Animating Transit Tales: A Poetic Approach to Oral Histories, Discussing Gendered Narratives in Montreal's Métro Experience

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ABSTRACT

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How can the integration of poetic frameworks to oral histories, and animation enhance our understanding of gendered narratives within Montreal's Métro, and what insights does this offer into the intersection of visual communication, spatial practices, and everyday experiences?

"Transit Tales" is a multi-disciplinary exploration documenting the gendered experiences of eight individuals navigating public spaces, particularly within the context of the Montreal Métro. Through oral history interviews, the study captures participants' voices, weaves together common themes such as self-censorship, spatial practices, and resistance against oppressive structures. Going beyond traditional documentation, the research incorporates visual and poetic elements to deepen narrative engagement and extend its reach to a broader audience. This research creatively navigates transcription techniques, and visual interventions to foster community interaction and stimulate conversation and self-reflection. By critically examining the intersection of oral history methodology and visual communication design, the research seeks creative inquiry for authentically capturing and responsibly sharing gendered experiences in an urban environment. It delves into questions of transcription processes, the representation of oral histories for critical engagement, and the graphic forms through which these narratives can be effectively communicated. Through this multi-faceted exploration, *Transit Tales* contributes to a deeper understanding of engendered and/or presenting as feminine people's experiences in an urban transit environment while offering new perspectives on communicating oral history research.

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This work, and the conversations that unfolded along the way, have empowered me to stand my ground, share vulnerable moments with confidence, walk with arms swinging, head held high, and, most importantly, to unabashedly take up space.

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Introduction

Every body should have a right to the city, however, accessibility, and the exercise of agency in public spaces differentiate between individuals' multiple socio-cultural identities and constructions. My research focuses primarily on gender as a cultural inscription affecting the experience of public space. Women's spatial practice and use of public spaces are inhibited by "geographies of fear and violence", the fear of male violence and harassment can manifest itself in the body as a fear of space (Tonkiss 95).[1] Through a feminist lens, I prioritise everyday lived experiences of feminine spatial practice to understand how vulnerability in public spaces is navigated, reproduced, and reflects larger patriarchal structures.

> "Indeed, at its worst this feeling results in a desire to make ourselves absent from space; it can mean that we acquiesce in being made invisible, in our occupying no space. We participate in our own erasure" (Rose 143).

Transit Tales is an animated documentary and poetic exploration conveying the gendered experiences of eight participants navigating Montreal's public spaces through oral history - with a particular focus on the Métro de Montréal (Montreal Metro).[2] Women tend to use public spaces with transient nature barely using them as a site of rest or occupation (Ranade 1522). The Métro becomes a liminal space where despite being in transit there is a compulsion to rest between destinations which can more easily lead to feelings of exposure and tension. The intent for this project was to develop a more situational knowledge of how public space is used, while illustrating strength and resistance in shared narratives. Exploring experiences outside of self-reflection can challenge preconceived ways of thinking and allow for a diversity of voices for a more well-rounded understanding of research subject matter (Leavy 6). The film engages with the slow, traditional mediums of Risograph and illustrated stop-motion to communicate the sensitivity of memories, aiming to be both evocative and tender. It dances between meditation, tension, disturbance and unity to visually communicate the everyday experiences of riding the Métro and walking in public space.

[1] While resources used here focus on "women", this research extends to be more inclusive as such gendered experiences are not limited to cisgender women.
[2] From here on out the Métro de Montréal can be referred to as *the Métro*.

This research emphasises the value and insight unpacked when stimulating dialogue around the everyday experience of engendered and/or presenting feminine bodies.[3] They do not often give themselves space or time to digest the layers of past experiences carried with them daily or how this continues to affect their spatial practice. What is often dismissed as part of a feminine existence can be linked to larger systems of patriarchal oppression. Providing a safe and encouraging space for dialogue to foster communicative relationships around everyday experiences among participants could encourage a sense of community and solidarity by sharing lived experiences. The creative output of this research attempts to weave audio-recorded narratives together by finding similar themes, strengthening the sense of community and the possibility of shared experiences.

Delving into the underrepresented intersection of visual communication design and oral history, this research aims to effectively capture the everyday encounters of individuals who are engendered and/or presenting as feminine within public spaces. This is documented through one-to-one oral history interviews and audio extracts of which serve as the foundation for a narrative woven together through visual communication design. This research aims to bridge the gap between oral history and the visual arts by exploring the synergy between the two disciplines.

Employing a poetic approach to transcription and animation documentary, the work seeks to preserve the emotive and textural qualities of the original audio recordings. This approach not only enhances the relationship between visual communication and oral history but also brings the inherent musicality of speech to the forefront, enriching the communication of these vital audio records and preserving the integrity of the participants.

Montreal Street Harassment and the "Subway Shirt"

A research report on street harassment in Montreal unveils a concerning set of findings with reference to the Métro as a space of tension.[4] Street harassment, characterised by intrusive and

[3] This is a terminology I use through-out the text as I recognise experiences of gendered oppression as not limited to women- in particular cisgender women. Rather it is the social inscription of femininity which leads to the experience of gendered oppression.

[4] All statistics in this section are taken from the following report: Courcy, Isabelle, Lavoie Mongrain, Catherine, Blais, Mélissa (2022). Highlights, taken from: Rapport de recherche sur le harcèlement de rue à Montréal. Un portrait statistique de la pluralité des expériences, des manifestations et des contextes. Montréal: Service aux collectivités de l'Université du Québec à Montréal/Centre d'éducation et d'action des femmes de Montréal.

unsolicited behavior in public spaces, is alarmingly prevalent in Montreal (Courcy et al).[5] Between 2020 and 2021, a significant 65% of survey respondents reported experiencing street harassment, with almost half recalling their first encounter as minors (Courcy et al). Certain groups, including cisgender women, gender-diverse individuals, racially diverse people, sexually diverse individuals, and those aged 18-24, are disproportionately targeted while primarily adult men are identified as the main perpetrators (Courcy et al). Despite its widespread occurrence, few incidents are reported, fearing not being taken seriously or perceiving the reporting process as lengthy and ineffective (Courcy et al). Witness support is lacking, with over half of respondents stating that no help was offered in most incidents (Courcy et al). Certain public spaces are more prone to harassment, such as streets, sidewalks, parking lots, or parks (66%) while public transit, adapted transport, and bus stops account for 38.8%.[6] *Transit Tales* aims to counter this by fostering an intimate space for dialogue around everyday spatial encounters while fostering solidarity by highlighting shared narratives.

In recent times, a notable TikTok trend, identified as "Subway Shirts" has gained prominence, putting a spotlight on longstanding issues of gendered street harassment public spaces, most notably within the confines of public transit (CTV News, 0:0:03).[7] This trend emerged as a response to the consistent harassment encountered during commutes, and it centers around people who have experienced such harassment sharing videos of themselves donning oversized shirts (CTV News, 0:0:12).[8] The underlying premise of this solution is to evade unwanted attention by the way individuals chose to present themselves and maintain personal safety

Research supported by the City of Montréal and the Secrétariat à la condition féminine. Translated from the French by Cheryl Smeall.

[5] Street harassment manifests in various forms, including insistent looks, intrusive questions, inappropriate comments, rude remarks, offensive jokes, whistling, shouting, or catcalls (Courcy et al).

[6] Incidents also occur in establishments like stores, bars, restaurants, and shopping centers (49.4%), festivals, events, and large-scale public activities account for 18.7% of reported incidents (Courcy et al). Contrary to assumptions, street harassment occurs throughout the day, with a significant number of incidents between noon and 4 p.m. (56.8%) and during the evening from 4 p.m. to 11 p.m. (59%).[6] Men are predominantly identified as primary perpetrators, targeting cisgender women (67.5%), gender-diverse individuals (62.4%), and other cisgender men (67%). These findings provide insights into the prevalence, settings, times, and demographics of street harassment.

[7] "Why Montreal women are wearing 'subway shirts' on the Métro to feel safer" *YouTube,* uploaded by CTV News, July 20th 2023, www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Is0Jwt6h1M

[8] The "Subway Shirts" TikTok trend has not been without its share of criticism, as the Canadian Women's Foundation has expressed concerns regarding its effectiveness and potential for victim-blaming (CTV news, 1:09). Their stance on this matter is unequivocal: the issue of harassment is not contingent on women's attire or actions; rather, it is a byproduct of societal vulnerabilities that certain individuals exploit to assert power (CTV news, 1:09).

during their journeys.[9] While this phenomenon has recently garnered attention online, the inclination to self-censor in terms of physical appearance and body language for enhanced feeling safety while navigating public spaces is not a novel trend.

In response to safety concerns of women using public transit and with the widespread rise of the "Subway Shirt", Montreal's public transit authority, Société de transport de Montréal (STM), has taken initiatives to ensure that commuters feel secure during their journeys. This includes the installation of surveillance cameras within the Métro and the launch of a campaign that encourages bystanders to intervene in cases of harassment (CTV News, 0:1:26).[10] While this intervention claimed to have launched in public space over June and July 2023, there is little evidence it took place aside from their online campaign. Canada stands out as a nation where women, girls, and individuals with diverse gender identities face a high risk of gender-based violence, with one in four of these individuals reporting some form of sexual harassment, assault, or unwanted physical contact (CTV News, 0:1:35). However, these figures represent only reported incidents, and the actual prevalence of such experiences may be higher.

Extracted from a YouTube post, the comments regarding this Montreal CTV News report discussed, though sadly unsurprising, serve as an infuriating reminder of the pervasive patriarchal objectification and control exerted over engendered and/or presenting feminine identities (Figure 1).

[9] See also: https://www.instagram.com/reel/Cxlra3bPaFz/ --- From what I understand this users' video ignited the *subway shirt* viral trend. After receiving so many abusive comments they decided to make an official "subway shirt" and by commenters demand they have even made a "Métro shirt" see https://www.bonfire.com/Métro-shirt/ (note that the creators claim they do not make profit from the shirts and money is donated to planned parenthood)
https://www.tiktok.com/@screenshothq/video/7234526653945220378?_r=1&_t=8gJrlJ3FGYn
https://www.tiktok.com/@feeling.jaded/video/7281837357270076702?_r=1&_t=8gJrSg3Y3VN

[10] https://www.temoinsagissons.ca/en/
https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2228260931611
https://www.stm.info/fr/presse/communiques/2023/la-ville-de-montreal--le-spvm-et-la-stm-unissent-leurs-voix-pour-denoncer-le-harcelement-de-rue
https://globalnews.ca/news/9762160/montreal-public-safety-campaign-street-harassment/

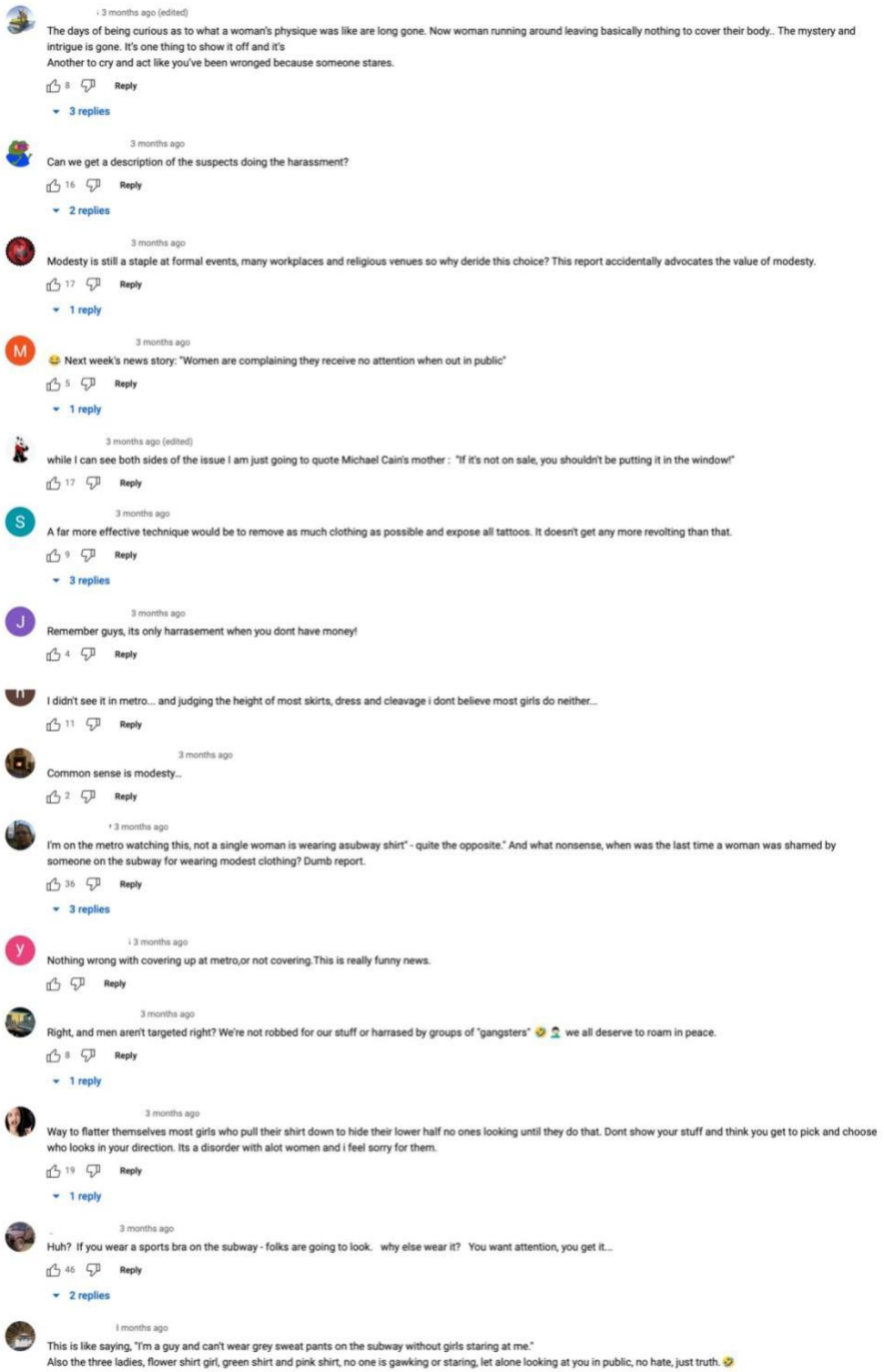


Figure 1: *Comments on YouTube from CTV News report on why Montreal Women wear "subway shirts"*. 2023. Screenshot by author.

As a result of patriarchal structures embedded into socialised behaviour, the "Subway Shirt" trend is a direct example of how engendered and/or presenting feminine people have changed their spatial practice to help them feel safer. This validates that gendered spatial oppression is a concern in Montreal, foregrounding the need to stimulate dialogue around this research's subject matter. *Transit Tales* aims to open up and foster dialogue around situated experiences navigating such tensions in Montreal through documenting the oral histories of participants. As opposed to a quantitative, summarised research report, it harnesses the intimacy of human experience and dialogue through creative inquiry.

Positionality

This study does not assume that all women and gender diverse people have the same experience of public space. Aside from personal aspects, lived experience is dependent on the many social inscriptions we carry of which gender and culturally inscribed femininity are just some. Working with a small group of 8 participants allowed me to foster a more personal and intimate relationship during the interview process, having discursive conversations driven by open-ended questions. Doing this provided time and space for the interview to take place, adopting a more care-centred approach to research. The participants all identified with some kind of vulnerability in public space that was connected to their gender presentation. They were *not* participants who did not align themselves with my subject matter - nor was I looking for people in this position. This research also had a time limit and resource constraints - it was *not* a mass study to identify what women and gender diverse people experience in Montreal. The intent for this project was to gain a more situated knowledge of a gendered experience of public space aside from my own experiences, and to illustrate strength and resistance in the collective experience of such gendered accounts. It is a homage to those who experience similar frustrations, so that they know they are not alone. It is important to briefly describe the positionalities of the participants, as this reflects the scope of my research (Appendix A).[11] All except two were people I had an existing relationship with. All except one identified as cisgender. All are able-bodied and middle-class. Most were under the age of 30.

[11] Coming from South Africa, my situational awareness towards gender-based violence is perhaps heightened over people who come from Canada.

Before delving into the creative work, the first chapter theorises the public space as built upon exclusions - primarily that of gender. It grounds spatial practice and gender as performative and as such provides a fertile space for intervention to counter hegemonic and patriarchal behaviour. The following chapters illustrate the multiple iterations that *Transit Tales* developed before reaching a final product of stop-motion film and exploration into poetic transcriptions. Each iteration gathered theoretical and methodological grounding which shaped the framework of this research-creation. The *Transit Tales* film represents a summary of the research findings while also being a creative exploration into the relationship between visual communication design and oral history.

Chapter 1

Public Space and Performance

Introduction

The dichotomous, binary associations between the public (male, production, domination, the city) and the private (female, reproduction, subordination, the home) are strategically entrenched in spatial discourse and continuously reproduced by public performance (Rendell 103). Sexual assault, harassment, and rape are consistent reminders that public spaces are no place for the feminine body, and the city is navigated with a vulnerability that inhibits mobility and potential (Spain 588). Conscious or not, decisions of daily spatial navigation are repeatedly recalibrated to accommodate more comfortable routes for engendered feminine bodies (Ranade 1522). Drawing from Rose's comment on the gendered experience of public space, we see that to be culturally engendered as feminine means to exist in a smaller space and to take up less room than the "dominant", masculine binary. As such I argue that discourse around critical spatial practice is a crucial site for intervention and resistance against oppressive, overarching patriarchal structures because it directly confronts constructs of prescribed femininity in public spaces.

1.1 The "Public" Space

The idea of considering a space to be public implies that everyone has an equal right to enjoy its use. Public space is broadly considered as democratic, and as such is a shared space of inclusion and expression. However, public space is not fully exercised by everyone, and barriers can include gender, sexuality, race and class.[12]

The term "public space" is a widely contested construction. Juergen Habermas conceptualises the idea of the "public sphere", a "universally accessible" realm of liberal discussion and critical thinking in which the "public" could produce and circulate critical discourse of the "State", and as a result was separate to the personal interests of the "private", "household"

[12] By "fully exercised", I mean that, whilst it might be used as a means of transport/transit, it is engaged in a passive sense and the foundations of public space as later discussed from the perspective of democratic philosophers (spaces of appearances, the common world, the public sphere) are not exercised.

(Goodsell 262, Fraser 57 & Langman 191).[13] Whilst the general idea is widely accepted in democratic political practice and holds significance in its core values, it is important to understand it as a "bourgeoisie" construct and despite it being constituted on public accessibility, it was ultimately built upon significant exclusions (Fraser 59, Langman 193 & Mitchell 34). The bourgeoisie sphere, which was a privileged white, male aristocracy, undermined the "universality" of Habermas' public sphere as it neglected any oppositional public spheres, and as such denies the social complexity of society (Fraser 66, Langman 193, Mitchell 34 & Mustapha 31). A key exclusion was that of gender, and as such masculine gender constructs were inscribed into the foundations of public spheres (Fraser 59).

As this relationship has been constrained and demarcated by gender, class and race, access to public space and thus everyday life was not open to all, and the public space was exclusionary (Mitchell 133). Space can be exercised as a form of control and limitation to mobility, or it can be a space of achievement, power, and resisting constraints (Wrede 324, Wiesman 4). I investigate a gendered experience of public space as continuously reproduced hegemonic discourse to understand how spatial practice in public space can draw attention to and destabilise restrictive constructs.

1.2 The Production of Space and Gender Performativity

Space is recognised as unavoidably political and inextricably linked to unequal social relations and as such always a potential place for conflict (Swenson 2). Henri Lefebvre speaks of space as a socially reproducible product of repetitive public and individual actions which can, in turn, become engendered as sites of homogeneity (Swenson 23). Dualistically, using creative practice to reveal this nature of socially produced space, appropriating it on your own terms can create powerful sites of resistance against hierarchal power structures (Swenson 25). Through documentation *Transit Tales* makes visible some of the limitations and vulnerabilities engendered and/or presenting feminine people face in public spaces. Such everyday encounters can be socially accepted as part of the feminine lived experience, nullifying their impact, and rendering it invisible. By weaving together narratives that echo

[13] Habermas understands the public sphere to have emerged from a post-feudal system, with the growth of a capitalist, market economy provoking individualism and a rising liberal state (Goodsell 262, Langman 191, Mitchell 34).

experiences can illustrate how spatial politics is engaged in everyday feminine practice and can therefore serve as a site of intervention.

Shilpa Ranade shows space is inherently gendered through behavioral mapping the spatial practice of people in public spaces finding that women as opposed to men use public space for only when they have reason to be there and make indirect and unconscious choices on the way they move through space for them to be comfortable (1521-2). Gillian Rose argues the awareness of being noticed, recognising oppressive social inscriptions such as skin colour, class, gender onto feminine bodies contributes to the immobilising experience of public spaces (Rose 154). The pervasive patriarchal discourse, reflected in feminine subjects' awareness of space occupancy and the vulnerability to objectification, leads to a disconnection from public space, prompting efforts to minimise the feminine body's presence (Rose 154). An example of this can be seen in the “Subway Shirt” trend and is further documented in *Transit Tales* through the oral histories of the research participants.

Judith Butler challenges binary structures as culturally performed constructs, which govern subjectivity such as gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality. She understands gender as a social construct, and as an action and performance, which requires repetition for success (191). Whilst gender is not fixed, the repeated act is a reproduction of an experience that already exists in its own established social meanings, and through everyday practice, this act is legitimised (191). This highlights resistance in actively participating and understanding how feminine practice is lived and reproduced. Drawing from social theorists such as Henri Lefebvre and Pierre Bourdieu through a queer lens, Sara Ahmed expands on the critical relationship between space, subject, and others as mutually dialectical and produced through action (2006). She describes how the body with its social inscriptions, carries and performs "sedimented history", both taking shape of and influencing the spaces they inhabit and the bodies and objects they orientate around (Ahmed, 56). This relates to Butlers' notions of gender performativity.

Conclusion

In the theoretical examination of public space, a structural binary emerges, highlighting distinctions between the public and private realms. This dichotomy extends to systems of meanings, associations, and exclusions, shaping who is included and excluded from public space, influencing civic voices and navigation patterns. These exclusions impact how individuals engage with and utilise public space. Recognising public spaces as embodiments and reflections of hegemonic discourse, they become crucial sites for intervention. Consequently, the performance of spatial practice is an important site to unearth Ahmed's layers of "sedimented histories" or Butler's performative iteration and to reinscribe more inclusive behaviour into space. Examining the gendered experience in public spaces reveals a historical exclusion of feminine bodies, necessitating a comprehensive understanding and documentation of their encounters and spatial practices. Employing a feminist lens, oral history in Montreal's Métro explores engendered and/or presenting as feminine experiences, aiming to foster critical dialogue and detailed insights.

Chapter 2

making hard things soft

Introduction

Recognising the legitimacy of emotion and the value of dialogue as a medium for gaining situated knowledge, the first creative research project towards *Transit Tales* was framed. This inaugural project titled *making hard things soft* commenced in the Fall semester of 2021. At this stage of research, I considered conversational dialogue around the research topic of gender and public space as an act of resistance as well as a way of gathering knowledge and perspectives pushed aside from history. This project turned to memory-work as a methodology and Alessandra Pomarico's "brave spaces" as a framework to foster dialogue.

making hard things soft invited two participants who identify with gendered spatial oppression in Montreal into a *brave space* where we exercised our agencies through nurturing dialogue and sharing vulnerability through one-to-one sessions while co-creating a soft textile poster with a message of resistance to put up in an appropriate public space.[14]

2.1 Theoretical Grounding

2.1.1 Designing for Care

Experiences of public space can be visceral, emotive, vulnerable, and traumatic. As a facilitator for dialogue and creative interventions, I have a responsibility to build a reciprocal relationship with participants and hold a space that is tender and supportive while remaining open to criticism. The relationship should be far more than "simply gathering data" (Tallbear, 2). To design with care seems an obvious statement however it is vital to recognise my own positionality and intentions while remaining open to change. Steering away from power imbalances it is important to maintain a mutually beneficial and empowering relationship with humans and more-than-humans working in a relational and tangled ontology of multiple

[14] Participant R and Participant V.

and shifting agencies (Rodgers et al 73). Caring for these relationships takes energy and time, maintaining contact is an integral part of this (Rodgers et al 74).

For the researcher to be an effective facilitator and active listener, it is crucial to curate a safe and sensitive space for productive dialogue to take place. Pomarico describes co-creating pedagogical "brave spaces" for collective transformation (208). Such spaces "for reflection, imagination, and practice" are calls-for-action to reconnect with the world critically and collectively (Pomarico 212). Reflecting how our bodies and minds carry cultural and social inscriptions and inhabit space, sharing personal stories, recognising positionality and privilege means sharing a space of vulnerability (Pomarico 214). It is in such intimate contexts that a "revolutionary, radical love made of a thirst for justice, militant gentleness, and subversive soulfulness can form." (Pomarico 217). Through the collective processes of "vulnerable confidence", Pomarico urges us to exercise our agencies through nurturing dialogue (216).

The designing and facilitation of such spaces for conversation can play as important a role as the dialogue itself (Schalk, Kristiansson & Mazé 155). It is within this framework of care that I looked towards when holding spaces of reflexive dialogue with my research participants/collaborators.

2.1.2 Memory-work

Developed by Frigga Haug and others as a means of connecting theory and experience, memory-work is a feminist social constructivist and participatory methodology for research and creation (Onyx & Small 773). Akin to Pomarico's brave spaces, memory-work explores how individual women are socialised to fit into society and how they reproduce such processes by writing down their memories (Onyx & Small 774). Memories are considered vital sites for unpacking social construction as everything remembered constitutes the formation of our identity (Onyx & Small 774). Claiming that human agency is strongly rooted in the power to reflect, memories offer an understanding of how individuals construct themselves into existing relations and as such reproduce social constructions (Onyx & Small 774). Actively participating in understanding the socialisation process through exploring memories of moving through public spaces means making sense of "how" feminine practice is lived. By investigating this, a revaluation and reconstruction of the "feminine self within

current social practices" (Onyx & Small 774). If we consider reflection as an agency, then memory-work can assist in a more embodied spatial practice through awareness of why and how feminine bodies attempt to render themselves invisible. This project engaged with memory-work as a structure rather than an explicit methodology. While the oral recollection of memories was focussed on as opposed to the written, it provided a feminist grounding for analysing personal and possibly collective experiences as lived practice reflecting social constructions.

2.1.3 Subversive Textiles

From a feminist perspective, the use of textile and needlework comes with multiple sets of meanings. Decorative embroidery has traditionally articulated gender performance, constructing, enforcing prescribed femininity and domestic oppression (Gruner 18). When appropriating such practices and materials, particularly through stitching disruptive or profoundly personal words, the association of normative femininity is rejected and replaced with subversive resistance (Gruner 18). Therefore, textile and needlework also become particularly powerful mediums to reject hierarchal gendered associations with the public and the private binaries. Textile practices indicate community and as such solidarity as their production implies a collectivist approach. The value of touch reflected in such tactile mediums enables an "irreducibly phenomenological" encounter with the material which can create sites of affective connections (Gruner 24). As such, this project purposefully engaged in these tactile, socially domestic material processes as a subversive medium.

2.2 Intervention

Considering how to design and facilitate a space for dialogue, I curated a collaborative space that encouraged intimacy and care through creative intervention. While we spoke the participant was asked to create a "soft poster" informed by the conversation we were having which I would collaborate in making. The intention for this was to make the conversation space less intimidating rather than leaning towards the therapeutic and meditative. On separate occasions, one participant engaged in this process in my living space the other conducted it in their home. Together with audio-recorded dialogue we reflected critically on our experiences of public spaces while making sense of how we perform gender, and how this can reproduce limiting social contractions. One result of these conversations was the co-

creation of the “soft poster” in which reclaimed linens are inscribed with words and visuals of resistance through needlework and textile cuttings.

Figure 2: Participant making her soft poster while we spoke of our experiences navigating Montreal as women. 2021. Photograph by author.

Engaging in a tactile, care-orientated process resonates with materiality. Using socially domesticated materials as tools of resistance in public spaces enhances the subversive essence. The invitation into this space was not aimed as data collection but rather to cultivate a tender and understanding bond by sharing narratives. This approach avoids hierarchical "researcher" and "researched" binaries, moving away from extractive data collection toward a caring, mutually liberating relationship. Initially, participants hesitated in creating, but as conversations flowed, the process became therapeutic.

While the rigorous steps that can be used to reproduce memory-work as a methodology were not taken, *making hard things soft* acted as a loose memory-work exercise. At the same time as cutting, sewing, and gluing, we shared memories of lived feminine practices and experiences while recognising and exploring how these experiences related to larger social powers. Audio recording was a less intrusive way of documenting the entire process, which post-intervention was laboriously transcribed into text.

Figure 3: Participant V creating their soft poster. 2021. Photograph by author.

Figure 4: Participant V's final poster with the message "walk like no one's watching. 2021. Photograph by author.

Figure 5: Participant R's final poster displaying her frustration of feeling unsafe when walking alone. 2021. Photograph by author.

The findings from the audio recordings will be elaborated on in more depth in Chapters 3 and 4, as they were used in collaboration with other oral histories in the final film. However, participants shared and reflected on experiences that they had never considered before or told to other people, recognising how they related to larger and subtle systems of oppression. There were two main spaces of discomfort in Montreal that were echoed in both women's experiences; the sidewalk/street and public transport - more specifically, the Métro.

Participant V expressed vulnerability and concern towards a lack of safety in public transport, particularly noting discomfort on the Métro. Recalling instances of disembarking prematurely due to unease, she emphasised a greater sense of safety on buses, attributing it to their smaller size and the presence of a driver at the front. The Métro's solitary experience, especially when

devoid of passengers, heightened feelings of isolation, exacerbated by significant distances between stops. Unlike buses, where stops could be requested at any time, the Métro intensified her vulnerability and sense of entrapment, particularly when navigating public spaces at night. Participant R recounted a night during the project session when, after disembarking the Métro, she pretended to wait for a bus while discreetly navigating to my house on Google Maps. To minimise vulnerability, she consciously limited phone usage to avoid appearing lost. Reflecting on past experiences of vulnerability while walking alone, especially at night, she incorporated these concerns into her poster's message, highlighting a heightened sense of caution in public spaces to prevent potential exploitation (Figure 5).

Conclusion

To focus this research, especially considering personal experiences of harassment, this study centered on the Métro. Co-creating soft posters allowed participants to comfortably engage in therapeutic conversations, reflecting Pomarico's concept of "brave spaces." However, as a method for collecting material, the project proved laborious, with audio-recordings spanning 2-3 hours per session. The resulting soft posters were collaborative and beautiful, yet as an artist I had limited creative control. There was then the question of how to communicate the dialogue we shared and connect it to the "soft posters" without simply writing monographs of text to accompany it.

Seeking a more effective way to convey insights with more personal creative direction and input, the exploration then led to oral history methodology and animation, offering a sensitive approach to communicate narratives while preserving the artistic voice and emphasising oral over written methodologies.

Figure 6. Soft posters displayed in MDes final exhibition. 2023. Photograph by author.

Chapter 3

Transit Tales: The First Take

Introduction

This chapter delves into the first iteration of *Transit Tales* from the Winter semester of 2022, an extension of the previous project. It aimed to document additional participant narratives, establish a theoretical foundation for methodology, and experiment with animation as a visual representation of interviews. The 3-minute and 24-second draft explored Risograph as a medium for animation and integrating interview sound into a cohesive narrative.[15] Establishing a groundwork for oral history, it emphasised the value of discursive dialogue. Integrating a caring framework into the methodology, the piece employed slow, analogue mediums to communicate the sensitivity of memory. Participant K and Participant N contributed their narratives, focusing on self-expression, drawing attention in the Métro, and awareness of space while in transit. Visually, this iteration centered on everyday Montreal Métro imagery to evoke participants' narrated memories. It should be noted that everything in Transit Tales is my interpretation, edited through my perspective. The original, unedited audio is the primary source however due to privacy the full audio cannot be shared. It is essential to recognise that the excerpts used are from longer conversations, edited to fit this research project.

3.1 Theoretical Grounding

3.1.1 Oral History Through A Feminist Framework

Oral history provides a qualitative method of interviewing through storytelling and accessing personal experiences of oppression (Leavy 6). Exploring experiences outside of self-reflection can challenge preconceived ways of thinking and allow for a diversity of voices for a well-rounded understanding of research subject matter (Leavy 6). The method can be considered as "living history" while both the act of listening and speaking become active embodied performances (Pollock 1). It facilitates a charged and reflexive space for making sense of how personal narratives are tangled within complex social webs (Pollock 1). The purposeful reengagement of memories makes this methodology a transformational process,

[15] Link to the video: https://vimeo.com/701911171

where participants can navigate renewed interpretations of the past in relation to systemic structures while exploring imagined futures and possibilities for change (Pollock 1). Oral history strives to explore the personal as political (Leavy 6). Through the process of dialogue, mediation, and the presentation of findings to an audience, oral history can expose intertwining relationships between space, politics and lived experience by provoking alternative readings of the present and past (Mattsson & Schalk 1). As such, it is an appropriate process to understanding how participants' gendered experiences of public space reflects patriarchal structures. Closely linked to the basis of memory-work, this methodology proved much more suitable to the research as it values participants verbalised experiences over written recollections.

Because of the nature of my research, I approach oral history through a feminist lens. As written on by Della Pollock, oral history

> "… is cocreative, co-embodied, specially framed, contextually and intersubjectively contingent, sensuous, vital, artful in its achievement of narrative form, meaning, and ethics, and insistent on doing through saying: on investing the present and future with the past, re-marking history with previously excluded subjectivities, and challenging the conventional frameworks of historical knowledge with other ways of knowing." (Pollock, 2).

Considering the feminists politically engaged perspective that oppression is intrinsically linked to social constructions, oral history can provide unique insight to how lived experiences are bound to larger institutional and symbolic structures (Leavy 6). Central to feminist practice is the inscription and restoration of excluded and marginalised narratives into historical record - archiving oral history transcriptions can play a vital role in this process (Leavy 19). This strengthens my argument for visually communicating oral history interviews in a way that can be accessible to an audience outside of academia.

Communicating Narrative Through Form

Deliberately working with narratives that draw attention to and counter dominant, hegemonic structures can offer charged sites of resistance (Akimenko 45). The intention of exploring

these narratives is to declare a powerful agency in collective experience and take up space by archiving these purposeful reflections of lived practice. While there may be be a collective experience in singular narratives, there are strong ethical implications to consider when choosing which and whose stories to unfold (Mattson & Schalk 1). While this research focuses on gendered experience of public space, I emphasise that patriarchal behaviour and structures embedded in everyday existence are not limited to cisgender women. The diverse, fluid, and performative experience of gender is influenced by many other social inscriptions. The participant group I had was small and as can be seen in their positionality in the introduction, gender diversity was limited, as well as other social and physical variations.[16] While *Transit Tales* weaves what can be considered feminine sounding voices, and sometimes the participants use the words "women" to identify their experiences, visually it leans towards gender-neutral imagery. Another consideration is the editing and visual communication of personal narratives. Throughout the process I had to maintain contact with participants and ensure they are content with interpretation of their stories.[17]

Form mediates meaning and evokes emotional responses, drawing its audience deeper into its disruptive potential (Butler-Kisber 230). While communicating credible information, applying such qualities as "The presence of ambiguity," "The use of expressive language," "The use of contextualised and vernacular language," "The promotion of empathy understanding," "The use of the personal signature of the author," and "The presence of aesthetic form" to research writings allows an ambiguous enough space to emerge for new meaning and interpretations to take place (Butler-Kisber 230).[18] This is a particularly useful framework when artistically communicating the factual and personal experiences of participants. Drawing from Butler-Kisber's "artful portrayals" of qualitative research, Transit Tales explores how to artistically convey the interviews in a way that remains authentic to the participant's voice while maintaining artistic licence. Considering the personal, experiential, and embodied aspects of my research topic, form is a potentially compelling means to communicate the evocative subject matter. Finding close connections between fragments of

[16] Gender as well as age, class, physical ability, race, and other social inscriptions can shape an individuals experience of public space particularly when it comes to limited mobility or self-expression.

[17] At this stage of my exploratory research, I addressed oral history more as a theoretical grounding to my framework for dialogue rather than a strategic methodology. The next chapter is more explicit about my methodological approach to oral history and ethical concerns.

[18] Barone, T., & Eisner, E. (1997). Arts-based educational research. *Complementary methods for research in education*, *2*, 73-83 cited by *Lynn Butler-Kisber* in "Artful portrayals in qualitative inquiry: The road to found poetry and beyond." *Alberta Journal of Educational Research* 48.3 (2002).

oral histories and tying them together through artistic practice can make visible vital links to discourse (Akimenko 56). Bridging aesthetic and disruptive strategies of visually communicating narrative can explore the uncomfortable and in doing so could promote discursive dialogues and propose unintended questions (Akimenko 60). Transit Tales does this by playing with elements like speed, motion and layering of visuals to strengthen the audio narratives creating moments of intensity where themes are driven forward.

The documentation of personal narratives through visual forms can deepen narrativity, encourage reflexive and empathetic engagement while building a discursive space for political actions by rendering visible intangible issues (Akimenko 197). "There are worlds of meaning that lie beyond words, and nobody pretends for a moment that the transcript is in any real sense a better representation of an interview than the voice itself" (Frisch 223). Frisch too argues that past transcribed words and even beyond the audio-recording itself, there is a wealth of signification which is flattened in standard oral history reproduction (223). Context, somatic expression, tone, setting, and silence is lost in translation from audio to text (Frisch 223). Frisch argues against the assumption that oral history can only effectively be engaged with through textual transcription and instead calls for audio and video documentation to be the primary source for researchers and public engagement (223). He builds an argument particularly for oral history audio-visually documented. While multimodality can illustrate context and emotional nuance, audio-recording is far less invasive than video. Instead, moving image in the form of animation documentary could be harnessed to amplify the many emotional facets of oral history.

Animation and documentary seem like counter intuitive disciplines to cross-pollinate; documentary relies strongly on authenticity and is particularly associated with the relationship between imagery and reality (Roe 216). Animation then seems to directly destabilise documentary's ontology as it is considered to challenge the tangible with its strong tendency towards the illustrative and imaginative (Roe 217). Despite much debate over their hybridisation, the discipline of animation documentary can technically be traced back to the youngest days of the moving image and has been proven as an emotive and significant interdisciplinary medium (Roe 215). [19]

[19] See Roe, A. H. (2011). Absence, excess and epistemological expansion: Towards a framework for the study of animated documentary. *Animation*, *6*(3), 215-230 for discussion on the contested nature of animated documentary. In this article they speak for instance of Ari Folman's challenges to get funding for his animated

Animation serves as a potent tool in qualitative research, bridging the gap between form and emotional resonance in conveying oral histories. Informed by Butler-Kisber's framework, animation incorporates ambiguity, expressive language, and contextualised vernacular to sensitively communicate personal experiences, as demonstrated in Transit Tales. This approach maintains authenticity while exploring disruptive narratives, creating compelling and intimate spaces for audience engagement and identity exploration. Addressing Frisch's critique of textual limitations in oral history, the call is made to creatively amplify voices through alternative forms, emphasising the value of moving images in conveying context and emotion. Unlike traditional documentaries, animated documentaries, provide a less invasive space for gathering research by veiling the visual identity of participants, particularly beneficial when discussing personal stories. Despite perceived incongruity, animated documentaries uniquely capture emotional facets, enhancing narrative depth and resonance for a broader audience.

Audio and Visual Approach To Transit Tales Take 1

Audio

In the same manner that a script can inform the basis to a film, the crafting of audio narrative for *Transit Tales* was the preliminary base to inform visuals. Only once the narrative was edited together, did the graphic component of the film begin.[20] In foregrounding the sonic experience, the process of working through daunting audio files involved initial listening and subsequent deep analysis. Notes, including timestamps, were made to facilitate referencing and identify connections between narratives. Surprisingly, numerous connections emerged, with participants expressing similar themes and even uttering identical sentences. A prominent theme was the acute awareness of appearance, with participants emphasising the desire to avoid drawing attention to themselves on the Métro, reflecting Rose's concept of rendering feminine bodies invisible. The recurring phrase "I just don't want to draw attention

documentary *Waltz with Bashir* (2008) as it was rejected by both animation and documentary associations for fitting into neither boxes. They also trace the shared history of the animation and documentary outline arguments for and against it as an interdisciplinary medium.

[20] This being said as I had already conducted interviews, and was working with the audio to connect narratives, I had formed a basis of what kind of visuals might accompany the work.

to myself" echoed across multiple participants. Another notable theme centered on the reluctance to take up physical space, closely tied to the awareness of appearance. Participants articulated a conscious effort to minimise their presence when navigating the Métro, sometimes getting off the train earlier to escape discomfort. Despite not being included in this version of *Transit Tales*, participants also discussed constant vigilance of surroundings, using earphones to appear occupied while remaining alert, and projecting confidence when navigating unfamiliar places. [21] These are just some of the tactics which allow participants to feel more at ease in public space.

The film strategically employs sonic and visual tension throughout, dynamically raising and dissipating it to enhance participant narratives and sustain audience engagement through a non-linear experience. By weaving recurring themes and layering audio snippets at key moments, like participants expressing a reluctance to draw attention to themselves and concerns about taking up space, the film intensifies the impact of collective experiences. This deliberate design amplifies the solidarity found in shared narratives discovered through post-interview inquiry. Complementing oral histories, ambient sounds from daily navigations contribute to a sense of environment. The opening title incorporates Métro tunnel busker sounds, gradually giving way to participant voices. The intentional layering of environmental sounds, particularly during moments of climax, captures the overwhelming and stressful experience of navigating public spaces as a feminine presence, fostering a visceral connection with the audience.

Visual

Transit Tales stop-motion is animated with Risograph prints, pencil, pen, and graphite illustrations. [22] Animation, inherently multidisciplinary, transcends mere photography by incorporating diverse visual approaches and media, fostering a unique visual richness that enhances the portrayal of subjective narratives (Harris 17). The hybridity of mediums in animation challenges binary systems, strategically navigating emotionally charged narratives. In *Transit Tales*, the deliberate mix of analogue and digital mediums reflects aesthetic choices, with a preference for analogue animation due to its slow, nuanced, and unpredictable

[21] These themes ended up rising in forthcoming participants narratives and were explored in the final version of the film.
[22] Note that for this first exploration, only Risograph prints were used while the final film used illustration.

nature. Stop-motion, coupled with the unpredictability of the Risograph, mirrors the intricate and labor-intensive process of oral history, providing a visceral means to communicate human experiences and memories with sublime, nostalgic qualities.

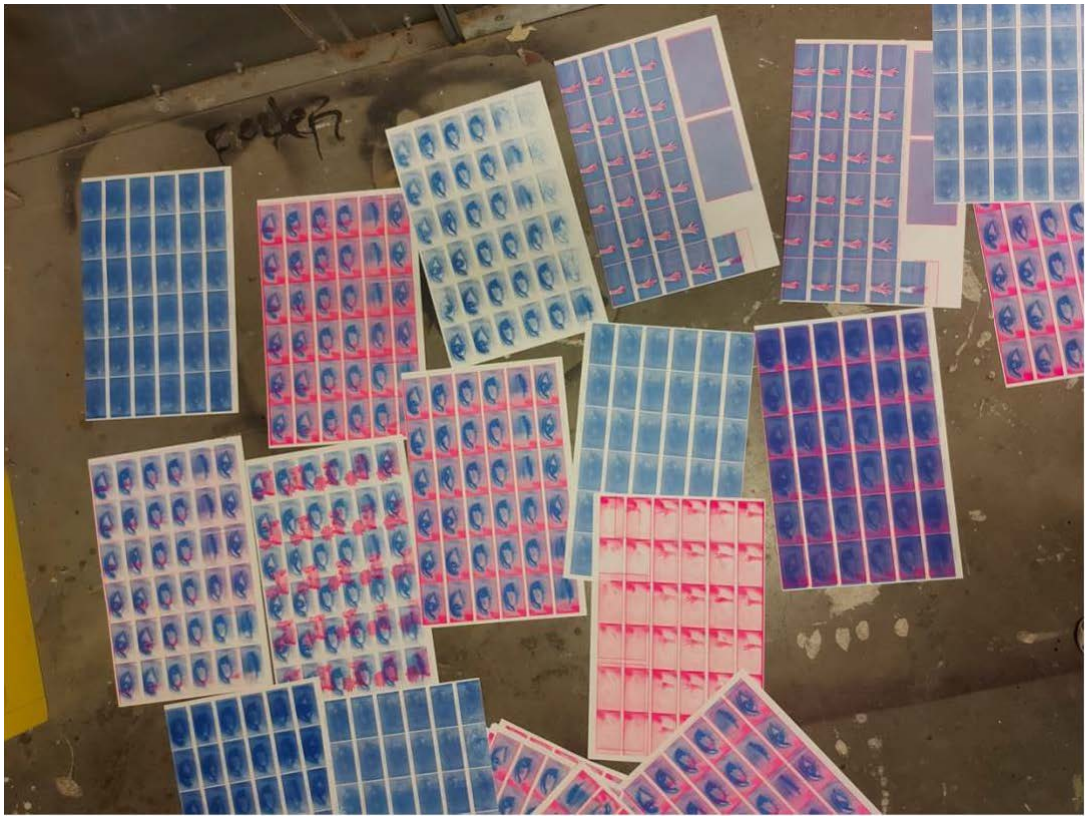


Figure 7: Risograph prints drying. 2023. Image by author.

The Risograph printer, akin to screen printing, utilises a master print and singular layers of CMYK soy-based ink, offering a limited colour palette that can be expanded through layering. Prioritising sustainability, I worked in Concordia's Visual Communication Lab, incorporating additional inks like fluorescent pink. The contrast between blue and pink provided clear but engaging images. While stereotypical connotations of gender but viewing them as lucid and subversive in context.

The printing process involves flooding ink for correct saturation, I minimised waste by maximising the use of each print, experimenting with frame density per page and repurposing misprints. This approach, documented in Figure 9, encapsulates a thoughtful exploration of the Risograph technique in the context of limited colours and sustainability concerns.[23]

[23] A misprint is considered when the two layers of color do not match up and misalign, or when the ink does not flood properly and the

During the MDes exhibition in April of 2022, the prints were made available for the attendees to help themselves and take home (Figure 8).

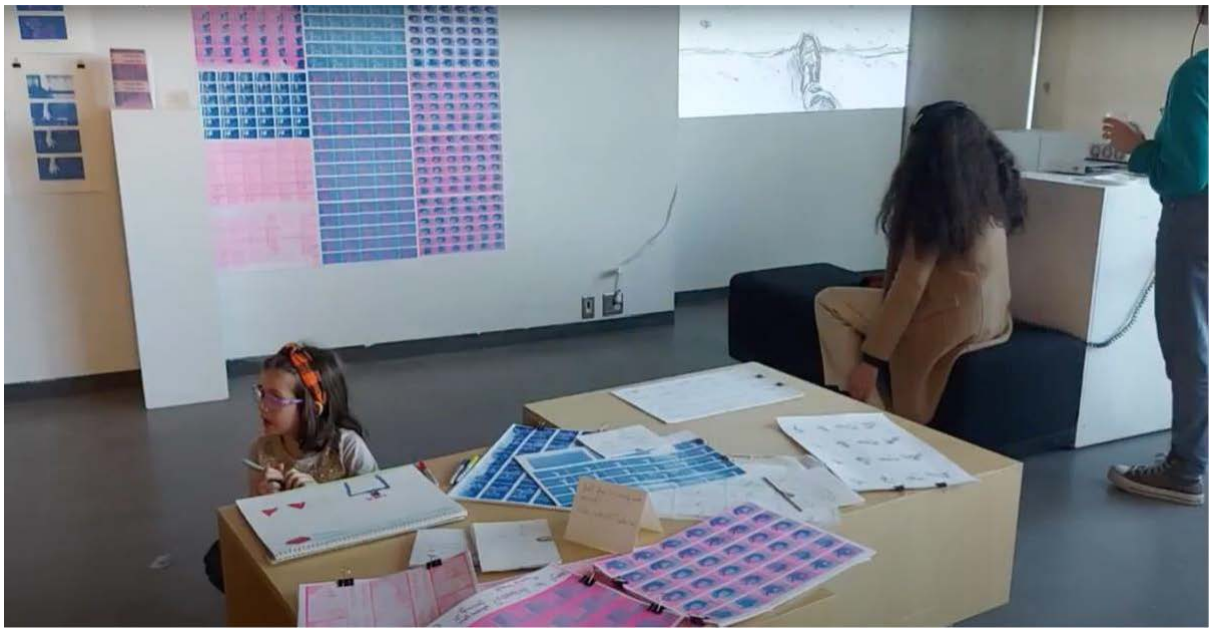


Figure 8: Prints available to take home at MDes exhibition. 2023. Photo by author.

In this foundational exploration, misprints and distorted Risoprint scans were utilised to enhance audio buildup during tense moments, seen in Figures 10 and 11. Mono-coloured prints and speed variations were strategically employed to amplify emotional responses, notably in the acceleration of frames from 01:25 to 01:59, reaching a pinnacle as multiple participants express a common sentiment. The animation continues to manipulate speed and scene reversals at 02:21, aligning with participants' narratives of discomfort in the Métro.

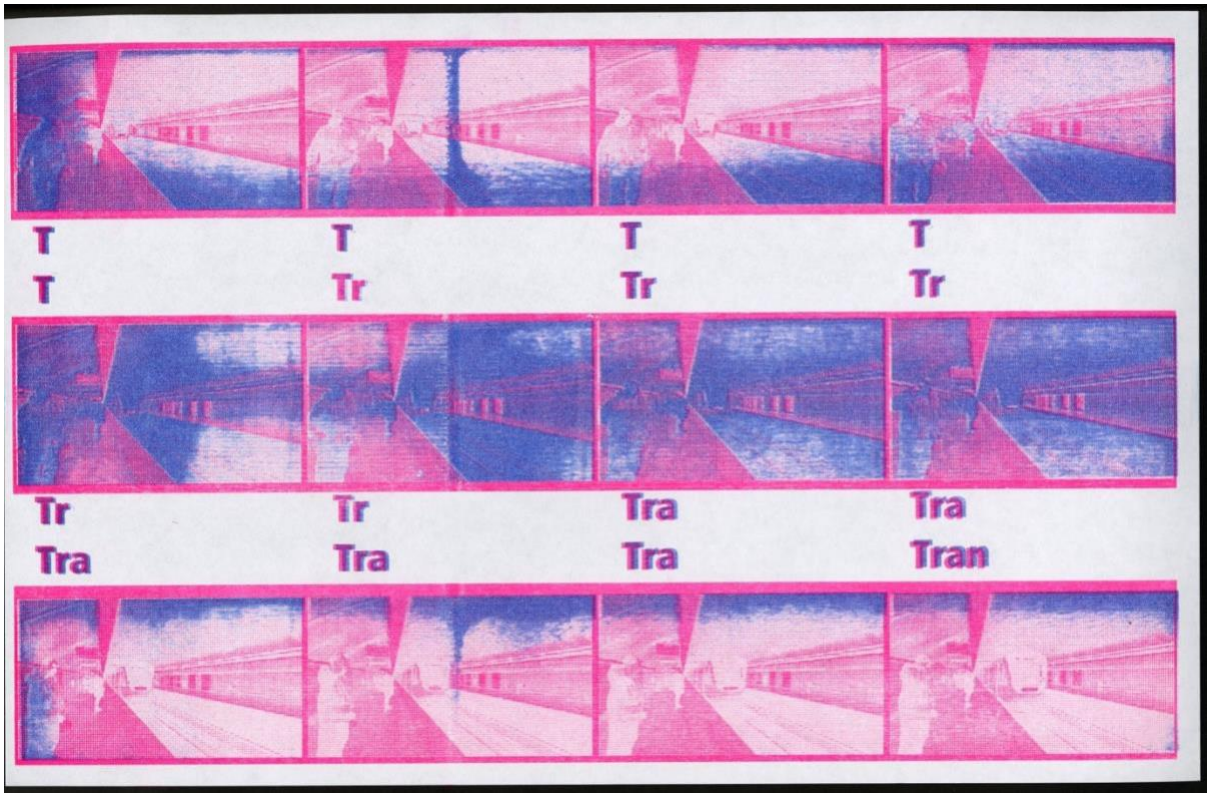


Figure 9: Example of a misprint, frames of Transit Tales. 2023 Scan of Risograph print by author.

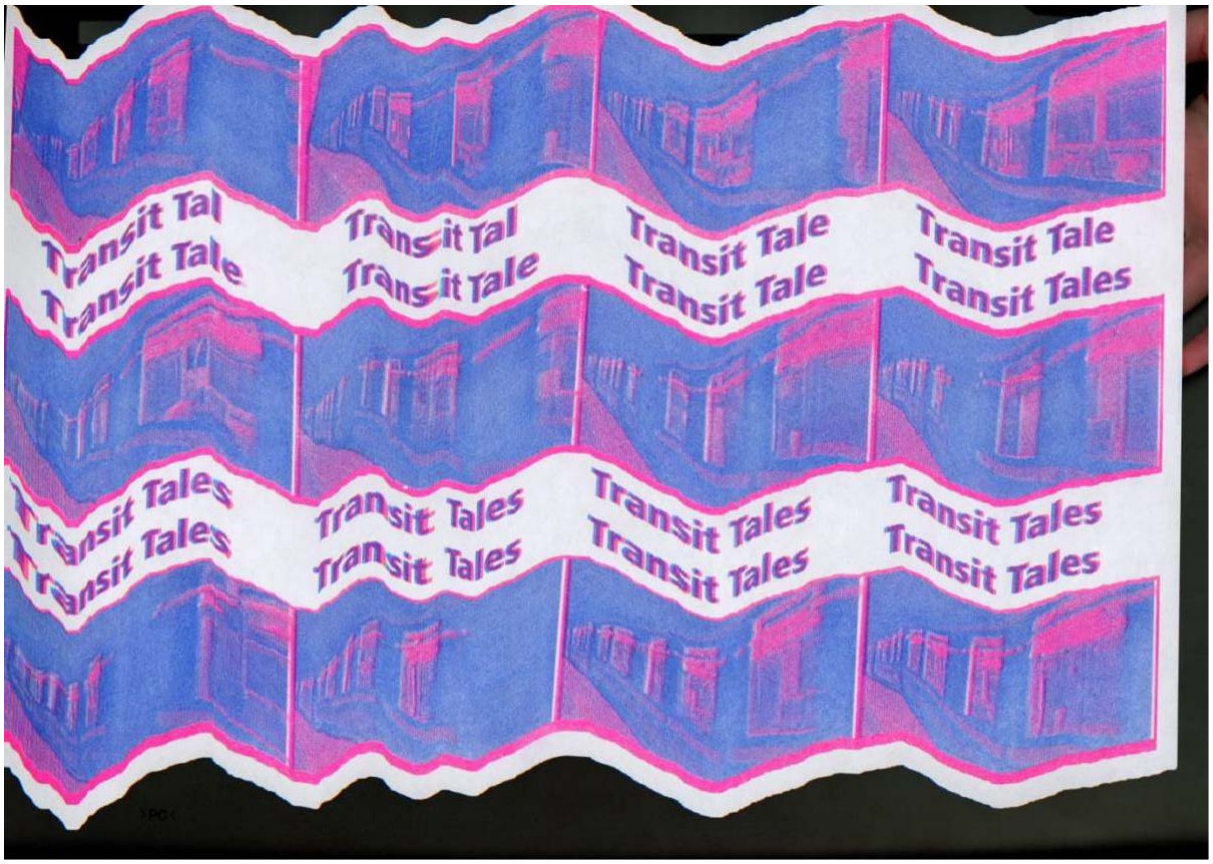


Figure 10: Using my hand to distort while scanning. 2022. Scan of Risograph by author.

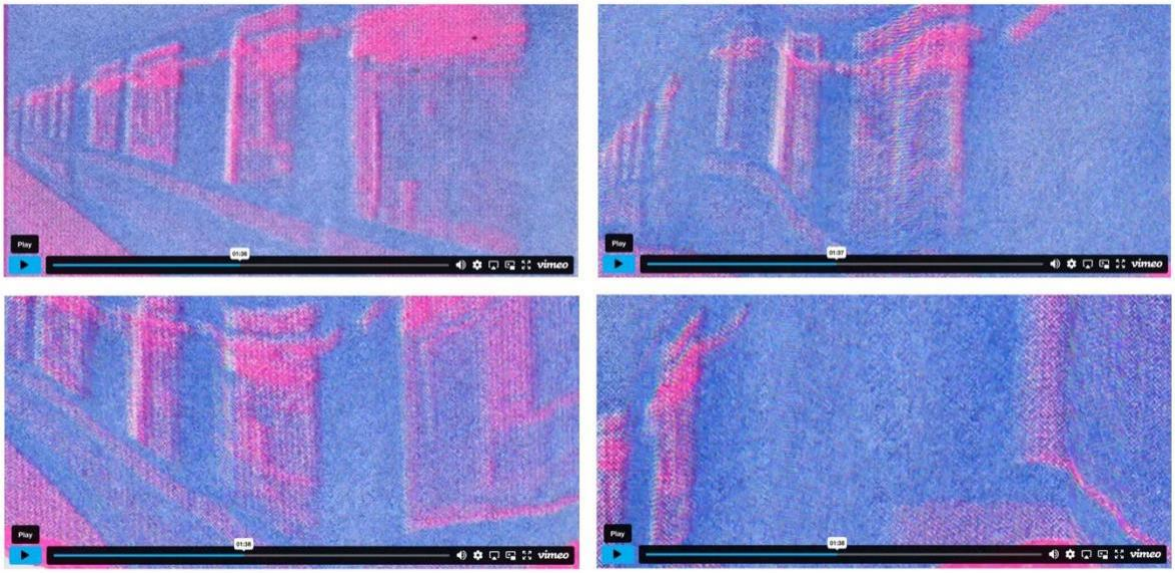


Figure 11: Frames from animation indicating timestamps for moment of tension using distorted scans. 2023. Screenshots by author.

At 02:26, echoing the narrative there is a scene where someone “manspreads” into someone else’s personal space.[24] The Risograph prints did not have enough contrast on the left figure, and so I drew on-top of it (Figure 12). This kind of unpredictability, sensitive and tactile quality of Risograph and stop-motion is what drew me to collaborate with it as a medium and attempt to create an intimate and evocative space between the viewer and the film.

[24] Manspreading" is a neologism referring to when some men sit with their legs wide apart, often encroaching on others' space, especially in shared settings like public transportation.

Figure 12: Animation still taken at 02:31. 2023. Screenshot by author.

Between interviews and audio analysis, I documented Métro scenes on my phone, turning it into a performative act in public spaces (Figure 13). By breaking down videos into 15 frames per second, exporting, and translating frames into duotone, I engaged the Risograph printer to animate participants' sensitive memories. This deliberate, reflective practice involved slowing down, introspection, and hands-on exploration to deepen my connection with both the materiality of content and participants' narratives. There is purposeful significance in the interdisciplinary process of Transit Tales. The live action filming from my phone is taken apart, fragmented, recreated and slowly thread together again to create the reflection of the past not quite the same, not entirely different. The “memory” touches many modalities - my cellphone, the computer, the printer, my hands, the printer, my hands, the printer, my hands, the computer, the scanner, the computer, the projector, the wall, the computer, your eyes, and undergoes a cycle of transitions in the process. The “memory” is appropriated and intervened with by the printer, it floods with soft inks, shifts it about makes unintentional marks and mistakes, physical evidence of the process. It has a beautiful sensitivity that’s imperfect and textured. Post-printing, I scanned and digitally layered each frame to ensure a smooth flow, mirroring the deliberate and unhurried engagement in collecting participants' oral histories. This process highlights the significance of investing time in unravelling sedimented experiences, serving as a homage to participants who revisited and embodied their memories with me.

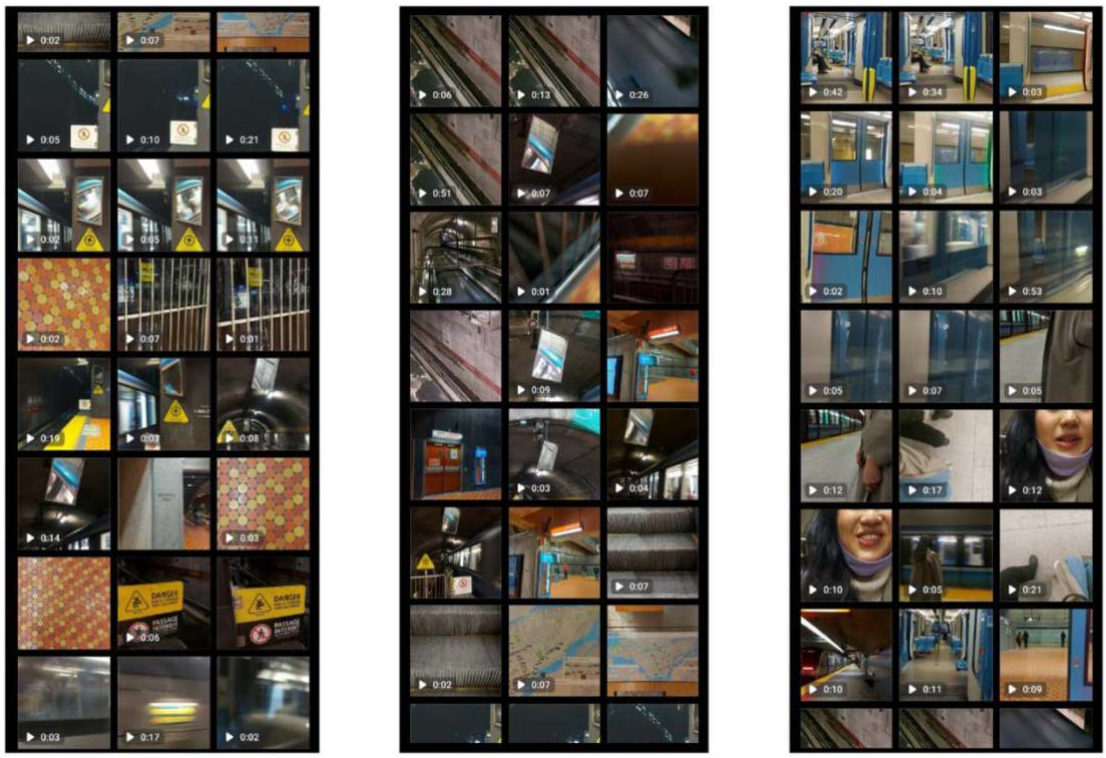


Figure 13: Cellphone video library from purposeful Métro explorations. 2022. Screenshots by author.

Conclusion

While animation served as a captivating avenue for my research, I sought to enhance it through complementary mediums and an interdisciplinary approach. Complex connections between politics, geography, and shared experiences emerged, enriching interpretations of the past and present. As a visual communication designer, I explored the integration of traditional graphic design and layout techniques in the next chapter, focusing on poetic transcription. During the evolution of *Transit Tales*, I developed greater audio recording experience and participant involvement to refine my oral history methodology. Exploring Risograph and stop-motion, I discovered ways to optimise fluid motion with fewer frames, reducing waste, and overcoming challenges of high file sizes when scanning. While this inaugural version of *Transit Tales* prompted the inclusion of narratives reflecting on bodily self-awareness, self-censorship, it lacked the hopeful conclusion that the final piece included.

Chapter 4

Transit Tales Final Film and Poetic Inquiry

Introduction

Archival practice holds the potential for political resistance by re-inscribing excluded narratives into history (Mattsson & Schalk 6). Viewing the transcription and mediation of oral histories as an archival practice, this chapter questions how archives can be agential devices rather than static collections. As a visual communication designer exploring narrative amplification through complementary media, I merged traditional graphic design with animation in the final film, delving into theoretical grounding for poetics as a communicative framework. This chapter lays the groundwork for a graphic form that amplifies the authenticity of the participants' voices, leading to methodological questions and a solidified oral history approach. Transit Tales' final film and poetic components are then explored, emphasising the discussion of animation approach rather than unpacking ambiguous imagery.

4.1 Theoretical Grounding

4.1.1 Oral History and Aurality: Illustrating the Poetics of Voice

Oral history recognises personal experience as a valuable source of legitimised knowledge with an ability to inscribe marginalised narratives within the historical record. Nevertheless, the oral historian should consider the authority they can have when representing narratives and should treat their participants stories with care. Aside from conducting oral history ethically and maintaining a "brave space", the historian has a responsibility to ensure their participant's narratives are interpreted and transcribed fairly. When unpacking issues surrounding oral history transcription, there are two key factors: the first is the loss of information and texture through selectively editing the narrator's language; and the second is the researcher's lack of mediation clarity blurring or ignoring distinctions between primary and secondary sources (Good 459).

Given the length of interviews, oral history recordings are often heavily edited in transcriptions to present "readable" texts that distance themselves from raw oral charm (Good

459). Such changes can include cutting out “crutch words and phrases” (such as ‘like’, ‘you know’ ‘mm-hmm’ etc), improving grammar, and reordering material (Good 459). The original audio tape of an interview should be considered as the primary source of oral history research, any process of mediation and transcription that comes after this is considered as an interpretation of the narrative (Woodley 50). The greater the intervention, the more distance there will be between primary oral material (the narrator’s story) and the researcher's transcribed text (Good 459). Beyond the written word sits realms of somatic and emotional meaning that far outweigh the value of the written transcription to be representational of the narrator's story and disposition (Frisch 223). There are worlds of meaning held in the interview context which is flattened in basic text reduction - gesture, rhythm, silences, body language, tone, and perform movements (Frisch 223). And yet, “The Deep Dark Secret of oral history is that nobody spends much time listening to or watching recorded and collected interview documents” (Frisch 223). While the audio might be considered as the primary material, it is commonly assumed that oral history research be effectively engaged only in text format (Frisch 223). But to completely do away with the audio at any point of the oral history process is then to sacrifice the integrity of the narrator, complicating the relationships of authority.

Given its embodied, performative, collaborative, and intimate nature, oral history is uniquely positioned to challenge hegemonic narratives of history by bridging social distance. This being said, some of its democratic potential is lost in the conversion from voice to text. How might the process of transcription be creatively explored to produce an accurate aural account of recorded oral histories while effectively sharing authority with the narrator? Taking into account authorship, how can creative practice re-present oral histories and encourage critical engagement from an audience beyond academia? And finally what kind of graphic forms could such oral history re-presentations take?

> “..history is typically grounded in distance – the more the better; whereas oral history is based on the idea of closing distance…” (High 108).

"… people talk poetry, they don't talk prose." (Tedlock 97).

The poetic structure gravitates toward a more precise portrayal of the musicality in speech, rendering it an enticing format for depicting oral history. However, simultaneously, it demands a self-aware artistry and literary finesse (Woodley 55). Where prose can mute the rhythm of speech, poetry honours it allowing for an evocative, interpretive space (Woodley 55). Many creative practitioners and scholars who consider the importance of interdisciplinarity when handling oral histories turn to poetics as a form of re-embodying the nuanced lyricism of speech (Good 2010, Foster 2018, Tedlock 1975, Woodley 2004). There is the overarching opinion that much of the expressive language commonly cleaned out of the transcript for publication holds fertile grounds for analysis and empowers the narrator by bringing them to life in print. Not only that but the use of rhythm, tone, white space, and punctuation can be used to visually illustrate the natural lyricism of oral communication in a similar way to how poetic elements interacts with the page.

4.1.2 VOICE, EAR AND TEXT by Francis Good

In his short essay *VOICE, EAR AND TEXT*, Francis Good provides a well-rounded overview and reflection on multiple, interdisciplinary approaches to transcribing and representing written oral histories (2015).[25] In response to the harsh "polishing" and editing of oral histories into "readable" text, scholar Kate Moore argues to capture every last utterance of verbatim into the transcription (Good 459).[26] What some researchers might consider useless, excessive redundancy of direct oral communication, Moore sees as indispensable (Good 459). Examples of such utterances as "pauses, hesitations, part - and whole-word repetitions,

[25] While I would rather review Good's sources myself, I have been unable to access most of them. As they are valuable to my argument, I have included Good's overview on them. In *Voice, ear and text: words, meaning and transcription.*

[26] Moore, K. (1997). Perversion of the Word: The Role of the Transcript in Oral History. *Words and Silences: Journal of the International Oral History Association*, *1*. In *Voice, ear and text: words, meaning and transcription.*

frequent exclamations such as 'all right', 'really', etc" become a rich foundation for deeper, reflective analysis (Good 459). Moore also encourages researchers to maintain and include verbal "back-channelling" through affirming expressions such as "mm-hmm" (Good 459).

This is an interesting point when reflecting on my own practice. When facilitating my second oral history interview, I informed my participant that I would nod instead of verbally utter "mm-hmm" as a means of encouragement and acknowledgement. When going through the audio and editing it for *Transit Tales*, my back-channelling would overlap with the voice of the participant making it impossible to edit out. But this felt uncomfortable, unnatural, and far more disconnected to affirm and support her narrative through the nod of my head rather than verbally - it certainly took effort. Moore however considers such sonic affirmations to be critical encouragements promoting an interactive relationship which play a role in how the information gathered is evoked and shaped (Good 459). Considering its primarily literate source, a strong argument is made for punction as a tool to communicate oral prosody, emotional expression, and rhythm (Good 460).

Bill Rosser captures the imagination and complex, interactive social processes of oral history by including his notes into the transcription, crafting a smooth-flowing narrative (Good 464)[27]. While most of the text is purely verbatim, the writer includes small illusive details such as "a pause to light a smoke and gaze reflectively out of a window while remembering long-past times" (Good 464). Such illustrative details add emotional and visual dimension to the sensitive somatic expressions of an oral history interview, conjuring vivid imagery.

Good acknowledges that transcribing the spoken word to reflect the music of speech varies widely and is more of an expressive art form than a formula that can be consistently reproduced (461). He illustrates that crafting a transcription close to verbatim is a valuable way of maintaining the narrator's integrity and can provide critical insight for the researcher. While drawing attention to the dynamic ways in which oral history can be edited into textual

[27] Rosser, B. (1985). *Dreamtime nightmares: biographies of Aborigines under the Queensland Aborigines Act* (No. 55). Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. In *Voice, ear and text: words, meaning and transcription.*

formats, he concludes that the level of mediation should always be explicit to a reader from the beginning (Good 465).

4.1.3 Let the data sing: REPRESENTING DISCOURSE IN POETIC FORM by Krista Woodley

Woodley explores the potential for poetic transcription over prose as a method assisting the analysis and deeper insight of an oral history audio. Rather than composing a transcript for an audience, she approaches poetics as a reflective and creative method for the researcher. By bringing the lyric of speech to her written formats, she hopes to make her "data sing" and reveal cultural echoes and themes.

Woodley makes clear that oral histories attraction to speech should amplify the raw recording - if not the actual lived interview itself - as the primary source and first point of call (Woodley 50). She highlights that any iteration outside of the full recording, particularly textual transcription, is impacted by the touch of the researcher and defined as an interpretation (Woodley 50). This reflects and supports Good's concerns over the researcher's clarity of mediation when working with oral histories.

In an attempt to draw out emotional influence from the narrative discourse of oral history, Woodley makes use of the poetic form to expose patterns, repetitions, refrains, and rhythms in the voice and explores the visual effect of stanza breaks and white space to represent tensions and aural silence (Woodley 52). While she uses the line breaks to indicate spaces in the discourse, she points out that some researchers use the tonal shifts in the narrator's voice when utilising white space (Woodley 53).

4.1.4 Finding poetry in the sound archives by Helen Foster

Foster takes an approach to methodology similar to Woodley's but pushes the poetics further by harnessing new media to visually mediate them into what she defines as "sound-shorts". Calling for an interdisciplinary framework and creative engagement with oral history, Foster harnesses her creative practice to digitally represent archival audio as tools for audience engagement (Foster 111). She critically engages with existing oral histories in attempt to

break the barriers that academia can hold by hosting archives, bringing them to life for exploration with a wider audience. Foster mediates the archives by illustrating them in a poetic manner, highlighting the narrators' silences, symbols, imagery, and recurring motifs (Foster 113). Before moving to new media visuals, Foster writes her audio summaries as poetics on the page, similar to Woodley's methodology.

Emphasising the importance of working directly with the archival recording as opposed to the transcript, she represents extracts as a sequence of what she defines as "sound-shorts'- curt sound and text montages (Foster 111). She pays particular attention to silences - the spaces of dialogue between narrator and interviewer are considered unspoken "oral punctuation", full of possibilities for creative, visual exploration and emotive suspense (Foster 114). Beyond the aural textures, Foster listens deeply to the non-vocal soundscape illustrating the space surrounding the conversations (Foster 114). Labelling herself an "eavesdropper", she listens in for "seeds of ideas, words and phrases, linguistic idiosyncrasies" and encapsulates the impulsive memories into her sound-shorts. Drawing on text conventions, selected words are synched with audio to accentuate its emotive qualities and rhythm (Foster 116). The sound-shorts could be described as *videopoems,* described as the "integration of narrative, non-narrative and anti-narrative juxtapositions of image, text and sound [...] resulting in a poetic experience" (Konyves). Arguing for an interdisciplinary practice of oral history, Foster critically engages with archival oral history audio as generative material for creative practice. She makes use of new media technologies to revitalise oral histories and encourage engagement offering a "format for engaging with oral history that is somewhere between the lived interview and the fixed transcript." (Foster 116).

4.1.5 Videopoetry Manifesto by Tom Konyves

In his influential manifesto, Tom Konyves defines videopoetry as a distinct filmmaking genre, setting it apart from other poetic-film combinations. Videopoetry blends visual, verbal, and audible elements, offering alternative poetic interpretations through juxtaposition of images with text and sound (Konyves). He suggests that this genre should convey both a thought process and a narrative while maintaining a poetic texture.

He underscores the importance of using creative methods to communicate without explicitly illustrating the poetic narrative. Konyves warns against directly illustrating audible or text

narrative with imagery, as it can diminish the poetic quality. Instead, he advises focusing on elements like juxtaposition, rhythm, motion, time, image, text, and sound to create ambiguity, suggestion, and disruption, establishing counterpoints between image and sound.

Konyves cites Maya Deren to emphasise the strategic effectiveness of balancing narrative and non-narrative moments to engage the audience in the poetic experience. This approach, which utilises image, motion, and silence for punctuation and tension, serves as a valuable tool in creating videopoetry. His manifesto offers insights not only for communicating the poetics of oral history through moving images but also for still images. His techniques aim to preserve the multidimensional experience of poetics, communicating the rhythm and charm of speech. Applying his approach to book design for visually transcribing elements of oral histories could yield intriguing results.

4.1.6 Learning to Listen: Oral History as Poetry Dennis Tedlock

Taken from "Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History", this article contributed towards a provocative combination of dialogues, essays, and poems.[28] The body of work offers the reader alternative ways of engaging with the interview experience as conversational, somatic, and multidimensional while highlighting the mutually dialectical relationship between what might be considered as the historian and the collaborator. In a subsection of the book, Tedlock's essay sets clear parallels between oral history and poetry by boldly claiming:

"POETRY is oral HISTORY
and oral HISTORY
is POETRY. " (Grele & Turkel 108)[29]

His article is typed in the poetic form, and he provides a "Guide to Delivery" outlining how the reader should interpret or perform the poetic text for a more aural experience (Figure 14)

[28] Grele, R. J., & Terkel, S. (1991). *Envelopes of sound: The art of oral history*. Greenwood Publishing Group.

[29] Dennis Tedlock in *Envelopes of sound: The art of oral history*.

GUIDE TO DELIVERY:

A line change indicates a short pause, about ½ to 1 second;
a double space between lines, marked by . , indicates a long pause, about 2 seconds;
bold type is loud;
light type is soft;
split-level lines indicate a chant-like delivery, with each level at a separate pitch;
long dashes indicate lengthened vowels, short ones at the ends of lines an interrupted delivery;
repeated consonants are lengthened;
other instructions are in *(parenthesized italics).*

Poetry is oral **history**
and oral **history**
is **poetry.**
•
First of all, historical information
and the **ideas** of history just spoken of by Mr. Grele
are found not only in
the relatively casual
conversational narratives of the interview situation
but also in forms of oral discourse which are
traditionally classified
as **poetry**--
songs and chants, for example.
Second
conversational narratives **themselves**
traditionally classified as **prose**
turn out, when listened to **closely**
to have poetical qualities of their **own.**

Figure 14: Dennis Tedlock in Envelopes of sound: The art of oral history. Page 107. Image scanned by author.

Tedlock draws on the performative and somatic nature of speech by typing his essay in the poetic form, drawing from some of the visual aesthetics of written text to evoke aurality. The article emphasises that informal, conversational narratives which interest oral historians the most are particularly poetical and cannot be fully understood through prose transcripts (Grele & Turkel 112). He too emphasises the vital importance of tone and silence which he criticises is not accurately communicated through prose (Grele & Turkel 113). "The WORST thing about written prose is that there is no SI LENCE in it." (Grele & Turkel 113). Drawing on the visual aesthetic of poetry, Tedlock encourages the reader to engage in the poetical nature of speech while his guide to delivery offers an almost performative method of engaging with his work, directly reflecting the aurality of its content. He argues that literate or not, nobody in society *speaks* in prose, so why should oral history be transcribed as such?

To address these challenges, researchers have explored creative and poetic approaches to transcription. Poetic transcription attempts to preserve the lyricism of speech and maintain a

closer connection to the raw, emotional, and performative qualities of the oral narratives (Woodley 50). Moreover, the use of new media, such as sound-shorts provides innovative ways to engage with and represent oral histories (Foster 111). These approaches reembody the narratives and offer opportunity for a wider audience to connect with the oral history material, bridging the gap between the lived interview and the final transcript (Foster 116). While there is evidence that researchers have turned to creative methods when communicating oral histories, as can be seen in the literature review so far, most of these stay within the realm of academic writing and do not venture into the realm of visual arts - despite there being much potential.

Flowing from this theoretical research came the following methodological questions to consider for my work:

- How might the process of transcription be creatively explored to produce an accurate aural account of recorded oral histories while effectively sharing authority with the narrator?

- What methods of care should be taken in the structure of oral history methodology to ensure the participant is invited into a “brave space”?

- Taking into account authorship, how can creative practice re-present oral histories and encourage critical engagement from an audience beyond academia?

- And finally what kind of graphic forms could such oral history representations take?

4.2 Oral History Methodology

This research methodology involves the conduction of one-to-one oral history interviews with participants, giving significance to the concept of "shared authority" as advocated by Michael H. Frisch. [30] The primary focus is prioritising the participant's voice, while the

[30] Frisch, Michael. A shared authority: Essays on the craft and meaning of oral and public history. Suny Press, 1990. In this book, Frisch’s concept of a "shared authority" in oral history emphasises a collaborative approach where both the interviewer and interviewee contribute to historical narratives. It seeks to bridge the gap

researcher remains cognisant of their own perspective and interpretation of the interviews. Prioritising the participant's voice, I balanced accuracy and narrative interpretation by involving them in my decision-making. After undergoing a thorough review of ethics to carry out this research, a methodology was established. As a recent immigrant to Montreal, I reached out to those familiar with the research, giving them explicitly the option to decline without consequences, ensuring an open dialogue despite pre-existing relationships.[31] As a member of the Feminist Media Studio and the Centre for Oral History and Digital Story Telling, I issued callouts through their social media channels and email lists (Figure 15).[32]

Figure 15. Transit tales call-out disseminated through FMS and COHDS. 2022. Image created by author.

This method to gain participants received little interest which validated my experience of the introduction to oral history at the COHDS earlier that year, where we were informed us that

between academic expertise and personal experience, fostering a more inclusive and equitable representation of history.

[31] As per the SPF submitted for ethics review for human subjects, the participants had up to 3 weeks to withdraw their consent for the audio interview to be used.

[32] FMS(https://feministmediastudio.ca) is a feminist and artist center affiliated with Concordia University. COHDS (https://storytelling.concordia.ca) is an oral history center affiliated with Concordia University.

callouts are almost useless unless there is an incentive. Nevertheless the individual who answered my callout was exercised and particularly engaged on the subject, and in a space of *vulnerable confidence* we exercised agencies through dialogue, and their narratives played an integral part in my creative work.

Once the participant had expressed their interest and agreed to be involved in this research, we agreed on an estimated duration of the interview. Generally, it was no longer than an hour, but this estimated time was not constrained. Should the participant have wished to continue they would be invited to do so and in the same manner, I should be attuned to whether the participant was tired, and the interview should be shorter than an hour. The conversation was centered around them; if it felt like they were in a space where the dialogue was flowing, and they were comfortable I would not cut them off to end the conversation because an hour was over. The discursive conversations unpacked a range of themes surrounding the subject matter, from youthful experiences and conditioning to comparing experiences in other cities or hometowns. We do not often give ourselves the space to contemplate the experiences of oppression, discomfort, or vulnerability, or the behaviour we embody to make ourselves feel safer – it can be considered as integrated into our existence. When we do start to nurture dialogue, however, we start to say things like "Oh I had a similar experience to that" or "I never realised I did that before but I guess I do". The more you speak together, the more you fuel the creation of a charged reflective environment towards understanding personal narratives that are tangled within complex social webs.

After agreeing the date and time, we discussed the participant's preferred location for the oral history session, offering options such as their home, mine, or a neutral space at Concordia. Upon their arrival, I prepared the recording equipment whilst engaging in an informal conversation to put them at ease. An explanation of the audio recording equipment's operation was also provided, fostering active engagement, transparency, and a smoother experience.

The interview commenced with light, general questions to establish comfort, covering topics such as self-introduction, how their day has been, and how long they have been in Montreal. Guided by open-ended questions, an interview guide (Appendix C) was prepared in advance for the conversation however this only served as a roadmap for the oral history process. Conducted as a discussion rather than a Q&A, the interview aimed for a participant-led

approach, with the researcher guiding without asserting control or assuming prior knowledge. The researcher served as an active listener, embracing silence for meaning, reflection, and dialogue. The interview guide was minimally referenced, allowing the conversation to flow naturally. Specific questions emerged organically based on previous interview insights, fostering a collective exploration of shared experiences, particularly in navigating the city, with a focus on the Métro system and its connection to spatial practice and patriarchal social structures. Participants were given two forms, the first was a consent form (Appendix A) after the interview took place which allowed me to record the interview and edit their audio through creative practice. The second was a release form which implied that they had viewed any creative material I had made using their information and approved for it to be released to the public (Appendix B).

4.3 Summary of Oral History Findings

As mentioned, the Transit Tales film serves to archive, document, and communicate a summary of key themes gathered in the research process. Amongst many participants there was a discomfort within the confined space of the Métro which heightened their sense of vulnerability due to the proximity of numerous people, limiting their ability to escape if they needed to. This was addressed in some by adopting strategies such as standing instead of sitting, providing both a poised stance for a swift exit and a better vantage point of their surroundings. Opting for single seats minimised the risk of uncomfortable proximity, allowing them to avoid potential discomfort.

There could be an acute awareness of the amount of space their bodies are taking up whilst on the Métro. This feeling was exacerbated when another male passenger chose to sit immediately next to them even when other seats were available or when a neighbouring male passenger *manspread,* encroaching on their space. Dressing down becomes a strategic tool when using public transport to avoid drawing attention and engaging in a form of self-censorship. This self-regulation extends to clothing choices, with participants deliberately avoiding attention-grabbing items like red accessories or elaborate outfits. This reflects the motivations behind the subway shirt trend. Dresses and skirts or shorts are avoided as they feel more exposed, they “don’t want to risk it” or “use it as instigation” (07:10).

Walking in public spaces becomes a challenging experience as participants frequently encounter interruptions from men commenting on their appearance. Another theme that was spoken of but not included in the film was the use of headphones not just for music but as a visual signal of busyness, attempting to deter unwanted attention (Appendix D).[33] However, even with headphones, participants are regularly approached, leading to the necessity of removing them to address persistent advances. Participants also expressed a need to bring items like blazers or jackets just in case as a comfortable fall back if they had to cover up. This caution extends to their presentation of coded femininity in public spaces, with past experiences informing their decisions to limit self-expression to reduce discomfort and potential approaches.

Other recurring themes that were not included in the film were the favouring some participants had towards the new single cart Métro over the old, separated ones as they felt less trapped (Appendix F) and some feeling more tense in the dark and switching to driving or car-share to intentionally avoid public transport after uncomfortable experiences (Appendix E).

Generally, there is an extreme caution towards how much coded femininity participants could express in the way they present themselves in public space. Building from past experiences, they have found that if they wished to present themselves in this way, it exposes them to more discomfort and risk of being approached or objectified.

4.2 Transit Tales, Audio and Visual Representation

4.2.1 Audio

Following each interview, audio recordings were transcribed, with attention to the nuanced rhythms of speech. The *Transcribe* function in *Word* facilitated this process, providing time-stamped textual transcriptions, an improvement on my initial manual transcription and note-taking. The searchable text allowed for easier thematic connections during analysis. Despite the computer-generated transcription's limitations, a comprehensive review was conducted alongside re-listening to refine accuracy, add punctuation, and emphasise the performative

[33] See appendix for recurring themes that were not included in the film. These are mostly transcribed into monograph texts, however the grammar and syntax is not cleaned out.

aspects of oral narratives. Identifying recurrent themes and significant topics, the next step involved using a poetic format to delve deeper into narrative elements for broader audience communication, as elaborated further in this chapter. As more material was obtained from participants, a practice of revisiting the initial transcriptions from earlier recordings was implemented to identify potential connections among subject matter. An inherent narrative within recordings developed over time, supported by back-and-forth examination of recurring themes from memory and as the interviews progressed.

Highlighting the importance of sound and the voice as a central element is often overlooked in documentary studies (Roe 27). However as previously grounded through a poetic framework, the preservation and centring of speech's lyricism maintains a closer connection to the raw, emotional, and performative qualities of the oral narratives giving authority to the narrator (Woodley 50). Reflecting the first iteration, the audio fore-fronted the film and was treated as a material in its own right. In a document which served as a "script", I added all the transcriptions from connected themes across participants narratives, marked with timestamps. From here, I edited the script into a long audio file. In contrast to voiceovers narrating a written script a *sound-based* structure to animation documentary employs natural and unprocessed sound that has been discovered or recorded as the main structural element (Roe 20). The technique of animation documentary can replace the omission of a physical body with what Roe refers to as "vocalic bodies," informed and affected by the voice recreate a distinct embodiment of the subject's experience, foregrounding their autonomy (Roe 78).

While the oral history recordings had to go through a process of editing through extraction, I maintained a poetic approach in the way the voices were woven together. Rather than polishing the audio to omit what might be considered as redundant information, the vocalic bodies are abundant with oral punction, such as what Woodley attested to "pauses, hesitations, part - and whole-word repetitions, frequent exclamations such as 'all right', 'really'." For example, at 01:00, under the theme of standing and body language when riding the Métro, Participant H says:

"I think it's..
just
the nature- for *me*,
just the nature of *being*...

In transit, with strangers

um… in an enclosed space
that..
There is like. A feeling of being t*rapped*
so one time being trapped,
on a bus with somebody aggressive, another time being trapped on a Métro
with somebody aggressive."

A particular place in the narrative when silence is embraced is at 02:48 when Participant F speaks about how she stands in the Métro to make sure she is out of the way of people. Such a pause emphasises the reflexive space of the interview, it indicates how she is considering why it is that she uses this body language in the Métro, and what it could be linked to.

Another example is at 12:55, under the theme of being vigilant and aware of their surroundings when navigating public spaces, Participant R says:
"turning around,
making *sure* no one is *following me* and stuff like that
it's just…

by habit, and also just the fact that as females we're *just not safe."*

When gathering information from others, the feminist oral historian should pay attention to the spaces between and framing of the narrator's story, the silences and emotions, the process of meaning-making and critical self-reflection (Leavy 9). While these are just two examples of where hesitation and silence is embraced, the film has many more such references.

In contrast to the initial phase of the film, I chose not to censor or edit out my backchanneling during the interview, incorporating it into the audio throughout the entire film. My position as a researcher is evident and I do not try to pretend that I am not there. Within the context of *brave spaces*, including my backchannelling indicates the discursiveness, fluidity, and *vulnerable confidence* of the dialogue being had. It invites the viewer/listener to participate in the conversation, encouraging the same level of engagement that I had.

Another manner which the unpolished audio was included was the oscillating pitch in participants' voices. While I edited all the volumes from the original recording to ensure they were at an audible level, when participants shifted their tone mid conversation to become louder or quieter in emotive moments, the volume was not edited. For instance, after recalling a memory where a man had commented on her physical form while she was walking in a public space, at 10:56 Participant F lowers her voice considerably to say:
"I feel -
I don't feel good… about…this…

feel sad because…
what started as a nice day, my mood is completely off now…"

It is evident in the lyrical quality of her voice just how much this experience had affected her. At the beginning of her recollection, her tone is lively and animated (09:18), it turns to confusion and anger (09:55) before becoming subdued and disheartened. The impact of such an experience is echoed by the two other participants whose narratives are woven into the same audio. An interesting observation was that while all three spoke one-to-one and independently to me, all three recollected a similar memory of being interrupted in a public space that made them uncomfortable. The number of experiences that were shared amongst different participants was evident. Within the film these reproduced narratives are woven together illustrating a collective and reflexive space to provoke transformative action. Without leading questions, the participants confided narratives that were so similar, that all three voices could be woven into a flowing sentence as though they were one.

More widely ambient noise is used expressively: sounds of footsteps; buskers; and people talking on the Métro platform. At 03:18, the familiar sound of "La STM vous souhaite la bienvenue à bord" echoes ironically after participants speak on how gendered experiences drive them to stand on the Métro and their need to stand as opposed to making themselves more comfortable in a seat. The layering of participants' echoes of the same phrases or words was also explored.

The sound-based film facilitates vocalic bodies to become the central focus by employing a framework of poetics in the oral history interviews. It maintains its raw oral charm by

minimally editing the audio used in an attempt to shorten the distance between the primary oral material and the communication of research findings. Concentrating on audio as the primary material hopes to strengthen the integrity of the narrative and ensuring balance between myself and the participant. While the audio serves as the foundation of the project, the visual elements strive to enhance comprehension and captivate the audience with the personal narratives presented in the *Transit Tales* soundtrack.

4.2.2 Visual

While *Transit Tales* might not conventionally be labeled as a videopoem, it essentially functions as one. The voice, though not the recited text of a traditional poem, holds a poetic quality. Even more poetic are the sensitive and emotional everyday experiences shared by my participants. Similar to poetics and videopoems, the stop motion plays with juxtaposition, rhythm, motion, time, image, text, and sound to generate ambiguity, suggestion, and disruption, establishing contrasting elements between the visual and auditory aspects. Like a videopoem, it navigates the delicate balance between narrative and non-narrative. Animation is increasingly being used as a means to express the core of experiences by encapsulating thoughts, emotions, and sensitivities (Roe 24). This emotive use of animation enables us to visualise the unseen aspects of existence from someone else's perspective, often presented in an abstract or symbolic style (Roe 24).

Transit Tales employs an ambiguous language where the animation often becomes a metaphorical echo of the narrative (Figure 17). This was explored through illustrated stop-motion whereas the first version primarily used Risograph animation based on live-action footage. The visual analogies should be individually interpreted in tandem with the narrative and speak for itself. The presence of ambiguity makes way for viewers to enter an immersive and reflexive space encouraging them to forge their connections and interpretations between voice and visuals.

The deliberate, gradual process of illustrated animation underscores a framework of meticulous care, attention, and labour invested in the reengagement of narratives (Figure 16). This medium enhances the film's interdisciplinary nature, while its dynamic qualities aim to foster audience engagement offering them more ways to connect with the narratives.

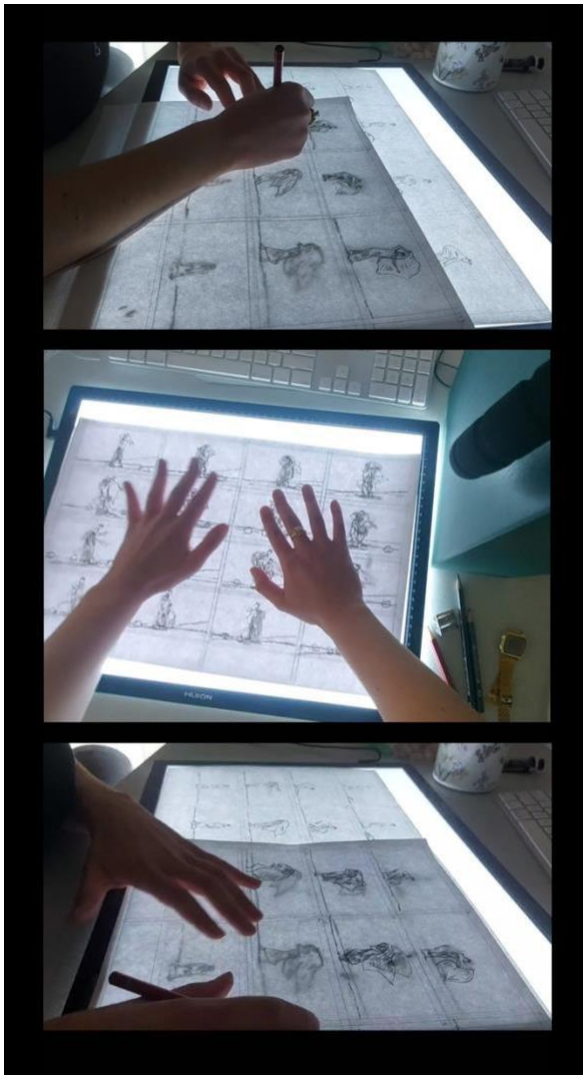


Figure 16: Illustrating stop-motion. 2023. Photographs by author.

In moments of narrative pauses, as discussed earlier (at 02:48 and 12:55), the visuals experiment with still durations by layering multiple versions of the same still, creating a dynamic yet paused effect. The shifting Riso textures in this relatively static interlude accentuate the contemplative nature of vocal pauses, enhancing their reflective quality. Despite these intentional pauses, the visuals maintain a continuous state of movement, reflecting the persistent nature of the gendered experience being explored.

Illustration layering serves as a technique to enrich narratives and introduce visual diversity and movement (Figure 17). Due to the time constraints of stop-motion, I approached my visual strategy carefully, mindful of not limiting the film's duration by summarising key research findings as it was necessary to balance time with affect. For example, an animation where no two frames or scene are the same for nearly 17 minutes of stop-motion, could have taken well over a year to make it. As the theoretical and creative framework for my film placed importance on the vocal over the visual narration, akin to videopoems or even some music videos, *Transit Tales* uses imagery and movement to draw the viewer into an engaged and deep listening space. By looping motions, irregularly oscillating them and the repeating such scenes throughout the film has a hypnotic effect on the viewer. As mentioned in Chapter 3, I made use of the Risograph's many prints by using misprints in the film to create variation when scenes were repeated. During the printing process, I also played with layering master's from different scenes on top of each other (Figure 18).

Given its freedom from replicating subject matter, animation enables the exploration of avenues that go beyond the concealment of identities. (Roe 79). It provides a means to

analyse remarks made by interviewees and visually express a film's concepts and themes. (Roe 79). Transit Tales achieves this through enigmatic visuals that remains subordinate to the participants audio in hopes of creating a more intimate space, while trying to uphold the integrity of the voice.

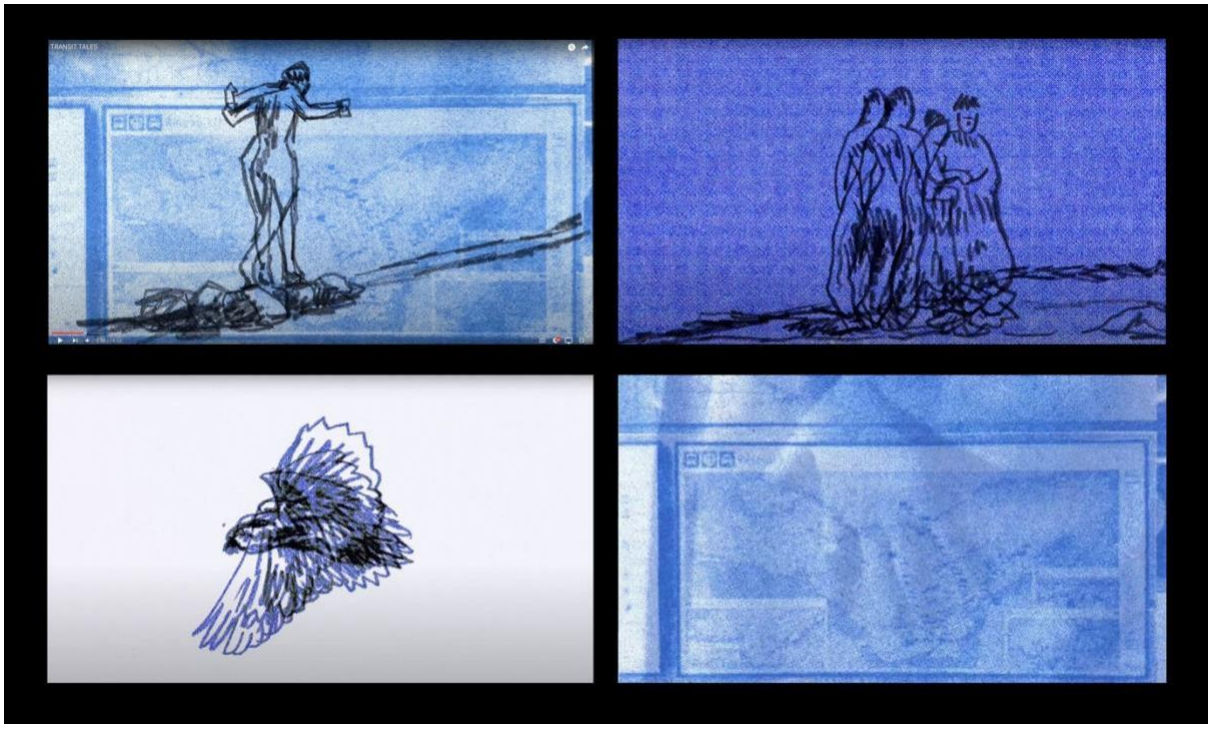


Figure 17: Transit Tales scene stills showing layering motions. 2023. Image by author.[34]

[34] Top left still taken at 00:58, top right at 03:14 ("I always stand in the Métro") bottom left at 06:20 and bottom right at 16:22.

Figure 18: Risograph print of two different frames layered on top of one another. 2023. Scanned image by author.

4.3 Poetic Transcriptions

Following a basic transcription of the oral histories, I delved into poetic transcriptions to visually connect with aurality and capture nuanced aspects of speech. Experimenting with white space, line breaks, and punctuation, I explored how the poetic format could unveil voice patterns and rhythms. This creative approach aimed to examine how graphic design could enhance and communicate oral history research in more traditional forms. Figures 19, 20, and 21 showcase initial work that utilised notetaking to represent tonal shifts and somatic expression, clearly indicating it as an interpretation of another person's voice, thereby sharing authority and transparently conveying the researcher's position.

R:

Yeah... uhm..

ann I tCatso another thing that I realize/?
isssa

myt{a.rring
So depening on what I *weeeeer*
to the metro Like
I think I get more for readtion

soo, I do sometimes plan my outfits
whuh-depending on which public transportation I'm t
um... ooor whether I'm going with my b.oyfriend.

so if I'll be-
if *I.'m* taking the mecrowith my *boyjnendI,*
eh,
I just know that I'm able co wear whatever I
just cos... I feel that...

men...
only ressspecc ...women when theres *men around*
and

um

Figure 19: Poetic transcription explorations. 2023. Image by author.

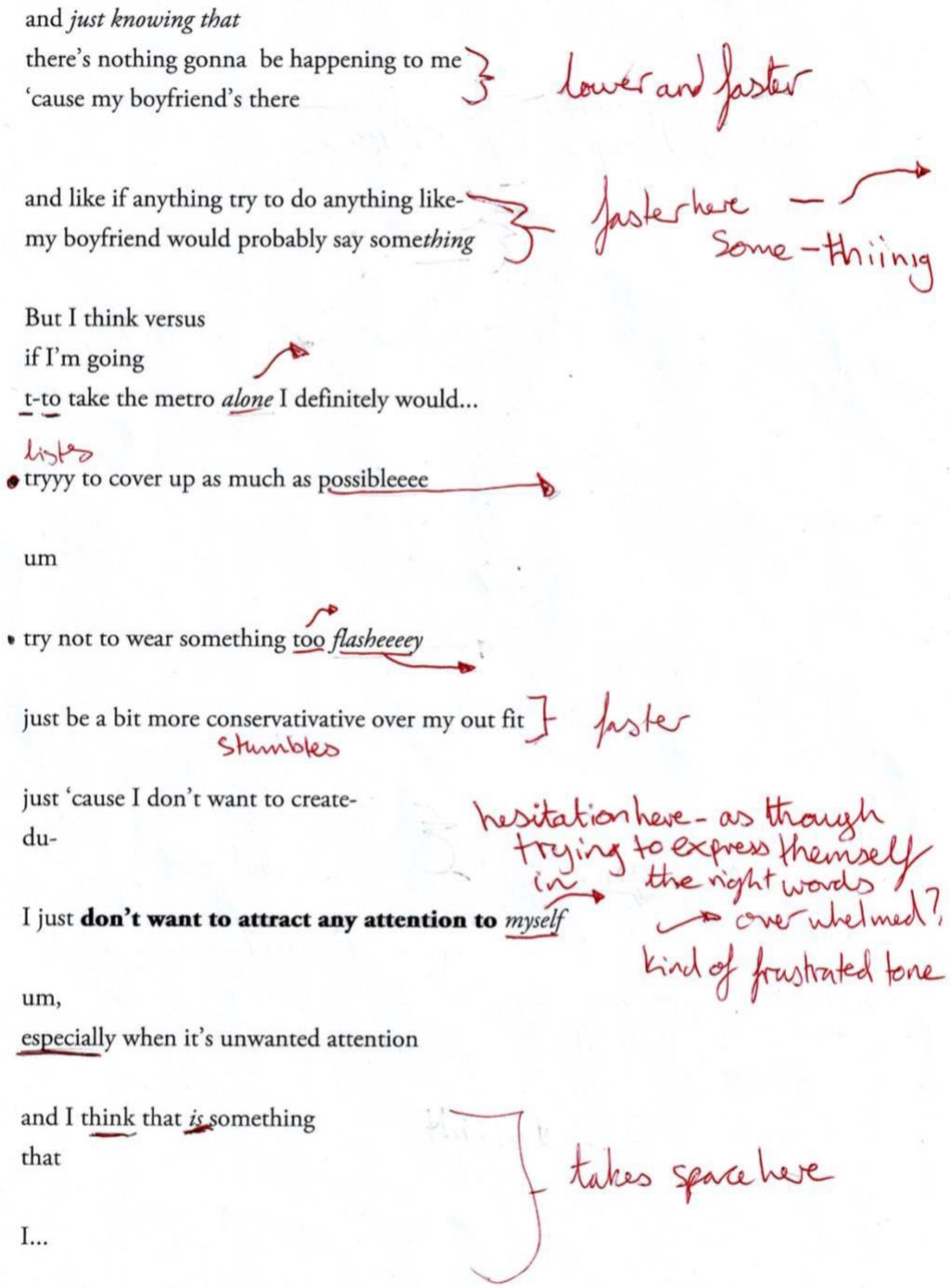
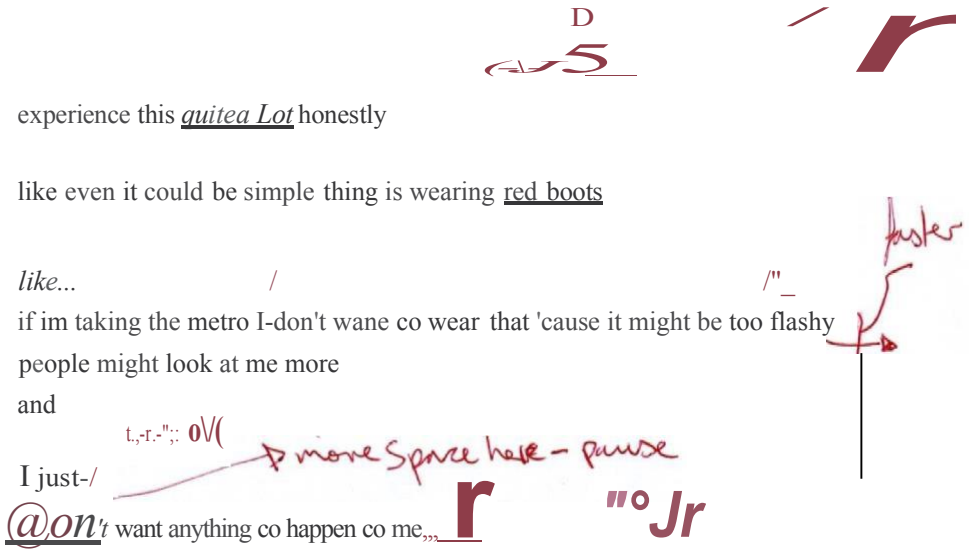


Figure 20: Poetic transcription explorations. 2023. Image by author.



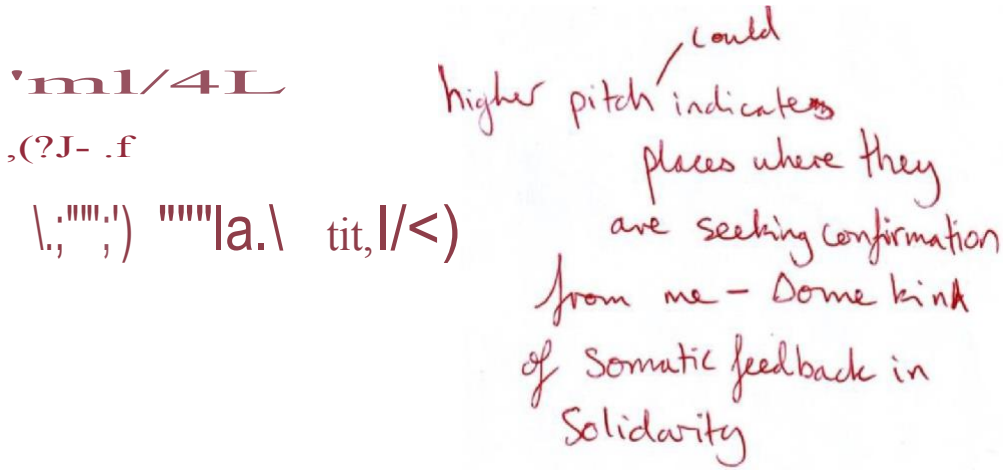


Figure 21: Poetic transcription explorations. 2023. Image by author.

The final result of poetic transcriptions was a small chapbook containing poetic explorations from oral to visual .[35] It embraces a conventional approach to the poetic book format, capturing elements of the creative integration of an entire oral history research. An illustrative instance is presented through an example of a “thematic chapter" titled "On Self-Censorship and Want," as depicted in Figure 22.

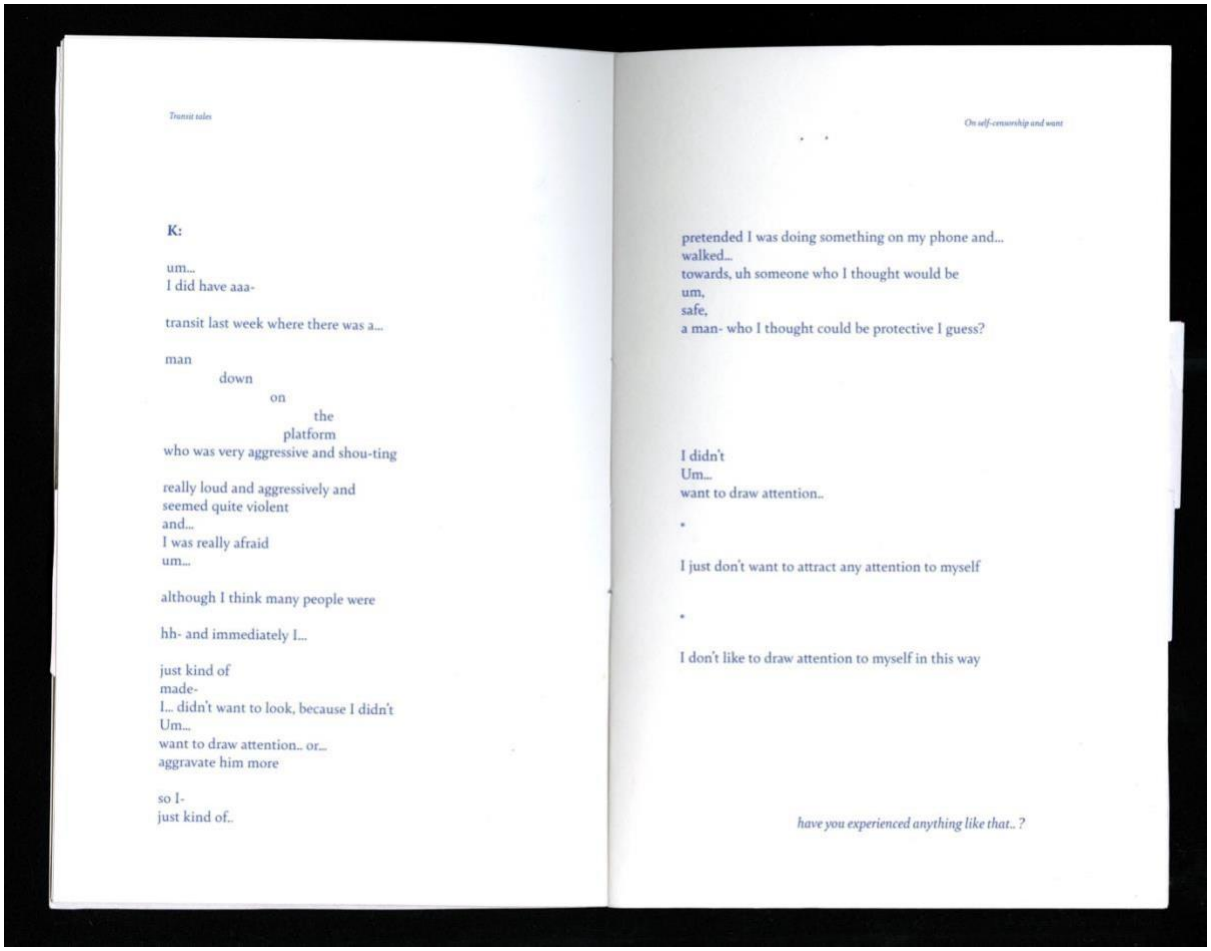


Figure 22: Spread from Transit Tales chapbook. 2023. Image by author.

The chapbook also includes an exploration into some more visual examples of poetic transcription (Figure 23). The intention was for the texts to still be readable therefore these kinds of concrete-leaning poems were only included after the poetic transcription. In the

[35] A chapbook is "a small book or pamphlet containing poems, ballads, stories, or religious tract but the term is still used today to refer to short, inexpensive booklets (https://web.mit.edu/21h.418/www/nhausman/chap1.html) They often had desire to give the perception that the chapbook was an extension of the oral tradition of stories (https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/library/files/special/exhibns/month/may2008.html).

same manner that the film relies on rhythm, layering, speed, etc to create moments of tension emphasising themes, so does the chapbook's use of the concrete-poems. In Figure 24, we see a play between two of the recurring themes, not wanting to draw attention or take up space. However, in this visual, the relationship is subverted to say take up space indicating a pushback against oppressive structures. Figure 24 pays distinctive attention to the tonal shifts and music of the voice, inviting the reader to read aloud or along with the participant's voice giving more colour and attention to the narrator's personal experience.

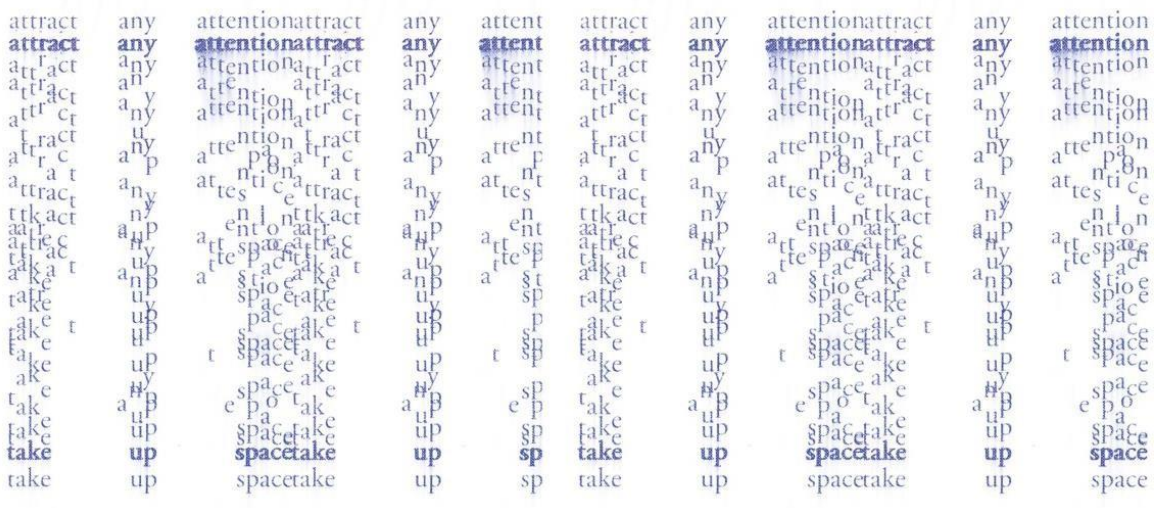


Figure 23: Spread from Transit Tales chapbook indicating visual poem connecting themes. 2023. Image by author.

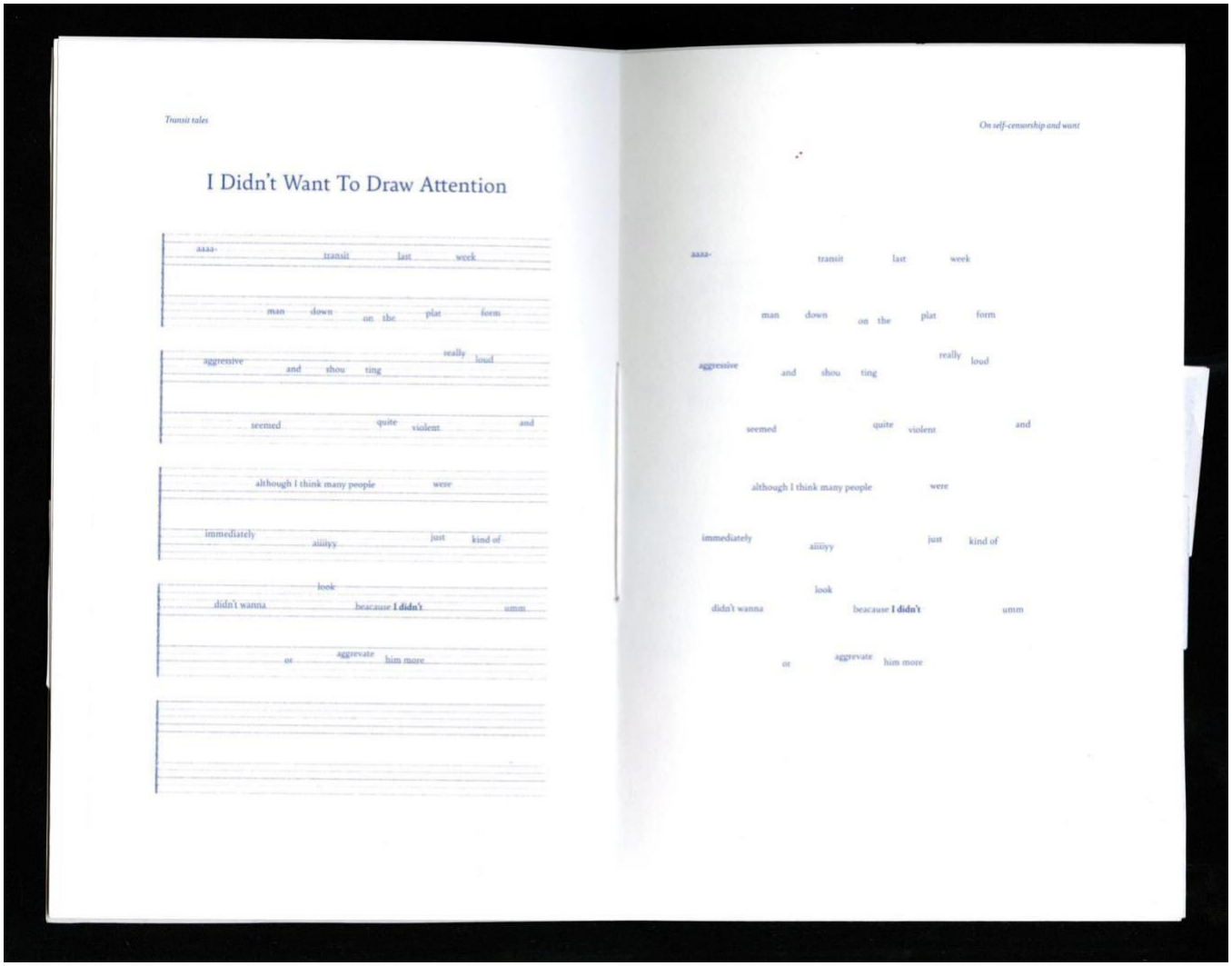


Figure 24: I Didn't want to draw attention, chapbook spread. 2023. Image by author.

Preceding the three participants' poetic transcriptions, this visual poem addresses their shared reluctance to draw attention to themselves. It weaves their individual narratives into a collective song, highlighting the commonality of their shared experiences. Some of these poetic explorations, were physically displayed in public spaces, near Métro stations and on the streets. This intervention aimed to observe and document how these narratives influenced and critiqued public spaces, sparking curiosity about people's reactions. Despite some technical challenges the endeavor provided insights into the interaction between these narratives and urban environments.[36]

[36] As see in these helpful references, it is best to use a lightweight paper like newsprint- as Riso prints were on cartridge paper it made them challenge to put up as they were rather heavy. Helpful references for wheatpastes: https://www.bombingscience.com/graffitiforum/threads/wheatpaste.3389/ https://crimethinc.com/2017/07/18/a-field-guide-to-wheatpasting-everything-you-need-to-know-to-blanket-the-world-in-posters

Figure 25: *Wheatpaste outside De La Savane Métro station*. 2023. Photograph by author.

Figure 26: Close-up of wheatpaste outside De La Savane Métro station. 2023. Photograph by author.

By pasting interview extracts in public areas, this intervention seeks to broaden narratives to a wider audience, inviting others to share their stories in spaces where they may otherwise go unheard. It draws attention to hegemonic structures by deliberately using counter dominant narratives and attempts to offer a charged site of resistance for often-overlooked experiences of women in public areas. The wheatpastes promote community interaction and conversation, allowing passers-by to interact with the work, hoping to thereby generate debate. By exploring the uneasy intersection of aesthetic and disruptive strategies it has the potential to stimulate discursive dialogues and raise unforeseen questions.

Figure 27 and 28 shows how two wheatpastes posted up in a St. Henri underpass were vandalised and torn down. Figure 29 shows a close-up of someone's writings which say "Let Valerie Plante fuck you- increased prices for transit + everything else every year". This demonstrates how the work was interpreted out of context. Given the Risograph prints that they were pasted on, I can assume that they misunderstood the work to be promoting the Métro system in a positive light, that the Métro allows the narrator to move around freely.

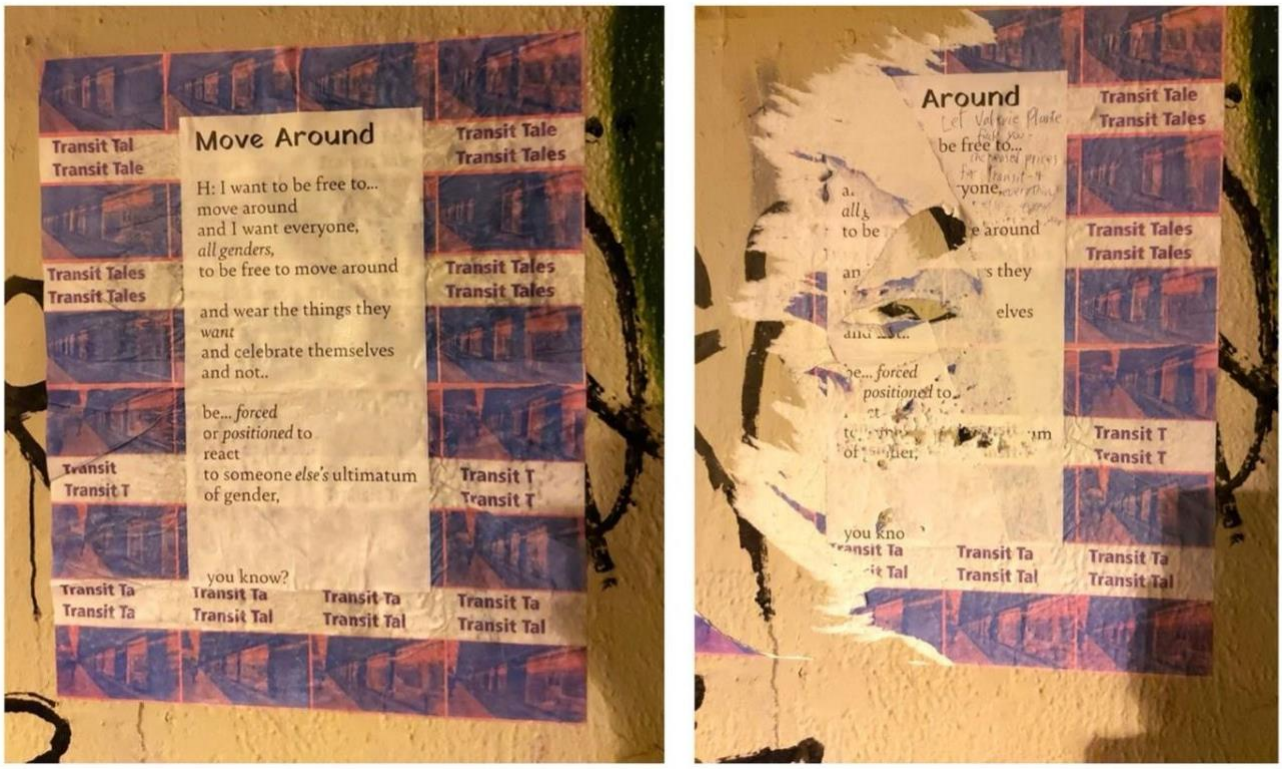


Figure 27: *Wheatpastes before and after a couple of weeks in a St. Henri underpass.* 2023. Photographs by author.

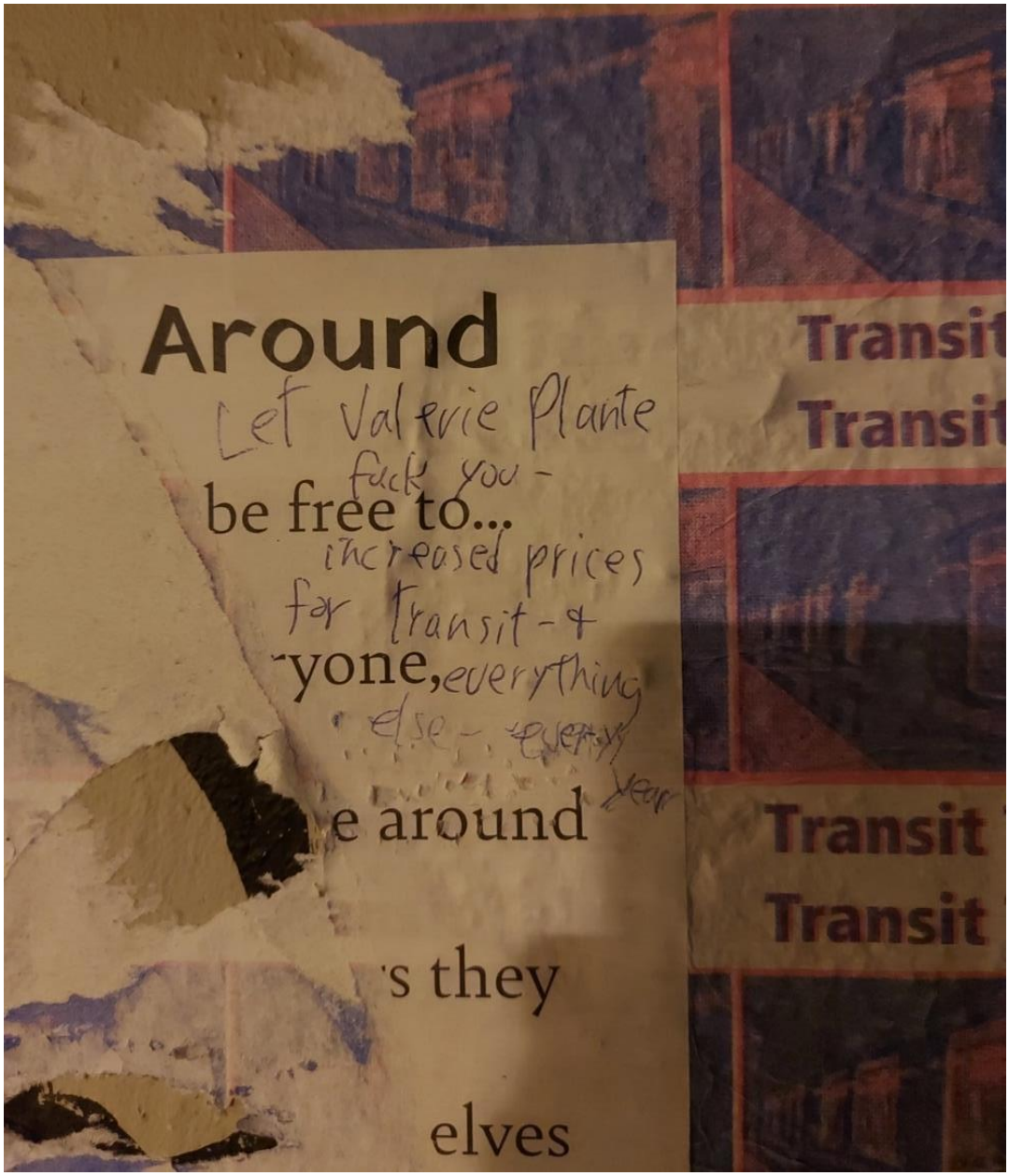


Figure 28: *Let Valerie Plante fuck you-*. 2023. Photograph by author.

I find this interesting, as the poem it was next to draws attention to the participants' experiences of discomfort navigating the Métro, and their tendency towards self-censorship to cover themselves up (Figure 29). I cannot speak for what state the person was in, or their interpretation but I find this completely unexpected interaction interesting. Both wheatpastes happened to be next to some subversive graffiti stating, "DEAD MEN DON'T RAPE" (Figure 30).

Figure 29: Second w*heatpaste* in the same location *before and after a couple of weeks in a St. Henri underpass. 2023. Photographs by author.*

Figure 30. Two wheatpastes next to each other St. Henri next to subversive graffiti. 2023. Photograph by author.

Figure 31: *Wheatpastes in a construction site outside La Salle Métro station*. 2023. Photographs by author.

Figure 32: Wheatpastes in a construction site outside La Salle Métro station. 2023. Photograph by author.

Conclusion

Participant Screening and Feedback

I hosted a small informal screening of the film with a cocktail party as a means of saying thank-you and enabling feedback session from my participants. While two of them no longer live in Montreal, and another three were unavailable or away, three participants were able to gather. The intimate evening started with some conversation and getting to know one another before watching the film together and having a conversation afterward about their interpretations and feelings towards the film.

Commenting on the relationship between visual and audio, one participant noted that they felt the ambient audio helped to situate their experience to the visuals, layering their interpretations onto this relationship. The same participant attested to the ambiguity of the less direct visuals which she found "captivating" as she could make her connections. On the other hand, another participant found that the repetition throughout the film got her into a "zone" where the visuals sank into the background illuminating the voices. This participant spoke of how it initially felt uncomfortable to hear her voice but when it was woven with people repeating the same experiences it became powerful - especially the scene where their narration of being interrupted on the street was integrated with others facing the same issue. Contrary to this, while it made them feel like they weren't alone in their experiences, one participant said hearing the echoed experiences was disheartening.

One participant shared that after our interview they were more aware of the habits they have adopted into their spatial practice. They felt the process made them more aware of their internal dialogue - wanting to push against oppressive structures, dressing and conducting themselves as they pleased yet acutely aware of their safety and comfort. Another participant echoed this sentiment saying they were left with a feeling angry in realising how they had "simplified" their self-expression in public space. This film combined with the conversation ignited a determination in them to stand their ground and encouraged for a further a series to be made documenting more experiences. The other subjects who were unable to attend offered similar insights and encouragement.

We also considered how deeply set the socialisation of patriarchal, colonial, and hegemonic narratives is and questioned the best way to move forward is. One participant expressed their discomfort when speak about their everyday experiences, it was something they try to suppress. The other two found encouragement and solidarity in conversations. Expressing experiences, even uncomfortable ones, provided a cathartic relief. Sharing and validating these encounters with others was seen as crucial. Whilst recognising the value of short-term sharing for validation, they emphasise making small changes where comfortable. Rather than feeling upset, there's a sense of relief in realising shared experiences, fostering a positive and hopeful outlook. We agreed a possible extension of this process would be to make a regular habit of calling a companion to unpack an experience, or burden, with them after it happens rather than automatically layering it into the sediment of our existence to carry with us.

Another conclusion was that cisgender, masculine-presenting men could benefit from engaging in this narrative so that they could lighten the "burden" of feminine experience by being aware of how their presence and behavior could affect others instead of us having to be the ones to constantly unlearn behavior. During the MDes exhibition, three men approached me to confess they had no idea the extent to of this gendered oppression was experienced in everyday practice suggesting wider ignorance.

Reflection and Moving Forward

From the participant's feedback it can be seen that following the oral history process and film, curating narratives through artistic practice provided a stimulus for identity work, a reflexive space was produced which provoked them to explore their potential participation and engagement. If a form of agency can be considered as the power to self-reflect, then *Transit Tales* provided a safe space for individuals to consider how they construct themselves into existing relations and as such reproduce social constructions. Giving meaning to and unpacking experience can foster a stronger sense of situational awareness towards complex, lived practice (Schalk, Kristiansson & Mazé 153). The feedback session provided a critical space for future possibilities of change to be imagined while opening up a further dialogue as a group. The *Transit Tales* process also illustrated that despite my intention the work would be perceived in unexpected ways, such as the vandalism of wheatpastes or the participant's discomfort with unpacking experiences of gender oppression.

Animation proved an evocative medium to present the research, and it can be concluded that this artful inquiry can be an accessible and engaging way of archiving and communicating academic research. Approached through a poetic framework, *Transit Tales* reflected the rich discursiveness of dialogue, upholding the integrity of the narrator while shortening the distance between the participant, myself, as such, the audience. It invited viewers to contribute to the conversation as though they were present at the interview forming a collaborative experience. This demonstrates that poetics provides a caring environment when doing oral history research. Interweaving participant's narratives into a shared experience could encourage a sense of solidarity and have a powerful community impact. The film's visual ambiguity allowed viewers to form their own connections and interpretations while the strategies such as hypnotic repetition offered a channel to become more engrossed in the content of the film.

The poetic chapbook offers an exciting avenue for presenting oral histories, although the efficacy of poetic transcription is optimal when condensed extracts are used. Attempting to transcribe an hour of verbatim dialogue poetically would result in over a hundred pages. If participants grant permission, incorporating time stamps in the transcripts and attaching full audio interviews to the book (via a QR code for example) could enhance the overall presentation. Organising the complete transcripts into chapter themes poses a challenge due to the non-linear nature of narratives, characterised by a web of connections rather than a straightforward progression. However, this film took a different approach. Due to time and resource constraints, it wasn't feasible to explore all the connecting themes exhaustively; instead, the emphasis was on crafting a cohesive and flowing narrative. Poetic transcription brings more character to the participant's voice, allowing an audience to connect with them on a more personal level and sharing authority while doing so.

Appendix

Appendix A:

Participant R is a Chinese Malaysian, cisgender woman currently aged 26. She has been in Montreal for two years, however immigrated to Ottawa, Canada, five years prior to this. Hailing from Malaysia, a country she expressed was far less secure than Canada, much like myself, she has been ingrained with a greater sense of vigilance concerning her surroundings than most especially when navigating at night as a woman. She also had a strong distrust in law enforcement, that she brought with her from Malaysia, which she claimed had issues of corruption, and spoke of Malaysia being far more conservative. We have an existing relationship.

Participant V is a Russian, white cisgender woman currently aged 30. She too has been in Montreal for a year and a half, however immigrated to Toronto, Canada13 years ago. Similarly to Participant R, she has a greater sense of vigilance concerning her surroundings than most especially when navigating at night as a woman. She also mentioned that there was far less public transport infrastructure in her hometown than there is here. She frequently uses public transport, and considers Montreal over all much safer as a woman than Toronto and generally feels safe navigating the Métro in comparison. We have an existing relationship.

Participant M is a white, cisgender Canadian currently aged 27 who comes from outer Toronto and has been in Montreal for just over a year and frequently uses public transport. We have an existing relationship.

Participant K is a cisgender white woman in her early thirties from British Columbia living in Montreal for 3 years. She feels overall quite comfortable navigating the city as a woman and does not experience as much harassment as she did when she was younger. She also had comments. We have an existing relationship.

Participant N is a cisgender black woman in her late twenties from greater Canada. She has

lived in Montreal for three years and uses public transport often. We have an existing relationship.

Participant O is a cisgender woman of Italian descent in her early thirties, born and raised in Montreal. While she currently more often drives than uses public transport, she had comments on navigating the city as a woman, particularly reflecting on times when she did not have a car. We have an existing relationship.

Participant F is a cisgender Indian immigrant in her late twenties. Having lived in Montreal for 5 years, she now resides in Ottawa. Like myself, she has a greater sense of vigilance and mentioned her home being far more conservative than Canada. This participant was suggested to me by a mutual acquaintance as she researched in a similar field of gender and space.

Participant H is a non-binary white Canadian woman in her late thirties who previously lived in Montreal, as well as other cities in Canada but currently lives in Vancouver. They have unfortunately had some severe experiences of harassment and assault on public transport, and as such now try to avoid it using it. This participant emailed me in response to a call-out. We interviewed over Zoom.

Avalon O'Henley:
I am a 27-year-old white, cisgender woman from South Africa. I have lived in Montreal for over two years. Coming from South Africa, my situational awareness towards gender-based violence is heightened. Public transport is barely accessible, mostly unsafe, and I would never think of walking alone at night.

Appendix B:

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Transit Tales
Researcher: Avalon O'Henley
Researcher's Contact Information: (Tel: 514-225-5700, avalon.ohenley@gmail.com).
Faculty Supervisor: pk langshaw
Faculty Supervisor's Contact Information: pk.langshaw@concordia.ca
Source of funding for the study: none

You are invited to participate in the research study mentioned above. This form provides information about what participating would mean. Please read it carefully before deciding if you want to participate or not. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

A. PURPOSE

Focussing on gender as a social inscription influencing everyday spatial experience and practice, the purpose of this research is to collect and creatively document experiences of navigating the Montreal public space daily as a body engendered as feminine. The research looks more specifically at the experience of Montreal's Métro system.

B. PROCEDURES

If you participate, you will be asked to engage in an oral history interview session. It will be audio recorded with the option for video recording. The interview can be held at a space that you are most comfortable in; this could be your home, the researcher's home, Concordia University, or any other appropriate location. The researcher will facilitate the conversation and you can refuse to answer any question. You are encouraged to take all the time necessary to answer and are free to stop at any time.

The recorded oral history will consist of a main interview with questions relating to the research theme, followed by a debrief where the researcher encourages reflection and comments on the interview process. In total, participating in this interview will take approximately one hour- but this is flexible. Both will be recorded.

If wanted, subsequent interview follow-up sessions can be held but are not required. These will take place in the same format as the previous interview, and recorded as part of the research.

Do not hesitate to contact the researcher at any time via email or phone should they wish to speak off the record and unrecorded.

The oral history interview will form the basis of the researcher's creative material. Excerpts will be documented, archived, and visually communicated through creative material, namely transcribed into the poetic form on print media, and woven into a stop-motion video piece along with other interviews. It must be understood that this material is the researcher's interpretation of the information shared, as such the participant's opinions are encouraged. Should the participant express interest, the researcher can continuously communicate their creative material and audio transcriptions with them. The researcher will take on board all comments and suggestions to ensure that you are satisfied with the interpretations.

The aim for the study is the creative material to be displayed in the graduate exhibition and findings intergrated into the thesis. Before any creative material is released to the public, the participant will sign a release form.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

You might face certain risks by participating in this research. Navigating the city as an engendered feminine body can draw unwanted attention caused by unequal, patriarchal power structures built into our everyday social world. It is therefore possible that past experiences discussed could be difficult, this can be troubling and traumatising on an emotional level. If at any time you feel overwhelmed by emotions or if you wish to speak with someone it is possible to refer to the list of resources attached to this document. You may also stop the interview at any time and withdraw your consent without any negative repercussions.

Potential benefits include a safe and encouraging space for dialogue to foster communicative relationships around everyday experiences. Things that are often dismissed as just part of being engendered as feminine can be linked to larger systems of patriarchal oppression. Individuals might think their experiences to be isolated, but through dialogue, a shared experience could be recognised forming spaces of solidarity and community. The space offers a moment of reflection on everyday experiences.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

The following information will be gathered as part of this research: oral testimonies and discussion facilitated by the researcher around the research theme.

No one will be allowed to access the information, except people directly involved in the research. The only use of information for the research described in this form will be used.

As previously mentioned, you have the option to remain informed about the creative process using the material recorded. Throughout this process, the researcher will try only to share material that uses your voice - not other participants. The original full audio recording will only be accessed by the researcher and the yourself - other participants will not have access to this. However the creative output relies on weaving a continuous and flowing narrative from the interviews conducted, and meaning is highlighted through the dialogue they have with each other. The participant must be comfortable with the creative material (which is informed by their data) being shared among other participants before they have signed a final release form. By signing this form, you consent that you will not share any material shown to you until given confirmation from the researcher that all participants have signed a release form.

You should also be prepared that the creative material will be shared with the researcher's supervisor for continuous assessment - however, they will not be given any hard copies and therefore cannot share.

The information gathered will be identifiable. That means it will have your name directly on it. It may ask for the researcher to manipulate the sound of their voice so that it is not recognisable. The researcher will protect the information by storing it in a password-protected folder, remaining contact throughout the creative process.

The researcher intends to publish the results of this research. Please indicate below whether you accept to be identified in the publications:

[ ] I accept that my name and the information I provide appear in publications of the results of the research.

[ ] Please do not publish my name as part of the results of the research.

The original audio recordings will be permanently deleted five years after the end of the study. The interpreted material will remain archived through the researcher's creative work and documented in the master's thesis.

F. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

You do not have to participate in this research. It is purely your decision. If you do participate, you can stop at any time. You can also ask that the information you provided not be used, and your choice will be respected. If you decide that you don’t want us to use your information, you have up until three weeks after the interview has been conducted. The researcher will notify you two days before the deadline.

There are no negative consequences for not participating, stopping in the middle, or asking us not to use your information.

G. PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION

I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been answered. I agree to participate in this research under the conditions described.

NAME (please print)

_____

SIGNATURE

_____

DATE

_____

If you have questions about the scientific or scholarly aspects of this research, please contact the researcher. Their contact information is on page 1. You may also contact their faculty supervisor.

If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or oor.ethics@concordia.ca.

Appendix B

Transit Tales

Final Release Form:

This document contains my understanding and agreement with Avalon O'Henley with respect to my participation in the audio- and/or video-recorded interview conducted by Avalon O'Henley on _____.

Please check all that apply below.

_____I confirm that I have gone over all final creative material that uses my voice and (if applicable) video which is to be released to the public.

_____I confirm that the material is interpreted artistically in a way that I am comfortable and consent with.

_____I confirm that extracts are **not** communicated out of context or manipulated to distort their meaning but are interpreted in a way that I am comfortable and consent with.

_____I confirm that the creative material can be released online such as on the Design and Computation Arts 2023 graduate website, Instagram, the researcher's portfolio or media accounts like Vimeo, and other online platforms.

_____I confirm that the researcher may use interview transcriptions and findings in their final master's thesis which will be deposited online at Concordia's spectrum website.

OPTIONAL: I wish to place the following restrictions on the use of my contribution including interpreted material:

Signature:_____

Full name:_____

Date signed:_____

Appendix C

Interview guide (not the full document)

Easing in:

- Can you please introduce yourself, and let me know a little bit about yourself?
- How has your day been so far?
- How long have you been in Montreal for?
- What has your experience been of Montreal? Do you enjoy it?
- What are your expectations for this project - is there anything that you might want to get from the process?
- In line with the research are there any themes that are meaningful to you that you may want to expand on?

More centered:

- (If immigrant) How do you experience navigating Montreal every day in comparison to your hometown?

- Do feel your gender plays a role in how you experience navigating the city daily?

- Do you feel comfortable navigating the city daily? Are there any periods of time or specific situations where you feel more (or less) comfortable?

  [if unsure, they can be guided by suggestions: times of the year, seasons, times of the day, being around specific people, being in certain states of mind etc]

- What about site specific places- when navigating the city everyday are there particular sites over others that you feel more safe/comfortable? If so, why do you think? And how could this relate to times (the above question)?

- *Let's talk about your everyday/usual movements around the city.* What is a usual path that you might take when you leave home?

- How would you describe your experience navigating the city daily?

- Are there any spaces/memories/experiences on this route that stand out to you?

- Do you feel like you are conscious of your spatial practice-how you move through space?

- Think about the habits that we develop when we move through space every day, sometimes it can be conscious, other times not. Are there any habits in your spatial practice that you can think of

- Which Métro station is closest to you/ the one you frequent the most?

- How would you describe your experience navigating the Métro?

- How does this space, inside, outside around, in the waiting area, make you feel - are there certain times that feel more comfortable than others?

- Do you ever experience tensions when commuting on the Métro?

- What kind of strategies do you embody to handle these tensions if yes?

- Are there particular Métro stations that you feel more comfortable navigating?

- Less comfortable navigating?

- If you could describe your experience in the Métro with a couple of descriptive/ associative words, what would they be?

- If you could experience your daily spatial practice in an ideal way, what would it be? What would your ideal scenario be?

- How do you think your experience navigating the city and Métro is shaped by your gender?

- -is shaped by larger patriarchal structures?

- -is shaped by your positionality?

Appendix D
On headphones:

Participant K:
And I guess there is a bit of a unconscious or just maybe automatic check that I probably do and make making sure that…As I- because I often ride with my earbuds in just making sure that..
Everything around me is safe and and if I have a bit of a unsure kind of feeling about a person behind me or somebody around, I'll pause my music or turn my turn my music off, or take my air pods out.

Participant O:
But if it's later at night, I kind of always either have a book or my earphones in, like something to just not have to interact with the people around me not to have like those awkward moments, or like interactions that I don't want to. Deal with.

Participant M:
Even if I'm not listening to music, just put one. So that's.
A feeling that I hate.
That, yeah. Even, like often when I'm when I'm feeling like I'm actually in a very uncomfortable situation and I have my headphones in because I'm usually trying to. Just like block. Off that kind of experience, if I'm in an uncomfortable situation, I will turn the volume down so that. I can. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Be aware, yeah. Well, it's true, cause you know, we do it to not... Have to deal with potential danger, but it is one of the most dangerous things to do. Like your.. sense of sound being blocked is like the worst thing you could do, like it's all there to sort of help us survive as like animals. So yeah, I think about that too. Or you know, it's that like your, your sense of hearing is there to help, but. But like we, we literally try to dull it so we don't have to deal with potential danger. Question mark? But it's like better than…I don't know.
Sometimes you just… just really need to do.

Participant R:
I pretended to have earphones in, but actually my earphones was completely turned off because I wanted to make sure - that like.. to see…to hear if his footsteps are right behind me..

Participant M:

When walking around and - I have my headphones on…. like kind of for that reason just cause I'm like, I hope no one talks to me because like. I'm not making eye contact and I'm like listening to music.

And sometimes that's respected, sometimes it's not, though.

It's like a visual like….like an, an actual sort of like sign for people, like a signifier of just like I'm doing something else right now. Like I'm I'm literally not. I'm doing what I can to not listen to you. If you say something to me. You know, it's like. It's kind of like wearing sunglasses and like staring at the ground in a way, where you're like visual signifier is….What you're signifying is, like I'm not paying attention to you. Like, literally. I'm not like there's two. There's two like blocks that are happening just in case you weren't aware. So yeah, yeah, it's like a shelter. Sunglasses as well. Yeah, I can if I hear someone say, like, hey, I can just ignore them. What you were saying? Where? You just be like now listening to music didn't hear you. Yeah, yeah.

Participant O
So yeah, like, I'll always pack a book. I'll always pack my earphones with me so that I have, like, the choice of either or even if I'm not actually listening to anything I guess those are like my security blanket items.

Participant spoke of using headphones as a way to show the world around them that they are occupied with something, which makes them feel safer. Particularly when they feel like they are in a potential situation of vulnerability, they will put their earphones in so that they seem occupied but turn down their music. I find myself doing the same thing, but as Participant M questioned - why do we want to shut off our sense of sound - or appear to - when that helps

our situational awareness? Their reflexional answer holds truth - it perhaps acts as a visual signifier to others that as you are already engaged in something and you may not notice them in the case that they harass you, or cat-call you for instance. As Participant R recalled, she pretending to have her headphones on when in reality she was listening carefully to what was happening behind her. By pretending like you can't hear means that you can avoid confrontation and as such, a potentially harmful and vulnerable situation. You can take cross to the other side of the road, and it will make you feel like less of a threat to them because its *definitely* not got anything to do with the fact that they are breathing down your neck. At the same time, this puts us in a situation where we are consistently separating ourselves from the world around us, and the richness that sound can give and situate a person when walking through a city. Since these conversations I sometimes make a conscious effort to not have headphones in as a crutch in uncomfortable positions. I have noticed it has become a habit, as such I make time to afford myself a soundwalk of the city, paying attention to what sound has to bring to the space.

Appendix E
Métro carts:

Participant O:
Let's say with the change also the new Métros that, are not stopped - like per compartment that you could actually walk through from the beginning to the end, I actually prefer those than the ones that are uh just cart per cart. cause I feel like… even if you're around people that you don't want to be next to, you can move around eas- more easily. Whereas like with the old cards, you're kind of stuck… within like a certain like 15 feet of space, kind of, you know.

Participat F
I have traveled in Métro carts where they were practically empty and it was just like one other person-sometimes that time I get threatened. Especially in the blue line, where it's those older cars, I've always perceived those to be eerie and… they're like separated as well, so you can't like if you're in a situation, yeah there's no visibility to the next cart..

Two participants spoke of their preference for the new Métro trains, finding the containment of separate carts as uncomfortable. Should you be in a compromising position you cannot

simply move further down the train, you are restricted to the cart that you are in until the next stop. This echoes previous themes of accessibility and feeling somewhat trapped and on edge. This too is echoed in the next section.

Appendix F
On darkness and driving
Participant H:

When I walk home..
From whereever *here*
I'm *very tense for the last leg because its dar**k***
And the blocks around my neighbourhood-
And,
I live sort of in an industrial area where there's a pocket of housing
And a bunch of *warehouses around us*
And so,
like
iiiiiiiii

have normalised
that…
tension in my body
that I have to come in and *unwind*

from that **hypervigilance** and like looking over my *shoulder* and,

you know-
getting.into this aggressive *body posture* to, like, let people *know* that I'm not an easy *target*
and, you know, so all of that
(yeah..)

Participant O

The like,
The one that I keep thinking of is thee uh-

um …

I'm not sure if
- I can't remember cause it's been so long
but I'm not sure if it falls under the *Jean Talon Métro station* or the Saint-Michelle, but whichever one is like the *end of the line*

**(mmmmmm)*

which is like- street wise, it's at the corner of Saint Michelle….
bet*weeeen* the hhhhighway and Jean Talon?
I always **hated** that Métro station and I used to have to go to it when I was at Universite de *Montreal*,
so I would always have to go there every morning
and
finish my day there*, basically*
and i…

did it for the first two years of my *degree*
Then on the last year, I decided I was just like *fed up* with dealing
with the people in that area
So I just
ended up driving for the last year…

like I made the choice TO drive even though it was like

longer
and it was more complicated to get there

um…

and I never liked that one,

It was just *very* dark
and like
it's
so far under*ground*
that you're kind of just like spiraling, spiraling to *get* down and I guess it was just..

not comfortable…
doing that by myself…

Participant H:
At the same time like,
Those platforms *are buried really deep*

Participant H:
Because of *my*…....
feeling about transit being vulnerable,
I have switched to using a car share
(which runs off of an app)
and I'm in the middle-
I-I'm really busy these days, but- I'm the middle
of… uh
of writing a feed*back*

letter to the company because I can *tell* that the car share apps *designed by men*,
because there's *so many safety*
….**concerns** for women using the car share system,
and I've just been like- you, you know, you've never thought about this
the way I have- *clearly.*
like you're not
in this position
to *worry* about these things and you can see it through the design of the car share.

Both participants speak of their experiences of switching to cars instead of public transport after experiences of vulnerability. They speak of the depth of the Métro, its accessibility and how that makes them feel - like their perceptive was not considered, when such spaces were designed. They also felt more nervous in the dark when on their own - all this has affected the way they move through public space. Participant H acknowledged that after trying to move towards what they considered was as safer option, had to also criticise the accessibility and safety issues in the car share apps they have used. There is a sense of limitation and inhibiting mobility reflected in these narratives - almost suffocation or disorientation in their descriptions - “spiraling spiraling down”, “buried really deep down”. As Participant O admitted - taking a car was longer and more complicated but she at least had what she considered was her comfort of safety by driving herself. From this section of narrative, you can see how themes are so intertwined that it is hard to separate them - for instance themes of hyper vigilance and body posture which connect to many other narratives - this section of participant H’s audio was used in the film along with others that spoke of being hyperaware of themselves and surroundings.

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