History, Memory, and Struggle in Saint-Henri, Montreal

Fred Burrill

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By: Fred Burrill

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Signed by the final examining committee:

Chair

Dr. Sebastien Caquard

External Examiner

Dr. Sean Mills

External to Program

Dr. Ted Rutland

Examiner

Dr. Barbara Lorenzkowski

Examiner

Dr. Gavin Taylor

Thesis Supervisor (s)

Dr. Steven High

Approved by

Dr. Peter Gossage Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

22/11/2021
Date of Defence

Pascale Sicotte Dean, Arts and Science

Abstract

History, Memory, and Struggle in Saint-Henri, Montreal

Fred Burrill, PhD
Concordia University, 2021

The working-class neighbourhood of Saint-Henri in the Southwest of Montreal was long at the heart of capitalist production in Canada. Like other industrial cities across North America, the area experienced a precipitous deindustrialization and decline in the postwar period, a process whose brutality was matched only by that of the subsequent refashioning of the sector into a post-industrial paradise of restaurants and condominiums.

Taking as its point of departure the competing historical discourses at play in present-day Saint-Henri – a post-industrial structure of feeling advanced by developers, business owners, and sanitized heritage projects; an oppositional working-class culture rooted in memories of industrial labour and the hard years of unemployment; and a common, structuring framework of settler whiteness – this thesis uses oral history and archival work to excavate the roots of gendered working-class consciousness, settler identity, and local forms of political resistance in a part of the city long seen as a quintessentially Québécois space.

Beginning with the 1967 shutdown of Dominion Textile, the thesis examines the changing patterns of capital accumulation that led to factory shutdowns and the brief 1970s overlap within community organizing around productive and reproductive labour issues, a nexus that conditioned local resistance into the 1990s. It then turns to the State and capital's conscious redevelopment of the neighbourhood in the image of bankers and hedge funds, a process particularly difficult for the women largely responsible for the affective and reproductive labour of collective survival. Gradually, local activism became integrated into the nationalist State apparatus, as deindustrialization fed into gentrification and the "worker's neighbourhood" slowly became re-imagined as a white-coded "*quartier populaire*." Finally, the dissertation turns to a more in-depth investigation of the structuring forces of settler colonialism and anti-blackness on working-class lifeways in Saint-Henri, before concluding with some thoughts on active, public history and the role it can play in imagining transformative ways of organizing local resistance.

The dissertation is an intervention into deindustrialization studies, inserting perspectives of race and gender into the discussion; gentrification studies, challenging the field to centre working-class experiences of displacement; Quebec and Canadian labour history, contesting dominant national/ist frameworks; and public history.

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— The unceded Indigenous territory of Tiohtiá:ke/Mooniyang, October 2021.

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ACEF – Association coopérative d'économie familiale

CDEC – Corporation de développement économique et communautaire

CDS – Conseil de développement social Montréal Métropolitain

CECO – Commission d'enquête sur le crime organisé

CLAC – Convergence des luttes anticapitalistes

CLSC – Centre local de services communautaires

COHDS – Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling

COM – Conseil des Oeuvres de Montréal

COSH – Comité ouvrier de Saint-Henri

CNR – Canadian National Railway

CREESOM – Comité pour la relance de l'économie et de l'emploi du Sud-Ouest de Montréal

CSN – Confédération des syndicats nationaux

CSPS – Coalition pour la survie des programmes sociaux

CYC – Company of Young Canadians

FCAI – Fédération canadienne des associations indépendantes

FLQ – Front de libération du Québec

FRAPRU – Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain

FTQ – Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec

GFO – Groupement familial ouvrier

GRT – Groupe de ressources techniques

HLM – Habitations à loyer modique

NCC – Negro Community Centre

NDG – Notre-Dame-de-Grâce

NFB – National Film Board of Canada

MCM – Montreal Citizens' Movement

MTSO – Mouvement des Travailleurs du Sud-Ouest

ODAS – Organisation d'aide aux sans-emplois

OHA – Oral History Association

OMHM – Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal

PEP – Programme économique de Pointe Saint-Charles

POPIR – Projet d'organisation populaire, d'information et de regroupement

PQ – Parti Québécois

RCA – Radio Corporation of America

RCLALQ – Regroupement des comités logement et associations de locataires du Québec

RESO – Regroupement pour le relancement économique du Sud-Ouest

RIL – Regroupement information logement

SAP – Services d'aménagement populaire

SHSH – Société Historique de Saint-Henri

SSH – Solidarité Saint-Henri

STSO – Secrétariat des Travailleurs du Sud-Ouest

UTWA – United Textile Workers of America

PREFACE:

HOMEMAKING

The doctoral dissertation is a curious literary artefact. Within its pages, PhD candidates must demonstrate proof both of original thinking and of their ability to navigate within the norms and accumulated knowledges of their chosen discipline, subject area, and methodology; a very particular blend of conformity and setting-apartness most commonly expressed in the form of an introductory chapter combining literature review and guide to the arguments expressed in the broader work. Readers understandably looking for a roadmap will find it in Chapter One, articulated through the prism of an exploration of the historical discourses structuring the Southwest Montreal neighbourhood of Saint-Henri, the geographical and social space that is the setting for this work. But I want first to pause here and say a few words about my relationship to this place that has so profoundly shaped my adult experience, and from there to describe how this motivates the ways in which I have approached learning about its past.

Daily life in Saint-Henri takes place in the shadow of several concrete monuments to modernist urban planning: the Ville-Marie Expressway runs across its northern edge, walling it off from downtown and the wealthy, anglophone City of Westmount; on its western border, it is swallowed up in the mess of construction and offramps making up the continually renovated Turcot Interchange.[1] Other boundaries hold different historical import. The southern limit of the neighbourhood is the Lachine Canal: first begun in the 1680s under the auspices of the seignorial Sulpician order, part of the broader project of settler dispossession of the island of Tiohtiá:ke from its Haudenosaunee caretakers and from the Anishinaabeg peoples who referred to it as

[1] On the Turcot Interchange, see Alexandre Wolford, "Le choix de tout-à-l'automobile à Montréal (1953-1967): un contexte propice à l'aménagement de l'échangeur Turcot" (MA thesis, Université de Montréal 2015); Laurence Brière, "L'exercise du jugement dans les débats publics expertisés: le cas de la reconstruction de l'échangeur Turcot," *VertigO - la revue électronique en sciences de l'environnement* 13, 2 (September 2013): http://vertigo.revues.org/14000; Sophie L. Van Neste and Gilles Sénécal, "Claiming Rights to Mobility Through the Right to Inhabitance," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 39, 2 (2015): 218-233. On the Ville-Marie Expressway, see Danielle Robinson, "'The Streets Belong to the People': Expressway Disputes in Canada, c. 1960-1975" (PhD diss., McMaster University, 2013); Valérie Poirier, "'L'autoroute est-ouest, c'est pas le progrès!': environnement et mobilisation citoyenne en opposition au projet d'autoroute est-ouest à Montreal en 1971," *Bulletin d'histoire politique* 23, 2 (2015): 66-91.

Mooniyang, its digging was taken up again in the 1820s, and then expanded in the 1840s – propelled forward by British merchant capital and made possible through the bloody repression of Irish labourers.[2] A series of unruly industrial suburbs in what became known as "Smokey Valley" grew along with capital's rush to the banks of the Lachine Canal, several of which were incorporated into the new town of Saint-Henri in 1875, annexed to Montreal in 1905.[3] Like other industrial cities across North America, the area experienced a precipitous deindustrialization and decline in the second half of the 20th century. The Canal was closed to navigation in 1970. On the eastern edge of the sector, Atwater Avenue separates Saint-Henri from Little Burgundy. The wholesale Sixties-era creation of this latter area, a product of "race-blind" city officials who bulldozed the previously existing neighbourhoods to create the largest public housing project in Canada, is home to what remains of a Black population that, excluded from factory jobs, found work as railway porters, becoming thus tied into transcontinental networks of developing Black radicalism.[4] Since that time, the communities on either side of this north-south axis have experienced quite different historical and political trajectories.

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[2] See H.C. Pentland, "The Lachine Strike of 1843," *The Canadian Historical Review* 29, 3 (September 1948): 255-277; Dan Horner, "Solemn Processions and Terrifying Violence: Spectacle, Authority, and Citizenship During the Lachine Canal Strike of 1843," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine* 38, 2 (Spring 2010): 36-47.

[3] On nineteenth-century working-class life in Saint-Henri, see Kathleen Lord, "Permeable Boundaries: Negotiation, Resistance, and Transgression of Street Space in Saint-Henri, Quebec, 1875-1905," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine* 33, 2 (2005): 17-29; Gilles Lauzon, "Cohabitation et déménagements en milieu ouvrier montréalais: essai de réinterprétation à partir du cas du village Saint-Augustin (1871-1881)," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 46, 1 (1992): 115-142. See also Yvon Desloges and Alain Gelly, *Le canal de Lachine: Du tumulte des flots à l'essor industriel et urbain, 1860-1950* (Québec: Les éditions du Septentrion, 2002).

[4] Dorothy W. Williams, *The Road to Now: 1628-1986: An Urban Demography* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1997); Sarah-Jane Mathieu, *North of the Color Line: Migration and Black Resistance in Canada* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Steven High, "Little Burgundy: The Interwoven Histories of Race, Residence, and Work in Twentieth-Century Montreal," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine* 46, 1 (2017): 23-44; Sean Mills, "Democracy in Music: Louis Metcalf's International Band and Montreal Jazz History," *The Canadian Historical Review* 100, 3 (September 2019): 351-372; David Este, Christa Sato, and Darcy McKenna, "The Coloured Women's Club of Montreal, 1902-1940: African-Canadian Women Confronting Anti-Black Racism," *Canadian Social Work Review/Revue canadienne de service sociale* 34, 1 (2017): 81-99; Amanda Ricci, "Searching for Zion: Pan-African Feminist

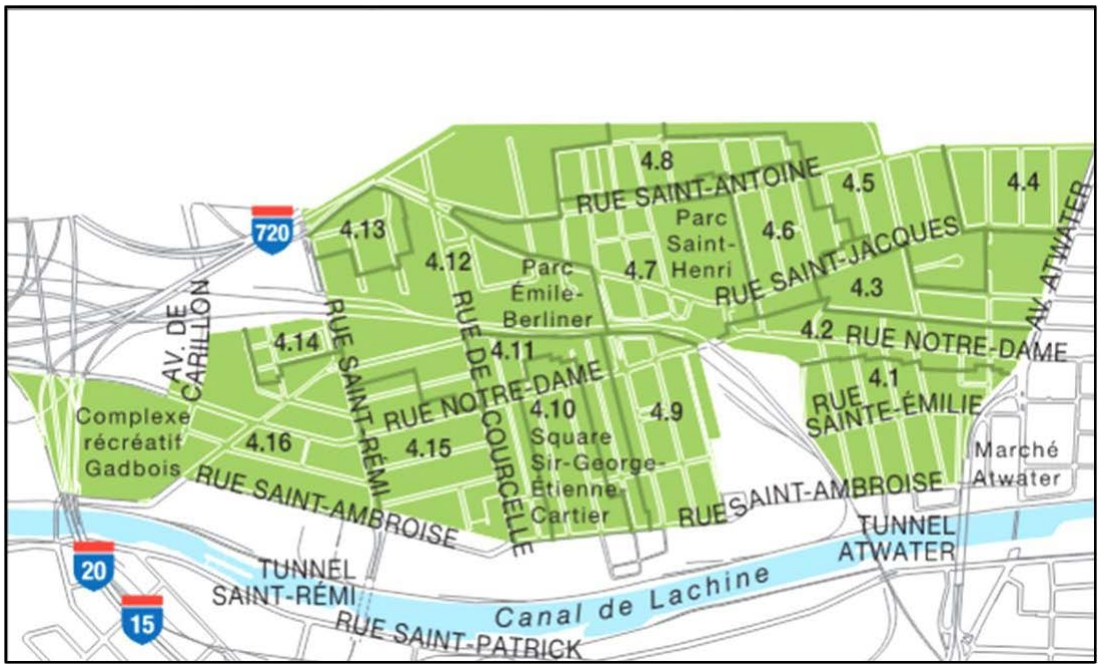

Figure 0: A map of present-day Saint-Henri from the Arrondissement Sud-Ouest's *Plan d'implantation et d'intégration architecturale*, 2021.

I grew up far removed from this history, on Mi'kmaw territory (although I was not conscious of this fact), in the industrial village of Upper Musquodoboit, Nova Scotia, the son of a Marxist United Church minister and a musician – culturally of the white settler professional classes, materially much less so. My siblings and I thus went through early life in the strange space of being simultaneously from, and not from, the place we called home, set at an ever-conscious remove from our friends and classmates by their knowledge of this difference and the ethic of community service that permeated our household. I dreamed of moving someplace urban, exciting, and anonymous, and did so just as soon as I was able, arriving in Montreal at the age of eighteen to study at McGill University.

Here I first encountered deep, inter-generational wealth, and spent an alienating year shuttling back and forth between the campus and my overpriced Plateau apartment. I became involved in the student movement, shifting rapidly from the left edge of social democracy into anarchism. It was in these halls of the rich and powerful that I first learned about the practice of "dumpster-diving" for free food; people pretended to be broke to be cool and did exchange years

Thought and Practice in English-speaking Black Montreal (1967-1977)," *Left History* 17, 1 (Spring/Summer 2013): 43-74.

in "development" programs abroad. Many of my fellow activists from that period are now businesspeople, lawyers, doctors, and politicians.

In 2006, I moved with (quite) a few friends into a collective house not far from Place Saint-Henri metro station. At that point, I'm not sure I was even cognizant of the fact that I lived in a neighbourhood called Saint-Henri. Our political activity was centred around the university; the city was where we slept at night or went to parties. We were most definitely "marginal gentrifiers."[5] But even in a language I didn't yet fully speak, I recognized the vocal inflections of people when they addressed one another on the street, the curious mixture of diffidence and defiance in working-class posture, the brokenness of bodies. After a few years, I began to feel again the belonging-not-belonging I recognized as "home."

This sense was challenged by the increasing pace of gentrification and housing displacement happening around me. My next-door neighbour, who had been living in her apartment since the 1970s, was evicted to make way for a poorly disguised AirBnB. The post office/corner store where I mailed letters closed down when its owner, a lovely man named Sylvain, died of cancer. It was replaced by an expensive "Tequila Bar," whose owners paid the upstairs tenant a sum she couldn't afford to refuse to vacate the premises (pocket change for them, really, given the property's skyrocketing value). In what seemed to me then like the space of months, the abandoned buildings of the neighbourhood were demolished or converted to condominiums. I started showing up to the events and actions of the POPIR-*Comité Logement* (*Projet d'organisation populaire, d'information et de regroupement*), a local group fighting for tenants' rights, and slowly overcame the language barrier separating me from my mostly French-speaking neighbours.

For a time, life took me elsewhere. But in 2012, in the midst of the excitement of the unprecedented mobilization of the Quebec student strike, I was hired by the POPIR as a community organizer. My years in the student movement had not prepared me for this world: we were simultaneously radical – challenging private property and staffed mostly by anti-authoritarians – and deeply reformist, oriented toward an expansion of Quebec's nationalist welfare state. The people I came to know through this new position – mostly women, mostly middle-aged and above – were not playing at poverty, either, experiencing capitalism not as an

[5] See Damaris Rose, "Rethinking gentrification: beyond the uneven development of Marxist urban theory," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 1 (1984): 47-84.

abstract struggle against corporations but through rents higher than their monthly welfare cheques, bedbugs and cockroaches that ate their flesh and spoiled their food, and the disdain of their new neighbours. I moved back to Saint-Henri, finding myself once again in and for a working-class community, but not entirely of it.

These countervailing forces of commitment and distance ground this work, poles which anchor a historical study that threads through multiple fields and methodologies. I understand the primary organizing feature of a capitalist society to be the struggle between classes, rooted not only in differing patterns of ownership of the means of production, but constituted socially, through historical experience – meaning, amongst other things, through the material relations of gender and race, embodied in the household, family, and community; "the bricks and mortar," according to historian Alice Kessler-Harris, "out of which class is constructed."[6] Focusing on these relations requires paying particular attention to the ongoing forms of dispossession – through settler colonial land theft, global imperialism, and the unpaid work of domestic labour – that undergird the entire apparatus of capital accumulation. And while my primary angle into understanding the past is this expanded historical materialism, it is not to the exclusion of the variety of useful theoretical tools contained in other traditions – this is a project working across "registers," in the words of Geoff Eley and Keith Nield.[7] While I broadly agree that "language is not life," as Bryan D. Palmer once angrily argued against proponents of the linguistic turn,[8] as an oral historian I am more interested in exploring the ways in which language contains life, in the fullest dialectical sense.

Focusing on class formation and struggle leads the dissertation to intervene in three major ways. First, I tackle deindustrialization. The diverse field of scholars studying this phenomenon do so informed by a body of work that stretches back far enough now that there have been several major retrospectives that outline developments in the field, each pointing to a gradual

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[6] Alice Kessler-Harris, "A New Agenda for American History: A Gendered Analysis and the Question of Class," in *Gendering Labor History* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 141.

[7] See Geoff Eley and Keith Nield, *The Future of Class in History: What's Left of the Social?* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007).

[8] Bryan D. Palmer, *Descent into Discourse: The Reification of Language and the Writing of Social History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), xiv.

shift from an earlier focus on political economy – manifested in North America in works like Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison's *The Deindustrialization of America* or James Laxer's *(Canada) Ltd.: The Political Economy of Dependency* – to a longer-term exploration of the "wounds of class" lived out in industrial communities during and after shutdowns; "a more socially complicated, historically deep, geographically diverse, and politically perplexing phenomenon than previously thought."[9] Within this trend, and in its adjacent field of the study of industrial heritage, memory and meaning have been paramount.[10] As will become clear, while this work operates largely inside of these latter parameters, it tries to insert political economy back into the conversation by paying attention to the patterns and cycles of capital accumulation underlying lived experience – from there exploring the ways in which Saint-Henri's industrial working class has navigated its own un- and re-making.[11] The field, too, has been dominated by studies of single-industry towns or regions, and heavily masculine in its focus.[12] By looking at working-class life and political activism in a single neighbourhood characterized in the 1960s

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[9] Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott, "Introduction: The Meaning of Deindustrialization," in *Beyond the Ruins: The Meanings of Deindustrialization*, eds. Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott, 2 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003). For historiographical treatments, see Steven High, "'The Wounds of Class': A Historiographical Reflection on the Study of Deindustrialization, 1973-2013," *History Compass* 11, 11 (2013): 994-1007; Tim Stranglemann, James Rhodes, and Sherry Linkon, "Introduction to Crumbling Cultures: Deindustrialization, Class, and Memory," *International and Labor and Working-Class History* 84 (Fall 2013): 7-22.

[10] See Stefan Moitra and Katarzyna Nogueira, "(Post-)Industrial Memories, Oral History and Structural Change," *BIOS–Zeitschrift für Biographieforschung, Oral History und Lebensverlaufsanalysen* 31, 2 (2020): 3-4; Stefan Berger, "Preconditions for the Making of an Industrial Past: Comparative Perspectives," in *Constructing Industrial Pasts: Heritage, Historical Culture and Identity in Regions Undergoing Structural Economic Transition*, ed. Stefan Berger, 14-31, Adobe Digital Editions EPUB (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2020).

[11] On applying E.P. Thompson's insights about agency and class formation to deindustrialization, see Tim Strangleman, "Deindustrialisation and the Historical Sociological Imagination: Making Sense of Work and Industrial Change," *Sociology* 51, 2 (2017): 466-482.

[12] See, for example, Steven High, *One Job Town: Work, Belonging, and Betrayal in Northern Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018); Robert Bruno, *Steelworker Alley: How Class Works in Youngstown* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999). On the gendered nature of the field, see Jackie Clarke, "Closing Time: Deindustrialization and Nostalgia in Contemporary France," *History Workshop Journal* 79, 1 (Spring 2015): 107-125.

and 1970s by a diversity of secondary production facilities employing mostly women workers, this study tries to continue along the lines recently laid out by historian Lauren Laframboise by thinking about social reproduction and survival: as she writes, "gender not only shapes women's experiences of waged industrial work, but also the interaction between deindustrialization, the gendered structures of that industrial work, and their unwaged work within the home."[13]

A second major expression of urban class struggle in the Global North's post-war period, and particularly in the post-1970s re-articulation of relations between state and capital widely termed "neoliberalism," has been the remaking of the city in the image of finance and real estate investors through gentrification. I maintain an activist's impatience with the seemingly never-ending realm of literature on this phenomenon, within which live "worlds of contradiction"[14] ranging from militant critique to Floridian embraces of the "creative class."[15] Indeed, as Tom Slater has pointed out, in all this complexity, "displacement gets displaced,"[16] and geographers and urban planners turn in ever greater intensity to tracking the mobility and motives of middle-class transplants.[17] Here, while anchoring my study in supply-side theories that emphasize the production of urban space through patterns of uneven development – "the geographical expression of the more fundamental contradiction between use-value and exchange-value"[18] –

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[13] Lauren Laframboise, "Gendered labour, immigration, and deindustrialization in Montreal's garment industry" (MA thesis, Concordia University, 2021), 15.

[14] James Tracy, *Dispatches Against Displacement: Field Notes from San Francisco's Housing Wars* (Oakland: AK Press, 2014), 7.

[15] See Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005). For a probing analysis of the use of "creative class" thinking in driving gentrification in Montreal, see Yuseph Katiya, "Creating Hegemony: Montreal's cultural development policies and the rise of cultural actors as entrepreneurial political elites" (MSc thesis, Concordia University, 2011).

[16] Tom Slater, "The Eviction of Critical Perspectives from Gentrification Research," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 30, 4 (December 2006): 747.

[17] See, for example, Damaris Rose, "Discourses and Experiences of Social Mix in Gentrifying Neighbourhoods: A Montreal Case Study," *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 13, 2 (Winter 2004): 278-316.

[18] Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space*, 3rd edition (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 6.

my principal aim is to place working-class experiences and analyses of the process front and centre.

Third, I focus on the profound role of race and nationalism in working-class formation and political subjectivity in Quebec (perhaps a factor of distance coming into play), highlighting its limiting effects on the development of solidarity and resistance. There has been an encouraging recent drive amongst historians in Quebec to undermine nationalist historical paradigms, brilliantly embodied in historian Catherine Larochelle's call to move from a history of the "people," that unitary subject that has monopolized so much of the discipline's focus, to the "multitude."[19] This has been accompanied by an important transnationalization of historical studies impacting both Canadian and Quebec historiographies, revealing the variety of ways in which these polities participated in empire abroad and were deeply affected by socio-political developments in the Global South – in Quebec's case, notably, through the Third World theories of decolonization integrated into its Sixties-era social movements.[20] Almost universally, however, this transnational lens has focused more on the circulation of theories and ideas than on material realities, with a concomitant focus on intellectuals.[21] Somewhat ironically, in the lack of

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[19] Catherine LaRochelle, "Émanciper l'histoire. Pour une histoire de la Multitude," *Histoire Engagée*, 10 September 2019, https://histoireengagee.ca/emanciper-lhistoire-pour-une-histoire-de-la-multitude/. This encouraging trend is perhaps most visible in calls to reckon with Quebec's colonial past. See Daniel Salée, "Les peuples autochtones et la naissance du québec: Pour une réécriture de l'histoire?" *Recherches sociographiques* 51, 1-2 (2010): 151-159; Brian Gettler, "Les autochtones et l'histoire du Québec: Au-delà du négationnisme et du récit 'nationaliste-conservateur'," *Recherches amérindiennes au Québec* 46, 1 (2016): 7-18; Emiliano Arpin-Simonetti, "Dé-coloniser notre regard: table ronde avec Catherine Larochelle, Melissa Mollen-Dupuis et Philippe Néméh-Nombré," *Relations* 802 (2019): 24-27. For an important troubling of the nationalist historical project from outside the academy, see Alexandra Pierre, *Empreinte de résistances: Filiations et récits de femmes autochtones, noires, et racisées* (Montréal: Éditions du remue-ménage, 2021).

[20] For a good summary, see Sean Mills, "The End of Empire? Third World Decolonization and Canadian History," in *Within and Without the Nation: Canadian History as Transnational History*, eds. Karen Dubinsky, Adele Perry, and Henry Yu, 341-363 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).

[21] This is perhaps due to the fact that, despite an earlier focus on the politics of international unionism, the transnational turn has yet to impact labour history in Quebec. One excellent bucking of this trend is Mathieu Houle-Courcelles' "'Ni Rome, ni Moscou': l'itinéraire des militants communistes libertaires de langue française à Montréal pendant l'entre-deux-guerres" (PhD diss., Université Laval et Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne, 2020).

attention paid to the working-class debates occurring outside the pages of activist publications, this transnational work tends to reify the very idea of "Quebec society."[22]

This is accompanied by broad lines of obfuscation within Canadian labour and working-class historiography on the question of whiteness and the determinative impact of settlerism on class formation,[23] an oversight perhaps even more true of a Quebec historiography, and especially that dealing with post-Quiet Revolution developments, that has focused to a great extent on labour institutions and their imbrication in the national project.[24] Here, inspired by historical traditions that foreground the importance of race and racism in the social and cultural constitution of the white settler working-class,[25] and drawing on the insights of Black

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[22] See, for example, Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010). On the broader transnational turn in Quebec, see Aline Charles and Thomas Wien, "Le Québec entre histoire connectée et histoire transnationale," *Globe: Revue internationale d'études québécoises* 14, 2 (2011): 199-221.

[23] See Fred Burrill, "The Settler Order Framework: Rethinking Canadian Working-Class History," *Labour/Le Travail* 83 (2019): 173-197; David Camfield, "Settler Colonialism and Labour Studies in Canada: A Preliminary Exploration," *Labour/Le Travail* 83 (2019): 147-172. Kirk Niegarth has recently taken issue with my claim that only 2.5 per cent of *Labour/Le Travail*'s articles in its 40-odd year history deal in some way with Indigenous issues or settler colonialism, while accepting the general gist of the argument. I will readily admit to being bad at math (and welcome whatever additions he might wish to propose), but the problem is more one of my own unclarity in writing. What I called "exceptions to the pattern" were exceptions in focus only, remaining part of the broader statistical portrait. See Kirk Niegarth, "Labour History's Present: An Account of *Labour/Le Travail* Under Bryan D. Palmer," in *Dissenting Traditions: Essays on Bryan D. Palmer, Marxism, and History*, eds. Sean Carleton, Ted McCoy, and Julia Smith (Edmonton: Canadian Committee on Labour History and Athabaska University Press, 2021), https://read.aupress.ca/projects/dissenting-traditions.

[24] See, for example, Jacques Rouillard, *L'expérience syndicale au Québec: Ses rapports à l'État, la nation, et l'opinion publique* (Montréal: VLB Éditeur, 2008); James D. Thwaite, ed., *Travail et syndicalisme. Naissance et évolution d'une action sociale* (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1996).

[25] The tradition invoked exists both in and outside the academy. While most famously associated with David Roediger's *Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso Books, 2007), I am also inspired by the more trenchant J. Sakai, *Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat from Mayflower to Modern* (Montreal: Kersplebedeb Publishing, 2014); and David Gilbert, *Looking at the U.S. White Working Class Historically* (Montreal: Kersplebedeb Publishing, 2017).

geographers like Délice Mugabo and Katherine McKittrick,[26] I try to use the specific example of Saint-Henri to think through the historical constitution of French-speaking, Euro-descended working-class identity and resistance. This perspective also adds to the literature on deindustrialization. There are several important works in the American context tracking the interrelation of capital abandonment, public policies, and white flight from Rust Belt inner cities, and Steven High's forthcoming, comparative analysis of deindustrialization in two Montreal neighbourhoods (white Point Saint-Charles and multiracial Little Burgundy) will I think become foundational in thinking about racism, job loss, and gentrification in Canada. But the broader field has generally had much less to say about race than about class.[27]

Some final words on method: while much of this study relies on traditional forms of archival work, albeit through an engagement with community records that reveal different stories than those contained within national collections, the central research strategy of the dissertation is oral history. Perhaps as a by-product of its long battle to win broader acceptance within the discipline, oral history has generated volume upon volume dedicated to the ambiguities and promise of the interview and the meanings and memories generated therein – leading one historian to question, "Is there anything really new under the oral history sun?"[28] While I am not certain that what I have to say within these pages adds anything radically new to this

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[26] See Délice Mugabo, "Black in the city: on the ruse of ethnicity and language in an antiblack landscape," *Identities* 26, 6 (2019): 631-648; Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

[27] See Stranglemann, Rhodes, and Linkon, "Introduction to Crumbling Cultures," 12-14; Jason Hackworth, *Manufacturing Decline: How Racism and the Conservative Movement Crush the American Rust Belt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019); Jason Hackworth, "Race and the Production of Extreme Land Abandonment in the American Rust Belt," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 42, 1 (2018): 51-73; Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Bryant Simon, "Segregated Fantasies: Race, Public Space, and the Life and Death of the Movie Business in Atlantic City, New Jersey, 1945-2000," in *Beyond the Ruins: The Meanings of Deindustrialization*, eds. Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott, 64-87 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003); Steven High, *Deindustrializing Montreal: Entangled Histories of Race, Residence and Class* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's, forthcoming).

[28] Daphne Patai, "When is enough enough?" in *Beyond Women's Words: Feminisms and the Practices of Oral History in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Katrina Srigley, Stacey Zembrzycki and Franca Iacovetta, 49 (London and New York: Routledge, 2018).

conversation, I do try to highlight what is gained from a public, oral history practice that is grounded in political struggle. My interview participants are all people that I have met through my involvement in Saint-Henri's tenant movement, some friends, others comrades – those with whom I share what historian Lana Povitz would describe as the "deep acquaintance" engendered through hours and hours of conversation, meetings, and actions, even if those hours were mostly outside of our recorded interviews.[29] But as Povitz has written elsewhere, "if love can enrich history, romance doesn't."[30] In exploring with interviewees the dynamics related to race and identity formation outlined above, sometimes difficult and uncomfortable thoughts were articulated. With the permission of those who bravely agreed to be interviewed, I share here these moments of tension in the spirit of generating new collective understandings. This is not because I think working-class people are in any way more prone to the discriminatory patterns that structure all our white, settler minds, but rather because I am convinced that if there is to be any future at all, it will be because of new working-class solidarities that have as a precondition the disentanglement of such contradictions.

A note on language and translation

Readers will no doubt notice that I have an inconsistent practice with regards to censoring oppressive terms such as the "N-word." This is simply because I feel it is my place to do so when spoken or written by white people like myself, and not when articulated by Black scholars.

As all oral historians know, in "the shift from the conversational nature of talk to the more linear logic of the page, the inner continuity of a spoken account can, without care, largely be left behind."[31] This is even more the case when working across languages. Most of the interviews

[29] Lana Dee Povitz, "Deep Acquaintance: Knowledge from Outside the Interview," Oral History in Our Challenging Times, Oral History Association Annual Meeting, Montreal, 11 October 2018.

[30] Lana Dee Povitz, "Warm Distance: Grappling with Vivian Gornick's *The Romance of American Communism*," *The Oral History Review* 48, 2 (2021): 191.

[31] Gary Burrill, *Away: Maritimers in Massachusetts, Ontario, and Alberta* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), xiii.

that inform this study were conducted in French, as was the bulk of the archival material that I accessed. French-language interviews were transcribed by Étienne Simard, and I sought out the assistance of Mary Foster from Magpie Translations in the interest of preserving as much authenticity of voice as possible in the transposition of those words to English – with stylistic adjustments based on my familiarity with the interviewees and how they might express themselves if they were English-speakers. Unless specifically noted otherwise, all renderings herein of oral testimonies are the fruit of that collaboration.

With respect to print sources, I have used prior published English translations where possible. In other cases, with some exceptions highlighted in the footnotes, translations were also done with the assistance of Mary Foster.

CHAPTER ONE:

Past and Present in Saint-Henri

Il s'aventura jusqu'au bout du quai. Et là, bien planté en pleine odeur et vision familières, il leva les yeux vers le faubourg. Son village dans la grande ville! Car nul quartier de Montréal n'a conservé ses limites précises, sa vie de village, particulière, étroite, caractérisée, comme Saint-Henri.

[He walked to the end of the platform, taking in the familiar sights and smells of the suburb. His village in the big town! For no part of Montreal has kept its well-defined limits or its special, narrow, characteristic village life as St. Henri has done.]

Gabrielle Roy, *Bonheur d'occasion*[1]

Stories about the past are everywhere in Saint-Henri. Here, interpretive panels along the Lachine Canal present sanitized accounts of Canada's "cradle of industrialization"[2]; there, a brick mosaic spelling out the words, *Bonheur d'occasion*, set in relief in the wall of the Métro Place Saint-Henri, signals to transit users that they are entering the setting of Gabrielle Roy's celebrated, eponymous novel of the 1940s. Even the newly formed business association, *Quartiers du Canal*, product of the recent gentrification of Notre-Dame Street, invites tourists to "Travel into the past" in order to re-discover "a part of Montréal that has evolved without denying its origins."[3]

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[1] Gabrielle Roy, *Bonheur d'occasion* (Montréal: Les Éditions du Boréal, 2009), 328. Translation from Gabrielle Roy, *The Tin Flute*, trans. Alan Brown (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 236.

[2] For a representative example of this discourse, see "Lachine Canal Historic Site: The Cradle of Industrialization," *Parks Canada*, https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/lhn-nhs/qc/canallachine/culture/histoire-history/industrialisation (accessed 4 February 2021).

[3] "Travel into the past," *Les Quartiers du Canal*, http://lesquartiersducanal.com/en/things-to-do/travel-into-the-past/ (accessed 7 December 2020).

These stories matter because they are tied to our ability to recognize ourselves and others within structures of power. "Human life depends on the stories we tell," writes socio-narratologist Arthur Frank, because of "the sense of life that those stories impart, the relationships constructed around shared stories, and the sense of purpose that stories both propose and foreclose."[4] Propose and foreclose – somewhat too *à propos*, perhaps, for an area experiencing such intense real estate speculation. But narrative symbolism and material conditions are unavoidably intertwined in Saint-Henri, where the social forces of class, language, and race have resulted in a sometimes-bewildering overdetermination of neighbourhood identity.

Since the 1945 publication of Roy's work, the first French-Canadian novel to deal extensively with the urban experience,[5] Saint-Henri has been the subject or setting of three major National Film Board (NFB) documentaries, several collections of short stories, graphic novels, comedic monologues, poetry, music, television shows, film, and innumerable other forms of visual and textual representation.[6] It takes on additional, layered meaning with each new

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[4] Arthur W. Frank, *Letting Stories Breathe: A Socio-Narratology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 3, Adobe Digital Editions EPUB.

[5] See Yannick Resch, "La Ville et son expression romanesque dans *Bonheur d'occasion de Gabrielle Roy*," *Voix et Images* 4, 2 (décembre 1978): 244-257; Patrick Imbert, "Les instants des rencontres culturelles dans Montréal et leurs impacts social et national," *Interfaces Brasil/Canadá. Florianópolis/Pelotas/São Paolo* 17, 3 (2017): 61-74.

[6] See *À Saint-Henri le 5 septembre*, dir. Hubert Aquin (Montreal: National Film Board of Canada, 1962), https://www.onf.ca/film/a_saint-henri_le_cinq_septembre/; *À Saint-Henri le 26 août*, dir. Shannon Walsh (Montreal: National Film Board of Canada, 2011), https://www.onf.ca/film/a_st-henri_le_26_aout/; *Le Bonhomme*, dir. Pierre Maheau (Montreal: National Film Board of Canada, 1972), https://www.onf.ca/film/bonhomme/; *L'Histoire d'être humain*, dir. Denys Desjardins (Montreal: National Film Board of Canada, 2005), https://www.onf.ca/film/histoire_d_etre_humain/; Maxime Raymond Bock, "Sous les ruines," in *Les noyades secondaires* (Montréal: Le Cheval d'août, 2017), 213-230; Daniel Grenier, *Malgré tout on rit à Saint-Henri* (Montréal: Éditions Boréal, 2013), inspired by the music of Raymond Lévesque, "À Saint-Henri," recorded in 1962 for the soundtrack for Aquin and Jacques Godbout's NFB documentary. The neighbourhood has also famously been represented in the musical genius of Oscar Peterson, in his *Canadiana Suite*, Limelight 86010, 1964. For the working-class comedy of Saint-Henri (and the racism that came with it), see Yvon Lamarre, *Les unions qu'ossa donne*, Polydor 542.503, 1969. For coverage of recent examples of representations of Saint-Henri in television, see Hugo Dumas, "Sortir de son coton ouaté!" *La Presse*, 11 septembre 2019, https://www.lapresse.ca/arts/television/2019-09-11/sortir-de-son-cocon-ouate; Amélie Gaudreau, "'Amours d'occasion': à Saint-Henri," le 16 juillet, *Le Devoir*, 24 janvier 2020, https://www.ledevoir.com/culture/ecrans/571431/amours-d-occasion-a-saint-

generation of residents, activists, and cultural producers.[7] And as a result, as one prominent observer put it, sometimes "*Saint-Henri des tanneries* resembles other neighbourhoods more than itself."[8] In this multiplicity of representations, concepts like "neighbourhood" and "community," mobilized by actors of a variety of political orientations, tend to hide as much as they reveal.[9]

Residents' relationships to stories about the past, and by extension, to the broader structuring narratives of history and memory, have come to be a determining factor in how they interact with the changing forms of capital accumulation shaping the urban landscape around them. Doreen Massey's description of place as a momentary congealing of "constantly shifting articulations of social relations through time" – an "envelope of space-time" – is helpful for thinking this through. She argues that "claims and counter-claims about the present character of a place depend in almost all cases on particular, rival, interpretations of its past."[10] In other words, the neighbourhood space is divided not only by different patterns of revenue and consumption

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henri-le-16-juillet. The most famous example of poetry referencing Saint-Henri is Michèle Lalonde's "Speak White," part of her collection *Terre des hommes: poème pour deux récitants* (Montréal: Éditions du jour, 1967). See, in response, Marco Micone, *Speak What* (Montréal: VLB Éditeur, 2001). For graphic novels, see Réal Godbout and Laurent Chabin, *Quand je serai mort* (Montréal: Les Éditions de la Pasteque, 2019).

[7] See *Montreal as Palimpsest: Graduate research in Montreal's architectural and urban histories*, https://cityaspalimpsest.concordia.ca/ (accessed 7 December 2020).

[8] Jacques Godbout, cited in Grenier, Ma*lgré tout on rit à Saint-Henri*, 11. This dynamic has only been exacerbated by the fact that Saint-Henri has become a central filming site for Hollywood productions in recent years. Residents of the neighbourhood can now see the spots they frequent in lamentable blockbusters such as Amazon's recent imperialist apologia, *Jack Ryan*.

[9] On class, race, and community, see Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); John Walsh and Steven High, "Rethinking the Concept of Community," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 32, 64 (1999): 255-273; Lucy Taksa, "Like a Bicyle, Forever Teetering Between Individualism and Collectivism: Considering Community in Relation to Labour History," *Labour History* 78 (2000): 7-32. For an insightful treatment of the concept of neighbourhood in Quebec historiography, see Harold Bérubé, "La ville, quartier par quartier," *Labour/le Travail* 78 (Fall 2016): 265-279.

[10] Doreen Massey, "Places and their Pasts," *History Workshop Journal* 39 (1995): 185, 188.

but by different collective understandings of the relationship between past and present: for some, Saint-Henri's history is a darkness to be cast aside in favour of the bustling, profitable *now*; for others, the survivors of deindustrialization and displacement, time holds different meaning. Daily life is steeped in remembrance of better moments, and *now* is measured out in food bank schedules or in the many hours spent collecting cans and bottles to make ends meet.

The coexistence of these multiple modes of time and being, or "regimes of historicity," to slightly misappropriate François Hartog, challenges any easy breakdown of the neighbourhood's history into "industrial" and "post-industrial" periods.[11] "Those of us involved in studying and documenting the aftermaths of deindustrialization," writes Cathy Stanton, "have yet to grapple in a really serious way with what it means to operate within that paradox, and with the question of how we might re-locate or re-envision our work so that it aligns more closely with present as well as past forms of resistance to the imperatives of capital."[12] This first, introductory chapter is an attempt at taking up Stanton's challenge, through a charting of the various historical discourses shaping the neighbourhood today. How do they relate to histories of industrial production? Deindustrialization? Gentrification? Collective identity? This ground established, it will be the work of subsequent chapters of the dissertation to determine how these narratives evolved, and to track their imbrication within the changing material realities of Saint-Henri and Montreal. In short, I am beginning at the end, although certainly not *the end*, of the story.

"I'm From the Future, Bro": Crafting a Post-Industrial Structure of Feeling

Perhaps the easiest historical narrative to identify in Saint-Henri is the purely negationist line maintained by segments of the new entrepreneurial class, an echo of sorts of the broader *urbs nullius* discourse inscribed in the logics of settler colonialism in the city.[13] The new sense of time

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[11] See François Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time* (NY: Columbia University Press, 2017).

[12] Cathy Stanton, "Keeping 'the Industrial': New Solidarities in Postindustrial Places," in *The Deindustrialized World: Confronting Ruination in Postindustrial Places*, eds. Steven High, Lachlan MacKinnon, and Andrew Perchard, 156 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2017).

[13] See Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 176. Coulthard is referring to the erasure of

of the gentrifying world comes through in the words of fashion entrepreneur and Saint-Henri landlord Corey Shapiro, asked in a recent CBC documentary if he lived in the area he was so profoundly shaping: "Me? No. I'm from the future, bro. This is the past."[14]

"The past" invoked here becomes something from which the neighbourhood needs to be saved, and the self-appointed spokespeople of Saint-Henri's new business class therefore generally conceive of themselves as progressive figures, bringing much-needed security to an abandoned area. "What somebody calls gentrification somebody else calls growth and evolution," opined one business owner recently. "Nobody speaks about how people stepped into an area and put up their money to actually make it safer," complained another.[15]

In addition to being an abusive landlord, Shapiro's multiple luxury business ventures have contributed greatly to what geographer Amy Twigge-Molecey has described as the indirect, social and cultural displacement of working-class residents – the feeling of not being at home anymore in one's neighbourhood, of local haunts demolished, of not knowing anyone one passes in the street; in short, the misery of being surrounded by what Sarah Schulman calls "the culture

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Indigenous sovereignty and presence from urban spaces, and any comparison between the displacement of settler tenant populations and colonization of Indigenous territory should be approached with extreme caution. That said, there is a utility in trying to think complexly about how regimes of whiteness, anti-black racism, and settler colonialism act as structuring forces in the broader process of gentrification, something that we will get into more deeply in Chapter Four. See, in particular, Jessi Quizar, "Land of Opportunity: Anti-Black and Settler Logics in the Gentrification of Detroit," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 43, 2 (2019): 115-135. The flipside of the "urbs nullius" discourse, of course, is hollow reconciliation-speak that confines colonialism to the past. As Philippe Meilleur, director of Native Montreal, an Indigenous community centre in Saint-Henri put it, "C'est bien de partir de l'histoire. Mais la reconnaissance historique et une poignée de main de politiciens, ce n'est pas ce qui me préoccupe le plus … Ma préoccupation, c'est ce qu'on va faire pour la communauté qui habite à Montréal maintenant." See Rima Elkouri, "Un Montréal autochtone en émergence," *La Presse*, 13 September 2017, https://plus.lapresse.ca/screens/8701aa58-5c0c-41ff-9a99-53d754c652d9__7C___0.html.

[14] *Algo, Polly and Turcot*, dir. Alexandre Shelton (Montreal: CBC Short Docs, 2017), https://gem.cbc.ca/media/short-docs/season-1/episode-48/38e815a-00d61d463ed.

[15] Damon Van der Linde, "Montreal entrepeneurs targeted by anti-gentrification attacks says benefits of new businesses are being ignored," *Financial Post*, 24 June 2016, http://business.financialpost.com/entrepreneur/small-business/montreal-entrepreneurs-targeted-by-anti-gentrification-attacks-say-benefits-of-new-businesses-are-being-ignored.

of gentrification," in which "personal happiness at the expense of other people's deprivation is a normative standard."[16] One could also, using the tools of Raymond Williams, accurately describe this culture as an emergent, post-industrial "structure of feeling" in the neighbourhood. These new "meanings and values as they are actually lived and felt" have consequences that surpass the aesthetic.[17]

One night in 2014, after a particularly long and difficult meeting about housing organizing, long-time Saint-Henri resident Luce Parisien called me, deeply upset. She had gone for a walk to clear her head, and found her way blocked by throngs of restaurant and bar clients all along Notre-Dame. She remembers,

> I felt like I'd lost something, I think. You think you belong to something, and then you go onto the street and you ask people to let you go by [here her eyes begin to well up] … It's in your face, y'know, that you're on the outside looking in, like. There's a difference when you walk down the sidewalk and you say hi to your neighbours, and you walk down the sidewalk and people don't get out of the way, there's no space for you. It's like the … it's too chic for you."[18]

In our interview, Luce spoke not just to the indignity of being poorly housed or the difficulties of making ends meet on a fixed income, but to the psychological violence of being relegated to the past while yet still being present. Sociologist Beverly Skeggs has written insightfully about how contemporary class struggle is played out in the realm of the symbolic. Historically and

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[16] Amy Twigge-Molecey, "Exploring Resident Experiences of Indirect Displacement in a Neighbourhood Undergoing Displacement: The Case of Saint-Henri in Montréal," *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 23, 1 (Summer 2014): 1-22; Sarah Schulman, *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 167, 162. On Shapiro, see POPIR-Comité Logement, "Notorious for All the Wrong Reasons: Upscale Men's Barbershop Evicts Tenant, Gentrifies Neighbourhood," *Le Canal* 2, 2 (Winter 2014): 3, http://popir.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/canal_hiver-2014.pdf.

[17] Raymond Williams, "Structures of Feeling," in *Marxism and Literature* (NYC and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 132.

[18] Luce Parisien, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 12 May 2018.

contemporarily, she argues, working class culture is mined by the middle class, its use-value converted to exchange-value in the accruement of cultural capital and moral authority. It is constructed through discourse as backward or stagnant precisely because it must remain so in order for other classes to be constructed as mobile and progressive.[19] When this process unfolds on the level of neighbourhoods, as "the edge becomes the center," to use D.W. Gibson's evocative phrase, it results in significant levels of cognitive dissonance – familiar bars and restaurants are re-purposed for different lifestyles, for instance, or personal geographical trajectories and schedules become no longer tenable or safe.[20] One becomes, as Luce said to me that night on the phone, "just part of the background."[21]

Shapiro and his ilk, however, are simply the crass edge of this new entrepreneurial class. Its more sophisticated spokespeople in the *Quartiers du Canal* business association have opted for a more complex, even insidious, relationship to the neighbourhood's past. In collaboration with the local *Société historique de Saint-Henri* (SHSH), it has produced a "commercial heritage trail" – twenty-four commemorative plaques placed around the neighbourhood with images of businesses from the distant past.[22] Only two references to Saint-Henri's industrial character can be found: the RCA-Victor plant, because of its place in music history and its role in producing Canadian satellites, and the Imperial Tobacco buildings – "restored to their original splendour to house the Imperial Lofts."[23] The rest of the images are of small businesses, restaurants, and bars.

Industrial heritage expert Lucie Morriset, in dialogue with Hartog, argues that the meanings with which we invest buildings or objects, or the process of heritagization, are

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[19] See Beverly Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004).

[20] D.W. Gibson, *The Edge Becomes the Center: An Oral History of Gentrification in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Overlook Press, 2015).

[21] Luce Parisien, personal correspondence with author, 2014.

[22] Only two of the plaques feature images from after 1945.

[23] "Parcours historique du patrimoine commercial de Saint-Henri," *Les Quartiers du Canal*, http://lesquartiersducanal.com/en/parcours/historic-commercial-heritage-route-saint-henri/ (accessed 9 December 2020).

governed by "regimes of authenticity" – bounded collective relationships to time, to space, and to the Other.[24] In memorializing these prewar stores and restaurants, stripped of the broader context of the neighbourhood's past, the *Quartiers du Canal* heritage project contributes to the construction of a post-industrial structure of feeling by creating a claim to historical authenticity and belonging for a petit-bourgeois class independent from industrial production, the difficulties of deindustrialization, and, by and large, the working class as a whole.

Figure 1: One of the *Quartiers du Canal*'s historical panels, on the corner of Greene Avenue and Saint-Jacques Streets. Photo taken by author.

This is particularly significant, I think, given the recent waves of political property destruction targeting new, gentrifying businesses along Notre-Dame Street. As an anonymous communique expressed after a 2017 attack on an upscale cocktail bar, "We attacked Ludger not just because of its expensive prices but also to attack the way of life of the rich young yuppy professionals who are invading working class communities and contributing to the exclusion of the poor in the neighbourhood."[25] One anonymous interviewee told me,

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[24] See Lucie K. Morriset, *Des régimes d'authenticité: Essai sur la mémoire patrimoniale* (Québec et Rennes: Presses de l'Université du Québec et Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2009).

[25] Anonymous, "Montréal (Québec): La guerre aux riches et leurs commerces continue de plus belle," *Squat.net*, https://fr.squat.net/2017/05/31/montreal-quebec-la-guerre-aux-riches-et-leurs-commerces-continue/ (accessed June 12, 2018). My translation.

> There was a bit of a political shift that happened, where there were like, clear protagonists, or antagonists, depending on how you look at it, of that [gentrification] process. Which is not necessarily a completely accurate political analysis of what was going on; I mean I don't think people like Corey Shapiro, who position themselves as representative of that process, and of that wealth, and that *literal* gentrification, as in like a sort of aristocratic, elitist identity, in relation to the broader social process, I don't think he or people like him, or their businesses, are actually that central causally to what's going on. But they definitely provided a very clear and politically significant target for that action, against that process.[26]

The implantation of luxury businesses, in other words, helped to put faces and names to the impersonal market mechanisms of housing displacement. While Saint-Henri residents I interviewed had a variety of viewpoints on the legitimacy of property destruction, many spoke of feeling a sort of emotional resonance with the actions. Former textile worker and POPIR member Carole Orphanos' reflections encapsulate this ambiguity:

> We want what's owed to us. That's what we want. And, that's what we push for and and … but without ever using violence. That, no, I don't agree with whatever organization or anyone at all who, who does, um, I mean breaking windows or things like that. There are other ways of organizing ourselves without going towards violence. Sometimes it happened that I said to myself, "*Oh, they did good*" [emphasis mine], but another time I think, "No, it's not the right solution." I reserve the right to think that way.[27]

Luce's feelings on the subject were more straightforward:

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[26] Anonymous, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 8 May 2018.

[27] Carole Orphanos, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 29 May 2018.

> I'd like to know which is more violent, y'know? Filling Notre-Dame Street with very, very expensive restaurants, when you have a hard time managing, when you have a hard time feeding yourself; when you spend all your money on housing and you're always worried, then you see people selling expensive stuff and there are restaurants everywhere … one beside the other, and all expensive. I find it offensive. Just because they can afford a business … But y'know it's like there's no *between*. So, I don't see, when you feel you aren't part of something, you want it to stop or … you don't want to be outnumbered anymore and you are sick of feeling all alone so you say to yourself that there are others who also can't stand it then it comes out like that. I'd like to know which is more violent, just like charging a lot and then saying to people, "Look, we're going to eat in your face, don't come to our place, we don't want to see you, we just want certain people." I don't know which is more violent.[28]

Despite their differences, what is clear from Carole and Luce's interviews is that there is a crisis of legitimacy, of authenticity, for these new entrepreneurial efforts. There is a clear "us" and a "them" vis-à-vis an important sub-section of the neighbourhood's residents – as Luce says, "there's no between" – and the dividing line expresses itself in culture, hunger, and demands for justice.[29] To my reading, then, the "commercial heritage trail" needs to be understood as a sort of counter-insurgency operation. When the business association invites viewers of their commemorative plaques to "immerse yourself in the Saint-Henri of yesterday while enjoying the vitality and commercial diversity of today," they are staking a historical claim, against their critics, to their right to the neighbourhood.[30]

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[28] Luce Parisien, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 12 May 2018.

[29] While being a tenant, or low income, doesn't necessarily indicate that one is opposed to new businesses, it is significant that despite its rapidly changing socio-economic profile, 71 per cent of households in Saint-Henri as of the 2016 census were still renters. See Solidarité Saint-Henri. *Portrait du quartier Saint-Henri, d'après les données du Recensement de 2016 de Statistique Canada*, February 2021, https://www.solidarite-sh.org/sites/solidarite-sh.org/files/portraitsthenri2016.pdf.

[30] "Parcours historique du patrimoine commercial de Saint-Henri."

(A personal parenthesis – I was still working as a community organizer at the POPIR when the *Quartiers du Canal* was formed in 2015 [or ’16, memory fails], and at that time we were situated on Notre-Dame Street. When their public relations person came to our offices, we got in a discussion about one of the few working-class bars on the strip – “It’s ok for them (!) to have their bar,” he said, “but couldn’t they wipe down the tables from time to time?” In this regime of authenticity, the Other is most of the neighbourhood. The bar, of course, has since closed.)

Figure 1.1: One of Parks Canada’s historical plaques along the Canal, on the former site of the Moseley Tanneries – a company which left Saint-Henri in the early 20th century. Photo taken by Valérie Simard.

We can see a similar operation at play in the various governmental commemorative efforts along the post-industrial Lachine Canal, now a national park and heritage site lined with luxury condos. Steven High has critiqued at length Parks Canada’s commemorative plaque

series, "A Century of Industrial Production." Chronologically truncated in 1945, High points out that this discourse avoids the story of factory shutdowns altogether: "We are told the names of the original industrialists, what was manufactured, and something about the buildings themselves. Visitors hear nothing about working people, their struggles, or the years of decline and hardship."[31] High notes a parallel between this sanitized tale and tourism-oriented industrial heritage projects in Germany.[32] There, as Stefan Berger has demonstrated, industrial heritage museums promote a "consensus narrative" around regional pride and a homogenous, corporate identity, while de-emphasizing the anti-capitalist discourses of past movements and soft-peddling the language of class.[33]

In the Southwest, however, even the history of struggle is put to work justifying the transformation of the neighbourhood. This is the case with Madeleine Parent Park, located on the south side of the Canal in neighbouring Point Saint-Charles, directly across from Saint-Henri's Atwater Market. The park itself is a lovely tribute to Parent, the union leader and feminist who led workers in Saint-Henri's Dominion Textile plant on strike on multiple occasions during the 1940s.[34] It features long picnic tables made out to give the feel of being in a plant cafeteria, or working on the assembly line, as well as well-researched interpretative panels about Parent's activism.

The new green space was built, though, on the foundation of the demolished Séracen candle factory, which in 2009 was squatted by local residents and allies in an effort to reclaim it as an autonomous social centre for Point Saint-Charles. This political squat was violently evicted by the police, and in its place, real estate developer Devinro was allowed to erect its 102-unit

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[31] Steven High, *Deindustrializing Montreal: Entangled Histories of Race, Residence and Class* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's, forthcoming), 270.

[32] Steven High, "Green Gentrification: Race and Class Exclusion in an Urban National Park," *Niche: Network in Canadian History and Environment*, 20 October 2020, https://niche-canada.org/2020/10/20/green-gentrification-race-and-class-exclusion-in-an-urban-national-park/.

[33] Stefan Berger, "Industrial Heritage and the Ambiguities of Nostalgia for an Industrial Past in the Ruhr Valley, Germany," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History* 16, 1 (March 2019): 37-64.

[34] See Andrée Lévesque, ed., *Madeleine Parent: Militante* (Montréal: le Éditions du remue-ménage, 2003).

luxury condo project, the Walter on Atwater.[35] The Southwest Borough administration billed the construction of the park as a compromise, as the developer was limited to only one building, and the neighbourhood would maintain access to the Canal. Labour historian (and friend of Parent) Andrée Lévesque even wrote glowingly that "The initiative of the citizens of the south-west to block the gentrification of their neighbourhood and save this bit of land along the canal is worthy of Madeleine Parent who always believed in the strength of collective action."[36]

But as Carole Orphanos pointed out to me, the re-imagined Canal is not truly open to all. Carole lives a bit farther west in Saint-Henri, in a housing cooperative at the corner of Saint-Philippe and Saint-Ambroise streets, across from the luxury *Quai des Éclusiers*, a condo project built on the site of the former Stelco steel plant.

> There is a good community of neighbours in Saint-Henri. There **was** a good community of neighbours. Now we've lost them, eh, the good neighbours, the good community of neighbours, we've pretty much lost that now, like … We don't know people like before, people aren't sitting in their windows any more … It's awful to see all this wealth, settled along the Canal … you, you got a little path, you can get to

[35] Hélène Roulot-Ganzmann, "Walter sur Atwater: Un projet plein de poésie," *Le Devoir*, 20 October 2012, https://www.ledevoir.com/vivre/habitation/361634/un-projet-plein-de-poesie.

[36] Andrée Lévesque, "Montreal citizens strike a blow against gentrification with Parc Madeleine-Parent." *Rabble*, 27 September 2016, https://rabble.ca/news/2016/09/montreal-citizens-strike-blow-against-gentrification-parc-madeleine-parent. Lévesque also erroneously identifies the location of the park as being in Saint-Henri. On the history of the squat, see La Pointe libertaire, *Bâtiment 7: Victoire populaire à Pointe St-Charles* (Montréal: Éditions Écosociété 2013), 34-36; and, Centre Social Autogéré,"Communiqué de presse: Montréal: Éviction brutale du centre social autogéré squatté à Pointe-saint-Charles," *Squat.net*, https://fr.squat.net/2009/06/01/montreal-eviction-brutale-du-centre-social-autogere-squatte-a-pointe-saint-charles/ (accessed 9 December 2020). To my mind, the jury is still far from out on whether or not the Bâtiment 7 can be referred to as a victory. Like all space reclamation projects, it has quickly been caught up in the cycle of attraction and speculation of the real estate market. See also Division du patrimoine. "Inauguration du parc en hommage à Madeleine Parent," *Ville de Montréal*, 19 September 2016, http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/page?_pageid=7757,85167633&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&id=15606&ret=/pls/portal/url/page/arrond_sou_fr/rep_annonces/rep_actualites/detail_actualite.

the Canal, you just got a little path. The others, they've got their big terrasses in the back.[37]

When Carole moved into her place in the 1990s, Stelco was already closed, but there were stables and a trucking business.[38] "These days," she says, "there's no more life! You don't even see them, those people! It's like they don't even have time to live their own lives!"[39] There is a rejection here of what Hartog refers to as "presentism": a mode of being "characterized by the tyranny of the instant and by the treadmill of an unending now."[40]

Loss of access to the Canal, then, is about more than physical space. While certainly the massive condo projects along the water impede access for the rest of the neighbourhood's residents, it is also, as Carole pointed out, about the loss of familiarity and social contact generated by the alienating lifestyles of the young and wealthy.[41] As Saint-Henri resident Marc-Olivier Rainville remarked, "Everybody knows that there was deindustrialization, but it caused something that was really dramatic for the people here. When the Canal closed, and the boats stopped passing by, and the water stopped moving … there were people who fell into a depression because of that!"[42] In place of this industrial activity, there are now multiple recreational and exercise opportunities afforded by the bike lanes and green grass of the Lachine Canal, fulfilling the dreams of the 1990s-era promoters who lobbied around its "recreational,

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[37]Carole Orphanos, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 29 May 2018.

[38] Centre Camion Remorques St-Henri Inc., occupied the portion of the former Stelco factory facing Saint-Ambroise Street, c. 1985-2001. See Daniel Guilbert, *Saint-Henri Industriel: Anciennes manufactures et fantômes d'usines* (unpublished manuscript, in possession of author), Microsoft Word file.

[39] Orphanos, interview. My translation.

[40] Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity*, 16.

[41] Romain Schué, "Des pirates dénoncent 'l'embourgeoisement' et 'la privatisation' du Canal de Lachine," *Radio-Canada*, 9 June 2018, https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1106117/residents-sud-ouest-canal-lachine-embourgeoisement-condos-montreal (accessed 9 December 2020).

[42] Marc-Olivier Rainville, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 7 June 2018. My translation.

cultural and touristic potential."[43] New types of citizen action have sprung up in the form of associations aimed at promoting mobility and alternative transit along its banks, as developers and restauranteurs progressively re-brand Saint-Henri and the rest of the Southwest as an active, yet relaxing, playground.[44] For Denis Valiquette, who grew up in Saint-Henri in the 1990s, this repurposing of the Canal represents a cultural and economic narrowing of its possible uses – a forced reduction in its "opacity" to capital and State:

> And so, that's it, I was talking, about the Lachine Canal, the um, disaffected side of things, that, that before was more, more favourable to a multiplicity of uses than today where there is something much slicker, much more … Who determines the possibility of making good use of the place, like, can you afford a condo? Or can you … Y'know … Um you're going to rent a little canoe to take a ride on the Canal, you're going to, y'know, you're going to ride on the bike path, y'know. There is less, less opacity. [45]

The purpose of Madeleine Parent Park and the Walter is certainly not opaque. It is advertised by realtors as the best of both worlds: "With easy access to all city transportation, combined with the tranquility of life beside the magnificent Lachine Canal, it's a truly agreeable spot to live, not

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[43] Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement and Agence canadienne d'évaluation environnementale, *Rapport de la commission conjointe fédérale-provinciale: Projet de decontamination du Canal de Lachine*, September 1996, 23, https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2017/acee-ceaa/En105-54-1996-fra.pdf.

[44] Nadia Lemieux, "Mobilité active: Une nouvelle association pour le Canal-de-Lachine," *Journal de Montréal*, 8 November 2018, https://www.journaldemontreal.com/2018/11/08/mobilite-active--une-nouvelle-association-pour-le-canal-de-lachine (accessed 27 August 2019); Clélia Sève and Daniel Lambert, "Piste cyclable du Canal de Lachine: Mme McKenna, faites bouger les choses (et les gens)," *La Presse*, 22 July 2019, https://www.lapresse.ca/debats/opinions/201907/21/01-5234673-piste-cyclable-du-canal-de-lachine-mme-mckenna-faites-bouger-les-choses-et-les-gens.php (accessed 27 August 2019).

[45] Denis Valiquette, interviewed by Paul-Émile Cadorette and Katy Tari, 23 November 2010, Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling (COHDS)-12-14 Parcs Canada (Mon Canal) Collection.

to mention an excellent investment opportunity."[46] Nominally dedicated to the heritage of labour rights, the park now serves as a dog-walking and exercise zone for the condo owners next door or a rest stop for passing cyclists, part of the broader green gentrification of the Southwest.[47] It is by and large not used by low-income residents of the neighbourhood. In effect, local politicians

Figure 1.2: Cyclists stop to eat their lunch in Madeleine Parent Park, flanked by historical panels and the *Walter on Atwater* condominiums.

Photo taken by Valérie Simard.

[46] "Walter sur Atwater," *McGill Immobilier*, http://www.mcgillimmobilier.com/tag/walter-sur-atwater/ (accessed 10 December 2020).

[47] Green gentrification is a significant phenomenon in the Southwest. See Cecilia Keating, "Did a green development project drive up the rent in a Montreal neighbourhood?" *National Observer*, 23 January 2019, https://www.nationalobserver.com/2019/01/23/features/did-green-development-project-drive-rent-montreal-neighbourhood; Mathieu Perreault, "Haro sur l''éco-embourgeoisement'," *La Presse*, 5 August 2019, https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/2019-08-05/haro-sur-l-eco-embourgeoisement.

have taken the labour history of Saint-Henri and used it to further the capitalist transformation of neighbouring Point Saint-Charles.

These links between industrial heritage and real estate are of course most efficiently manipulated by development companies themselves, often with the collaboration (or at least tacit approval) of heritage activists. The Imperial Tobacco lofts, for example, converted to luxury residential space following the closure of the plant in the early 2000s, are advertised by developer Prével as having a "unique cachet" due to the preservation of the original architecture. The developer even went so far as to *alter* features of the building in order to bolster its historical claim, boasting that "the size of each loft's windows has been increased to highlight their industrial character."[48]

Similarly, the abandoned Canada Malting plant, the last un-converted or demolished manufacturing site in the Saint-Henri section of the Lachine Canal, is being targeted for re-purposing by a company called Renwick Development. Renwick specializes in the residential conversion of heritage sites. Their pitch for their project, which includes 175 condo units and townhouses, is written in the mode of historical tragedy:

> In many ways, the Canada Malting facility is an encapsulation of the history of the Lachine Canal. Having played an integral role in the development and success of the brewery and distillery industry in Montreal and likely Canada as a whole, the facility exists now as the last and perhaps best reminder of a lost era - symbolizing both the heyday and the decline of the South-West of Montreal. Quietly, the buildings have bravely weathered the passage of time, the effects of gross neglect and abject vandalism to the point where they have become a canvas for the abstract expression of the angst of a community desperate for better services.[49]

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[48] "Lofts Impérials," *Prével*, https://www.prevel.ca/en/project/loft-imperial (accessed 10 December 2020).

[49] "Canada Malting, St-Henri," *Renwick Development*, https://www.renwickdev.com/project-page---canada-malting (accessed 10 December 2020).

While the plant was open until the early 1990s, the confining of industrial work to a distant, "lost era" is a common strategy used to "praise and to bury" working-class histories.[50] Projects like Renwick's mobilize a sense of vague architectural "pastness" that serves to "culturally validate" the incoming, upwardly mobile population, as Sharon Zukin reminds us, and "automatically provides new middle classes with the collective identity and social credentials for which they strive" while pricing out low-income households.[51]

Figure 1.3: The Canada Malting plant, with its iconic terra-cotta silos in the foreground. Photo taken by Valérie Simard.

[50] Cathy Stanton, *The Lowell Experiment: Public History in a Postindustrial City* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), xii. Lucy Taksa has discussed this in the Australian context. See her "Machines and Ghosts: Politics, Industrial Heritage and the History of Working Life at the Eveleigh Workshops," *Labour History* 85 (November 2003): 65-88.

[51] Sharon Zukin, "Gentrification: Culture and Capital in the Urban Core," *Annual Review of Sociology* 13 (1987): 143.

Many residents of the neighbourhood see through this facade, and have organized a campaign – *À Nous la Malting* – to convert the plant site into social housing, a daycare, urban farming space, and an industrial and working-class heritage museum (explored more in detail below). Pointing out that there are already condos lining the length of the Canal, Carole Orphanos commented, "The Canal isn't theirs. People need it, us too, we also need the Canal. That's why we are working to get the Canada Malting, to get it for the community, and that's important because otherwise … we'll have lost on all levels, like, if we don't get the Malting."[52] For this former industrial worker, condo construction on the Malting site is seen as a robbery of the working-class right to the Canal.

Unfortunately, the position of all local actors vis-à-vis displacement is not as clear. In the summer of 2019, I participated in a guided tour of Saint-Henri's industrial heritage organized by the *Association québécoise du patrimoine industriel*. As we passed the *Quai des Éclusiers*, the massive, gated condo community on the site of the former Stelco plant, and a project against which tenant organizers fought ferociously in the early 2000s,[53] our guide commented on what a success it was, as its designers had included several nods to the industrial architecture of the original building.

The *Société historique de Saint-Henri* also plays an ambiguous role in the broader process of displacement. It is run by tireless local volunteers, many of them life-long residents of the neighbourhood, and on occasion has been a fierce critic of attempts to erase Saint-Henri's past.[54] When the provincial Transport Ministry accidentally uncovered the archaeological remnants of the original *Village-des-Tanneries* (the small European fur-tanning settlement from which the neighbourhood eventually grew) in the process of renovating the Turcot Interchange, and then proceeded to unceremoniously destroy them, no one was more outraged or vocal than

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[52] Carole Orphanos, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 29 May 2018.

[53] See Patricia Viannay, "Les luttes pour le droit au logement à Montréal depuis la pénurie de 2001," *Nouveaux cahiers du socialisme* 10 (Fall 2013): 95-105.

[54] While my criticism of the SHSH is made both as a neighbourhood organizer and an academic historian, I am conscious that these two roles carry different weights. Professional historians have been very condescending about the efforts of these committed volunteers in the past. See Joanne Burgess, "Vivre en ville: Saint-Henri à l'adresse http://collections.ic.gc.ca/sthenri/," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 55, 2 (2001): 327-329.

the members of the SHSH.[55] But despite possessing an impressive collection of photos and documents that could be used for critiquing and contextualizing deindustrialization and gentrification, SHSH largely remains committed to an apolitical rendering of Saint-Henri's past. It produces cheerful brochures on such topics as sports and leisure and religious life in the neighbourhood, and its guided tour of industrial heritage is a version of that past largely free from workers and their organizing efforts.[56] Its work on the 1950s and 1960s, further, published in the recent book *Moments d'histoire à Saint-Henri*, contains scant reference to industrial labour, and is completely silent on the question of closures and conflict. The book's firmly nostalgic authors "wanted to show our Montreal neighbourhood in its true colours: a lively neighbourhood where working-class families lived, worked, were educated and had fun. A tightly-knit community where mutual aid made it possible to get through the difficult days."[57]

Like many non-profit organizations in the neighbourhood, the SHSH has been around since 1969, and there is a definite gate-keeper effect generated by this longevity. Despite being invited on several occasions to participate in the heritage committee of the community-based Malting project, SHSH recently wrote a critical message to one of the campaign's organizers, defending the society's turf: "The *Société historique de Saint-Henri* brings together the real keepers of the history of Saint-Henri. In any project relating to Saint-Henri's history, it is essential to call on us. Seriously. Not just activists but real people." [58] Who gets to be considered "real," or in other words which regime of authenticity takes precedence, is a worry deeply

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[55] See Guy Giasson, "Les tanneries de Saint-Henri: de Jean-Talon à l'échangeur Turcot," *Histoire Québec* 23, 1 (2017): 12-15.

[56] See, for example, Monique Courteau and Pauline St-Aubin, *Histoires de rues: Origine des noms de Saint-Henri* (Montréal: Collection SHSH, Les Éditions Histoire Québec, 2005); SHSH, *100 ans de loisirs au Cercle Paroissial St-Zotique* (Montréal: Société historique de Saint-Henri, c. 2011); SHSH, *Expo Sport: Une exposition de photos sur les sports à Saint-Henri* (Montréal: Société historique de Saint-Henri, 2010); SHSH, *À la découverte des manufactures de Saint-Henri: Une promenade autoguidée propose par la Société historique de Saint-Henri* (Montréal: Collection SHSH, Éditions Histoire Québec, 2008).

[57] Guy Giasson and Camile Baccanale, *Moments d'histoire de Saint-Henri: Plus de 800 photos des années '20 aux années '60* (Montréal: Éditions Histoire Québec, 2020), back cover.

[58] SHSH, email correspondence with Ines Benessiah, 9 September 2020.

embedded in the broader historical genealogy of heritage labour. The field, as Cathy Stanton has demonstrated, has from its beginnings been driven by "specific anxieties and changing class positions characteristic of industrialism and capitalism more generally."[59] In downplaying conflictual narratives and collaborating with new capitalist forces, the *Société* seeks to maintain its authoritative place in the neighbourhood's changing ecology. But in doing so, it erases much of the history that its members are trying to preserve.

The combined forces of the new entrepreneurial class, State cultural production, real estate developers, and heritage activists, then, seek to propel this post-industrial structure of feeling to hegemonic dominance in the neighbourhood space. From outright denial to historical revisionism to re-purposing industrial architecture for speculative purposes, these actors aim to downplay the dynamic and conflictual nature of the industrial period and to obscure the connections between deindustrialization and the brutal gentrification and displacement from which they benefit.

"Le St-Henri que nous voulons": Past and Present in Activist Discourse

Those engaged in resistance to displacement recall and highlight other histories. In 2011 members of the POPIR-*Comité Logement* published a survey of empty lots and buildings in Saint-Henri, demanding that the City administration buy them up and take them off the ballooning real estate market, reserving these spaces for the construction of social housing. Their message – yes to development; no to displacement – was situated within a much different regime of authenticity:

> St. Henri's industrial past has left a heritage which still defines the neighbourhood today. The entire sector has a long tradition of social struggle, popular organization, mutual aid and solidarity. This is the St. Henri that we love and it is with it, and not against it, that we want to build.[60]

[59] Cathy Stanton, "Displaying the Industrial: Toward a Genealogy of Heritage Labor," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History* 16, 1 (March 2019): 155.

[60] POPIR-Comité Logement, *Le St-Henri que nous voulons bâtir*, Winter 2011, http://popir.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Journal-mis-en-page-final-Site-web.pdf (accessed 22 September 2020).

In a similar vein, in February 2013, the local network of community groups, *Solidarité Saint-Henri* (SSH), held a neighbourhood consultation entitled "Remembering Saint-Henri, owning its future." Juxtaposing archival photos of Saint-Henri with images of the gentrified present, organizers invited Saint-Henri residents to reflect on "How has the neighbourhood changed? Who controls the changes? Is it a good or a bad thing? What role can residents play in these transformations?"[61] As an active force in the fight against gentrification, SSH hoped to use residents' memories and reflections on the past to stir political mobilization in the present.

The Southwest is steeped in activist lore – sometimes for better, sometimes for worse. Valérie Simard, my former co-worker at the POPIR, moved to Montreal from Gatineau in 2008 and began working as a community organizer at the *Regroupement information logement* (RIL), in neighbouring Point Saint-Charles. She had heard many of the stories about the Point's activist past, she remembers, but was quickly disabused of any romantic notions:

> So you see, there were, there were different narratives there. Y'know the Point … what's sold as history by the community sector, it's the [Sixties-era] birth of the CLSCs [community health clinics], the birth of legal aid, y'know, pretty much the birth of housing cooperatives, technical resource groups,[62] y'know like the entire social economy in fact, and the community sector a little … Not very long before that, there was the whole campaign around the Casino, y'know so … the gang around the *Pointe libertaire*, like, called it the *Petite Gaulle*, y'know, there really was an indomitable village thing, and all that? I'm not sure if the discourse has changed a little, but for real, it would be embarrassing to continue this discourse about the Point because the gentrification is really intense, there, and … rental housing hasn't been maintained in Point St. Charles more than elsewhere. So there was that whole narrative, and there was at the same time, all the people at the heads of the

[61] Rédaction, "Se rappeler St-Henri, s'approprier son avenir," *La Voix populaire*, 27 February 2013, http://journalmetro.com/local/sud-ouest/actualites/618364/se-rappeler-st-henri-sapproprier-son-avenir/.

[62] Non-profit groups that develop social housing projects.

> organizations, have been there for decades and decades, y'know, that's what's really particular as well. But for sure it was a little like that in many organizations at that time, it was like, y'know, people that've been at the head of organizations for thirty years that backed each other up, and y'know, it's not criticized, among them?

Crossing the Canal to Saint-Henri, and coming to the POPIR in 2009, she found things to be a bit different, the connection with past struggles perhaps somewhat more organic:

> I knew there'd been workers' struggles, and all that, but I didn't know the details. But I found that, it's obvious that it strikes the imagination the fact that people are poor, because the factories were closed, because people lost their jobs, and then they built condos there, in these factories where people had once worked. And y'know it's as though it's a life full of battles. Battles against poverty, because when they were working there it was also, miserable conditions, y'know? And it was a constant battle, and after that, you have to fight for, for, y'know, you live in this neighbourhood, probably in really shitty housing conditions, then at one point you aren't able to live in the neighbourhood anymore because the factory where you worked becomes condos. It's just really visual. So it was interesting to try to speak about it and to put that forward, obviously, and to identify it as a kind of injustice, not just an injustice but like something, y'know, that really showed the little importance these folks had for a system that abuses and exploits them. It's like, we don't need you anymore, in any way. [63]

Activist narratives in Point Saint-Charles tend to relate to the area's industrial past as an era of darkness and drudgery, defeated by the hope offered by the neighbourhood organizing of the Quiet Revolution period.[64] Partially, this can be explained by the outmigration of workers who hung onto high-paying jobs in the last generation of union shops in plants like Northern

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[63] Valérie Simard, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 25 January 2020.

[64] Steven High, "No Sign of Hardship or Hurt: The Erasure of Class Politics in Point Saint-Charles," *Our Times: Canada's Independent Labour Magazine* (Fall 2019): 18-23. For an example of the treatment of industrial histories of the period, see Le Collectif CourtePointe,

Electric, Dominion Glass, and at CN.[65] There was not much overlap between grassroots organizing and the world of industrial labour. The contemporary emergence of new neighbourhood groups in Saint-Henri, by contrast, coincided with a militant period of labour organizing in the largely non-unionized, light-manufacturing plants that at least partially replaced the employers lost to the first post-war wave of deindustrialization. Industrial production in the neighbourhood continued at Imperial Tobacco until 2003; at the Asten-Johnson plant, until 2013. The connection between industrial labour and neighbourhood organizing, then, still structures the experience of some of Saint-Henri's more long-time activists.

When Carole Orphanos first knocked on the door of the POPIR in the 1990s, for example, looking for help with sorting out some problems in her housing cooperative, she was already a veteran of union organizing in the Liberty Woolstock textile plant, in Montreal's Old Port:

> That's how I found out what POPIR is, what the organizations are who … at that time were doing protests; I had already, I already liked the fact of union protesting, so for housing, and having reserves [reserved lots and buildings for social housing] and all of that for housing, well geez I agreed with that, I knew that people, they needed it. [66]

While Carole grew up in the neighbourhood, others migrated to Saint-Henri looking for industrial jobs at the same moment that grassroots community organizing was taking off. This was the case for Doris LeBlanc, who arrived in Saint-Henri from Campbellton, New Brunswick, in 1974. When I interviewed her for a short film created for the 50th anniversary of the POPIR in

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Pointe Saint-Charles: Un quartier, des femmes, une histoire communautaire (Montréal: Les Éditions du remue-ménage, 2006), 27-33. On the racial politics of this activist narrative, see Rosalind Hampton, "By All Appearances: Thoughts on Colonialism, Visuality, and Racial Neoliberalism," *Cultural Studies* 33, 3 (2019): 370-390.

[65] Piyusha Chatterjee and Steven High, "The Deindustrialisation of our Senses: Residual and Dominant Soundscapes in Montreal's Point Saint-Charles District," in *Telling Environmental Histories*, eds. K. Holmes and H. Goodall, 188 (London: Palgrave MacMillan, Palgrave Studies in World Environmental History, 2017).

[66] Orphanos, interview.

2019, she rattled off a list of jobs in the short-lived generation of secondary manufactories operating in the area in the 1960s and 1970s: "I worked for the umbrella shop, I worked for Grover; then right across from my place, the RCA-Victor shop. I worked there just four months. I worked three years at Montex."[67] At the same time, she was brought into the universe of the POPIR through its burgeoning neighbourhood outreach: "The first memory, it's the first year that I found out about them, they left flyers in the door. This is the way I found out about it." Although poor health (partially as a consequence of industrial labour) limits Doris' participation these days, through the POPIR and ODAS (*Organisation d'aide aux sans-emplois*) she has become a fixture over the decades in a variety of poor people's movements.[68]

This industrial ethos, in turn, structures the imagination even of those who have never experienced factory work. I found this to be the case, for example, when I interviewed Freda Guttman. Although Freda has maintained a lifelong commitment to social justice as both an artist and activist involved in feminist and Latin American and Palestinian solidarity efforts, she moved to the neighbourhood only in her late 70s, to be closer to her daughter. Growing up in the 1930s and 1940s in the Jewish community of Outremont as the daughter of an owner of a small clothing factory, and having been a homeowner on the Plateau for much of her adult life, her experience was much different than that of the people she came to know through tenant organizing in Saint-Henri. "I guess I thought of it in terms of class," she remembers about her first impressions of her new home. "It's not that I felt uncomfortable, but I was very aware that I, that this was an area where poor people lived? And I had never lived, y'know, amongst poor people … and also lived in a milieu that was so francophone." This realization propelled her into creating a series of "People's History of Montreal" posters highlighting grassroots struggles in the Southwest, including the suppression of labour resistance in the building of the Lachine Canal, profiles of union leaders Madeleine Parent and Léa Roback, histories of local community organizations, and later, reflections on colonialism in Quebec.

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[67] "Grover" was in fact the name of the owner of the building on De Courcelle street, formerly Tooke Brothers Limited, that rented out space to ELPRO International (Exclusive Leather Product Corp.). Montex was a small textile company operating alongside Eagle Toys/Coléco in the former Dominion Textile plant on Saint-Ambroise. See Daniel Guilbert, *Saint-Henri Industriel.*

[68] Doris LeBlanc, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 9 October 2019 and 16 January 2020.

> It felt important to me to somehow, y'know being in this "strange country," to find a way to be myself in it? I mean I'm always aware of … being middle class, having grown up with so much … so there's always a way in which I don't quite feel like I belong here; I live here but I don't … there's probably a lot of people like me living here now, but just that sense, always … Then I got involved with POPIR and started doing those, y'know, people's history. I thought of it because I read about the Beauharnois strike![69] And that's what gave me the idea to do, like, people's history … When I found myself living here I wanted to participate in some way … when I read about the Beauharnois massacre, and I thought like … Gee, I never heard of that, and nobody I knew did! One thing led to another, and it was a way of me participating in POPIR, and then I got the idea of making them into posters.[70]

As Guttman points out, being a relatively recent middle-class transplant in the "strange country" of Saint-Henri is not uncommon in the context of gentrification. But it is significant, I think, that an engaged person like Freda, looking to situate herself in a new context, could identify a militant working-class tradition with roots stretching back to the mid-19th-century, and be able to connect that with ongoing working-class organizing. There is still an "industrial structure of feeling" at play in the neighbourhood, however much it may be composed of "norms and values that are in the process of being made marginal."[71]

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[69] The 1843 strike of Irish labourers working on the Canal, and its violent repression, have been central to debates in Canadian labour historiography for years. For recent work on this topic, see Dan Horner, "Solemn Processions and Terrifying Violence: Spectacle, Authority, and Citizenship During the Lachine Canal Strike of 1843," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine* 38, 2 (Spring 2010): 36-47.

[70] Freda Guttman, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 14 August 2020.

[71] Tim Strangleman, "Deindustrialisation and the Historical Sociological Imagination: Making Sense of Work and Industrial Change," *Sociology* 51, 2 (2017): 472.

Figure 1.4: A screenshot of Freda's poster on the Beauharnois Massacre, from the Winter 2014 digital edition of *Le Canal*, a newspaper created and run by Southwest residents, supported by the employees of the POPIR (including the author).

The original was accompanied by a French translation.

I found these industrial influences in other places I didn't expect. My friend Daniel Guilbert has been involved in neighbourhood activism for years, but I got to know him a little better through organizing around the Canada Malting project. He is a musician, a photographer, spent several years living out West, and is an intrepid urban explorer – in his own words, a bit of a bohemian. Unlike most other urban explorers, however, his interest goes beyond the purely aesthetic consumption of deindustrialized spaces.[72] A former volunteer of the SHSH, he has compiled an encyclopedic knowledge of the history of industrial production in Saint-Henri and the Southwest. His home is full of industrial artefacts and documents that he has rescued from abandoned plants, and he is in the process of writing an incredibly detailed book on this history (which has greatly informed and assisted me in my own research).

[72] For a critique of middle-class ruin-gazing, see Steven High and David Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland: The Landscape and Memory of Deindustrialization* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2007), Chapter 2.

In one of our interviews, I asked him about what inspired this historical work. On the one hand, he said, "It was kind of accidental … I went to an annual assembly [of the SHSH] and there were elections, and there was someone who suggested me, and I got myself elected [laughs]." But working on an exhibit on the neighbourhood's factories in the early 2000s sparked a deeper passion. For several years he laboured full time on his book, living on his savings. As our conversation continued, Daniel began to speak about the contradictory legacy of class mobility – his family lived in suburban Ville Saint-Laurent, in the north of the city, but his mother, it turns out, had worked at the Northern Electric plant in Point Saint-Charles when she arrived in Montreal in the 1950s, and his father spent his working life as a pattern maker and then as a foreman at the Jenkins Brothers foundry, in nearby Lachine.

> So I got to know it as the son of a worker … When I returned from the west, my father he offered me a job working at Jenkins. But it wasn't really my style, y'know? But in any case, at one point he invited me and my brother, we did a tour of the whole factory … But the foundry … it was like hell working in there, well, y'know it was like, hell, y'know, it was dark, hot … and there was one guy who just operated a kind of crane, and he had a deep respect for, it was obvious that he didn't have much of an education, his job was, y'know, it was like manual in the end, probably well paid but all the same. And so the fact of our being the boss' son, that we were a boss' son, he saw us as if we were like, much better than him? Just the look in his eyes, it's always stayed with me … anyway, it had a funny effect on me. And I didn't feel, y'know it was not, it was not, like really not my … it was a workers' world, y'know? In fact, I worked, but y'know, I felt more like an artist, or drop-out, or I don't know, a bohemian ... But it was like these sorts of jobs … you were in it for life, that's the thing. If I had gone back to Jenkins, it's like I couldn't see the end of it.

Daniel moved to Saint-Henri in 1995 and has pursued a variety of interests, studying anthropology, running an urban farm, and becoming a published expert in Québécois folklore.[73]

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[73] Daniel Guilbert, "La légende des 'Veillées du bon vieux temps' (1ère partie)," *Bulletin Mnémo* 12, 4 (Fall 2010): http://mnemo.qc.ca/bulletin-mnemo/article/la-legende-des-veillees-du-bon; "La légende des 'Veillées du bon vieux temps' (2ème partie)," *Bulletin Mnémo* 13, 1 (Spring

His work later on in life on industrial heritage was in some ways a means to re-connect with the "workers' world" from which he had strayed:

> Before my father died, I had started to get him talking, and I learned that before working at Jenkins, he had worked in a little nothing factory beside the Canal, here in Saint-Henri, and so I interviewed him about it for my book. When he got Alzheimers, and I was clearing out the stuff at their place, I found a little box, and when he worked there, I was born, when he worked there, and his boss had bought a present for the baby, okay? Which was a little silver spoon, in a box, with the factory's business card. So from the first day I was born, I had a link to this project. Yup, it's pretty special.[74]

Daniel now keeps this spoon in his apartment, amongst the many industrial artefacts that fill his home to bursting.

Multi-disciplinary artist Angie Arsenault, born and raised in industrial Cape Breton, has written that there is "memory value implicit in the history carried by discarded industrial fragments: Once invaluable parts that facilitated the running of the machine of industry, when the chain of labour broke, they lay neglected and forgotten shifting only with the passing of time and weather, but still weighted by their previous sense of significance."[75] Through Daniel's active involvement in the heritage committee of *À Nous la Malting*, he and other neighbourhood opponents to gentrification and displacement are also actively investing those industrial artefacts, and the history to which they're connected, with a new political significance.

2011): http://mnemo.qc.ca/bulletin-mnemo/article/la-legenge-des-veillees-du-bon. A third and fourth part, as well as a full bibliography, can be accessed under Guilbert's author page: http://mnemo.qc.ca/auteur/guilbert-daniel.

[74] Daniel Guilbert, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 7 August 2020.

[75] Angie Arsenault, "Keeper of Industrial Design" (MFA Thesis, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 2017), 10.

Figure 1.5: Daniel Guilbert in his basement archive. Photo taken by author.

For Geneviève Tremblay-Fafard, member of the heritage committee and life-long resident of Saint-Henri, this work is as much about the future as the past, part of a broader project of community infrastructure – "Fundamentally, what motivated me to get involved, it's what we can leave to future generations." Geneviève is a single parent, and her son lives with epilepsy and an intellectual disability. Around their apartment in the *Village-des-Tanneries*, the northwest corner of the neighbourhood tucked in under the massive Turcot Interchange, community services and support are severely lacking. Since becoming involved in the work to save the Malting in 2014, she says, "I developed a critical take on things, I understood more what the problems in the neighbourhood were."[76] Much like industrial organizing originally overlapped with community organizing, industrial heritage has now become an important part of contemporary popular education and mobilization efforts.

[76] Geneviève Tremblay-Fafard, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 7 August 2020.

Neighbourhood organizing in Saint-Henri is of course constantly changing, as both the class character and ethnic make-up of the area are in transformation.[77] But today's movement is in no way seeking a clean break with its working-class past; rather, it is nestled in and continues to create an industrial structure of feeling, generating a "regime of authenticity" based on storytelling about the heritage of industrial work and organizing.

Deindustrialization and Joblessness

Of course, not all industrial workers in Saint-Henri were involved with labour organizing, and most of them were never subsequently drawn into the world of community groups and associations. In a fascinating 1970 study of different working-class Montreal neighbourhoods conducted by sociologist Louise Chabot-Robitaille, one interview participant from Saint-Henri was already blaming the looming spectre of automation and job loss on the unions, arguing that, "If there have been wage increases it's because of the unions, who really push too hard to get wages that are too high. So the bosses, to make their profit, they're forced to change the machines, oust the workers and put machines in their place."[78]

As much as the activist tradition in Saint-Henri is nourished by persistent industrial cultures and the history of labour militancy, it is also to a great extent informed by the fundamentally working-class (and heavily gendered) experience of being without a wage.[79] Carole recalled in 2018 the shock of losing her textile job in 1990:

> It was like the air was let out of me. It was a huge, huge loss … like a hole that opened up in the ground, practically. Anyways, you find yourself from one day to the next, you got nothing anymore. You're notified maybe two months or so … I don't know, I don't remember how much time we had, as notice, it wasn't a lot neither,

[77] Patricia Viannay, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 9 October 2019.

[78] Anonymous participant, quoted in Louise Chabot-Robitaille, *De l'eau chaude, de l'espace et un peu de justice: Des citoyens de quartiers ourvriers analysent leur situation* (Montréal: Conseil de développement social du Montréal métropolitation, 1970), 91. My translation.

[79] See Michael Denning, "Wageless Life," *New Left Review* 66 (November-December 2010): 79-97.

> anyway. Even if you get notice, you receive a notice, somehow you can't see the end? You aren't capable of imagining the end, and when you get to the end, then believe me you're down in the hole. And then you have to turn around, and … you ask yourself a thousand questions. Where do I go from here? Because … I mean you started at minimum wage, you fought to get higher wages, and then you have to go back to minimum. And … it's not easy. At that time, I had a kid … my daughter was two years old.[80]

Carole would not ultimately return to the workforce. Despite several attempts at upgrading her qualifications, family responsibilities complicated her attempts to learn a new trade. When reflecting on her experience, she speaks in the language of the class-wounded.[81] As Steven High points out, "Plant closings are humiliating experiences."[82] "I feel like I'm bad luck wherever I go," Carole remarks. "Everything closes!"[83]

For others, often economic refugees from previous waves of gentrification elsewhere in the city, their resistance to displacement stems from the difficult experience of living on too-lean social assistance benefits. Marc-Olivier Rainville, for example, is a product of a middle-class upbringing in the neighbourhood of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (NDG), but found his way to Saint-Henri in the 1990s when faced with chronic unemployment, on the look-out for a cheap apartment. He prefers to think about condo construction in terms of "real-politik": while it is not what he would have preferred, he argues that condos are here to stay, and that the neighbourhood has to face up to this reality. Still, his downward mobility to unemployment and welfare payments has brought with it its own hardships – he recalls losing twenty pounds within three months of going on social assistance – and his economic situation prevents him from enjoying

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[80] Carole Orphanos, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 14 June 2018.

[81] See Steven High, "'The Wounds of Class': A Historiographical Reflection on the Study of Deindustrialization, 1973-2013," *History Compass* 11, 11 (2014): 994-1007.

[82] Steven High, "The Emotional Fallout of Deindustrialization in Detroit," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 1 (March 2019): 146.

[83] Carole Orphanos, interview. My translation.

many of the new businesses which have replaced places he could afford. “They’re very expensive … Before *Foie Gwas* [a new upscale eatery] it was the *Belle Provinc*e [a diner chain in Quebec]. I used to go there with my kids … well it closed down, and now I would never put a foot in the door of *Foie Gwas*. I don’t want to go there.”[84]

Still others have created their own de-industrial regimes of authenticity, a kind of guerrilla heritage, composed of attachments to the people and places of a deindustrialized world. Luce Parisien’s story is a good example. Although raised in the industrial Franco-Ontarian town of Hawkesbury, and having worked in a variety of plant jobs there, she came to Montreal in the 1980s in her late twenties to study photography at Concordia. Upon her arrival in the neighbourhood, it wasn’t the abandoned factories that left an impression. What others might have then been feeling as loss or emptiness was to her an opportunity for a different kind of connection: “I felt right at home … because Saint-Henri isn’t all that big, it’s accessible … I remember when I got here, coming out of the Saint-Henri metro … the railway, it’s extraordinary, I was walking along the track and there were these big trees … there’s something magical about it.”[85]

Figure 1.6: Black and white image of Luce Parisien on the undeveloped Canal, circa 1990. From the personal collection of Luce Parisien.

[84] Rainville, interview. My translation.

[85] Parisien, interview. My translation.

Another interviewee, who preferred to remain anonymous, felt at home in Saint-Henri precisely *because* of its deindustrialized character, and indeed expressed a certain amount of emotional resonance with the term post-industrial.

> I mean it feels less and less … or like, it feels like we're not post-industrial anymore? We're like post-post-industrial, or something? Like it's like, the neighbourhood being covered in condos, doesn't make it feel post-industrial, it makes it feel, like, a new, other thing. And there's just been like, such intense saturation of condos in the last ten years. And like, the City, fixing up, like, the fucking Woonerf,[86] and like, there just used to be these, like, brownfields. When I moved to the neighbourhood, there were just like, tonnes of like, fuckin' abandoned lots, with like, weeds growing all over them, and, like, down by the Canal, y'know.
>
> Anyway, it doesn't feel super post-industrial anymore. But I remember when it did. I mean, that was what made me, make it, feel like, felt like the place where I'm from. Like, that was a way to be like, I grew up in a city that someone once told me was like, I dunno one the ugliest cities, and [laughs], I was proud of it, I was like, whatever, this city's great![87]

These interviewees have made lives in the spaces and places left behind by capital flight, and much of their experience has been forged in the remains of what Sherry-Lee Linkon calls the "half-life" of deindustrialization: the long-term, ongoing impact of the loss of industrial worlds.[88] The meanings and attachments formed in this period motivate local resistance to displacement as much, if not more, than the industrial past.

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[86] "*Woonerf*," a Dutch term literally meaning "living yard," is the name given by the Southwest Borough to a green alley constructed through massive public investment in the western part of the neighbourhood. "*L'Alcôve sur le the Woonerf*," a Mondev condo project, followed soon after.

[87] Anonymous, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 7 August 2020.

[88] See Sherry-Lee Linkon, *The Half-Life of Deindustrialization: Working-Class Writing About Economic Restructuring* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018).

White Nostalgia and Neighbourhood Memory

Whether they seek to pacify neighbourhood resistance or inspire it, these competing regimes of authenticity are united in a common framework of settler whiteness. Despite having been connected through industrial capitalism to a broad, transnational network of production and exploitation, and in fact possessing a multi-ethnic working-class past, the history of the neighbourhood is almost universally understood through the lens of the white, French-speaking population. As a 2000 public health report on the neighbourhood put it, "Saint-Henri, Montreal's most famous working-class neighbourhood, is part of the imaginary of every Québécois."[89]

Partially, this can be traced back to the white, middle-class gaze of Gabrielle Roy, and her perception of the "village" in which she briefly found herself in the 1940s. As Winfried

Figure 1.7: *Gabrielle Roy and Boys of St. Henri*, 1945. P48, S1, P11917, Fonds Conrad Poirier, BANQ.

Siemerling has pointed out, Roy "expunged almost all indications of a multiracial Montreal … it is striking how she renders invisible another universe that existed at the same time in the same

[89] Renald Bujold, *Développement des communautés locales. Portrait de concertations de quartier à Montréal: Solidarité Saint-Henri* (Montréal: Régie régionale de la santé et des services sociaux Montréal-Centre [Direction de la santé publique], Ville de Montréal, Centraide, 2000).

Montreal neighbourhood."[90] Saint-Henri has always been, and in fact continues to be, demographically dominated by francophone Euro-settlers. But precisely at the same time as Roy was writing her famous novel, a young Oscar Peterson was emerging onto Montreal's jazz scene. Peterson was born in Saint-Henri, the son of one of the many Black railway porters who peopled the Southwest. His famous *Canadiana Suite* pays homage to "Place Saint-Henri," its rapid melody recalling the industrial atmosphere of a "a hustling, bustling community," as he remembered during a performance in 1983.[91] Today, historical commemoration of the Black community has largely been confined to neighbouring Little Burgundy. But this is a material and discursive reality that had to be fostered, and one that didn't seriously begin to take root until after the City proceeded with mass urban renovation east of Atwater in the latter half of the 1960s, destroying most of that section of the neighbourhood's homes and replacing them with public housing. Prior to that point, people both east and slightly west of Atwater referred variously to their homes as being in Sainte-Cunégonde, upper Saint-Henri, the West End, the Saint-Antoine District, or simply, Saint-Henri.[92]

This re-drawing of boundaries corresponded, of course, with the explosion of neo-nationalist sentiment in Quebec and the growing overlap of community organizing and labour politics with concepts of national liberation. "Saint-Henri" became shorthand for the oppression and poverty of the Québécois worker, evoked, memorably, in Michèle Lalonde's 1968 poem, "Speak White": "speak white and loud/qu'on vous entende/de Saint-Henri à Sainte-Domingue/oui quelle admirable langue/pour embaucher/donner des ordres/fixer l'heure de la

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[90] Winfried Siemerling, "Jazz, Diaspora, and the History of Black Anglophone Montreal," in *Critical Collaborations: Indigeneity, Diaspora, and Ecology in Canadian Literary Studies*, eds. Smaro Kamboureli and Christl Verduyn, 201, Google Play Books (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2013).

[91] SOGLIDER, "Oscar Peterson, 'Place St-Henri,' Canadiana Suite (Peterson)," Youtube video, 2:05, 13 February 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-EpLRuta58.

[92] This multiplicity of usages and boundaries can be seen, for example, in Richard Lord, interviewed by Dorothy Williams, 7 September 1982, Little Burgundy Oral History Project, P0007/SR64, Oral History-Montreal Studies Collection, Concordia University Records Management and Archives; Élise Chevrefils Boucher, interviewed by Paul-Émile Cadorette and Katy Tari, 9 November 2010, COHDS-12-14 Parcs Canada (Mon Canal) Collection.

mort à l'ouvrage/et de la pause qui rafraîchait/et ravigote/le dollar."[93] As Emilie Nicholas has pointed out, the continuing invocation of this particularly inappropriate comparison, long after the 1960s moment, is indicative of a broader refusal of Quebec society to face up to its own histories of racism.[94] More broadly, Saint-Henri's political fate became tied up with language politics, causing the presence of English-speaking Black communities to be written over and out of the historical record – as Délice Mugabo has observed, "The dominant linguistic geography of Montreal masks Blackness as an operative category in Quebec."[95]

This linguistic geography and its mapping onto whiteness also often conditions local reactions to gentrification. The arrival of wealthier populations, some of whom are English-speaking, is sometimes confounded with a perceived uptick in immigration and a simultaneous discomfort with and reaction against local Indigenous people. A few years back, for example, I was putting up posters for an anti-gentrification action along Notre-Dame Street. A woman stopped to ask what it was all about, leading to an all-too familiar refrain: while she was completely supportive of our effort to stop condo construction, the real problem, she insisted, was "the immigrants taking all the social housing."

Similarly, discussions about decolonization within the local movement have not always been straightforward. The increasingly visible presence of Indigenous people in the neighbourhood, due at least in part to the social cleansing of the western half of nearby downtown Montreal in recent years, has resulted in new confrontations about history and its relevance for who has a right to remain. As one interviewee, an active participant in local anti-gentrification struggles, confided,

> I'll start with my brain and then I'll speak from the heart. My brain says that, these people don't deserve all that they've been through, and I think that … they deserve a lot more than they now have in their lives, when you think of ... y'know? I'm going

[93] Michele Lalonde, "Speak White," in *Terre des hommes* (Montréal: Éditions du jour, 1967).

[94] Emilie Nicolas, "Maîtres Chez L'Autre," *Liberté* 326 (Winter 2020): 42-46.

[95] Délice Mugabo, "Black in the city: on the ruse of ethnicity and language in an antiblack landscape," *Identities* 26, 6 (2019): 644.

> to speak with, for my heart for the rest, a little bit more, ok? There've been a lot more Indigenous people coming into Saint-Henri for let's say five years, y'know, since the Children's at the top of the hill hasn't been there anymore[96] … There's part of me that resents them because they have unacceptable behaviours, those who are here, then on the other side, y'know there is the part that our ancestors made them suffer a lot … the Indigenous people of the Island of Montreal are mainly all, in my, my perspective, homeless people who have enormous problems with alcoholism. [97]

This position is not particular to working-class residents of Saint-Henri; it is also part of a broader structuring approach to the question of displacement that has conditioned resistance in the neighbourhood for decades, perpetuated by the paid organizers of community groups. My former colleague Valérie Simard's memories parallel my own:

> We used the imaginary of colonialism to talk about gentrification, y'know? And of those who had the right to be there, of those who didn't have the right to be there, a kind of, of *habitants*, who were Indigenous, y'know, basically? Y'know like saying that the Indigenous people of Saint-Henri they were, the poor French Canadians? So, yeah, talking about gentrification as a new form of colonization, and that, I remember having, having really liked one of Banksy's images [laughs], it's like a drawing by Banksy with a kind of conquistador, y'know, planting a poster which says, "Real Estate Project Coming Soon," y'know? I found it really strong [laughs at herself]. Oh yes, Banksy! So inspiring.

[96] The Montreal Children's Hospital, where many Indigenous peoples from northern Quebec are forced to bring their families for care, was until recently next to a park called Cabot Square, at the corner of Atwater and Sainte-Catherine Streets. It is now being re-developed into luxury condominiums. On the ongoing legacy of colonialism and healthcare in Quebec, see Samir Shaheen-Hussain, *Fighting for A Hand to Hold: Confronting Medical Colonialism against Indigenous Children in Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020).

[97] Geneviève Tremblay-Fafard, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 7 August 2020.

> So I was really, I found that really smart, to have thought about the link to colonization, and it's as if, I was talking about colonization in the abstract, as though, it wasn't a thing, like. In Montreal, and in Quebec, and in Canada, and in the Americas, y'know? Like it wasn't, it was no longer a current problem, y'know? While, in the Southwest, like, where the homeless Indigenous population is concentrated around Atwater Metro, y'know like, there were a huge number of Indigenous people living in the Southwest, y'know? And we are close to the Mercier Bridge, leading to Kahnawà:ke, y'know it's like, it's there. It was not at all, at all, conscious. There was nothing, it was not, it was completely ignored, in fact, it was completely ignored. [98]

I know from my own experience as an anti-gentrification organizer how tempting it is to reach for the metaphor of resistance to displacement as a fight against a kind of colonial encroachment. These seeds were sown, we will also see later on, over multiple generations of neighbourhood activism. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang have referred to this phenomenon as "settler moves to innocence," designed to obfuscate and subvert the hard truth that, in fact, "decolonization is not a metaphor."[99] Talja Blokland's work on Rotterdam reminds us, further, that working-class collective memory in rapidly changing urban areas can be simultaneously a source of solidarity and a means of exclusion: "We must acknowledge," she writes, "that the identities of places are articulations of relations that include some but exclude others (whether categorically based or not), or relations in which the access to sites of place-making is at least unequally distributed."[100] Towards the end of the dissertation, I will attempt to reflect critically on some of the intersections between my own public history and political organizing efforts in Saint-Henri, touching amongst other things on just how difficult it is to explode these parameters.

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[98] Simard, interview.

[99] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, 1 (2012): 1-40.

[100] Talja Blokland, "Bricks, Mortar, Memories: Neighbourhood and Networks in Collective Acts of Remembering," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 25, 2 (June 2001): 280.

Heritages of Struggle for a History of the Present

This chapter has featured some of the historical narratives that have structured my own and my neighbours' resistance in a place under siege by real estate and finance capital. But they are more than just unfettered discourse. These memory-schemes are deeply rooted in the shifting material patterns of accumulation and social organization that have shaped and re-shaped Saint-Henri since the 1960s, forming regimes of historicity that have been laid out here partly with an eye to Foucault's evocative concept of writing a "history of the present": "the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them."[101] To put it more forcefully, in the words of George Jackson, on whose wisdom much of Foucault's genealogical approach was based: we need to diagnose the "historical factors that have produced the present state of chaos" in which we find ourselves.[102]

Chapter Two takes on the deindustrializing world of Saint-Henri between 1967, the closing of major employer Dominion Textile, and 1987, the closing of the Coleco-Eagle Toys and Simmons Bed plants. Between these two moments of loss, I examine the multiple shopfloor and neighbourhood-based autonomous initiatives and experiences that laid the groundwork for the development of contemporary working-class worldviews in Saint-Henri, relying heavily on the community archives of the POPIR. While other parts of the city, particularly across the Canal in the nearby neighbourhood of Point Saint-Charles, were turning toward the accommodationist framework of social economy, the relatively drawn-out decline of industry in Saint-Henri made

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[101] Michel Foucault, cited in Martina Tazzioli, Sophie Fuggle, and Yari Lanci, "Introduction," in *Foucault and the History of Our Present*, eds. Sophie Fuggle, Yari Lanci and Martina Tazzioli, 1 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[102] George Jackson, *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson* (Chicago: Laurence Hill Books, 1994), 117. See also Brady Thomas Heiner, "Foucault and the Black Panthers," *City* 11, 3 (2007): 313-356; Jason Demers, "Prison Liberation by Association: Michel Foucault and the George Jackson Atlantic," in *The American Politics of French Theory: Derrida, Deleuze, Guattari and Foucault in Translation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 123-155, Google Play Books.

for a local culture of feminist resistance that placed collective struggle first.[103] This chapter aims to situate contemporary political organizing and *animation sociale* techniques, the dominant focus of much of the Quebec historiography, within the broader context of deindustrialization and women workers' experience, and in so doing to move the parameters for understanding grassroots activism in Montreal beyond the much-heralded 1960s and 1970s.

Chapter Three speaks to the question of gentrification and resistance in the post-1987 period, as Saint-Henri's housing market became thoroughly imbricated in speculative structures and the right to housing became the centre of neighbourhood organizing. I highlight the restructuring of gendered relations of (re)production, as formerly industrial women workers faced the dual hardships of job loss and the re-structuration of their working lives on the domestic front. I aim also to trace the largely unwritten history of Montreal's urban working-class activism in the 1990s and early 2000s, focusing on contemporary working-class assessments of the gentrification process and the lessons that can be learned for future struggles, with an emphasis on the social and cultural process of the unmaking of the industrial proletariat. Gradually, as the movement turned towards the nationalist welfare state, the language of class lost ground – without entirely being erased – to the more identitarian embrace of the "*quartier populaire*" [popular neighbourhood].

Chapters Four and Five focus in on the confluence of history, race, and activism in Saint-Henri. The former attempts to make explicit the historical processes behind the creation of a working-class settler identity in the neighbourhood, examining the cross-over between nationalism and neighbourhood struggle, the long-term consequences of anti-blackness and shifting neighbourhood boundaries for working-class organizing, and the thorny questions posed by class-tinged claims for the right to remain within the context of the settler order – in short, the ways in which the political potential of anti-gentrification organizing has been limited by the

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[103] On the evolution of social economy in the Point, see Jean-Marc Gareau, *Le Programme économique de Pointe Saint-Charles, 1983-1989. La percée du développement économique communautaire dans le Sud-Ouest de Montréal* (Montréal: Les Publication de l'IFDEC, 1990). Of course, Saint-Henri was not entirely free of social economy work, particularly in the development of housing cooperatives. I will deal with this in subsequent chapters, but a good introduction to these early efforts is Gilles Lauzon and Marcel Sévigny, "Le Service d'aménagement et les coopératives," *International Review of Community Development/Revue international d'action communautaire* 4, 44 (Fall 1980): 83-91.

historical quest to become "Masters of Someone Else's House."[104] Chapter Five examines my own role in these processes as both a community organizer and historian, situating myself within the literature on engaged historical practices in order to ask critical questions about public history and research-creation as paradigms for engagement. I focus on the creative process and dissemination of an audiowalk and film that I produced during my time as a doctoral student, as well as the broader neighbourhood struggle for the conversion of the abandoned Canada Malting plant in the west end of Saint-Henri into a community-controlled complex containing social housing and an industrial museum.

While all of the insights forthwith have been informed by the endless generosity of neighbourhood friends and comrades, the responsibility for their conclusions rests with me.

[104] Émilie Nicolas, "Maîtres Chez L'Autre," 42-46.

CHAPTER TWO:

Deindustrialization in the "Workers' Neighbourhood," 1967-1987

What did you do for work?

All kinds of things!

All kinds of things.

All kinds of things, yup.

And was it tiring, this …

No, of course not! Before, I did as much overtime as I wanted. And today I say, that's what burned me out.

It's all the overtime you were doing …

Yup!

You mean like with your feet, and everything?

Well yeah, it was all standing up.

And you think that affected your health?

I think so, yeah.

(Doris LeBlanc, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 2020)

Doris LeBlanc is only in her early 70s, but like many people her age in Saint-Henri, she has difficulty getting around the neighbourhood. Her feet hurt and swell, and her lungs are short of breath. She still carries the consequences of terrible working conditions in the non-unionized plants that set up shop in the neighbourhood in the late 1960s, characterized by contemporary militants as having "low wages, long working hours, periodic layoffs, tight surveillance and daily repression, lack of safety measures, old machinery, noxious smells, numerous work accidents."[1] Gender, as always, was an essential component of class exploitation; the workforce of these dangerous plants was heavily feminized, employing mostly young women (like Doris) with little

[1] Militantes de Lumiray, "Lumiray: Bilan d'une lutte," *Québécoises Déboutte!* 1, 5 (April 1973): 18. On deindustrialization, illness, and injury, see Robert Storey, "Beyond the Body Count? Injured Workers in the Aftermath of Deindustrialization," in *The Deindustrialized World: Confronting Ruination in Postindustrial Places*, eds. Steven High, Lachlan MacKinnon, and Andrew Perchard, 46-67 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017).

formal education.[2] These workers did what they could to survive in the twilight of industrial production. The temporal dichotomy in Doris' reply – "*Before*, I did as much overtime as I wanted. And t*oday* I say, that's what burned me out" – speaks to what oral historian Arthur McIvor has referred to as the "constant tension in the deindustrializing workplace to directly protect the body at work and the impulse to save jobs and livelihoods, and to maximize earnings while the opportunity existed."[3]

The period when these light industry factories were opening up in the late 1960s has become an important focus of study for historians of Quebec. Artists and intellectuals, student and union leaders; Catholic missionaries, social animators and community organizers; even Marxist-Leninists and Maoists – all have found their historian(s).[4] And perhaps inevitably, given the contemporary cross-fertilization of international and local political movements at play in Montreal, Saint-Henri has appeared in the pages of many of these works, although usually as a backdrop rather than an object of study; a timelessly poor neighbourhood where activists experimented with different methods and ideologies.[5]

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[2] Militantes de Lumiray, "Lumiray: Bilan d'une lutte," 18-23; Benoit Michaudville, "Histoire," in *Les gens du Québec (1): St-Henri*, ed. Benoit Michaudville, 9-10 (Montréal: Éditions Québécoises, 1972).

[3] Arthur McIvor, "Deindustrialization Embodied: Work, Health, and Disability in the United Kingdom since the Mid-Twentieth Century," in *The Deindustrialized World: Confronting Ruination in Postindustrial Places*, eds. Steven High, Lachlan MacKinnon, and Andrew Perchard, 40 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017).

[4] See, for example, Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010); Jean Lamarre, *Le mouvement étudiant québécois des années 1960 et ses relations avec le mouvement international* (Québec: les éditions du Septentrion, 2017); *Bulletin d'histoire politique:* Les mouvements étudiants des années 1960, 16, 2 (Winter 2008); Catherine Fournier, *Au risque de la conversion: L'expérience québécoise de la mission au XXe siècle (1945-1980)* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017); Amélie Bourbeau, *Techniciens de l'organisation sociale: La réorganisation de l'assistance catholique privée à Montréal (1930-1974)* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015); Vincent Garneau, "Le Conseil des oeuvres de Montréal: animation sociale démocratie participative" (MA thesis, Université du Québec à Montreal, 2011); Jean-Philippe Warren, *Ils voulaient changer le monde: le militantisme marxiste-léniniste au Québec* (Montréal: VLB Éditeur, 2007).

[5] For an example of this backdrop approach, see the chapter on Saint-Henri in Will Langford's recent *The Global Politics of Poverty in Canada: Development Programs and Democracy, 1964-*

This chapter takes a different approach. While it is also focused on local responses to degrading and deteriorating socio-economic conditions, it situates this phenomenon within the wider context of a material world shifting away from industrial production, grounded in changing transnational and sexual divisions of labour. It looks, too, at the broader tradition of neighbourhood-based working-class organizing in Saint-Henri, and in particular the ways in which activists created links between this history and their contemporary responses to economic crisis. I aim to centre my analysis in women workers' experience, noting how struggle in the productive realm overlapped with organizing for better conditions on the reproductive labour front, tackling issues like housing, childcare, and domestic violence. This important feminist current kept neighbourhood organizing alive after the post-1970s decrease in labour militancy, nourishing a tradition of collective organizing that still shapes Saint-Henri's social movements.

We begin in 1967, using the shutdown of Dominion Textile's Saint-Henri plant as a jumping-off point for a broader discussion about the roots of deindustrialization and the making of the post-war feminized workforce. The chapter then traces (or re-traces differently) the early history of grassroots community mobilization in Saint-Henri, focusing particularly on the evolution of the POPIR through the 1970s and then extending the story into the years of more self-consciously feminist organizing in the 1980s. Finally, the chapter turns to the 1987 shutdowns of major local employers Coleco-Eagle Toys and Simmons Bed, arguing that this moment can be read as a turning point for neighbourhood mobilizations. In contrast to the initial rich crossover of shopfloor and other forms of working-class struggle, bureaucratization and specialization in community and labour organizing made for ineffective responses to closures in the late 1980s.

1979 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020), 123-152. In fairness to Langford, Montreal's Southwest is only one part of a much larger study. But it is all the same a pretty good example of the limitations involved in writing about urban neighbourhood history almost exclusively from a centralized, national archive. I return to this point later on in the chapter in some detail. See also Mills, *The Empire Within*, 172-173.

Capitalist Restructuring in Saint-Henri

The historiography of Dominion Textile is tightly bound to key moments in the national past.[6] The successive strikes of its employees in the late 1940s and early 1950s, led by Madeleine Parent and her partner Kent Rowley of the United Textile Workers of America (UTWA), represent for Quebec labour historians crucial first shots across the bow of Maurice Duplessis' *Grande noirceur* regime.[7] Similarly, Dominion Textile is often evoked in connection with the July 1966 death of *Front de libération du Québec* member Jean Corbo, killed by a bomb he was transporting to the company's Saint-Henri Merchant's Cotton plant in support of striking members of the *Conféderation des syndicats nationaux* (CSN).[8]

Despite these dramatic moments, textile production at Merchant's, a fixture of the neighbourhood's industrial profile since the plant's opening in 1880, went out with more of a whimper than a bang.[9] Ironically, the Montreal employees of Dominion Textile were not even on strike at the time of Corbo's tragic error, still represented by a UTWA significantly weakened by the anti-communist purge of Parent and Rowley.[10] And when the company unceremoniously announced the closing of its Saint-Henri plant in April of 1967 with a short note to its workers expressing gratitude "for the spirit you have shown and the relationship we have had during your

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[6] Gail Cuthbert Brandt, *Through the Mill: Girls and Women in the Quebec Cotton Textile Industry, 1881-1951* (Montreal: Baraka Books, 2018), 12.

[7] See Denyse Baillargeon, "La grève de Lachute (1947)," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 37, 2 (September 1983): 271-289; Denyse Baillargeon, "Les grèves du textile au Québec: 1946, 1947, et 1952," in *Madeleine Parent: Militante*, ed. Andrée Lévesque, 45-59 (Montréal: Les Éditions du remue-ménage, 2003); Andrée Lévesque, "A Life of Struggles," *Labour/Le Travail* 70 (Fall 2012): 189-192.

[8] Louis Fournier, *FLQ: Histoire d'un mouvement clandestine* (Montréal: VLB Éditeur, 2020), 112-113. For the not very good film immortalizing this moment, see *Corbo*, dir. Mathieu Denis (Montreal: Max Films Média/Équinox Films, 2014).

[9] A.B. McCullough, *The Primary Textile Industry in Canada: History and Heritage* (Ottawa: National Historic Sites Parks Service, 1992), 165-68.

[10] See Denyse Baillargeon, "Histoire du syndicat des Ouvriers unis des textiles d'Amérique, de 1942 à 1952" (MA thesis, Université de Montréal, 1981), 135-150; Benoit Michaudville, "Pour la Dominion Textile la fin justifie les moyens," in *Les gens du Québec (1): St-Henri*, ed. Benoit Michaudville, 54 (Montréal: Éditions Québécoises, 1972).

employment at this particular plant of the company," there was little organized resistance.[11] By Fall of 1968, the plant's remaining 295 employees, 80 per cent of whom lived in Saint-Henri, found themselves out of work.[12] This was only a fraction of the thousands of jobs lost to shutdowns in this period: one after another, major employers like Westeel-Rosco (1969), General Steel Wares (1970), RCA-Victor (1971), and Boulangerie A&P (1972) shut their doors or moved production elsewhere; those that remained, like the Johnson Wire Works or Imperial Tobacco, significantly reduced their personnel.[13] In total, more than 10 000 manufacturing jobs disappeared from the Southwest between 1951 and 1973, and 30 000 people left the area.[14] 85 different factories located in Saint-Henri closed over this twenty-year period.[15]

Saint-Henri's professional classes were nonplussed in the face of these losses: "We can't blame industries that want to progress and modernize for leaving Saint-Henri. They're forced to do so," read a 1972 editorial in the boosterish local paper, *La Voix Populaire*. "We don't foresee miracle solutions to stem this phenomenon happening in all the big cities of North America. Even in an independent Quebec, we wouldn't be able to prevent city centres from growing and

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[11] "Merchants Branch of Dominion Textile Will Close in October," *La Voix Populaire*, 12 April 1967, 1.

[12] Claude Larivière, *St-Henri: L'univers des travailleurs*, Cahier 3 (Montréal: Éditions Albert St-Martin, 1974), 89; Michaudville, "Histoire," 8. The closing of Dominion Textile in turn led to the shutdown of its subsidiary company Domil, taking 200 jobs with it to St-Timothée. See "fermeture de DOMIL: UN AUTRE COUP DUR," *Pouvoir Ouvrier* 1, 2 (August-September 1968): 8, RG116, Volume 118, 541, Projet Petite Bourgogne – Staff Reports, Company of Young Canadians Fonds, Library and Archives Canada (LAC). Thank you to Simon Vickers for sharing this and other references on the Company of Young Canadians.

[13] Larivière, *St-Henri*, 87-106; Michaudville, "Histoire," 6-11; Rapport Final du Comité de reclassement des employés de RCA Limitée. Groupe représenté par le Syndicat International des Travailleurs de l'Electricité, de Radio, et de Machinerie, P764, S4, SS3, SSS1, 1999-04-014/86, Directeur du Service de reclassement de la main d'oeuvre, Fonds Pierre-F. Côté, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ). Thanks to Steven High for sharing this reference.

[14] Comité pour la relance de l'économie et de l'emploi du Sud-Ouest de Montréal (CREESOM), *Sud-Ouest: diagnostic* (Montréal: CRÉESOM, 1988), 24.

[15] Larivière, *St-Henri,*102.

progressing."[16] Quebec historians, curiously, have adopted a somewhat similar attitude: on the one hand, the legacy of plant closures and the union movement's turn to the public sector has led labour scholars away from the experience of factory workers;[17] and for many urban and economic historians of Montreal, in whose approach the "city is treated as a single, unitary object of study" tied to discourses of national progress, industrial job loss is treated as part of the inevitable push towards the post-industrial francophone metropolis, making a place for Quebec in the world of finance capital and technology.[18]

Early Canadian studies of deindustrialization laid the blame on the national economy's historically dependent status on the economic giant south of the border.[19] Rianne Mahon, for example, argued that "the persistence of the old [British] imperial connection and the Canadian state's concern to promote staples exports to newer markets (i.e. the United States and Japan)

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[16] Michel Dufour, "L'avenir industriel de St-Henri," *La Voix Populaire*, 14 June 1972, 100P-630: 03/18, Front populaire 1973, Fonds d'archives de la Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec, Service des archives et de gestion des documents de l'UQAM (Archives UQAM).

[17] Lucie Bettez, "'Cent jours dans la vie des Campivallensiennes': La grève de 1946 à Salaberry-de-Valleyfield," *Labour/Le Travail* 62 (Fall 2008): 50. For an example, see Jacques Rouillard, *Le syndicalisme québécois: deux siècles d'histoire* (Montréal: Boréal, 2004), 139-279.

[18] Steven High, "Review of Paul-André Linteau. *Une Histoire de Montréal*. Montréal: Boréal, 2017. 360 pages," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine* 45, 2 (Spring 2017): 61-62. For relevant sections in Linteau, see *Une histoire de Montréal* (Montréal: Boréal, 2017), Chapters 15 and 16. See also Mario Polèse, "Montreal's Economy since 1930," in *Montreal: The History of a North American City*, Volume 2, eds. Dany Fougères and Roderick MacLeod, 164-205 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018).

[19] Steven High, "'The Wounds of Class': A Historiographical Reflection on the Study of Deindustrialization, 1973-2013," *History Compass* 11, 11 (2013): 994-1007; and Steven High, "The Radical Origins of the Deindustrialization Thesis: From Dependency to Capital Mobility and Community Abandonment," Désindustrialisation et transformations structurelles des entreprises, 26ème Journées d'histoire du management et des organisations à Mulhouse en France, 25 March 2021, on Zoom. Although similar takes were of course also present in Québec [see for example Jorge Niosi and Henri Gagnon, *Fermetures d'usines, ou bien, liberation nationale* (Montréal: Les Éditions Héritage, 1979)], general thinking on deindustrialization in the province has mostly been restricted to urban studies and economics. See, for example, Pierre Lamond and Mario Polèse, "L'évolution de la structure économique de Montréal 1971-1981: Désindustrialisation ou reconversion," *L'Actualité économique* 60, 4 (1984): 471-494. For a recent exception, see Jacques Houle, *Il était une fois des usines: Essor, déclin et relance de l'industrie Québécoise* (Montréal: Éditions Hurtubise, 2014).

meant that the Canadian textile and clothing industries were among the first to feel the impact of low-wage import competition."[20] In the U.S., initial work on deindustrialization tended to place the emphasis on capital flight, emphasizing the callous abandonment of local communities by non-local corporations searching for cheaper labour inputs and less restrictive human rights and environmental regulations.[21] As Jefferson Cowie wrote about the runaway American plants of RCA, each relocation "represents the corporation's response to workers' increasing sense of entitlement and control over investment in their community. Capital flight was a means of countering that control as the company sought out new reservoirs of controllable labor."[22]

Both of these frameworks hold water in this case. As former Dominion Textile worker Denise Tanguay-Dufault remembered in 2010:

> In China, the Chinese were practically working on roller skates. There weren't any unions in China. For us, it's the union that killed us. It was the union that killed it, asking for too much. Y'know at a certain point, the unions, they're not that good, eh? It depends on the union. In the beginning, when I began, it was Madeleine Parent who was there. Then we needed a union, we worked from six in the morning to six at night. Hold the phone! Y'know, listen, that was no life! Six days a week! Then, there was abuse, so it was right to have, right to have a union, but over the years, it got worse. The union kept taking up more space, more space, and more space, y'know. [23]

In this explanation we find an echo of the company's own analysis. Dominion Textile CEO Ryland Daniels complained in 1966 that, "Canada is pricing itself right out of both world and domestic markets because of demands of labor and spending of government … Gradually a

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[20] Rihanne Mahon, *The Politics of Industrial Restructuring: Canadian Textiles* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 20.

[21] High, "'The Wounds of Class'"; "The Radical Origins of the Deindustrialization Thesis."

[22] Jefferson Cowie, *Capital Moves: RCA's Seventy Year Quest for Cheap Labour* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 4.

[23] Denise Tanguay-Dufault interviewed by Paul-Émile Cadorette and Katy Tari, 1 December 2010, COHDS-12-14 Parcs Canada (Mon Canal) Collection.

change has evolved so that business (still pictured in striped trousers) is given the bulk of the responsibilities, whether real or imagined, while state, labor, and that amorphous body 'society' lay claims to the rights."[24] Shortly after shuttering its Saint-Henri plant, Dominion Textile moved into international production as a way of competing against U.S. dominance, acquiring the American firm DHJ for its connections with Tunisian and Chinese labour markets.[25]

There is strong evidence to suggest that Dominion Textile was not the only neighbourhood manufacturer encouraged to cut jobs or to relocate altogether by a wartime upsurge of industrial working-class militancy, spurred on by a growing labour shortage and a new, more expansive federal system of industrial legality.[26] Workers at Stelco unionized in 1945 and fought two important strikes, first in 1946 in order to gain equal pay with their Ontario counterparts, and then again in 1962 around issues of job classification and salaries.[27] At Imperial Tobacco, a strike in 1942 led to recognition of the Tobacco Workers' International Union, and won employees a "48-hour week, paid vacations, maintenance of membership and a joint application to the Regional War Labour Board for a five-cent-an-hour increase."[28]

Despite the relatively advantageous material conditions, these were bitter battles. Workers at RCA-Victor, for example, attempted unsuccessfully throughout the late 1930s and early 1940s to organize their plant under difficult conditions of surveillance and repression.[29]

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[24] Cited in Barbara J. Austin, "Life Cycles and Strategy of a Canadian Company. Dominion Textile: 1873-1983" (PhD diss., Concordia University, 1985), 645.

[25] Barbara J. Austin, "Life Cycles," 730-741.

[26] For general context see Terry Copp, "The Rise of Industrial Unions in Montreal, 1935-1945," *Relations Industrielles/Industrial Relations* 37, 4 (1982): 843-875.

[27] Michaudville, "Histoire," 11; Larivière, *St-Henri*, 95-96.

[28] Copp, "The Rise of Industrial unions in Montreal," 868.

[29] Irving Burman to James J. Matles, Director of Organizing, UE, New York City, 16 June 1938, RG 4.1.5, File 155, United Electrical Workers National Records, University of Pittsburgh Archives and Special Collections; Irving Burman to Julius Emspak, General Secretary-Treasurer, UE, 16 August 1938, RG 4.1.5, File 309, United Electrical Workers National Records, University of Pittsburgh Archives and Special Collections; C. S. Jackson to James J. Matles. Director of Organizing, UE, New York City July 1939, RG 4.1.5, File 65, United Electrical Workers National Records, University of Pittsburgh Archives and Special Collections; Marcil Sorel to Julius Empsak, 19 January 1940, RG 4.1.5, File 309, United Electrical Workers National

They finally succeeded in 1942, unionizing under the auspices of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.[30] Switching to the leftist United Electrical Workers in 1948, inspired in part by the militant energies of Communist labour organizer Léa Roback (who had been working at the plant since 1941[31]), they soon found themselves under attack from the staunchly anti-communist Duplessis. Sixteen U.E. organizers were summarily fired in 1952, including the U.E. local President, Vic Walker. "Next morning," related District U.E. Vice President C.S. Jackson, "the plant was ringed with squad cars of the Montreal police with enlarged company police forces patrolling all the departments. This show of police force and intimidation had been a consistent factor in the RCA plant from the previous four weeks."[32] The workers were forced to regroup in the anti-communist International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers.[33]

While workers' struggles in Saint-Henri in the immediate post-war years were part of a broader national upswing in industrial organizing, they were also local, place-based campaigns. Madeleine Parent, for example, painstakingly organized the workers at Dominion Textile through a series of kitchen-table meetings at homes throughout Saint-Henri, with neighbours congregating around doorways and windows to hear what she had to say.[34] And Roback remembered in a 1978 interview that, "If you work in a neighbourhood, you're part of it. The workers live there, and not in Côte-des-Neiges." When Parent and Rowley were organizing Dominion Textile, RCA employees were there in support: "We didn't have money to give our comrades," said Roback, "but with our presence on the picket lines, we wanted to assure them

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Records, University of Pittsburgh Archives and Special Collections. My thanks to Steven High for sharing these and other U.E. records with me.

[30] Terry Copp, *The I.U.E. in Canada: A History* (Elora, Ontario: Cumnock Press, 1980), 48.

[31] Léa Roback, interviewed in Nicole Lacelle, *Entretiens avec Madeleine Parent et Léa Roback* (Montréal: Les Éditions du remue-ménage, 2005), 149.

[32] C.S. Jackson (District 5 Vice President of the United Electrical Workers) to Albert J. Fitzgerald, General President, UE, New York City, RG 4.1.5, File 201, United Electrical Workers National Records, University of Pittsburgh Archives and Special Collections.

[33] Copp, *The I.U.E. in Canada*, 48-57.

[34] Michaudville, "Pour la Dominion Textile la fin justifie les moyens," 51.

that they were not the only ones being exploited in St. Henri."[35] Stelco workers collected funds for the Merchant's strikers in 1946, and local unions became heavily involved in the struggle for better housing.[36] The working class in Saint-Henri was slowly beginning to assert its right to control the productive and reproductive forces structuring the neighbourhood, moving gradually from a "class in itself" to a "class for itself."[37]

Manufacturers had obvious incentive, then, to seek greener pastures in their "continual struggle to maintain the social conditions deemed necessary for profitability."[38] In 1974, a team of student researchers led by Claude Larivière from the Université de Montréal surveyed 29 major employers that had recently left Saint-Henri. Of the thirteen companies that responded, 69 per cent were unionized shops. Interviewed in the accompanying report, Saint-Henri resident and former Dominion Textile employee René Cartier remarked, "They used us when they needed us to make money and today, these same companies, from the moment that business can improve, they move out of the neighbourhood."[39]

The material terrain, however, was also shifting on another level, as the brief war-time parenthesis in capitalism's cyclical economic crises was beginning to come to an end. As geographer Robert Lewis has argued, the expansion of industry in the "West End" of Montreal in the second half of the 19th century and early decades of the 20th was part of a continual North American process of industrial suburbanization dating back to the 1700s. Companies were originally drawn to the Southwest due to haphazard and poorly planned tax breaks and

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[35] Léa Roback, cited in Lucie Leboeuf, "Léa Roback, ou Comment l'organisation syndicale est indissociable de la vie de quartier," *Vie ouvrière* 28, 128 (1978): 470.

[36] Théodore Garrett, interviewed in Michaudville, ed., *Gens du Québec*, 32; Nacelle, *Entretiens avec Madeleine Parent et Léa Roback*, 136; Leboeuf, "Léa Roback," 470.

[37] While there are of course many places from which to draw inspiration for understanding this historical distinction, I draw my own from the class-struggle analysis of the British Marxist tradition, with its emphasis on class formation through relationality and experience. See Harvey J. Kaye, *The British Marxist Historians: An Introductory Analysis* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 221-249.

[38] Jefferson Cowie, *Capital Moves*, 2.

[39] Larivière, *St-Henri*, 99. This interview was actually conducted for Michaudville, ed., *Gens du Québec*, 38.

concessions. In turn, production continued to be propelled outward in the post-war years by speculative construction cycles and real estate investment on the industrial fringe, exacerbated by a mode of production "that demonstrates persistent unevenness in rates of growth and capital accumulation among different industrial sectors and places."[40]

This uneven development is fundamental to a system prone to periodic crises of over-accumulation, brought about by competition amongst individual members of the ruling class: put simply, in the words of David Harvey, when "too much capital is produced in aggregate relative to the opportunities to employ that capital."[41] Larivière's 1974 report, crucially, noted that,

> [T]he "war" industries had accumulated a large number of production patents applicable to common consumer goods. They began to produce them during the prosperous post-war period (1945-1953). Having exhausted those patents and saturated the market with these new products, there was a period of economic downturn in the late 1950s, partly related to the end of the Korean War. From that time, unemployment has gradually increased, and more in Quebec than in Canada. [42]

Localized crises such as the one experienced in the Canadian economy in the late 1950s can resolve themselves in several ways. In some cases, surplus capital is channelled into secondary circuits of accumulation, usually via the State, in the form of long-term infrastructure investments. In others, capital seeks a spatial or sectoral fix to its accumulation problem, moving production elsewhere or switching capital flows to another facet of the economy (real estate, for example).[43] Much of the literature on Montreal's post-war economy reflects the understanding

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[40] Richard Walker and Robert Lewis, "Beyond the Crabgrass Frontier: Industry and the Spread of North American Cities, 1850-1950," *Journal of Historical Geography* 27, 1 (2001): 11. On Montreal's West End, see Robert Lewis, *Manufacturing Montreal*: *The Making of an Industrial Landscape, 1850-1930* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 221-253.

[41] David Harvey, "The Urban Process Under Capitalism," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 2, 1-3 (1978): 106.

[42] Larivière, *St-Henri*, 91-92.

[43] See Harvey, "The Urban Process Under Capitalism."

that the deindustrialization of the Lachine Canal corridor was a by-product of the 1959 opening of the Saint-Lawrence Seaway.[44] Business was indeed deeply affected by the shift to the larger shipping channel, as the Canal was closed for good in 1970. But it may be more accurate to posit that both the departure of plants from Montreal's Southwest and the construction of the Seaway were part of industrial capitalism's broader response to the building post-war crisis of accumulation: the former an attempt to maintain rates of profit through secondary and tertiary investments in fixed capital and new scientific endeavours and production lines (a pursuit ill-suited to the 19th-century built environment of the Lachine Canal industrial corridor); the latter seeking to provide an infrastructural outlet for an Ontario industrial economy veering toward its own tipping point, as "Two great waves of plant closings inundated the [North American heartland] region between 1969 and 1984, washing away millions of jobs."[45]

Suggestive of a broader social law of value asserting itself was the futile opposition of powerful individual members of the capitalist class. As late as 1969 the Lachine Canal Committee of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association continued to protest the imminent closure. In a 2 April letter to federal Transport Minister Paul Hellyer, the Committee's Secretary R. Bruce Gates wrote to communicate

> our insistence that a date for the opening of navigation of the Lachine Canal be immediately announced. Historically, the Canal has been opened in the middle of

[44] See, for example, Pauline Desjardins, "L'Organisation spatiale du corridor du Canal de Lachine au 19e siècle" (PhD diss., Université de Montréal, 1999); Desmond Bliek and Pierre Gauthier, "Mobilising Urban Heritage to Counter the Commodification of Brownfield Landscapes: Lessons from Montreal's Lachine Canal," *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 16, 1 (2007): 39-58; Desmond Bliek and Pierre Gauthier, "Understanding the Built Form of Industrialization Along the Lachine Canal," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine* 35, 1 (Fall 2006): 3-17.

[45] Steven High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969-1984* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 6. See also Daniel W.D. Macfarlane, "To the Heart of the Continent: Canada and the Negotiation of the St. Lawrence Seaway and Power Project, 1921-1954" (PhD diss., University of Ottawa, 2010), 164-168. The centrality of the Ontario industrial economy, of course, was part of a longer history of uneven development within Canada's national borders, and the Seaway was not ultimately successful in staving off crisis in Ontario manufacturing.

> April and the industries represented on our committee expect that this year will be no exception. Shipping has been booked for delivery of coal to Lasalle Coke, and Dominion Bridge is involved in contracts which demand shipping by water.[46]

In a longer report submitted a month later to Montreal's City and Regional Planning Office, the Lachine Canal Committee complained again that it was "strange that the Federal Government has not made further study of the external effects of the Lachine Canal on the companies and municipal areas involved … it would appear that only capital and operating costs are being considered," they went on, "without reference to their bearing on costs to the establishments that would be affected by the eventual closing of the canal."[47]

In 1973, a joint committee was formed in order to study the problem of industrial erosion, bringing together representatives from industry, labour and community groups, the provincial government, and the *Commission de Formation Professionnelle Montréal Métropolitain*. In a spring meeting of the project's business caucus, one of the employers expressed doubt about the possibility of finding solutions, commenting that, "it is often financially advantageous for a company to move, because it can in that case obtain subsidies."[48] The issue of subsidies was tied

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[46] R. Bruce Gates, letter to the Honourable Paul T. Hellyer, 2 April 1969, MG 32, 112-33, Series B33, Volume 112, Transport-Parts-Lachine Canal-Closing 1969 (55-3-1), Paul Hellyer Fonds, LAC.

[47] Lachine Canal Committee of the Canadian Manufacturers Association, Lachine Canal Project, 1 May 1969, 2, RG127 Volume 302, File 3066-2 PT. 1, Urban Development – Ports, harbours, and waterways – Lachine Canal – General, 1969-1972, Ministry of State for Urban Affairs Fonds, LAC.

[48] Résumé de la rencontre avec les employeurs du Sud-Ouest tenue le 10 mai 1973, aux locaux de l'Impérial Tobacco Ltée., 3810 rue St-Antoine, à 3.30 heures p.m., 100P-630: 03/18, Front populaire 1973, Fonds d'archives de la Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec, Archives UQAM. Unions were used to this kind of collaboration due to their increasing participation in federally mandated joint labour-company reclassification committees. Grassroots community groups were significantly more sceptical about employers' participation. When they argued that workers who had lost their jobs should have collective representation within the committee, Labour Ministry spokesperson Aurélien D'Allaire responded that their experience was not representative, and they could participate only as individuals. Compte-rendu de la reunion avec les représentants de mouvements populaires du Sud-ouest, tenue le 20 mars 1973, aux Services Sociaux St. Henri, 730 Laporte, St. Henri, à 7.30 p.m, Projet d'un comité d'étude sur la main d'oeuvre et l'emploi dans le Sud-Ouest, 165MI01.3.6.2, Fonds du POPIR.

up with investments in fixed capital. While several companies did in fact misappropriate government funds allocated for modernization in order to finance moves out of the neighbourhood, the link was usually somewhat more indirect.[49] The problem facing capital, as mentioned above, was the cost of carrying out the necessary adjustments to face the growing crisis within the facilities available along the Lachine Canal corridor.[50] Dominion Textile, for example, in addition to branching out into Global South labour pools, sought to compensate for the wartime glutting of the market by moving into synthetic materials – refurbishing old plants where possible, and building new facilities outside the city, with the help of over $800 000 in federal assistance. Montreal plants where modernization would be more costly, such as those in Hochelaga and Saint-Henri, were simply closed.[51]

RCA, similarly, moved its production to suburban Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, where it had the space to fully accommodate a move into aerospace technology. Stelco's Saint-Henri facility moved to Contrecoeur, east of Montreal; Westeel-Rosco and General Steel Wares, to Baie d'Urfé, on the West Island; General Foods, to Lasalle; and the list goes on.[52] In a city with still few public transit options, few could afford to follow their jobs.[53] In most cases these were intermediate steps to a broader global restructuring, bridged by the process of industrial suburbanization.[54] The immediate situation, however, observed activists in the 1980s, was exacerbated by "an absence of legislation, policies, and government programmes … to provide alternatives to an aging industrial complex such as in the Southwest."[55] The capitalist State, in

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[49] Larivière, *St-Henri*, 94.

[50] CREESOM, *Sud-Ouest: diagnostic*, 185-186.

[51] Austin, "Life Cycles," 628; Larivière, *St-Henri*, 97.

[52] Larivière, *St-Henri*, 89-90.

[53] Larivière, *St-Henri*, 98.

[54] Westeel Rosco is now owned by multinational agribusiness firm AGI, with production sites around the globe; Stelco was purchased by U.S. Steel in 2007. Through a series of mergers and buy-outs, different parts of what was General Steel Wares are now controlled by multinational giants General Electric, Mabe, and A.O. Smith, with facilities in Mexico, China and India. General Foods became part of the global empire of the Kraft-Heinz Company.

[55] CREESOM, *Sud-Ouest: diagnostic*, 24.

other words, was performing its classical function: intervening when necessary to ensure accumulation, benign neglect otherwise.

This broader re-orientation of accumulation was facilitated by a gendered re-composition of the urban industrial working class. As feminist labour historians have argued, the traditional focus on white male breadwinners in the supposed Fordist, post-war consensus years obscures as much as it reveals; not least the ways in which precarity and contingency were already creeping back into the labour market via the experience of the rapidly increasing number of women workers.[56] By 1951, women made up 24.5 per cent of the total Quebec workforce, second in Canada only to neighbouring Ontario. Seventeen per cent of those women workers were married, compared to only 7.5 per cent a decade earlier, indicating changing realities within household sexual divisions of labour.[57] By 1961, women made up 39 per cent of the workforce in Saint-Henri; 39.4 per cent of these women workers, in turn, held industrial jobs (compared to a 23 per cent rate in the city as a whole). 17.3 per cent of women in the neighbourhood made under $1000 per year, compared to 8.9 per cent of men.[58]

At RCA, foremen took advantage of women's reproductive roles to justify firings and lay-offs.[59] Despite this, women workers did not conceive of their jobs as "temporary," as necessity prevailed even in the height of Fordism. One employee, when told she could take a well-earned rest when the "boys" came back to take over her factory position, responded,

> What are you trying to do, kid me? How can my André earn enough to keep me and the three children? Even if the 2 others were to go to work, they still wouldn't earn enough, I want them to take up a trade and not have to go through what I have. They

[56] Joan Sangster, *Transforming Labour: Women and Work in Post-war Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 5-7.

[57] Cuthbert, *Through the Mill*, 228-229.

[58] Louise Chabot-Robitaille, *De l'eau chaude, de l'espace et un peu de justice: Des citoyens de quartiers ouvriers analysent leur situation* (Montréal: Conseil de développement social du Montréal métropolitation, 1970), 79. Here I'm including those workers listed as "Ouvriers de métiers, artisans, ouvriers à la production et travailleurs assimilés" and "Manoeuvres."

[59] Leboeuf, "Léa Roback," 468-469.

> will be able to get jobs then, in Union Shops, and earn a decent wage, and then perhaps I will be able to rest, but until then, full speed ahead.[60]

The labour struggles of the 1940s had been as much about pushing back against invasive scientific management techniques – the "damn timekeeper," as Roback referred to the supervisor – as they had been about wages.[61] But unionization did not bring about the softening of gendered power relations or a slowing of the pace for the increasingly feminized workforce. One assembly line worker at RCA, interviewed in 1996, remembered of her first day in 1952, "We were at least 150 girls on the line and they put me in last place … they said, 'figure it out,' and that's all … Me, I was all new, all worked up, all stressed out. So the boss gets there, he says, 'well, I think this one here is too slow.'"[62] In the heavily feminized textile industry, further, wage increases won during the war were offset by an intense, exhausting piecework regime.[63] Tanguay-Dufault, a single mother who supported a family of six, remembered being paid by the piece throughout her career at Dominion Textile: "Always by the piece! And they gave us … every week, they gave, they gave, they pulled out a sheet, and they gave the results. So y'know we always, always had to surpass ourselves to get a decent wage."[64] The breakneck speed required to maintain a basic salary affected workers' health and undermined solidarity on the shopfloor.[65]

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[60] Causes – Labour, Radio Addresses, Women Workers – 1945, 00026, Fonds Léa Roback, Jewish Public Library Archives.

[61] Nacelle, *Entretiens*, 148. On working-class resistance to scientific management, see David Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

[62] Madame Allard, interviewed in 1996. This interview was conducted by volunteers at the Musée des Ondes Emile-Berliner, a clip of which was graciously provided to me by Dr. Anja Borck, the museum's Director.

[63] Cutherbert, *Through the* Mill, 155, 279.

[64] Denise Tanguay-Dufault interviewed by Paul-Émile Cadorette and Katy Tari, 1 December 2010. My translation.

[65] Paule Beaugrand-Champagne, "Les ouvrières du textile: C'est inhumain," *Le Travail* 42, 5 (July 1966): 10-11.

Many women workers in the neighbourhood found themselves in this situation of single parenthood, with heavy financial burdens.[66] In 1966, 32.7 per cent of families in Saint-Henri and neighbouring Little Burgundy had at least five children.[67] 92 per cent of the neighbourhood's population were tenants, crammed into a housing stock the vast majority of which was built before 1920.[68] Infant mortality rates in 1969 were at a shocking 28.3 per cent per 1000 inhabitants, compared to the 19.8 per cent average for Montreal.[69] And as deindustrialization worsened, women bore the brunt of shutdowns. Across Canada, industries with heavily feminized workforces like textiles and electronics were hit hard by new free-trade regimes. This was especially the case for Montreal. With a high concentration of its production in these sectors, the city saw its share of national industrial output drop from seventeen per cent in 1976 to only 12.5 per cent in 1997.[70] Consequently, women in the Southwest had an average revenue more than two times less than that of men in the 1980s. 54.5 per cent of families on social assistance in 1986 were women-headed households; 87 per cent of those households had only one parent.[71]

The intensification of the exploitation of women was clearly shaped by the patriarchal norms and values of both employers and male members of the working class. In the regular "Labour Echoes" column that appeared in *La Voix Populaire* in the late 1950s and early 1960s, for instance, women were rendered almost entirely invisible – except when the labour columnist

[66] Le Centre des femmes, "Femmes en lutte à Coleco," *Québécoises Deboutte!* 1, 6 (June 1973): 50.

[67] Françoise Marceau, "Le 'Sud-Ouest" C'est Quoi?" May 1970, 5, P611.003.01, Saint-Columba House Fonds (Saint-Columba), BANQ.

[68] Marceau, "Le Sud-Ouest C'est Quoi?" 10.

[69] Larivière, *St-Henri*, 104.

[70] See René Morissette and Hanqing Qiu, *Permanent Layoff Rates in Canada, 1978-2016. Statistics Canada Economic Insights* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2020); Tara Vinodrai, *A Tale of Three Cities: The Dynamics of Manufacturing in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, 1976-1997* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2001). Thanks to Steven High for these references.

[71] CREESOM, *Sud-Ouest: diagnostic*, 66-69, 99.

was relaying advice for how wives could support their husbands on strike.[72] The aforementioned René Cartier, a member of the *Groupement familial ouvrier* (GFO, an initiative of Jesuit worker-priest Jacques Couture), similarly waxed poetic about the working-class nuclear family: "But the most beautiful thing, it's returning at night/to your family, to your home/you say: another day done!/you have to hear the cries of the children/when daddy comes/their faces in the window/and mommy and her hot dishes."[73] Excluded from shopfloor organizing by sexism in the union movement and at home, considered temporary labour and forced to accept degrading work environments to support their families, women workers in Saint-Henri faced an uphill battle for better conditions.[74] Still and all, "The redefinition of capital's sexual division of labour and the definition of housewife are not the result of a congenital male misogyny," writes feminist scholar Maria Mies, but rather "a structural necessity for the process of capital accumulation."[75] And as capital pushed back against the brief moment of relative post-war labour strength, re-orienting production in the face of its cyclical crises of accumulation, this precarity would increasingly come to characterize the experience of the class as a whole – the labour market in Saint-Henri, to borrow a term from Mies, was being "housewifized."[76] New forms of activism and community organizing in the 1960s and 1970s would have to grapple with this reality.

From Political Laboratory to Deindustrialization Struggle

In 1972, *La Presse* journalist Louise Cousineau published a front-page retrospective on ten years of political organizing in Saint-Henri. In the Sixties, she wrote, "Social action was 'in.' It was a

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[72] Maurice Hébert, "Échos syndicaux: Le role des femmes dans une grève," *La Voix Populaire*, 12 October 1960, 4.

[73] René Cartier, "Mon Quartier," *Opinion ouvrière: Le Journal des Travailleurs Pour les Travailleurs*, 1, 2 (January 1968): 7.

[74] Le Centre des femmes, "Femmes en lutte à Coleco," 50-51.

[75] Maria Mies, "Housewifisation – Globalisation – Subsistence-Perspective," in *Beyond Marx: Theorising the Global Labour Relations of the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Marcel van der Linden and Karl Heinz Roth, in collaboration with Max Henninger, 218 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2014).

[76] See Mies, "Housewifisation," 209-238.

time when 'social science' students descended on Saint-Henri, which became a true laboratory."[77] This was the decade of *animation sociale*, in which young professionals under the auspices of the lay Catholic *Conseil des Oeuvres de Montréal* (COM), inspired by a hodgepodge of influences including Saul Alinsky's ubiquitous community development philosophy, Catholic social action, and the technocratic democracy of early Quiet Revolution state planning, came to the neighbourhood to organize *participation citoyenne* around concrete and limited local problems.[78] These professionals generally conceived of themselves as political pioneers, arriving in a neighbourhood where, as former COM organizer Michel Blondin recently remembered, "The citizens were disorganized and ignored."[79] Their work, as they saw it, was to interest people in their own circumstances, to help them analyze their conditions, and to engage in action to change them – animators therefore assumed the role of agents of "(a) reason, (b) socialization, and (c) information. Not everyone is cut out for this work!"[80] Despite the underlying condescension in the approach, their emphasis on collective analysis and action challenged the atomizing, charity-based response to poverty still dominant in Catholic Quebec.[81] Eventually, the proliferation of citizens' committees arising from this tendency would converge with the drive

[77] Louise Cousineau, "Dix ans de contestation à Saint-Henri," *La Presse,* 6 November 1972, 1. My translation.

[78] See Garneau, "Le Conseil des oeuvres de Montréal," 37-47; Bourbeau, *Techniciens de l'organisation* sociale, 158-178. On the interesting marriage of technocratic State power and social animation's democratic impulse, see Tina Loo, *Moved by the State: Forced Relocation and Making a Good Life in Postwar Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019), 91-120.

[79] Michel Blondin, "Qu'était le quartier St-Henri avant le POPIR?" *POPIR-Comité Logement, 1969-2019: 50 ans de lutte* (December 2019): 3.

[80] Compagnie des Jeunes Canadiens, "La CJC et la participation des citoyens dans la rénovation urbaine – une étude de cas," August 1971, 28, 165MI02.2.10, C.J.C. (Compagnie des jeunes canadiens), Fonds du POPIR. My translation. See also Michel Blondin, "L'animation sociale en milieu urbain: une solution," *Recherches sociographiques* 6, 3 (1965): 283-304.

[81] See Michel Blondin, Yvan Comeau, and Ysabel Provencher, *Innover pour mobiliser: L'actualité de l'expérience de Michel Blondin* (Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2012), 33-69.

amongst union activists to create a "second front" in the labour struggle, resulting in the creation of the short-lived leftist municipal political party, the *Front d'action politique*, in 1970.[82]

Another significant inflow of political energy came directly from within the Church itself. Increasing numbers of Catholic priests and nuns, many of whom had been influenced by missionary experiences abroad (especially in Latin America, the birthplace of liberation theology), sought to enact the progressive dictates of Vatican II in urban working-class neighbourhoods across Quebec.[83] In perhaps the most widely known example, young Jesuit Jacques Couture moved to Saint-Henri and became heavily involved in social animation initiatives. This included founding the GFO and its newspaper *Opinion ouvrière*, and acting as President of the *Club de Rencontre et d'Information de Saint-Henri* (a popular education supper-club for workers in the neighbourhood). Eventually, as historian Martin Croteau demonstrates, these experiences would lead Couture to run in 1974 for Mayor under the banner of the social democratic municipal political party, the Montreal Citizens' Movement (MCM), and in 1976 to become Saint-Henri's first and only *Parti Québécois* Member of the National Assembly.[84]

It should be noted, however, that the political organizing of the early 1960s was not only (or even mostly) driven by external actors arriving in the neighbourhood. Saint-Henri registered on Couture's mental map precisely because of autonomous local working-class organizing, notably through an initiative called the "*Copains de Saint-Henri*." Journalist Lysiane Gagnon referred to the *Copains* in 1971 as "the first citizens' committee in Montreal," but this was

[82] Mills, *The Empire Within*, 171-175.

[83] See Fournier, *Au risque de la conversion*; Fred Burrill and Catherine LeGrand, "Progressive Catholicism at Home and Abroad: The 'Double Solidarité' of Quebec Missionaries in Honduras, 1955–1975," in *Within and Without the Nation: Canadian History as Transnational History*, eds. Karen Dubinsky, Adele Perry, and Henry Yu, 311-340 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015); Oscar Cole Arnal, "The Presence of Priests and Religious Among the Workers of Post Quiet-Revolution Montreal," [Canadian Society of Church History] *Historical Papers* (1995): 149-160.

[84] See Martin Croteau, "L'implication sociale et politique de Jacques Couture à Montréal de 1963 à 1976" (MA thesis, Université du Québec à Montréal, 2008).

somewhat anachronistic.[85] Founded in the late 1950s and made up of young men coalescing around the figure of the slightly older Maurice Nadeau – "a born anarchist" in the words of one contemporary observer – the *Copains* had a widely-published newspaper, criticized Christian charity, and operated outside of parish authority structures, including organizing mixed-gender events for young people. While they made alliances with the student and union movements of the early 1960s, appearing at their conferences and demonstrations, these young, angry workers were critical of organized labour's role in their exploitation. Eighteen-year-old Jean G. wrote,

> They say that the exploited worker isn't a man but a robot who can't think. I don't know if this is true in general but in my case, it's false. I work for $43.00 net per week in a shop and yet I think. Yes, I think that I've had enough. I think that I am completely revolted by the boss' union that succeeds in getting most employees to swallow that they should be content with a low salary because of the company's so-called "poor financial situation." [86]

The *Copains* would go on to become enmeshed in the world of social animation, as a constituent group of the COM-propelled "*Fédération des mouvements du Sud-Ouest de Montréal*."[87] At least

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[85] Lysiane Gagnon, "Bref historique du movement étudiant au Québec (1958-1978)," *Bulletin d'histoire politique* 16, 2 (Winter 2008): 21. For the influence of the *Copains* on Couture, see Croteau, "L'implication sociale et politique de Jacques Couture," 37.

[86] Jean G., "Je pense que je suis écoeuré complètement," *Le Travail*, October 1966, 5. See also Michaudville, *Gens du Québec*, 61-65; Lysiane Gagnon, "Les jeunes de Saint-Henri auront de quoi s'occuper: Les 'Copains' reprennent leur activité," *Le Petit journal*, week of 31 December 1961, A-6; Michael McAndrew, "Le syndicalisme étudiant québécois," *Parti Pris* 2, 6 (February 1965): 21; Jules Béliveau, "Maurice Nadeau et l'O.N.F.: Les vedettes qu'il découvre, ce sont des délinquants!" *Photo-Journal*, 1-8 July 1964, 2; Anonymous [although I suspect written by Maurice Nadeau], "Les Copains de St-Henri," in *Les Gens du Québec (1): St-Henri*, ed. Benoit Michaudville, 61-65 (Montréal: Éditions Québécoises, 1972); Benoit Michaudville, "Maurice Nadeau, un prophète," in *Les Gens du Québec (1): St-Henri*, ed. Benoit Michaudville, 65 (Montréal: Éditions Québécoises, 1972).

[87] Garneau, "Le Conseil des oeuvres de Montréal," 36-37.

one of the *Copains*' members, however, thought that the Alinsky-fied universe of citizen participation had been conceived of in opposition to their autonomous organizing.[88]

Historian Will Langford has written what is probably the most in-depth exploration of Saint-Henri's left politics of the 1960s, analyzing the activism of the young members of the federally funded Company of Young Canadians (CYC). CYC volunteers were heavily involved in social animation and the support of block committees created in the wake of expropriation and urban renewal in what would become the new neighbourhood of "Little Burgundy," but moved radically left after deciding to operate exclusively in Saint-Henri, investing the *Comité ouvrier de Saint-Henri (*COSH) and practicing what Langford refers to as "*animation révolutionnaire*" – nothing less than the "politicization of the masses."[89] In this analysis, the industrial working-class of Saint-Henri – a "*quartier ouvrier*" [workers' neighbourhood] – was seen as possessing more organizational potential than the lumpenized, community-bound underclass of the "*quartier populaire*" [popular neighbourhood] of Little Burgundy. COSH was an important reference point in the constellation of the white Montreal left of the late 1960s, and was involved in tenants' struggles and the local campaign to obtain a French-language hospital for Saint-Henri. They also organized small factory committees to push union drives in the new generation of plants, although these were largely unsuccessful (with the exception of Simmons Bed). The organization dissolved in 1969 under the repression of the municipal Drapeau-Saulnier administration, part of a general crackdown on CYC activities in Montreal in the lead-up to the October Crisis.[90]

Langford demonstrates that a second "stream" of CYC volunteers were involved in shopfloor organizing after the COSH experiment, although with an ideology more reminiscent of Italian or Jamesian autonomous Marxism than that of the radical nationalism of the 1960s. COSH had made an aborted attempt in 1969 to organize Coleco-Eagle Toys,[91] the American

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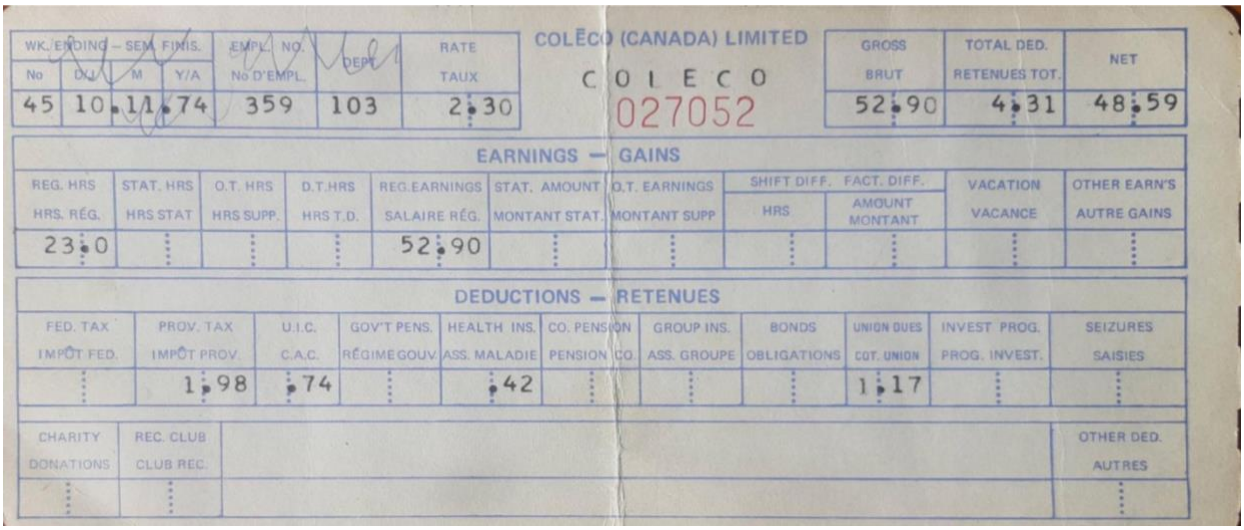
[88] Anonymous, "Les Copains de St-Henri," 63.

[89] Langford, *The Global Politics of Poverty in Canada*, 133.

[90] Langford, *The Global Politics of Poverty in Canada*, 126-139.

[91] Eagle Toys, a Montreal company which originally had its factory in the north of the city, moved to Saint-Henri in 1968. It was purchased by Coleco, itself a conglomerate of several smaller New England manufacturers, in 1972. Daniel Guilbert, *Saint-Henri Industriel: Anciennes*

company that had set up shop in the Dominion Textile building in September 1968, describing the conditions faced by the 800-strong workforce (70 per cent of whom were women, and the rest immigrant men) as a "concentration camp."[92] This time Coleco workers would be assisted by POPIR organizer Benoit Michaudville, who received funding from the *Métallos* (Steelworkers) with the goal of breaking the grip of the company union, the *Fédération canadienne des associations indépendantes* (FCAI). The success of this effort at Coleco inspired CYC volunteers to lend a hand to an organizing committee in the multi-racial, heavily feminized Lumiray plant. The CYC also supported the *Maison des jeunes travailleurs*, a worker-run cultural and social centre, and aided worker's committees organizing around unsafe conditions at Simmons, before ceasing activities in Saint-Henri in 1974.[93]



COLECO (CANADA) LIMITED

COLECO

027052

WK. ENDING – SEM. FINIS. No	DD	M	Y/A	EMPL. NO. No D'EMPL.	DEPT	RATE TAUX	GROSS BRUT	TOTAL DED. RETENUES TOT.	NET
45	10	11	74	359	103	2.30	52.90	4.31	48.59

EARNINGS — GAINS

REG. HRS HRS. RÉG.	STAT. HRS HRS STAT	O.T. HRS HRS SUPP.	D.T.HRS HRS T.D.	REG.EARNINGS SALAIRE RÉG.	STAT. AMOUNT MONTANT STAT.	O.T. EARNINGS MONTANT SUPP	SHIFT DIFF. HRS	FACT. DIFF. AMOUNT MONTANT	VACATION VACANCE	OTHER EARN'S AUTRE GAINS
23.0				52.90						

DEDUCTIONS — RETENUES

FED. TAX IMPÔT FED.	PROV. TAX IMPÔT PROV.	U.I.C. C.A.C.	GOV'T PENS. RÉGIME GOUV.	HEALTH INS. ASS. MALADIE	CO. PENSION PENSION CO.	GROUP INS. ASS. GROUPE	BONDS OBLIGATIONS	UNION DUES COT. UNION	INVEST PROG. PROG. INVEST.	SEIZURES SAISIES
	1.98	.74		.42				1.17		

CHARITY DONATIONS	REC. CLUB CLUB REC.		OTHER DED. AUTRES

Figure 2: A pay stub from Coleco, 1974. From the personal collection of Carole Orphanos.

manufactures et fantômes d'usines (unpublished manuscript, in possession of author), Microsoft Word file.

[92] *Pouvoir ouvrier*, Spécial Eagle Toy, n.d. 1969, 2, 21P-900:02/30, Comité Ouvrier de Saint-Henri.-1969-1970, Collection de publications de groupes de gauche et de groupes populaires, Archives UQAM. On the composition of the workforce, see Le Centre des femmes, "Femmes en lutte à Coleco," 42.

[93] Langford, *The Global Politics of Poverty in Canada*, 140-152.

What Langford describes as the "endemic conditions" of these factories, concentrated in secondary industries like plastics and electronics and reliant on the unskilled labour of young women, was in fact the penultimate stage of industrial capital's broader global restructuring in the second half of the century; a sort of final, hurried draining of the well of labour power before its uprooting from the North American urban milieu.[94] For a teenager like Carole Orphanos, who got her first job at Coleco in 1974 assembling table hockey games, the built-in precarity of the period seemed almost like abundance: "It was incredible in the factories. I was really happy," she remembered in 2018. "If you didn't like where you were working, you just said, 'see ya later!' and you went to the place next door."[95] Doris LeBlanc's comments similarly reflect these formative years. She is skeptical of those out of work today: "I said: 'Me, I'm not educated and I found work. How do you explain that?' And today you need education; it's not true. I'd go into a factory and get a job tomorrow, if I wanted."[96] This easy circulation from job to job, however, was a very contingent structural necessity, designed to keep wages low and solidarity to a minimum. Even after the initial union battle at Coleco was won in 1971, workers needed three months' seniority before becoming part of the bargaining unit, and the company did all it could to prevent this from happening. Carole remembers, "Those guys, before you got your three months in, they laid you off. So you couldn't get in the union. I went back later, and they took me on again, but for less than three months. I think I did that three times."[97] Organizing under these conditions was not easy.

One important reason for the success of these early 1970s efforts, despite the many obstacles, was the cross-fertilization of a variety of forms of working-class struggle. And to really understand the inner workings of this moment, I think, it is necessary to take a deeper look at the social and political worlds being constructed within the POPIR. Langford is not alone in assigning this group a relatively secondary importance; most of the literature, including earlier analyses of Montreal social movements, lumps the POPIR in with the COM and reformist

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[94] Langford, *The Global Politics of Poverty in Canada*, 126.

[95] Carole Orphanos, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 29 May 2018. My translation.

[96] Doris LeBlanc, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 16 January 2020.

[97] Orphanos, interview.

animation sociale, as the original impetus for its foundation came from Michel Blondin.[98] Winding up his time in Saint-Henri and seeking to give some institutional solidity to the various citizens' committee initiatives in the Southwest, in 1969 Blondin worked out a deal with the Archdiocese of Montreal to fund the new organization for a period of two years.[99]

A young Françoise David was involved as a social work intern in this early iteration of the POPIR, and as she aptly observed, during the first two years of its existence the new group "was present everywhere."[100] Initially, the organization had a hybrid *Comité directeur*, with three Directors named by the Archdiocese, three from the *Conseil de développement social du Montréal Métropolitain* (CDS, the new name adopted by the COM in 1969[101]), and eight from citizens' committees around the Southwest. Significantly, only four of the original fourteen Directors were women.[102] The POPIR employed several social animators, assisted in their duties by CYC volunteers. While the arrangement was not without its tensions, work began quickly in the form of "study groups" on different issues facing Southwest residents, morphing into several main fronts of struggle: housing, consumption, health, and labour.[103]

The POPIR's first stab at organizing tenants was unsuccessful: despite several attempts by animator Jeanne Leblanc, a veteran of the housing struggles in Little Burgundy, initial interest in the project quickly fell off.[104] Efforts to set up food purchasing cooperatives – "*Clubs*

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[98] Langford, *The Global Politics of Poverty in Canada*, 116-117; Garneau, "Le Conseil des oeuvres de Montréal," 57-60, 70-71; Donald McGraw, *Le développement des groupes populaires à Montréal (1963-1973)* (Montréal: Les Éditions coopératives Albert St-Martin, 1978), 24.

[99] Michel Blondin, Yvan Comeau, and Ysabel Provencher, *Innover pour mobiliser*, 67-68.

[100] Françoise David, "Le POPIR, 1970-1972," in *Animations sociales au Québec, rapport de recherche*, eds. Frédéric Lesemann and Michel Thiénot, 343 (Montréal, École de service sociale, Université de Montréal, 1972). Accessed in 165MI01.2.2, Historique, Fonds du POPIR.

[101] Garneau, "Le Conseil des oeuvres de Montréal," 52.

[102] Liste des Membres du Comité-Directeur du Projet POPIR, 1970, 165MI01.3.3, Comité directeur ou l'exécutif (1970), Fonds du POPIR.

[103] David, "Le POPIR," 330.

[104] David, "Le POPIR," 339; Rapport de Travail, à l'intention du Comité directeur du POPIR, par un membre de l'équipe, 165MI01.3.3, Comité directeur ou l'exécutif (1970), Fonds du POPIR; Réunion de l'Exécutif du P.O.P.I.R. tenue le 26 août '71; Rencontre de l'exécutif du

populaires de consommateurs" – were more fruitful, but here too it was not easy going.[105] In Saint-Henri, the Club ran into financial problems. Given predominant sexual divisions of labour within the household, however, women participated actively in the neighbourhood food coop.[106]

On the health front, David wrote, the POPIR's main contribution was as a structuring presence for the multiple different groups struggling to obtain a new hospital in Saint-Henri.[107] A decade of patronage politics and broken electoral promises by both the Liberals and the *Union Nationale* had fractured local efforts to win the institution, sorely needed in a neighbourhood where residents had no access to French-language or affordable healthcare.[108] In October 1971, POPIR organizer (and Catholic priest) Emile Dion became the designated animator of the *Comité de citoyens de l'hôpital de Saint-Henri*,[109] accompanying residents through a series of

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P.O.P.I.R., mardi le 9 novembre '71, à 6.30 heures p.m. au 3904 ouest, Notre-Dame; Projet POPIR, Rapport-Progrès du 1 juillet au 31 décembre 1971, 7, 165MI01.3.3, Comité directeur ou l'exécutif (1971), Fonds du POPIR; Journée d'étude du personnel du POPIR tenue le vendredi, 28 janvier '72, au 675 Filaitrault, 2, 165MI01.3.3, Conseil d'administration (1972), Fonds du POPIR.

[105] Rencontre avec les membres du Club des consommateurs de Pointe St-Charles, vendredi soir, 28 janvier 72, 2, 165MI01.3.4.5.2, Club populaire des consommateurs de Pointe St-Charles. Fonds du POPIR.

[106] David, 339, "Le POPIR"; Compte-rendu de la réunion des citoyens intéressés au Club populaire des consommateurs de St-Henri, le 27 octobre 1970; Compte-rendu de la reunion du Club populaire des consommateurs de St-Henri, le 12 avril 1971 – au 3040 rue Delisle – Réunion de Fondation, 165MI01.3.5.4, Club populaire des consommateurs de St-Henri, Fonds du POPIR. The majority of the Club's executive were still men, however.

[107] David, "Le POPIR," 343.

[108] See Langford, *The Global Politics of Poverty in Canada*, 133; Marguerite Legris, "Historique de l'hôpital St-Henri," *Les Gens du Québec (1): St-Henri*, ed. Benoit Michaudville, 68-74 (Montréal: Éditions Québécoises, 1972); Guy Giasson, "Le CHSLD de Saint-Henri: Une histoire de 135 ans – (2ème partie)," *Les Potins des Tanneries: Bulletin d'information des membres de la Société historique de Saint-Henri*, Spécial Coronavirus 5 (July 2020): 1-4; Brian Stewart, "St. Henri and the hospital (or how the politicians fed on the hopes of poor people for 10 long years," *The Montreal Gazette,* 6 June 1970, 7.

[109] Originally an initiative of the COSH, the *comité de citoyens* broke with the more radical formation in 1969. For an example of the position and tone taken by COSH on this question, see Comité ouvrier St-Henri, "L'Hopital à St-Henri: position finale du comité ouvrier St-Henri," *Pouvoir Ouvrier: hôpital st-henri: ULTIMATUM* (n.d.): 3, 21P-900: 02/30, Comité Ouvrier de

frustrating encounters with a Liberal government seeking to forego the hospital in favour of a new community clinic model, known as *Centres locaux de services communautaires* (CLSCs).[110]

A public assembly in April 1972 led to a broader push for a community health complex in the far west end of the neighbourhood that was to include low-income housing for seniors, a long-term care centre for the elderly and the chronically ill, a CLSC, and a community centre, and Dion became the POPIR representative to the new "Saint-Henri Community Health Complex Corporation."[111] But this was far from a complete victory – only one block of housing was ever built, and construction over-runs led to the eventual separation of the long-term care facility and the community clinic.[112] Significantly, where the *Comité de citoyens de l'hôpital St-Henri* had been a space of active leadership for women in the neighbourhood, the Directors of

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Saint-Henri.-1969-1970, Collection de publications de groupes de gauche et de groupes populaires, Archives UQAM.

[110] Legris, "Historique de l'hôpital St-Henri," 74. Procès-verbal de la rencontre du Comité pour l'Hôpital St-Henri tenue le 22 novembre 1971; Réunion du Comité de l'Hôpital St-Henri, 27-1-72; Minutes de l'assemblée du comité de citoyens de l'hôpital St-Henri, le 30 janvier 1972; Minutes de l'assemblée du comité de citoyens de l'Hôpital St-Henri, le 8 février 1972; Assemblée du comité de citoyens de l'hôpital St-Henri, 3 avril 1972, 165MI01.3.5.3.1, Comité des citoyens de l'hôpital St-Henri, Fonds du POPIR. On the tensions generated by Bill 65, see Louis Favreau, *Mouvement populaire et intervention communautaire de 1960 à nos jours: Continuités et ruptures* (Montréal: Le Centre de formation populaire et les Éditions du Fleuve, 1989), 19-24. See also Eric Shragge, "Castonguay – A Marxist Perspective," *Canadian Journal of Social Work Education/Revue canadienne d'éducation en service social* 5, 1 (1979): 62-77. On Dion's missionary background, see Alain Lamothe, "Vingt ans au pays du café et de la tourmente," *La Patrie: L'Hebdo des Canadiens-Français*, 10-16 August 1972, 11.

[111] Prise de position du Comité de citoyens pour l'Hôpital St-Henri face au projet du Complexe Communautaire de Santé St-Henri – Lundi, 3 avril 1972, 165MI01.3.5.3.1, Comité des citoyens de l'hôpital St-Henri, Fonds du POPIR; Première reunion de la Corporation du complexe communautaire de santé de St-Henri, lundi, le 17 avril 1972, 7.30 heures p.m., au local du POPIR, 3904 Notre-Dame Ouest, 165MI01.3.5.3.2, Corporation du complexe communautaire de santé de St-Henri, Fonds du POPIR; Assemblée sur la Santé dans St-Henri, lundi 10 avril 1972, 8.00 heures p.m., au Centre des Loisirs St-Henri, 521 Place St-Henri, 165MI01.3.6.3, Projet Action-Santé, Fonds du POPIR.

[112] Giasson, "Le CHSLD de Saint-Henri," 4

the new Corporation were almost all men.[113] Marguerite Legris, centrally involved in the hospital committee since 1968, noted deploringly that, "I didn't understand anything about what was decided, I didn't know the code, I voted I don't know why, for which amendment, for who, I don't know, my proposal was lost in the fog."[114] In this case, social animation's focus on participation took precedence over its commitment to empowerment.[115]

POPIR animator Henri Lamoureux initially brought a similarly pioneer-esque approach to workers' struggles, arguing that, "Of all the problems afflicting the Southwest, there is one that has never been seriously analyzed and for which no really effective and sustained action has been undertaken. This is the problem of labour."[116] Probably precisely because this was not the case, however, the young organization's labour front was particularly active. Two "*Ateliers de travail*" – one for Saint-Henri and one for Point Saint-Charles – quickly became important hubs of worker investigation, as men and women from the Southwest's various factories – Dominion Glass, CNR, and Belding Corticelli, in Point Saint-Charles; Eagle Toys and Simmons Bed in Saint-Henri; Crane, from across the Canal in Côte Saint-Paul, to give just a few examples[117]— came together to analyze the conditions of their increasing exploitation. During a November 1970 meeting, participants detailed the pernicious cycle wherein increasing unemployment forced workers to accept worse conditions, making for frequent turnover when they were no

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[113] Deuxième reunion de la Corporation du Complexe Communautaire de Santé St-Henri, mardi le 25 avril 1972, au 3904 ouest, Notre-Dame, 165MI01.3.5.3.2, Corporation du complexe communautaire de santé de St-Henri Fonds du POPIR.

[114] Minutes de l'assemblée du comité de citoyens de l'hôpital St-Henri le 13 avril 1972, 2, 165MI01.3.5.3.1, Comité des citoyens de l'hôpital St-Henri, Fonds du POPIR.

[115] Here one thinks of Charles Gagnon's trenchant 1972 critique: "on remarque que l'opportunisme, le réformisme et un certain gauchisme ont encore suffisament d'adeptes et de porte-parole qui parviennent à semer la confusion au sein du proletariat … Les sociaux-démocrates sont précisement ceux qui en pratique font le jeu des bourgeois … tout en pretendant être du côté du prolétariat et du peuple entier." In *En Lutte! Écrits politiques,* Volume II, 1972-1982 (Montréal: Lux Éditeur, 2008), 14-15, 18.

[116] Henri Lamoureux, "Une intervention globale au niveau du travail," 11 November 1970, 165MI04.5.1, Atelier-travail (Activités se rapportent au travail), Fonds du POPIR.

[117] "Rapport de l'Atelier Travail, 26.10.70," 165MI04.5.1, Atelier-travail (Activités se rapportent au travail), Fonds du POPIR.

longer able to tolerate the job. These "voluntary" departures kept companies from having to shell out unemployment benefits and created a permanent state of precarity in the workforce. As such, workers had "no time to go to the toilet, no fun on the job." They noted that men were increasingly being replaced by lower-paid women, and that plants in the Southwest expected them to do more work more quickly, with fewer employees.[118]

The members of the *Ateliers de Travail* organized kitchen-table meetings with workers throughout the Southwest, leading up to an all-day event in December 1970 where one of the principal issues discussed was the problem of the FCAI, particularly at the Clix Fastener zipper factory in Verdun. The FCAI had been a target of the COSH at Toilet Launderies and Coleco on the north side of the Canal, but following the December colloquium, Clix workers got organized and became the first worksite to successfully get rid of the boss' union for good.[119] Accompanied initially by POPIR animator Hubert Beaudry, the *Atelier de Travail* in the Point transitioned into the "*Mouvement du Zip*," or the *Mouvement des Travailleurs du Sud-Ouest* (MTSO), as it soon came to be called, carrying on mobilizing against the FCAI in other plants in the area.

The MTSO also conducted a systematic investigation into deindustrialization and wage scales in the Southwest. Workers reported on conditions in their plants, and patterns began to emerge – Crane had lost most of its 700 employees, General Steel Wares, all 750; RCA, which had employed 1500 workers in 1968, was only going to employ 150-200 in its new locale in the suburbs. Workers were left with minimum wage jobs at places like Montex (a small carpet plant that shared the old Merchant's building in Saint-Henri with Eagle Toys, and one of the plants where Doris LeBlanc briefly worked), or in laundry or food preparation.[120]

Another initiative with a full-time animator from the POPIR was the *Secrétariat des travailleurs du Sud-Ouest* (STSO). The STSO concerned itself not only with shopfloor struggles but with the increasing numbers of workers finding themselves on unemployment or welfare,

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[118] Rapport de l'atelier "Travail," lundi 16 nov. 70, 165MI04.5.1, Atelier-travail (Activités se rapportent au travail), Fonds du POPIR.

[119] See 165MI04.5.2, Comité ouvrier de St-Henri, Fonds du POPIR; *Pouvoir ouvrier*, Spécial Eagle Toys, n.d. 1969; David, "Le POPIR," 333.

[120] Mouvement des travailleurs du Sud-Ouest, 5 avril 71, 165MI01.3.6.5, Projet Mouvement des travailleurs du Sud-Ouest, Fonds du POPIR. Projet POPIR, Rapport-Progrès du 1 janvier au 30 juin 1971, 3-4, 165MI01.3.3, Comité directeur ou l'exécutif (1971), Fonds du POPIR.

creating a welfare rights group called the *Organisation des Droits Sociaux* which eventually expanded across Montreal to form the *Association pour la Défense des Droits Sociaux*. The Saint-Henri *Atelier* continued to meet, bringing together the STSO and a variety of autonomous initiatives that worked in collaboration with the POPIR. One of these was the *Maison de Chômeur de Saint-Henri,* a social centre for the unemployed propelled by former Trappist monk and ex-COSH member Jean Pilon, where out-of-work neighbourhood residents could come for a meal, engage in political education and discussion, and get help finding a job. Southwest residents who were part of the "*Gars de Lapalme*," delivery drivers engaged in what at that time was one of the most ferocious labour struggles in Quebec history, also sent representatives to the meetings.[121] Finally, animators from the labour front supported two small worker's cooperatives formed in Saint-Henri: *La Ruche*, a group of single women making wool rugs and clothing, and *l'Association Coopérative Ouvrière de Production des Amis du Québec*, a group of young workers who designed and painted educational children's toys.[122]

Inside the POPIR things were changing rapidly, as the organization shifted politically, demographically, and geographically. The experience of the first year or so had brought the contradictions of social animation to the fore. In March 1971, CSD representative to the POPIR Pierre Pagé resigned from the former to become a full-time organizer at the latter, citing a desire to work more directly with those most affected by structural injustice.[123] The CSD pulled completely out of the POPIR shortly after, as the Southwest organization adopted a new charter

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[121] See Pierre Vadeboncoeur, *366 jours, et tant qu'il en faudra: vive les gars de Lapalme* (Montréal: Beauchemin, 1971).

[122] Recontre STSO – ADDS et POPIR, le 3 septembre 1971; Atelier-Travail, 21 September 1971, 165MI01.3.6.5, Projet Mouvement des travailleurs du Sud-Ouest, Fonds du POPIR. "Pensez aux Gars de Lapalme," 4 January 1970 [?]; Les Gars de Lapalme dans le Sud-Ouest; Compte-rendu de la réunion de l'Atelier Travail, tenue le 28 janvier 1971, au Secrétariat des Travailleurs du Sud-Ouest, 165MI04.5.1, Atelier-travail (Activités se rapportent au travail), Fonds du POPIR. See also Mouvement Action-Chômage de Montréal, "La Maison du Chomeur," *Mouvement Action-Chômage de Montréal: 50 ans de lutte!* http://macmtl.qc.ca/roman-feuilleton-des-50-ans-du-mac-chapitre-1-la-maison-du-chomeur/ (Accessed 27 May 2021); David, "Le POPIR," 332-6, 340; Robert Lemieux, "La maison du chomeur," in *Les Gens du Québec (1): St-Henri*, ed. Benoit Michaudville, 76-85 (Montréal: Éditions Québécoises, 1972).

[123] Letter from Pierre Pagé to Yvon Belley, 16 March 1971, 165I02.2.6, Conseil de Développement Social, Fonds du POPIR.

giving significantly more power to local residents. The Archdiocese, in turn, announced that it would not continue to fund the POPIR at the end of its original two-year mandate.[124] Looking toward the future, POPIR members no longer sought simply to incite participation; instead, they stated their intention to "take power away from the minority that controls the Southwest and put it back in the hands of the majority." The issue of deindustrialization was front and centre: "we have to find … ways that the unions can face up to the reality of factory closures in the Southwest; avenues through which the worker's financial problems can be addressed that go beyond the household food budget."[125] Southwest militants were moving from an abstract fight against "poverty" to a struggle against exploitation.

The gendered composition of decision-makers within the POPIR had also changed dramatically – by Fall of 1971, almost half of the *Comité Directeur* were women, most of whom had been brought into the organization through participation in the group's various initiatives (*La Ruche* workers' coop and the *Club populaire de consommateurs*, for example, or the general meetings of the *Atelier du travail*).[126] Further, while the POPIR was originally conceived to cover all the neighbourhoods of the Southwest, and much of the original enthusiasm for the project had come from Point Saint-Charles, by the end of the year both the offices and the energy of the group had been firmly transplanted to Saint-Henri.[127]

It is in the light of these developments that the organization of Coleco workers can be best understood. Langford's account, detailed above, gives us the broad lines – the *Métallos* did indeed pay POPIR organizer Benoit Michaudville, who supported the young women workers driving the anti-FCAI campaign; their experience of shopfloor activism led them, along with

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[124] David, "Le POPIR," 338, 342.

[125] Projet POPIR – Centre d'Action St-Henri, 2, 5, 165MI01.3.3, Comité directeur ou l'exécutif (1971), Fonds du POPIR.

[126] Procès-verbal de la rencontre du Comité directeur du P.O.P.I.R. tenue au 3904 ouest, Notre-Dame, Mardi le 26 Octobre 1971, 165MI01.3.3, Comité directeur ou l'exécutif (1971), Fonds du POPIR.

[127] Projet POPIR, Rapport-Progrès du 1 juillet au 31 décembre 1971, 165MI01.3.3, Comité directeur ou l'exécutif (1971), Fonds du POPIR. On the Point Saint Charles roots of the POPIR, see Anna Kruzynski, "Du Silence à l'Affirmation: Women Making History in Point St. Charles" (PhD diss., McGill University, 2004), 202-204.

fellow workers from Lumiray and C.C.M. (in nearby Griffintown), to challenge the structures and procedures of central unionism.[128] But Michaudville was not, before this initiative, a paid social animator at the POPIR; rather, he was a Saint-Henri militant whose trajectory closely mirrored the evolution of struggle in the Southwest. Originally a Jesuit theology student who had come to the area after being expelled from Brazil by the military dictatorship in 1969, Michaudville first lived in Point Saint-Charles. Working at Toilet Launderies brought him into contact with the COSH and workers' struggles in Saint-Henri.[129] He was an active participant in the *Atelier-Travail* and the *Mouvement des Travailleurs du Sud-Ouest*, and soon became one of the volunteer Directors of the POPIR.[130] When a group of young women workers at Coleco reached out to the *Métallos*, the union agreed to pay Michaudville the small sum of $1500 (covering his living and organizing expenses from September 1971 to May 1972) to assist them.[131]

Langford suggests that this union support was a matter of the increasingly radical and nationalist *Métallos* "stepping in" to fund the anti-FCAI work of the MTSO after the Archdiocese pulled out of the POPIR.[132] But the impetus for this development was almost entirely local – in fact, the solidity of the funding from the *Métallos* was frequently in question, and at least once the POPIR had to cover Michaudville's tab from its own meagre budget.[133] This

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[128] Langford, *The Global Politics of Poverty in Canada*, 140-148.

[129] "Aujourd'hui, Place Ville-Marie: Jeûne symbolique contre les tortures au Brésil," *Le Devoir*, 1 April 1970, 3; Benoit Michaudville and Pierre Durocher, "L'Avenir du Comité Ouvrier de Saint-Henri," *Relations* 345 (January 1970): 8-11.

[130] Rencontre STSO – ADDS et POPIR le 3 septembre 1971; Mouvement des travailleurs du Sud-Ouest mercredi 28 avril 1971, 165MI01.3.6.5, Projet Mouvement des travailleurs du Sud-Ouest, Fonds du POPIR.

[131] Le Centre des femmes, "Femmes en lutte à Coleco," 44; Pierre Vennat, "Le mouvement syndical ne fait à peu près rien pour organiser les non-syndiqués," *La Presse*, 27 October 1972, A5.

[132] Langford, *The Global Politics of Poverty*, 141-42.

[133] POPIR, Comité de pilotage et Comité directeur, Réunion du mardi 21 mars 1972, 4; Assemblée du Comité-Directeur du POPIR tenue le 29 mars '72 au 3904 ouest, rue Notre-Dame, 8.00 hres.p.m., 1; Rencontre de l'Exécutif du POPIR tenue au 3904 ouest, Notre-Dame – le 25 Avril '72, 3, 165MI01.3.3, Conseil d'administration 1972, Fonds du POPIR.

new organizing initiative reflected discussions (in which Coleco employees were regular participants) within Saint-Henri's *Atelier-Travail* about working conditions and the FCAI, as well as the increasing realization that the MTSO strategy of trying to federate more politically advanced individuals from a variety of plants was not working. While still staying rooted in the context of neighbourhood struggle, there was a need to organize workplaces, one at a time.[134]

As a member of the *Comité directeur* of the POPIR, where Coleco workers often came as a group to help out with different neighbourhood projects, Michaudville was able to rally broad support for the unionization effort.[135] As he related to *La Presse* labour columnist Pierre Vennat, "without the activism of the people of the neighbourhood, nothing would have been possible." With it, the campaign resulted in the unionization of 882 workers, spreading to shops like Lumiray, Canada Fibre Can, Thomas Bonnar, and Montreal-Phono. By comparison, Vennat pointed out, the *Métallos* had spent over $80 000 on "organizing" non-unionized workers in 1970 and had recruited only 800 across the whole of Quebec.[136] Madeleine Neveu, a young nun employed at Coleco, pointed out at the October 1972 congress of the *Métallos* that "Everybody here is talking about the necessity of unionizing unorganized workers. We have proved that we can do this unionization work by making the neighbourhood our organizing base."[137] Beyond the political significance of the initiative, it was also personally very important for Michaudville: in the Spring of 1972 the former Jesuit priest was engaged to be married to Diane Perron, one of the Coleco workers at the heart of the struggle against the FCAI.[138]

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[134] David, "Le POPIR," 333, 335-336, 340; Rapport de l'Atelier-Travail, lundi 26.10. 70/2 nov. 70, 165MI04.5.1, Atelier-travail (Activités se rapportent au travail), Fonds du POPIR; Journée d'étude du personnel du POPIR tenue le vendredi, 28 janvier '72, au 675 Filaitrault; Rapport de la réunion de l'Exécutif du POPIR tenue le 7 février 1972, au 3904 Notre-Dame, 165MI01.3.3, Conseil d'administration (1972), Fonds du POPIR.

[135] Projet-POPIR, Rapport Progrès du 1 juillet au 31 décembre, 1971, 165MI01.3.3, Comité directeur ou l'exécutif (1971), Fonds du POPIR.

[136] Pierre Vennat, "Le mouvement syndical ne fait à peu près rien pour organiser les non-syndiqués"; Militantes de Lumiray, "Lumiray: Bilan d'une lutte," 18.

[137] Pierre Richard, "L'organisation syndicale traditionnelle est remise en cause par un groupe du sud-ouest," *Le Devoir*, 14 October 1972, 3. My translation.

[138] Comité de pilotage et Comité directeur, Réunion du mardi 21 mars 1972, 165MI01.3.3, Conseil d'administration (1972), Fonds du POPIR.

This convergence of territory-based struggle and class conflict was also rooted in an engagement with histories of working-class organizing in Saint-Henri. In Spring 1972 POPIR militants reached out to Léandre Bergeron, the founder of publisher *Éditions québécoises*, who agreed to work with them to write a history of Saint-Henri. The finished product, *Les gens du Québec (1): Saint-Henri*, was put out in November. While the initiative was headed up by Michaudville, twenty neighbourhood residents contributed to the final project. It is a remarkable document, at once an analysis of deindustrialization, a guide to the multiplicity of local political initiatives of the period, a history of neighbourhood labour struggles, and a compilation of oral histories of Saint-Henri residents. The authors, and particularly Michaudville, situated the legitimacy of their neighbourhood organizing in the longer local lineage of working-class struggles: "I've always lived in Saint-Henri," recounted one interview participant. "I came into the world here, on Beaudoin Street … I knew Madeleine Parent. She was in the union. She was good. I really liked her."[139] In contrast to the attitude of the Alinsky disciples who arrived in the Southwest in the early 1960s, the point of the book, according to Michaudville, was to demonstrate that "throughout the history of Saint-Henri, there have always been people who knew how to stand up for themselves."[140] These labour militants were laying claim to the neighbourhood class solidarity that had typified the shopfloor organizing of the 1940s and early 1950s.

As Langford points out, given the composition of working-class forces in the neighbourhood, the surge of this sort of militant labour activity in the first few years of the 1970s had a strong feminist tendency, both in the nature of the demands made upon bosses – equal pay for equal work, maternity leave – and in its critical relationship to the authoritarian and patriarchal structures of central unionism. Saint-Henri militants instead insisted on the importance of worker self-activity. While Langford points here to the influence of New Left autonomist thinking on the CYC volunteers who accompanied the Lumiray workers in their organizing, we can just as easily look to the local turn from vague anti-poverty discourse to the sharper, class-based analysis occurring in the *Ateliers de travail*, the STSO, and the MTSO,

[139] Émilia Cartier, cited in Benoit Michaudville, ed., *Les Gens du Québec (1): Saint-Henri* (Montréal: Éditions Québécoises, 1972), 30-31.

[140] Renée Rowan, "Une publication sur le quartier St-Henri," *Le Devoir*, 18 November 1972, 2.

rooted not in a prefabricated political line but in the material conditions in which workers found themselves. If there is a resemblance to the struggles of autoworkers in Detroit or to the emergence of *operaismo* in Italy, it is more due to shared challenges than shared texts: social democratic unions wedded through bureaucracy to the capitalist State, for example, or the intensification of patterns of exploitation in a context of increasing deindustrialization.[141]

At any rate, while the *Métallos* were making headlines for their support for Quebec independence, the Southwest workers criticized their union and its leader, Jean Gérin-Lajoie, for supporting the bourgeois *Parti Québécois*, for anti-democratic functioning, and perhaps above all, for abandoning workers in the small and medium-size industries that now dominated deindustrializing neighbourhoods like Saint-Henri. Central unions, they advanced, were only interested in filling their coffers.[142] They argued instead, Langford writes, for the necessity of a "politicized labour movement premised on class conflict and the assertion of worker control over production, capital, and employment."[143] In the convergence of shopfloor organizing with issues like food prices and healthcare, further, this organizing moment represented a potentially fruitful new shift within movement politics toward the integration of unwaged, reproductive labour into the organized class struggle.

"Une problématique, un groupe"

Financial constraints and political shifts soon presented a challenge to this new direction. If it is by now a bit of a truism for radicals to say that "the revolution will not be funded," community

[141] See, for example, Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 2017); A. Muhammad Ahmad, "The League of Revolutionary Black Workers: A Historical Study," *History is a Weapon*, http://history isaweapon.com/defcon1/rbwstudy.html (accessed 18 June 2021); Jack Taylor, "Revolution at the Point of Production: An Interview With Mike Hamlin of DRUM and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers," *Spectrum: A Journal on Black Men* 2, 1 (2013): 99-112.

[142] Des Travailleurs de C.C.M., Coleco, Lumiray, "Pour une information, formation, organisation, syndicales et politiques des travailleurs," RG 116, 114, 521, Maison des Jeunes de St-Henri – Staff Reports, Company of Young Canadians Fonds, LAC.

[143] Langford, *The Global Politics of Poverty in Canada*, 148.

organizers in the mid-1970s were learning that lesson the hard way.[144] The vibrancy of the first years of the decade had a lot to do with the space for organizational experimentation afforded by the multiple sources of secular and ecclesiastical funding. As this support dried up, neighbourhood initiatives increasingly limited themselves to the formula of what one POPIR pamphlet referred to as, "*une problématique, un groupe*" [one issue, one group].[145]

The activities of the POPIR's labour front continued throughout 1973, as Michaudville worked through the MTSO to consolidate the organizing gains at Saint-Henri plants Coleco, Lumiray, and Canada Fibre Can, and collaborated with other neighbourhood partners to try to find solutions for laid off workers.[146] In 1974, POPIR animators provided technical support and meeting space for striking workers at Accessories Manufactures, but with just two part-time paid organizers, the decision was made to once again place the focus on consumption issues.[147]

Saint-Henri groups were also dealing with the political cleavages splitting working-class initiatives across Montreal in the mid-1970s, as the increasing (and rivalling) influence of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist organizations *En Lutte!* and the *Ligue communiste ouvrière* made for heightened tensions and long, difficult meetings.[148] In both Saint-Henri and the Point, the

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[144] See INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, ed., *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex* (Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 2007).

[145] POPIR-Comité Logement, "POPIR: 25e Anniversaire, 1969-1994," January 1995, 3, Fonds du POPIR. Thank you to Pierre Bissonnette for sharing this document with me.

[146] "Les Travailleurs du Sud-Ouest s'organisent," 165MI01.3.3, Comité directeur ou l'exécutif (1974), Fonds du POPIR; Réunion, Mercredi 18 avril 1973, Services Sociaux St-Henri, 730 Laporte. Projet A.D.D.S.: Service d'éducation des adultes, 165MI01.3.6.6, Projet A.D.D.S. Service d'éducation aux adultes, Fonds du POPIR.

[147] "Quelques données 'fait topiques' sur les rapports entre le POPIR et les Travailleurs d'Accessories Manufacturers, et sur l'évolution de leur grève," 21 August 1974, 165MI04.5.2, Comité ouvrier de St-Henri, Fonds du POPIR; Daniel Vinet, "Projet d'Organisation Populaire, d'Information et de Regroupement Inc. (P.O.P.I.R.): Document explicatif sur l'organisme," 1974, 2, 165MI01.3.3, Comité directeur ou l'exécutif (1975), Fonds du POPIR; Procès-verbal: Réunion du Comité d'implantation de la Coopérative funéraire du Sud-Ouest de Montréal, 22 April 1975, 165MI01.3.6.1-2, Comité d'implantation de la Coopérative funéraire du sud-ouest Fonds du POPIR.

[148] See Jean-Philippe Warren, *Ils voulaient changer le monde: le militantisme marxiste-léniniste au Québec*; Bernard Dansereau, "Une expérience de l'extrême gauche au Québec: le Parti communiste ouvrier," *Bulletin d'histoire politique* 13, 1 (2014): 25-35.

involvement of "M-Ls" in local organizations had deleterious effects on participation. In 1976 an employee of the POPIR was forced to resign due to his membership in the *Ligue*.[149] Benoit Michaudville also joined up, becoming the local candidate for the *Parti Communiste Ouvrier* in the 1980 provincial election.[150] Community groups increasingly decided to leave labour issues to labour activists.[151]

The class politics of the earlier part of the decade did not, however, simply disappear from the neighbourhood nexus. A working document defining the values of the POPIR in December 1976, for example, stated that the long-term goals of the organization were "socialism, communism, etc.," and positioned itself against "the exploitation of man."[152] It is instead more accurate, I think, to say that the reproductive aspects of that class struggle became more prominent, albeit framed in the language of social rights. A principal form this took in the neighbourhood was the move toward housing struggles, first in the form of a short-lived tenant's association, part of the *Association des locataires du Montréal métropolitain*, and then through active committees of the POPIR.[153] By the early 1980s, POPIR militants organized themselves into two groups – one to defend tenants renting from private landlords, and one defending the

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[149] For Saint-Henri: Christiane Bélanger, Carole Damiens-Panneton, et Mireille Girard, "Évolution et pratiques de l'animation sociale et des groupes populaires" (SV 1121, Faculté des Arts et Sciences, École de service social, Université de Montréal, April 1981), 44-46, 165MI.01.2.3, Études de stagiaires, Fonds du POPIR. On the impact of MLs in the Point, see Le Collectif CourtePointe, *Pointe Saint-Charles: Un quartier, des femmes, une histoire communautaire* (Montréal: Les Éditions du remue-ménage, 2006), 57-58.

[150] "La santé-sécurité," *La Presse*, 31 January 1980, A12. The PCO was the short-lived successor organization of the *Ligue*.

[151] Réunion d'équipe le 2 sept. 1975; Procès-verbal de la reunion du COMITÉ-Directeur du POPIR, Lundi le 8 sept., 1975, 165MI01.3.3, Comité directeur ou l'exécutif (1975), Fonds du POPIR.

[152] Le P.O.P.I.R.: Document de travail, Orientation et cadre de travail du P.O.P.I.R., December 1976, 165MI01.2.2, Historique, Fonds du POPIR.

[153] "SAINT-HENRI deux visages," 165MI04.3.5.1, Association des locataires de St-Henri, Fonds du POPIR. *The Association des locataires du Montréal métropolitain* was itself largely defunct by 1974. See Geneviève Breault, "Militantisme au sein des groups de défense des droits des personnes locataires: pratiques démocratiques et limites organisationnelles," *Reflets: Revue d'intervention sociale et Communautaire* 23, 2 (Fall 2017): 183.

rights of renters living in the new *Habitations à loyer modique* (HLM), subsidized public housing funded by federal and provincial housing authorities and managed by Montreal's *Office municipal d'habitation* (OMHM).[154]

Echoing the dynamics driving the construction of the Saint-Lawrence Seaway, the massive public investment of the golden period of Canadian social housing represented the State's re-circulation of capital into infrastructure in response to steadily declining rates of profit in manufacturing, mirroring a broader capitalist shift from production to real estate.[155] As part of this push, 599 HLM units were constructed in Saint-Henri between 1969 and 1980.[156] Geographer Pierson Nettling has convincingly demonstrated that the activism of public housing tenants in Montreal was an important site of working-class self-activity in the 1960s and 1970s, helping to bring about an end to hugely destructive urban renewal policies.[157] In Saint-Henri, HLM tenants fought back against rising rent scales, cut-backs in services, and the abusive management style of the OMHM.[158] Participation in struggles against their own landlords also brought Saint-Henri residents into contact with the growing provincial tenants' rights movement. Although it was not officially a "*comité logement*" or an "*association de locataires*," the POPIR took part in the variety of emerging fora for tenant movements in the late 1970s and early 1980s, including the *Table régionale contre la hausse des loyers*, which brought together the member groups of two provincial associations – the FRAPRU, born out of the struggle against urban

[154] See 165MI01.3.5.5.1 Comité-logement (HLM) P.O.P.I.R, Fonds du POPIR; 165MI01.3.5.5.3, Comité des locataires du P.O.P.I.R., Fonds du POPIR.

[155] Greg Suttor, *Still Renovating: A History of Canadian Social Housing Policy* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press), 53-83; M.J. Webber and D.L. Rigby, "The Rates of Profit in Canadian Manufacturing, 1950-1981," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 18, 1-2 (1986): 33-55.

[156] CREESOM, *Sud-Ouest: diagnostic*, 272.

[157] See Pierson Nettling, "Tenant Activism and the Demise of Urban Renewal: Tenants, Governance, and the Struggle for Recognition at Habitations Jeanne-Mance in Montreal," *Journal of Urban History* (2020): 1-18.

[158] 165MI01.3.5.5.1 Comité-logement (HLM) P.O.P.I.R, Fonds du POPIR.

renovation but increasingly dedicated to the fight for social housing, and the RCLAL, focused on the private market – along with their non-aligned counterparts.[159]

In part as a reaction to public housing tenant opposition, throughout the 1970s federal and provincial governments gradually shifted the funding model toward cooperative and non-profit housing developments.[160] While the next chapter will deal more in depth with the movement dynamics engendered by this shift, we can note for now that the POPIR helped tenants form four different housing coops between 1977 and 1980. This work was accomplished in collaboration with the *Services d'aménagement populaire* (SAP), part of a new wave of *Groupes de ressources techniques* funded by the provincial government and made up of progressive architects and community organizers.[161] Founding coops required intense local participation: tenants studied different forms of co-property and government programs, and conducted surveys of buildings that could potentially be renovated and converted to social housing.[162]

The POPIR also formalized the latent feminist tendencies of the 1970s neighbourhood movement. Reflecting the disproportionately gendered impact of deindustrialization, by the end of the 1980s almost 90 per cent of the people seeking out the assistance of the organization were women, dealing with poverty, isolation, and the stresses of single parenthood. These women were generally between 30 and 45, were on social assistance, had little education or confidence, and needed to share their stories and be listened to. Attempts to meet the needs of this population resulted in several new projects, including the founding of an affordable daycare, the *Garderie Paillason*, and the creation of the *Maison du Réconfort*, an emergency shelter for women and

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[159] FRAPRU: Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain; RCLAL (later to become the RCLALQ): Regroupement des comités logement et associations de locataires du Québec. See 165.MI01.3.5.5.4, Table régionale contre les hausses de loyer, Fonds du POPIR; 165MI02.2.15 F.R.A.P.R.U., Fonds du POPIR; 165MI02.2.15.1, R.C.L.A.L., Fonds du POPIR.

[160] Suttor, *Still Renovating*, 84-119.

[161] POPIR-Comité Logement, "POPIR: 25e Anniversaire, 1969-1994," 5; 165MI02.2.17.2-2 S.A.P. (Services d'aménagement populaire) P.V. des congrès et colloques, Fonds du POPIR. See also Gilles Lauzon and Marcel Sevigny, "Le Service d'aménagement et les coopératives," *Logement et luttes urbaines* 4, 44 (1980): 83-91.

[162] 165MI04.3.7, Groupe logement, P.O.P.I.R. St-Henri, Fonds du POPIR.

their children.[163] The increasing predominance of women in the organization, according to one 1981 student report, was a reflection of the household division of labour: "In general, when problems with housing, food, or money arise in a family, it's the woman who comes to ask for help."[164] In order to facilitate the participation of these women in discussion sessions, the POPIR also instituted a daycare within its walls, "*Les P'tits POPIRs*."[165]

The turn toward feminist organizing was not without sometimes acrimonious debate about governance and politics – in one particularly difficult conflict between co-workers in 1984, divergent opinions emerged about the continued presence of men in the organization.[166] Social worker Lyse Bessette carried out an eight-month institutional diagnostic of the POPIR during the same period, concluding that the group was veering rapidly toward an emphasis on personal wellness and growth, abandoning the tradition of collective organizing and mobilization that had characterized its work in the 1970s.[167] Scanning the promotional materials of the organization in the late 1980s, however, it is hard to come to the same conclusion. While there was indeed a certain focus on "leisure" activities like writing and self-expression workshops, other sessions offered – self-defence and sexual health and boundaries, for example, or a "Toast and coffee" breakfast to discuss the political and economic dynamics of women's unpaid work in the home – point to Saint-Henri's enmeshment in the collectively-oriented Quebec feminist movement of the 1970s and 1980s.[168] There was always a class element underlying this activism, and these

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[163] "Présentation du POPIR," 1987, 165MI01.2.2, Historique, Fonds du POPIR. See also 165MI01.3.6.7-2, Maison du Reconfort, Fonds du POPIR. On the characteristics of women coming to POPIR, see Réunion du 15 juin pour la formation du comité de coordination femmes du POPIR, 165MI01.3.2, Comité des femmes, Fonds du POPIR.

[164] Bélanger, Damiens-Panneton, and Girard, "Évolution et pratiques de l'animation sociale et des groupes populaires," 16.

[165] POPIR-Comité Logement, "POPIR: 25e Anniversaire, 1969-1994," 4.

[166] Mireille Girard, "Document préparé pour la discussion du C.A. special du 25 octobre 1984," 165MI01.3.2, Conseil d'administration (1984), Fonds du POPIR.

[167] Lyse Bessette, "Le POPIR: Vers une rédifinition," May 1984, 165MI01.2.3, Études de stagiaires, Fonds du POPIR.

[168] 165MI07.2, Communique (POPIR Bonjour), Fonds du POPIR. For a brief introduction to this period, see Camille Robert, "Du 'travail d'amour' au travail exploité: Retour historique sur les

programs fostered political education and solidarity amongst the working-class women of the neighbourhood. Work, unemployment, and housing continued to be pressing issues.[169]

The loss of the POPIR's principal sources of funding in 1972 had eventually been softened by support from the *Fédération des oeuvres de charité canadiennes-françaises*, one of several such entities folded into the broader philanthropical organization *Centraide* in 1975. By the end of the 1980s, *Centraide* was placing increasing pressure on the POPIR to choose a single issue – "une problématique, un groupe." Some activists within the organization argued that the POPIR was at its most dynamic when focused on the pressing housing issues of Saint-Henri. Ultimately, the membership agreed: after a series of extensive consultations, in 1988 the POPIR officially became the "POPIR-*Comité Logement* [Housing Committee]," assuming responsibility for tenants in Saint-Henri, Little Burgundy, and Côte Saint-Paul and Ville-Émard on the south side of the Canal.[170]

While the POPIR had been focused on feminist struggles, however, across the Canal in Point Saint-Charles the 1980s saw a collective turn towards a "social economy" model, working in collaboration with private sector partners to try to create employment opportunities. Deindustrialization in the Point had been swift and brutal. By the end of the 1970s, wrote sociologist Jean-Marc Garneau, "no hope of reconstruction was on the horizon. The grand economic actors, the representatives of industry and government were silent and helpless in the face of the catastrophe."[171] Activists tried to salvage what they could, adopting a community

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luttes feminists entourant le travail ménager," in *Travail invisible: Portraits d'une lutte féministe inachevée*, eds. Camille Robert and Louise Toupin, 31-45 (Montréal: Éditions du remue-ménage, 2018).

[169] 165MI07.2, Communique (POPIR Bonjour), Fonds du POPIR; Rencontre inter-organismes sur la question du logement privé à Saint-Henri et Petite-Bourgogne, 165MI01.3.5.6, Table de concertation des organismes de St-Henri Petite-Bourgogne 1987, Fonds du POPIR.

[170] 165MI01.3.2, Conseil d'administration (1987-1988), Fonds du POPIR; 165MI07.2, Communique (POPIR Bonjour), Fonds du POPIR.

[171] Jean-Marc Garneau, *Le Programme Économique de Pointe Saint-Charles, 1983-1989: La percée du développement économique Communautaire dans le Sud-Ouest de Montréal* (Montreal: Institut de formation en développement économique Communautaire, 1990), 3, cited (and translated) in Steven High, *Deindustrializing Montreal: Entangled Histories of Race,*

economic development model inspired by social animation and contemporary American attempts to stimulate bottom-up neighbourhood capitalist development.[172] As time went on, they even started to develop a certain level of condescension vis-à-vis the movements from which they came: the president of the social economy group *Programme Économique de Pointe Saint-Charles* (PEP), for example, argued in 1989 that unlike other groups, "we do what's necessary to make our projects work, instead of 'dying pure.'"[173]

The new POPIR-*Comité Logement* was vehemently opposed to this approach. At the opening panel of the annual congress of the FRAPRU in 1990, POPIR militants denounced the new strategy in no uncertain terms:

> For some time, talking about mobilization in the popular movement has been to go against the current. Many groups … push and promote a new strategy of community development: partnership or even social consensus. In the Southwest of Montreal, this trend is very strong and recognized by different groups without even a minimal questioning within the popular movement about its effectiveness and the price we pay when we function by consensus. The gains are far from obvious when we sit down with the directors of the *Caisse Populaire* [credit union] or businesses and other actors advocating interests different than ours. We have to seriously question ourselves in the face of this new trend in economic and social development in a context in which the state is disengaging from social policies.[174]

Residence and Class (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, forthcoming), 303.

[172] High, *Deindustrializing Montreal*, 303. On the incarnation of this approach in the housing sector, see Simon Vickers, "From 'Balconville' to 'Condoville', but Where is Co-opville? Neighbourhood Activism in 1980s Pointe-Saint-Charles," *Labour/Le Travail* 81 (Spring 2018): 159-186.

[173] Cited in Favreau, *Mouvement populaire et intervention communautaire*, 123. My translation.

[174] Kathey Lepage, "Congrès FRAPRU: La Force de l'Action Collective," FRAPRU, Congrès 10, P16-410-10, Fonds Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain (FRAPRU), Centre d'archives et d'histoire du travail.

While local credit union directors and businesses might geographically be part of the neighbourhood structure, in the POPIR's analysis there were still clear class lines that needed to be drawn. To my mind, the immediate adoption of this position upon the group's emergence in the world of housing struggles is evidence of the organization's recent roots in the shopfloor efforts of the 1970s, and of the impacts of the comparatively longer, drawn-out history of deindustrialization in Saint-Henri. It also lends credence to the argument that the feminist organizing of the 1980s shouldn't be seen as a rejection of the class-based approach of earlier years, but rather as an extension of this militant tradition through a focus on the reproductive elements of the struggle.

Bureaucratization and Resistance to Shutdowns at Coleco and Simmons Bed

We began this chapter with a factory shutdown, noting the relative lack of response to Dominion Textile's uprooting in 1967. This was not at all the case when first Simmons Bed, and then Coleco, unexpectedly announced their closures in Winter 1987. Together these plants represented close to 1000 jobs in the neighbourhood, and their successive shutterings inspired *La Presse* journalist André Noël to describe "the crisis of Saint-Henri" in terms worthy of a Springsteen anthem: "Today, Gabrielle Roy is dead. Saint-Ambroise Street too. The wind blows through empty warehouses and abandoned factories. Trains hardly ever go by anymore. The flow of cars has thinned to a trickle. Here, the deindustrialization of Montreal isn't just a big word used by sociologists."[175] Partially, as Steven High demonstrates, the relatively higher profile of these closures had to do with broader public debates about free trade and Quebec nationalism.[176] Simmons, originally established along the banks of the Lachine Canal in 1910, had expanded to include factories across Canada and branch plants in forty different countries, and had recently been acquired by financial interests in Delaware. The company locked out its employees in January 1987 following their refusal to countenance the subcontracting of union work, and then proceeded to transfer production to nearby Cornwall, Ontario – "in order to flood the Quebec

[175] André Noël, "La crise de Saint-Henri," *La Presse*, 28 March 1987, B1.

[176] High, *Deindustrializing Montreal*, 304-306.

market with its nightmarish mattresses!"[177] Coleco, for its part, had received close to three million dollars in federal and provincial subsidies over the course of the decade, giving little indication of its intention to depart from Montreal.[178] By the end of the 1980s, the interim step of industrial suburbanization was no longer necessary for this multinational's restructuring process. The closure of the Montreal plant, announced in March 1987, occurred as part of a broader winding down of the company's facilities across North America. Its toys were now being produced in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore.[179]

There was certainly no shortage of outrage in Saint-Henri. Union activists came together with local community groups and members of the PQ and the MCM to form *Urgence Saint-Henri*, organizing a 400-strong demonstration through the streets of the neighbourhood in April 1987.[180] The nature of this community-labour crossover was significantly different, however, from that which had led to the unionization of these plants in the late 1960s and early 1970s. As the "*une problématique, un groupe*" formula and the rise of social economy led to the proliferation of specialized and increasingly professionalized community organizations, neighbourhood groups in Montreal structured themselves into *Tables de concertation de quartier*: geographically constituted networks of local non-profits, where paid community workers came together to strategize around issues of common interest. The *Table de concertation de Saint-Henri et de la Petite-Bourgogne* was officially constituted in 1987. Despite collaboration on some projects, a pattern quickly emerged in which member groups each carved out individual areas of responsibility. The welfare rights group *Organisation d'aide aux sans-emplois* (ODAS), formed in 1985, obviously took the lead on the issue of job losses, and its employee Gilles Cormier became the Table's official delegate to *Urgence Saint-Henri*. Cormier

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[177] Urgence Sud-Ouest, *Mémoire presenté aux députés péquistes membres de l'Opposition officielle à l'Assemblée nationale*, September 1987, 1, 165MI01.3.5.6, Table de concertation des organismes de St-Henri Petite Bourgogne 1987-88, Fonds du POPIR.

[178] High, *Deindustrializing Montreal*, 304-308.

[179] Georges Lamon, "Le syndicat de Coleco accuse la compagnie d'avoir agi de manière 'sauvage'," *La Presse*, 26 March 1987, A4.

[180] Urgence Sud-Ouest, *Mémoire presenté aux députés péquistes membres de l'Opposition officielle à l'Assemblée nationale*, 1.

frequently brought updates on industrial closures to the meetings of the Table throughout 1987 and 1988, soliciting support for letters of protest to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa, but there was little conscious overlap with the problems brought forth by other member organizations.[181]

When *Urgence Saint-Henri* expanded to become *Urgence Sud-Ouest* in the Fall of 1987, there was initially wide interest from a variety of neighbourhood groups: amongst the founding members, in addition to ODAS and union locals from Simmons, Coleco, Imperial Tobacco, and Johnson Wire Works, were the POPIR, *Local Ensemble*,[182] the SAP, the *Centre d'éducation aux adultes de la Petite-Bourgogne et de Saint-Henri*, and the *Comité chômage Sud-Ouest*. The most significant new participant, though, was the PEP. *Urgence Sud-Ouest* had three demands: saving jobs, particularly those of Simmons and Coleco workers, fostering economic development in the Southwest, and helping working-class residents stay in their neighbourhoods.[183] As it became clear, however, that there was little corporate or political will to prevent the departure of these companies, the collaborationist approach of the PEP quickly gained ground. *Urgence Sud-Ouest* was folded into the *Comité pour la relance de l'économie et de l'emploi du Sud-Ouest de Montréal* (CREESOM), a commission reluctantly agreed to in April 1987 by a Mulroney government heading into a federal election destined to be "a veritable referendum on Free Trade."[184] CREESOM was composed of corporate executives, government bureaucrats, union presidents and staff, and just three "local organizations" – the CLSC, the PEP, and *Urgence Sud-Ouest*, the latter represented only by a member of the *Parti Québécois*.[185]

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[181] Rencontre des organismes pour la Table de Concertation, Rencontre # 7 le 31 mars 1987, Annex II and III, 165MI01.3.5.6, Table de concertation des organismes de St-Henri Petite-Bourgogne 1987, Fonds du POPIR.

[182] *Local Ensemble* was a community group organizing with parents and children, now known as *Famijeunes*.

[183] Gilles Cormier, "Urgence Sud-Ouest," Annex 1, Rencontre des organismes communautaires pour la Table de Concertation, 12 June 1987, 165MI01.3.5.6, Table de concertation des organismes de St-Henri Petite-Bourgogne 1987, Fonds du POPIR.

[184] High, *Deindustrializing Montreal*, 307.

[185] CREESOM, *Sud-Ouest: diagnostic*, Liste des membres [no page number].

In April 1989, the CREESOM published their report, *Sud-Ouest diagnostic*. This detailed analysis of economic and social conditions in the Southwest, interestingly, dealt as much with issues of urban planning, property regimes, and the housing market as it did with the problem of industrial job loss. Steven High notes that "Perhaps the single most important outcome of the CREESOM report was the moratorium on zoning changes along the Lachine Canal, which remained in force until 1999." Ultimately, this had little impact on deindustrialization.[186] It did, on the other hand, positively affect the funding for social economy projects, in the form of five million dollars to help the PEP transition into the *Regroupement pour le relancement économique du Sud-Ouest* (RESO), Montreal's very first *Corporation de développement économique et communautaire* (Community Economic Development Corporation, or CDEC).[187]

There are two significant takeaways to register here as we transition into Chapter Three. First: the CREESOM was a far cry from Saint-Henri's neighbourhood-based shopfloor campaigns of the early 1970s. While the working-class militancy generated by that brief crossover between reproductive and productive struggles continued to articulate itself in the POPIR's feminist demand for sharper lines between the have and the have-nots, layers of bureaucracy and specialization within both the union and community sectors conspired to make this an increasingly minoritarian view. Outside of some limited circles, worker's investigation had given way to expert analysis and a well-paid seat at the table. And second: the urban planning focus of the CREESOM report indicated a changing terrain of struggle for neighbourhood militants.[188] The re-organization of capital accumulation had created the conditions for new forms of neighbourhood solidarity and political structures, drawing on the hard battles of the 1940s and 1950s and translating that into the shopfloor and feminist organizing of the 1970s and 1980s. Once again, though, the ground was shifting beneath the feet of working-class people in Saint-Henri. As the clock ticked inexorably toward the 21st century, the void left by industrial capital was eagerly beginning to be filled by real estate investors and

[186] High, *Deindustrializing Montreal*, 313.

[187] High, *Deindustrializing Montreal*, 308.

[188] CREESOM, *Sud-Ouest: diagnostic*, 288.

developers. Gentrification was the new enemy, and the “workers’ neighbourhood” was increasingly understood to be a thing of the past.

CHAPTER THREE:

Gentrifying the "Popular Neighbourhood," 1975-2006

Saint-Henri, they can't take it away from me. I've got it in me, and I'll fight to keep it.

Carole Orphanos (interviewed by Fred Burrill, 2018)

Carole Orphanos was born on Chatham Street in 1959, before it became part of "Little Burgundy." Her family shifted briefly across the Canal to Point Saint-Charles, where they lived in an apartment with no bathtub or shower, until they moved back to Saint-Henri when Carole was twelve or thirteen. Her working life started soon after, as we saw in Chapter Two, on the assembly line at Coleco. She then found employment at Benjamin News, a distribution centre for books and magazines, but after participating in a successful unionization campaign, she lost her job in the company's subsequent downsizing. Moving on to labour briefly in an industrial launderer and at the Copak bottling factory (operating in the old General Foods building on Rose-de-Lima[1]), Carole eventually settled into a job at a textile plant. Here she was again an active participant in union efforts, first with the Teamsters and then with the CSN. When this plant closed, too, in 1990, Carole had a newborn daughter and was out of options. She remembers this period as "heavy":

> Back in the day, people sat outside … I remember, you'd walk down the sidewalk, people were sitting in front of their sidewalk with their coffee, there were around six, seven, eight sometimes, and you would go around. It was fine, everyone had fun and everything. They were real jokers. You had them everywhere, people like that. And now, you don't see that anymore. When it started, when the weight that the people who started to lose their jobs, lose their apartments … it became really heavy, then

[1] Before its merger with General Foods, the plant was the Montreal branch of the Boston-based Baker's Chocolate company. See The Bostonian Society, *Sweet History: Dorchester and the Chocolate Factory* (Boston: The Bostonian Society, 2005), 13, https://early birdpower.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/SWEET_HISTORY_2005.pdf; Daniel Guilbert, *Saint-Henri Industriel: Anciennes manufactures et fantômes d'usines* (unpublished manuscript, in possession of author), Microsoft Word file.

> you didn't see those people anymore. You don't see the same joy anymore as you saw before. It's horrible.[2]

If job loss affected Carole's sense of identity and connection to her neighbourhood, it also hit hard on the home front, rippling throughout the family networks upon which she relied for childcare, housing, and emotional support. She went back and finished high school and took a secretary course, relying on her sisters and mother to look after her child.[3] She recalls very early winter mornings bringing her daughter to her parents' place before heading off to school, and being "tired in her bones."[4] Life as a single mother was not easy in a neighbourhood relegated by capital to the status of "global benchwarmers in the competitive markets of the modern world."[5]

> There was a point when I was shocked by Notre-Dame Street where the shops were. All the stores were closing. It was shocking. It came down to: you want to have ... you have a young child. Even for me I needed socks. It was simple, I wanted to buy socks. Geez, I was forced to take the metro because there was nothing any more on Notre-Dame. There was nothing anymore! I couldn't even buy socks for my daughter. I couldn't buy socks for myself. When it started, the closures, I found that really shocking, because I found that, well, we have no more services. We don't have anything anymore.[6]

One form of local business that persisted was the many family diners around the neighbourhood. But as things began to change in Saint-Henri, and the area began to gentrify, these important sites of friendship and socialization for the working-class population fell one after the other. I

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[2] Carole Orphanos, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 29 May 2018.

[3] Orphanos, interview.

[4] Carole Orphanos, personal communication with author.

[5] Kathryn Marie Dudley, *The End of the Line: Lost Jobs, New Lives in Postindustrial America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 161.

[6] Carole Orphanos, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 14 June 2018.

asked Carole when she started to see things shift on her street, but her thoughts quickly turned to the changes on Notre-Dame:

> On my street … especially when there were rent increases, there were a lot of people who left. The job losses too, there are lots of people who left. I'd say that it was really around then that it started. After that, it was the arrival of the condos …
>
> And, more than that, to top it all off, we had the *Place-Saint-Henri* restaurant that left because the owner, Sergakis, raised its rent extremely high. He had to leave, the owner of the *Place-Saint-Henri* restaurant. And that was a place where everyone liked to go. Affordable and everything, friendly, you didn't feel like you were given the once over going in there, everyone was welcome. It's not like today. Today the restaurants, it's incredible. Me, I'm curious, I like to go into places. But there: no way. There are some who intimidate me: I can't even go in. Otherwise I go in, I look at the menu, not because I can pay for the things. I just want to go see the menu, it interests me to know what they sell. But there are places, today, where I can't do that. It's really heavy. And, you see people, today, walking around. There are people walking around the Dame with their bottles of wine, their bottles of who-knows-what, their little cases of beer. That's for the "Bring your own wine" restaurants. My god! It's not our Notre-Dame Street anymore like we had before. No, no, no, oh no![7]

Carole's life story is inspiring on its own merits, as she has navigated the myriad challenges of deindustrialization's structural violence while assisting countless others through her involvement in neighbourhood activism.[8] Her memories, however, also provide crucial signposts for understanding the process of displacement in Saint-Henri: capital dispossessing workers, first of their health and vitality and then of their jobs; lives lived and solidarities forged on the margins of a downturned economy, particularly difficult to navigate for the women

[7] Orphanos, interview.

[8] On understanding deindustrialization as a form of mass violence, see Steven High, "Introduction," in *Beyond Testimony and Trauma: Oral History in the Aftermath of Mass Violence*, ed. Steven High, 9 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015).

responsible for the reproductive and affective labour of ensuring the class' survival; and then that same class being dispossessed once again of its homes, gathering places, and sense of dignity as capital reconquered the space it had abruptly abandoned.

If Chapter Two dealt with the slow unmaking of an industrial world, here we turn our attention to the re-making of the neighbourhood into a "post-industrial" paradise after factory closures, tracking the collaboration of the State and real estate developers and the impacts of this new pattern of accumulation on Saint-Henri residents. Focusing on multi-level government interventions into infrastructure projects, zoning regulations, and property regimes, I aim to show that gentrification was far from a simple by-product of consumer preference. Secondly, the chapter turns to the lived experience of working-class people in this period of urban transformation, paying particular attention to the re-formation of class structures occasioned by deindustrialization as well as the gendered impacts of displacement. Finally, I re-focus on the question of resistance, following developing strategies within the local housing movement throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. Class-based demands gradually fell away, as activists increasingly looked to the nationalist State to defend the amorphously defined "popular neighbourhood."

Creating Displacement

Good sections of the literature on urban displacement are quite uncritical. As Tom Slater points out, "'Gentrification' as a concept and a political rallying cry has in many places been swept away by an alliterative garble of revitalisation, renaissance, regeneration, renewal, redevelopment, rejuvenation, restructuring, resurgence, reurbanisation and residentialisation — terms that bolster a neoliberal narrative of competitive progress" and that risk transforming urban studies into a project of middle-class exculpation.[9] But while there are as many theories about

[9] Tom Slater, "Missing Marcuse: On gentrification and displacement," *City* 13, 2-3 (June-September 2009): 294. For recent and particularly egregious Montreal examples, see Madeleine Steinmetz Wood, Rania Wasfi, George Parker, Lisa Bornstein, Jean Caron and Yan Kestens, "Is gentrification all bad? Positive association between gentrification and individual's perceived neighbourhood collective efficacy in Montreal, Canada," *International Journal of Health Geographics* 16, 24 (2017): https://doi.org/10.1186/s12942-017-0096-6; Leila Ghaffari, "Pour une gentrification socialement acceptable: Le cas d'Hochelaga-Maisonneuve à Montréal et Madeleine-Champ-de-Mars à Nantes" (PhD diss., Université du Québec à Montréal and Université de Tours, 2020).

gentrification as there are urban geographers, we can count ourselves lucky that some of the most important debates in the field have been carried out by those working in or on Canadian cities, providing significant fodder for attempts to understand the process in Montreal.

David Ley, for example, in his comparative studies of gentrification in major Canadian cities, placed emphasis on what he called the "cultural new class," middle-class by-products of the Sixties generation who rejected the aesthetics and values of suburbia.[10] Certainly there is some evidence of this in Saint-Henri. In the 1980s, for example, we can find artist André Martin expounding on "the modest charms of a forgotten era" to be found in Saint-Henri, or the painter Serge Deschamps returning to the city from the Laurentians to restore the neighbourhood's "workers' houses."[11] Montreal geographer Damaris Rose, for her part, coined the term "marginal gentrifier" in 1984, arguing for the importance of complexifying our portrait of new arrivals in traditionally working-class neighbourhoods in order to discover potential solidarities.[12] Some of the best scholarly work on Saint-Henri, I would say, has emerged from critical tendencies from within this social positioning, focusing on the challenges to gentrification and displacement posed by queer community and creativity.[13]

Among the most striking analyses of the gentrification process that I came across, however, is that of Christina Xydous, a neighbourhood housing activist I interviewed in 2018; her words cut efficiently through much of the anger I felt as a resident of Saint-Henri in a period where new *drinkeries* and tequila bars seemed to be opening every other week:

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[10] David Ley, *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 15, 24.

[11] André Martin, "Les charmes discrets de Saint-Henri," *Vie des Arts* 26, 105 (Winter 1981-82): 23-25; Jacques Laberge, "Serge Deschamps," *Continuité*, Special issue on Manoirs et seigneuries 44 (Summer 1989): 36-37.

[12] Damaris Rose, "Rethinking gentrification: beyond the uneven development of Marxist urban theory," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 1 (1984): 47-84.

[13] See Estraven Lupino-Smith, "Not Your Shock Troops: Queer Artists Disrupting Gentrification in Montréal's Saint-Henri Neighbourhood" (MA thesis, Concordia University, 2019); Danielle Lewis, "The Turcot Yards: Community Encounters With a Queer Sublime," *Montreal as Palimpsest II: Hauntings, Occupations, Theatres of Memory*, April 2009, https://cityaspalimpsest.concordia.ca/palimpsest_II_en/index.html.

> Well for me, one of the things that I remember being very vocal about then, and still today, is that, I feel like there's a lack of like, literacy on how gentrification works among a lot of activists. I see a lot of focus on, an anger against like, artists and students moving into a neighbourhood as like the stormtroopers of gentrification. And it's not that that isn't true. It's that, it's not quite so ephemeral a process. What they weren't looking at, and I think what is the real driver of gentrification, for me, is the amount of money made available by all levels of government, including the city government, specifically for gentrifying the neighbourhood. This was a plan! This wasn't a random, like, suddenly people thought Saint-Henri was cool. This was a concerted effort on the part of City officials and developers! They saw cheap land, large tracts of it, right? A lot of it available for the taking, next to something that was attractive, in this case the Canal, and the City made those funds available! They also made special funds available to property owners for renovating their dwellings, and giving them, like, much greater percentages of the overall cost of the renovation than you would get for any other area in the city. They were incentivizing in other words, renovate your homes, and that might sound good, especially when you consider how terrible the stock of housing was there, but the subsidies were that you had to live in the apartment, you weren't, it wasn't available for you if it was just a rental unit that you owned, you had to reside in the apartment to be able to access that surplus of subsidies, to renovate. So, you're inciting them, you're giving them, financial incentive, to take over those dwellings from people who were tenants! All of this was deliberate! None of this was happenstance![14]

This on-the-ground perspective dovetails nicely with geographer Neil Smith's theory of the "rent gap": in short, gentrification of urban neighbourhoods begins when there develops a sufficient disjuncture between "capitalized ground rent (the actual quantity of ground rent that is appropriated by the landowner, given the present land use) and potential ground rent (the

[14] Christina Xydous, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 9 September 2018.

maximum that could be appropriated under the land's 'highest and best use'),"[15] a "historical gap … that results from a complex pattern of investment and disinvestment in the built environment."[16] Disinvestment is relatively easy to perceive for historians attuned to deindustrialization, and through life stories like Carole's.[17] The pattern of reinvestment, however, and the intertwining of State, developers, and landlords in the re-capitalization of the neighbourhood – taking up Christina's insights – requires further study.

One early sign of the State's restructuring of economic and social relations in Saint-Henri was its intervention into the world of organized crime. Alistair Fraser and Andy Clark's recent study of the links between industrial closures and violent, extra-legal economies argues that "deindustrialization has acted as a centrifugal force in the embedding of criminal harm" in the pseudonymous west Scotland urban neighbourhood of Tunbrooke; forms of organized illicit activity replaced the industrial jobs lost in the area's prolonged economic decline, exacerbated by the structural violence and precarity associated with the evisceration of industrial working-class worlds.[18] In Saint-Henri, this process crystallized in the emergence of the Dubois family, a group of nine brothers whose control of protection rackets, drugs, gambling, and the sex industry emanated out from the Southwest into significant sections of downtown Montreal, the Plateau area, and working-class Hochelaga-Maisonneuve in the east end of the city. While most of the literature on the Dubois' activities is of the lurid, true-crime variety, criminologist Guillaume

[15] Tom Slater, "Planetary Rent Gaps," *Antipode* 49, S1 (2017): 119.

[16] Neil Smith, "Gentrification and the Rent Gap," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 77, 3 (September 1987): 463.

[17] For authors encouraging us to see lines of continuity through the historical processes of deindustrialization and the subsequent creation of the post-industrial, see Tony Dingle and Seamus O'Hanlon, "From Manufacturing Zone to Lifestyle Precinct: Economic Restructuring and Social Change in Inner Melbourne, 1971-2001," *Australian Economic History Review* 49, 1 (March 2009): 52-69; Tracey Neumann, *Remaking the Rust Belt: The Postindustrial Transformation of North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

[18] Alistair Fraser and Andy Clark, "Damaged Hardmen: Organized crime and the half-life of deindustrialization," *The British Journal of Sociology* (2021): 1-15 (quote from page 3).

Jasmin's work reveals that the Dubois Gang was responsible for 21 per cent of organized crime-associated murders between 1953 and 2013, second only to the Hell's Angels.[19]

The Dubois' underworld enterprise emerged out of the necessity of poverty. As children and young adults, the brothers ran small-time money-making schemes and came into conflict with local business figures for things like stealing food, or taking the tips left for milkmen on the front porches of Westmount homes.[20] By the 1970s, however, their increasing control of more serious criminal activities was enough to warrant the full attention of the provincial government, becoming a focus of the combined police and judiciary forces of the *Commission d'enquête sur le crime organisé* (CECO). The extensive 1975-1976 hearings were widely televised to captivated audiences across Quebec, shining an uncomfortable spotlight on the Dubois brothers, and by extension, Saint-Henri. The report of the Commission revealed a world of deadly piece-work that much resembled the conditions in the few remaining plants in the neighbourhood, as the "*hommes de main*" who found work with the Dubois – ranging from drug delivery to hired killings – were kept in a constant state of precarity as they awaited the next paying contract from the brothers.[21] The hearings of the CECO, along with a string of arrests and prison sentences, signalled the end of the Dubois network.[22] Jean-Jacques Mercier, founder and editor of *La Voix Populaire*, triumphantly announced the crumbling of their empire and the fear with which they kept residents of the neighbourhood in check.[23]

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[19] Guillaume Jasmin, "Soixante ans de règlement de compte au Québec" (MSc thesis, Université de Montréal, 2016), 58-59. For an example of the true-crime coverage, complete with graphic photos of corpses, see Richard Desmarais, *Le clan des Dubois* (Montréal: Éditions internationals Alain Stanké Ltée, 1976).

[20] Claude Dubois with Claude Jodoin, *Claude Dubois se raconte. Les frères Dubois: l'envers de la médaille* (Montréal: Éditeur 80304, Canada Ltée, 1976), 27-51.

[21] Jean Dutil, (for the Commission de police du Québec), *La lutte au crime organisé au Québec: Rapport d'enquête sur le crime organisé et recommendations*, September 1976, 110-170.

[22] Pierre de Champlain, *Histoire du Crime Organisé à Montreal 2: De 1980 à 2000* (Montréal: Les Éditions de l'Homme, 2017), 13-36.

[23] Commission de police du Québec, *La lutte au crime organisé au Québec*, 353.

Feelings of fear and safety, however, are highly contingent. Some of the old neighbourhood *omerta* did still come through in my interviews. Doris LeBlanc remembered, for example, "Well, me, when I got here, it was rough. You know what I mean. Bing! Bong! [making a pistol out of her thumb and forefinger]. I'm not going to name anyone … I don't want to talk about it."[24] Carole, on the other hand, while recalling some youthful social crossover with friends involved in extra-legal activities, remembered the neighbourhood dynamic somewhat differently:

> Before I could walk on the street at midnight, I didn't have a problem. Today, I am afraid because we no longer know people like we used to. People are not sitting outside either, aren't in their windows anymore, where we often used to see that. Even my mother, how many times I saw her with her little cushion in the window, chatting with people. Now, no. Now, it worries me to walk late at night.[25]

At any rate, by the time Luce Parisien moved into the neighbourhood in the late 1980s, the fearsome reputation of Saint-Henri seemed to her like more of a joke than anything else:

> I said to people, y'know, I said to people that I was living in Saint-Henri and they said, "Aren't you afraid of the Dubois? Aren't you afraid of organized crime?" No. I wasn't afraid. I was fine. I … [laughs]. I used to say that I lived in Saint-Henri-by-the-beach.[26]

The organized, de-industrial underworld felt like a thing of the past.[27]

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[24] Doris LeBlanc, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 16 January 2020.

[25] Orphanos, interview.

[26] Luce Parisien, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 12 May 2018.

[27] Saint-Henri, however, did not entirely escape the violence of Quebec's "biker wars" of the 1980s and 1990s, as the Outlaw biker gang had a headquarters in the Village des Tanneries. See Marcel Laroche, "L'incendie du local des Outlaws tourne une page de l'histoire de Saint-Henri," *La Presse*, 6 November 1998, A7.

Without falling into overly functional explanations of State actions, we would be remiss not to point to the overlapping of this policing and juridical intervention with the redevelopment of Saint-Henri's central public infrastructure. Victim of the sectoral switching of the building 1970s crisis, the Lachine Canal existed as devalued capital, ready and waiting for a new cycle of accumulation.[28] Steven High has convincingly demonstrated that Mayor Drapeau's Civic Party administration, led by Southwest city councillor and Executive Committee President Yvon Lamarre, was a central player in promoting a post-industrial vision for the Canal, poking and prodding a reluctant federal government into transferring control of the waterway from the Seaway Authority to Transport Canada, then to Public Works, and finally, to Parks Canada in 1977, as the Canal became a designated national historical site.[29] Indeed, Lamarre remembered in a 2010 interview,

> And so with the development of the Lachine Canal, I, when I was at the City, I also had the presidency of the Executive Committee, I wanted to change a little, I, I said: "With the development of the Lachine Canal, the industrial vocation has to go. Slowly, but it must start to go." … I said, "The vocation of the, the area beside the Lachine Canal must change. It has to become a residential zone, maybe with a pretty high density, but residential."[30]

Residential development was particularly important for a city that had experienced a massive loss in tax base during the 1970s.[31] In some cases, the Drapeau administration used its regulatory

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[28] David Harvey, "The Urban Process Under Capitalism," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 2, 1-3 (1978): 101-131.

[29] Steven High, *Deindustrializing Montreal: Entangled Histories of Race, Residence and Class* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, forthcoming), 30, 248-257.

[30] Yvon Lamarre, interviewed by Paul-Émile Cadorette and Katy Tari, 2 December 2010, COHDS-12-14 Parcs Canada (Mon Canal) Collection.

[31] Damaris Rose, "Economic Restructuring and the Diversification of Gentrification in the 1980s: A View from a Marginal Metropolis," in *City Lives and City Forms: Critical Research and Canadian Urbanism*, eds. Jon Caulfield and Linda Peake, 131-172 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016.

power to advance this agenda. The 1989 CREESOM report, for instance, details a multitude of zoning deregulations – from industrial to residential – between 1981 and 1986 that ultimately led to condo development.[32] The City also moved directly into real estate, as in the case of its purchase of the main Stelco plant just east of the Atwater market, which it then sold at a bargain price to a private residential developer.[33] With its "*Opération 20 000 logements*," further, a policy adopted in 1979 and continued through 1987, the City sold off vacant land to developers to incentivize property access for urban professionals. Almost twenty per cent of this new-build construction occurred in the Southwest.[34]

Although the election of the social democratic Montreal Citizens' Movement in 1986 did bring about the temporary moratorium on de-zoning along the Lachine Canal mentioned at the end of Chapter Two, the new approach was not without exceptions. A significant point of contention was the conversion of the COPAK plant, purchased in 1988 by McGill University for its new student residence. The POPIR and ODAS opposed the project, decrying not only the loss of industrial infrastructure but also the creeping forces of gentrification already at work in the neighbourhood. While the MCM administration hid behind its functionaries, those community groups who had bought into the social economy approach, led by the PEP, negotiated a settlement wherein McGill agreed to loan $500 000 to the *Fonds d'investissement social en habitation*, a short-lived municipal creation discontinued in 1993.[35] POPIR spokesperson Jean-

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[32] Comité pour la relance de l'économie et de l'emploi du Sud-Ouest de Montréal (CREESOM), *Sud-Ouest: diagnostic* (Montréal: CRÉESOM, 1988), 257-261. Zoning by-law 7068 paved the way for condo construction on the corner of Saint-Rémi and Notre-Dame streets, right next to the apartment where I lived for many years.

[33] High, *Deindustrializing Montreal*, 258-259.

[34] CREESOM, *Sud-Ouest: diagnostic*, 275-276; Geoffrey Paul DeVerteuil, "Evolution and Impacts of Public Policy on the Changing Canadian Inner City: Case Study of Southwest Montreal, 1960-1990" (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1993).

[35] Direction d'habitation de la Ville de Montréal, "Soutenir le développement du logement social et communautaire: l'expérience de la Ville de Montréal, présentation dans le cadre de la journée de réflexion RQOH-FOHM," *Réseau Québécois des OSBLs en Habitation*, 27 May 2015, 5, https://rqoh.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/153_ville_de_montreal_et_developpement_du_logement_social.pdf.

Pierre Wilsey warned that this collaborationist model signalled that Saint-Henri was a "neighbourhood for sale," and would drive up land prices and make social development dependent on private capital.[36]

His words unfortunately proved prescient. The MCM was defeated in the municipal elections of 1994, and under new Mayor Pierre Bourque – and even more so under his corrupt, neoliberal successor Gérald Tremblay, elected in 2001 – de-zoning and condo construction continued at a rampant pace. The transformation of the Lachine Canal was a particular incentive to developers. A joint provincial-federal commission held a series of consultations throughout the early 1990s on the necessity of cleaning up the Canal, ultimately ruling in 1996 that a decontamination was not necessary before the water could be re-opened to pleasure craft navigation.[37] From 1997-2002, the municipal and federal governments invested more than 100 million dollars into the refurbishing of the Canal.[38]

Major real estate developments quickly followed, as investment funds increasingly financed "new-build gentrification" in the sector.[39] *La Presse* journalist Danielle Turgeon reported in 2002 that, "Five years ago, no one boasted of living in Point St. Charles, Little Burgundy, or Saint-Henri … Now not only do buyers rush to the doors of the new projects near the Atwater Market and the Lachine Canal, but they pay high prices to live there."[40] From 1997

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[36] Jean-Pierre Wilsey, NON à la fermeture de nos quartiers; pas de Schefferville dans le Sud-Ouest," *Vie ouvrière* 29, 2 (August 1989): 24-26.

[37] See Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement and Agence canadienne d'évaluation environnementale, *Rapport de la commission conjointe fédérale-provinciale: Projet de decontamination du Canal de Lachine*, September 1996, https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2017/acee-ceaa/En105-54-1996-fra.pdf.

[38] Arrondissement du Sud-Ouest, *Rapport synthèse de la consultation de 2010 sur le développement des abords du Canal de Lachine*, March 2011, 6, http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/ARROND_SOU_FR/MEDIA/DOCUMENTS/RAPPORT%20SUR%20LA%20CONSULTATION%20PUBLIQUE.PDF.

[39] See Louis Gaudreau, Gabriel Fauveaud, and Marc-André Houle, *L'immobilier, moteur de la ville néoliberale: Promotion residentielle et production urbaine à Montréal* (Montréal: Collectif de recherche et d'action sur l'habitat, 2021), 58-73.

[40] Danielle Turgeon, "Renaissance du Canal de Lachine," *La Presse*, 16 February 2002, Cahier J, 1.

to 2007, almost 600 million dollars were invested in real estate in the Southwest, and much of it on the Saint-Henri stretch of the Canal.[41] The abandoned Coleco building became the upscale "*Château Saint-Ambroise*" in 1999, featuring a much-vaunted complex of commercial lofts and restaurants.[42] In 2002, aided along by development-hungry Southwest Borough mayor Jacqueline Montpetit, the former site of Stelco's Saint-Henri plant was converted by major developer Alta Socam into the luxury condo development, "*Quai des Éclusiers*."[43] The rapid real estate boom in the Southwest invoked a 7.3 per cent municipal tax increase in 2010, the highest anywhere in the city.[44]

Soon, condo construction began to spread northward from the exclusive Canal zone. One of the neighbourhood's last major industrial holdouts, Imperial Tobacco, announced its closure in 2003, moving its remaining Canadian production to Guelph, Ontario.[45] The abandoned plant was purchased by real estate company Prével, and construction on the Imperial Lofts began in 2006. This time, the ad-hoc collaborationist framework denounced by ODAS and the POPIR in 1989 was institutionalized: under intense pressure from the community, the City required the developer to include fifteen per cent social housing in order to gain approval of its plans; a 70-unit housing cooperative and a 30-unit non-profit housing project were crammed behind the 638

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[41] Hélène Bélanger, "Revitalization of Public Spaces in a Working Class Neighbourhood: Appropriation, Identity and Representations," Urban Dynamics and Housing Change – Crossing into the 2nd Decade of the 3rd Millennium, ENHR International Conference, Istanbul, 2010.

[42] "Présentation," *Château Saint-Ambroise*, http://www.chateaustambroise.ca/fr/Presentation/ (accessed 21 September 2021).

[43] Laurence Clavel, "Le Quai des éclusiers – Luxe et confort, au bord de l'eau," *Le Devoir*, 19 March 2005, https://www.ledevoir.com/societe/77328/le-quai-des-eclusiers-luxe-et-confort-au-bord-de-l-eau.

[44] Louis Gaudreau, "Participer, mais à quoi? Les limites du partenariat local en matière de développement urbain," *Nouvelles pratiques sociales* 23, 2 (2011): 93, n. 7.

[45] Sophie Cousineau, *La Presse*, 21 June 2003, E1. Industrial suburbanization was again a temporary bridge to global restructuring, as several years later Imperial Tobacco moved all of its production to Monterrey, Mexico. See Tristan Péloquin, "Imperial Tobacco fermera ses usines canadiennes," *La Presse*, 21 October 2005, A13.

new lofts in the former industrial space.[46] As we will see later on in the chapter, internal divisions generated by this new "Inclusion Policy" seriously hampered the strength of local resistance.[47]

Propelled by these developments, housing in Saint-Henri became increasingly absorbed into the speculative world of finance – in other words, neighbourhood landlords were no longer simply exploitative rent-seekers, relating increasingly instead to their real estate holdings as lucrative, often short-term investments.[48] Driven upwards by the massive condo developments along the Canal, property values in the neighbourhood increased by 177 per cent between 1996 and 2006, with a concomitant 29.6 per cent increase in rental prices.[49]

Seeing through the lens of the rent gap theory helps us to perceive landlords not only as happenstance beneficiaries of this speculative cycle but also as active producers of the "depreciation and disinvestment" so necessary to future profits.[50] Unsafe and unsanitary housing conditions led to frequent moves within the neighbourhood in the 1980s: one study of fifteen streets in Saint-Henri conducted in 1989 found a full 42.6 per cent of respondents had been in their apartment for less than two years, and that 83.8 per cent of this population had in fact been there for less than a year.[51] Fire was also a frequent reality for tenants. Doris LeBlanc, for

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[46] Patricia Viannay, "Les luttes pour le droit au logement à Montréal depuis la pénurie de 2001," *Nouveaux cahiers du socialisme* 10 (Fall 2013): 100.

[47] Fabien Desage, "Excluded from inclusion: Building social housing in times of austerity and 'social diversity' (Quebec/France)," *Espaces et Sociétés* 170, 3 (2017): 15-32.

[48] See Louis Gaudreau, *Le promoteur, la banque et le rentier: Fondements et évolution du logement capitaliste* (Montréal: Lux Éditeur, 2020); Ted Rutland, "The Financialization of Urban Redevelopment," *Geography Compass* 4, 8 (2010): 1167-1178.

[49] POPIR-Comité Logement, *Le St-Henri que nous voulons*, Winter 2011, http://popir.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Journal-mis-en-page-final-Site-web.pdf.

[50] Slater, "Planetary Rent Gaps," 119.

[51] Xavier Bourgeois, Louis Cyr, and Ginette Michaud, "Malheurs d'location! Ou, Résultat d'une enquete effectuée dans un quadrilatère ciblé du quartier St-Henri aupres d'un substrat composé de ménages locataires habitant des immeubles de 5 logement et + en vue de mesurer l'éventuel potential de mobilisation de ces ménages afin de former des regroupements du type 'syndicat des locataires'" (SOC 2260, Initiation à la recherche sociale 2, UQAM, 1989), 1-2, in possession of

example, lost three different apartments to flames before finally being granted an HLM: in one case, she was forced to live for weeks in the burned-out shell of her dwelling for fear of finding herself in the street.[52]

In some instances, fires were due to make-shift heating arrangements in poorly insulated apartments, such as the one that claimed the life of 73-year-old Joseph Pruneault in January 1985.[53] In others, the source of the flames was more nebulous: newspaper headlines in the late 1990s and early 2000s testify to the frequency of deadly conflagrations of undetermined causes in both residential and abandoned industrial spaces.[54] Christina Xydous remembers,

> There were also fires in the neighbourhood! People may not remember this, but an unusual, suspicious number of fires were happening all over Saint-Henri. There was a particular summer where it seemed like, there was a fire every other weekend in the neighbourhood … And, all of that is just stuff that we've seen [with] every, like, sudden, massive gentrification project coming into a working-class neighbourhood, anywhere else in North America, it's always the same pattern, so, that stuff is

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author. While the authors of the report conclude that this phenomenon can partially be explained by the beginnings of gentrification and real estate speculation in the neighbourhood, earlier studies of Saint-Henri indicate that the recourse to frequent moves has in fact always been an important part of working-class survival strategies in the neighbourhood. See Gilles Lauzon, "Cohabitation et déménagements en milieu ouvrier montréalais: Essai de réinterprétation à partir du cas du village Saint-Augustin (1871-1881)," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 46, 1 (Summer 1992): 115-142.

[52] LeBlanc, interview.

[53] "Un mort à Saint-Henri: Trois Incendies dans la région de Montréal," *La Presse*, 2 January 1985, A3.

[54] For example: "Incendie à Montréal: Quatre morts," *Le Soleil*, 24 July 1997, A6; "Incendie à Saint-Henri," *La Presse*, 14 August 1998, A3; "Incendie majeur à Montréal," *Le Devoir*, 1 May 2000, A3; "Incendies crimininels dans plusiers bars de Montréal," *La Tribune*, 18 September 2001, D6; "Un incendie fait deux morts à Montréal," *La Tribune*, 10 November 2003, D5; "Le feu ravage un triplex à Saint-Henri," *La Presse*, 20 December 2006, A34; Daphné Cameron, "Un immeuble historique ravagé par les flammes dans Saint-Henri," *La Presse*, 3 novembre 2010, A18.

> political violence. Political and economic violence, right? Against the people that have always been in the neighbourhood.[55]

The violence experienced by tenants was also often of the more grinding, daily sort. Marc-Olivier Rainville, for example, came to the neighbourhood in 1996 after having been evicted three times on the Plateau, where the gentrification process was slightly more advanced. Disinvestment was still at work in the rental market in Saint-Henri, where the pronounced mold in one of his first apartments made both he and his infant son severely ill.[56] Luce Parisien similarly remembers of her apartment on Beaudoin Street,

> Well, you know, when you live in it, you tell yourself, "No. I don't have a lot of housing problems," but when your floor is rotting because the water tank busted, and your landlord is not sure if he needs to change it completely, and he says he's coming but it takes two weeks; well, there was water. There was infiltration. I had beaverboard on the walls but inside it was empty. So I heard the rats, then the mice, then the squirrels [laughs]. And I had a window that didn't work. I found out when I opened it: it closed on my finger … So it was a little bit hazardous, but I was OK all the same. Because you make do, you know. You make your home then, one bug at a time. I didn't have bedbugs. I was happy about that … Rats, I had a few. You don't talk about them because you are embarrassed. But, at one point, they opened on the street, they started building on the Canal and … My landlord, he always wanted to raise my rent. He did nothing, but he raised the rent always. So it always went up twenty bucks, year after year.[57]

While landlordism is always of course a parasitic economic function, this dynamic became increasingly pronounced as neighbourhood property owners saw the potential ground rent

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[55] Xydous, interview.

[56] Marc-Olivier Rainville, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 7 June 2018.

[57] Parisien, interview.

of their investments rapidly increase. They had little incentive to provide dignified housing conditions for the low-income residents of their apartments, continuing to collect their cheques while waiting for an eventual real estate bonanza.

The cascading impact of condo-driven real estate speculation began to truly make itself felt in the rental market by the turn of the 21st century. The federal government had ceased construction of social housing in 1994, creating increasing pressure on the supply of private-market rental alternatives.[58] At the same time, municipal and provincial programs such as the *Programme de revitalisation des quartiers centraux* and *Rénovation Québec* (referenced by Christina above) acted as incentives for the conversion of rental property to owner-occupant dwellings.[59] In a neighbourhood historically composed of close to 90 per cent tenants, homeownership increased over the 1990s by 4.3 per cent. From 1999-2000, this rate sped up dramatically, with a 62 per cent increase in real estate transactions in Saint-Henri.[60] The neighbourhood (and Montreal more widely) found itself in the middle of a full-blown housing crisis, as landlords charged increasingly higher prices for the remaining available rental units. 1 July 2002 (moving day in Quebec) found 250 families temporarily housed in the crowded gymnasium of the local high school.[61] There was nowhere for them to go – the rent gap was rapidly being closed.

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[58] Marc Daoud and Guillaume Hébert, "Note socio-économique. Logement 2011: Marché locatif et speculation," *Institut de recherche et d'informations socio-économiques* (June 2011): 2-3.

[59] Damaris Rose, "Local State Policy and 'New-Build Gentrification' in Montréal: The Role of the 'Population Factor' in a Fragmented Governance Context," *Population, Space and Place* 16 (2010): 422-423; Brendan James Pinches, "Providing a home and then some: A study of Montreal's Homeownership Programme" (MA Supervised Research Project, McGill University, 2010), 32-35.

[60] Comité habitation Sud-Ouest (RÉSO), *Construire un espace équitable ou comment gérer la révitalisation*, 2002, 15, 65, https://www.bibliotheque.assnat.qc.ca/DepotNumerique_v2/AffichageFichier.aspx?idf=70987.

[61] Éric Trottier, "250 sans-logis dans un gymnase. Pas d'intimité ni d'aération: Des conditions inacceptables, selon le FRAPRU," *La Presse*, 4 July 2002, EI.

Surviving Displacement

There are few clean lines to be drawn between industrial and post-industrial patterns of accumulation. Even while the State was busily intervening in favour of real estate speculation, the un-making of the neighbourhood's industrial working class did not happen all at once. Production under difficult working conditions continued well into the 21st century in small plants like Canadian Foundry Supplies, on Richelieu Street on the northern edge of the neighbourhood, where a 1988 health inspection found silica dust levels in the air up to 1.5 times higher than the norm.[62] As late as the Spring of 2000, a threatened shutdown of the Asten Johnston factory, in the western half of Saint-Henri, also led to a brief resurgence of cooperation between the labour movement and the community sector. Half of the company's 126 employees lived in the neighbourhood, and groups like *Solidarité Saint-Henri* still had the fight to maintain industrial jobs on their agenda.[63]

Increasingly, though, those who managed to hang on to unionized plant jobs moved socially upward and geographically outward. The 1989 CREESOM report revealed that less than 30 per cent of Southwest residents were employed in the area's remaining workplaces.[64] Micheline Labreque, for instance, who first started at Imperial Tobacco in 1967 and became the

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[62] CLSC St-Henri, *Canadian Foundry Supplies (mise à jour # 1): Programme de santé spécifique présenté par l'équipe de Santé au Travail de St-Henri*, June 1988, 9, Collection Daniel Guilbert. In fact, industrial production continued in this building until 2015, until its purchase by the provincial Transport Ministry. Daniel Guilbert, *Mémoire pour la consultation publique indépendante du poste de ventilation mécanique Richelieu*, 15 April 2021, https://www.stm.info/sites/default/files/media/Travaux/PVM-Richelieu/d_162_-_m4_daniel_guilbert.pdf.

[63] François Normand, "Projet de fermeture de l'usine Asten-Johnson: Les travailleurs de Saint-Henri veulent se battre," *Le Devoir*, 13 April, 2000, B1; FTQ, "Fermeture d'Asten Johnson à Saint-Henri et perte de 126 emplois: Des partenaires locaux et montréalais demandent une rencontre avec la direction américaine de l'entreprise," *FTQ*, 7 April 2000, https://ftq.qc.ca/actualites/fermeture-dasten-johnson-a-saint-henri-et-perte-de-126-emplois-des-partenaires-locaux-et-montrealais-demandent-une-rencontre-avec-la-direction-americaine-de-lentreprise/ (accessed 20 July 2021).

[64] CREESOM, *Sud-Ouest: diagnostic*, 28-29.

union local's president in 1984, moved to Longueil, on Montreal's South Shore.[65] As she explained in 1995, "When they are hired, most people live nearby. But when you make a good salary, you have a family to raise, you want to buy a house, you turn to the suburbs. That's what happens here and it's understandable."[66] Gilles Paquette, born in Saint-Henri, became involved in union organizing at Clix Fasteners in 1969. He would go on to become the FTQ's regional representative for Montreal and the President of the RESO, retiring to rural Sainte-Ursule in 2011.[67]

By 1996, in contrast, 58.9 per cent of households in Saint-Henri were surviving on less than $20 000 per year.[68] In essence, the global restructuring of production had brought about a cleavage in the neighbourhood's working class. Those who could leave, those lucky enough to be drafted into the suburban ranks of the Western labour aristocracy, did. Those who remained were obliged to navigate the hard reality of having been transformed into what Marx referred to as the "relative surplus population."[69] Beyond the material exigencies of the moment, there were, and are, psychological wounds incurred in this relegation. As we saw in Chapter One, Carole Orphanos faced multiple obstacles in her attempts to pursue career re-orientation. She reflected with regret on her unfinished secretary training, sacrificed to family responsibilities and the requirements of a social assistance regime turning increasingly to a workfare model[70]:

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[65] "Micheline Labrecque, Présidente du syndicat chez Imperial Tobacco: Une retraite forcée après plus de 30 ans de militantisme," *Le Monde ouvrier* 58 (May-June 2004): 5.

[66] "Micheline Labrecque: Une femme profondément engagée," *Le Monde ouvrier* 1 (January-February 1995): 5.

[67] FTQ: Fédération des travailleuses et travailleurs du Québec. See "Gilles Paquette devient sédentaire," *Le Monde ouvrier* 95 (January-February 2012): 12.

[68] Comité habitation Sud-Ouest (RÉSO), *Construire un espace équitable ou comment gérer la révitalisation*, 16.

[69] For a discussion of this concept, and a critical take on dominant understandings of employment and unemployment, see Michael Denning, "Wageless Life," *New Left Review* 66 (November-December 2010): 79-97.

[70] See Eric Shragge and Marc-Andre Deniger, "Workfare in Quebec," in *Workfare: Ideology for a New Under-class*, ed. Eric Shragge, 59-84 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019).

> I had an internship at the *Société des fêtes et festivals* in their offices in the basement of the Olympic Stadium. I did my internship there, I had finished it, then they offered to keep me for a program they used to have, to do with social assistance. They gave 100 bucks per month. So I entered this program, I stayed a year, except that school, it was a success, except for my typing. You had to have 40 words a minute, even though I was an accounting clerk. And I did maybe 35 or 36 words a minute. And in doing my internship, I didn't go back to school right away, but I planned to go back to take my typing exam again. Then after that, they kept me a year. I never had the time. Then after that, a year later, I finished this year, I got pregnant, and there were three months left before I gave birth. So I didn't go to school again. Then after that I took care of my child. Then after that, I never went back. Then after that, it's the fear that hits you. You say to yourself, "That's all a long time ago, I probably have to take it again" … (I'm answering myself, maybe it's not true!) I answer myself, "They won't take me back to do this exam, for sure I'd have to do another training." And so, I'm 59 now, and I don't know … I want to and I don't want to. I'm struggling with it, and have been for some time.[71]

Other former industrial workers found themselves stuck in low-paying service jobs, making not much more than they could receive on social assistance anyway. Doris and her husband worked side-by-side in a restaurant kitchen, peeling potatoes and washing dishes. She remembers, "Oh yes. We did potatoes! We peeled potatoes, me and my husband! In the end, they [the restaurant owners] sold it. I said, 'Okay, I'm staying home.' When he died [her husband], I started to get my pension. With welfare, I was fine."[72]

The difficult years of closure and disinvestment were of course not without joy. Doris remembers hanging out at *Chez Mitch* tavern on Saint-Jacques Street: "We'd go have a couple beers, we'd play pool, we'd have fun. They sold hotdogs; we ate all the time. We ate all the time.

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[71] Orphanos, interview.

[72] LeBlanc, interview.

We'd get together in little groups, the weekends, we'd go there."[73] Carole fondly recalls the free activities she found to do with her kids:

> So, me, when I heard that there were … *fêtes populaires* in the neighbourhoods, I was always on the look-out for *fêtes populaires*. Organizations where they didn't charge, and it was fun for kids too. I went to those. I remember there was even the torch march at Angrignon Park.[74] I was there with my daughter. It was winter, but not the deep, deep cold of winter. I remember that. We marched with the torches. It was beautiful. Those sorts of events, I was always looking for those.
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> Because we couldn't treat ourselves to big stuff, us folks. We didn't have the means, so I appreciated those moments. So, the torch march, listen. It was out of the ordinary. It was not an everyday thing. It helped, it was motivating, it did you good. And all the neighbourhood festivals, I went with my daughter, and so on. There were inflatable games, so … I couldn't afford *la Ronde*,[75] so we went for the inflatable games in the neighbourhoods where there were events. No. I always ran around after those times, those things with my daughter. Yeah. Even my son too, I took him when he was little too.[76]

Low-income people arriving in the midst of Saint-Henri's transformation also found much to love. For some, it was about the close-knit sociability of the neighbourhood. Luce Parisien recalls returning to Saint-Henri after having left for a year to live in the United States: "In the end, I didn't leave 'cause I didn't like it, I left because, well, I met someone. And, I remember, I

[73] LeBlanc, interview.

[74] I am not certain, but I suspect that this was in the context of the 1988 Winter Olympic Games.

[75] An expensive Montréal amusement park on the former Expo 67 grounds.

[76] Orphanos, interview.

was walking, and I met, like, a neighbour. And she said, 'Oh! You came back, dearie! Welcome back!' That touched me. Made me feel good."[77]

Karina Montambeault first came to Saint-Henri in the late 1990s as a law intern at ODAS, moving to the neighbourhood when she got a job at the POPIR:

> Well, the Saint-Henri I came up in, at that time, I always said it was a village, Saint-Henri. It's a part of the Southwest that's pretty hemmed in. The whole way along. And at that time it was a pretty tightly-knit place. So when you worked at POPIR and you lived in the neighbourhood, you ended up knowing lots and lots of people. You walked down the street and people said hi. It was pretty special, in a city like Montreal. Saint-Henri folks, at the time when I was working at POPIR (around 1999-2005), they were born in Saint-Henri. They grew up in Saint-Henri. They went to the *polyvalente Saint-Henri* [the local French-language high school]. They told us stories about the transformation of Saint-Henri.[78]

Other newcomers, like Marc-Olivier Rainville, found pleasure in the deindustrialized environment:

> So, I got here, in Saint-Henri, and it was a shock, a little, really, because even though I didn't go out much … I found it like a desert at night. As much as there'd been too much activity (too much for my taste) in the Plateau, it was like a desert. Notre-Dame Street was dead. But, at the same time, I put down roots, and I met a girl and I had a kid and I found ways of having an interesting and fun life. But, as for our neighbourhood, you had to find spots that you liked. So, for me, what I liked was to walk beside the tracks and along the Canal. There used to be a lot of animal life. The Canal was closed, there was no water flowing. So there were lots of beavers and lots of birds staying there. And along the track, there were groundhogs and my dog

[77] Parisien, interview.

[78] Karina Montambeault, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 13 November 2019.

brought me some sometimes. And we cooked and ate them. There were lots of animals wandering around: racoons, skunks (there still are, but way less).[79]

Even while carving out these small "realms of freedom," there were still socks to be bought and bellies to be filled in the midst of a mounting housing crisis.[80] Gentrification is not simply a process of "neighbourhood change" that can be measured in aggregate income levels, property values, and crime rates. At its heart, it is about curtailing the possibilities of working-class life, making continued residence in an area "hazardous or unaffordable."[81] Geographer Amy Twigge-Molecey's recent work on Saint-Henri argues that this process of displacement is multifold, including not only evictions and other forms of direct housing-market displacement but also indirect, social elements, squeezing down on subaltern lifeways in ways that make daily life increasingly untenable.[82] Urban displacement is also distinctly gendered, as "any attempt towards economic restructuring also forces a significant reconstruction of everyday practices and infrastructures of the reproduction of labour power"; under patriarchy and capitalism, unpaid work largely performed by women.[83] Almost universally, the memories of and opinions about Saint-Henri advanced by my women interviewees were structured by the ongoing loss of

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[79] Rainville, interview.

[80] Historian Ian McKay, drawing on Marx' *Capital: Volume III*, defines this as "a way of understanding and extending the democratic spaces that we are able to experience in the daily world." See his *Rebels, Reds, Rebels: Rethinking Canada's Left History* (Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2005), 17. David Camfield takes issue with this re-working ("*Rebels, Reds, Radicals: Rethinking Canada's Left History* by Ian McKay," *Labour/Le Travail* [Spring 2006]: 201-204), but I think it is a helpful way to understand the struggle for daylight in dark times.

[81] Chester Hartmann, D. Keating, and R. Gates (with S. Turner), *Displacement: How to Fight It* (Berkeley, CA: National Housing Law Project, 1982), 3, cited in Slater, "Missing Marcuse: On gentrification and displacement," 294-295.

[82] Amy Twigge-Molecey, "Exploring Resident Experiences of Indirect Displacement in a Neighbourhood Undergoing Displacement: The Case of Saint-Henri in Montréal," *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 23, 1 (Summer 2014): 1-22.

[83] Nikki Luke and Maria Kaika, "Ripping the Heart Out of Ancoats: Collective Action to Defend Infrastructures of Social Reproduction against Gentrification," *Antipodes* 51, 2 (2019): 581.

affordable places to buy food and clothing, to eat, and to see their neighbours; in short, by the increasing difficulty of reproducing working-class life.

Despite its growing reputation as a hotspot for fine dining and nightlife, Doris refers to Saint-Henri as a "*fantôme*-town":

> When I moved here, [in 1974], there were all kinds of great stores. There was Woolworth … It was full of stores. And other than that, it slowly fell apart. No more stores. There was a shoe store. There was Blue Jean, you wanted pants, they had them. But now, *Libéral* [a long-standing affordable clothing store], was sold. So it became like a ghost-town here in Saint-Henri.[84]

Agathe Melançon moved to an HLM in Saint-Henri with her son in the early 2000s. She remembers, "There were also people who went to the same restaurants all the time, so, for better or for worse, in doing that, they'd chat with people, meet new people, and get the latest on everyone else [laughs]." She contrasts this with the increasing supply of luxury dining opportunities today: "I guess because the restaurants are becoming more expensive, it's less familial, less accessible. So, it'd be nice if it were more affordable. Besides McDonalds [laughs]."[85] In addition to spending time at the *Place Saint-Henri* diner, Carole Orphanos was also a fixture at *Pizza Miracle*, a restaurant situated under the former Notre-Dame offices of the POPIR, lost to fire several years ago. I asked her what that place represented for her:

> Well yeah, it's a chance to see your neighbours. So many things to talk about! Always happy to see each other. Sometimes just to have a coffee or breakfast. Whatever. You have some soup. You can't do that anywhere in the restaurants on Notre-Dame now. You can't go in and go, "I'll just have a soup and a glass of water." No, no, no. But it's a real need. For the neighbourliness of Saint-Henri. The

[84] LeBlanc, interview.

[85] Luce Parisien and Agathe Melançon, interviewed by Fred Burrill and Laurence Hamel-Roy, 15 March 2019.

> real Saint-Henri neighbours. The real Saint-Henri tenants, and the workers, the workers' kids, and the workers as such too.[86]

For Geneviève Tremblay-Fafard, the increasing cost of food in neighbourhood grocery stores has complicated not only daily survival but also the time she has to give to her passion for involvement in her community:

> And what bothers me, you know … food, it's gone up a lot, a lot. Me, you know, I get involved a lot. Going back to March [2020], I was involved everywhere. I started to get involved in organizations for people with mental disabilities in the east end in January, but everything got messed up. And you know, I said to myself, "Christ! That's all I have to do and I'm out of money." I'm going to collect cans, Fred. It's helped me a hell of a lot. I don't collect a tonne. Some people make filthy money with cans! I had nothing else to do but collect cans. Christ, it helps me the fuck out. For the financial side, especially food, it … it bothers me a lot more than it bothered me before.[87]

A recent study by Lucy Lé and Aaron Vansintjan on food security in Saint-Henri and the nearby neighbourhood of NDG concluded that, "the long-term presence of a disadvantaged population is now jeopardized more than ever. Beyond increased difficulty to shop for adequate food, there are also feelings of frustration, exclusion, and dispossession."[88] Saint-Henri is now widely renowned for its fine dining, dubbed "Montreal's Coolest Neighbourhood" by the city's popular trend-

[86] Orphanos, interview.

[87] Geneviève Tremblay-Fafard, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 7 August 2020.

[88] See Lucy Lé and Aaron Vansintjan, "Gentrification and Food in Montreal," 15 November 2017, https://fr.slideshare.net/LucieL3/gentrification-and-food-in-montreal-gentrification-et-offre-alimentaire-montral (accessed 31 August 2019).

watching site, *Mtl Blog*.[89] The area is also , however, home to Montreal's largest food bank, and its low-income residents are more likely to shop for necessities at the Dollarama than one of the increasingly pricey big-box groceries or smaller, boutique stores.

By the end of the first decade of the 21st century, Saint-Henri had become solidly divided. For those enjoying the fruits of the "loft living" cultural modes provided for them by the State and real estate capital, life was good. As one resident in the new *Quai des Éclusiers* development enthused in 2008, "I love that I'm just on the cusp of downtown and a seemingly quiet neighbourhood … it's comfortable, convenient for my situation and very active. The number of joggers, cyclists and rollerbladers is uncanny!"[90] But for the 42 per cent of neighbourhood residents living below the poverty line,[91] life in Saint-Henri was a daily reminder that, as Michael Denning has written, "Under capitalism, the only thing worse than being exploited is not being exploited."[92] The 2006 conflict over the construction of the Imperial Lofts was particularly heated: "The vast majority of children under 18 in Saint-Henri live in poverty," decried one participant in a community forum. "Often, their families have to spend more than half their income on rent."[93] In the place of condos, the POPIR and *Solidarité Saint-Henri* argued that the City should buy the former plant and convert it to social housing and neighbourhood

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[89] Thomas MacDonald, "13 Reasons Why St-Henri is Montreal's Coolest Neighbourhood," *Mtl Blog*, 7 August 2019, https://www.mtlblog.com/best-of-mtl/13-reasons-why-st-henri-is-montreals-coolest-neighbourhood (accessed 1 September 2019).

[90] Cited in Edith Tam, "Disputed Post-Industrial Landscapes: an enquiry into the 'loft-living' cultural model in Montreal's Saint-Henri" (MSc thesis, Concordia University, 2009), 65. For a further revealing treatment of the social attitudes of new residents and business owners in Saint-Henri, see Alexandre Maltais, "Anciens et nouveaux petits commerçants face à la transformation socioéconomique de deux anciens quartiers montréalais," *Territoires urbains et mixite sociale* 77 (2016): 148-165.

[91] So Engmann (for Solidarité Saint-Henri), *Portrait du Quartier Saint-Henri d'après les données du recensement de 2011*, 2014, 5, https://www.solidarite-sh.org/sites/solidarite-sh.org/files/portraitsthenri_2011_version1.1.pdf.

[92] Denning, "Wageless Life," 79.

[93] Monique Beaudoin, "St-Henri pleads for low-cost homes," *Montreal Gazette*, 23 February 2006, A6.

services.[94] In some senses, former POPIR organizer Louis Gaudreau reflected in 2019, Imperial Tobacco was "the last straw" in a conflict over infrastructure and the social reproduction of the increasingly lumpenized left-behind that had been building since the late 1980s.[95]

Resisting Displacement

The differing tendencies that emerged around the COPAK struggle continued to structure local resistance through the 1990s and early 2000s. As State and capital poured resources into the repurposing of the Lachine Canal, the newly-formed RESO sought to harness the process for the benefit of local actors, arguing throughout a series of public consultations for the importance of a "*mixité*" of economic functions along the waterway, including job-creating environmental tourism, "new economy" industrial development, and residential construction.[96] Anti-poverty groups on both sides of the Canal were critical of this "consensus" position. *Action-Gardien,* the *Table de Concertation* in Point Saint-Charles, called for the reindustrialization of the Canal.[97] The POPIR and the RIL, its Point Saint-Charles counterpart, denounced the massive public sums being injected into the post-industrial rejuvenation of the Canal, pointing out that the federal Liberal government was busily cutting healthcare, welfare, unemployment insurance, and

[94] Isabelle Audet, "Mésentente autour du complexe Imperial Tobacco," *La Presse*, 25 March 2006, J5.

[95] Louis Gaudreau in Fred Burrill, "D'une lutte à l'autre: le POPIR-Comité Logement a 50 ans!" Youtube video, 19:12, 16 December 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=acYX2uFOGaM. My translation.

[96] See Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement and Agence canadienne d'évaluation environnementale, *Rapport de la commission conjointe fédérale-provinciale: Projet de decontamination du Canal de Lachine*, 37; Arrondissement du Sud-Ouest, *Rapport synthèse de la consultation de 2010 sur le développement des abords du Canal de Lachine*, 6; RESO, *Forum canal de Lachine – Rapport synthèse*, May 2000, https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_-VzoIl7mrIaEZIMVBQdEFMREk/view?resourcekey=0-h8YEuVbPth0D7zVmDUxBWA.

[97] Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement and Agence canadienne d'évaluation environnementale, *Rapport de la commission conjointe fédérale-provinciale: Projet de decontamination du Canal de Lachine*, 23.

housing programs.[98] "We don't trust wishful thinking and promises," said Jean-Pierre Wilsey.[99] "*On ne veut pas de condos*" chanted Saint-Henri tenants in a Fall 1997 action, "*ça nous prend des boulots*!" [We don't want condos, we need jobs!]. Demonstrators marched to the banks of the Canal with a symbolic condo project made from plywood and proceeded to light it on fire.[100] The roots of neighbourhood organizing in shopfloor struggles were still on display.

Figure 3: Saint-Henri demonstrators get ready to light a symbolic condo project on fire, September 1997. POPIR Collection.

[98] André Noël, "Les millions affectés au canal de Lachine ne font pas que des heureux," *La Presse*, 30 April 1997, A10.

[99] André Noël, "La lumière au bout du … canal," *La Presse*, 13 October 1998, B5.

[100] Georges Lamon, "Saint-Henri ne veut pas de condos," *La Presse*, 23 September 1997, A19.

Louis Gaudreau, an organizer at the POPIR between 2000 and 2007, vehemently called out the limits of the RESO's vision of local participation. In 2000 the CDEC organized a massive public forum on the future of the Canal, bringing together community groups with public institutions, corporations, and the financial sector.[101] The supposedly participatory process, Gaudreau said, was technocratic, anti-democratic, and profoundly useless: almost the entirety of the Lachine Canal had been developed into condominiums anyway. The crucial flaw, he argued, was that the proponents of the accommodationist, social economy approach refused to recognize that simple participation couldn't begin to affect change in a profoundly inegalitarian urban system rooted in private property.[102]

From the moment that members of the POPIR decided to officially become a housing committee, the organization rallied to the struggle for social housing, and particularly HLM. If housing was a fundamental human need, they reasoned, it should not be subject to the whims of the private market. Divorced from capitalist production but not from its social relations, deindustrialized Saint-Henri residents contested "the neo-liberal insistence that reproduction is the worker's responsibility,"[103] demanding the right to continue to exist. On the one hand, this involved participating in the tenacious early 1990s battle, led by the FRAPRU, against the Conservative and then Liberal governments' gutting of the federal housing program.[104] Through Wilsey, the POPIR also played a central role in Montreal's *Coalition pour la survie des programmes sociaux*. Liberal Finance Minister Paul Martin's significant personal wealth came from his shipping company, Canada Steamship Lines, notorious for its practices of hiding profits in offshore accounts. In one action, POPIR and other CSPS militants snuck onto a CSL ship in

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[101] RESO, *Forum canal de Lachine – Rapport synthèse*.

[102] Gaudreau, "Participer, mais à quoi?"

[103] Silvia Federici, "Notes on Elder-Care Work and the Limits of Marxism," in *Beyond Marx: Theorising the Global Labour Relations of the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Marcel van der Linden and Karl Heinz Roth, in collaboration with Max Henninger, 218 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2014).

[104] See François Saillant, *Le radical de velours: Parcours militant* (Ville Mont-Royal: M éditeur, 2012), 40-43.

Montreal's Old Port, unveiling a massive banner: "Paul Martin, *Coupe les Abris Fiscaux, Pas les Programmes Sociaux!*" [Cut Tax Havens, Not Social Programs].[105]

On the local level, fighting for the right to exist meant getting organized to develop housing projects. The POPIR waged a campaign for 350 social housing units in the neighbourhood, corresponding to the number of tenants on waiting lists for an HLM. They accused the MCM administration of "nonchalance" in the face of a mounting crisis, and created a committee of "*requérants*" – those on the waiting list – to identify and fight for spots in Saint-Henri that could be turned into housing.[106] In the face of landlords' increasing disinvestment in

Figure 3.1: CSPS militants take the fight to Paul Martin. Collection POPIR.

the private market, neighbourhood militants rallied around the battle cry, "*Pas de Schefferville dans le Sud-Ouest!*", invoking an infamously abandoned industrial mining town in the north of Quebec.[107] Karina Montambeault remembers,

[105] Jean-Yves Joannette, "L'apport du POPIR à la Coalition pour la survie des programmes sociaux," *POPIR-Comité Logement, 1969-2019: 50 ans de luttes* (December 2019): 12-13.

[106] Clément Trudel, "18 HLM se feraient attendre," *Le Devoir*, 26 July 1990, 3; POPIR-Comité Logement, "Le POPIR-Comité Logement et le développement du logement social," *POPIR-Comité Logement, 1969-2019: 50 ans de luttes* (December 2019): 9-11.

[107] Wilsey, "Non à la fermeture de nos quartiers," 24.

> POPIR, at that time, it was … listen, there were actions. There were actions all the time. At the time, the Accèslogis program was a pilot project. There were, in 1994, cuts to social housing, then there was a mobilization in the Southwest for social housing projects and experimental programs and so on. So, there was an incredible effervescence.[108]

The end of federal funding was somewhat compensated, as Karina outlines, by the provincial government's institution of experimental initiatives designed to purchase and convert private property into social housing, culminating in the 1997 adoption of the Accèslogis program, a significant new source of funding for coops and other forms of non-profit housing.[109] This was, of course, the height of the Quebec sovereignty movement, as the ruling *Parti Québécois* came within a hairsbreadth of winning a 1995 referendum on independence. Political scientists Pascale Dufour, Jean-Vincent Gaudin-Bergeron, and Luc Chicoine argue that developments in housing policy in this period demonstrate that "the national question has served as a kind of cement between community groups and the provincial government vis-à-vis the federal"; unlike its counterpart the RCLALQ, the FRAPRU supported the "Yes" side of the referendum and also campaigned against the 1992 Charlottetown Constitutional Accord. Accèslogis created a sort of sanctioned hierarchy of protest and expertise on housing questions in Quebec. In addition to funding new social housing projects, the program also created the *Contribution au secteur*: approved member groups of the FRAPRU, including the POPIR, would now receive direct funding from the government, contingent on promoting, developing, and yes, demonstrating for, social housing in their respective areas.[110] This gradual submergence into the nexus of nationalism and State bureaucracy meant, for Valérie Simard, that community groups ended up serving the State more than they opposed it. "With a view towards establishing a strong nation-

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[108] Montambeault, interview.

[109] Greg Suttor, *Still Renovating: A History of Canadian Social Housing Policy* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016), 156-159.

[110] Pascale Dufour, Jean-Vincent Bergeron-Gaudin, and Luc Chicoine, "Social Movements and the National Question in Quebec: The Institutional Legacy of a Cleavage," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 53 (2020): 658-675 (quote from 662).

state, [the government] had to work alongside these organizations. These organizations, and like the unions who are still heavily marked by nationalism, in fact still have this super limited perspective of, like, we are fighting for Quebec, like."[111]

As capital receded from view in favour of a focus on the State and the nation, further, the movement turned increasingly away from sharper class-based demands in favour of the more identitarian language of the "*quartier populaire*." While studies of Quebec's urban past have often employed this label interchangeably with that of the "*quartier ouvrier*" to indicate workers' geographical space, historian Harold Bérubé points out insightfully that the former can come with a romantic temptation to defend "authentic" community against the supposedly atomized and alienated suburb.[112] It is indeed a loaded conjunctivization: Stuart Hall suggests that "the term 'popular', and even more the collective subject to which it must refer – 'the people' – is highly problematic," marked by power and struggle and shot through with the contradictions of race and imperialism.[113] "Place," as Doreen Massey similarly reminds us, is an organizing concept that can become beset by these same tendencies, and political strategies rooted in the local sometimes risk becoming "place-bound" rather than "place-based"[114]: the working-class "quartier" has been subject in both historiography and common discourse, argues historian Alain Faure, to a relatively static place-bound "master narrative" emphasizing ties of sociability and solidarity, rooted in the understanding that "people loved their quarter, identified with it, and had a sense of themselves as belonging to an authentic and homogeneous community."[115]

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[111] Valérie Simard, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 25 January 2020.

[112] Harold Bérubé, "La ville, quartier par quartier," *Labour/Le Travail* 78 (Fall 2016): 275.

[113] Stuart Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing 'The Popular'," in *People's History and Socialist Theory*, ed. Raphael Samuel, 227-240 (New York: Routledge, 2016), [quote from 238].

[114] Doreen Massey, "Places and Their Pasts," *History Workshop Journal* 39 (Spring 1995): 184.

[115] Alain Faure, "Local Life in Working-Class Paris at the End of the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Urban History* 32, 5 (July 2006): 762. See also his "Le local: une approche du quartier populaire (Paris 1880-1914)," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée* 105, 2 (1993): 489-502.For a brief introduction to the vast historiography on urban neighbourhoods, see David Garrioch and Mark Peel, "Introduction: The Social History of Urban Neighbourhoods," *Journal of Urban History* 32, 5 (July 2006): 663-676.

Anticipating the Quebec government's removal of the moratorium on the conversion of rental properties to condominiums, for instance, the FRAPRU organized a 1986 congress entitled "*Pour la survie des quartiers populaires*" [For the survival of popular neighbourhoods]. Recalling for his audience the roots of the network in citizens' movements against the displacement of urban renovation, FRAPRU coordinator François Saillant decried the damage now being done to "our" neighbourhoods by gentrification:

> Our neighbourhoods are being destroyed by renovictions and co-property agreements at a pace that feels like the savage demolitions of the 1960s. The difference with the 1960s is that then, they affected 600, 100, 1200 people at a time, here for a highway, there for a hotel, an office building, or a parking lot. Now, it's being done quietly, home by home, person by person, but the result is the same.[116]

In the face of this threat, congress participants advanced the idea that the massive construction of social housing was the only way to safeguard the right to remain of the "traditional population" of inner-city neighbourhoods. But as Pierce Nettling has written, who gets to be interpreted as a "traditional" population is highly racialized. Places like Côte-des-Neiges, for example, just up the hill from Saint-Henri, are generally described as "immigrant" neighbourhoods, "even if those 'immigrants' have lived in the area for decades." Nettling chalks up the differing visibility accorded to tenants' political activity in Côte-des-Neiges and Saint-Henri to "the persistence of white francophone identity politics that have long undergirded the left in Quebec."[117]

In 1988, the FRAPRU member-group *Association Coopérative d'économie familiale* (ACEF)-Laval expressed criticism of the Front's single-minded focus on social housing and

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[116] François Saillant, "Mot d'ouverture du colloque," in FRAPRU, *Pour la survie des quartiers populaires: Actes du colloque organisé par le FRAPRU, les 6 et 7 décembre 1986, à Montréal* (Montréal: Éditions luttes urbaines, 1987), 2, http://bv.cdeacf.ca/bvdoc.php?no=2004_11_0545&col=EA&format=htm&ver=old. My translation. See also Saillant, *Le radical de* velours, 35-36.

[117] Pierce Nettling, "Organizing Against *Projet Gentrification*: Housing Activism in a White-Supremacist Landscape in Montreal," *Metropolitics*, 18 November 2018, https://metropolitics.org/Organizing-Against-Projet-Gentrification-Housing-activism-in-a-white.html.

expanding government programs. In turning away from a broader anti-capitalist critique of exploitation, they warned, and therefore in eschewing an analysis with which "diverse sectors of the working class can identify," housing groups risked preventing "solidarities from growing, risk weakening if not actively harming the working class while reinforcing corporatism and individualism, and risk even leading the struggle into a dead end."[118] Of course, one wonders how the member groups of the FRAPRU could have done otherwise, given the economic situations of left-behind tenants in their formerly industrial neighbourhoods. It was a political strategy imposed by the exigencies of deindustrialization. Tenant organizers sought to "wrap themselves in the F*#@ing Fleur-de-lis," to repurpose a phrase of Steven High's, seeking to slot into the same nationalist moral economies that inspired English-Canadian union activists' resistance to plant shutdowns in the 1970s and 1980s.[119]

For a time, inclusion in the national institutional framework did indeed act as an important lever in the local power struggle against neoliberal City officials. Along with *Bâtir son quartier*, the new *Groupe de ressources techniques* that grew out of a 1994 merger of the *Service d'aménagement populaire* with a few other GRTs, the POPIR developed several major housing projects in the late 1990s and early 2000s, including the *Coopérative Du Couvent*, where Karina lived, the *Coopérative Delinelle*, and *Citadelle de Saint-Ambroise*, a family-oriented non-profit housing complex in the far west end of the neighbourhood.[120]

Even before Accèslogis, however, POPIR employees, and particularly my former colleague Louis Cyr, had developed a significant expertise in helping coop members sort out problems and manage their finances, acting not as hired administrators but instead seeking to support local tenants in self-governance. Carole remembers,

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[118] ACEF de Laval, "Document de réflexion présenté au Congrès du FRAPRU, juin 1988," 8e Congrès 1988, P16-410-08, Fonds du FRAPRU, Centre d'archives et d'histoire du travail. My translation.

[119] Steven High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969-1984* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 167-191.

[120] See POPIR-Comité Logement, "Le POPIR-Comité Logement et le développement du logement social."

> I got to know [the POPIR] around 1991. When you think about it … 1991, it's late! I was around 32. It was because I knew someone (the father of my boy actually) who lived in a cooperative. That's when I first went into a cooperative and finally, a couple of months later, I started going to general assemblies, I was on the board, I went from one committee to another, so I learned everything, I learned everything, everything. We had management problems, the administration of this coop, because there were many people, older members, who made a lot of trouble with the others. The board wasn't healthy at that time. Me and another of my neighbours too, who like me didn't know anything, we were getting into it and then, one day, this woman who together with me was getting involved and learning, she went to POPIR. The old POPIR on the corner of Saint-Philippe/Notre-Dame, at that time. And she met Louis Cyr. And she talked about our cooperative, how it worked and all that and he began to help us. That's how I got to know POPIR and Louis Cyr. We had a 100 per cent impeccable service. He really helped us. He helped us get our cooperative back on its feet.[121]

While the relatively high percentage of social housing units in Saint-Henri has been an important bulwark against displacement, the move away from HLMs and toward cooperatives has also had other, less positive ramifications.[122] First, perhaps because of the reproductive nature of the struggle, it often ends up being the unpaid labour of women tenants like Carole that determines whether or not a housing coop is functional – a gendered element that is largely invisibilized in the provincial cooperative movement's discourse on empowerment.[123] This can be almost a full-

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[121] Orphanos, interview.

[122] 13.2 per cent of the housing stock in Saint-Henri are subsidized units, compared to only 5.2 per cent for Montreal as a whole. Solidarité Saint-Henri, *Portrait du quartier Saint-Henri, d'après les données du Recensement de 2016 de Statistique Canada*, February 2021, 38, https://www.solidarite-sh.org/sites/solidarite-sh.org/files/portraitsthenri2016.pdf.

[123] See, for example, Fédération des coopératives d'habitation intermunicipale du Montréal Métropolitain (FÉCHIMM), *La FECHIMM: Album souvenir. 30 ans de coopération et d'entraide*, 2013, https://cdn.fechimm.coop/uploads/documents/document/65/Programme_30ans_fechimm.pdf (accessed 20 September 2021).

time job, dependent to a great extent on the unemployed and the retired. There is a very fine line, as sociologist Maude Simonet reminds us, between the ethical imperative driving volunteer work and the workfare-inspired civic discourse of neoliberalism.[124] When I interviewed Carole in 2018, her coop had finally been forced to hire an external management firm, several years after Louis Cyr's retirement.

> Now, we put it under external management because of exhaustion, because there was no one to replace us. It's not because we didn't try: we tried to train people, we had a lot of trouble and not enough people to really participate actively. Because we were a little crazy. We did 30, 40 hours per week managing the cooperative in those years. Way too much. Twenty years later, we're burnt out. Because we managed everything.[125]

The other troubling element of this turn toward developing coop and non-profit housing projects is that despite (or perhaps due to) the fact that development funding itself derives from a collective anti-poverty struggle vis-à-vis the State, the subsequent administrative work is as much about managing poverty as it is fighting against it. Christina Xydous was a founding member of the *Citadelle* project, and heavily involved in its governance for the period she lived there. She reflects,

> Y'know I'm not opposed to that in any way, shape or form, I think that when, y'know, you're caught in a situation where there is no accessible, affordable housing, and here's, like, some money from the government to make actual brick, y'know, like, a physical structure to house people, you go for it! But, as a long-term analysis, all it does is manage poverty. 1000 per cent. And, moreover, if you're on the board of one of those things, you're the one doing the poverty management, and … your, your, your, position as an ally is no longer there, y'know. If you're concerned for the

[124] Maude Simonet, *Travail gratuit: la nouvelle exploitation?* (Paris: éditions Textuel, 2018), 77-81. My thanks to Laurence Hamel-Roy and Valérie Simard for this reference.

[125] Orphanos, interview.

> big picture, y'know, so what is the big picture? You have to maintain that block of housing in the black, in order so that everybody can benefit from it, then that puts you in an antagonistic position against somebody let's say who's been late on the rent for three months or more. That's not the type of position you wanna be in as a radical ally [laughs]. Or as a radical housing activist, y'know? Free housing for all, etc., etc., right? So, it's definitely … was it worthwhile? I mean I'm glad we did it? And, I think that it was … I think it was also a bulwark against a lot of the condos in the area, undoubtedly, and it's true for all social housing projects. I think that we need social housing, we need, uh, *subventions* [subsidies] for people to be able to afford their rents in late-stage capitalism, y'know? But, we cannot deny that all of these things really just serve to help the State rather than, to change that relationship with power, and with capital, and the equitable sharing of resources, y'know? So …[126]

Beyond these contradictions, the dynamics generated by making the State the political focus of the movement made it difficult to do much more than pressure municipal politicians into putting the brakes on the gentrification process.[127] Karina no longer lives in the neighbourhood, but expressed shock at driving down Notre-Dame recently and seeing Porsches parked on the street. She felt the POPIR's warnings to local officials had not been heeded:

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[126] Xydous, interview.

[127] Sean M. DiGiovanna observed similar dynamics at work in his 1997 comparison of union responses to global economic restructuring in Saint Catharines and Sault Saint Marie, Ontario. In the former city, the Canadian Autoworkers pursued an aggressive political strategy vis-à-vis the State on the question of free trade, while in the latter, the United Steelworkers of America pursued co-management and co-ownership schemes with Algoma Steel. He argued that the latter strategy was ultimately more effective, which, while an interesting illustration of the limits of a State-focused approach, was not necessarily born out over the long term. See Sean M. DiGiovanna, "Fighting For a Working Future: Emerging Models of Local Union Strategy in a New Era of Global Competition" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1997). See also Richard C. Hoffman and Marvin O. Brown, "Employee ownership and union labor: the case of the United Steelworkers of America," *Labor History* 58, 3 (2017): 350-371; Sam Gindin and Jim Stanford, "Canadian Labour and the Political Economy of Transformation," in *Changing Canada: Political Economy as Transformation*, eds. Wallace Clement and Leah F. Vosko, 422-442 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).

> POPIR told them, "Do something, because the neighbourhood is going to gentrify." I think that the officials … I think that there was a lack of political will and I think as well that they didn't think it would happen so quickly. Some clearly couldn't care less about poverty, others didn't think it would happen so fast and said to themselves, "Well. We have to find a way of profiting from this."[128]

While the POPIR had been struggling throughout the 1990s to keep the neighbourhood from becoming another Schefferville, capital was rapidly assuring that Saint-Henri would become quite the opposite. Marc-Olivier Rainville was critical of the efforts he had been part of in the POPIR's early struggle against gentrification:

> When I started with the POPIR, we demonstrated against condos, but it was always tiny demos and we didn't really do anything serious, really. We marched in the streets but that didn't stop the condos being built. Here there wasn't really effective action from POPIR to stop it. And FRAPRU, I didn't even know FRAPRU at that time. Later, I found out that we, our housing committee, we were a member of an organization [with] others … Maybe in other neighbourhoods, actions were better coordinated, but I don't think so. Condos are everywhere. I think that we didn't do enough to stop the condos. But, maybe, even if we had made ten times the effort, it wouldn't have stopped what is happening now.[129]

Of course, as Marc-Olivier recognized, working-class activists were facing extremely long odds. And the POPIR was certainly not afraid of disruptive interventions. One of the actions that remains central in collective memory from this period is a short-lived, 2002 squat of an abandoned garage on the corner of Saint-Philippe and Saint-Antoine (close to the old RCA plant), part of a province-wide FRAPRU campaign in reaction to the housing crisis. Yvon

[128] Montambeault, interview.

[129] Rainville, interview.

Deschamps, the popular Quebec humourist and monologuist from Saint-Henri, came and delivered a speech in support of the occupation – an indication, in Karina's words, "that there are still good people."[130] However much the POPIR was locked into an ambiguous dynamic vis-à-vis the State, they remained committed to the idea that solutions to the neighbourhood's housing crisis could not be found on the private market.

Other forces at work in the neighbourhood took this analysis even farther. The political energy of the late 1990s and early 2000s anti-globalization movement translated in Saint-Henri into a significant local struggle against the *Quai des Éclusiers* condo development. At the forefront of this fight were the militants of the *Convergence des luttes anticapitalistes* (CLAC), a diverse network of radical groups that had formed in the run-up to the protests against the 2001 Quebec City Summit of the Americas.[131] In the analysis of the CLAC's housing committee (CLAC-*Logement*), capitalism was held directly to account: "Rage and anger against landlords," they chanted; "We look forward to the day when each of their mansions in Westmount houses 30 people, and not a handful of rich bastards."[132] Beginning in 2002, the City of Montreal adopted a devolved administrative structure. Despite widespread opposition, the new Southwest Borough granted a demolition permit to the developer for the former Stelco buildings along the Lachine Canal. In response, militants occupied the offices of Borough Mayor Jacqueline Montpetit and local councillors Line Hamel and Robert Bousquet.[133] Montpetit had the police throw CLAC

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[130] Montambeault, interview. See also FRAPRU, *Le FRAPRU a 35 ans* (Montréal: Groupes d'études et d'actions urbaines, 2013), 38; Jacques Brochu, "Semaine d'occupations," *L'Itineraire* 9, 7 (July 2002): 9; Marie-Claude Girard, "Crise du logement: Occupations et squats 'symboliques' à la mi-mai," *La Presse*, 3 May 2002, E3.

[131] See Adrien Jouan, "Le mouvement pour la justice migrante: une histoire montréalaise," *Critique Internationale* 3, 84 (2019): 81-103; Rachel Sarrasin, Anna Kruzynski, Sandra Jeppesen and Émilie Breton, "Radicaliser l'action collective: portrait de l'option libertaire au Québec," *Lien social et Politiques* 68 (Fall 2012): 141-166; Nicholas Delisle-L'Heureux, "L'action directe des groupes antiautoritaires oeuvrant au Québec: Analyse de discours de documents produits et/ou distribués par certains de ces groupes selon le modèle de l'action sociale" (MA thesis, Université de Montréal, 2008).

[132] Rima Elkouri, "Un anarchiste déguisé en scout?" *La Presse*, 9 July 2003, A5.

[133] Bruno Dubuc, "Gentrification dans Saint-Henri," *Le Couac* 6, 3 (December 2002): 6.

activists out of the December 2002 Borough Council session, proceeding to approve the *Éclusiers* project with little debate.[134]

In keeping with their analysis, the municipal government was not the only target of the CLAC. Supported by members of the POPIR, they also occupied and regularly protested in front of the developer's sales office on the central corner of Atwater and Notre-Dame, to the point where the company took out a temporary restraining order on the group.[135] Militants also briefly took possession of the abandoned buildings along the Lachine Canal in May 2002, saying in a communique:

> Today we have occupied a building in disrepair that should be turned into housing for people who need it. This is just a first step. We don't think people should occupy disgusting buildings; instead we are announcing to the condo developers that we consider this site to be the property of the people of St-Henri and we refuse to have luxury condos built here. If the developers continue building these condos, then we will consider them ours too and will come back to occupy clean, brand-new luxury housing as the social housing we deserve and are entitled to.[136]

But despite this activity, construction of the *Quai des Éclusiers* continued apace, and the brand-new luxury housing was not occupied by those who needed it most. And while capitalism was clearly at the heart of the CLAC's analysis, class and labour were not; that the "disgusting buildings" had very recently been workplaces was largely forgotten.

One of the most significant outcomes of this wave of protest was in fact the City's offer of some of its land in the west end of the neighbourhood for the development of the *Citadelle* non-

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[134] Arrondissement Sud-Ouest, "Procès-verbal de la séance régulière tenue le mardi 3 décembre [2002], à 19h, à la Maison de la culture Marie-Uguay au 6052 Boul. Monk," *Ville de Montréal*, https://ville.montreal.qc.ca/documents/Adi_Public/CA_Sud/PV_ORDI_2002-12-03.pdf.

[135] Clairandrée Cauchy, "Des citoyens s'opposent à la construction de condos de luxe," *Le* Devoir, 20 January 2003, A2.

[136] CLAC-Logement communique, cited in Stefan Christoff, "Gentrification in St. Henri today as addressed through research creation" (HIST 390 – History and Memory in Gentrifying Saint-Henri, Concordia University, April 2021), in possession of author.

profit housing project. Several CLAC-*Logement* militants became involved in its creation. This is an ambiguous legacy, reflected Karina, in much the same vein as Christina:

> All that to say that this non-profit, for me it's not a great source of pride because I think they gave it to us ("they" … it's land belonging to the city) a bit to buy peace. Because even if POPIR wasn't part of this movement there was a group at the time called the CLAC (*Convergence des luttes anti-capitalistes*) and this movement was tied to POPIR because the activists who worked to set up the non-profit were involved there. Even the POPIR staff protested but not under the POPIR label. And we went ... there was a condo project (called the *Quai des Éclusiers*) and we protested against condos coming into the neighbourhood because we said, "It's going to gentrify the neighbourhood! It's terrible! There shouldn't just be condos all along the Canal." And there was a struggle. It was a pretty strong, local mobilization against these condos coming. So much so that the developer went and got an injunction because he didn't want people to protest anymore. Me, I protested even though I wasn't a member of the CLAC. So that's it. And the condos were built all the same. So I think that the *Citadelle Saint-Ambroise*, it was a bit to say to us "Right then, we will … you.' That's my interpretation, there is nothing in writing, nothing like that, but I think that, if we hadn't gone to scream against all these condos, we may not have gotten anything.[137]

This new municipal approach – offering crumbs in lieu of the cake – would become concretized in the City's 2005 "Inclusion Strategy," adopted in the midst of a massive condo boom in the Southwest neighbourhood of Griffintown. Aiming for a greater degree of "social mixity,"[138] the Inclusion Strategy aimed to incite real estate companies building new condo projects of over 200 units to "include" fifteen per cent social housing and fifteen per cent so-called "affordable" housing – in essence, to forego market prices on that small percentage of their overall

[137] Montambeault, interview.

[138] For a critical perspective, see Mark Davidson, "Love thy neighbour? Social mixing in London's gentrification frontiers," *Environment and Planning A* 42 (2010): 524-544.

development, instead selling them to community groups backed by funding from Accèslogis. Developers, while initially reluctant, quickly rallied to the new strategy, seeing an opportunity to purchase social acceptability and indeed to secure a portion of their profits in the uncertain, speculative world of condo sales.[139] In essence, the nationalist State was subsidizing condo development through its own public housing program, facilitated by municipal government.

The first application of this new planning tool in Saint-Henri was the Imperial Lofts. Development company Prével, with the enthusiastic backing of *Bâtir son quartier*, announced the project "with great pomp" in the beginning of 2006.[140] The POPIR, despite its emphasis on social housing, assisted thousands of private-market tenants per year impacted by increasing property values, and therefore rents, in the neighbourhood. Nominally an ally of these tenants, *Bâtir* had instead moved squarely into the pocket of capital and the State. Karina remembers:

> *Batir son quartier* (oh lord!), we often fought with those guys and I think they're still fighting with them because they have a vision of development … You see, POPIR, it was always, "Yes, we want social housing, but not at any price." It was always, "The more general interests of people. Not at any price. We won't sell our soul for that." So there were confrontations (I call them that), there were confrontations against private developers and against social housing developers too. It isn't easy.[141]

The Inclusion Strategy is perfectly designed to divide and conquer, and the POPIR's opposition to the project was not without its own difficult internal debate. But oppose it they did, nearly managing to force the Borough to hold a referendum on the building's zoning change from

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[139] See Collectif de Recherche et d'action communautaire de l'habitat (CRACH), *Bilan critique de la 'stratégie d'inclusion de logements abordables dans les nouveaux projets residentiels' de la Ville de Montréal (2005-2015),* 2016, http://crach.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Bilan-du-CRACH-_strategie-dinclusion_D%C3%A9cembre2015.pdf; Desage, "Les exclus de l'inclusion," 29-30.

[140] Louis Gaudreau, "Des logements sociaux, mais à quel prix? L'Imperial Tobacco, l'inclusion et la Ville des promoteurs," *POPIR-Comité Logement, 1969-2019: 50 ans de luttes* (December 2019): 14.

[141] Montambeault, interview.

industrial to residential. They were outmanoeuvred by Prével, unfortunately, who organized a counter-mobilization of residents to block the procedure.[142] I personally had just moved to Saint-Henri in the midst of that battle, and as a young McGill student with shaky French, I remember being confused by the company's promotional material that found its way into my mailbox. I understood enough to know I didn't want to be on their side, but in the way it was being sold – environmentally friendly condos with social housing included – I can understand how some rallied to the cause. At any rate, the POPIR's opposition (which continues through to today) to the Inclusion Strategy earned it condemnation from pundits and many within the housing movement.[143] Wilsey's 1989 warning about making social development contingent on its private counterpart, however, continues to be salient: zero social housing units have been developed in Saint-Henri since the Imperial Tobacco project, either because condo developments have been under the unit-limit imposed by the municipal government or because the developer negotiated a payment to the nebulously-managed "Inclusion Strategy Contribution Fund"; on the level of Montreal, the construction of 60 000 condo units between 2000 and 2015 resulted in only 3500 social housing apartments.[144]

The fight around Imperial Tobacco was also indicative of the growing structural divide amongst segments of the subaltern, lending further credence to the 1988 criticism of the ACEF-Laval. Imperial Tobacco's surprise closure announcement in June 2003 represented the loss of 580 jobs. The workers fought a hard battle throughout the rest of the year, demonstrating in front of the company's headquarters and eventually negotiating generous severance packages as well

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[142] Gaudreau, "Des logements sociaux, mais à quel prix?"; Isabelle Audet, "Feu vert au projet de Prével," *La Presse*, 17 June 2006, J5.

[143] Viannay, "Les luttes pour le droit au logement à Montréal depuis la pénurie de 2001," 100; Alain Dubuc, "Les racines de l'immobilisme," *La* Presse, 10 June 2006, A25; Marc Simard, *Les éteignoirs: Essais sur le "non-isme" et l'anticapitalisme au Québec* (Montréal: Voix Parallèles, 2007).

[144] CRACH, *Bilan critique de la 'stratégie d'inclusion de logements abordables dans les nouveaux projets residentiels' de la Ville de Montréal (2005-2015)*, 1-3; POPIR-Comité Logement, *Montréal: Métropole inclusive ou exclusive?" Mémoire du POPIR-Comité Logement déposé à l'Office de consultation publique de Montréal*, 10 October 2019, 7-8, https://popir.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/M%C3%A9moire-R%C3%A9glement-dinclusion.pdf.

as re-location for 140 union members.[145] Few of them lived in the neighbourhood (in contrast to the Asten-Johnson plant), however, and there is little evidence of any kind of organized support from neighbourhood groups. I asked Karina if there was much crossover between Imperial Tobacco workers and the anti-gentrification struggle:

> Not much. Because we (you see I say "we" and I don't work there anymore), POPIR really worked with the poorest people in the neighbourhood. In the time I was there, there were many, many people on social assistance or retirement who were there. It's changed, I think that there are more workers, students and so forth, but … You know, there was still this (in quotation marks because I don't like to say it) "working class" specific to popular neighbourhoods, that I think no longer exists. So we worked a lot with those people, so the mobilization was very francophone. Very francophone and very white.[146]

In Chapter Two we referenced historian Will Langford's argument that Sixties-era militants abandoned the struggle in Little Burgundy and invested their energies instead in Saint-Henri as part of a concerted decision to move from a "popular neighbourhood" to a more politically advanced "workers' neighbourhood." As we have seen over the course of this chapter, the slow disintegration of the industrial working class in Saint-Henri and the outmigration of those lucky enough not to be caught up in capitalism's global re-structuring left those remaining – the wageless and the elderly – to fight a thankless battle against the State for the right to continue to exist. Along the way, the movement became dependent on, and perhaps even a part of, that same State apparatus. The sharp structural and political consequences of this divide come out in Karina's memories, as she hesitates even to say the words "working class." And even in evoking

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[145] Marie Tison and Marie-Eve Cousineau, "Imperial Tobacco ferme son usine: La production est transférée à Guelph, en Ontario," *La Presse*, 19 June 2003, A1; Marie-Eve Cousineau, "Les employés d'Impérial Tobacco se battront pour leur usine," *La Presse*, 20 June 2003, E3; "Fermeture de l'Imperial Tobacco à Saint-Henri: Le syndicat a négocié les meilleures conditions," *Le Monde ouvrier* 55 (November-December 2003), 2.

[146] Montambeault, interview.

the term in quotation marks, she associates it not with the well-paid, unionized Imperial Tobacco employees, but rather with those on welfare or retired. Activist discourse had come full circle.

Working-class displacement in Saint-Henri was carefully fostered by the State and capital's turn from industrial to post-industrial structures of accumulation, and the difficulties imposed by the gentrification process were felt most keenly by the women responsible for the gendered work of the class' reproduction. Concomitantly, the neighbourhood movement, despite maintaining the oppositional edge that I associate with its early beginnings in shopfloor struggles, gradually adopted a strategic orientation monopolized by the nationalist State and its social programs. There is a clear through-line, as we can see in Karina's analysis above, between class decomposition, the "popular neighbourhood," and the racial and linguistic composition of Saint-Henri. The working-class and activist worlds with which we have spent time in this chapter were indeed predominantly white, francophone ones, and in fact continued to be largely so throughout the period of my own involvement in neighbourhood struggles. But this move toward nationalist moral economies was not purely a creation of the need to resist neoliberalism. It was forged in the material and discursive creation of Saint-Henri as the quintessential Québécois neighbourhood, a phenomenon stretching back as far as the 1940s.

CHAPTER FOUR:

The Making Of "Le Petit Peuple": Whiteness, Nationalism, And Gentrification

Dans le Québec (cette tête de chien-loup dont la gueule est un fleuve et qui regarde vers l'Atlantique, vers l'Europe) on peut trouver toutes les tensions possibles, ou latentes. Beaucoup d'ignorance cultivée, encouragée, beaucoup de bonne volonté faite de cette ignorance. Mais viennent les paysans bretons qui bloquent les routes de France avec leurs tracteurs et nos paysans à nous se disent: nous ne sommes pas plus bêtes, montons vers la capitale. Viennent les mots: lutte des classes, et le quartier Saint-Henri commence de comprendre ce qui le distingue de celui de Westmount. Viennent les leçons cubaines et algériennes, et la nation entière se demande si elle est dominée, dominante, ou si elle co-existe pacifiquement…

[In Quebec (that wolf-hound's head whose mouth is a river and whose gaze is towards the Atlantic, towards Europe), we can find all possible, or latent, tensions. Lots of cultivated, encouraged ignorance, lots of good will born of this ignorance. But come the Breton peasants blocking the highways of France with their tractors and our own peasants say to themselves: we're no worse than them, on to the capital. Come the words class struggle and the neighbourhood of Saint-Henri begins to understand what distinguishes it from Westmount. Come the Cuban and Algerian lessons and the entire nation asks itself if it is dominated, dominant or co-exists peacefully …]

Jacques Godbout, "La Haine," *Parti Pris* 2, 3 (November 1964): 20

I have always struggled to adequately articulate the racial politics of gentrification in the predominantly white, francophone neighbourhood of Saint-Henri, so central – as the above citation attests – to the historical lexicon of class, language and national oppression in Quebec. When I first moved to the area in 2006, my thinking about power and place was primarily refracted through hyper self-consciousness about my own position as a young anglophone living with other young anglophones, all of us from elsewhere, all of us solidly positioned to climb the class ladder. As I learned French and became more involved in anti-capitalist and (at least aspirationally) anti-colonial political organizing, I grasped for ways to connect my support for

Indigenous sovereignty to the fight against displacement happening around me, even as my every-day organizing life was increasingly rooted in the world of white, francophone, working-class Saint-Henri.[1] What did it mean, I wondered, to fight for the "right to the city" on stolen land; to think of colonialism not only as the leitmotif of urban class conflict but as a central, structuring aspect of political economy and social identity in the neighbourhood space?[2]

After being hired at the POPIR in 2012, I slowly began to realize, too, that there was a tangible difference between our relationships with Saint-Henri residents and with their counterparts in Little Burgundy, where after all there is still the biggest collection of HLM in the country. Our offices were in the former neighbourhood, as they had been since 1971, and organizing there was organic and lively, rooted in daily interactions and happenstance meetings on the street.[3] In the latter, connections to the historic English-speaking Black community, and to the allophone immigrant families increasingly making up the population, had continually to be re-cultivated and re-forged.[4] We went to Little Burgundy for meetings with other (mostly white)

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[1] From 2009-2011, I was involved in the settler-based Indigenous Solidarity Committee, as well as a supporter in the Defenders of the Land network. I credit the lines of questioning opened up by comrade Craig Ferguson for getting me thinking more seriously about these two facets of my political life. See his *Unsettling the Commons: Social Movements Within, Against, and Beyond Settler Colonialism* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2017).

[2] See David Harvey, "The Right to the City," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27, 4 (December 2003): 939-41. On the mythic nature of the frontier in the urban context, see Neil Smith's classic essay, "'Class Struggle on Avenue B': The Lower East Side as Wild Wild West," in his *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London: Routledge, 1996), 1-27. On surpassing a strictly metaphorical approach to the links between gentrification and settler colonialism, see Sarah Launius and Geoffrey Alan Boyce, "More Than Metaphor: Settler Colonialism, Frontier Logic, and the Continuities of Racialized Dispossession in a Southwest U.S. City," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 111, 1 (2021): 157-174.

[3] This has since changed, as the POPIR, too, was evicted in 2019. Its offices are now in the CEDA, a community centre just east of Atwater. See Francis Pilon, "Saint-Henri: Un groupe anti-gentrification victime de la gentrification," *24 heures*, 9 May 2019, https://www.24heures.ca/2019/05/09/saint-henri--un-groupe-anti-gentrification-victime-de-la-gentrification.

[4] One of the significant issues facing social housing tenants during my time at the POPIR was the end of long-term social housing financing accords between the federal and provincial governments. We frequently organized door-to-door campaigns in Little Burgundy, as well as

community workers, to do door-to-door campaigning, or to participate in special public assemblies. We were not in any authentic sense part of the daily life of neighbourhood residents.

This chapter represents a fresh opportunity for me to think through these dynamics. In what follows, I return to the working-class social worlds and political organizations of Chapters Two and Three with an eye to the structuring presence of white supremacy, settler colonialism, and anti-Black racism, and then give some space to thinking through the ongoing imprint of these patterns on the mental maps of the present-day tenant's movement. While I reject the self-congratulatory liberalism that understands racism to be the sole province of the white working-class, I am also inspired by David Roediger's reminder of "the value of the … movement speaking frankly to itself – a far more important activity than 'speaking truth to power,' that deeply questionable practice we hear so enthusiastically press-agented."[5] In that sense, this part of the thesis is centrally about whiteness, and the ways in which it has been mobilized and defended in the working-class fight against deindustrialization and displacement in Saint-Henri. This is more than a matter of inclusion – here I aim not simply to "write in" the Indigenous, Black, and migrant presence in the area's past, but rather to show how the social, cultural, and political constitution of the white, working-class, francophone movement has been in relationship to, tension with, and rejection of these subaltern histories, undermining the potential for the creation of a truly liberatory, neighbourhood-based working-class movement. Recognizing, following Satnam Virdee, that "capitalist rule advanced through a process of differentiation and hierarchical re-ordering of the global proletariat," we must also face up to the agency of segments of that proletariat in embracing and crafting moral economies of whiteness within this fragmentation, particularly through nationalist ideologies.[6]

These patterns did not emerge fully formed in the 1960s. The geographical area occupied by present-day Saint-Henri and its adjacent neighbourhood of Lachine (Skaniatará:ti, according

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several public assemblies. On this issue, see Louise Constantin, "Le logement social mis à mal," *Relations* 778 (2015): 6-7.

[5] David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso Books, 2007), x.

[6] Satnam Virdee, "Racialized capitalism: An account of its contested origins and consolidation," *The Sociological Review* 67, 1 (2019): 3-27.

to the Kanien'kéha-language map created by Karonhí:io Delaronde and Jordan Engel[7]) has long been gripped by processes of invasion and displacement, as a hub in the early settler-Indigenous fur trade and a connection between Montreal and the nearby Kanien'kehà:ka community of Kahnawà:ke. Kahnawakehró:non, key local participants in that trade, were similarly enmeshed in the emerging world of 19th-century industrial production, although increasingly excluded and encroached upon by infrastructural expansion as the Southwest grew in economic import.[8]

Nathalie Kermoal has argued that the long history of Indigenous connections with cities in Quebec has been obscured by nationalist and urban historical narratives that locate Indigenous people as outside of capitalist modernity.[9] The work to undo these tropes in Canadian labour history has barely begun,[10] but there are important traces of an Indigenous working class to be found within the 20th-century history of Saint-Henri. The 1940s struggle to unionize Imperial Tobacco, recalled Madeleine Parent in a speech in 1984, was led by Haudenosaunee women.[11] And the first secretary of the newly-minted Local 234 of the Tobacco Workers International Union was a Haudenosaunee man, Ovila Phillips, who went on to become an organizer with the

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[7] Karonhí:io Delaronde and Jordan Engel, "Montreal in Mohawk," *The Decolonial Atlas*, 4 February 2015, https://decolonialatlas.wordpress.com/2015/02/04/montreal-in-mohawk/.

[8] Nicole St-Onge, "'He was neither a soldier nor a slave: he was under the control of no man': Kahnawake Mohawks in the Northwest Fur Trade, 1790-1850," *Canadian Journal of History* 51, 1 (Spring/Summer 2016): 1-32; Daniel Ruëck, "When Bridges Become Barriers: Montreal and Kahnawake Mohawk Territory," in *Metropolitan Natures: Environmental Histories of Montreal*, eds. Stéphane Castonguay and Michèle Dagenais, 228-244 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011).

[9] Nathalie Kermoal, "Connecting Urban and Aboriginal Histories: Towards an Urban Aboriginal History in Québec," *inditerra: Revue international sur l'Autochtonie* 5 (2013): 1-12.

[10] See, for example, Joan Sangster, *Transforming Labour: Women and Work in Post-war Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010); John Sutton Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008); Mary Jane Logan McCallum, *Indigenous Women, Work, and History, 1940-1980* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2014).

[11] A condensed version of the speech can be found in Jeanne Maranda, "La syndicalisation féminine au Québec," *Canadian Woman Studies* 25, 3 (2006): 47-49.

union's Canadian section.[12] Kahnawakehró:non were also inextricably linked with the fate of working-class settlers in the Southwest by the crisis of accumulation that resulted in the Saint-Lawrence Seaway. Significant sections of Kahnawà:ke were expropriated for its construction, deeply impacting the economic and cultural life of the community.[13]

Working-class settler worlds in Montreal's Southwest were structured by the political and social repercussions of these local manifestations of colonial processes, but also by "a larger continental system that lay at the basis of the colonization and settlement of western North America," write Desmond Bliek and Pierre Gauthier, "and whose infrastructures, industries, and built landscape need to be understood not just as an urban tissue particular to Montreal, but as the manifestation of a continental scale of territorial and economic development."[14] My thinking on this has been influenced by Alaina Perez, an undergraduate student in my "History and Memory in Gentrifying Saint-Henri" class. She proposed a brilliant museum exhibit interpreting the natural resources used in industrial capitalism (such as the iron ore used in steelmaking) through "Indigenous relational approaches to material," thinking through how multiple forms of extraction, transport, production and the layers of subjectivity added through the labour process complicate the bounded settler stories told about places like Saint-Henri. Her proposal situates iron ore in juxtaposition with images and documentary fragments of the settler labour history of Stelco, eschewing a didactic narrative: "the objects contained in this exhibition do not explicitly address Indigeneity," she writes. "How this exhibition communicates the Indigenous condition of the place in question is inherently marked by the absences that have been generated by the settler

[12] Phyll Yelle, in *Les gens du Québec (1): St-Henri*, ed. Benoit Michaudville, 32 (Montréal: Éditions Québécoises, 1972); "Délégation canadienne au congrès de l'Union des employés de tabac," *Le Canada*, 24 April 1943, 11; "Ouvriers du tabac," *Le Monde ouvrier*, 5 February 1944, 4.

[13] See Stephanie Phillips, "The Kahnawake Mohawks and the St. Lawrence Seaway" (MA thesis, McGill University, 2000); Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 51-56.

[14] Desmond Bliek and Pierre Gauthier, "Understanding the Built Form of Industrialization along the Lachine Canal in Montreal," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine* 35, 1 (Fall 2006): 5.

colonial occupation called Montreal."[15] The working-class neighbourhoods of the Southwest's industrial suburbs grew around this forced absence, strengthened by acts of enclosure and extraction across the continent.

Further acts of dispossession need to be understood not only as echoes of this original sin, as it were, but instead as manifestations of the ongoing process of colonization, with the discursive invisibilization of Indigenous populations often symptomatic of a more material displacement. One of the major battles in Saint-Henri in the first decade of the 2000s, for instance, was the struggle against government expropriations for the reconstruction of the Turcot Interchange. Valérie Simard reflected critically on her participation in this campaign:

> While the reconstruction required the demolition of around one hundred housing units, the past of the area remained of interest and there were archeological digs to bring the vestiges of the *Village des Tanneries* to the surface. The oldest vestiges exhumed in this way dated from the 1700s, just 50 years after Montreal was founded. The fact that it was one of Montreal's oldest neighbourhoods and among the first industrial sites in Canada made the prospect of further demolitions even more unacceptable, and I wielded this historical perspective throughout the mobilization. It never entered my mind that the Mohawks (Kanien'kehà:ka) lived in this area 4000 years ago and that Montreal was a gathering place for numerous First Nations well before the arrival of European settlers.[16]

According to the most recent federal census data, Saint-Henri in fact has twice as many Indigenous residents as the Montreal average (albeit at a still-small 1.4 per cent of the local population), with the largest proportion of that community living in the poorer, western half of

[15] Alaina Perez, "Material Relations: Industrial Configurations of Saint-Henri. A Museological Exhibition" (HIST 390 – History and Memory in Gentrifying Saint-Henri, Concordia University, April 2021), in possession of author.

[16] Valérie Simard, "Mobilisation Turcot," *POPIR-Comité Logement, 1969-2019: 50 ans de luttes* (December 2019): 18.

the neighbourhood, the area most affected by the Turcot construction.[17] Indigenous residents of the city are continually impacted by capital and the colonial State.

Thinking through anti-Black racism in the long-term constitution of the neighbourhood space also requires grappling with absence. Steven High's work on the multi-racial working-class community of Little Burgundy, carved out of areas variously known as Sainte-Cunégonde, the West End, the Saint-Antoine district, or simply, "Saint-Henri," establishes that Blackness was completely occulted in the vision of the white urban planners who oversaw its "renovation" and re-baptizing, re-emerging on the white viewscreen only with the sensationalized media coverage of crime and drugs in the 1980s.[18] In 2021, Blackness has now safely been ensconced in a sanitized discourse of community and the golden age of jazz, and limited to the Sixties-era public housing in the geographical area east of Atwater.

Recently, in reading the meditation of my Concordia colleague Kelann Currie-Williams on experiencing Little Burgundy's now-demolished Negro Community Centre through Google Street View, and therefore connecting with some of the lost Black geography of the neighbourhood, I was introduced to the concept of "absented-presence" in the works of thinkers Rinaldo Walcott, Dionne Brand, and Katherine McKittrick: "what these three writers articulate of Black history in Canada," Currie-Williams suggests, "is that where there is displacement, erasure, and loss, there is also presence, remains, and potential."[19] McKittrick writes about "the unexpected ways in which black geographic subjects differently produce space within this context of domination and objectification: specifically, the seeking out of alternative geographic options, and the coupling of geography with black matters, histories, knowledges, experiences, and resistances."[20] The absented-presence of Black life in Saint-Henri makes itself felt in the

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[17] Solidarité Saint-Henri, *Portrait du quartier Saint-Henri, d'après les données du Recensement de 2016 de Statistique Canada*, February 2021, 25-27, https://www.solidarite-sh.org/sites/solidarite-sh.org/files/portraitsthenri2016.pdf.

[18] Steven High *Deindustrializing Montreal: Entangled Histories of Race, Residence and Class* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's, forthcoming), 167-202.

[19] See Kelann Currie-Williams, "Life After Demolition: The Absented Presence of Montreal's Negro Community Centre," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine* 48, 2 (2021): 68.

[20] Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 92.

alternative geographies remembered by the Southwest's anglophone Black population, belying the hard present-day border with Little Burgundy. Richard Lord, interviewed in 1982, situated Little Burgundy as "below the tracks, anywhere from, I say, Peel St. to Imperial Tobacco down to the Canal … Many families that lived on east side or west side of Atwater, all have cousins and so forth in that particular area."[21] Renowned pianist Oliver Jones, on the other hand, despite having grown up on Coursol and Georges-Vanier Streets in present-day Little Burgundy, and figuring prominently in the neighbourhood's recent heritagization of its Black jazz legends, has maintained throughout his career that he comes from Saint-Henri.[22] Black community life and its memory defy present-day boundaries, bringing much of the dominant Montreal discourse about race and space into question.

Geographical ambiguities show up in interviews with white residents, too, betraying earlier patterns of identification with parish districts. Élise Chevrefils-Boucher grew up on Paxton street, about halfway between present-day Saint-Henri and Montreal's Old Port district: "Well there are those, there are those who said, 'I come from Saint-Henri.' Not Saint-Henri, us, the parish before, it was Sainte-Hélène, us it was Saint-Joseph, after it was Sainte-Cunégonde. And these three parishes, with the English parish, Sainte-Anne, that, that was all destroyed," she remembers. For her, Little Burgundy was a creation of the 1970s – "but before that it was Saint-Joseph here or Saint-Henri."[23] The new political organizing of the 1960s reflected this flexibility as well: the *Copains de Saint-Henri*, for instance, had their offices in Sainte-Cunégonde, and much of the energy of the *Conseil des Oeuvres* and the Company of Young Canadians' social animation project in Saint-Henri was directed at organizing and supporting tenants targeted for urban renovation in the new "Little Burgundy" section of the

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[21] Richard Lord, interviewed by Danny Fry, 7 September 1982, P0007/SR64, Oral History-Montreal Studies Collection, Concordia University Records Management and Archives.

[22] Winfried Siemerling, "Jazz, Diaspora, and the History and Writing of Black Anglophone Montreal," in *Critical Collaborations: Indigeneity, Diaspora, and Ecology in Canadian Literary Studies*, edited by Smaro Kamboureli and Christl Verduyn, 208, Google Play Books (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2013).

[23] Élise Chevrefils-Boucher, interviewed by Paul-Émile Cadorette and Katy Tari, 9 November 2010, COHDS-12-14 Parcs Canada (Mon Canal) Collection.

neighbourhood.[24] Even after 1967, when most of the CYC's resources were re-directed into the *Comité ouvrier de Saint-Henri*, its *Pouvoir ouvrier* publication continued to provide updates on urban renovation.[25] The early reports of the POPIR, similarly, divided the Southwest into only two sections: south of the Canal was Point Saint-Charles; north was "The 'St-Henri' area bounded by Westmount to the north, Guy Street to the east, and the Lachine Canal to the south. It includes 'Little Burgundy' situated between Guy and Atwater."[26] In the minds of these young, white, francophone activists, east of Atwater was still part of the neighbourhood political project.

This would not last for long. As historian Will Langford has established, the CYC's final assessment of its efforts to help citizens shape the urban renewal process was overall quite negative, deciding in April 1972 to pull entirely out of the eastern part of the neighbourhood – "effectively writing off the population of Little Burgundy as a lumpen proletariat mired in a culture of poverty and unable to effect personal, social, or political transformation."[27] West of Atwater was made up of industrial working-class families, wrote Michel Blondin, but "East of Atwater were mostly people on social assistance, very poor and often disorganized."[28] He blamed the political shortcomings of the social animation approach on these residents: "While in Saint-Henri, we could rely on a natural leadership potential, here the neighbourhood was too

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[24] Lysiane Gagnon, "Les jeunes de Saint-Henri auront de quoi s'occuper: Les 'Copains' reprennent leur activité," *Le Petit journal*, week of 31 December 1961, A-6; Will Langford, *The Global Politics of Poverty in Canada: Development Programs and Democracy, 1964-1979* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020), 88-122.

[25] "St-Henri en bref," *Pouvoir ouvrier* 2, 2 (May 1969): 6; "Feu rue Quesnel," *Pouvoir ouvrier* 3, 6 (March 1970): 3, 21P-900:02/30, Comité Ouvrier de Saint-Henri.-1969-1970, Collection de publications de groupes de gauche et de groupes populaires, Archives UQAM.

[26] Françoise Marceau, "Le 'Sud-Ouest" C'est Quoi?" May 1970, 3, P611.003.01, Saint-Columba House Fonds (Saint-Columba), BANQ.

[27] Langford, *The Global Politics of Poverty in Canada*, 120.

[28] Michel Blondin, "Qu'était le quartier St-Henri avant le POPIR?" *POPIR-Comité Logement, 1969-2019: 50 ans de lutte* (December 2019): 3.

degraded and it was difficult for us to build leadership in a short amount of time. Dysfunctional families were numerous and already overwhelmed with the problems of daily life."[29]

These strategic decisions were framed in the language of class, but there were implicit – and sometimes explicit – racial logics at play in the potent mixture of Catholic social thought and American political theory driving the social animation experiment. In a recent programmatic piece, historians Catherine Larochelle and Ollivier Hubert have written insightfully about the need to better understand the ways in which Quebec's cultural history has been shaped by its role in 19th-century imperialism in Canada and abroad, particularly through the vehicle of missionary projects and propaganda, "a phenomenon that the Quiet Revolution managed not only to erase but to invert: the colonizing and imperialist imaginary of the French Canadians of Quebec, normalized in the 19th century, became an imaginary of the colonized the following century."[30] While much of the growing literature on the impact of missionaries on Quebec's Quiet Revolution emphasizes the progressive elements of these transnational connections,[31] there is a need for more thinking about how they were "caught up in a broader epistemological project of knowing and cataloguing the 'other'," and how that project has conditioned the broader structures of the left.[32] Blondin recalled his early encounter with missionary propaganda in the *Collège Saint-Laurent* of the 1950s, run by the socially engaged *Congrégation de Sainte-Croix*, eventually leading him to the decision to become a social worker:

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[29] Michel Blondin, Yvan Comeau, and Ysabel Provencher, *Innover pour mobiliser: L'actualité de l'expérience de Michel Blondin* (Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2012), 67.

[30] Catherine Larochelle and Ollivier Hubert, "Culture coloniale euroquébécoise et missions catholiques dans l'Ouest canadien au XIXe siècle," *Études d'histoire religieuse* 85, 1-2 (2019): 15.

[31] See, for example, Catherine Foisy, *Au risqué de la conversion: l'expérience québécoise de la mission au XXe siècle* (1945-1980) (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017).

[32] Fred Burrill and Catherine C. LeGrand, "Progressive Catholicism at Home and Abroad: The 'Double Solidarité of Quebec Missionaries in Honduras, 1955-1975," in *Within and Without the Nation: Canadian History as Transnational History*, eds. Karen Dubinsky, Adele Perry, and Henry Yu, 329 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015). Despite this word of caution, our work also falls within the "progressive" school of thought described above.

> When I thought about the priesthood, which I considered during my classical studies, it was really the social dimension that interested me. I was fascinated by the stories of missionaries who told us of distant lands and social action. The Fathers of Sainte-Croix were especially present in Haiti, Brazil, Bengal … Some of them lived overseas for a very long time and became either intellectuals, such as Father Desrochers in Bengal, or very important social activists, such as Father Oscar Mélançon, who worked with the *Jeunesse ouvrière catholique* (JOC) in Brazil and Latin America. Others were involved in social movements here, in publishing (at Fides, especially), in the struggle against juvenile delinquency in Boscoville, or in multicultural centres. The former priest of my parish, Saint-Laurent parish in Ville St. Laurent, became a bishop in a Haitian diocese. In the Saint-Laurent parish, returning or in-transition missionaries were often guests and sometimes stayed there for long periods of time.[33]

Despite the participatory ethos of the early post-war neighbourhood movement, there was an important element of salvation at play: Jesuit priest and POPIR employee Emile Dion, for instance, testified to his desire to "give this population, very typical of this part of Montreal, back its dignity and especially its rightful place in society."[34] Those who resisted being saved were hard to comprehend.

The "citizen" at the heart of Alinsky's liberal-pluralist vision for grassroots participation was also a racialized construct. As geographer Ted Rutland reminds us, "The interest-possessing individual at the core of Alinsky's model, like so many modern conceptions of the human being, ultimately functions as a regulatory norm. It posits, that is, a singular, normative conception of the 'human' that not all individuals are able to emulate."[35] Racialized Others, and particularly

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[33] Michel Blondin, Yvan Comeau, and Ysabel Provencher, *Innover pour mobiliser*, 15.

[34] Alain Lamothe, "Vingt ans au pays du café et de la tourmente," *La Patrie: L'Hebdo des Canadiens-Français*, 10-16 August 1972, 11.

[35] Ted Rutland, *Displacing Blackness: Planning, Power, and Race in Twentieth-Century Halifax* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 183.

Black communities (and in this case even those multi-ethnic whites living in proximity to Blackness) were construed as being irretrievably outside of this norm. Blondin's political memoir is telling:

> At the time, Little Burgundy had Montreal's only black neighbourhood. This population was served by a community centre, the Negro Community Centre, focused on providing services to its own population, without any ties to the much more numerous francophone community. I tried to get in touch with the director, but there was the language barrier and a lack of interest in what was happening in other parts of the neighbourhood.[36]

High's research into the archives of the Negro Community Centre, however, demonstrates that the director in question, Stanley Clyke, was in fact a champion of racial integration, and was at the helm of the organization during a period in the 1950s and early 1960s when the Centre's programs were opened up to all in the neighbourhood. Clyke remained committed to this vision until his death in 1970, after Blondin had already left the Southwest for his own form of missionary work in Latin America, through the aegis of an international development agency, the *Service universitaire canadien outre-mer*. At any rate, the NCC was anything but unconcerned by the broader impacts of urban renewal, as the Black community, already significantly diminished due to suburban flight, was decimated by expropriations.[37] Perhaps a more accurate explanation for the dynamics remembered by Blondin is that many community members felt that the white, middle-class social animators were condescending. Interviewed in the early 1980s, Little Burgundy resident Abel Lewis remembered,

> I remember in the seventies when all of those community organizers were coming in and telling us what the community should look like and what we should be at a certain period of time, the concepts that they were using were probably sociologically very right but unfortunately nobody understood the concepts that they

[36] Michel Blondin, Yvan Comeau, and Ysabel Provencher, *Innover pour mobiliser*, 46.

[37] High, *Deindustrializing Montreal*, 131-132, 167-202.

were trying to get across and that's probably because why you're running into a little hesitation from people talking about the area. They're saying: Ha! Ha! Here comes another community organizer and he's going to say to me what's wrong with us.[38]

The inability of white social animators to conceive of and engage with the robust community life of Black people in Saint-Henri was interwoven with the emergence of the neo-nationalist Quebec New Left. Historian Sean Mills has emphasized the great extent to which the political effervescence of Montreal's Sixties was based on interactions with and adoptions of postcolonial thought emerging from Global South anti-colonial movements.[39] As we saw in Chapter One, and as the quotation from Jacques Godbout at the beginning of this chapter indicates, the difficult lives of working-class, white, francophones in Saint-Henri became a symbol for the colonization of the Québécois. The original 1963 Manifesto of the *Front de libération du Québec* is a good example:

> In Quebec there prevails … an unjust and paradoxical situation exemplified by comparing the Saint-Henri and Westmount neighbourhoods. On one side, we find the typically Québécois masses, poor and miserable, and on the other, an English minority displaying the most shameful luxury. Our progressive economic devastation, an increasingly totalizing foreign domination, does not call for provisional, short-term solutions. Patriots say NO TO COLONIALISM, NO TO EXPLOITATION.[40]

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[38] Abel Lewis, interviewed by Danny Fry, 9 September 1982, P0007/SR65, Oral History-Montreal Studies Collection, Concordia University Records Management and Archives.

[39] See Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010).

[40] Front de libération du Québec, "Manifeste du FLQ à la Nation," in *Les Manifestes du FLQ* (Online publication: Vertiges éditeur, 2019), Collection numérique de la Bibliothèque et archives nationales du Québec.

The *Comité ouvrier de Saint-Henri* similarly exhorted their neighbours: "QUÉBÉCOIS BROTHERS, we must wake up, stop BEGGING for CHARITY and TAKE what is ours. These factories and these buildings were built by our arms and the arms of our fathers. WE, FRANCOPHONE QUÉBÉCOIS, SHOULD PROFIT FROM THEM!!!"[41]

For the COSH, workers at factories like Eagle Toys were "slaves": "Getting cursed at, wrecking your health at work, without being able to say anything: this is to be a slave."[42] They enthusiastically adopted FLQ theorist Pierre Vallières' concept of the Québécois as the "White n-----s of America."[43] In his classic book *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, David Roediger examines the ways in which antebellum Euro-descended workers adopted the language of slavery in order to critique their own conditions of exploitation, "not [as] an act of solidarity with the slave but rather a call to arms to end the inappropriate oppression of whites."[44] In Quebec, writes sociologist Philippe Néméh-Nombré, the frequent invocation of Vallières' phrase to describe the oppression of French-descended Euro-settlers situates the figure "of the 'slave,' of the 'nigger' as the negation of existence and liberty, and thus as an anti-ontological figure who can be mobilized metaphorically, without reference to the real existence of black individuals and communities."[45] For the Québécois

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[41] "Assistance-sociale et chômage," *Pouvoir ouvrier* 3, 6 (March 1970): 2, 21P-900:02/30, Comité Ouvrier de Saint-Henri.-1969-1970, Collection de publications de groupes de gauche et de groupes populaires, Archives UQAM.

[42] "Ouvriers d'Eagle Toy, Debout!" *Pouvoir ouvrier*, Spécial Eagle Toy, n.d. 1969, 5, 21P-900:02/30, Comité Ouvrier de Saint-Henri.-1969-1970, Collection de publications de groupes de gauche et de groupes populaires, Archives UQAM.

[43] "Aux armes Québécois!" *Pouvoir ouvrier* 3, 3 (Janvier 1970), no page numbers, 21P-900:02/30, Comité Ouvrier de Saint-Henri.-1969-1970, Collection de publications de groupes de gauche et de groupes populaires, Archives UQAM.

[44] Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, 68.

[45] Philippe Néméh-Nombré, "'Sauvage,' 'esclave,' et 'Nègres blancs d'Amérique': hypothèse sur le complexe onto-politique québécois," *Histoire Engagée*, 11 April 2019, https://histoireengagee.ca/sauvage-esclave-et-negres-blancs-damerique-hypotheses-sur-le-complexe-onto-politique-quebecois/.

worker, and therefore Saint-Henri, to become the subject of colonial, racial oppression, Black people had to be forced farther into the background.

Godbout and Hubert Aquin's classic 1962 documentary, *À Saint-Henri le 5 septembre*, provides an excellent example. The "cinema-vérité" production, filmed over the course of 24 hours in the neighbourhood and aided along by Maurice Nadeau and the *Copains*, touched off a firestorm of controversy amongst Saint-Henri's commercial elite, several of whom sued Godbout and the NFB for defamation.[46] It is a powerful, gritty film, portraying Saint-Henri simultaneously as "a shelter, a playground, and a prison."[47] And yet, writes Emilie Nicholas, throughout the whole 41 minutes of the film, the Black community is accorded only brief mention:

> The film pauses, for a minute or two, on images of Little Burgundy's Black community with this comment:
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> "Saint-Henri has its black reserve, but little segregation is practiced. First, because negros are a minority there, they live on the same streets, and above all, supreme reassurance, they speak English."[48]

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[46] Jacques Godbout, "Lettre ouverte à Shannon Walsh, à propos de Saint-Henri," *Spirale* 238 (Fall 2011): 33-34; Jules Béliveau, "Maurice Nadeau et l'O.N.F.: Les vedettes qu'il découvre, ce sont des délinquants!" *Photo-Journal*, 1-8 July 1964, 2; Benoit Michaudville, "Le rôle de la Voix Populaire," in *Les Gens du Québec (1): St-Henri*, ed. Benoit Michaudville, 19-21 (Montréal: Éditions Québécoises, 1972).

[47] Emma Kreiner, "Saint-Henri and the Urban Uncanny: A Comparative Analysis of Hubert Aquin's *À Saint-Henri le cinq septembre* (1962) and Shannon Walsh's *Saint-Henri the 26th of August* (2011)" (MA thesis, Concordia University, 2013), 20.

[48] Note that this is a direct translation of the French narration. In the truncated English-language version of the film, *September Five in Saint-Henri*, dir. Hubert Aquin (Montreal: National Film Board of Canada, 1962), the narrator, Bill Davies, says, "Nobody worries about segregation in Saint-Henri. The negroes are in the minority, they live in the same streets as everyone else, and anyway, most of them speak a different language: English." Uncertain of how Nicolas was employing its translation, I have kept the outmoded but less offensive "Negro" in place of the N-word.

> They say that there is little segregation in Montreal – but nevertheless enough that one can talk about a reserve. Maybe if Blacks were more numerous, there might have to be concern, but not just yet.[49]

Through the prism of language politics, the Black community of Saint-Henri, at this point several years away from becoming part of the "renewed" Little Burgundy, was basically written out of the fabric of the neighbourhood. In a recent study, geographer Délice Mugabo's exploration of anglophone and francophone Black solidarity in the face of police violence in the 1990s leads her to conclude of Montreal that "race, not language, configures the city."[50] Conversely, establishing language as the dividing line required centring whiteness.

This obscuring of Blackness had its roots in the inspiration for the documentary – Gabrielle Roy's *Bonheur d'occasion*.[51] Roy was one of several authors to whom neo-nationalist intellectuals turned in order to unearth aspects of French-Canadian identity that could be transformed into new, critical Québécois consciousness.[52] But as literary scholar Winfried Siemerling reminds us, there is only one reference to Black people in this classic depiction of working-class life in Saint-Henri: at a house party on Sir Georges-Étienne Square, someone turns on the radio and the guests begin dancing to jazz music. A character asks, "'*Qu'est-ce que c'est que cette danse de n----es*?' ('Is that some new N----r dance?')."[53] Roy imagined Saint-Henri as a "village in the big city" peopled with recent migrants from Quebec's countryside, opposing a certain rural innocence to the encroachments of poverty and industrial life.[54] Black people were

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[49] Emilie Nicholas, "Maîtres Chez l'Autre," *Liberté* 326 (Winter 2020): 42.

[50] Délice Mugabo, "Black in the city: on the ruse of ethnicity and language in an antiblack landscape," *Identities* 26, 6 (2019): 631.

[51] Jacques Godbout, "Lettre ouverte à Shannon Walsh, à propos de Saint-Henri."

[52] See André Brochu, "La nouvelle relation écrivain-critique," *Parti Pris* 2, 5 (1965): 52-62.

[53] Siemerling, "Jazz, Diaspora, and the History and Writing of Black Anglophone Montreal," 201.

[54] Gabrielle Roy, *Bonheur d'occasion* (Montréal: Les Éditions du Boréal, 2009), 328; Yannick Rech, "La Ville et son expression romanesque dans *Bonheur d'occasion* de Gabrielle Roy," *Voix*

denied this innocence, construed as inherently urban and perhaps even threatening, despite the fact that much of the Black community during the time of Roy's writing had very recently immigrated to the city from parts of rural Ontario and Nova Scotia.[55]

Building from *Bonheur d'occasion*, Godbout and other intellectuals went to Saint-Henri in search of "*le petit peuple*": working-class, to be sure, albeit increasingly affected by deindustrialization; Euro-Québécois, French-speaking but with a particular dialect – a local version of what Saint-Henri-born linguist Gilles des Marchais called "*le québécien*" – and with a villager-like attachment to the territory of their neighbourhood.[56] As Blondin wrote:

> The people of Saint-Henri belong to a world apart. There, in their own place, a deep need is satisfied: social contact with others in the same condition ("people like us folks," as they say), who share the same values and the same perception of the world. The residents of this neighbourhood find comfort in living amongst each other. They need this contact, sometimes crude to the eyes of strangers to the neighbourhood, but very much sincere, with people and families like themselves. Whence the intense feeling of belonging to the milieu. This is the positive aspect of isolation. The population identifies with its neighbourhood, it is proud to belong to it and there finds essential satisfactions which prevent a deeper deterioration.[57]

These elements, identified by anthropologist Marie Letellier in her 1971 study of Montreal's Centre-Sud neighbourhood as combining aspects of Oscar Lewis' "culture of poverty" with a

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et images 4, 2 (December 1978): 245-248. See also Nathalie Dolbec, "Les descriptions de villages dans l'oeuvre de Gabrielle Roy," *Francophonies d'Amérique* 29 (Spring 2010): 11-34.

[55] David C. Este, "The Black Church as Social Welfare Institution: Union United Church and the Development of Montreal's Black Community, 1907-1940," *Journal of Black Studies* 35, 1 (September 2004): 8-9.

[56] Jacques Godbout, "L'année zéro," *Parti pris* 7 (April 1964): 9; Gilles des Marchais, "Défense et illustration du québécien," *Parti pris* 3, 6 (January 1966): 24-43.

[57] Michel Blondin, L'animation sociale en milieu urbain: une solution," *Recherches sociographiques* 6, 3 (1965): 286.

deteriorating class position, alienation from the broader society, and the reflexes of the colonized, were good grounds for the political project of white New Left thinkers inspired by Fanon and Albert Memmi.[58] The self-appointed task of these intellectuals was to re-instil in this homogenous population "a common thread allowing a series of situations to be interpreted and leading to the possession of a global vision of society."[59]

Despite the active early implication of social animators of a variety of stripes in the struggle against urban renewal, the search for "*le petit peuple*" was thus greatly facilitated by the City's re-drawing of neighbourhood boundaries. Saint-Henri was heavily francophone when the Drapeau administration announced its plans for urban renewal in 1965, but also included the multi-lingual, multi-racial working-class east of Atwater, with its Black, Italian, Irish, Scottish, Chinese, Belgian, German, Polish, and Ukrainian communities.[60] By 1972, within the new geographical limits created by the City, POPIR activist Benoit Michaudville's profile of the neighbourhood could safely claim that 97.7 per cent of Saint-Henri residents were French-speaking.[61] The City recognized the new dynamics it had created when in 1973 it erected a statue of famous 19th-century Quebec strongman Louis Cyr in the far west end of the neighbourhood. Louis Cyr in fact had never lived in Saint-Henri, but had briefly (and unsuccessfully, having been attacked by working-class residents) served as a policeman in Sainte-Cunégonde, east of Atwater.[62] In the run-up to urban renovation, media coverage of the new Little Burgundy frequently mentioned his connection to the area. But as demolition commenced, it was decided

[58] See Marie Letellier, *On n'est pas des trous-de-cul* (Montréal: Moult Éditions, 2019), 173-187.

[59] Claude Larivière, *St-Henri: L'Identification du milieu*. Cahier 1. (Montréal: Centre national de recherche du Québec, 1973), 6, n6.

[60] Marceau, "Le Sud-Ouest c'est quoi?", 5.

[61] Benoit Michaudville, "Le Quartier de St-Henri: Sa Population, son elite," in *Les Gens du Québec (1): St-Henri*, ed. Benoit Michaudville, 13 (Montréal: Éditions Québécoises, 1972).

[62] On the rejection of Louis Cyr in Sainte-Cunégonde, see Kathleen Lord, "Permeable Boundaries: Negotiation, Resistance, and Transgression of Street Space in Saint-Henri, Québec, 1875-1905," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine* 33, 2 (2005): 25-26.

that this powerful symbol of Quebec's popular culture was best associated with white, working-class Saint-Henri.[63]

Figure 4: Evidence of Louis Cyr's iconic symbolic status for the neighbourhood and Quebec as a whole, Saint-Henri groups decided to decorate the statue in red during the 2012 Quebec student strike.

Photo taken by Valérie Simard.

These divisions found an echo in the neighbourhood's working-class movement. Imprisoned FLQ intellectual Charles Gagnon recognized as much in an ironic 1968 criticism he wrote of Godbout, whose own politics had softened remarkably over the decade: "Alright, Saint-Henri is not Westmount," he said, in a tongue-in-cheek parody of those who objected to the links being made between Quebec *indépendantistes* and movements for national liberation, "but Saint-Henri isn't a ghetto like Harlem because there is 'Little Burgundy' and the citizens of Saint-Henri don't have guns behind their doors like the Blacks of Harlem."[64] (Gagnon of course disagreed with this position, still yet several years removed from his own move away from the

[63] See Serge Fisette, "Robert Pelletier, sculpture: Louis Cyr, vers la création d'un monument: entretien avec Anne-Marie Sigouin," *Espace sculpture* 72 (2005): 25-27; High, *Deindustrializing Montreal*, 176.

[64] Charles Gagnon, "Une lettre de Charles Gagnon," *Liberté* 10, 7 (January-February 1969): 93. See also David St-Denis Lisée, "'Le monde va changer de base': L'horizon international du groupe Marxiste-Léniniste En Lutte! (1972-1982)" (MA thesis, UQAM, 2019), 44-46.

revolutionary nationalism of the Sixties). In 1974, the CSN's *Le Travail* magazine began running a regional profile series entitled, "*Québécois Pure Laine*,"[65] making the political decision to start with Montreal. "Because when we talk about the fabric of the nation, of died-in-the-wool, pure Québécois or popular culture," they argued, one thought of the countryside; in Montreal, however, they reminded the reader, "almost half of the Québécois live there." To underline the point, the authors interviewed Saint-Henri-born comedian Yvon Deschamps, who took them on a tour of the neighbourhood, recounting the tale of a six-day battle with the English in a park bordering lower Westmount. For Deschamps and the CSN, francophone Saint-Henri was also "*Un village en ville*."[66]

Similar categories structured the memories of my interview participants. Karina Montambeault is a product of a francophone background, but from Montreal's middle-class suburbs. She described the first time she came to Saint-Henri, in the late 1990s:

> Saint-Henri was really a popular neighbourhood. So there were lots of people on welfare, lots of small-time workers,[67] as we call them. The Imperial Tobacco factory was still going. I liked it, but it was a little destabilizing all the same. I remember thinking to myself, "Woo! It's far from my culture." And, I have a memory, you see, of Place Saint-Henri metro station. I had the impression of being in another universe completely, completely from the universe of the Université de Montréal and the francophone milieu, even though they were francophones. And, also … people were talking and I didn't understand everything they said, and they were speaking French. But I didn't dare tell them so I tried to figure it out. There was (I don't know if we can call it that) a popular language or a manner of expression that was very particular

[65] An expression meaning "died-in-the-wool" or "pure" Québécois, referring to descendants from the original French settlers.

[66] "Québécois Pure Laine: Montréal, c'est aussi nous autres," *Le Travail* 50, 1 (January 1974): 32-35. Although the original references "étoffe du pays" and not "de la nation," the framework is a nationalist one. My translation.

[67] "Petits travailleurs, qu'on appelle." My translation.

> to the Southwest neighbourhoods of Montreal or Hochelaga-Maisonneuve … Maybe Hochelaga-Maisonneuve too. I felt a little like I was in another society.[68]

Another white Québécoise interviewee, who grew up in Little Burgundy in the 1980s, but who moved to Saint-Henri in the early 2000s, also described her new neighbourhood as being "a little village." In contrast, she remembered Little Burgundy as "More rough … the way I heard it talked about, it was better to go around in a group than all alone." When I asked why, she stated simply, "I think there are more gangs over there."[69] This sense is representative of much of the media coverage of the 1980s and 1990s. My interviewee nuanced her opinion by saying that these were of course childhood recollections, and that there were also lots of fights and intimidation at the high school she later attended in Saint-Henri. But it is all the more significant, I think, that after so many years, what stuck with her from her childhood were contemporary discourses about policing and criminality that pathologized and sensationalized the social and geographical space east of Atwater – echoing the earlier anti-Black justifications of city planners used to bulldoze the West End and refashion it into the modern Little Burgundy.[70]

French historian Alain Laure points out that the almost anti-modern evocation of the village by residents of Paris' "*quartiers populaires*" is more "a formula, a way of making people understand," than a simple equation. Still, he submits, the closer one looks at the commonly evoked themes of uniformity, familiarity, and solidarity, the more one sees the cracks in the representation.[71] Differences were present in the homogenous village, if obscured. In 1987, following the shocking shutdowns of the Simmons Bed and Coleco-Eagle Toys plants, observers asked not about the many migrant workers employed in the factories but instead wondered,

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[68] Karina Montambeault, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 13 November 2019.

[69] Luce Parisien and Agathe Melançon, interviewed by Fred Burrill and Laurence Hamel-Roy, 15 March 2019. My translation.

[70] Janin Hadlaw, "Locating Crisis: Representations of Race and Space in the English Media. Montreal, 1987-1992" (MA thesis, Concordia University, 1996). See also High, *Deindustrializing Montreal*, 343-345.

[71] Alain Faure, "Le local: une approche du quartier populaire (Paris 1880-1914)," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée* 105, 2 (1993): 489-502.

"Where will the traditional population go?"; "authentic, friendly, warm people," in the words of local CLSC director Pierre-Paul Lachapelle.[72] Difference was also mobilized as something to be feared. Jean-Pierre Wilsey's 1989 denunciation of the COPAK plant's conversion to student residences was not just about the loss of industrial space. He reminded readers of what had happened in Montreal's Plateau and Milton-Parc sectors, where "it's becoming obvious that the arrival of a new population and a new culture sparked major social and economic transformations in these neighbourhoods."[73]

As gentrification increased, the movement increasingly developed a siege mentality – the "*petit peuple*" was under attack. Lachapelle again mounted the barricades against COPAK's conversion. "We don't want them to take us for Iroquois … We can't be bought off with medals and trinkets. We want McGill to invest real efforts in community recovery."[74] This type of language was obviously racist and insulting to Haudenosaunee peoples, who would soon show the world just how far they were willing to go in defense of their territory, facing off against the Canadian Army in the colonial state's 1990 attempted invasion of nearby Kanehsatà:ke and Kahnawà:ke.[75] [Again, the roots of the neighbourhood's mythos in Roy's *Bonheur d'occasion* are on display. The novel's only reference to Indigenous people occurs when the character Emmanuel, desperate to find some way to amuse his disinterested female companion Florentine, asks her if she wants to visit Kahnawà:ke. Realizing she doesn't even know where it is, he says, "If only I had a month I'd show you a lot of places," to which she responds, "Well, you've only

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[72] André Noël, "La Crise de Saint-Henri," *La Presse Plus*, 28 March 1987, B6. On the use of migrant workers as strike-breakers at Coleco, see Jean Fortier, "Une expérience de solidarité à l'usine Coleco," *Vie ouvrière* 25, 99 (November 1975): 565-570.

[73] Jean-Pierre Wilsey, "Non à la fermeture des nos quartiers. Pas de Schefferville dans le Sud-Ouest." *Vie ouvrière* 29, 2 (August 1989): 24.

[74] Caroline Montpetit, "L'université McGill aidera au développement social et économique des quartiers du Sud-Ouest," *La Presse*, 13 June 1989, A11.

[75] See in particular *Kanehstake: 270 Years of Resistance*, dir. Alanis Obamsawin (Montréal: National Film Board of Canada, 1993), https://www.onf.ca/ film/ kanehsatake_ 270_ ans_ resistance/.

got two weeks and we're not about to go running over there to look at the sa---ges."[76]] But Lachapelle's derisive invocation of the Iroquois also neatly placed the French-speaking Euro-settler residents of Saint-Henri in the position of indigeneity themselves, becoming part of a pattern of "narratives that normalize Settler people on the land and exclude or eliminate Indigenous peoples and Indigenous presence on the land."[77]

This process has continued to play itself out in the intervening years. Saint-Henri has become much less white since Michaudville wrote in 1972, as 24.5 per cent of neighbourhood residents are now from racialized communities.[78] Gentrification, language, and race were sometimes confounded in the analysis of my interview participants, reflecting not only the historical patterns of working-class composition in the area but also the broader trend of movement discourse of the last 60 years. One interviewee reflected,

> You know, it's like two different worlds. I don't get the impression that there is any tie between the poor, who are poorer and poorer, and the middle class, who are there, who are taking over a neighbourhood they don't seem to know. Or that they don't give a damn about, maybe. They are in their little bubbles, in their little lives. And so, you know, me I'm having a hard time making ends meet, I see these luxury cars, fuck, that if I knew how to drive, I would … In any case, the crazy things that go through my head when I see these cars cruising around when I know that I could eat in a much healthier way, and a much better way than I eat now. I find it frustrating.
>
> I'm not going to hide it, I have a tough time with English. I have nothing against anglophones, that's not the problem, but it's just that the neighbourhood here is becoming more and more anglophone. I have a tough time with English. I understand

[76] Roy, *Bonheur d'occasion*, 380. Translation from Gabrielle Roy, *The Tin Flute*, trans. Alan Brown (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 274.

[77] Emma Battell Lowman and Adam J. Barker, *Settler: Identity and Colonialism in 21st Century Canada* (Halifax: Fernwood, 2015), 34.

[78] Solidarité Saint-Henri, *Portrait du quartier Saint-Henri, d'après les données du Recensement de 2016 de Statistique Canada*, February 2021, 26, https://www.solidarite-sh.org/sites/solidarite-sh.org/files/portraitsthenri2016.pdf.

a little, I can get by a little bit, but by lack … I was never interested in learning other languages, honestly, and it's not like I want to insult anyone or anything, but from lack of interest, I was always lazy in learning other languages and I find it a little too bad that sometimes I'm going by a restaurant and it's only people speaking in English. I was used, when I was young, to everyone speaking French, y'know, much more than today. That's another huge difference, I think, in the neighbourhood here. Even when I go by the *polyvalente Saint-Henri*, I have nothing against immigrants, it makes our country. But it's because these days – when I was young, I remember, another difference is that there are many, it's the teens at the school, it's 90 per cent immigrants. I feel like a minority in my area while it wasn't like that when I was a teen. It was really more like 50/50 or 60 …

FB: *You mean anglo/franco?*

I'm talking about whites versus … You know I don't want to do racial stuff or whatever or seem racist or whatever, but you know, it's the differences I see, that are very different from when I was young. At the same time, it's positive all the same where there are people like my boy, even at his school there are lots of immigrants, it forces people to be interested in other things as well. There are other cultures, there are other ways of seeing. That can be good, but anyway it's striking, I find, to my eyes, especially the anglophone side and the immigration side, that's really, really different from when I was young. It's really, really different. I felt more when I was a teenager, too, that … it was more about class, y'know, let's say poor versus the middle-class poor who lived here. And, there again, maybe I'm wrong, or I don't know, but it's the memories I have that are really, really, really different from when I was young.[79]

There is obviously a lot to unpack here. According to the most recent available data, while there is a higher rate of English-French bilingualism in Saint-Henri (67.6 per cent) than in Montreal as

[79] Geneviève Tremblay-Fafard, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 7 August 2020.

a whole, only 9.7 per cent of Saint-Henri residents speak only English. In terms of languages spoken in the home, 55.6 per cent of residents are francophone (a 3.8 per cent decrease from 2011), and 22.7 per cent anglophone (a marginal 1.8 per cent increase from 2011). Less than one per cent of residents speak neither French nor English. Moreover, Saint-Henri has a much higher percentage of white residents (75.5 per cent) than Montreal as a whole (67.1 per cent), and the poorer sectors of the neighbourhood have elevated proportions of racialized residents compared to the rest of the area.[80] What is most striking to me about this interview is how much it reflects the historical composition of the post-war working-class movement – class and language being melded together – and how much there is an easy slippage from there to race, even though the immigrant teens at the local high school are as likely to speak to one another in French as they are any other language. Just as non-white people had to be disappeared from view in order to create the quintessential Québécois working-class neighbourhood, their reassertion of presence in Saint-Henri, obviously higher now than in the 1960s and 1970s, is easily interpreted as an infringement on the cultural character of the area.

There is also an increasing moral panic in Saint-Henri about the visible presence of unhoused or street-associated Indigenous neighbours, as Inuit journalist Ossie Michelin learned first-hand in Spring 2016 when two police officers showed up to his door to warn him about "homeless aboriginals" and "homeless Inuit people" in the neighbourhood.[81] Local murals created by Indigenous artists, part of the 2017 Unceded Voices: An Anticolonial Street Art Convergence, have repeatedly been vandalized.[82] Statues erected to the glory of conquest, on the

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[80] Solidarité Saint-Henri, *Portrait du quartier Saint-Henri, d'après les données du Recensement de 2016 de Statistique Canada*, 24-27.

[81] Christopher Curtis, "St. Henri residents say police encourage racial profiling against Inuit," *Montreal Gazette*, 12 May 2016, https://montrealgazette.com/news/profiling. Some of this moral panic has fortunately been tempered by more holistic understandings of houselessness, through the auspices of groups like the POPIR, *Solidarité Saint-Henri*, and *Travail de rue/Action communautaire*. See *Actes du forum sur la précarité des conditions de logement et itinérance: Verdun, Pointe Saint-Charles, la Petite-Bourgogne, Saint-Henri, et Émard-Saint-Paul*, 22 October 2015, http://cdsv.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/ actes_forum_22_octobre.pdf.

[82] Gloria Henriquez, "Mural calling out white supremacy in Saint-Henri defaced for a third time," *Global News*, 8 October 2017, https://globalnews.ca/news/3792259/mural-calling-out-white-supremacy-in-saint-henri-defaced-for-a-third-time/.

other hand, such as that in *Parc Saint-Henri* featuring French colonizer Jacques Cartier standing on the disembodied heads of Indigenous people, are celebrated as part of the cultural heritage of the neighbourhood.[83]

I tried to use my oral history interviews with settler anti-gentrification activists to open up shared space to reflect on the links between gentrification and colonialism, but I approached the subject rather gingerly, partially because I was unsure of my own analysis, and partially because I didn't know how to go about asking the question. In retrospect, I suspect that part of this is that the sheer scope and depth of the violence of colonial dispossession is in many ways "in the realm of the unthinkable" for white settlers like myself and my interviewees. Analogy is an inadequate tool.[84] Sometimes, my poor framing led to uncomfortable responses:

> *FB: You know, sometimes, we say things like, "It's our neighbourhood! The neighbourhood is ours!"*
>
> Yes! It's our neighbourhood!
>
> *FB: We are losing the neighbourhood. Do you think that there is a link to Indigenous struggles or like…?*
>
> No…
>
> *FB: Well, you know, they are talking about land theft.*

[83] See Sarah A Wilkinson, "The Living Monument: A Consideration of the Politics of Indigenous Representation and Public Historical Monuments in Quebec" (MA thesis, Concordia University, 2011); Pohanna Pyne Feinberg, "Re-storying place: The pedagogical force of walking in the work of Indigenous artist-activists Émilie-Monnet and Cam," *International Journal of Education Through Art* 17, 1 (2021): 163-185.

[84] Lawrence L. Langer, *Preempting the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 64, cited in Paul Prescott, "Unthinkable ≠ Unknowable: On Charlotte Delbo's 'Il Faut Donner à Voir'," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 48, 3 (2014): 459.

> No. No. Well, sometimes, there are good groups and sometimes, there are … It's like the Inuit: there are some who are okay, there are some who don't have homes. In … Saint-Henri, there are lots of Inuit. "Big bottle of beer, man, let's go!" But they don't beg from anyone. At Berri metro, they're lying around like animals. The police do nothing. If they do something, they have the right to pick them up. Before Christmas, I said, "They're worse than animals." The big bottle, those guys; the police went by (they were like), "No, no. They aren't bothering anyone, those guys." And it's true they weren't bothering anyone. It was freezing out. I go by Guy sometimes. There are three, four in a row. Atwater, there were six the day before yesterday. I said, "It's too bad." But they like living like that … When you have a roof over your head, you're okay. Me, I like having a few beers, but I have my roof over my head.[85]

Other times, my line of questioning simply didn't get very far at all, running up against the boundaries of a sort of leftist civic nationalism. In 2013, a group of us in Saint-Henri occupied a vacant lot owned by slumlord Peter Sergakis for six days, calling on the city to reserve un-used property for social housing. The slogan for the action was "*À Qui la Ville? À Nous la Ville*!" (Whose City? Our City!). I asked Marc-Olivier Rainville, an enthusiastic participant in the action: "How does this fit for you with Indigenous questions, the question of colonialism, y'know we talk about 'Our Neighbourhood,' but does it really belong to us?" Although I was trying to ask about structural inequality, his response came in the form of a reflection on neighbourhood and national identity: "It's like recently some politicians tried to define what is to be Québécois. You're Québécois if you live in Québec. So, in Saint-Henri, you're from Saint-Henri if you live in Saint-Henri. I don't know if that responds to your question, and I don't really see a link with colonialism."[86] The door I was trying to open was quickly closed.

When Carole Orphanos expressed the feeling that she and her neighbours were being dispossessed, I asked, again quite tentatively: "Y'know, you were saying before, it's like we're being robbed, a bit, of our neighbourhood? What do you think about, like, is there a link between that and like, how First Nations folks, they feel?" She responded,

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[85] Doris LeBlanc, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 16 January 2020.

[86] Marc-Olivier Rainville, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 7 June 2018. My translation.

> Yeah, huh? Really. Oh yeah. Yup, they were robbed, and now it's our turn to get robbed … it's always the strongest who win, and today it's all about money, it's always money. But, I mean, it's not everybody who robbed them, the First Nations, either, because I wouldn't have done that, y'know, robbed them. But I mean, they're always welcome. What they lived through, yes, that's what we're feeling today. The fact that they were robbed of their land. Yes, that's definitely what's happening in Saint-Henri. We're being robbed.[87]

While there is much more openness here than in the blatant self-substitution evident in Pierre-Paul Lachapelle's statement on the COPAK factory, there is a certain safety, both in the way I framed my question and in the response to it, in relegating colonial dispossession to the past. Sarah Launius and Geoffrey Alan Boyce's study of gentrification in the U.S. Southwest points to the "heterotemporal multiplicity" of settler colonialisms, warning against "the temporal slippages that constantly permeate the settler colonial condition – in which harms are always to be located in the past, whereas the issues most essential for official decision making are prospects for accumulation in the present."[88] One anonymous interviewee's reflections went much in the same direction:

> I don't entirely buy the really, like, slogan-y line, that I think was big when I first moved to the neighbourhood. Which was this like, gentrification is the new colonialism or something? Like, I buy some of the pithy remarks people made back about that, like no, colonialism is the new colonialism, like, it's not, it's a thing that … because of who it targets it feels different. Because of the like, demographics of who is targeted by gentrification. And, in this context at least, I think the people targeted are mostly like working-class francophones, and, because of the history of Quebec, and some of the weirdness around, like … I don't know what to call it.

[87] Carole Orphanos, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 29 May 2018. My translation.

[88] Launius and Boyce, "More Than Metaphor," 170.

> Quebeckers relating to being, like, both colonizers and colonized, or something, but wanting to be like, I want colonization to mean something different, than what happened between the English and the French.[89]

Launius and Boyce point to the work of Dene scholar Glen Coulthard, who argues that letting go of the progressive teleology of historical materialism allows us to understand the colonial dispossession at the root of capital accumulation as continual and ongoing.[90] Again, there is a necessity to move away from analogy – gentrification is not "like" colonialism; it is an expression of the structure of settler colonial capitalism.[91] Different subaltern groups within that structure experience and relate to dispossession with different tools at their disposal. Poor and working-class white people, while obviously lacking the material means to benefit from the capitalist re-invasion of Saint-Henri, nonetheless have the proceeds from the "wages of whiteness" with which to fight against their own uprooting – a moral economy built, as we have seen, through the creation of a working-class neighbourhood identity rooted in anti-Black urban planning and structured around the forced material and discursive absence of Indigenous people.

Of course, these preoccupations have not gone unregistered for many in the neighbourhood movement. Saint-Henri tenant and POPIR organizer Patricia Viannay noted the necessity to balance, "In the context of gentrification, this whole discourse, really important for people we work with: '*c'est mon quartier, j'y suis, j'y reste*' [it's my neighbourhood, I'm here, I'm staying here – a popular demonstration slogan in the movement for social housing], with the capacity the neighbourhood should have to welcome new people! That's also a big challenge."[92] My anonymous interviewee pursued the reflection even farther, saying, "I think I haven't done a

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[89] Anonymous, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 7 August 2020.

[90] See Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 10, 13.

[91] Launius and Boyce, "More Than Metaphor," 171-2.

[92] Patricia Viannay, in Fred Burrill, "D'une lutte à l'autre: le POPIR-Comité Logement a 50 ans!" Youtube video, 29:41, 16 December 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=acYX2uFOGaM.

like, gentrification and colonialism are the same thing. And in fact, like, walked out of a lot of years of being involved in ostensibly anti-gentrification stuff … being really unclear on whether or not focusing on gentrification is like, strategic, for radicals?"[93]

Another important slogan often chanted in demonstrations against gentrification and for the construction of social housing is "*Quartiers populaires, quartiers solidaires*!" But I wonder: as historian Bryan D. Palmer wrote about class formation in 19th-century Canada and Australia: much as a proletarian "class was made through struggle and solidarity, gaining much from capital and [the] state, it was also made against struggle and solidarity, giving much to capital and the state."[94] Opposition to the deprivations of private property is not inherently transformative. In fact, it can have the effect of erasing some of the more fundamental structural divisions of our society, and thereby strengthening the settler order.[95] What these interviews and this broader historical investigation have made clear for me is that, within the settler tenant movement, we need to think about moving away from territorial-based claims about the right to the city, with their concomitant resistance to changes in the cultural character of urban space. Perhaps more than any other neighbourhood in Montreal, such claims about Saint-Henri cannot be separated from the broader project of Euro-centric Quebec nationalism. Instead, I think we need to re-orient our movement away from the language of gentrification and come back to the centring of class struggle, building a multi-racial, working-class movement that centres capitalism and colonialism in its analysis. It is time to let go the racially exclusive "quartier populaire."

I don't think this means that organizing on the neighbourhood scale is a mistake, particularly when it can be a fulcrum for building working-class power through direct resistance

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[93] Anonymous, interviewed by Fred Burrill, 7 August 2020.

[94] Bryan D. Palmer, "Nineteenth Century Canada and Australia: The Paradoxes of Class Formation," *Labour/Le Travail* 38 (Fall 1996): 35.

[95] On these erasures see Fred Burrill, "The Settler Order Framework: Rethinking Canadian Working-Class History," *Labour/le Travail* 83 (Spring 2019): 173-197; Konstantin Kilibarda, "Lessons from #Occupy in Canada: Contesting space, settler consciousness and erasures within the 99%," *Journal of Critical Globalisation Studies* 5 (2012): 24-41.

to evictions and displacement. It is more a question of strategy than scale. I am particularly inspired by an autonomous Toronto initiative, Parkdale Organize, whose mission statement stipulates, "Where landlords, bosses, or the state exploit or abuse us, we organize to defend, inform, educate and empower our neighbours to collectively improve our conditions. We want to build working class organizations independent of politicians and social service providers." Rather than appealing to homogeneity and cultural cohesion or making the neighbourhood into some sort of metonymical device for a broader national polity, they "organize across all false divisions between our neighbours whether based on race, gender, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, ability, language and literacy, level of education or level of poverty. We oppose all those who want to further divide us."[96]

Neighbourhood-based political organizing in a settler city like Montreal could also potentially be a powerful force for orienting working-class energies toward the dismantling of structures of colonial private property. As Jas M. Morgan writes, "Land Back is for Indigenous Peoples in the city, too."[97] Struggles against police surveillance and harassment, for wet shelters, for Indigenous and Black housing, and on a deeper level, for Indigenous land ownership and control, are all examples of forms this could take.[98] The fight for social housing, in particular, could be solid ground for decolonial transformation of property and ownership structures. The explicit goal of the housing movement is to remove urban land from the private market; by working with the Indigenous nations whose territory we have stolen, pushing for creation of Indigenous-controlled land trusts in the city, for instance, working-class settler movements could (with permission) create HLM, coops, and other forms of non-profit housing on that land,

[96] Parkdale Organize, "Statement of Principles," http://parkdaleorganize.ca/principles/ (accessed 19 August 2021).

[97] Jas M. Morgan, "This Prairie city is land, too," *Briarpatch Magazine*, 10 September 2020, https://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/this-prairie-city-is-land-too.

[98] Morgan, "This Prairie city is land, too"; Riley Yesno and Xicotencatl Maher Lopez, "Four case studies of Land Back in action," *Briarpatch Magazine*, 10 September 2020, https://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/four-case-studies-land-back-in-action.

responding to their own very pressing needs in a way that assures Indigenous material and political sovereignty.[99] I can think of few better uses of public funds.

These are of course only a few suggestions. In the next and final chapter, I turn to thinking about how – or if – politically engaged historical work could be a part of new directions in neighbourhood organizing, based on a critical assessment of some of my own attempts to balance political militancy in Saint-Henri with my role as a historian.

[99] For interesting examples and proposals, see Yesno and Maher Lopez, "Four case studies of Land Back in action"; James Tracy, *Dispatches Against Displacement: Field Notes From San Francisco's Housing Wars* (Oakland: AK Press, 2014), 77-93; Samuel W. Rose, "A New Way Forward: Native Nations, Nonprofitization, Community Land Trusts, and the Indigenous Shadow State," *Nonprofit Policy Forum* 2, 2 (2011): Article 3, https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.2202/2154-3348.1023/html; Louise Crabtree, Nicole Moore, Peter Phibbs, Hazel Blunden and Carolyn Sapideen, *Community land trusts and Indigenous communities: from strategies to outcomes* (Melbourne, Australia: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, 2015).

CHAPTER FIVE

Community Organizing, Research-Creation, and Public Historical Scholarship

Every day you have to try to find little victories. Like today, we succeeded in coming here, answering their questions and being open books.[1]

One day at a time, one step at a time. Together we're stronger than each on our own.[2]

Agathe Melançon (2019)

It was a hot spring afternoon in Saint-Henri. I squinted in the sun, trying to hear the questions of the *Radio-Canada* news anchor over the traffic and conversation of Notre-Dame Street, the main commercial boulevard of my Montreal neighbourhood. Two days prior, on 28 May 2016, a group of masked individuals had broken into a recently opened luxury grocery store, stealing thousands of dollars of merchandise to re-distribute to low-income people in the area. A tag reading "FUCK EMPIRE" was still scrawled across the window behind me, and wheat-pasted messages proclaiming "*Longue vie à la dégentrification*!" [Long live degentrification!] could be seen from the street.[3]

As a community organizer with the POPIR-*Comité Logement*, I had been asked to speak to the ongoing impact of gentrification in the Southwest. "Let's talk about these businesses," said

[1] Agathe Melançon and Luce Parisien, interviewed by Fred Burrill and Laurence Hamel-Roy, 15 March 2019. Translations in this chapter are mostly mine, with some input and precisions from Mary Foster.

[2] Agathe Melançon, in Fred Burrill, "D'une lutte à l'autre: le POPIR-Comité Logement a 50 ans!" Youtube video, 33:07, 16 December 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=acYX2uFOGaM.

[3] Ashifa Kassam, "Montreal grocery store vandals aimed to 'recalibrate' gentrified area," *The Guardian*, 1 June 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/01/montreal-gentrification-st-henri-looting-vandalism.

the tiny voice in my earpiece, "what have they done wrong? How does their presence hurt the residents of Saint-Henri?" I responded,

> Saint-Henri is still a neighbourhood made up of a majority of low-income tenants, so these people don't have the means to go to the new restaurants or to buy the super-expensive sausages here behind me. So we're talking about a phenomenon designed for people who have just arrived in the neighbourhood, or who don't even live in the neighbourhood, so that has an impact on the social fabric of the area. Saint-Henri is a popular neighbourhood that has always had a lot of solidarity between neighbours, and these new businesses are coming in and attacking that solidarity.[4]

The reader will notice that this statement is structured around much the same themes that I have been deconstructing and criticizing in the rest of this dissertation; the ethos of the anonymous action – FUCK EMPIRE – was somewhat obscured by my response about "popular" Saint-Henri.

I begin with this story not as a form of self-flagellation but because I think it is a helpful reminder of how much historical discourses shape the work of community organizing, and the stakes therefore in historically minded interventions into movement spaces.[5] It is also an indication of how much historical research can hopefully contribute to sharpening the analyses and practices of movement work. There are revealing truths in the fact that an English Canadian with accented French could credibly speak about the "social fabric" of the quintessential Québécois neighbourhood – again, "race, not language" seemed to be the determining factor.[6] Needless to say, my answer to the reporter's question would be much different today: I am still angry about the affront of luxury food stores in a neighbourhood where many are starving; I now

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[4] "Violences anti-embourgeoisement dans Saint-Henri," *RDI en direct*, 30 May 2016, https://ici.radio-canada.ca/info/videos/media-7536637/violences-anti-embourgeoisement-dans-saint-henri (accessed 21 September 2020).

[5] Some of the thinking for this chapter was originally done during a 2009 undergraduate reading course with Suzanne Morton. I owe her this and other debts of gratitude.

[6] Délice Mugabo, "Black in the city: on the ruse of ethnicity and language in an antiblack landscape," *Identities* 26, 6 (2019): 631.

think it's a mistake to couch that anger in the language of the cultural character of the neighbourhood or duration of residence in the area.

Figure 5: Still image of the author's live interview with *Radio-Canada*, 2016.

Not long after this interview, I embarked on a PhD at Concordia's Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling (COHDS). It was actually my second attempt: in my initial brief foray in 2010 I had been working on oral histories of deindustrialization and community organizing in my childhood home of rural Upper Musquodoboit, Nova Scotia. But neither the topic, nor the long haul of research and writing, seemed to fit with the political urgency of my life in Montreal. I left the program in 2011, and soon after began working at the POPIR. This was a significant challenge, both linguistically (much like Karina Montambeault, who as a francophone herself recalled initially having trouble understanding the dialect spoken in Saint-Henri, I too was often at sea) and in terms of political culture. I had a vague sense of the history of my chosen neighbourhood, but I was entering into a world fashioned by working-class stories and strategies that were far from my experience.

After five years of intense engagement, however, I could confidently speak the language – in both senses. I had heard stories about working at Coleco, could identify sites of past struggle in the neighbourhood, knew the housing coops and the slumlords. The more I learned, however, the more I drifted back in the direction of research and study. I could see political contradictions at play, but didn't have the time or space to fully trace their historical roots and contours: I knew that Saint-Henri's industrial past affected the way we did things in the present, but not quite why or how; I noticed national/ist parameters structuring our activist work, especially at the province-

wide level, but couldn't articulate the link between that and our resistance to gentrification. I needed to be able to reflect with friends and comrades in Saint-Henri from a different angle, without the distance imposed between us by the official "community organizer" title or the need to plan and carry out immanent campaigns and actions. I decided to return to historical studies, resolving to focus on deindustrialization and grassroots organizing in the Southwest.

I wanted my work, then, to serve as a tool for critical reflection for the movement. For me this meant choosing oral history and its focus on "the empowerment of individuals or social groups through the process of remembering and reinterpreting the past."[7] Of course, oral history is not alone within the discipline in attempting to make these links. From its origins as a professional practice, "History was and continues to be an important resource for political agendas and mobilization," writes Stefan Berger, "and those whose job it is to interpret the past have felt or have been called upon to engage with those agendas and mobilizations."[8] On the political left, journals such as *Labour/Le Travail*, *Radical History Review*, *Left History*, and the *History Workshop Journal* have long been centred around the project of interacting with social movements and struggles for liberation, and newer, online initiatives such as *Active History* and *Histoire engagée* have deepened and extended that tradition, seeking to undermine dominant historical narratives and democratize access to historical scholarship.[9] But as Robert Storey has observed about his work with the Ontario injured workers' movement, oral histories have a special role to play in political education and collective actualization within movements of people on the margins, both in terms of helping individuals situate their experiences of loss and hardship within larger systems of exploitation and in terms of listening to and learning from the

[7] Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson, "Introduction," in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson, ix (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

[8] Stefan Berger, "Historical Writing and Civic Engagement: A Symbiotic Relationship," in *The Engaged Historian: Perspectives on the Intersection of Politics, Activism and the Historical Profession*, ed. Stefan Berger, 39, Google Play Books (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2019).

[9] See L'équipe éditoriale, "Énoncé de mission," *Histoire engagée*, September 2019, https://histoireengagee.ca/a-propos-dhistoire-engagee/enonce-de-mission/.

political struggles of others.[10] In its emphasis on self-narration, relationship building, and recovering marginalized pasts, oral history is a potentially powerful tool for social change.[11]

For the collective promise of oral history to be realized, however, it needs to be accessible and accountable to the communities in which the interviews are conducted, and employed as part of a broader mass struggle against all forms of domination. This imperative comes with its own set of challenges. While radical public historians like James Green have very successfully demonstrated the potential of approaches like narrative historical writing, extra-mural teaching, and creative commemoration efforts to centre the role of "historical consciousness in movement building and in the mysterious processes that create human solidarity,"[12] public history as a subdiscipline, and perhaps especially in settler societies like Canada and the U.S., has still had a difficult time breaking free from the grips of dominant narratives, falling into the trap of integrating marginalized stories into, rather than undermining, nation-State frameworks.[13] Moving past this requires more than simple compliance with university ethics procedures.[14] The inter-disciplinary world of "emerging participatory

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[10] Robert Storey, "Pessimism of the Intellect, Optimism of the Will: Engaging with the 'Testimony' of Injured Workers," in *Beyond Testimony and Trauma: Oral History in the Aftermath of Mass Violence*, ed. Steven High, 56-87 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015).

[11] Sarah K. Loose, with Amy Starecheski, "Oral history for building social movements, then and now," in *Beyond Women's Words: Feminisms and the Practices of Oral History in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Katrina Srigley, Stacey Zembrzycki, and Franca Iacovetta, 236-243 (London and New York: Routledge, 2018).

[12] James R. Green, *Taking History to Heart: The Power of the Past in Building Social Movements* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 1. It remains the case, however, that the links between memory, identity, and radical political activity continue to be understudied, a legacy of the hiving off of social movement history from the broader field of memory studies. See Stefan Berger, Sean Scalmer and Christian Wicke, "Remembering Social Movements: An introduction," in *Remembering Social Movements: Activism and Memory*, eds. Stefan Berger, Sean Scalmer, and Christian Wicke, 1-27, Google Play Books (London and New York: Routledge, 2021).

[13] See Jannelle Warren-Findlay, "Public History, Cultural Institutions, and National Identity: Dialogues about Difference," in *The Oxford Handbook of Public History*, eds. James B. Gardner and Paula Hamilton, 309-323 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[14] Steven High, *Oral History at the Crossroads: Sharing Life Stories of Survival and Displacement* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 265-29.

approaches" in such diverse realms of practice as history, theatre, and film invites us to think more complexly about the ethical and methodological challenges and promises in the act of "going public" through research-creation; the "creative tussle that can happen when you're working outside of your comfort zone," across differences and methodologies, in the pursuit of new collective understandings.[15] The tensions raised in these creative, collaborative endeavours can be very generative.

What follows is a critical evaluation of a few of my own modest efforts to intervene through oral history research-creation into public political work, through the prism of three such creative tussles: an audiowalk on the question of violence in the neighbourhood, a short documentary on the history of the POPIR, and my involvement in the heritage committee of the *À Nous la Malting* collective, a coalition of neighbourhood residents and non-profit groups seeking to transform the abandoned Canada Malting plant into a community-controlled complex of social housing, local services, and an industrial and working-class history museum. I try to deal not only with the creative and scholarly issues raised but also with the sometimes awkwardly-matched nuts and bolts – principally, funding, access, and time management – that present themselves when cooperating across different material contexts. Along the way, I hope to highlight the importance of working on these public historical interventions for the articulation of the wider arguments of this dissertation, emphasizing the iterative process of research-creation, writing, and political work. Finally, I turn to some broader reflections about the impacts that historical research and liberatory community organizing can have on one another.

I had been scratching the historian's itch already for some years before taking up my PhD again by giving tours of Saint-Henri for student and community groups, introducing them to the history and struggles of the area and discussing the consequences of gentrification. My hope was that this would allow participants, usually from anglophone universities and CEGEPs, to be able to connect with ongoing organizing if they happened to move to the Southwest (a likely occurrence, given the changing profile of the neighbourhood and the proximity of Saint-Henri to several post-secondary institutions). At the very least, I hoped to help them, as one student put it

[15] Elizabeth Miller, Edward Little, and Steven High, "Introduction," in *Going Public: The Art of Participatory Practice*, eds. Elizabeth Miller, Edward Little, and Steven High, 3-4 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017).

after doing the tour, to "realize that there is more than just the history of Montreal but the future of it too."[16]

The stories, though, were in my voice and filtered through my perception of events. When it was announced that the Oral History Association (OHA) would be holding its Fall 2018 annual conference in Montreal, and that there would be funding for research-creation projects, I thus jumped at the opportunity to craft a guided, downloadable audiowalk of Saint-Henri that centred working-class perspectives from the neighbourhood. My supervisor Steven High and other affiliates of COHDS had produced several such walks of the Southwest in the years prior, and I had found them to be excellent, interactive tools with which to get people thinking about the lived consequences of deindustrialization and displacement.[17] As historian-practitioner Toby Butler has argued, the combination of soundscapes, oral histories, and the immersive act of walking while listening allows for "complex, multivocal experiences that can quite literally give people a voice in the interpretation of their neighbourhood that are listened to in an active way."[18]

The medium's potential for multivocality was an important part of my reflection in choosing the overarching framework for the walk – political, economic, and social violence. The spectacular robbery with which I started this chapter had generated international media coverage, but spokespeople – either organizers like myself, or the local municipal politicians who asserted that "The entire community is upset about what they've seen"[19] – tended to advance competing,

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[16] "Walking Tour of Saint-Henri," *Dawson College Student Success Action Plan – Projects*, https://www.dawsoncollege.qc.ca/ssap/projects/walking-tour-of-st-henri/ (accessed 23 August 2021). A particularly excellent group of geography students from the University of Toronto made a zine from their experiences in this and other tours of the city. See Shahid Kibria, Khalood, and Alison Yu-Sen Zhou, eds., *Tiohtià:ke/Mooniyang/Montreal*, featuring Camille Larivée, David Austin, Nora Butler-Burke, Mostafa Henaway, Ted Rutland, and Fred Burrill (Geography Undergraduate Course, University of Toronto), December 2018. https://issuu.com/khaloodkibria/docs/montreal_magazine-dec_2018.

[17] See "Audiowalks," *COHDS-CHORN*, https://storytelling.concordia.ca/research-and-creation/audio-walks/ (accessed 27 August 2021).

[18] Toby Butler, "Memoryscape: How Audio Walks Can Deepen Our Sense of Place by Integrating Art, Oral History and Cultural Geography," *Geography Compass* 1, 3 (2007): 370.

[19] Craig Sauvé, cited in Basem Boshra, "Don't make our local businesses scapegoats for gentrification," *The Montreal Gazette*, 31 May 2016,

monolithic representations of Saint-Henri. In the process, the broader picture of the multiple forms of structural violence shaping the neighbourhood space could become difficult to perceive. In my own conversations with my neighbours, by contrast, I had heard a variety of thoughtful and often divergent opinions on the topic of property destruction. My hope was that in foregrounding these residents' personal experiences and reflections, I could help to stimulate a deeper, more complicated reflection on the process of urban displacement. As the narration specified at the beginning of the walk,

> For much of the 19th and 20th centuries, Saint-Henri was at the heart of industrial capitalist production in Canada. After World War II, like in many cities across North America, the neighbourhood experienced a brutal deindustrialization process: between 1951 and 1971, 30 000 people were forced to leave the area; tens of thousands lost their jobs.
>
> In more recent times, low-income people in Saint-Henri have been fighting against gentrification: as you heard in the previous media clips, the ever-growing number of upscale condos and businesses is pushing out the long-standing population and driving up rents around the neighbourhood.
>
> Some in Saint-Henri have turned to acts of political violence as a means of resisting this process of displacement, much to the consternation of police, politicians, and media pundits. The aim of this tour is both to take a look at that political violence, examining some of the motivations behind it, and to broaden the scope a bit to take into account the various forms of structural violence that people here face on a daily basis.[20]

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https://montrealgazette.com/opinion/columnists/boshra-attacking-small-businesses-in-st-henri-to-protest-gentrification.

[20] Fred Burrill, "Talking Violence: Oral Histories of Displacement and Resistance in Saint-Henri," *Soundcloud*, https://soundcloud.com/fred-burrill/talking-violence-oral-histories-of-displacement-and-resistance-in-saint-henri (accessed 17 September 2021).

Above all, I wanted to highlight that gentrification was not a benign inevitability but instead a historically specific project of capitalist domination and rule, intimately linked with deindustrialization and continually resisted by those who felt its impacts most deeply.

Receiving the small grant of $1500 through the OHA allowed me to hire the amazing Phil Lichti, an audio engineer with ample experience with public history projects,[21] historian colleague Kassandra Dewyse-V., who translated and then lent her voice to the French-language version of the narration for the tour, and artist Kerri Flanagan and graphic designer Emma Lightstone, who provided imagery and layout for the accompanying booklet. My siblings, Rosanna and Clayton Burrill, agreed to lend their musical talents to a soundtrack for the transitional moments in the walk. I provided the narration for the English version. Together, we made "Talking Violence: Oral Histories of Displacement and Resistance in Saint-Henri," an 82-minute, bilingual guided audiowalk of the neighbourhood.

Beginning in front of Lionel-Groulx metro station on Saint-Henri's present-day eastern border of Atwater Avenue, the walk moves back and forth between trendy Notre-Dame Street – whose transformation has been the most visible manifestation of gentrification in recent years – and sites of more subterranean violence on its southern, Canal side. Based in oral history interviews with six participants – Carole Orphanos, Christina Xydous, Luce Parisien, Marc-Olivier Rainville, Patricia Viannay, and one person who chose to remain anonymous – and interspersed with media coverage of recent events, the walk brings listeners farther west into the middle of the neighbourhood. There are six stops: (1) walkers move south to the pricey Atwater Market, where they hear from Carole, who worked there in the 1980s when it was still financially accessible, and Christina, who discusses the condo-ization of the Canal; (2) north and west to 3734 Notre-Dame, the upscale grocer that was looted, featuring the divergent viewpoints of Marc-Olivier, Carole, Luce, and an anonymous political activist, as well as media clips of politicians, the POPIR (featuring the soundbite referenced at the beginning of this chapter), and store employees and ownership; (3) south again to a condo development on the corner of Sainte-Émilie and Turgeon Streets where the previously affordable apartment building had been sacrificed to a mysterious fire, and where Patricia describes the rapid transformation of that

[21] See in particular his central role in public history work in Ronald Rudin, *Kouchibouguac: Removal, Resistance, and Remembrance at a Canadian National Park* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), xi-xii.

sector of the neighbourhood; (4) west to the *Château Saint-Ambroise*/former Dominion Textile/Coleco building along the Canal, where Carole discusses working on the assembly line and union organizing in the textile industry; and finally, (5) back up to the abandoned lot on the corner of Saint-Philippe and Notre-Dame Streets, site of the *À Qui la Ville* action mentioned in Chapter Four, featuring media coverage of the virulently angry lot owner Peter Sergakis and analysis from participants Patricia and Marc-Olivier. While I would have liked to extend the walk farther west to the Canada Malting plant, the abandoned lot is conveniently located in close proximity to the Place Saint-Henri metro station, where the OHA participants could easily find transport back to Concordia.

Figure 5.1 Artwork from the "Talking Violence" audiowalk booklet, created by Kerri Flanagan.

The metrics provided by the hosting service Soundcloud tell me that the English version of the tour has been listened to 352 times; its French counterpart, "Parlons Violence: Histoires orales de déplacement et de résistances," 512 times. It has been made part of History, Geography and Education curriculums at Dawson College, Concordia, and the Université du Québec à Montréal, and received some positive media coverage.[22] Concordia public history students who participated in the walk thought that it "was a really immersive way to hear the perspectives on direct action to combat gentrification in the area." From the vantage point of one student,

[22] Stéphane Baillargeon, "Racontez-moi ce qui est survenu," *Le Devoir*, 12 October 2018, https://www.ledevoir.com/societe/538819/un-congres-international-fait-le-point-a-montreal-sur-l-histoire-orale.

"anything that is inconvenient to the movement of capital is considered violence and debating [just] the one kind may be pointless."[23] Others doing the tour began noticing different aspects of gentrification around them, including the concentration of greater numbers of commercial and residential properties in the hands of large real estate companies.[24] After listening to the stories of Saint-Henri residents, a Dawson student reflected that "It is no surprise in my opinion, the way activist groups have lashed out their anger towards the ongoing gentrification of the city." Another was struck by the closing line of the narration: "community resistance is rooted in the stories and memories we tell ourselves and share with others." They wrote that "this is very apparent [from] the residents' mindsets. Ever since its creation, [gentrification] has continually been put into question by opposers."[25] The booklet for the audiowalk continues to be available through COHDS and at the POPIR-*Comité Logement's* offices just east of Atwater, and has become part of the public history programming of the *À Nous la Malting* heritage committee.

While the pedagogical aims of the production were thus largely met, the creative process raised unexpected difficulties. Most significantly, not all of my oral history participants were at first pleased with the tour. I hadn't anticipated there being any problems, partially because I was by and large conducting interviews at this stage only with people with whom I had prior political and friendship connections. In addition, however, where their memories went beyond general observations about the neighbourhood and into the realm of intimate experience, I had re-confirmed with interviewees individually that it was alright to include the material in question in the audiowalk. I did a test run the week before the OHA conference and invited the participants and several trusted friends, and afterward, everyone agreed that they were happy with it. I felt confirmed in my assumption that this step was only a formality.

Within a day, this had changed. To my surprise, there were some elements of what one participant had shared in their interview that they were not comfortable having so publicly available, or at least not to others they knew in the neighbourhood. Although of course consent

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[23] History and Memory in Gentrifying Saint-Henri, Twitter Post, 16 March 2021, 10:11 AM, https://twitter.com/histmem/status/1371826442317803526.

[24] History and Memory in Gentrifying Saint-Henri, Twitter Post, 15 March 2021, 10:34 AM, https://twitter.com/histmem/status/1371469904113774594.

[25] Thanks to Stacey Zembrzycki and her History students at Dawson for making their feedback available to me.

forms had been signed, we had also agreed that I would not publish anything without giving interviewees an opportunity to listen to one final draft. The sections in question, however, required a complicated re-edit. The timeline was too tight to change the audio before the two pre-registered tours for conference participants (comprised of Concordia colleagues and out-of-towners), but I took the track down from Soundcloud immediately following the events, only fully launching the public version after Phil had made the necessary changes. This was an acceptable compromise for the participant in question, who in fact helped me to recruit other interviewees later on. But I still have a knot in my stomach when I think about it. In moving from "shared authority," that cherished principle of the dialogic, egalitarian interview space championed by oral historian Michael Frisch, to the more active, ongoing "sharing authority," as Steven High has written, "who controls the research process of course matters."[26] I worried I had betrayed my own principles and those of the discipline as a whole.

There are multiple lessons here, many of which have been learned and re-learned by feminist oral historians in the process of pursuing transformative methodologies. I wish I had listened more closely, or perhaps really *heard*, when I read that it is not only the stories themselves that matter; that "the telling of those stories – the processes by which they are generated and recorded, and the contexts in which they are shared and interpreted – also matters – a lot."[27] What is "difficult knowledge" is not the same for everyone, and things that can be spoken easily in one context take on whole new weights and meanings in another.[28] I think there is also something to retain here about humility in the face of material constraints. When I submitted the application for the project, I had not yet gone through Concordia's ethics process or completed my comprehensive examinations. After passing those milestones I was still working and preparing my thesis proposal and had to carry out interviews as well as learn how to

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[26] High, *Oral History at the Crossroads*, 9-10.

[27] Franca Iacovetta, Katrina Srigley, and Stacey Zembrzycki, "Introduction," in *Beyond Women's Words: Feminisms and the Practices of Oral History in the Twenty-First Century*, 1 (London and New York: Routledge, 2018).

[28] Alice Pitt and Deborah Britzman, "Speculations on Qualities of Difficult Knowledge in Teaching and Learning: An Experiment in Psychoanalytic Research*," International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 16, no. 6 (2003): 755–776. I learned about this work from Lisa Ndejuru's amazing dissertation, "Oral History and Performance in the Aftermath of Organized Violence" (PhD diss., Concordia University, 2021).

create storyboards for the sound design of the project, recruit the various people who helped me with the artistic aspects and audio engineering, and go through the time-consuming process of selecting and time-coding appropriate interview and media clips. The audiowalk went through five different versions before I arrived at the final draft that I confidently shared with research participants. I also gave two talks at the OHA conference – I had manifestly bitten off more than I could chew. Although I had made the effort to do individual check-ins about sensitive material, I didn't leave enough time for these decisions to be re-evaluated before the launch.

Figure 5.2: Participants from the OHA listening to the audiowalk while standing outside the former Dominion Textile/Coleco building on Saint-Ambroise street, now the "*Château Saint-Ambroise*." Photo taken by author.

This is a mistake that I think I would have been less likely to make in the context of community organizing in Saint-Henri, where as a spokesperson for the POPIR I was guided by the mandates voted upon in committee meetings and general assemblies. It was easy to speak as a univocal "we"; in the project of multivocality, of being an "I" engaging with other subjectivities, my instincts were not as sharp as I had thought. A big part of this is obviously my own positionality as a white, cis-gendered man. But I also think that bridging the gap between scholarship and activism requires great honesty, clarity and precision. With hindsight, I can see that after years of being annoyed by academic researchers coming to the neighbourhood, I was not yet ready to fully assume that posture myself. This led to inconsistencies. Instead of (or rather in addition to) attempting to check-in individually with participants, passing through the

informal channels of neighbourhood friendship and organizing ties, I should have created a realistic collective timeline, with clear dates beyond which consent could not be revoked. Paradoxically, in not facing up to the fact that my role in the neighbourhood had changed, in attempting to negate the new distance from which I navigated, I had strayed closer to "knowing about" rather than "knowing with" my neighbours.[29]

These were not the only tensions raised in the creative process. It was in doing interviews for the audiowalk, accompanied by a wide reading of working-class history in Canada, that I first began seriously trying to think through some of the issues related to anti-gentrification struggle in white settler contexts. I had set out on this research-creation project intending to place settler colonialism front and centre in the panoply of structural forces creating violence in Saint-Henri, but despite years of organizing in the neighbourhood, I had not even begun to develop the ties necessary to ethically carry out interviews with local Indigenous residents and activists. For oral history to be a successful tool for political mobilization, there needs to be reciprocity involved – the historian needs to be involved in the political struggle in tangible, ongoing ways that stretch beyond the bounds of their individual research project, taking part in movements both "as active participants and as critical intellectuals."[30] This is even more true of intellectuals working from the university space, fraught with the exploitative legacies of all colonial institutions and rendered more so by public relations-driven pushes to "decolonize" that sideline structural power and transformation. [31]

Unlike the settler tenants I interviewed, with whom I had been in reciprocal relationship for years, I did not have personal connections to a single Indigenous person who lived in Saint-Henri. My involvement in the neighbourhood movement had generated little of the "shared socio-political intentionality within and across geographically-defined neighbourhoods and

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[29] High, *Oral History at the Crossroads*, 9.

[30] Green, *Taking History to Heart*, 4.

[31] On this, see Zoe Todd, "Indigenous Stories, Knowledge, Legal Traditions, Ontologies, Epistemologies as Unceded Territories (Or: Hands Off of Our Teachings)," *Urbane Adventurer: Amiskwacî* (blog), 27 April 2017, https://zoeandthecity.wordpress.com/2017/04/27/indigenous-stories-knowledge-legal-traditions-ontologies-epistemologies-as-unceded-territory-or-hands-off-of-our-teachings/.

communities" necessary for creating such alliances.[32] Why was this the case? Pulling on this thread led me to the analysis articulated in Chapter Four. I remain dissatisfied, though, with how I integrated this question into the audiowalk. The tour began with the assertion that Saint-Henri, "like all of Montréal, is unceded Kanien'kehà:ka Indigenous territory. The history of land theft and ongoing colonialism in Quebec has continued grave consequences for Indigenous people. Gentrification is an extension of that process, continuing to make life for First Nations, Métis and Inuit in the city even more difficult." But settler colonialism was not mentioned again. While I don't think this type of acknowledgement is always without effect (in fact, one student participant commented that they were surprised to learn that Saint-Henri was also Indigenous territory), without a more sustained engagement it risks becoming a simple "box-ticking exercise."[33]

Different sorts of issues cropped up when the time came for my next research-creation project. December 2019 marked the 50th anniversary of the POPIR-*Comité Logement*, and I was part of a committee of residents who came together to organize a celebration of this momentous achievement. I proposed to the group that I would use the remaining $2000 of the supplementary graduate funding I had received from the *Fonds de recherche du Québec* (FRQSC) to make a documentary about the history of the organization, based in interviews with members and my work with the POPIR's archives. I would be responsible for the research, writing, and narrative arc – a "producer," for lack of a better term – and I hired filmmaker Amelia Moses to do the filmography and editing. Valérie Simard volunteered to lend her voice to the narration, and Camille Marcoux-Berthiaume did the time-consuming work of inserting subtitles into the final product. The end result was a thirty-five-minute film, "D'une lutte à l'autre: le POPIR-Comité Logement a 50 ans!" [Always in the Struggle: The POPIR-Comité Logement Turns 50!"].[34]

The biggest challenge for me in piecing the film together was to figure out a way to balance pride with reflexivity. There have been other such anniversary milestones in the housing

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[32] Edward (Ted) Little, "People First and First Peoples," in *Going Public: The Art of Participatory Practice*, eds. Elizabeth Miller, Edward Little, and Steven High, 142 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017).

[33] See Joe Wark, "Land acknowledgements in the academy: Refusing the settler myth," *Curriculum Inquiry* 51, 2 (2021): 191-209.

[34] The quotations in the following paragraphs are all from the film.

movement in recent years, and I felt that the material produced in that context was uncritical and corporatist, involving "a great deal more commemoration, celebration, and myth-making"[35] than is comfortable for historians or really helpful, I think, for the struggle.[36] I understand the impulse: as a community organizer, I too had adopted a sort of relentless positivity in the pursuit of nurturing and sustaining a movement made up of tenants in often very difficult personal situations. But these moments should be opportunities for re-evaluation as well as paying homage, and both as an oral historian and as a member of the POPIR I felt the need to hold space for critical and dissenting opinions. Above all, however, I wanted to highlight the contributions and analyses of the volunteer members of the organization. Working-class people do not often get to see themselves portrayed as reflexive actors, suffering from both under- and misrepresentations rooted at least partially in the middle- and upper-class nature of capitalist media producers.[37] In Montreal's community sector, too, they are more often spoken on behalf of by paid organizers than solicited directly for their opinions.

The way I chose to navigate this was by having the narrator provide the basic chronology, accompanied by visuals from documents, photos, and video archives of actions and campaigns – the "company line," as it were. This was interspersed with segments of individuals from a variety of ages and backgrounds sharing their experiences in the movement. I tried to ask open-ended questions about their first memories of the POPIR, how they saw their neighbourhood changing, and, looking toward the future, what they saw as the challenges for the organization going into the next 50 years.

For the most part these were not life story interviews – in a few cases they lasted no longer than seven or eight minutes, although they were usually around a half an hour. But they were still full of insight; I have relied on this material in both Chapters Two and Three of the

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[35] Craig Heron, "The Labour Historian and Public History," *Labour/Le Travail* 45 (Spring 2000): 182.

[36] See, for example, the documentary produced on the 40th anniversary of the FRAPRU. FRAPRU "40 ans au Front," Youtube video, 25:44, 24 March 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CjkMztWr3io.

[37] See David Hesmondhalgh, "The Media's Failure to Represent the Working Class: Explanations From Media Production and Beyond," in *Media and Class: TV, Film, and Digital Culture*, eds. June Deery and Andrea Press, 33-54, Google Play Books (New York and London: Routledge, 2017).

dissertation. Points of dissonance emerged, including the ongoing tension within the organization between its feminist roots and its commitment to the broader struggle for social housing. Former organizer Karina Montambeault for instance, spoke of how the POPIR had participated in the landmark 1995 "*Marche du pain et des roses*" and formed a strong women's committee around the 2000 "*Marche mondiale des Femmes*"[38]; this initiative, however, remembered current organizer Patricia Viannay, "didn't last because people didn't want to hurt the overall struggle." Viannay remarked that while the intersectionality of different forms of oppression and struggle has thus been part of the POPIR since its beginnings, there is a need to always be renewing this commitment. For example, "Racialized people really need to take up more and more space in the POPIR-*Comité Logement* because they're the ones with housing problems." For her, this was not just a simple question of inclusivity, but a more fundamental way of ensuring that "our demands really correspond to people's needs. But that's easier said than done, we always, always have to work hard for that." The demographic profile and experiences of the POPIR membership have indeed shifted massively even in the five years since my departure, and this was reflected in those who volunteered to be interviewed. This led to surprising things. POPIR member Nelly Márquez, originally from Chile, brought up the issue of colonization in a way that was much more organic than my rather stilted efforts recounted in Chapter Four, speaking from a place of experience rather than analogy: "Everything happening these days with respect to housing … it makes me think about colonization … I think it's a new way to neo-colonize, to evict us from our homes, to make us suffer horrible things, and I think we have to be united in order to change things." While I had been focused on white settler tenants, I had neglected the experiences of colonialism of those who had migrated here from the Global South – reproducing forms of erasure endemic in the movement as a whole. This is something that needs to be remedied in my approach.[39]

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[38] See Flavie Trudel, "L'engagement des femmes en politique au Québec: Histoire de la Fédération des Femmes du Québec de 1966 à nos jours" (PhD diss., Université du Québec à Montréal, 2009), 304-329.

[39] For excellent work on this topic, see Harsha Walia, with a foreword by Robin D.G. Kelley and afterword by Nick Estes, *Border and Rule: Global Migration, Capitalism, and the Rise of Racist Nationalism* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2021).

Activist movement history can sometimes be overly focused on foregrounding how "movements of people who don't seem to have much power can shake the rich and powerful."[40] But histories of defeat are perhaps even more important, for they allow movements to learn and grow. Of course, a short film celebrating 50 years of neighbourhood struggle is not perhaps the most opportune medium, but where interviewees had critical things to say, I highlighted them in the documentary. This included Marc-Olivier Rainville's opinion from Chapter Three that "we were demonstrating against condos, but it was always tiny demos and we didn't really do anything serious, really." Jacques Trousquin, who became involved in the POPIR after moving to Saint-Henri from Mauritius in 1993, similarly had memories of defeat and repression to share: "I've seen Saint-Henri change a lot over many years. We did demonstrations to get empty lots. I marched everywhere to get lots, and all that. But it didn't work. Recently, the police kicked us out over there on Notre-Dame [at the end of the *À Qui la Ville* action]." I tried to reflect the spirit of these interventions in the narration, which goes on to say that "faced with the frontal attack of real estate capital, it's not easy to fight back."

Of course, since this was a joyous occasion, the film ends on an upbeat, if reflexive, note:

> The militants of the POPIR know too well that it's not always easy to keep struggling. It's hard to pry victories out of the hands of those in power. But the experience of 50 years of resistance has also convinced them that the only way forward is together, in the Southwest tenants' movement. From one struggle to the next, the POPIR will always stand up in defense of those at the bottom of the ladder. It's not just housing we want, but a new world of dignity for all.

After the research and writing of this dissertation, thinking about the slow bureaucratization and integration of tenant struggles into the nationalist State project and learning more about the difficult legacy of white supremacy with which the movement still grapples, I tend to think that winning this new world will require a significant overhaul of the way we do things. But having made the film and having been able to share it with more than 100 people at the December 2019 50th anniversary event still feels like an important contribution.

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[40] Howard Zinn, *The Politics of History* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 3.

There are, however, open questions about the long-term utility of the documentary as a tool for political education and mobilization. While I was able to make sufficient physical copies for all of the interview participants, accompanied by an insert designed by Emma Lightstone, there weren't enough for everyone in attendance. The film itself remains available online, where it has been viewed several hundred times, and I have used it as a teaching tool to give students some idea about the difficult work of community organizing over the long haul.[41] But many of the POPIR's militants do not have a personal computer or home internet or lack the requisite digital literacy for easy access. While the feedback at the screening was certainly positive, and event organizers felt that we had achieved our goal of underlining the contributions of the membership,[42] POPIR members have by and large not referred back to the lines of questioning I tried to open up in our subsequent conversations – or even mentioned the film at all. The increasing turn to digital storytelling has allowed oral historians to explore new worlds of making interviews live on outside the archive, but Steven High cautions us that "talk of open access and infinite archives is often disconnected from issues of collaboration and social change."[43] Instead, he points to filmmaker Elizabeth Miller's push to focus on connection and diffusion, rather than immediately turning to the next project. This is a helpful reminder for me – for research-creation to be useful in community organizing, even when produced in collaboration, the "final product" has to be more of a beginning than an end. This rings true for historical scholarship as a whole.

The event itself was a massive logistical undertaking that the committee had been working on for months: preparing promotional material, ordering T-shirts and buttons, organizing food, soliciting and editing contributions for the accompanying historical booklet, sending invitations and personally calling hundreds of people. I arrived late, having hurriedly been burning DVDs for interview participants all afternoon, and busied myself getting ready to emcee the evening, a duty I shared with Karina Montambeault. Rather predictably, given the fact that I had not shown up in time to fully test the projection beforehand, we had some pretty significant technical difficulties in the middle of the screening. Fortunately, we were saved by

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[41] Stefan Christoff, email message to author, 15 March 2021.

[42] Patricia Viannay, email message to author, 19 December 2019.

[43] High, *Oral History at the Crossroads*, 195.

good food and a POPIR militant's impromptu dance performance! But I was disappointed by what felt like an inadequate representation of the time and care that had gone into the making of the documentary.

Figure 5.3: Members and allies of the POPIR-*Comité Logement* watch the documentary at the *Centre d'éducation aux adultes de la Petite-Bourgogne et de Saint-Henri*, December 2019. Photo taken by Cédric Martin.

I have come to a somewhat different understanding since the event, both of the gravity of technological glitches and of the overall purpose of public research-creation. That night, we came together and celebrated 50 years of struggle, 50 years of refusing to silently accept the fate handed out to us by a system of private property and monthly exploitation. A few years ago now I attended a talk by public historian John Walsh entitled, "What do You Need? Facilitation as Practice in Public History," in which he spoke about how his role as Co-Director of Carleton University's Centre for Public History had really more to do with helping people make connections with one another than it did with providing specific scholarly bearings.[44] Although I

[44] John Walsh, "What do You Need? Facilitation as Practice in Public History," History and Memory: A Journée d'étude to mark the retirement of Ronald Rudin, Concordia University, 15 November 2019.

didn't take notes, I remember being struck by how much of what he described resonated with my own experiences as an organizer. Unbeknownst to us, it was about to get a lot more difficult to be all in the same room. Some of the comrades who attended the event have since passed away, or have entered into long-term care facilities. But many of them got a chance to tell their stories, either through participation in a post-screening open mic or in smaller groups around tables. What was needed that night was a pretext for coming together, for remembering, eating, laughing, and dancing. *D'une lutte à l'autre* helped make that possible, and beyond my scholarly preoccupations, that in and of itself is justification enough for the work of public history.

I have tried to carry this idea with me throughout my involvement in the heritage committee of the *À Nous la Malting* collective, an effort that is significantly more collaborative than the two described above. I of course have input as an individual, but the research and creative aspects of the initiative are shared responsibilities. While in some ways this project is the clearest expression of my desire to meld activist work and historical scholarship in the service of the neighbourhood struggle, I have very mixed feelings about including our work in my analysis. As with all of the Collective's members, I have both participated and observed; the purpose of the former, however, was not to advance the latter. This is not a denial of my role as an academic, a position that both informs how I interact in community spaces and how others interact with me. But to my mind there is an element of consent involved that needs to be considered – with the exception of those who generously agreed to be interviewed for this project, it is neither my understanding nor that of my fellow Collective members that I am engaged in the initiative for research purposes – it is not "fieldwork." Out of respect for the integrity of collective process, I try to limit myself here as much as possible to the aspects of our work relevant to a discussion about public historical engagement, and reserve in-depth analysis of internal debates and processes for other, less public fora.

My involvement began as an employee of the POPIR, when in the Fall of 2012 a consortium of developers, via a public relations firm, began setting up exploratory meetings with local neighbourhood groups in view of purchasing social acceptability for a 700-unit luxury condo project. Together with *Solidarité Saint-Henri*, we organized a massive public campaign to block the conversion of the abandoned site from industrial zoning to residential. During 2013's municipal election the POPIR occupied the campaign offices of all three political parties (at that

time, the team around Denis Coderre, Marcel Côté's *Vision Montréal*, and Richard Bergeron's *Projet Montréal*), winning an informal moratorium on zoning changes.[45]

Following this success, in Fall 2014 *Solidarité Saint-Henri* organized a day-long public consultation as part of an "*Opération populaire en aménagement*" [Popular Planning Operation] for several sites in the west end of the neighbourhood, and as a POPIR employee I facilitated the break-out group on the Canada Malting.[46] In addition to the pressing need for housing and local pharmacy, daycare, and postal services, it was there that the idea for a working-class and industrial heritage museum first began to emerge. Participants argued that the Canada Malting was too important, both symbolically and physically, to lose to yet another condo development. In May 2016, I helped to organize a tent-city on the Parks Canada-controlled grounds next to the

Figure 5.4: Neighbourhood residents discuss the future of the Canada Malting, Fall 2014. Photo taken by Louis Grenier.

Malting, part of a broader FRAPRU campaign calling for the conversion of such abandoned sites into social housing.[47] Finally, in Winter 2017, we founded the *Collectif À Nous la Malting*, a

[45] POPIR-Comité Logement, "Développement de la Canada Malting – Occupation des bureaux de campagne: Les locataires montrent leur determination," *POPIR-Comité Logement*, 30 October 2013, https://popir.org/2013/10/.

[46] See Solidarité Saint-Henri, *À Qui St-Henri? Ateliers de planification populaire tenus le 4 octobre 2014. Vision de résidents de Saint-Henri pour l'aménagement de l'ouest de leur quartier*, https://www.solidarite-sh.org/sites/solidarite-sh.org/files/a_qui_saint-henri_-_opa_2014.pdf.

[47] Caroline Lévesque, "Canal Lachine: Occupation de terrains pour réclamer du logement social," *24 Heures*, 8 May 2016, https://www.24heures.ca/2016/05/08/occupations-de-terrains-pour-reclamer-du-logement-social.

network of local residents and groups focused on pressuring multiple levels of government into buying the former industrial site and handing it over to the community.

By that time, I had begun my doctorate and was no longer working at the POPIR. My apartment in Saint-Henri, however, was on Sainte-Marie Street at the foot of the Malting, where rents were rising and condo construction had increased dramatically following the Southwest Borough's construction of the *Woonerf*, a green alley nominally designed to deal with the effects of the "heat island" in the laneway behind my home, but in reality a significant public expenditure designed to make the sector more attractive to developers.[48] Given this personal interest in preventing my own displacement, I happily signed up to be part of the mobilization committee. I also joined the heritage committee, hoping once again to make my historical work relevant to the movement.

For at least a year, this latter preoccupation remained dormant. We were caught up in the cycle of mobilization around the 2017 municipal election and its aftermaths, again occupying the offices of the major political players and continuing a series of demonstrations outside of City Hall, even wrangling a grudging promise of support from Southwest Borough mayor and soon-to-be Montreal Executive Council President Benoit Dorais. But as the Collective turned more seriously to thinking through the proposal for our project, the heritage committee picked up momentum as well. The official *Dossier de projet* which we submitted to the City in 2020 includes a plan for an industrial and working-class history museum that seeks to conserve important elements of the site itself, highlight industrial artefacts from the impressive personal collection of committee member Daniel Guilbert, house an oral history collection of Saint-Henri's working-class residents, and organize extensive historical programming in the neighbourhood.[49]

Industrial heritage work of this sort is far too often caught up in the broader web of real estate driven re-development of deindustrialized areas, becoming aesthetic fodder for urban

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[48] Cecilia Keating, "Did a green development project drive up the rent in a Montreal neighbourhood?" *National Observer*, 23 January 2019, https://www.nationalobserver.com/2019/01/23/features/did-green-development-project-drive-rent-montreal-neighbourhood.

[49] Collectif À Nous la Malting, *À Nous la Malting! Dossier – Mars 2020*, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1es24mTXIxJsrxDD3uQEhk8UDaIWtAvKC/view.

capitalism's culture-focused "artistic mode of production."[50] Even where the vision of public historians and heritage activists is quite critical, as with Cathy Stanton's study of the designers of Lowell's National Historical Park, "The logic of culture-led redevelopment projects dictates that certain relationships and cultural productions will be nurtured while others – those that somehow violate or defy the underlying economic purposes of the project – will not receive the kind of long-term support that they need in order to survive."[51] Public historians must "pick a side," but just how to go about doing so is less clear.[52] "Overemphasizing present-day utility may … alienate funders, audiences, and stakeholders who prefer, for a variety of reasons ranging from the nostalgic to the commercial to the ideological, that what is past stays past," Stanton has observed elsewhere. "Public historians continually navigate within these tensions, balancing responsibilities within different and sometimes conflicting agendas."[53]

A principal innovative aspect of the *À Nous la Malting* Collective's vision for industrial and working-class heritage, I want to suggest, is its attention to the underlying material structures driving deindustrialization, speculation and housing displacement. Collective member Luce Parisien gestured to this in a 2019 interview:

> Where have they gone, the people who worked at the Malting? Why shouldn't they have the right to a nice apartment? Social housing they can afford? Then, you can eat because you have enough money to buy a little food that's worth it, y'know. You

[50] See Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989). For a recent example see Pete Hodson, "Titanic Struggle: Memory, Heritage, and Shipyard Deindustrialization in Belfast," *History Workshop Journal* 87 (2019): 224-249.

[51] Cathy Stanton, *The Lowell Experiment: Public History in a Postindustrial City* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), 235.

[52] Steven High and Fred Burrill, "Industrial Heritage as Agent of Gentrification?" *National Council for Public History, History@ Work*, 19 February 2018, https://ncph.org/history-at-work/industrial-heritage-as-agent-of-gentrification/.

[53] Cathy Stanton, "Between Pastness and Presentism: Public History and Local Food Activism," in *the Oxford Handbook of Public History*, eds. James B. Gardner and Paula Hamilton, 218 (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

> don't eat just bread and peanut butter (even though that's good too). It's just having choices, I think, eh.[54]

While plans for the Malting thus include the museum, the daycare, green space, and an urban farm, the centrepiece of the project is the 200 social housing units desperately needed in the western half of Saint-Henri. Our proposal adopted a position of "Zero condos" on the site, citing the cascading effect of rising property values and evictions that inevitably follow any major real estate development.[55] For it to respond to the present-day needs of the working-class communities in its vicinity, any development would need to be 100 per cent collectively owned.

This focus, importantly, doesn't entail sacrificing the industrial heritage elements of the abandoned factory – most notably the iconic terra-cotta silos, the last of their kind in Canada. The site is currently owned by Quonta Holdings, the same firm that acquired it from the Canada Malting company in 1981, closing it down in the early 1990s, and that has been content to let it deteriorate while waiting for the zoning change necessary for its sale to a developer. It is currently a very dangerous place to visit, and thus inaccessible to all but the most intrepid urban explorers. Neglect is the enemy of preservation: the first action that the Collective proposes once the building is purchased is the "rapid consolidation and rehabilitation of conservable structures in view of making the site safe for all."[56]

One of the particularities of malting plants of this era is that they were essentially themselves huge machines rather than simple containers for equipment, with the production determining the layout and design of the building and with much of the technology integrated directly into the architecture. In a nod to this idiosyncrasy, the Collective argues for:

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[54] Luce Parisien and Agathe Melançon, interviewed by Fred Burrill and Laurence Hamel-Roy, 15 March 2019.

[55] Collectif À Nous la Malting, *À Nous la Malting! Dossier – Mars 2020*, 12-13, 71.

[56] Collectif À Nous la Malting, *Patrimoine populaire ou patrimoine gentrifié: Quel avenir pour la Canada Malting? Mémoire du Collectif À Nous la Malting! Consultation sur ensembles industriels d'intérêt patrimonial, Commission de la culture, le patrimoine et les sports de la Ville de Montréa*l, 4 May 2021, 5, http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/COMMISSIONS_PERM_V2_FR/MEDIA/DOCUMENTS/MEM_MALTING_20210504.PDF.

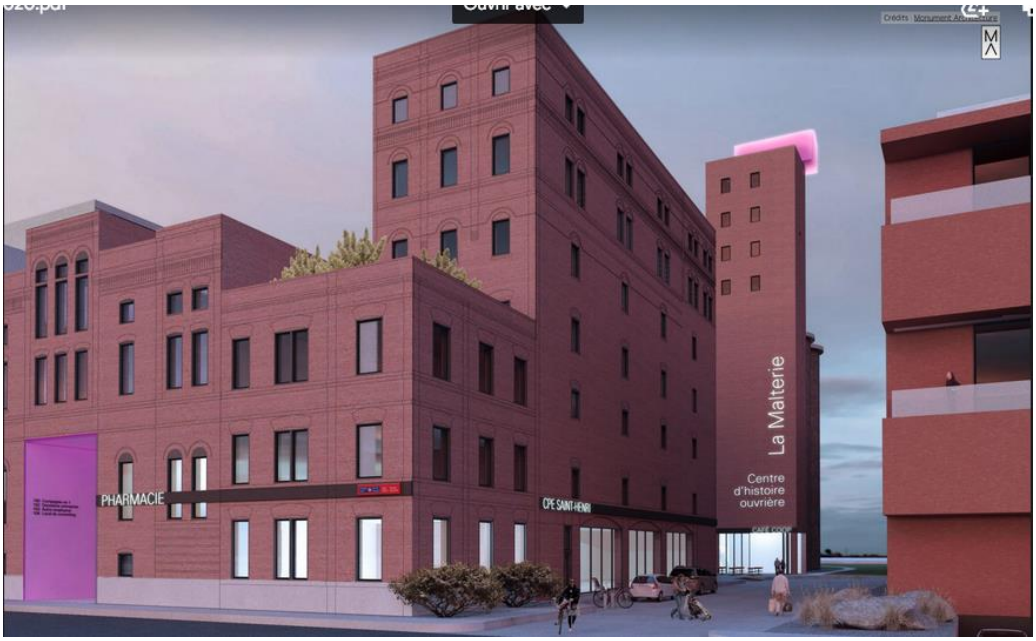

Figure 5.5: Screenshot of a 3-D project model created by Monument Architecture. The proposed museum sits at the centre of the site, flanked on the left by local services like a pharmacy and a daycare and on the right by social housing.

> a contemporary version of this fusion of human activity and building-machine. The amount of space inside is surprising, permitting a fresh regard on the past of the site, the neighbourhood, and the city. Through the complexity of the whole, the diversity of the space both inside and outside, and the force of its architecture, the site offers enormous use-potential.[57]

If this reads like a sales pitch, it is no doubt because to a great extent, the industrial heritage-value of the Malting plant's brick and mortar (and terra-cotta) is indeed being leveraged for community-driven development. Unlike our private-sector competitor Renwick, however, the Collective's plan does so in the hope of impeding, rather than encouraging, the dominant house-of-cards urban planning strategy that banks on overly mortgaged, upwardly mobile professionals. We propose building the social housing units in the concrete part of the factory that was built in

[57] Collectif À Nous la Malting, *Patrimoine populaire ou patrimoine gentrifié*, 5.

the 1950s, while reserving at least one of the terra-cotta silos for museum visitors to be able to enter and explore the original processing procedure of the plant.[58]

The built environment is only the tip of the iceberg in this sort of work. Heritage and Museum Studies scholar Laurajane Smith has written that "to talk of industrial heritage without explicitly engaging in issues of class, and indeed class alongside of gender and race or ethnicity, is to misunderstand the social and political context of the memory work undertaken at such sites and to risk misidentifying what this remembering does."[59] The meanings with which people invest the site, in other words, are rooted in social position. For deindustrialized workers like Carole Orphanos, as we saw in Chapter One, the context in which the Malting project is inscribed is one of reclaiming working-class access to the gentrified Canal. For neighbourhood poet and Collective member Agathe Melançon, it is about the potential for community projects and services; a line from her poem, "Canada Malting," says it all: "*Tant de possibilités/à vous de les imaginer/mais pas de condos*!" [So many possibilities/it's up to you to imagine them/but no condos!].[60] To return to the frame of reference with which this dissertation began, we are constructing a "regime of authenticity" of those without means.

In the heritage committee, we are trying to remain faithful to this vision by mobilizing the scant resources available to us in the interest of a museum that highlights not only material artefacts but also the collective memory of a variety of marginalized populations who have lived or who presently reside in Saint-Henri.[61] Through Steven High, we applied for and received $5000 in funding from Concordia to develop local programming and think through our definition of industrial heritage. As part of this, we commissioned Masters student and Saint-Henri resident

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[58] Collectif À Nous la Malting, *À Nous la Malting! Dossier – Mars 2020*, 50.

[59] Laurajane Smith, "Industrial Heritage and the Remaking of Class Identity: Are We All Middle-Class Now?" in *Constructing Industrial Pasts: Heritage, Historical Culture and Identity in Regions Undergoing Structural Transformation*, ed. Stefan Berger, 158, Adobe Digital Editions EPUB (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2017).

[60] Fred Burrill, Twitter Post, 3 March 2020, 11:25AM, https://twitter.com/fburrill/status/1234877481523515392.

[61] Collectif À Nous la Malting, *À Nous la Malting! Dossier – Mars 2020*, 85-91; Collectif À Nous la Malting, *Patrimoine populaire ou patrimoine gentrifié*, 7.

Tom Fraser to conduct a survey of different working-class history museums and recommend best practices. His report argued that (1) "Working-class history must not be detached from the neighbourhood's present"; and (2) "The museum must foreground people, and not industry," lest we become yet another cultural attraction driving real-estate speculation.[62] Of course, this latter proposal has to be tempered by the very real fact that many dedicated people in Saint-Henri are indeed fascinated by the history of industry, even while this passion is quite often rooted in industrial cultures passed down through family experience and stories. On a very modest scale, we are now working on a project that will hopefully respond to both recommendations: a small exhibit to be displayed in November 2021 as part of a broader mobilizing push in the context of yet another electoral cycle, accompanying artefacts from Daniel's collection with segments of oral history interviews that I have conducted or that are already available in the COHDS archive. As Stefan Moitra and Katarzyna Nogueira recently asked, "How can value systems, structures, places and cultural practices that used to hold a community together be saved for the future without the economic centre that defined all these practices?"[63] This is an especially thorny question given the massive outmigration from the Southwest occasioned by deindustrialization, and the concomitant reality that many or most of the area's working-class people are long divorced from industrial labour. It is a tricky balance – we are trying to put our heritage efforts to work in advancing the broader collective project, without losing historical reflexivity or making the industrial past seem like a long-lost land, while also privileging the memories and experiences of those who remain.

As part of this quest, we also decided to put the funding toward the creation of a series of historical interpretive panels placed around the neighbourhood. Unlike the academic milieu, however, our ability to advance this work was significantly compromised by the pandemic-induced shift to online meetings. For the reasons I highlighted above in relation to accessing the documentary on the POPIR, "Zoom" is a foreign country for many involved in the Collective.

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[62] Tom Fraser, *À Nous la Malting and the future of industrial heritage in Montreal*: *Report for the Heritage Committee of the À Nous la Malting Collective*, 10 May 2021, in possession of author.

[63] Stefan Moitra and Katarzyna Nogueira, "(Post-) Industrial Memories, Oral History and Structural Change," *BIOS: Zeitschrift für Biographieforschung und Oral History* 31, 2 (2018): 3.

Fortunately, I had an opportunity in Winter 2021 to teach (online) Concordia's "Urban History Lab" course, structured around the theme of "History and Memory in Gentrifying Saint-Henri." Over the course of the semester students learned about histories of work, struggle, and racial divisions and gendered labour in the neighbourhood, while staying grounded in the impacts of displacement by working with oral history interviews of area residents. For their final projects, in collaboration with the *À Nous la Malting* Collective, students had the option of working on a proposed museum exhibit, a bilingual interpretative panel, or a research-creation output. They more than rose to the occasion, significantly enriching my understanding of the neighbourhood's past: proposals ranged from the decolonial museal analysis of raw industrial materials that we saw in Chapter Four to a panel on women workers in the Dominion Textile/Coleco building to a rap track about industrial job loss, to a zine featuring memories from the resistance to the *Quai des Éclusiers* to a jazz/folk fusion on the history of Saint-Henri's Black population. Throughout the term, they were responsible for curating a Twitter profile for the course, @Histmem, analyzing their readings and sharing their research with the public. The semester finished with an online event attended by family, other historians, and members of the *À Nous la Malting* Collective.

This was a positive experience for the students – one shared that "It was participative, it made all the theory feel much more relevant to have public facing strategies of diffusion, and I think more of the academy should follow the path of knowledge distribution rather than retention"[64] – but it was also significantly helpful in advancing our work in the heritage committee. As of this writing, we are in the process of printing and installing the historical panels around the neighbourhood, a project that will significantly advance the visibility of the *À Nous la Malting* Collective and our proposal for the factory site. Crucially, by balancing historical study with critical thinking on gentrification, the students' contributions also help us navigate past and present working-class histories. A good example is the project submitted by Kari Valmestad, to be installed along the Lachine Canal (seen in the image below). Reflecting critically on the historical discourse of Parks Canada, her panel encourages readers to think about the role of heritage in gentrifying the surrounding neighbourhoods. Giving some brief detail on the industrial past of the area, she moves on to say, "The canal's dramatic transformation is

[64] Yasmine Phan, email message to author, 7 May 2021.

fraught with irony in that its historical significance has become disengaged from the current social space and built environment now forming its banks, prompting the question: to whom does the history of the Lachine Canal belong?"[65] This re-engagement of historical significance with the current social space is exactly in the spirit of our project.

Figure 5.6: A historical panel critically reflecting on the heritage discourse of Parks Canada, designed by Concordia History student Kari Valmestad.

One final thought on my own personal participation in the *À Nous la Malting* project will help us transition into the broader reflections with which I want to end this chapter. Enthused as I am about the work of the committee, and notwithstanding the huge help it has been in deepening my own understanding of history and memory in Saint-Henri, there is a very real issue of time and energy that needs to be addressed. As I mentioned, I originally was part of two of the project's working groups, heritage and mobilization, in addition to attending the regular general assemblies of the broader Collective. But as I got deeper into my doctoral studies, and therefore

[65] Kari Valmestad, "Dislocating Deindustrialization: Industrial Heritage at the Lachine Canal" (HIST 390 – History and Memory in Gentrifying Saint-Henri, Concordia University, April 2021), in possession of author.

was able to contribute more effectively to collaborative industrial heritage efforts, I had less and less space for participating in the consuming work of outreach and strategy (in this and other initiatives[66]). Putting together occupations and demonstrations, passing out flyers in the Metro, attending planning meetings; all of this can take up multiple days and nights of the week.

Research-creation and writing also take time. Although there are theoretically enough hours in the day, especially considering I have no dependants, I often feel that there is not enough flexibility in my brain. Switching between these two very different modes of production is no easy task. Walter Benjamin advised that "Anyone intending to embark on a major work should be lenient with himself and, having completed a stint, deny himself nothing that will not prejudice the next."[67] In other words, the writer must reproduce themselves, whatever that means to them. For me, unless it is dosed very carefully, political work can "prejudice the next" intellectual endeavour. Obviously, though, there will be no community-controlled Canada Malting project without political mobilization. The last year of the *À Nous la Malting* Collective's efforts have been proof of that. While municipal officials expressed support in principle following our initial flurry of disruptive activities, they chided us for not having a detailed plan. In the time since we produced our *Dossier de projet*, however, they have gone silent and cold – not showing up to meetings, complaining our proposal would cost too much money, etc. They knew what all State actors know – the road to oblivion for social movements is paved with well-argued documents and reports. The only way out is militant mass mobilization.

This is not at all an anti-intellectual position. If I have attempted to demonstrate anything here, it is that this necessary mass mobilization can and indeed should be enriched by critical historical scholarship that prioritizes grassroots voices and reflections, focuses on diffusion and relationships, and that creates the space and time to work in honest collaboration across social positions and disciplinary as well as material boundaries; a "plural authorship of history-telling

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[66] In particular, my other main implication of recent years has been in Solidarity Across Borders, a network of migrants and their allies struggling against border imperialism, global apartheid, and racism. The pandemic particularly affected people without legal status, for whom government support and free healthcare was not an option. These comrades have been courageously organizing throughout the crisis, and it is a sorrow to me that I have not been able to help more.

[67] Walter Benjamin, "The Writer's Technique in Thirteen Theses," in *One-Way Street*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), 46.

[that] requires a plurality of subjects."[68] Oral historians, in particular, can do this work by encouraging marginalized people to become "open books," as Agathe put it, to both themselves and their friends and comrades in struggle, while honouring the need for silence wherever it crops up – even or especially when to do so is inconvenient – and being alive to the unexpected outcomes our work can generate, which may have little or nothing to do with our scholarly agenda.

Research and creation about the past, moreover, as my own example illustrates, can help activists develop more critical understandings of the material and socio-historical patterns structuring their own present-day activities, as well as generate new insights into potentially fruitful avenues for future movement strategy. But I still conclude with a note of caution, coming back to some of the lacunae I noted in the production of "Talking Violence." For historians to be producing "movement-relevant" research, to borrow a term from political theorists Douglas Bevington and Chris Dixon,[69] they must do so with the intention, as Dixon wrote elsewhere, of "learning from and through struggle,"[70] de-conjugating the privileged epistemological marriage of the "participant" and the "observer" not in favour of a silo-ing of the two functions but toward a full embrace of both roles by all. We need to think critically and carefully about two sometimes overlapping and sometimes divergent paths of questioning; *What would I like to do?* and *What needs to be done?*[71] As often as it might be some version of the historical efforts I have described here, it is even more likely to be some form of more quotidian support and presence.

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[68] Alessandro Portelli, "History-Telling and Time: An Example from Kentucky," *The Oral History Review* 20, 1-2 (Spring/Autumn 1992): 66.

[69] Douglas Bevington and Chris Dixon, "Movement-relevant Theory: Rethinking Social Movement Scholarship and Activism," *Social Movement Studies* 4, 3 (2005): 185-208.

[70] Chris Dixon, with a Foreword by Angela Y. Davis, *Another Politics: Talking Across Today's Transformative Movements* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), 41, Google Play Books.

[71] For crucial writing on the difference, from an anarchist perspective, see Anonymous, "On Duty, Responsibility, and Sacrifice," *Entanglement* (2018): 6-13, https://ia903105.us.archive.org/22/items/entanglement_web_read/entanglement_web_read.pdf.

This is especially important for those of us working from within the university context. One might reasonably argue that the figure of the disconnected leftist professor is somewhat of a straw man in this moment of unprecedented adjunctification, with its endless sessional teaching jobs and time-consuming grant cycles. If anything, professional historians of my generation are more likely to be pulled away from contributing to transformative movements by precarity than by comfort.[72] But to a great extent, this is the flip side of the same carrot-stick tenure-industrial complex. This is partially why I have included figures and grant sources in writing this chapter. Even while juggling several teaching and research contracts, I still had access to resources that my neighbours did not. And if all of this engagement someday translates into a university position, that disjuncture will be rendered even greater. Reaching across social and material divides requires a frank and open assessment of who is reaching from where: movement historians need movements as much or more as the other way around.

I suppose I highlight this as a form of holding myself accountable. While much of what is contained within this dissertation is a celebration of the movement in which I have been implicated, much is also critical. But the spirit of this criticism is one of continued engagement. As Agathe says, "One day at a time, one step at a time. Together we're stronger than each on our own."

[72] See Anonymous, "Precarious Historical Instructors' Manifesto," *Active History*, 20 February 2020, https://activehistory.ca/2020/02/precarious-historical-instructors-manifesto/.

CONCLUSION:

On the Duty to the Past

The writing of this dissertation has bestowed on me several enormous blessings. Principal among them is that it has allowed me to renew and strengthen connections with the people I came to know in my time working as a community organizer for the *Projet d'organisation populaire, d'information et de regroupement*. Although only one of my interview participants was older than 75, many of them are living with the health crises brought about by pre-mature old age, the consequence of industrial work and hardscrabble lives lived in the aftermaths of shutdowns. Strokes, heart attacks, isolation (and a global pandemic): it is much less likely that we will run into one another on the streets of Saint-Henri than it would have been even a few short years ago.

A related blessing has been an unexpected respite from the "tyranny of the instant."[1] Activist daily life, with its pressing dates, meetings, phone calls to make, is a whirlwind. It can be easy to fall into developing purely instrumental relationships – can you make it to the demonstration? Will you take on this role? If it acknowledges any connection to a broader concept of time, it is only to a sort of nebulous, endless future. The work of interviewing, of holding space for memory, reminded me of the redemptive duty we have to past struggles and movements: "Such a claim is not settled cheaply."[2]

It seems appropriate, then, that we began by situating ourselves in the variety of historical discourses structuring present-day Saint-Henri: the emergent, post-industrial structure of feeling, with its business opportunities, real-estate developers, and sanitized heritage projects; the oppositional "regime of authenticity" being created by those who have fought to survive deindustrialization and displacement, grounded in memories of labour and the difficult experience of living without a wage; and the darker elements of white nostalgia in the settler order. Each of these memory-schemes, I argue, is intertwined with specific material histories of deindustrialization and displacement, product of a broader global re-structuring of capital accumulation and of international and sexual divisions of labour.

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[1] François Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time* (NY: Columbia University Press, 2017), 40.

[2] Walter Benjamin, "Thesis II," in Michael Löwy, *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's 'On the Concept of History'* (London and New York: Verso, 2016), 30.

Chapter Two dealt with the history of deindustrialization, bookended by the 1967 closure of Dominion Textile and the 1987 shutdowns of Coleco and Simmons Bed. The massive uprooting of industrial plants from Saint-Henri, I argue, had its roots in capital's pushback against the 1940s and 1950s uptick in working-class organizing, and in the building postwar crisis of accumulation. In contrast to explanations that cite firms' vague need to "modernize"[3] or the evolving infrastructure and technological considerations that led to the 1970 closing of the Lachine Canal,[4] I situate capital's abandonment of the neighbourhood in political economy. New forms of militancy of the 1960s and 1970s should be understood thus not only through the lens of the middle-class political activists arriving in the "workers' neighbourhood," but also by paying attention to the gendered restructuring of the industrial working class – conditions that were not "endemic"[5] but rather a dynamic conduit for the broader process of global restructuring.

Focusing particularly on the POPIR, I argue that the strength of the movement in this period lay in the fruitful crossover between survival-focused reproductive labour and productive struggles on the shopfloor in heavily feminized, last-generation plants like Coleco, where militants situated their revolt in a broader neighbourhood tradition of labour organizing. In turn, this led to an increasing focus on feminist struggles that acted to preserve and extend this working-class tradition, leading to conflicts with other Southwest groups who directed their energies toward a collaborationist "social economy" model, hoping to harness capitalist forces for local economic development. Ultimately, the trend toward bureaucratization and specialization in community organizing, combined with the rise of social economy, made the more militant view the minority one. This led to ineffective responses to deindustrialization in the late 1980s.

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[3] Will Langford, *The Global Politics of Poverty in Canada: Development Programs and Democracy, 1964-1979* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020), 126.

[4] Pauline Desjardins, "L'Organisation spatiale du corridor du Canal de Lachine au 19e siècle" (PhD diss., Université de Montréal, 1999); Desmond Bliek and Pierre Gauthier, "Mobilising Urban Heritage to Counter the Commodification of Brownfield Landscapes: Lessons from Montreal's Lachine Canal," *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 16, 1 (2007): 39-58; Desmond Bliek and Pierre Gauthier, "Understanding the Built Form of Industrialization Along the Lachine Canal," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine* 35, 1 (Fall 2006): 3-17.

[5] Langford, *The Global Politics of Poverty*, 126.

The dissertation then turned its attention to the hard years of abandon, re-capitalization, and displacement. While anchoring my understanding in supply-side theories like Neil's Smith concept of the "rent gap," I tried to privilege working-class understanding and experience. The State and capital worked hand-in-hand to facilitate the sectoral switch from industrial to real-estate investment, intervening in local crime networks, refurbishing the Lachine Canal into a post-industrial playground, and re-zoning factory sites for residential development. This reshaping of the neighbourhood in the image of bankers and hedge funds was particularly difficult for the women largely responsible for the affective and reproductive labour of collective survival, a downloading of responsibilities onto the working-class family that was hotly contested through local and provincial struggles for social housing. As the working-class population was split, however, into a labour aristocracy and an increasingly lumpenized left-behind, groups like the POPIR and the FRAPRU mobilized an identitarian discourse of "saving" the *quartier populaire*, betting on the nationalist welfare State and its housing program, Accèslogis. Ultimately this was a losing strategy – opportunities for solidarity with unionized workers at plants like Imperial Tobacco were lost, and the housing program was re-routed into a tool for purchasing social acceptability for luxury condo projects.

The nationalist impulse, however, had roots far deeper than the 1990s convergence of *indépendantistes* and housing groups. Chapter Four traced the 1960s solidification of Saint-Henri in the collective consciousness of French-descended Euro-settlers as the quintessential Québécois neighbourhood, situating its development in the white imaginary of Gabrielle Roy's *Bonheur d'occasion* and in the anti-Black urban planning that led to the construction of the new neighbourhood of "Little Burgundy": centring language as the dividing line of the city meant disappearing race. Shaped by the dispossession and forced absence of Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg peoples, and at the heart of a broader continental process of enclosure and colonial extraction, settler activists in Saint-Henri slotted themselves neatly into the position of neighbourhood indigeneity. These patterns continue to impact the neighbourhood movement and its militants, particularly through the easy slippage from class and language to race, confounding the economic transformation of the neighbourhood with the arrival of immigrant populations and increasingly visible presence of Indigenous peoples. We are still struggling to articulate new ways to fight for the right to remain.

Finally, I shared some more personal reflections on the contradictions of combining activist work and historical investigation, through the prism of three acts of research-creation: a guided audiowalk of Saint-Henri on the theme of violence; a short documentary on the history of the POPIR; and my participation in the heritage committee of the *À Nous la Malting* Collective. These three outputs were full of promise and frustration. The audiowalk has been a useful teaching tool and has given a fair amount of visibility to working-class experiences of gentrification, but also was a learning moment for me in terms of the precision and care necessary for working across material and institutional boundaries, as well as stark evidence of the need for new parameters for understanding the connection between settler colonialism and housing displacement. The film, in turn, helped to create a meaningful context for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the POPIR in December 2019, even though there remain open questions about its ongoing usefulness, given its digital format, for popular education and mobilization in Saint-Henri. And lastly, our work in the heritage committee of the community-based Malting project has given me simultaneously great joy and pause: joy in the fun of working on building working-class-focused historical programming with Saint-Henri residents passionate about the neighbourhood's past, and pause in the impact that my deeper involvement in historical work has had on my ability to contribute to the vital forms of mobilization and outreach that keep movements alive. I argue that for public, oral history work to be relevant to movements, it needs to come from a place of engagement in struggle. Full participation and full observation – no conjugated half-measures.

The duty to the past, of course, also requires us to draw lessons from those experiences to apply to our present. This is another form of struggling against "presentism." At its most programmatic, in Chapter Four, the dissertation argues that the fight against working-class displacement in the settler city needs to be decoupled from identitarian, culture and language-based claims about the right to territory, and instead re-oriented toward direct struggle against landlords and the de-privatization of land through insistence on Indigenous material sovereignty and control of resources. This may mean that we need to leave the language of gentrification, with its propensity toward metaphorizing the frontier, behind.

There are two subtler points that could stand to be made more sharply here. From their emergence in the 1960s, local community organizations like the POPIR have always been constrained, and sometimes directed, as was the case in the organization's choice to become a

comité logement in 1988, by foundations and funders. It is no coincidence that the highly mobilized convergence of shopfloor and reproductive struggles of the early 1970s was in a context of multiple financial backers and still-forming structures of authority within Quebec's philanthropic organizations. As these structures solidified, and as the strategic horizon therefore increasingly narrowed, it became more difficult to effectively contest state policies and capitalist exploitation. In essence, neighbourhood groups went from being working-class organizations to becoming specialized components of civil society with a working-class membership – "giv[ing] rise to politically debilitating misdiagnoses of the operations of power and of resilience of the very forces one presumably wants to combat."[6] These contradictions were only sharpened by the bureaucratic movement marriage to the nationalist provincial welfare State.

A certain strand of thinking on Quebec's social movements traces a more-or-less direct path from the grassroots, "popular" moment of the 1960s and 1970s through to professionalization and institutionalization in the 1980s and 1990s, as the community sector increasingly was forced to substitute itself for the neoliberal State. Depending on one's vantage point, this can either be a positive or negative thru-line – generating many tempests in teapots about the "autonomy" of non-profit groups.[7] In the Southwest, while we have seen that bureaucratization and specialization indeed became increasingly limiting dynamics, the contradictory relationship between the professional organizer and the working-class base has characterized the area's movements now for some 60 years, with the balance of forces depending almost entirely on the political culture of a given organization and the local material conjuncture

[6] Joseph A. Buttigieg, "The Contemporary Discourse on Civil Society: A Gramscian Critique," *boundary 2*, 32, 1 (2005): 36-37.

[7] See, for example, René Lachapelle, "Renouveler l'État social: Les enjeux de l'action communautaire au Québec," *Nouvelles pratiques sociales* 19, 2 (2007): 176-181; see also Eric Shragge's thoughtful reply in the same issue, "Réponse à René Lachapelle," *Nouvelles pratiques sociales* 19, 2 (2007): 182-183. For a critical reflection that accepts the same thru-line, see Louis Gaudreau, Michel Parazelli, and Audréanne Campeau, "L'action communautaire: Quelle autonomie pour ses destinataires?" *Nouvelles pratiques sociales* 29, 1-2 (2017): 20-28; and for representative discourse on the necessary autonomy of the community sector, see Lise St-Germain, Josée Grenier, Mélanie Bourque, and Danielle Pelland, "Enjeux d'autonomie de l'action communautaire autonome (ACA) à partir des analyses des discours de rapports d'activités et des acteurs," *Nouvelles pratiques sociales* 29, 1-2 (2017): 102-120.

(the relatively longer process of deindustrialization in Saint-Henri as compared to Point Saint-Charles, for instance).

This dynamic becomes more pressing as time advances. At the POPIR, for example, the last of the full-time staffers who worked closely with the generation of militants from the 1980s and 1990s has recently left the organization. I can think of very few paid community organizers from the variety of non-profit groups in Saint-Henri who are also residents of the neighbourhood. This is of course not all bad – new ideas and new faces encourage different types of people to become involved in the struggle. But it does mean that the material context, and the subsequent local configuration of class forces, can become less determinant of the strategies of the organization than the ideological proclivities of its employees.

There is an urgent need, then, for the development of truly autonomous working-class organizations in the neighbourhood that receive no funding, have no employees, and that are beholden only to the debate and discussion of their members. Interestingly, the context of the early 1970s – the overlapping structures of pressing reproductive issues like housing and healthcare and precarious, underpaid, heavily feminized and increasingly racialized workplaces – is not so far from that of 2021. In addition to eking out livelihoods on benefits and collecting cans, neighbourhood workers now wash dishes and serve drinks in the area's many trendy bars and restaurants, or clean AirBnBs for absentee landlords. The local CLSC provides ever fewer services, and it is increasingly difficult to see a doctor in the neighbourhood. To tackle these problems, we need to reject specialization and return to the broad-based, feminist working-class organizing that allowed the neighbourhood movement of the early 1970s to make such impressive gains, taking on exploitation wherever it might crop up.

Whatever direction Saint-Henri's working-class chooses to go, it will do so strengthened by a collective tradition that has always placed struggle first. We will continue to take up our duty to the past.

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Oral History Consent Form

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research on Saint-Henri, social movements and urban change being conducted by Frederick Burrill of the Department of History at Concordia University (514 449-9370; fredburrill@gmail.com).

PURPOSE: The purpose of the project is to examine gentrification, social movements and public memory of industrial heritage in the working-class neighbourhood of Saint-Henri, Montreal. This project is supported by grants from the Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et Culture (FRQSC) and the Faculty of Arts and Science Research and New Explorations Funding (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada).

PROCEDURES: The interview will be conducted at the location of the interviewee's choice. Typically, this is the home of the interviewee, the interview room of the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling or while walking outside. Interviewers will record participants' life stories using video, or audio depending on the interviewee's preference. Interviews can also be conducted over the phone or via a secure Internet platform (Microsoft Teams). Participants can choose to discuss any aspect of their lives and they may refuse to answer any questions. Interview sessions normally last up to two hours, but participants may take as long as they would like and are free to stop at any time.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: Telling your life story can sometimes be upsetting and emotionally difficult. You are free to stop and take a break or discontinue at any time. Please also take care to not identify specific individuals who have participated in illegal political activity, either peaceful civil disobedience or property destruction.

With your consent, your story could be part of a publically available audio-walk of Saint-Henri and other exhibits on the history of the neighbourhood, and will be used in the principal investigator's dissertation research.

CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION: (Please review the following conditions and options with the interviewer. Feel free to ask questions if they appear unclear.)**.** There will be several rounds of the interview process during which you will be consulted and may choose to remove your consent: (a) during the interview itself; (b) after consulting the recorded interview (video or audio file) and the attached transcript; and (c) upon seeing the final product, as employed in draft versions of (1) an audiowalk of St-Henri to be released digitally in October 2018; (2) video clips to be published in December 2019 for the 50th anniversary of the tenants' rights movement in St-Henri; (3) the publication of the thesis, tentatively scheduled for Fall 2020; and (4) the creation of public history exhibits in summer and fall of 2020.

(Please read and check off the following boxes)

☐ I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the interview and discontinue from that point forward.

☐ I agree that recordings of my interview will be stored at the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling and/or at another Montreal-area archive for long-term preservation.

In terms of identification and reproduction of my interview, I agree to:
(Please choose only one option: option 1 (with only one sub-option: 1-A or 1-B) or option 2.)

☐ **OPTION 1: Open public access**
My identity may be revealed in any publications or presentations that may result from this interview.
(Please choose only one sub-option: 1-A or 1-B.)

☐ **SUB-OPTION 1-A**
I agree to the possible broadcasting and reproduction of sound and images of my interview by any method and in any media by researchers of this project.
I consent that my interview, or portions of it, be made available on the internet through web pages and/or on-line databases of the project.

OR

☐ **SUB-OPTION 1-B**
My interview may be accessed on-site by researchers and the public by viewing it but the sound and images should not be reproduced or disseminated.

☐ **OPTION 2: Anonymity**
My identity will be known only to the interviewer; others will not gain access to my identity unless they gain special permission from me, the interviewee. Once the interview has been transcribed and approved by me, the recordings will be destroyed (though a copy of the interview will be given to me). The transcript will then become open public access and will potentially be broadcasted or reproduced by any method and in any media.

In cases where personal photographs or documents are scanned or photographed:
(Please choose only one option: 1 or 2)

☐ **OPTION 1**
I agree to let the project researcher digitize personal photographs and/or documents for use in the project publications only and for their being archived with the interview recording

OR

☐ **OPTION 2**
I agree to let the project researcher digitize personal photographs and/or documents for use in the project and for their being archived with the interview recording. I likewise give permission to let future researchers to use these images in their publications.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT.
I FREELY AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

INTERVIEWEE:

NAME (please print)	
DATE AND BIRTHPLACE (optional)	
POSTAL ADDRESS	
PHONE NUMBER	

EMAIL ADDRESS	
SIGNATURE	
DATE	

INTERVIEWER:

NAME (please print)	
SIGNATURE	
DATE	

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics and Compliance Advisor, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 oor.ethics@concordia.ca

Formulaire de consentement en histoire orale

Je consens à participer au programme de recherche sur St-Henri, ces mouvements sociaux et l'aménagement urbain mené par Frederick Burrill du département d'histoire à l'Université Concordia (fredburrill@gmail.com; 514-449-9370).

Objectif : Cette recherche a comme objectif d'enquêter sur la gentrification et les mouvements sociaux dans le quartier populaire de St-Henri, Montréal. Ce projet est subventionné par le Fond de recherche du Québec – Société et Culture (FRQSC) et par le Faculty of Arts and Science Research and New Explorations Funding (Conseil de recherche en sciences humaines du Canada).

Procédure : L'entrevue se fera dans un lieu choisi par la personne interviewée : typiquement, chez la personne interviewée, dans la salle d'entrevue au Centre d'histoire orale et de récits numérisés (CHORN) ou lors d'une promenade dans le quartier. L'intervieweur enregistrera l'histoire de vie de la personne interviewée en format vidéo ou audio selon la préférence du/de la candidat(e). L'entrevue peut également se faire par téléphone ou via une plateforme numérisée sécurisée (Microsoft Teams) Le contenu de l'entrevue sera déterminé par la/le participant(e), et la/le participant(e) peut refuser de répondre à toute question. L'entretien typique a une durée d'à peu près deux heures, mais ça pourrait être plus long ou plus court, selon la volonté de la personne interviewée. Le/la participant(e) est libre à mettre fin à l'entrevue à tout moment.

Risques et bénéfices : Raconter son histoire de vie peut être émotionnellement difficile. Vous pouvez prendre une pause ou mettre fin à l'entrevue en tout temps. Veuillez aussi faire attention de ne pas identifier des individu(e)s qui auraient commis une acte politique illégale, soit de la désobéissance civile soit de la destruction de la propriété.

Avec votre consentement, votre histoire pourrait faire partie d'un tour guidé audio du Saint-Henri et d'autres expositions portant sur l'histoire du quartier, et sera utilisée dans le recherche de l'enquêter principal menant à la rédaction de sa thèse.

Conditions de participation (Veuillez réviser les conditions et options suivantes avec l'intervieweur. Sentez-vous à l'aise de demander toute question de clarification). Il y a aura plusieurs moments de consultation lors du processus d'entrevue où vous pouvez retirez votre consentement : (a) lors de l'entrevue; (b) après avoir consulté la version enregistrée de l'entrevue (vidéo ou audio) et la transcription associée; (c) après d'avoir consulté une première version de (1) un tour guidé numérique de Saint-Henri qui va être publié en octobre 2018; des vidéoclips qui seront publiés en décembre 2019 lors du 50 anniversaire du mouvement pour le droit des locataires à Saint-Henri; (3) la publication de ladite thèse, provisoirement prévue pour l'automne 2020; et (4) la création d'expositions d'histoire publique en été et automne 2020.

(Veuillez lire les conditions suivantes et indiquez votre accord en cochant la boite)

☐ Je comprends que je peux retirer mon consentement à n'importe quel moment durant l'entrevue et y mettre terme à partir de ce moment.

☐ Je suis d'accord que l'enregistrement de mon entrevue soit préservé dans les archives du Centre d'histoire orale et de récits numérisés et/ou une autre archive montréalaise.

Concernant l'identification et la reproduction de mon entrevue, je consens à :
(Veuillez choisir seulement une option : option 1 (avec sous-option 1A ou 1B) ou option 2

☐ **Option 1: Accès ouvert au publique**
Mon identité peut être partagé dans le cadre de toute publication et présentation qui découle de cette entrevue.

☐ **Sous-option 1A**
Je consens à la possibilité de la publication et reproduction de tout son et image de mon entrevue, par n'importe quel moyen et en toute média choisie par les chercheurs associés avec ce projet. Je consens à la distribution de mon entrevue dans son intégralité ou en partie par Internet, soit en page web ou par le biais des bases de données en ligne du projet.

OU

☐ **Sous-option 1B**
Mon entrevue sera accessible sur les lieux de l'archive pour les chercheurs et le publique mais le son et les images y associés ne peuvent pas être disséminés ou reproduits.

☐ **Anonymat**
Mon identité sera connue seulement du chercheur; d'autres chercheurs n'y auront pas accès sauf par la permission spéciale de moi, la personne interviewée. Une fois que mon entrevue soit transcrite et approuvé par moi, l'enregistrement sera détruit (mais une copie de l'entrevue me sera donnée). L'accès à la transcription sera ouvert aux chercheurs et au publique et la transcription sera possiblement diffusé et reproduit par toute méthode et en toute média.

En cas de numérisation de documents et images :
(Veuillez choisir seulement une option : 1 **ou** 2)

☐ **Option 1**
Je consens à ce que le chercheur numérise mes documents et images personnels seulement aux fins de ce projet et pour qu'ils soient archivés avec l'enregistrement de cette entrevue.

☐ **Option 2**
Je consens à ce que le chercheur numérise mes documents et images personnels aux fins de ce projet et pour qu'ils soient archivés avec l'enregistrement de cette entrevue. Je consens également à ce que les images et documents numérisés associés avec mon entrevue soient accessibles aux chercheurs dans l'avenir et qu'ils soient reproduits dans leurs publications.

J'AI LU ATTENTIVEMENT LE TEXTE PRÉCÉDANT ET JE COMPRENDS CETTE ENTENTE. JE CONSENS LIBREMENT ET VOLONTAIREMENT À PARTICIPER À CETTE ÉTUDE.

PERSONNE INTERVIEWÉE :

NOM (lettres moulées)	
LIEU ET DATE DE NAISSANCE (optionnel)	
CODE POSTALE	
NUMÉRO DE TÉLÉPHONE	
COURRIEL	
SIGNATURE	
DATE	

INTERVIEWEUR:

NOM (lettres moulées)	
SIGNATURE	
DATE	

Si en tout moment vous avez des questions sur vos droits en tant qu'un(e) participant(e) à une étude de recherche, veuillez contacter le Research Ethics and Compliance Advisor, l'Université Concordia, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 oor.ethics@concordia.ca.

Self-Assessment for participation in a research study during the COVID-19 pandemic

Screening criteria in the context of COVID-19 pandemic:
Have you or someone in your household?:

- Travelled outside Canada
- Been in close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with or is under investigation for COVID-19
- Been in close contact with anyone who has experienced any of the below-mentioned symptoms
- Experienced any of the following symptoms:
    - fever
    - cough that is new or worsening, continuous or more than usual
    - difficulty breathing
    - loss of sense of taste or smell without nasal congestion
    - intense fatigue
    - important loss of appetite
    - sore throat
    - diarrhea

If the answer to any of the above criteria is yes, participants are not permitted to attend and participate in person in the research project. Please contact the principal investigator to notify them.

Vulnerable population criteria:
Do you meet any of the following criteria for being a member of a vulnerable population group, as defined by government authorities?:

- Aged 70 or older
- One or more of the following chronic conditions:
    - Uncontrolled or complicated chronic heart or lung problems, severe enough to require regular medical monitoring or hospital care
    - Uncontrolled or complicated case of diabetes, severe enough to require regular medical monitoring or hospital care
    - Complicated liver problems (including cirrhosis) and chronic kidney diseases, severe enough to require regular medical monitoring or hospital care
    - Uncontrolled or complicated hypertension (high blood pressure), severe enough to require regular medical monitoring or hospital care
- Significant obesity (e.g., a BMI ≥ 40)
- A medical condition causing a decrease in evacuation of respiratory secretions or risk of aspiration (e.g. cognitive impairment, spinal cord injury, seizure disorder, or neuromuscular disorders)
- Immunosuppressed due to a medical condition or treatment, such as chemotherapy (with full details available *via* the Institut National de Santé Publique Website)

If the answer to any of the above criteria is yes, please inform the principal investigator as soon as possible. The principal investigator will contact Concordia's EHS department to assess your situation and make sure you are not at risk when coming to participate or during your participation in the study.

Waiver of participation in a research study during the COVID-19 pandemic

The continued health and safety of the Concordia community and those communities with whom, and within which, we conduct research is a top priority for the university. We are adhering rigorously to all public health directives and carefully planning to ensure security, health, safety and cleaning procedures have been developed in accordance with the *Commission des Normes, de l'Équité, de la Santé et de la Sécurité du Travail* (CNESST) protocols and requirements. As part of these efforts, a central committee has been established to review all research projects involving in-person participants to verify that adequate measures have been taken to adhere to strict health and safety requirements. This form has been developed to confirm your awareness of these measures and your agreement to participate in the research.

Participants acknowledge that they have verified their personal health situation using the self-assessment form provided prior to commencing their in-person participation in the research.

Participants acknowledge that they have been informed of the criteria for membership of a vulnerable population group, as defined by government authorities[1]. They declare that have understood them and are comfortable proceeding with the study.

Participants acknowledge that they have been invited to consult the websites of *Direction de Santé Publique de Montréal*, CNESST, Health Canada and INSPQ to obtain the latest information from public authorities on the COVID-19 disease and the associated safety precautions.

Individuals who decide to participate in a research study and/or activity that is being conducted by a Concordia researcher, regardless of where the activity is conducted on or off university property, acknowledge and accept the inherent potential infection risks associated with getting to or from the research location.

Participants acknowledge that they have been informed of measures that will be taken to adhere to safety guidelines and requirements, and can ask for additional information at any time.

Participants accept that Concordia cannot guarantee a risk-free environment and that it is a personal choice of them to participate in a study.

I, _____, declare that I have read and understood the above information and that I am willing to continue participating in the study entitled _____

Signed in Montréal,

Please print name	Signature	Date

[1] https://www.inspq.qc.ca/publications/2967-protection-travailleurs-maladies-chroniques-covid-19