Black Stud" who beds white women, the black woman could be the race traitor whom Fanon asserts chases white men in order to "avoid falling back into the pit of niggerhood" (47) represented by sexual and romantic partnership with black men.

In the essay "How can a black writer find his way out of the jungle?" written in 1996, Laferrière attempts to address the lack of black female characters in his work, and in literature by other black and white male writers. The essay is a dialogue between Laferrière the writer and a young black woman who demands that he "Talk about [her]" because she's "tired of

listening to black writers advertising for white women. White writers only talk about white women. So now with black writers onto white women, too, we [black women] don't stand a chance" (97). The narrator tells her that he cannot write about her because "we're [black male writers] only trying to protect you" ("How can" 97). Not surprisingly, and consistent with Laferrière's iconic representations of black women in the novel, the name of the young black woman in the essay is Erzulia, the name of the "dreadful voodoo goddess" (96). Interestingly, Erzulia embodies two contradictory visions of the black woman that potentially explains why she is not included in the novel: her goddess status does indeed make her "sacred,"[9] and she and other black women need to be protected; yet her "dreadfulness" implies her fearful black femininity, her "ball-breaking" potential. The essay concludes with the young woman proclaiming: "What do you care whether I'm in your book or not? I've got everything I need to be in a book, and you can't imagine what I might do!" (99). This uncertainty regarding what she and the black woman type "might do!" signals precisely why Laferrière does not include her in *How to Make Love to a Negro* – he wants types, not surprises.

Specifically, black women do appear as abstract, disembodied icons—as the Platonic idea or "form" that Vieux's room-mate Bouba defines while lounging on his couch, which Vieux refers to as Bouba's "wife" (22) or the "whore" he's married (14). Bouba expounds on the notion of beauty, referring explicitly to the ways in which Ella Fitzgerald, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday appear in the novel:

> [L]et's take the mouth. You meet a girl on the street. She has a sensual, hungry mouth, the whole package. You tell her this and that, she answers that and this, and a couple hours later you're kissing. But when you're kissing you can't see her mouth. When you're up that close you can't see anything at all . . . . [The] mouth in your mind, your ideal mouth, is better than the real mouth, the mouth that belongs to the girl you happened to meet on such-and-such a street and at such-and-such a time. At the last minute she could change mouths and you wouldn't be any wiser. (29)

For Bouba, the best lay is the one in his head. But this passage also suggests that for him black women are indeed only a type or intellectual concept and that the best black woman is the woman with no body, a music icon or goddess, or a long-dead historical figure. If readers are to believe what Laferrière explicitly states in his dialogue with Erzulia, she is sacred and to be "protected" by being perpetually hidden.

So what are the ramifications of Laferrière's ignoring the voodoo goddess in the room? His refusal to include the potentially messy complexity of the black woman's physical presence in the narrative results in a troubling statement about the main character's own sexuality and the novel's literary handling of black men's sexuality in general. Although until now I have primarily discussed the sex that occurs between Vieux and his various conquests, sex appears in a number of forms in the novel—the sex between Vieux and his various Mizzes perhaps being the least important. Pascale de Souza suggests that as the book progresses "le sexe cède peu a peu la place au processus d'écriture, dont il permet l'éclosion. . . . Le titre du chapitre 26, 'Ma vieille Remington s'envoie en l'air en sifflotant *ya bon banania*,' souligne le caractère gratifiant de l'écriture qui remplace le sexe comme source de jouissance" (65). The sex does not "cède" or surrender so much as get sublimated into the act of writing, so that writing and reading are *also* sexual acts, hence de Souza's assertion that both are "source[s] de jouissance." Vieux is often "in bed with Bukowski" (33). He goes to bed with Henry Miller, Blaise Cendrars, and Ernest Hemingway. He carries on an ambiguous, romantic relationship with his "always faithful" (101) Remington 22 typewriter that used to belong to the black American crime writer Chester Himes. Vieux personifies and adores the typewriter: it gives him "nasty look[s]" when he neglects it, as he does throughout the first half of the book, but it is also his "bouquet de lilas ruisselant de pluie" (67).[10] Much like the couch Bouba has "married" (14), the typewriter is also Vieux's life-partner – one could even say corporeal male muse who cajoles and shames Vieux into writing his novel. Vieux associates the typewriter with the natural image of the rosebush or bouquet of lilacs, and with the bicycle lovingly and repeatedly polished by the professional cyclist who lives across the hall. The novel he begins writing on it, *Black Cruiser's Paradise*, "wait[s] for [him]" (105). He is eager to return to the Remington and the novel, and unlike his relationship with the women around him, his lavish attention to it reveals that he and his typewriter have a relationship that relies on equality and cooperation if he and it are to write the great American novel. The typewriter has no obvious gender (although it does carry the Chester Himes "pedigree" (46) and in French Vieux refers to the Remington in the feminine as "la Remington"), although it is obviously a lover of sorts. When Vieux is in bed with Bukowski and the boys, he does not identify himself as anything other than heterosexual even though the majority of his writer bed-mates are

men, several of whom Coleman refers to as "virulent writers of male eroticism" (68).

With the typewriter Vieux unhesitatingly reveals his "naiveté," his "conscience," and the emotion that would, in front of his sex-partners, result in his "ass [being] grass" (27); he allows himself to be "down-hearted" (77) around la Remington. As de Souza suggests, as the novel progresses, Vieux becomes less obsessed with sex with white women, and more obsessed with the white page in his Remington 22 and writing his novel. Writing is not as racially charged an endeavour as sleeping with white women, in spite of his comparison of the white page to "the snowy grace of the cotton. Black bodies shining sensual, beaten by the cruel wind of the Deep South" (78), and his writing about sex with white women. In the realm of the page he loses some of his apparent disdain for white women by acknowledging white female writers and artists such as Gloria Steinem, Emily Dickinson, and Valery Miller, using their full names rather than the snide "Miz" nicknames. The shift suggests that the page does not operate within the same "discourse of racialized sexuality" as *actual* sex with white women nicknamed "Miz" does. Although both provide Vieux with "jouissance," writing (about sex) is not the same as actual sex; in a back-hand way he even seems to acknowledge the legitimacy of (white) women's struggle for equality by giving the final chapter of the book the title "You're Not Born Black, You Get That Way" – an almost direct quotation from Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*.[11]

In contrast to his attitude towards white dominant culture, Vieux does not regard white writers such as Bukowski and Hemingway as rivals or enemies—instead he seeks to count them as his peers and dreams, for example, of sitting on a bench with Henry Miller and Blaise Cendrars (78-79) watching Charles Bukowski get arrested. Race enters the equation, however, in that he wants to "become the best black writer" and put writers such as James Baldwin and Chester Himes "out to pasture" (71).

In Vieux's attention to writing the parody, or what Daniel Coleman refers to as the "metaparody" around the triangulated representation of black/white racialized sexuality, loosens its grip. As he focuses his attention on the Remington and *Black Cruiser's Paradise*, Vieux channels, consciously or unconsciously, his sexual super-powers into his writing. The key turning-point in the text occurs when, at the urging of his friend Bouba and with Bessie Smith singing "Mississippi Flood" in his ear, he diverts his gaze from seducing white women – in a writer's block fever he rants about "Black

desire obsessed with pubescent white flesh. Desire flaming up. Desire for the white woman" (78)—and actually begins to write, starting with a description of the objects around him, leading up to the actual meta-fictional writing of *How to Make Love to a Negro*, disguised as the novel-within-the-novel, *Black Cruiser's Paradise*. From this chapter on, he fails at seducing white women such as Miz Snob, Miz Cat; and his most frequent lover, Miz Literature, tells him to "go to hell" because she doesn't know anymore if he is "still among the living" (100), presumably because he has been neglecting her in favour of Chester Himes's Remington.

The "Black Stud" is traditionally not an intellectual figure. As Fanon bluntly puts it, within the paradigm of New World colonialist thinking, "The Negro is the genital" (180). When Vieux finally grabs the white page and begins writing in earnest, he is no longer as securely entrenched in his role as "Black Stud." The other characters around him may remain "types" while he reads and writes, but *he* is no longer an authentic "Black Stud." Earlier in the novel Vieux's interest in reading provokes fascination from Miz Literature because it is an activity so inconsistent with his "Black Stud" primitivism. She interrupts him:

> "You're reading! Oh I'm sorry."
> And believe it or not, she really is sorry. Reading is sacred in her book. Besides, a black with a book denotes the triumph of Judeo-Christian civilization! . . . True, Europe did pillage Africa but this black is reading a book. (34)

Vieux's room-mate Bouba notes Vieux's writing as an exceptional event since Bouba—himself a "Black Stud"—does not like to read what Vieux writes because he "abhors being presented with a fait accompli":

> "You writing, man?"
> "I'm trying."
> . . . .
> "Great!" Bouba looks happy. "Tell me about it."
> "It's a novel."
> "No kidding. . . . A novel? A real novel?" (47)

Vieux is unlike the other black men in the book, including Bouba, because of his literary interests: it is his intellect, his activity outside of the "genital," that exposes the hair-line cracks in the racial-sexual parody that is the organizing principle of this novel. Additionally, Vieux does not use writing as a way to seduce women, unlike Bouba's philosophic, "bum-wipe Buddha" (53) routine. When he writes, he does it for the sake of writing with no other motive except to write the next great American novel, and escape the grime

and poverty of his situation: "I've got a thirst for a decent life. I am thirsty. The Gods are thirsty. [White] Women are thirsty. Why not Negroes? The Negroes are thirsty" (115).

The trouble with Laferrière's channeling of Vieux's sex drive into his work on *Black Cruiser's Paradise* and Vieux's subsequent "jouissance" while in the act of writing, is that Laferrière seems to suggest that the only "productive" sex, the only cooperative partnership, is sex with the typewriter or no sex at all. In the final sections of the novel, Vieux no longer actively lusts after white women who exist off the page; black women or women of any colour no longer enter the picture, and so the character falls into the "trap" Dionne Brand describes in her essay "This Body for Itself." Even though Brand's essay is about black women's bodies and the difficulty of writing about our bodies in sexualized terms, ironically the essay could also describe how Laferrière falls into the "trap" of not discussing the possibility of his character's healthy sexuality and vulnerability at all except within the safety of the inanimate Remington 22 typewriter and the company of the mostly dead writers he idolizes. Brand states: "In a world where Black women's bodies are so sexualized, avoiding the body as sexual is a strategy. . . . I know that not talking about the sexual Black female self at all is as much an anti-colonial strategy as armed struggle. But what a trap" (27).

Brand's feminist analysis of the dearth of representations of authentic, non-conformist, black female sexuality applies very easily to the situation of Vieux the writer, the intellectual and artistic "Black Stud" trying to find a "decent life" (115) rather than continue his role as a strictly sexual organism who will sleep with "girls that no one will take except the blacks and the bums" (115). In the case of a book all about the black male "type" having fantastic, politically-charged sex, not talking about the authentic, sexual black male body—a body that could have authentic, romantic sex with both black women and non-black women, *including* white women—is also part of the "struggle" to "protect" himself from damaging stereotype. Thus the trap re-emerges for black male experience as well as for black female struggles. The book ends with the character staring at his novel manuscript, describing it as his "handsome hunk of hope. [His] only chance," imploring the reader in David Homel's English translation to "Take it" (117), in the original French commanding "VA" (153). Vieux has discovered that by taking on the role of the "Black Stud" he has tried to invent himself in a literary history where he does not exist except as cliché that certainly could

never author the next great American novel. Once he gives in to his writing and proves himself as more than just "genital," he loses his place in the script of "racialized sexuality." He has never considered black women or other women of colour as sexual partners (or any other kind of partners), he has never thought of white women as anything but quarry, and so when he abandons the "game" of seducing white women, he leaves himself with no sex except with books by white male writers. The parody has played itself out to the end and collapsed on its inconsistencies and the restrictiveness it represents to the black male subject. Once the cliché has been exhausted, Laferrière as the writer has no choice but to end the book.

If black women could exist in this world Vieux has around him, he could also exist, and not just as a "Black Stud." Laferrière sees the limitations of the parody and so ends the book when his character no longer lives the parody/fantasy. But neither Vieux nor Laferrière *explode* the parody with a "nuclear" fervour that would, as Coleman suggests, "expose and ridicule the discursive system that produces the racist stereotypes which degrade men of African ancestry" without "recommodif[ying]" the same stereotypes (53). Instead, by the end of the book black women are where they started: without a body, an independent voice, or their own chance at "nuclear" sex with a partner of their own choice.

NOTES

1 The original French title is *Comment faire l'amour avec un nègre sans se fatiguer* or "How to Make Love to a Negro Without Getting Tired."
2 For the purposes of consistency, I will be following Dany Laferrière's model and using the lower-case "black" and "white" throughout this essay.
3 According to narrator Vieux when he discusses his novel-within-the-novel *Black Cruiser's Paradise*, "there are no women in my novel. There are just types. Black Men and white women. On the human level, the black man and the white woman do not exist" (111). Because the narrator of this book deals only in "types," by extension, the black woman would also be a type.
4 See the chapter, "How to Make Love to a Discursive Genealogy: Dany Laferrière's Metaparody of Racialized Sexuality" in Coleman's book, *Masculine Migrations: Reading the Postcolonial Male in 'New Canadian' Narratives*, for a full discussion of parody and metaparody.
5 This term is used throughout the novel and describes not only Vieux's physical interaction with the white women he meets, but his political take on his interactions with white women and white dominant culture in general.
6 Billie Holiday, not Bessie Smith, is referred to on page 70 of *How to Make Love to a Negro*.

7 Cleaver realizes after he is sent to prison for rape that "for the first time in my life, [I admitted] that I was wrong, I had gone astray . . . for I could not approve the act of rape" (15). Fanon states that "This sexual myth – the quest for white flesh – perpetuated by alienated psyches, must no longer be allowed to impede active understanding" (81).

8 In an interview with Carrol F. Coates, Laferrière reminds her that "The Caribbean is a region of America. . . I belong to this continent that the United States has wanted to keep simply for itself. The idea of a 'Great *American* Novel' is not a novel that can only take place in the United States" (916). Interestingly, the "Great American Novel" that Laferrière proposes would presumably be written in French, even further dismantling the cultural hegemony associated with "America." This novel would in effect be Laferrière's rewriting of America and the racist, neocolonialist underpinnings that sustain stereotypes such as the "Black Stud."

9 The reformed Eldridge Cleaver takes a similarly worshipping approach to black women as "sacred," distant objects in *Soul on Ice*. In the chapter "To All Black Women, From All Black Men" he refers to black women as his "Queen-Mother-Daughter of Africa / Sister of My Soul / Black Bride of My Passion" (205). For Cleaver, black women do not represent human beings; rather he uses them as target practice when he prepares to rape white women, or as his goddesses after he has decided that raping women is "wrong."

10 The "bouquet of lilacs" sparkling with rain in the French version of the chapter title is changed to "wild rosebush" (41) in the English translation.

11 The quotation in *The Second Sex* is "on ne nâit pas femme, on le devient."

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