Seam Stress: Garment Work and Gendered Labour Struggle in 1980s Montreal

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ABSTRACT

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Montreal's garment industry was the largest in Canada until most of its factories closed or relocated in the 1980s and 1990s, but it did not go out quietly. Staring down the barrel of rapid, state-sanctioned deindustrialization, 9,500 members of the Quebec ILGWU, most of them immigrant women, launched an industry-wide strike in August of 1983, the first in 43 years, as well as the last. Using the strike as a springboard, this thesis combines oral history interviews and archival material with historical, geographical, and feminist literatures to understand how women workers experienced and contested garment deindustrialization in 1980s Montreal. The result is a graphic novel about garment work and feminist labour struggle, for public consumption. This thesis adds much-needed female perspective to a growing body of work around deindustrialization and its contestation within history and geography. Conceptually and politically, it seeks to recast the Mile End and Mile-Ex as a site of feminist, working-class struggle, placing gentrification in conversation with deindustrialization while offering a primer on place-based labour organizing during a time of unprecedented capital mobility.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Montreal's garment industry was the largest in Canada until most of its factories closed or relocated in the 1980s and 1990s. It has a long and lively history. Garment work was dominated by women as early as 1891, most of it centered on Montreal's lower "Main."[1] The expansion of ready-made clothing production after 1900 saw the consolidation of the area as a vibrant manufacturing hub. This shifted many female "homeworkers" onto the factory floor, radically reconfiguring working class life.[2] Initially dominated by Jewish immigrants, the garment workforce was largely French Canadian by the 1940s.[3] It then soaked up successive waves of Irish, Italian, Greek, and later, Portuguese, Haitian, and Chinese immigrants, most of them female.[4] This created distinct racial and gender divisions of labour lasting well into the 1980s. As a general rule, esteemed cutting and pattern-making work fell to men, while lower-paid, "semi-skilled" needlework fell overwhelmingly to women.[5]

A rapid reordering of the international division of labour, beginning in the 1960s and accelerating in the 1980s, saw the contraction and "rationalization" of Canadian industry. Reacting to international pressure and national economic decline, garment work in Montreal again changed shape.[6] Larger firms responded by shifting operations abroad. Smaller firms reached for a more immediate solution, paring down production to include only "skilled" work and farming out the rest to a labour supplier, firing most of their female workers in the process.[7] Paired with an intensification of production, this tactic allowed manufacturers to cut costs on the backs of their workers. The twinned threats of subcontracting and closure worked to cripple collective bargaining power and create widespread job insecurity, ushering in massive job loss, spreading sweatshop conditions, and a reversion to pre-industrial non-unionized homework. In the first six months of 1981, 2,000 factory jobs were lost to homework, and by the end of the year, 20,000 women were estimated to be sewing from home.[8]

This rapid decline in stable, centralized employment was accompanied by a crisis of faith in the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU), the American union that took over existing union structures in the mid-1930s. To establish itself in Quebec, the ILGWU led strikes in 1937 and 1940.[9] These secured important victories, but were quickly followed up with anti-communist purges.[10] Leading organizers Rose Pesotta and Lea Roback, both indispensable to the strikes, were later marginalized. This routine suppression of labour militancy was accompanied by a consistent failure to elect representative leaders, with the result that the union's largely white male leadership and largely immigrant female membership were worlds apart socioeconomically by the 1970s.[11] Combined with collusion and negligence, this produced a chronic suspicion of union elites at a time when membership was being rapidly eroded by subcontracting. Membership in the Quebec ILGWU dropped from 17,500 to 10,000 between 1976 and 1983.[12] Even at this low point, Montreal held 65% of the Canadian garment industry.[13]

It was against and in spite of this geographic, socioeconomic, and linguistic fragmentation that 9,500 members of the Quebec ILGWU launched an industry-wide strike in August of 1983, the first of its kind in 43 years, as well as the last. Though it surprised manufacturers and union bosses alike, the ground for the strike had been carefully laid by Action Committee for Garment Workers (CATV), a multiethnic union reform movement created in response to the threat of subcontracting and the failure of ILGWU to represent and defend its membership.[14] The strike, christened "*la greve de la fierte*," united five languages and both skilled and semi-skilled workers.[15] Initially about the coercive threat of subcontracting, and the

loss of dignity and security this entailed, the strike soon implicated union leadership, just as that same leadership rushed to quell it. Following the strike, CATV militants were fired and blacklisted, and the industry quietly resumed its death march.[16] The strike and the conditions that led to it are the subject of my thesis.

The strike can be understood in different ways, depending on where one stands. For Lipsig-Mummé, writing in 1987, the strike is a parable about the necessity of taking power—CATV deliberately spurned leadership roles in order to maintain credibility, resolving instead to educate and expose.[17] To the present-day observer, the strike was a futile last gesture against historical inevitability. A more common reading of deindustrialization in cities, where the vacuum of urban industry is soon filled, is one of neighbourhood change.[18] Though many of the factory buildings that once housed garment work still stand, most of them now cater to young professionals. These spaces were subject to a frenzy of investment, beginning in the mid-90s.[19] My sense is that in the process, the human history of garment work was lost to the public. Absent this, the only critical narrative in circulation is one of rising rents and the displacement of artists. As a student-artist living in the Mile End, this reading was close at hand, but it is not the only one. This thesis seeks to *ensure* it is not.

To understand the strike, this thesis engages with historical, geographical, and feminist literatures. The variable social and cultural half-life of industrial decline is the more recent focus of a growing body of historical research on deindustrialization. Work in this field generally seeks to reveal deindustrialization as a radical historical transformation by tracing it within social and cultural continuities. For social and labour historians, very broadly, deindustrialization is a messy dialectic between workers and capital, mediated by context. This is an excellent starting point, and one I seek to complicate in two important ways in this thesis: first, by thinking about "context" geographically, and second, by taking gender seriously. The thesis, then, engages historical work on deindustrialization within social and labour history, followed by spatial engagements with class and gender struggle from Marxist and feminist geography, to build a theoretical and conceptual lattice around this topic, and to help me to frame my research and analysis. In what follows, I first provide a literature review that lays out a roadmap for understanding how Montreal garment workers experienced and contested deindustrialization in the 1980s. I then describe the methodology that moved me towards answering it creatively and obliquely, in the form of a graphic novel for general public consumption. All of this provides a context for the results of my work—a graphic novel that traces a path through garment work and gendered labour struggle in 1980s Montreal.

Literature Review

A Long View: Deindustrialization Studies

By the early 1980s, Europe and North America were losing tens of millions of industrial jobs, in time to a precipitous decline in trade union membership. Deindustrialization studies emerged to survey the damage, and as part of a broader mobilization against plant shutdowns. Motivated by a need to insist on the scale of destruction, much of the early scholarship takes the form of factory post-mortems and job loss "body counts."[20] Heeding Cowie and Heathcott's 2003 call to move "beyond the ruins,"[21] research on deindustrialization has since taken up the

long view to better understand its cultural meaning and social consequences. Steven High points to a "third wave of deindustrialization scholarship that has focused on working class culture and politics in a post-industrial era."[22] This work, which guided my own, is dialed to the continuing struggle over meaning and memory as much as material security.

Much of this "third wave" scholarship revives the historical materialism of Edward Thompson, whose writing on industrializing Britain was unique in its emphasis on the social and cultural experience of industrial change. For anyone seeking to better understand industrialization's "negative bookend," Thompson's ideas are foundational.[23] Of particular conceptual value is Thompson's understanding of class not as fixed structural position but as fluid social *relation*—a friction exerted not on "some nondescript undifferentiated raw material of humanity," but on living beings bearing norms and values.[24] Thompson's refusal to differentiate an "objective" economic sphere, to which "subjective" social and cultural concerns take a backseat, allowed him to assign an active role to working classes in "making" themselves.[25] Deindustrialization describes a political process with winners and losers, and hindsight brings a temptation to consign the latter to passive victimhood. Defending the agency of working people without minimizing what they are up against, Thompson's approach offers a gentle corrective.[26]

Tracing the impact of industrialization through living cultures, Thompson was able to see how changing production relations come up against existing norms and customs. Thompson articulated the concept of a "moral economy" to explain 18th century food riots as a rational response to the marketization of food and wages beyond communal control.[27] Moral economies describe "norms and sentiments regarding the responsibilities and rights of individuals and institutions with respect to others," which "co-evolve with economic systems."[28] Inasmuch as all economic systems are embedded in living cultures, moral economy has a great deal of conceptual mileage for historians interested in the social and cultural manifestations of economic change. It is worth noting here the extent to which these questions of morality and validity have been benched by neoclassical economics, in which social norms are removed from economic consideration and recast as individual preferences.[29] Karl Polanyi's "embeddedness," describing the degree to which economic systems are bound to their societal context, is another way to understand the weakened hold of moral economic views, publicly and academically.[30] Broadly, as "economic activities became increasingly 'disembedded' from earlier social attachments" with the development of global capitalism, "economic, political and bureaucratic systems became detached from the lifeworld and then began to colonize it," turning "questions of validity into questions of behavior."[31] Paired with a moral economy framework, this concept allows us to see in deindustrialization a "disembedding" of local economies from civil society,[32] whereby place-based webs of economic responsibility evaporate, and "all that is solid melts into air."[33]

Andy Clark, Steven High, Andrew Perchard, and Jim Phillips, among others, have all framed local responses to deindustrialization in terms of a breach of moral economy.[34] Phillips powerfully applies this concept to a comparison of early and late coalfield closures in Scotland, emphasizing fast-changing policy priorities between 1950 and 1990. Pit closures in the 1950s were negotiated in line with communal expectations, and thus broadly accepted, whereas later closures under Thatcher systematically transgressed the coalfield moral economy, fueling nationalist sentiment. Phillips finds a similar trend in the Scottish shipbuilding industry, where a project of carefully managed deindustrialization was abruptly ceded to market fundamentalism in the 1980s. Likewise, worker resistance to Caterpillar and Timex plant closures in Glasgow and

Dundee stressed the companies' obligations to the local community. Phillips locates a political aftershock of this accelerated disembedding in widespread working-class support for Scottish independence after 2010.[35] An important theme from Phillips's work is that "deindustrialization is a willed and highly politicized process," which can be managed in many different ways.[36]

Perchard outlines the impact of a smelter closure in the Scottish Highlands on its locality in moral economy terms, adding an understanding of how deindustrialization narratives are refracted by place-based politics. Following the shutdown, "'moral outrage' at the abandonment of a moral economic view," and resistance to the same, coalesced around local and regional identities.[37] Where deindustrialization fortified national and occupational identities in Phillips's lowland Scotland, Perchard finds "a narrative of locality overlain with the regional motif of Highland otherness and peripheralization."[38] In Clark's work around the successful occupation of the Lee Jeans factory in Glasgow, female workers' moral economy arguments against relocation had a legitimizing effect, drumming up wider community support. This support in turn reframed their struggle as a broader one against economic restructuring.[39]

Departing slightly from moral economy, Cowie's history of the RCA Corporation's many relocations was another vital resource for thinking through the ways in which "the spatial mobility of capital is pitted against the geographical solidarity of labor."[40] The company's labour history offers some interesting parallels, RCA having shifted its manufacturing across the US and finally to Mexico in search of "cheap and docile" labour. Like garment industrialists, RCA "reinforced the difference between highly skilled, high-technology 'male' work and low-skilled, labour intensive 'female' work by separating the two labor processes not just on the shop floor but by region and nation as well."[41] By pitting "militancy" in one region against "docility" in another, and "skilled" men against "low-skilled" women, the company fractured solidarity at every level.[42] Unlike Montreal's CATV, RCA workers opposed plant closures by drawing on a strong sense of local community. In Cowie's view, this was both an asset and a liability—it strengthened social bonds, but it also prevented "a more expansive notion of working-class politics in an era in which capital transcends boundaries with complete ease."[43]

A related and more literary concept taken up by "third wave" deindustrialization scholars such as High and Strangleman is Raymond Williams' "structures of feeling."[44] Like Thompson, Williams looked to social and cultural life for rich evidence of the impact of economic transformations.[45] Structures of feeling frame "the ways meaning and values are actively lived in an historical moment, again emphasizing that culture is not static but adaptive, relational, and contextual."[46] Williams' distinction between "residual" and "emergent" structures of feeling has special value for understanding intergenerational responses to deindustrialization, as well as evolving workplace cultures, where "what is lost is a sense of the permanence or predictability of work."[47] At the time of the 1983 strike, organized, centralized garment work, like other forms of relatively stable industrial employment, represented a "social form in the process of being made marginal."[48] Williams' ideas facilitated a finer subtextual reading of media accounts of the strike, as well as my interviewees' recollections.

Other deindustrialization scholars have cautiously taken up ideas around cultural erasure, and the radical potential of certain forms of nostalgia. In this vein, Jackie Clarke's work on displaced Moulinex workers in France stands out. Contrasting French media narratives with worker interviews, she reflects on how discourses of inevitability are used to consign industrial workers to the past, even when they remain a substantial part of the workforce.[49] Moulinex's female workers actively resisted its closure, and remained politically organized long after the fact.

All the same, official accounts pathologized their response as one of grief-stricken paralysis.[50] According to Clarke, media representations of the shutdown as part of the inexorable march of progress, "served to entrench a depoliticized account of the process of deindustrialization" and a "construction of historical time which recasts ideological differences and social conflict as temporal lag."[51] Clarke's interviews reveal that Moulinex women's nostalgia for past work was neither reflexive nor total—it was about the factory as "a space of gender and class solidarity." This attunes her to Peter Fritzsche's notion that nostalgia "is not simply an irrational attempt to turn the clock back…but raises 'the spectre of alternative modernities.'"[52]

Beyond critical and conceptual tools, what much of this scholarship on deindustrialization shares is a refusal to accept its outcomes as historical givens, and a dedication to upholding the agency of its losers, "even in political defeat."[53] What I drew from it, at a general political and theoretical level, is an attention not just to how collective identities and agencies are destroyed by capitalist restructuring, but to how new ones *form*. At the same time, I hoped to modestly redress a stark imbalance. Clark and High correctly note that discussion on deindustrialization is impoverished by a failure to admit the experiences of female workers in the textile and electrical appliance industries.[54] That heavy industries employing "the classic male proletarian worker of the industrial age" have monopolized public and academic concern perhaps reflects the "'common assumption' that unemployment is less significant for women than for men."[55] Clark posits a related perception that the transition to service work—already considered "women's work"—does not entail a loss of identity for female industrial workers. Whatever the cause, the result is a literature in which "women are predominantly secondary figures."[56] Clarke's work on Moulinex workers, and Clark's on the Lee Jeans occupation, are a foot in the door, but much remains to be done, especially as deindustrialization picks up in China, where 60% of rural-to-urban factory workers are women.[57]

Several labour historians have described the "self-fulfilling prophecy" of women workers' historically restricted union involvement, where, fighting hostility from both male employers and male trade unionists, "resources became doubly exhausted."[58] This is a recurring theme in both the early and late history of Montreal's garment industry, as I will later show. Save Clark's somewhat pat analysis of Lee Jeans female workers' alliance with male shipbuilders, this double bind has received little attention in literature on deindustrialization, despite its likely impact on collective resistance and collective memory. Like Lipsig-Mummé in her 1987 article on the strike, I would argue that this history contains valuable lessons for present and future organizing, even in post-industrial places.

Holding this double bind in mind, it is hard not to see the relative indifference to female experiences of deindustrialization as a tacit consensus that women workers had it worse to begin with, less to lose, and more to look forward to. This perhaps explains why moral economy has been little used to discuss women, save as extensions of male industrial worlds. While my research makes painfully clear that life as a rank-and-file female garment worker in 1980s Montreal was no cakewalk, it also reveals union shops, these last bulwarks against the dissolution and invisibilization of garment work, as "spaces from which strong networks and friendships extended out from the shop floor into the industrial communities in which they were located."[59] That CATV successfully organized so vulnerable and diverse a workforce is a testament to the binding power of shared material experience, on which deindustrialization, via homework, represented an assault. Moreover, the decision to strike was less about wages, considered fairly good at the time, than about the threat of imminent redundancy, and the loss of

dignity and security this entailed. That unionized garment workers risked their jobs to forestall a worse future suggests there was still something left to defend.

To my mind, a moral economy framework, bolstered by related historical concepts around disembedding, structures of feeling, and radical nostalgia, best illuminates the web of experience and expectation giving shape to garment workers' public and private lives, and grounding their demands for a better one. It also throws into sharp historical relief the patronizing "realism" of media accounts of the 1983 strike, which, like those of Clarke's Moulinex closure, pathologized resistance to a deteriorating status quo as a childish refusal to move forward in time, ideological conflict in the present thereby disappearing into a mandatory choice between past and future.

While female histories of industrial decline are much-needed, my research aims less to insert women workers into historical conversation around deindustrialization than to offer a different perspective on both. Recent work around deindustrialization within labour and social history weds a sophisticated historical consciousness with a sense of political urgency. What it perhaps lacks, in addition to consideration of women workers, is an attention to the social production of space. Labour geographer Andrew Herod points out that labour and social historians "have generally tended to view geography in terms of how place functions as a 'context' for social action, rather than in terms of how space and spatial relations may serve as sources of power and objects of struggle."[60] While the historians I draw from stress that deindustrialization is a fundamentally geographic expression of capitalist restructuring, and one affecting and affected by geographic identities, they are somewhat less attentive to how moral economies are spatially constituted. These scholars rightly reject aesthetic readings of deindustrialization that serve to erase widespread socioeconomic hardship,[61] but in their laudable commitment to a social and political reading of deindustrialization, they have perhaps overlooked some of the ways in which the spatial is also the social.

In this thesis, I hoped to enrich a historical understanding of class and gender struggle in the garment industry by taking geography seriously, and *socially*. This meant understanding its deindustrialization as a project of socio-spatial fragmentation enacted through the gender-specific restructuring tactic of homework, and the organizing leading up to the 1983 strike as its dialectical response—a political will towards socio-spatial *cohesion* around shared interests, and a strategic claim to real and representational urban space. As a sidebar, but linked to the transparent political agenda of this research, I was also interested in how this feminist working class association has all but disappeared from public representations of the Mile End, massive public and private investment having replaced it with other more marketable ones. For spatial approaches to class and gender struggle, I mine Marxist and feminist geography.

A Wide View: Spatial Perspectives on Class Struggle

Marxist spatial theorists working within geography and urban theory have variously enriched a vertical understanding of class struggle by theorizing its horizontal (i.e., spatial) dimensions, their work converging on a "spatial turn" in the humanities in the 1970s and 1980s. Much of this work builds on French social philosopher Henri Lefebvre's groundbreaking thesis that "capitalism has found itself able to attenuate (if not resolve) its internal contradictions for a century…*by occupying space, by producing a space*."[62] Spatial contributions to Marxist theory ask us to rethink space as actively, socially produced, much as we distinguish between "time and

its socially produced outcome, history."[63] Developing Lefebvre's hunch that "space and the political organization of space express social relationships but also react back upon them,"[64] Marxist geographers and urban theorists have worked to establish a dialectical relationship between society and space, and a language with which to specify it.

For Marxist geographers working in the abstract, capitalism unfolds on two planes, "[buying] time for itself out of the space it captures."[65] While not specifically about women industrial workers, their work sheds important light on homework, here a fundamentally spatial tactic of industrial restructuring in which workers are made to surrender the social and material benefits of visible, centralized labour in exchange for the precarious isolation of the home. Seen this way, garment deindustrialization in Montreal was a process of progressive spatial—and thus, social, cultural, and political—fragmentation. This perspective is important, but one-sided. In the literature I describe below, it is not just capital accumulation but *class struggle* that unfolds on two planes. This vantage point reveals garment workers contesting the pernicious spatial logic of subcontracting and its weaponization, first by organizing themselves against the spatial odds, and then by taking to the streets to loudly and visibly reclaim lost territory.

Wrested from the realm of pure theory, spatial perspectives on urban class struggle broaden understanding and open up strategic possibilities—the causes, effects, and *stakes* of these conflicts become spatial ones as well. Edward Soja writes extensively on the unexpected rash of mobilizations in the wake of deindustrialization and economic restructuring in 1990s Los Angeles. For him, the efforts of coalition groups such as the Bus Riders Union, Justice for Janitors, and the Right to the City Alliance describe a fight "to take greater control over the social production of urbanized space," efforts that work back upon the city's geography.[66] Even when these struggles are around wages, such as Justice for Janitors, they are space-contingent *and* space-shaping. The concentration of LA's immigrant working poor in its inner city ensured a density of interaction that allowed J4J to effectively organize. Moreover, the group used an explicitly spatial strategy, selecting Century City, a symbolic cloister of commercial power west of downtown LA and the site of historic 1967 antiwar demonstrations, as their protest ground.[67]

Of similar conceptual value is Don Mitchell's writing on California migrant workers revealing how material struggles are written on the landscape. Here, California's Central Valley, in both its material and representational forms, is recast as the variable outcome of an ongoing struggle between migrant farm labourers and growers. Mitchell is sensitive to how representations of space, whether about glorifying private ownership or indulging cultural vanity, "'dissolve and conceal' tangible relations of power; they are duplicitous."[68] Here, they mask a geography of violent expropriation and contestation. Peeling away these layers, Mitchell's work demonstrates that any vertical struggle over material conditions is also a horizontal struggle for spatial legitimacy and spatial control. Put another way, "not only do migratory workers in agricultural California have to continually fight just to survive…they also have to continually fight their own aestheticization, their dissolution, in the landscape."[69]

Like Soja and Mitchell's, Andrew Herod's work within labour geography spatializes a vertical understanding of class struggle to attend not just to how "workers' lives are structured and embedded spatially" but to workers' active role in their own social and spatial reproduction. Just as much of the historical work on deindustrialization disputes historical inevitability, labour geography confronts the mind-numbing assumption that capital's spatial logic is always already imposed from without. Herod's work on the New York City ILGWU shows its members enacting a consciously spatial strategy to stall deindustrialization in the early 1980s. To limit loft

conversions and safeguard members' jobs, the union leveraged threatened opposition to a Times Square redevelopment plan to pressure the city into establishing a Special Garment Center District, which still exists today. Herod's workers are here "sentient spatial actors" applying their own spatial fix to global economic trends.[70]

Jane Wills and Angela Hale's "'worker's-eye' view" of the operation of the global garment industry picks up the thread of Montreal garment workers' struggle against subcontracting, placing it in present-day geographic perspective.[71] Here we find the cost-cutting strategies developed in deindustrializing garment industries, "exemplary of contemporary trends in global production," deepened and extended in cheaper labour environments across Asia, Eastern Europe, and Central America.[72] Wills and Hale's work provides an internationalist compass for my own, a reminder of "the 'human web' connecting global experiences of industrialization."[73] Like Herod, they question the strange disregard for labour in work on commodity supply chains, describing "widespread resistance by women workers, supported by a growing network of organizations," and exploring strategies for reconfiguring industrial power relations in their favour.[74]

As much as my research borrows spatial approaches from Marxist and labour geography, it draws its spirit from urban theorist Andy Merrifield's writing on urban struggles. Merrifield's "dialectical urbanism," a cosmopolitan take on Marx's class struggle as the motor of history, recognizes that cities derive their "problematical energy" from contradiction and conflict, and that this friction "needs to be harnessed somehow, not collapsed."[75] While recognizing a similar dialectic between local and global processes, Merrifield follows Edward Thompson and Raymond Williams in his conviction "that truth claims about cities must be conceived from the bottom upward, must be located and grounded in the street, in urban public space, in everyday life." Merrifield's case studies around affordable housing, corporate development, policing, and government accountability are ever faithful to this principle, wedding spirited observation, critical analysis, and political imagination to describe "cities made liveable by people struggling to live."[76] Like Dante's "infernal flame,"[77] Montreal garment workers' fight for dignity and security dramatizes and illuminates the city's human tensions as it strains towards a variously conceived future.

A Feminist View: Spatial Perspectives on Class and Gender

To reduce the 1983 garment strike to class struggle alone would be to miss out on its chaotic dynamism, as well as its lessons. Gender, ethnicity, language, and citizenship status add to the kaleidoscope of identities and affinities that compel this research in the first place. Just as Montreal's garment industry was a profitable marriage of capitalism and patriarchy, organized resistance to its deindustrialization was articulated along both class and gender lines. As a restructuring tactic, homework is not only socio-spatial but *gender-specific*, and the radical response to it equally a feminist one. To do this subject justice, I wanted to complicate a Marxist historical-geographical approach with a feminist one, at both the structural and personal level. I first took up two different spatial approaches to jointly theorizing capitalism and patriarchy. Moving inward, I borrowed concepts from feminist geography to frame issues around identity, subjectivity, and the body, and their connection to space and place.

Social Reproduction Theory

Social reproduction theory (SRT) offers an approach to economic exploitation and gender oppression that more closely resembles how they are lived and felt—as a complex unity rather than as separate analytical categories. Following from its "fundamental insight…that human labor is at the heart of creating or reproducing society as a whole," is a close attention to the social processes that produce and reproduce life under capitalism, and a refusal to separate them from those that produce commodities.[78]

SRT is concerned with how spaces of production and reproduction are socially created, coded, and experienced. In this sense, it is also a spatial theory. By physically dividing work from home, industrialization helped institute a sense that these are separate spheres of activity—one economic and one social—such that "the domestic tasks of wives and mothers became invisible as work, while women who worked for wages were considered the exception, not the rule."[79] As deindustrialization, via homework, forced precarious female garment workers back into the home, their wage labour became invisible as well. Understanding work and home as acutely gendered socio-spatial constructions is crucial to parsing the themes of pride, dignity, and visibility that accompany the moral economic language around the strike. It also sheds light on the complicated solidary relationship between unionized factory workers and the precarious contract workers they saw their grim future in, and whose existence was weaponized against theirs. SRT is also useful for conceptualizing the role of government in deindustrialization from a feminist and labour perspective, where policies that enable fragmentation, de-unionization, and massive job loss dovetail with a transfer of the costs of social reproduction back onto working people, in the form of cuts to social spending.[80]

Feminist Economic Geography

SRT is concerned with how capitalist systems circumscribe gender inequality, often spatially. Feminist economic geographers offer a more dialectical approach to socio-spatial production under patriarchal capitalism, in which space and gender relations are mutually producing. Here, the capital-labour and socio-spatial dialectics elaborated by (male) Marxist geographers and urban social theorists are given yet another dimension. In this conception, "geography matters to the construction of gender, and the fact of geographical variation in gender relations…is a significant element in the production and reproduction of both imaginative geographies and uneven development."[81]

Doreen Massey and Linda McDowell broadly theorize (Western) capitalism and patriarchy as historic projects of joint control over space and identity, operating through the real and symbolic cultural distinction between "public" and "private" domains, where "the attempt to confine women to the domestic sphere was both a specifically spatial control and, through that, a social control on identity."[82] This slight variation on SRT's productive and reproductive realms is less an attempt to extend the definition of "economic" to the private sphere than to position the spatial separation of work and home as a culturally specific construction. Of special concern to me in their work is how women's spatial mobility—specifically, the fact of women "going to work"—has historically met with social panic and economic restriction. Put another way, how have capitalist economies found it lucrative to fix women in space and place, and how does this relate to "the masculine desire to fix the woman in a stable and stabilizing identity"?[83]

McDowell and Massey's *A Woman's Place?* examines spatial and gender divisions of labour across 19th century industrial England, linking women's variable socio-spatial mobility, and its popular reception, to regional disparities in the spatial separation of work and home. Four very different portraits of "women's place" in industrial capitalism emerge: the "male solidarity and female oppression" of Durham's coal towns, the unprecedented female labour force and trade union participation of Lancashire's cotton towns, the socio-spatial immobility of waged homework in London's garment district, and the traditional agricultural work-sharing of East Anglia.[84] Of critical comparative value here are the Lancashire and London cases, and how they bracket the evolution and devolution of Montreal's garment industry.

In Lancashire county, a long, proud history of female industrial participation belies an earlier one of social disruption and male reaction, whereby "modern industry was a direct challenge to the traditional sexual division of labour in social production."[85] Suddenly, "the men who had been at the heads of productive households were unemployed or deriving a pittance from their work whilst their wives and children were driven out to the factories." Despite the best efforts of a "'coincidence of interests' between philanthropists, the state…and the male working class" to malign and restrict it, female industrial labour came to dominate, leaving many men "condemned to domestic occupations."[86] By the end of the century, "it became almost unthinkable for women not to work," and female trade-union membership was the norm.[87] Moreover, female industrial work culture spawned a vibrant regional suffragette movement.

In urban Hackney, home to London's rag trade, levels of waged female labour were similarly high but failed to cause alarm. McDowell and Massey put this down to its innocuous spatial organization—for women, textile work in Hackney largely took the form of homework. Confined to their "natural sphere" and "individualized, isolated from other workers," female homeworkers posed no great threat to the existing order. Unsurprisingly, unionization rates were negligible. Weighing this against Lancashire, McDowell and Massey find that "it wasn't so much 'work' as 'going out to' work which was the threat to the patriarchal order," in that "it threatened the ability of women adequately to perform their domestic role as homemaker for men and children, and it gave them an entry into public life, mixed company, a life not defined by family and husband."[88] Following Hackney into the 1980s, they note "an intensification of the old patterns of exploitation and subordination," whereby Hackney's homeworkers remain a cheap and unorganized reserve labour force with little to no bargaining power. Importantly, even this ruthlessly stingy industrial form finds itself undermined by changes to the international division of labour, with the inflow of cheap imports on the one hand, and service work on the other.[89]

McDowell and Massey's four-fold comparison leaves no doubt that "taking gender seriously produces a different analysis," revealing not just how labour systems structure space and gender, but how "industry has actively used geographical differences in systems of gender relations in attempts to remain competitive."[90] In *Space, Place, and Gender*, Massey goes a step further, speculating on male workers' unintended part in the threat posed to them by deindustrialization:

> The decline of male employment was an important condition for the formation of the women of these areas into a "reserve of labour". To the extent that it was complicit in the rigidity of the sexual division of labour in these regions, and in the exclusion of women from so many social activities, the old traditional heart of the (male) labour movement may well itself have been party to the creation of the new super-cheap labour-forces

industry was searching out in the sixties and seventies.[91]

McDowell and Massey's work in this area is a gift to my own, offering direct comparisons within a general framework for understanding economic change, in which class and gender, intricately bound up, contribute to the ongoing production of space and place. Moreover, their mobility framing is a useful spatial complement to SRT. However, because its main concern is with making a structural case for the spatial importance of gender, it has less time for stickier poststructuralist feminist ideas around identity, subjectivity, and the body. For insights on these concepts from a geographical perspective, I turn to other work by Massey, as well as that of other feminist geographers.

Feminist Geography: Identity, Subjectivity, and the Body

Gender, as a lived social construction, feeds into not only the production of space, but its conceptualization. Feminist geographers such as Gillian Rose lament the extent to which geographic discourse and thought are structured around insidious dualisms such as public-private, culture-nature, and—the mother lode—space-time, connecting these to the same thoroughly Western mode of thought that endlessly opposes masculine and feminine.[92] For Massey, "it is, moreover, time which is typically coded masculine and space, being absence or lack, as feminine." If "history, progress, civilization, politics and transcendence," as time-adjacent concepts, are coded masculine, the "exercise of rescuing space from its position…of stasis, passivity and depoliticization…connects directly with a wider philosophical debate in which gendering and the construction of gender relations are central."[93] This is the abstract political thrust of feminist geography.

Gender also inflects notions of place and community. Massey follows other feminist theorists in shelving psychoanalytic approaches to identity, which, founded on the notion of a bounded self, tend to be "defensive and counter-positional." She favours rethinking place-based identity as a multiple and shifting "articulation of the social relations in which a person/group is involved."[94] Thinking relationally narrows the conceptual gap between identity and subjectivity, inviting the understanding that "we are in fact always multiple and contradictory subjects, inhabitants of a diversity of communities…constructed by a variety of discourses and precariously and temporarily sutured at the intersection of those positions."[95] Put more plainly, identity and subjectivity are in open conversation with space and place, and the people that make them. From this vantage point, Massey's insight that spatial control is also a control on identity is especially powerful. As well, emphasizing the spatial and relational contingency of identity aids thinking about the formation of collective *political* subjectivities in relation to structures of power, a concept crucial to my work, and indeed to any political project.

From thinking about identity as multiple and shifting, it is a short step to thinking about the body as the site of those identities. In a poststructuralist view, the body, like capitalism, is far from stable—it is constantly being produced.[96] Poststructuralist feminism is often viewed as antithetical to Marxist theory, but this is only up for debate if we take them as totalizing theories of exploitation and oppression. Melissa Wright's ethnographic work, particularly that on Ciudad Juarez's *maquiladoras* "as a window for studying how local social processes contribute to the constant renovation of global capital," shows them synthesized to great effect.[97] A joint approach reveals not only "how the laboring body, under capitalist conditions, emerges as an embodied site of exploitation and accumulation," but "how social differences cut across working

populations so that no single 'worker' emerges as a unified subject with a unified experience."[98] Here, resistance by workers can be as much to the discourses that devalue them as to material conditions, and need not involve "strict allegiance to class politics."[99] As I unraveled the knot of identities and allegiances around the 1983 strike, the social spaces that made them, and the discourses that shaped them, Wright's work provided a blueprint.

A Stitch in Time?

> Sociologists who have stopped the time machine and, with a good deal of conceptual huffing and puffing, have gone down to the engine room to look, tell us that nowhere at all have they been able to locate and classify a class. They can only find a multitude of people with different occupations, incomes, status-hierarchies, and the rest. Of course, they are right, since class is not this or that part of the machine, but the way the machine works once it is set in motion – not this and that interest, but the friction of interests – the movement itself, the heat, the thundering noise.[100]

Post-Brexit and -Trump, work around deindustrialization resonates more than ever. As part of a tiny sub-discipline amplifying the "roar…on the other side of silence" of those affected,[101] recent historical work around deindustrialization communicates an urgent sense that history is not, per Fukuyama, dead—that post-1980 global economic restructuring has come home to roost in the form of widespread economic despair and growing political polarization, and that the future is still very much up for grabs. In subtler ways, it affirms the continuing relevance of stable, centralized employment as a source of social meaning, and of class struggle at the point of production, where the class relationship is arguably most legible as a friction of interests.

Rather than pit history against geography, I insist that a commitment to progressive internationalism demands both perspectives. Wills, Hale, and Wright remind us that deindustrialization is by no means complete. As industrial capitalism continues to buy time by capturing a space, pitting place against place in a race to the bottom, a "territorial consciousness…based on the exploitative nature of capitalist relations of production and reproduction, and not on parochialism and emotional attachment to place" becomes ever more crucial.[102] Pulling back somewhat, I hoped for my interviews to recapture "the way the machine works once it is set in motion,"[103] but also to situate this "machine" within an active conceptualization of local and global geographies.

At the same time, the story of garment work in Montreal, and its liquidation, is equally about immigrant women struggling over space, and for a *place*. This hot mess of intersecting identities and geographies, where what was at stake was not just material security but female pride, mobility, and visibility, demands a feminist spatial praxis, as does a fuller understanding of the moral economy of garment work. By dramatizing the pivotal moment "when people realize what privileges they may have had were really contingent all along," I hoped to recast the Mile End and "Mile-Ex" as neighbourhoods where a feminist working class made and mobilized itself.[104]

Historical work around the social and political half-life of industrial decline and geographic work around the variable spatial strategies of capital and labour attuned me to the ways in which deindustrialization and its repercussions are both unprecedented and nothing new.

Work within feminist geography positioned me to examine these contradictions and ambiguities at closer range, refracted by concerns around female identity, visibility, and mobility. Integrating these perspectives, I was able to develop a deeper analysis of spatialized and gendered labour struggle, helping me thread the needle on resistance to garment deindustrialization in Montreal.

Research Design

My literature review builds a theoretical and conceptual arsenal around the 1983 garment strike to better understand the lived experience of deindustrialization and its contestation, and to broaden and deepen that understanding with geographical and historical specificity. Around my interest in spatial class and gender struggle, and its framing within shifting moral economies and "structures of feeling," coalesced the following broad research question: How did Montreal garment workers challenge the spatial and gendered reconfiguration of garment work to contest deindustrialization in the 1980s? Because I wanted to answer this question communicatively and indirectly, rather than instrumentally, I approached it sidelong, through semi-structured oral history interviews and archival material, as I discuss later.

While the deindustrialization literature I reviewed provides the historical framing and political impetus behind this question, the Marxist and feminist geography literature that follow it opened up several sub-questions that structured and refined my analysis going forward:

a) How did these workers confront both the spatial fragmentation represented by the reversion to homework, and the regressive gender logic beneath it?
b) Additionally, how did they confront the potential threat to socio-spatial mobility, and thus, to personal and collective identity, represented by the resurgence of homework?
c) To what extent were these struggles—about space, gender, and identity—necessarily intertwined?

These questions, opened up by the Marxist and feminist literature, bring attention to important aspects of the 1983 strike. A common thread in the literature I reviewed is a consideration of workers' agency as much as capital's machinations, and to histories and geographies as their dialectical outcome. Animating much of this work is an implicit sense that "by writing a more active role for workers concerning how capitalism functions, workers, activists, and progressive scholars may begin to identify geographical possibilities and strategies through which workers may challenge, outmaneuver, and perhaps even beat capital."[105] The Marxist geographers I looked to extend this engagement to the social production of space, drawing attention to the spatial stakes of resistance to deindustrialization. Feminist geography and social reproduction theory refined this focus further, zeroing in on the overlap between capitalism and patriarchy as programs of joint control over space and identity. Viewed from this busy intersection, resistance to garment deindustrialization was inseparable from a feminist claim to space and place.

To buy time, Montreal garment businesses "employed weaker workers in more vulnerable conditions."[106] Just as larger companies looked to cheaper labour environments abroad, smaller companies sought to create, through subcontracting, "a reserve army of the precariously employed" out of a female immigrant underclass.[107] Work within feminist geography, particularly Melissa Wright's, provided a blueprint for understanding how social

difference cuts across class positionality to shape personal and collective historical geographies, and how CATV, taking such difference as a baseline condition, managed to organize a loose patchwork of identities and affinities around a set of shared interests. As well, literature around relational identity, subjectivity, and embodied knowledge invited an understanding of garment deindustrialization as a process of identity loss intimately tied to female mobility. Lastly, by putting feminist geography in conversation with moral economy, I hoped to reach a fuller understanding of garment deindustrialization from which both will benefit.

Methodology

Oral History Interviews

> In memory, time becomes "place": all the recollected past exists simultaneously in the space of the mind.[108]

In this thesis, I wanted to tell the story of garment deindustrialization in Montreal through people who lived it, backlit by visual and textual contextualization. To that end, I first turned to oral history. As a political project of knowledge creation, oral history insists, like Williams, Thompson, and Merrifield earlier, that history lives not just in books—as "a narrative of kings and war"—but in everyday people.[109] Having little experience of my own, I borrowed almost wholesale from Alessandro Portelli's approach to the genre, where, broadly,

> the task and theme of oral history—an art dealing with the individual in social context—is to explore this distance and this bond [between "history" and personal experience], to search out the memories in the private, enclosed space of houses and kitchens and—without violating that space, without cracking the uniqueness of every spore with an arrogant need to scrutinize, to know, and to classify—to connect them with history and in turn force history to listen to them.[110]

As a research method, interviews are distinguished by "the scope they provide for probing meaning and emotions," and by the extent to which they are messy, intimate social encounters.[111] What distinguishes oral history from other approaches to interviewing within the humanities is "the combination of the prevalence of the narrative form on the one hand, and the search for a connection between biography and history, between individual experience and the transformations of society, on the other."[112] This search is but one in a layer cake of subjective interpretation, where human memory, already a kind of interpretive alchemy, takes external shape through contingent and collaborative dialogue between interviewer and interviewee. Michael Frisch's "shared authority" is a way to spotlight this latter component.[113] Here, David Butz's distinction (via Habermas) between instrumental and communicative action in research practice becomes a baseline,[114] as "two people work hard to understand the views and experience of one person: the interviewee."[115]

If oral history refers both to what interviewees say, and to what historians do, any discussion of its theory and practice quickly becomes one of self-reflexivity.[116] Understanding the interview process as both deeply personal and inescapably social, and its product as a complex co-creation, creates basic conditions for accountability and transparency. At the level of

narrative interpretation, it means treating the collecting of data "*as* data."[117] I tried to keep all this in mind during and after the interviews I describe below. Though I ended up including only one of the oral history interviews I conducted myself, this framework remained a useful methodological compass.

Fatima Rocchia

This thesis owes its existence to Fatima, whose story inspired and carries the novel. I contacted Fatima in October of 2017 after reading her name in Lipsig-Mummé's 1987 post mortem on the 1983 strike. She has a website advertising her small business—a textile and homesteading workshop in Saint-Joseph-du-lac. Fatima doesn't speak English, and I barely speak French. When I called her, she handed the phone to her English-speaking friend, to whom I explained my project. She asked that I send a list of questions in French to give a better sense of what I wanted to know (likely because my explanation confused her). I fired off an email explaining that I'm a *féministe de gauche* interested in the garment industry and the circumstances surrounding the 1983 strike. I kept my questions vague, fearing she would prepare answers in advance, but made sure to mention Lea Roback and Madeleine Parent. This demonstration of political loyalties earned me an effusive response, and I arranged to interview her at her farm the following week.

To manage the language barrier, I brought my very personable francophone friend Andrew with me to the farm to serve as interpreter. Fatima seemed both pleased and perplexed by my interest in this history. We settled in and Andrew asked her about what the garment industry was like in the 1970s and 1980s. I nodded along and tried to guess what she was saying. It was painful not being able to direct the interview or follow up on particular points, but I'd briefed Andrew on everything I wanted to know, and he did a good job of gathering loose ends. It helped that what I wanted to know about—working conditions, subcontracting, union turmoil, CATV's organizing activities, media treatment—largely coincided with what she wanted to talk about. Fatima has led many lives since 1983 and it was clear she hadn't thought about this particular one in quite a while. Her responses, loose and fragmented at first, gathered coherence and conviction over the course of the interview.

A great deal of pride shone through the language barrier. Fatima wondered at how she and her CATV comrades had found the energy to wage a battle on two fronts, against the bosses and the union. Recounting her court appearances, the CATV's organizing activities, and the *Dossier noir* she helped publish, Fatima openly marveled at her own pluck, repeatedly calling herself a "*brasseuse de merde*." Cut short by a minor emergency, the interview lasted just under an hour and a half, but Fatima seemed to have more to say, and extended an open invitation to her farm. She sent us off with a maxim along the lines of, "It's important to use the past to make the future," which released a big hit of dopamine to the political center of my brain.

I strongly doubted my ability to transcribe colloquial French speech, so I hired my friend Jonny to do it. He knew I was paying him by the hour, so he dispensed with parts of the interview that didn't make sense or weren't relevant to the project. As a result, the transcript has gaps, and doesn't flow especially well. While I have since resolved to have the interview transcribed in full, the partial version has had to suffice. I arrived at a serviceable translation by running the transcript through Google Translate and then having Jonny correct any obvious errors and smooth out any kinks (there were a lot of literal translations of Fatima's idioms).

Throughout this process, I was acutely aware of how dependent on other people the project had started to become.

Preparing to read the transcript, I was a little worried that Fatima's version of events would contradict my other research, and that I would have to untangle a whole bunch of inconsistencies. This was not the case. Fatima's account corroborated almost everything in Lipsig-Mummé's piece, as well as the newspaper articles, albeit from a very different perspective. Where Fatima veered from Lipsig-Mummé was in her insistence that taking power within the union was not an option. Fatima worked at Sample Dress, one of the few remaining large union shops, whose response to international competition was to threaten to shift operations, and eventually follow through (Sample moved to Hong Kong). This may be why there was a stronger emphasis on factories abandoning ship than on homework, though she saw these processes as dovetailing to create widespread job insecurity.

Fatima's contempt for the Montreal ILGWU was visceral. I began to wonder if I could adequately contextualize the union leadership's Faustian bargain without devaluing this emotion. My fear was that simply transferring Fatima's understandable disgust to the page would, for someone unfamiliar with this history, obscure some of the structural pressures at play. At the same time, sublating so personal a feeling as betrayal struck me as a betrayal in itself. For the reader, context renders the Montreal ILGWU's legacy intelligible, if utterly disappointing. For Fatima, however, context does not moderate experience. I later realized that my obvious intention was for the reader to identify with Fatima—to feel her situated emotions as their own. If I succeeded at this, context would refract rather than dull these feelings by adding complexity and historical weight. That said, Andrew's first characterization of Fatima's account was one of pride and achievement (even I picked up on this with my miserable French) and this is the emotion I felt most beholden to.

I decided to include Fatima's voice in the original untouched French, and ground it with bilingual source material, as well as my own narration in English. This decision was both practical and theoretical. Even with an excellent translation, I suspect much of the flavor of her colloquial Portuguese-inflected *Quebecois* French would be lost. Variously inflected French was also the closest thing striking garment workers had to a common language. That said, English was also in circulation among workers who spoke better English than French, as well as union leaders and business owners. Language has been a social and political fault line in Quebec dating back to the Conquest of 1760, and confusion and tension around language is a defining feature of Montreal life. A mess of English and French seemed a good way to embrace rather than erase this tension in my novel. It also echoes the odd circumstance of an American union in post-1960s Quebec. Though the resignation of Bernard Shane allowed for a "Francising" of the Quebec ILGWU in the 1970s,[118] my sense (from Fatima and the French newspapers) is that it was still seen as an outsider.

Going forward, I extracted some themes from the interview to help structure my storyboard:

1. Manufacturers' use of subcontracting and eventual closure to justify an intensification of work in sweatshop conditions, and to sap bargaining power.
2. For unionized workers, the decision to strike was less about wages than about the threat of imminent redundancy, and the loss of dignity and security this entailed.

3. The contradictory role of union membership as defending a last vestige of job security and decent pay while simultaneously hastening the departure of larger companies and the collapse of the industry.
4. Beyond charges of corruption, collusion, and negligence, the Montreal ILGWU and its manufacturers knew exactly what was coming, and had simply given up ("*C'était fermé*").
5. The urgent need to publish the *Dossier noir*, and the level of exposure that entailed for CATV members.
6. The difficulty of organizing a geographically dispersed workforce with no language in common.
7. The strikers' patronizing media reception.
8. The linking up of struggles in the form of support from construction worker spouses, who were engaged in a simultaneous labour dispute with the QFL.
9. The sense that the industrial know-how that vanished along with the industry finds continuity in small local businesses.
10. The importance of staying socially and politically engaged, especially at the local scale, and of using past struggles to inform present ones.

False Starts

My initial plan was to supplement Fatima's story with two or three other garment worker narratives from around the same time. To that end, I spent more than a year casting about for people who remembered working in the garment industry in the 1980s, with few results. I started by searching Canada411 for every name I came across in newspaper articles and archival material on the industry. Fatima was quite a bit younger than most of her factory peers, so many of these people had likely passed on. Many more were likely listed under their husband's name. I got through to a former head of the Montreal chapter of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA) and interviewed him in his home, but his experience was very specific to the men's clothing industry and the union bureaucracy therein, so I decided to leave it out. After running down the list of names, I switched to tacking up flyers at Greek, Haitian, and Portuguese community centers. I met three former garment workers at the Association of Greek Workers and interviewed them together, hoping they would jog each other's memories, but instead ended up with audio of three very sweet retirees talking over each other in Greek.

Glen and Randy Rotchin

Just as I was considering interviewing Fatima again in more depth, she called to say she'd unearthed a copy of the *Dossier noir* mentioned in the interview, along with a big box of personal papers from her time working in and organizing the garment industry. I then pinned my hopes to this box, hoping it could substitute for another interview. In the process of sorting through it, I met Lauren Laframboise, a history student working on a similar topic, and began sharing research with her. She had separately interviewed both Glen and Randy Rotchin for an oral history class and sent the transcripts my way. While I hadn't intended to include a boss or manager perspective, these interviews were so rich in contextual detail missing from academic and newspaper articles and industry reports I'd been working with.

Using a very different, even oppositional, perspective to set the stage for Fatima's (like two moments in a dialectic) suddenly seemed like a compelling idea. The fact that their father owned the factory Fatima worked in, and that they're now in the business of "revitalizing" those same industrial properties, was the icing on a serendipitous cake. These interviews allowed me to avoid having a huge chunk of the book be in my own voice. I also felt that Randy and Glen being likeable and interesting would add to the productive political tension of the book instead of flattening it into a morality play. As well, in emphasizing the Canadian government's role, whether to absolve themselves or otherwise, Glen and Randy helped me restore a sense of institutional agency to the story of garment deindustrialization in Montreal, recasting it as the "willed and highly politicized process" Phillips describes.[119]

Other Primary Sources

Archives

I first went through the online archives of *Le Devoir*, *La Presse*, and *The Gazette* (now *The Montreal Gazette*) and pulled all news items from around the time of the strike. In preparation for a storyboard, I pulled all the photographs and most of the quotes I encountered in these news articles. I also used the reporting to flesh out Lipsig-Mummé's account of the strike, creating a detailed timeline of events. Where possible I wanted to recreate rather than tell, which meant I would be relying heavily on quotes and pictures. The newspaper quotes I curated were all a bit flat (Lipsig-Mummé's inventory of the strikers' various signs does a better job conveying a residual structure of feeling than *The Gazette*).

In search of a fuller perspective, I looked into the ILGWU archive at the *Centre d'histoire et d'archives du travail*, but this was a dead end. The one or two decades surrounding the strike were a black hole in terms of recordkeeping, indicating a period of institutional chaos. One box contained framed photographs of union events, and each of these was a sea of white men. The absurdity of a Ladies' Union with no visible ladies in it sent the archivist into a giggling fit. I did find a collection of commemorative essays published on the 25th anniversary of the Montreal ILGWU, many of which celebrated the expulsion of communists from the union following the 1937 strike. The Madeleine Parent fonds at McGill contained a wealth of information from the 1970s and 1980s on the ILGWU's various institutional scandals, much of which I later found in Fatima's papers.

The CBC archive turned out to be a crucial source for the graphic component of the graphic novel. The strike footage in "Quebec Garment workers' first strike in four decades" conveys a world of visual and affective information that textual sources cannot, and supplied a fair number of drawings and quotes. Visual inspiration aside, the CBC's 1983 exposé on "underground" homework and subcontracting, in its effort to do "both sides" journalism, excellently captures Raymond Williams' residual and emergent structures of feeling around garment deindustrialization in Montreal. I reproduced quotes from bosses and other industry figures on page 38 and the interview with Mirielle Trottier (incidentally a CATV co-founder) on page 62.

Fatima's Personal Papers

In late May of 2019, Lolo, Andrew and I made another trip to Fatima's farm to help her turn over her soil for spring planting, at the end of which she presented us with an ancient box of personal papers from her time working in and organizing the garment industry. This box was both a gift and a curse. On the one hand, it was a treasure trove of primary source material I would not have found anywhere else—CATV letters, press releases, meeting minutes, planning documents, and the *Dossier noir* itself, but also correspondence between Fatima and Sample Dress, the ILGWU, and the FTQ, stacks of informational pamphlets and activist publications related to garment work, ILGWU souvenirs, factory pay stubs, and much more. On the other hand, the papers were a mouse-nibbled mess (this is where I got the idea to use the mouse as a narrative device) and almost entirely in French. I wanted to scan, transcribe, translate, and archive parts of the box but every time I opened it, hoping to create some order out of chaos, the language barrier would trip me up.

Just as I began toying with pausing my degree to learn French, Lauren (the history student I mentioned earlier) appeared on the horizon. Lauren had just begun a history thesis on the same topic and was very curious about the papers. She helped me sift through and triage them by relevance. Lauren transcribed and translated the most important papers (almost everything CATV-related) and I scanned a great deal of the remainder. The result is a partial informal archive of CATV's organizing activities and garment deindustrialization in Montreal more generally.

Creative Process

Conceptualizing

Reading various accounts of the garment industry's heyday, the history felt quaint and remote. I wanted to not only reintroduce the second half of the story, but knit it to the present. Centering Fatima's loose conversational narration, and nudging the reader into her subject position, seemed a good way to make this history present and felt. Fatima's words painted a rich picture for me because I was already invested in their subject and their speaker. Preparing to storyboard, I imagined myself as an oblivious and hopelessly jaded reader. From this perspective, Fatima's narration required a fair amount of visual and textual ballast.

I'd never made a graphic novel before, but I'd consumed a few. Revisiting some of these for inspiration, Kate Evans' *Red Rosa*, a graphic biography about Rosa Luxembourg, was especially instructive. Evans relies almost entirely on original quotes from Luxembourg's writings and correspondence to create a whirlwind account of her life. While the story derives its emotional charge from Luxembourg's own words, Evans' hand is visible in the narrative framing, as well as in a brief forward describing her process. Comic journalist Joe Sacco and manga historian *Shigeru Mizuki* go further, spotlighting the subjective nature of their work by inserting themselves as characters. Sacco features himself heavily throughout, this functioning as a sort of accountability process for the high-stakes war reporting he does. Inserting myself as a minor character seemed like a good way to put myself on the same page as my other narrators and position myself as embodied and fallible. From there, I decided to open the story with my own

process of encountering it, as a way to situate it in the present day and set up the link between gentrification and deindustrialization.

I wanted to use primary sources wherever possible, but in order to construct a readable narrative from interview transcripts and primary source material, I needed to be able to ask questions, fill in gaps, and make connections. The sassy mouse character—expert witness to all this history but still embodied and flawed—was a way to do this that also allowed me to have some fun with the material and keep the reader engaged (though I admit it also creates a hokey high school textbook feel at times). I hoped my conversations with the mouse would give the reader a window into my thought process as I wrestled with all these historical connections. At the same time, it allowed me to keep the actual narrative text fairly straightforward so it wouldn't overshadow the source material.

Making conceptual and analytical links to the academic literature without the novel becoming didactic or alienating was one of the harder lines to walk. Having no precedent to look to within academia, I developed my own way of spinning the literature into the fabric of the novel. Footnotes struck me as a good way to make the novel optionally academic without cutting too much into the narrative flow. Similarly, the nested history book format of the second chapter seemed like the best way to pack 50 years of history into a short section with the option to pursue different levels of detail.

Storyboarding

By the time I sat down to construct, I had way more information than I knew what to do with. Having assembled all my source material, I expected the actual storyboarding process to unfold like a scene from *A Beautiful Mind*. Instead, it was like putting together a giant jigsaw puzzle with mismatched pieces and no clear edges. This was especially true of Chapter 3. Before I could let Fatima do most of the talking in Chapter 4, I needed Glen and Randy to set up the historical and political context of garment deindustrialization in Montreal. This meant endlessly shuffling sentences around until they cohered into a rough narrative, with emphasis on themes that come up later. Finessing all this speech into a story while retaining its original context would have been a simpler task if I'd conducted the interviews myself, but I enjoyed the challenge of coming at it obliquely and I think the result is more personal and off-the-cuff than it otherwise would have been. If anything, I think I went a bit overboard with editorializing their narratives to fill in gaps and make broader connections, but hopefully the result is a good primer for readers unfamiliar.

In Chapter 4, I leaned on Fatima's interview transcript wherever possible, editorializing only to clarify or add context. Chapters 4 and 5 presented a painful dilemma in terms of deciding what and how much of Fatima's archive to show. So many of these documents—particularly the handwritten ones—are fascinating to me and potentially overwhelming to anyone else. I decided to include the most relevant CATV documents in their original form by layering them together in one giant centerfold such that the reader can choose to read, visually scan, or move on. Other CATV documents I quoted as dialogue in the text. Also painful was not being able to include the *Dossier noir* in full. Finding it impossible to cherry-pick, I compromised by condensing it on page 94. Chapter 5 called up many historical parallels and I tried every trick in the book—photographs, quotes, mouse, footnotes—to bring some of these in.

Chapter 6, about the strike itself, borrows heavily from Lipsig-Mummé's account of the strike, as well as the newspaper articles and CBC footage I mentioned earlier. Fatima discusses her more recent political activity in the interview, and spelling this out seemed a good way to leave the reader with a sense of agency and continuity. I initially thought to end the book with Fatima's reminder about using the past to make the future, but later decided to introduce this idea obliquely instead, with Lea Roback passing on her 1940 scab strategy. Fatima's comment about indifference (a cryptic version of Gramsci's "optimism of the will") felt less obvious and more on message. In this way, Fatima's gentle advice carries a long thread of political engagement into the future by (hopefully) implicating the reader. At the same time, I really wanted to leave the reader with an internationalist perspective, turning the story not just inward but outward. Sewing Fatima's quote onto a label, which then floats down on some ambiguously Chinese garment workers, seemed like a subtle enough way to do this. Hopefully this two-part, open-ended conclusion leaves the reader with a sense of political possibility at two different but connected scales.

Drawing

Putting together even the slim first iteration of *Seam Stress* (For Steven High's class) was *much* more difficult and time-consuming than I'd imagined, and I struggled with a lot of the more complex illustrations. I finally entreated the help and advice of my friend Lolo, a visual artist and graphic design wizard. Preparing to expand it into a full-length graphic novel, I knew I'd have to get Lolo back on board. The digital storyboard I put together combined text with either very crude draft illustrations or descriptions of illustrations. Lolo and I met several times to discuss my suggested drawings and then settle on one for each panel.

Sacco applies the general rule that "anything that can be drawn accurately should be drawn accurately," defaulting to "*informed* imagination" for events he didn't witness.[120] Reaching into a past that is not our own, Lolo and I could only apply this rule where a visual record was available. Our best hope for faithful representation and historical ambience lay with stylizing the photographs and film stills I collected. Lolo and I used all of these and left the rest to our imaginations. Writing Chapters 3 and 4, I had a lot of information to pack in and little visual material to carry it. This is where I started storyboarding in a lot more playful and symbolic illustrations (such as the cursed pyramid and the A&R phoenix) as a way to emphasize information while lightening the load a little bit. Though the intention with these figurative illustrations was to return a sense of magic and fun, they also call up the mysterious process of human memory, itself a kind of interpretive sorcery. This, along with Fatima's winding recollection, seemed a good way draw on the tension between fact and memory and leave the novel "open to the possibilities of the untold, the symbolic, the implicit, and the ambiguous."[121]

Final Construction

After settling on a drawing for each panel, Lolo and I met to bang out better draft illustrations for each one. I then printed out, cut up, and stapled text from the digital storyboard onto the draft drawings to make the final (analog) storyboard. Lolo used this to execute final versions of the drawings in ink while I continued to refine the text and scan items from Fatima's archive. The final stage (which hilariously still took months) involved scanning all the finalized

drawings and pairing them with the text in Adobe InDesign. Lolo and I met once a week to do this together.

Seam Stress is Lolo's as much as mine. Their involvement allowed me to pack a lot more information into the novel, and where my illustrations would have been painstaking and leaden, theirs are bold and energetic, bringing this history to life in a way mine could not. Lolo's artistic brain wonderfully complemented my textual one, and their creativity breathed fresh air into the stale-seeming words I'd been staring at for months on end, keeping me excited and engaged. I initially felt sheepish about relying on so many other people—Fatima, Lolo, Andrew, Jonny, and Lauren—to complete my Master's thesis, but I have since embraced it. As Lolo and I move towards publishing the novel, I hope the project becomes even more interdependent.

Notes

[1] Julie Podmore, "St. Lawrence Blvd. as 'Third City': Place, gender and difference along Montréal's 'Main'" (PhD diss., McGill University, 1999), 103.

[2] Ibid., 121.

[3] Mercedes Steedman, "The Promise: Communist Organizing in the Needle Trades, the Dressmakers' Campaign, 1928-1937," *Labour/Le Travail* 34 (Fall 1994): 56.

[4] Carla Lipsig-Mummé, "Organizing Women in the Clothing Trades: Homework and the 1983 Garment Strike in Canada," *Studies in Political Economy* 22 (Spring 1987): 52.

[5] Steedman, "The Promise," 42.

[6] Lynda Yanz, Bob Jeffcott, Deena Ladd, and Joan Atlin, *Policy Options to Improve Standards for Women Garment Workers in Canada and Internationally* (Ottawa: Status of Women Canada, 1999), 14.

[7] Lipsig-Mummé, "Organizing Women," 45.

[8] Ibid., 47.

[9] Terry Copp, "The Rise of Industrial Unions in Montréal 1935-1945," *Relations Industrielles* 37, no. 4 (1982): 850.

[10] Bernard Shane, "Great Moments," in *Les / The Midinettes: 1937/1962*, ed. Edward Bantey (Montreal: Montreal Joint Board, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, 1962): 121.

[11] Lipsig-Mummé, "Organizing Women," 57, 52. Women, comprising 88% of the Quebec ILGWU's membership around this time, were largely excluded from its membership. Driving this fact home were the old photographs of union events I found in the ILGWU archive at the *Centre d'histoire et d'archives du travail*.

[12] Ibid., 47. As far as I've been able to tell, ILGWU was the main game in town by the 1980s. For an earlier history of garment unions in Montreal, see Copp's "The Rise of Industrial Unions in Montréal," or Steedman's "The Promise."

[13] Germain Tardif, "Midinettes : l'UIOVD a réduit ses demandes salariales en soirée," *La Presse*, August 17, 1983, A-5.

[14] Lipsig-Mummé, "Organizing Women," 60. Confirmed by Fatima Rocchia, interview by Leona Siaw, Saint-Joseph-du-Lac, November 5, 2017, audio and partial transcript.

[15] Ibid., 63.

[16] Rocchia, interview transcript.

[17] Lipsig-Mummé, "Organizing Women," 68.

[18] Steven High, "Beyond Aesthetics: Visibility and Invisibility in the Aftermath of Deindustrialization," *International Labor and Working Class History* 84 (Fall 2013): 150.

[19] Christopher DeWolf, "New life for a garment district," *Urban Photo*, July 4, 2008.

[20] Steven High, "'The Wounds of Class': A Historiographical Reflection on the Study of Deindustrialization, 1973-2013," *History Compass* 11, no. 11 (2013): 995, 998.

[21] Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott, "Introduction: The Meanings of Deindustrialization," in *Beyond the Ruins*, eds. Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 1-2.

[22] High, "The Wounds of Class," 1000.

[23] Tim Strangleman, "Deindustrialisation and the Historical Sociological Imagination: Making Sense of Work and Industrial Change," *Sociology* 51, no. 2 (2016): 478.

[24] Edward Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 194.

[25] Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism* (London: Verso, 1995), 92.

[26] High, "The Wounds of Class," 1000.

[27] Edward Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past & Present* 50, no. 1 (1971): 76-136.

[28] Andrew Sayer, "Moral Economy and Political Economy," *Studies in Political Economy* 61 (2000): 79, 81.

[29] Ibid., 87.

[30] Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 7th ed. (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2001), *xxiv*.

[31] Sayer, "Moral Economy," 86.

[32] Strangleman, "Deindustrialisation," 471.

[33] Karl Marx and Fredric Engels, *The Communist Manifesto: A Modern Edition* (London: Verso, 1998), 38.

[34] Andy Clark, "'Stealing Our Identity and Taking It over to Ireland:' Deindustrialization, Resistance, and Gender in Scotland," in *The Deindustrialized World: Confronting Ruination in Postindustrial Places*, eds. Steven High, Lachlan MacKinnon, and Andrew Perchard (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 331-347; High, "'I'll Wrap the F*** Canadian Flag Around Me': A Nationalist Response to Plant Shutdowns, 1969-1984," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 12, no. 1 (2001): 199-225; Andrew Perchard, "A Little Local Difficulty? Deindustrialization and Glocalization in a Scottish Town," in *The Deindustrialized World: Confronting Ruination in Postindustrial Places*, eds. Steven High, Lachlan MacKinnon, and Andrew Perchard (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 284-312; Jim Phillips, "The Moral Economy of Deindustrialization in Post-1945 Scotland," in *The Deindustrialized World: Confronting*

Ruination in Postindustrial Places, eds. Steven High, Lachlan MacKinnon, and Andrew Perchard (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 313-330; Jim Phillips, "The Closure of Michael Colliery in 1967 and the Politics of Deindustrialization in Scotland," *Twentieth Century British History* 26, no. 4 (2015): 551-572.

[35] Phillips, "The Moral Economy," 314-315, 320, 322-325, 327.

[36] Phillips, "The Closure of Michael," 1, 31.

[37] Perchard, "A Little Local Difficulty," 287.

[38] Ibid., 307.

[39] Clark, "'Stealing Our Identity,'" 338, 343.

[40] Doreen Massey, *Spatial Divisions of Labour: Social Structures and the Geography of Production* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 57. Quoted in Jefferson Cowie, *Capital Moves: RCA's Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 185.

[41] Cowie, *Capital Moves*, 5. Preceding quote ("cheap and docile") appears in 53, 74, and 101.

[42] Ibid., 8.

[43] Ibid., 182.

[44] High, "The Wounds of Class," 1001; Strangleman, "Deindustrialisation," 468, 471, 476.

[45] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

[46] Strangleman, "Deindustrialisation," 472.

[47] High, "The Wounds of Class," 1001.

[48] Strangleman, "Deindustrialisation," 471.

[49] Jackie Clarke, "Closing Time: Deindustrialization and Nostalgia in Contemporary France," *History Workshop Journal* 79 (Spring 2015): 107-125; "Closing Moulinex: Thoughts on the Visibility and Invisibility of Industrial Labour in Contemporary France," *Modern & Contemporary France* 19, no. 4 (2011): 443-458.

[50] Clarke, "Closing Time," 120, 118.

[51] Ibid., 123.

[52] Peter Fritzsche quoted in ibid., 119. Preceding quote from 117.

[53] High, "The Wounds of Class," 1000.

[54] Clark, "'Stealing Our Identity,'" 335; High, "The Wounds of Class," 1002.

[55] High, "The Wounds of Class," 1002; Clark, "'Stealing Our Identity,'" 335.

[56] Clark, "'Stealing Our Identity,'" 335.

[57] *Between the Lines: Listening to Female Factory Workers in China*, Business for Social Responsibility (BSR), March, 2013.

[58] Anna Pollert, *Girls, Wives, Factory Lives* (London: Macmillan, 1981), 180.

[59] Steven High, Lachlan MacKinnon, and Andrew Perchard, "Introduction," in *The Deindustrialized World: Confronting Ruination in Postindustrial Places*, eds. Steven High, Lachlan MacKinnon, and Andrew Perchard (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 5.

[60] Andrew Herod, *Labor Geographies: Workers and the Landscapes of Capitalism* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2001), 2.

[61] Steven High, "Beyond Aesthetics," 140-153.

[62] Henri Lefebvre, *The Survival of Capitalism*, trans. Frank Bryant (London: Allison & Busby, 1976), 21 (emphasis in original).

[63] Edward Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 15.

[64] Henri Lefebvre translated and quoted in David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 306.

[65] Andy Merrifield, *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 108.

[66] Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, 6.

[67] Ibid., 141.

[68] Don Mitchell, *The Lie of the Land* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 27.

[69] Ibid., 200.

[70] Herod, *Labor Geographies*, 53-69, 48.

[71] Jane Wills and Angela Hale, "Threads of Labour in the Global Garment Industry," in *Threads of Labour: Garment Industry Supply Chains from the Workers' Perspective*, eds. Angela Hale and Jane Wills (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 16.

[72] Ibid., 5, 3 (quote is from page 5).

[73] Steven High, Lachlan MacKinnon, and Andrew Perchard, "Afterword: Debating Deindustrialization," in *The Deindustrialized World: Confronting Ruination in Postindustrial Places*, eds. Steven High, Lachlan MacKinnon, and Andrew Perchard (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 354.

[74] Wills and Hale, *Threads of Labor*, 6, 2, 15 (quote is from page 2).

[75] Merrifield, *Dialectical Urbanism: Social Struggles in the Capitalist City* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002), 16, 14.

[76] Ibid., 172. Preceding quote from 14.

[77] Ibid., 16.

[78] Tithi Bhattacharya, "Introduction: Mapping Social Reproduction Theory," in *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression*, ed. Tithi Bhattacharya (London: Pluto Press, 2017), 2.

[79] Salar Mohandesi and Emma Teitelman, "Without Reserves," in *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression,* ed. Tithi Bhattacharya (London: Pluto Press, 2017), 43.

[80] Ibid., 63.

[81] Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 2.

[82] Ibid., 179.

[83] Craig Owens, "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism," in *Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (London: Pluto Press, 1985), 75. Quoted in Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, 11.

[84] Linda McDowell and Doreen Massey, "A Woman's Place?" in *Geography Matters! A Reader*, eds. Doreen Massey and John Allen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 199, 200, 203, 205 (quotes are from 199).

[85] Sally Alexander quoted in ibid., 200.

[86] Friedrich Engels quoted in ibid., 202. Preceding quotes are Catherine Hall quoted in ibid., 201.

[87] Jill Liddington quoted in ibid., 202.

[88] This and preceding quote from ibid., 203.

[89] Ibid., 213, 213-214 (quote from 213).

[90] This and preceding quote from Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, 181.

[91] Ibid., 82.

[92] Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

[93] This and preceding quote from Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, 6.

[94] Ibid., 179. Preceding quote from 7.

[95] Chantal Mouffe, "Radical Democracy: Modern or Postmodern?" in *Universal Abandon? The Politics of Postmodernism*, eds. Andrew Ross (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 44.

[96] Melissa Wright, *Disposable Women and Other Myths of Global Capitalism* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 13. This idea comes from Judith Butler's work.

[97] Wright, *Disposable Women*, 8.

[98] Ibid., 13.

[99] Melissa Wright, "A Manifesto Against Femicide," in *Place, Space and the New Labour Internationalisms*, eds. Peter Waterman and Jane Wills (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 257.

[100] Edward Thompson, "Peculiarities of the English," *The Socialist Register* 2 (1965): 357.

[101] George Eliot quoted in High et al., "Introduction," 4.

[102] Soja, "The Socio-Spatial Dialectic," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 70, no. 2 (1980): 224.

[103] Thompson, "Peculiarities of the English," 357. Strangleman also calls for this in "Deindustrialisation and the Historical Sociological Imagination" (478).

[104] Merrifield, *Dialectical Urbanism*, 165.

[105] Herod, *Labor Geographies*, 17.

[106] Lipsig-Mummé, "Organizing Women," 48.

[107] Ibid., 44.

[108] Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 32.

[109] Ibid., *ix*.

[110] Ibid., *viii*.

[111] Linda McDowell, "Interviewing: Fear and Liking in the Field," in The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Geography, eds. Dydia DeLyser, Steve Herbert, Stuart Aitken, Mike Crang, and Linda McDowell (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2010): 158.

[112] Ibid., 6.

[113] Steven High, *Oral History at the Crossroads* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 7.

[114] David Butz, "Sidelined by the Guidelines: Reflections on the Limitations of Standard Informed Consent Procedures for the Conduct of Ethical Research," *ACME* 7, no. 2 (2008): 250.

[115] Henry Greenspan quoted in High, *Oral History*, 7.

[116] Portelli, *The Battle*, 3.

[117] Ibid., *xiii*.

[118] Lipsig-Mummé, "Organizing Women," 59.

[119] Phillips, "The Closure of Michael," 1, 31.

[120] Joe Sacco, *Journalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012), *xii* (original emphasis).

[121] Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), *xii*.

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