

No Quiet Revolution:
Studies in the Sonic History of Montréal, 1965-1975

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Abstract:

Listening for sound and noise in Montréal during the late 1960s and early 1970s, this dissertation adds a sonic perspective to historical understanding of the later years of Québec's "Quiet Revolution." Guided by aurality rather than visuality, and arguing implicitly for the inclusion of sound in historical methodology, this project puts noise and silence – both literal and figurative – at the centre of the question: What does it mean to call the great transformation of Québec from 1965 to 1975 a "*Quiet Revolution*"?

Exploring the auditory atmosphere of what was a cacophonous and dissonant decade, this thesis analyses Montréal's urban soundscape, music, language, and acts of silencing. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, the work is informed by theories culled from existing works on sense history, sound studies, and Québec and Canadian historiography. Via the practice of "agile listening," the dissertation seeks to re-create a sense of Montréal's sonic environment between 1965 and 1975.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	vi
List of Figures	vii
Abbreviations	viii
Chapter 1	
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2	
“A Symphony of Progress”: Montréal’s Changing Urban Soundscape.....	60
Chapter 3	
The Ubiquitous Soundtrack: Music and “The Sixties”	116
Chapter 4	
Discordant Tongues: Voice and Language in Montréal.....	180
Chapter 5	
Silent Majorities and the Peaceable Kingdom: Silencing Montréal’s Not-So-Quiet Revolution.....	229
Chapter 6	
Sound/Silence, Québec/Kébek.....	315
Chapter 7	
Conclusion.....	332
Bibliography.....	341

List of Figures

Figure 1:	“Un monde de silence”: advertisement.....	84
Figure 2:	“Noise abatement”: editorial cartoon.....	93
Figure 3:	A binary model of 1960s Québécois popular music.....	121
Figure 4:	“Nègle Dlade D’Amé-Rique”: image.....	161
Figures 5 & 6:	Students at l’Université de Montréal’s language lab: photographs.....	206
Figure 7:	“When adults don’t know the answer they just yell louder”: editorial cartoon.....	226

Abbreviations

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BNA	British North America Act
BOAC	British Overseas Air Carrier
CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CCLA	Canadian Civil Liberties Association
CDDP	Comité pour la défense des droits démocratiques du peuple
CEGEP	Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel
CEQ	Corporation des enseignants du Québec
CN	Canadian National
CPR	Canadian Pacific Railway
CRTC	Canadian Radio-television and Communications Commission
CSN	Confédération des syndicats nationaux
CYC	Company of Young Canadians
FFQ	Fédération des femmes du Québec
FLF	Front de libération des femmes
FLQ	Front de libération du Québec
FRAP	Front d'action politique
FTQ	Fédération des travailleurs du Québec
LIS	Ligue pour l'intégration scolaire
MLQ	Mouvement de libération du Québec
MP	Member of Parliament
MSO	Montréal Symphony Orchestra
NATO	North American Treaty Organization
NDP	New Democratic Party
NFB	National Film Board of Canada
ONF	Office national du film du Canada
PQ	Parti Québécois
QJLQ	Quatuor de Jazz Libre du Québec
QPP	Quebec Provincial Police
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
RIN	Rassemblement pour l'indépendance nationale
SDS	Students for a Democratic Society
SQ	Sureté de Québec
SST	Super Sonic Transport
STOP	Society To Overcome Pollution
SUPA	Student Union for Peace Action
UQAM	Université du Québec à Montréal
VOW	Voice of Women
WMA	War Measures Act

Chapter 1

Introduction

In this study of Montréal in an era of transformation, from 1965 to 1975, I seek to achieve a new understanding of Québec's largest city in a crucial moment of its history. I also seek to demonstrate the possibilities of a new approach to the understanding of the past – one particularly attuned to an appreciation and critical analysis of changing patterns of sound in the city. In focusing on the aural rather than the visual, this study situates itself within a new trajectory in historical studies, one that has acquired stature throughout much of the western world but which has been slow to develop in Canada – the history of the senses.

With the exception of music history, historians of Canada and Québec have only just begun to explore sound in history. However, Canadians outside the discipline of history have pioneered two relatively young fields of inquiry: sensory history and sound studies. Drawing from these fields, this work reflects the premise that the ascendant power of visuality in modern Western culture, epitomized by academic obsessions with “the gaze,” is part of a hierarchy of the senses according to which the eye has unfortunately eclipsed the ear as our primary mode of knowing and understanding the world. We are less inclined to believe our ears than our eyes, it seems. Discussing what she calls our “eye-mindedness,” Constance Classen has argued that “...by focusing all our attention on visual symbolism we remain ignorant

of the symbolic functions of the other senses.”¹ Leigh Eric Schmidt goes further, arguing that our modern society is “distinctly ocular centric, even hypervisual.”² The result is a general social hearing loss – that is, a loss of openness to and recognition of the sonic dimension of human experience. Les Back’s *Art of Listening*, which calls for a renewed practice of sociology based on sound and hearing, warns that “[o]ur culture is one that speaks rather than listens.” He argues that “[l]istening to the world is not an automatic faculty but a skill that needs to be trained.”³ Back cites philosopher Theodor Adorno when he argues that “a ‘regression in listening’ ha[s] resulted in a kind of ‘masochism in hearing’. We become deaf not just to each other but also to the sounds all around us.”⁴ In *Sensing the Past*, Mark M. Smith argues that *all* of the senses were central to the elaboration of modernity, and that therefore hearing and sound were key to the unfolding of the contemporary world.⁵ And as Back points out, many nineteenth- and twentieth-century observers “have characterized modernity as an experience of distraction,” “scattered perceptions and fragmented experience.”⁶

This thesis uses an analysis of changing soundscapes to explore one city’s decade-long experience of “modernity.” This is, of course, a strenuously contested term, and in order to put it to useful work, I must first indicate what I mean by it.

¹ Constance Classen, *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and Across Cultures* (London: Routledge, 1993): 6-7.

² Leigh Eric Schmidt, “Hearing Loss” in Bull & Back eds., *The Auditory Culture Reader* (Oxford: Berg, 2003): 43-8. This essay was reprinted from his book *Hearing Things. Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2000).

³ Les Back, *The Art of Listening* (Oxford: Berg, 2007): 7.

⁴ Adorno quoted in Back: 7.

⁵ Mark M. Smith, *Sensing the Past: Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting and Touching in History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007): 2, 58.

⁶ Back: 7.

The term “modernity” has simultaneously repulsed and captivated historians. It has repulsed them because, as a one-word summation of vast and infinitely complex phenomena, it issues a standing invitation to over-simplification. Yet it has also suggested that beyond a strategy of merely reproducing and acquiescing to the sensory chaos of contemporary life, one can begin to think through an interpretive framework within which that chaos might be at least partially understood. As used in this thesis, “modernity” refers to ways of interpreting and responding to the social order that incorporate five leading features. There is, first, capitalism and its necessary correlate of commodity fetishism: what drives the experience of modernity is, in large measure, the logic of capital, as individuals and societies come more and more to answer to the expectations and move to the rhythms of capital accumulation, placing more and more aspects of life into play as exchangeable commodities. The flip side of this is resistance to this process of commodification, as part of an oppositional cultural politics that nonetheless is shaped by the very process to which it offers resistance. Second, there is alienation and reflexivity. This refers to a widespread sense of being caught up in social and natural processes over which individuals exert little control and can achieve but a limited understanding. As social and cultural relations are “disembedded” from the contexts in which they originally arose, and often “re-embedded” in very different contexts, they take on a character that is simultaneously “strange” and calls out for systematic inquiry – for the self-reflective capacity to situate oneself in time and space and effect change (through such forces as money, science, publications, broadcasts or theatrical performances). Third, modernity in my understanding suggests the annihilation of

space by time (in Marx's expression): or, one might say, the radical transformation of perceptions of time and space, so that places once distant seem proximate, times once long-past seem contemporary, and hierarchies once thought perpetual come to be seen as contingent and changeable. Fourth, and relatedly, modernity in my usage suggests a future-oriented acceptance that these transformed conditions have come to stay – which is not the same thing as an acquiescence in all of their effects. Modernity implies a stance towards time that places an emphasis upon the future. One develops a new future-oriented sense of history and a commitment to scanning the present to discern the outlines of tomorrow's realities. Perceptions of the past and present take the form of a 'suspension of belief' in the permanence and goodness of the given conditions within which one finds oneself. And finally, modernity entails an acceptance of the necessity of a cultural revolution, working to transform rather than to reverse the processes of unceasing change in social and individual life. It entails new concepts of freedom, ones fully aligned with the transformed space-time relations characteristic of contemporary times. It is this five-fold complexity – new forms of capitalism, reflexivity and alienation, transformed spatio-temporal relations, a future-oriented stance towards the past, and cultural revolution – that I hope to capture with the single phrase "modernity," a term that describes an era and gestures towards, though it does not fully accomplish, the exploration of its constitutive features.⁷

⁷ For the intellectual underpinnings of this position, see Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1989); *Intimations of Postmodernity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); *Liquid Modernity* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2000); Peter Beilharz, ed., *The Bauman Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001); Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990); Marshall Berman, *All That is Sold Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982); David Harvey, *Justice, Nature*

Returning then to Back and his observation that modernity has been characterized as a highly sensory “experience of distraction,” and “scattered perceptions and fragmented experience,”⁸ one must ask, if this is the sensory experience of modernity, how did humans “make sense” other periods of time and history? Discussions about the sensory dimensions of knowledge have been with us from the ancients to Karl Marx to Marshall McLuhan. Much of the discussion has centred around hierarchy and the ascendance of visuality, with many scholars drawn to the thesis that the advent of printing and the Enlightenment devalued other senses as it elevated visuality. Marshall McLuhan and Walter Ong, for example, point to the Gutenberg Bible and the printing press as western civilization’s transition point from aural tradition (spoken word) towards the visual (printed word).⁹ Yet Ong was troubled by the premise of a hierarchy of the senses and not fully persuaded that modernity had permanently jettisoned visuality’s lesser

and the Geography of Difference (Malden, Mass. and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996); *The Urban Experience* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006); Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Karl Marx, *Outline of the Critique of Political Economy* (The Grundrisse), in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol.28 (New York: International Publishers, 1986); Göran Therborn, *European Modernity and Beyond: The Trajectory of European Societies, 1945-2000* (London: Sage, 1995). For empirical work in the Canadian setting that makes use of concepts of modernity, see Ian McKay, ed., *The Challenge of Modernity: A Reader on Twentieth-Century Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1992); Ian McKay and Robin Bates, *In The Province of History: The Making of the Public Past in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010); Jarrett Rudy, *The Freedom to Smoke: Tobacco Consumption and Identity* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005); Suzanne Morton, *At Odds: Gambling and Canadians 1919-1969* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003); John Varty, “On Bread, Prairie Wheat, and Good Bread: Rationalizing Technologies and the Canadian State, 1912-1935,” *Canadian Historical Review* 85,4 (December 2004): 721-53; Keith Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

⁸ Back, *Art of Listening*: 7.

⁹ See: Schmidt, “Hearing Loss”; Joy Parr, “Notes for a More Sensuous History of Twentieth Century Canada: the timely, the tacit and the material body,” *Canadian Historical Review* Vol. 82 no. 4 (December 2001): 720-745; also Don Ihde, “The Auditory Dimension,” in Jonathan Sterne, ed. *The Sound Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2012): 23-28.

cousins to a perpetual periphery. As was Joachim-Ernst Berendt, who argued that human experience could only be fully understood through a “democracy of the senses.”¹⁰ Leigh Eric Schmidt has commented on these debates, concluding that given the total sensory experience that is modernity, it is essential that the auditory, whatever its position vis-à-vis the other senses, be considered “a prerequisite for a more intricate historical narrative.”¹¹ As Smith observes, “The print revolution, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, all enthusiastically promoted the power of the eye, but hearing seemed to hold its own, with no discernible dilution of its social and intellectual importance. In fact, hearing, sound, and aurality generally were critical in many ways to the unfolding of modernity and to downplay its importance only deafens us to the meaning and trajectory of key developments of the post-Enlightenment era.”¹²

It is curious that most historians of Canada have hitherto failed to engage with sound as a part of their methodological practice. Of the few aural historians working in Canada, most of them are pursuing non-Canadian topics.¹³ That said, three important scholars in the Canadian context are social scientists Constance Classen and David Howes,¹⁴ whose work on the human sensorium argues for the

¹⁰ Joachim-Ernst Berendt, quoted in Michael Bull & Les Back, *The Auditory Culture Reader* (Oxford, Berg: 2003): 2.

¹¹ Schmidt, 42.

¹² Smith, *Sensing the Past*, 58.

¹³ See, for example: A. Blake, “Audible Citizenship and Audiomobility: Race, Technology and CB Radio,” *American Quarterly* Vol. 63 no. 3 (2011) and A. Blake “An Audible Sense of Order: Race, Fear, and CB Radio on Los Angeles Freeways in the 1970s,” in David Suisman & Susan Strasser, eds. *Sound in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

¹⁴ Classen is a founding member of the Centre for Sensory Studies at Concordia University in Montréal. Her publications include: David Howes and Constance Classen, *Ways of Sensing: Understanding the Senses in Society* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Constance Classen, *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch* (University of Illinois Press, 2012); Constance Classen, David Howes, and Anthony Synnott, *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell* (New York: Routledge, 1994);

inclusion of noise, smell, touch, and taste in historical scholarship; and historian Joy Parr, who had the foresight, in 1997, to suggest that Canadian historians “go ‘looking’ for the modes of the senses as they are expressed in cultural codes, to consider the sensorium as it is historically derived and at work.”¹⁵ For Classen and Parr, human experience is materially embodied in our flesh-and-blood selves, and our senses are the interface through which we experience the world. As Pierre Bourdieu has argued, we are deeply conditioned by the sensory *habitus* we inhabit, and, as Parr has demonstrated in *Sensing Changes* – a study of everyday embodiment and the traumatic changes wrought by construction megaprojects – we are also deeply affected by changes in our sensory input patterns.¹⁶

Examining how the town of Iroquois coped with the trauma of losing its river and being relocated to make way for construction of the St. Lawrence seaway, Parr demonstrates how residents’ frequent analogies to physical injury represent their best way of verbally making sense of experiences that may be beyond language. Reaching towards “a sensuous history,” she acknowledges that “We can only go part of the way,” because felt changes can only be described through metaphor and allusion.¹⁷ Turning away from the linguistic turn, Parr reminds readers that, despite excellent literature on the discursive body, human beings inhabit material bodies too – bodies that interface with the world through their senses. Historical events (as

Constance Classen, “Museum Manners: The Sensory Life of the Early Museum,” *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 40, no. 4 (Summer 2007): 895-914; and Constance Classen, “Foundations for an anthropology of the senses,” *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. 49, no. 153 (September 1997): 401-412.

¹⁵ Joy Parr, “Notes for a More Sensuous History...”. See also Joy Parr, *Sensing Changes: Technologies, Environments, and the Everyday, 1953-2003* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010).

¹⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984); Parr, *Sensing Changes*.

¹⁷ Parr, “Notes for a More Sensuous History...”: 726.

with the everyday) are therefore “whole body encounters, heard, savoured, touched and enacted, even though in our ocular-centric culture these aspects, more elusive to the gaze, are less readily susceptible to intellectual representation.” “A historical body in a time dominated by the eye sees but does not feel, loses touch with other sensuous resonances and, by oversight, marginalizes them,” Parr cautions.¹⁸ “Daily we learn through our senses,” Parr writes. “This visceral knowledge, which we carry corporally, often wordlessly, marks us as of our time, as much as do the values and chronicles we carry in language.”¹⁹ Although she is primarily interested in other senses, Parr notes that the practice of sound studies “wills us to hear the drones of modernity more than to silence them by regulation, spatial separation, or cultural callouses” – in other words, to attend to sounds we have learned *not* to hear.

Myriad intellectuals have wrestled with how to incorporate sounds and noises into the vast catalogue of human knowledge.²⁰ Availing itself of the practices of the history of the senses and sound-studies, the present work aims to add an analysis of modernity and Montréal’s “Quiet Revolution” to the growing literature on sound and history. Through demonstrating the value of *listening* to history rather than simply reading or looking at it, I hope to make a convincing argument for the inclusion of aurality and sound-studies as valuable tools in the historian’s toolbox. Inspired by Joy Parr’s description of bodies overcome by forces of modernity which

¹⁸ *Ibid.*: 734, 736.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*: 720.

²⁰ For a good summary of how the senses have been dealt with by various intellectuals, see Anthony Synnott, “Puzzling over the Senses: From Plato to Marx,” in David Howes, ed., *Varieties of Sensory Experience: A Sourcebook in the Anthropology of the Senses* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991): 61-76.

“radically intervene to disorder the local sensory order,”²¹ this thesis uses metaphors of noise and silence to get at a local sense of social disorder. Finally, as with Karim Larose’s linguistic history of Quebec, which aims to introduce “des lignes de désincorporation dans le corps de la théorie en aménageant autrement les concepts et les objets à l’étude,”²² my study similarly wishes to complicate the existing body of work on Québec’s “Quiet Revolution,” through the introduction of new sensory input – i.e. sound.

Michael Bull and Les Back point out that “the world presents itself when we listen to rather than look upon it” and they call for scholars to investigate “sound as a modality of knowing and being in the world.”²³ What is needed is an “agile listening [which] involves attuning our ears to listen again to the multiple layers of meaning potentially embedded in the same sound.”²⁴ Sense history is an important field for scholars of the sonic, but more recently, a new practice dubbed sound studies has emerged. In his *Sound Studies Reader*, editor Jonathan Sterne defines sound studies as “the interdisciplinary ferment in the human sciences that takes sound as its analytical point of departure or arrival. By analyzing both sonic practices and the discourses and institutions that describe them, it redescribes what sound does in the human world, and what humans do in the sonic world.”²⁵

Since the 1960s a wide variety of historians have begun incorporating the sonic into their historical practice, producing works that range from histories of

²¹ Parr, “Notes for a More Sensuous History...”: 728.

²² Karim Larose, *La langue de papier: Spéculations linguistiques au Québec 1957-1977* (Montréal: Presses de l’Université de Montréal, 2004): 9.

²³ Michael Bull and Les Back “Introduction: Into Sound,” *The Auditory Culture Reader* (Oxford: Berg, 2006): 1-18.

²⁴ *Ibid.*: 3-4.

²⁵ Sterne, *The Sound Studies Reader*: 2.

recording technologies and sound reproduction, to medical histories of hearing and deafness, acoustic archaeology, temporal acoustics, histories of sound and noise in the arts, sound and the human body, sound and religious belief, noise abatement and regulation, sound and noise in warfare, acoustic ethnology and anthropology, and of course the history of music. And this list is by no means exhaustive. Debates have touched upon many issues, including the difficulties of writing about sound, the challenge of understanding how senses were constituted in the distant past, and methodological questions about how best to construct historical narratives around aural evidence. The range is diverse, the quality of scholarship varies, and the field is, and perhaps always will be, a contested one. For example, historians of sound and “sound students” (as Sterne dubs the practitioners of sound studies)²⁶ come primarily from Europe and North America – meaning that non-western sounds are woefully under-represented in the existing scholarship. And while work on sound and race, and sound and class, is advancing, aural analyses of gender are less common.

Constance Classen and Joy Parr have been rare Canadians in terms of the incorporation of sound into their work (with the important exception of historians of music), despite the fact that Canadians have been at the forefront of sound studies from the very beginning. Indeed, the scholarly practice of sound studies has its origins here: composer, researcher and writer R. Murray Schafer started his career as an avant-garde composer in Montréal before relocating to British Columbia in the early 1970s, where he and Barry Truax helped establish the world’s first

²⁶ *Ibid.*: 3

department of sound studies at Simon Fraser University. Together they started the World Soundscape Project, dedicated to recording and cataloguing acoustic environments throughout the globe. In 1973 their group of researchers went on an extended field-recording tour of Canada, and in 1974 the CBC radio programme “Ideas” aired “Soundscapes of Canada”, ten episodes “based on the sounds of the Canadian acoustic environment.”²⁷ The radio programme was designed to make Canadians more aware of their sonic surroundings, and so take a more active interest in issues such as noise pollution. It taught listeners terms such as “keynote” and “soundmark” to help them better identify elements of their acoustic environments. The programme encouraged, to use Bull and Back’s phrase, the development of “agile listening” amongst Canadians. Many of the terms introduced in the programme were further elaborated in Schafer’s 1977 *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*.²⁸ “For some time,” Schafer wrote, “I have...believed that the general acoustic environment of a society can be read as an indicator of social conditions which produce it and may tell us much about the trending and evolution of that society.”²⁹ The book has become a cornerstone text in the field of sound studies, as it presents an introduction to concepts and terminology designed to facilitate perception and analysis of the sonic environment.

The central concept of Schafer’s book, as the title suggests, is that of the *soundscape*, defined as “the sonic environment.” A soundscape can refer to actual

²⁷ “Soundscapes of Canada” *The World Soundscapes Project* <http://www.sfu.ca/~truax/canada.html> (last accessed 27 July 2014); R. Murray Schafer, *Soundscapes of Canada* Vol. 1-10 (CBC, 1974).

²⁸ R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1994 [1977]).

²⁹ *Ibid.*: 7.

physical environments as well as to “abstract constructions such as musical compositions and tape montages...”³⁰ – and my work adheres to both definitions. More recently, the editors of *Sonic Experience: A Guide to Everyday Sounds* (2005) have defined Schafer’s term more clearly, arguing that “...the term soundscape does not simply refer to a ‘sound environment’; more specifically, it refers to what is perceptible as an aesthetic unit in a sound milieu.”³¹

Another concept central to sound studies and to this dissertation is the idea of the *keynote*. Drawn from music theory, a keynote is “the note that identifies the key or tonality of a particular composition. It is the anchor or fundamental tone and although the material may modulate around it, often obscuring its importance, it is in reference to this point that everything else takes on its special meaning.”³² Keynote sounds of the distant past were primarily natural: the sound of wind or water, for example. But as human society has changed over the centuries, so too have the keynotes of our sonic environment. From the church bell to the railroad to the steady roar of traffic, keynotes are sounds that are always there, and often work to regulate aspects of our daily lives. We often do not hear our soundscapes’ keynotes consciously – and because we are not completely aware of hearing them, the ubiquity of keynotes “suggests the possibility of a deep and pervasive influence on our behaviour and moods. The keynote sounds of a given place are important

³⁰ *Ibid.*: 274-5.

³¹ Jean-François Augoyard and Henry Torgue, eds. *Sonic Experience: A Guide to Everyday Sounds* (Montréal/Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005): 6-7. This definition jives neatly with Schafer’s own qualification that “A soundscape consists of events *heard* not objects *seen*.” Schafer, *The Soundscape*, 8.

³² Schafer, *The Soundscape*: 9.

because they help to outline the character of [people] living among them.”³³ More recently, Joy Parr has provided a definition of keynote contextualized specifically for historians: “Historical bodies live in the presence of keynotes, the tonalities of their place and their time created by climate, geography, and changing technology. They are part of the ambiance of a place-time... often only subconsciously apprehended.” Keynotes are “identifiers, pleasures, comforts, constraints and frustrations, makers of the historical bodies we watch.”³⁴

Aside from ‘soundscape’ and ‘keynote’, references are made throughout this thesis to sound and noise, as well as to the audible and the sonic. It is important to distinguish the differences between such terms, despite their common reference to “things heard.” Generally speaking, our culture determines what is considered a “sound” and what is a “noise”. As Jonathan Sterne has acknowledged, “there is no knowledge of sound that comes from outside culture.”³⁵ That said, defining what is or is not a “sound” is a complicated task. Not all sounds are audible. This means that sound can be defined as “a vibration of a certain frequency in a material medium,” registered either by the human ear or by “sensing” technologies calibrated for finer reception than the capacity of human hearing.³⁶ For the purpose of this thesis, “sound” is something audible, registered by human ears. Of course for something to be “audible,” conditions must be present for something “to become recognized, labelled and valorized as audible in the first place.”³⁷

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Parr, “Notes for a more sensuous history...”: 736-737.

³⁵ Sterne, *The Sound Studies Reader*: 6.

³⁶ Michele Friedner and Stefan Helmreich, quoted in Sterne, *The Sound Studies Reader*: 7.

³⁷ Veit Erlmann, quoted in Sterne, *The Sound Studies Reader*: 8.

Regarding “noise”: while both “sound” and “noise” are identifiable as audible elements of a larger sound milieu, “sound” tends, in general usage, to be neutral while “noise” often carries a negative connotation. When we hear something we dislike, we demand: “What is that noise?” As Schafer put it, “Noises are the sounds we have learned to ignore.”³⁸ For Jacques Attali, whose interest lay in noise and political economy, “[w]ith noise is born disorder...”: “In noise can be read the codes of life, the relations among men. Clamor, Melody, Dissonance, Harmony.”³⁹ From the standpoint of communications technologies, moreover, “noise” is something unwanted, something – such as static or feedback – that interrupts a signal. This dissertation therefore defines noise in two ways: first as an audible element of the soundscape that is considered undesirable, and second, borrowing from Attali, as a form of socio-political disorder, i.e. clamour or dissonance.

Borrowing then from Schafer, as well as Attali – who argued that “any theory of power today must include a theory of the localization of noise and its endowment with form”⁴⁰ – this dissertation explores the relationship between noise and power. Until fairly recently in human history, loud noises were always associated with the otherworldly power of deities. Thunder was produced by the gods, whereas “God’s presence was first announced as a mighty vibration of cosmic sound.”⁴¹ The basics behind “sacred noise,” as Schafer dubbed it, were simple: noise (i.e. “any big sound”) = power. The most regular loud sounds heard in the medieval village were those of the church-bell – signalling the rule of the Divine within society, and the

³⁸ Quoted in Sterne, *The Sound Studies Reader*: 95.

³⁹ Jacques Attali, “Noise: the Political Economy of Music,” in Sterne, *The Sound Studies Reader*: 31-32.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*: 32.

⁴¹ Schafer, *The Soundscape*: 27-8.

institutional power of the Church.⁴² The church-bell continues to figure in Montréal's soundscape, despite the fact that by the 1960s the Catholic Church had lost much of its power in Québec, yet it is apparent to many Montrealers that the bell no longer provides the industrial city's keynote. Shifts in Montréal's soundscape occurred gradually, and in place of the church-bell and the church organ came the steady noises of the machine age: the clamorous din of the factory and the railroad, the roar and screech of automobiles and airplanes. These noises of the urban soundscape are, as per Schafer and Parr, "low-fi." They create "a technologically suffused acoustic space" wherein "[d]omestic, industrial and transportation technologies create dulling drones, the unlovely peril of the small electrical motor and the internal combustion engine, what Schafer calls the 'muscle sounds' of modern life."⁴³

Noise has also always been closely associated with violence, presenting yet another facet of the relationship between noise and power. From battle-cries to the clashing of metal, from drumming to gunpowder to the atomic bomb, noise has always found a role in military strategy, often designed to frighten and overwhelm the enemy.⁴⁴ The sound of boots marching in unison, the "thwak! thwak!" of batons on shields, the sudden "ka-boom!" and echo of an explosion, the loud staccato of gunfire – all of these sounds of power were heard in Montréal during the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, the explosions of FLQ bombs (over 200 between 1963 and 1970)

⁴² See Alain Corbin, *Village Bells: Sound and Meaning in the 19th-century French Countryside* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

⁴³ Parr, "Notes for a More Sensuous History...": 738-9.

⁴⁴ See Steve Goodman, *Sonic Warfare: sound, affect, and the ecology of fear* (Cambridge, Mass.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2010); and Joe Zadeh "A history of using sound as a weapon" *Motherboard* <http://motherboard.vice.com/read/a-history-of-using-sound-as-a-weapon> (last accessed 4 Aug. 2014).

were a frequent part of Montréal's soundscape – and were, for many frightened citizens, perhaps the most important soundmarks of the era.

Loud noises often constitute deliberate strategies designed to evoke fear or respect, to disorient an opponent by disrupting the habitual soundscape through an act of *acoustic imperialism*. What I mean by this term is the deliberate use of loud noise to dominate public space. A recent example: at the G20 event in Toronto during the summer of 2010 police considered using a sound cannon to temporarily deafen and disperse protesters, a controversial decision given this weapon's use against protesters in Pittsburgh one year earlier.⁴⁵

One might, conversely, also note the tens of thousands of Montrealers who participated in the 'casserole' marches of 2012's 'Printemps d'érable'. In this case, citizens created a "tintamarre" by banging on pots and pans, not just in the streets but from balconies and windows too, creating a great din and signalling to the Québec government that there was also power and presence in the street. These casserole marches have a historical precedent in the tradition of charivari or "rough music", especially in Québec. This over 700-year-old tradition entailed a practice used to enforce standards of social morality. It was often concerned with the regulation of heterosexuality. If an older man married a much younger woman, or a woman was caught having an extra-marital affair, a charivari might well ensue. Groups of disguised men would surround the person's home and create a racket by

⁴⁵ See: Jill Mahoney, "Police can use sound cannons, but with limits: Judge" *The Globe and Mail* (25 June 2010) at <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/g8-g20/police-can-use-sound-cannons-but-with-limits-judge/article1617752/> (last accessed 27 June 2010); and Joe Mandak, "Bystander sues Pittsburgh over sonic device at G-20" *Business Week* 21 Sept. 2011, at <http://www.businessweek.com/ap/financialnews/D9PT3KRO0.htm> (last accessed 23 Sept. 2011).

banging pots and pans, the noise acting as a kind of shaming ritual. In Québec this tradition had an added political angle, most notably in the use of charivari during the *Patriot* rebellion of 1837-8, when locals created a “tintamarre” in order to express discontent with British colonial officers.⁴⁶

Perhaps predictably, in the escalation of police confrontation in the time since the student strikes of the ‘Printemps d’érable,’ Montréal municipal police have decided to fight noise with noise, adding sound-cannons to their anti-riot arsenal.⁴⁷ The state thus has the option to use militarized sound against its citizens – and not just any sound: a hyper-modern high-frequency pulse, specifically designed to reach the threshold between hearing and pain, to drown out dissenting voices, and to dominate public space in an act of acoustic imperialism.

“The association of noise and power has never really been broken in the human imagination,” wrote Schafer. “It descends from God, to the priest, to the industrialist, and more recently to the broadcaster and the aviator. The important thing to realize is this: to have the Sacred Noise is not merely to make the biggest noise; rather it is a matter of having the authority to make it without censure.” Indeed, he argues further: “Wherever Noise is granted immunity from human intervention, there will be found a seat of power.”⁴⁸ This is a crucial aspect of Schafer’s argument. It is not just anybody who can make noise. Ordinary citizens are not entirely at liberty to make loud noise – hence the existence of city noise

⁴⁶ See Jonathan Sterne and Natalie Zemon Davis, “Québec’s manifs casseroles are a call for order” *Globe and Mail*, 31 May 2012 at <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/quebecs-manifs-casseroles-are-a-call-for-order/article4217621/> (last accessed 12 Aug. 2014).

⁴⁷ “La police de Montréal se dote de canons à son” *LaPresse online* 24 May 2014. <http://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/montreal/201405/22/01-4768807-la-police-de-montreal-se-dote-de-canons-a-son.php> (last accessed 24 June 2014).

⁴⁸ Schafer: 76.

ordinances and bylaws giving authorities prerogative to silence. And when a historian discovers that people are nonetheless taking this noise-making power into their own hands (or mouths), making themselves an aural power unto themselves, he or she is in the presence of a significant social change. This is the position of a historian of Montréal, who is obliged to notice how often and how strenuously the city's residents contested the terms of the soundscape they inhabited.

The association between silence and submission is deeply entrenched in North American culture. Mark M. Smith, in an article about the “heard worlds” of Antebellum America, discusses some of the ways the loudness or quietness of society was perceived by both the industrialising North and the slave-holding South.⁴⁹ To citizens in the North, the loudness of the factories signified the power of their modernity, while the boisterous volume of the crowd signified the vibrant health of their new democracy. In the South, things were different. Here, it seems, silence was valued by plantation owners as a symbol of their control over the plantation – and thus of the slaves' submission. Historically it was not only slaves who were expected to hold their tongues. Society in general is full of aphorisms reminding us that “silence is golden.” Take for example the old saying that “children are to be seen but not heard.” Youth are supposed to defer to their elders. For centuries women were expected to be mindful of their tongues, letting their husbands, fathers, or brothers speak for them. In analysing how the perception of

⁴⁹ Mark M. Smith, “Listening to the Heard Worlds of Antebellum America” in Michael Bull & Les Back, eds. *The Auditory Culture Reader* (Oxford: Berg, 2003): 137-163. See also: Mark M. Smith, *Listening to Nineteenth-Century America* (University of North Carolina Press, 2003); *Hearing History: A Reader* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004); and *Sensing the Past*. For more on early American soundways, see also Richard Cullen Rath, *How Early America Sounded* (Cornell University Press, 2003) and Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion and the American Enlightenment*. (Harvard University Press, 2000).

'noise' was shaped by both race *and* gender, Smith points out how the woman who fulfilled the expectations of her gender was considered a proper woman "not least because she was quiet and submissive."⁵⁰

While children, women, and slaves learned that "a still tongue makes a happy life," this adage has also been adopted in the name of national security. During the Second World War, posters warned that "loose lips sink ships," "careless talk costs lives," "the walls have ears," and that "enemy agents may be listening."⁵¹ Concerns about national security often result in the repression of dissenting voices. Canada's past contains a plethora of shameful examples of deterring, detaining, and deporting individuals who dared to voice "disharmonious" opinions or concerns.⁵² The silencing of Canada's First Nations' voices, in particular, and people of colour in general, has been one of the most enduring results of Canada's imposition of liberal order. David Austin, for example, has written about how traditional historical narratives of power silence minorities – particularly Blacks. Taking historians and politicians to task for perpetuating these silences within the historical record – and with specific reference to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who has even denied that Canada has a history of colonialism – Austin writes: "The myth of a non-racialized society without a history of colonialism presents Canada as good, innocent and peaceful while, in both Quebec and the rest of the country, condemning to the

⁵⁰ Smith, "Listening to the Heard Worlds of Antebellum America": 140.

⁵¹For discussion, see Susan Briggs, *The Home Front: War Years in Britain, 1939-1945* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1975): 91.

⁵² For discussions of these patterns, see Dennis Molinaro, "'A Species of Treason?': Deportation and Nation-Building in the Case of Tomo Cacic, 1931-1934," *Canadian Historical Review* Vol. 91 no. 1 (March 2010): 61-86; and Barbara Roberts, *Whence They Came: Deportation from Canada 1900-1935* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988). Fans of the cult 1960s television classic *The Prisoner* (1967) may remember the scene where a man of The Village is made to stand in shame at a public lectern, shouting his confession of being "disharmonious! disharmonious!"

margins those who are not part of the dominant narrative.”⁵³ Silencing and “political dissonance” are correlated: the first often arising as a consequence of the second.⁵⁴

Alongside theories of noise and silence, this dissertation also explores the idea of ‘the voice’ – specifically, the voice as heard in the public sphere. In the social environment with which most westerners are familiar, we are all supposed to keep our voices down. In church, in school, and at work, we leave the vocal imperative to those in charge: our parents, our deities (and their earthly representatives, such as priests, clerics, and rabbis), our teachers, our bosses and – perhaps most significantly – our elected representatives in government. But what happens when elected representatives do not voice the concerns of the people? When the people and the politicians are not ‘speaking the same language’? In the 1960s, Montréal Mayor Jean Drapeau claimed to be speaking for the “silent majority” when he enacted legislation designed specifically to silence vocal expressions of dissent. Many Montréalais loudly disagreed. They contested the terms of the modern soundscape the city expected them to honour.

Paying attention to the kinds of voices heard in Montréal during the 1960s and 1970s, listening for shouts as well as silences, can help us find points of friction between citizens and elected officials. As Smith argues, in a democracy the vibrancy of debate signifies the health of the body politic. But what happens when there is a silencing of certain voices? What happens when voices are appropriated or

⁵³ David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex and Security in Sixties Montréal* (Toronto: Between The Lines, 2013): 47-48, 70.

⁵⁴ The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines dissonance as 1) an inharmonious or harsh sound or combination of sounds; 2) want of concord or harmony (between things); disagreement, incongruity. While dissonance is usually applied in a musicological sense, I use it throughout as a way to highlight the discordant nature of politics during a turbulent decade. This theme is central to Chapter Four.

mimicked – when disharmonious elements are made to harmonize with the grand narrative, such as the “symphony of progress” to which Montrealers were expected to provide a respectful and passive audience in the 1960s and 1970s? What happens when we are all made to speak with the same voice, as so often happens with the pervasiveness of the generic ‘voice of the media’, which is really just a corporate approximation of and substitute for ‘the voice of the people’? What happens when our politicians do not voice our concerns with enough stridency to be heard above the din of petty politicking? What recourse do the people have but to take to the streets in an attempt to raise their own voices in unison – citizens together in the public places where they dwell?

Marshall Berman, in his beautifully written classic *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, traces the intricate history of how the street became a place where the modern subject would learn to assert his or her presence – individually at first, then in number, finding power in the unity and harmony of the collective voice.⁵⁵ Berman tells the story of Dostoevsky’s *Underground Man* – a new kind of Russian citizen, a man whose rebellion begins in the silence and cover of darkness, a man who finally finds his voice on the Nevsky Prospect (one of Imperial Russia’s first ‘political’ spaces) when “he stands up to his social superior and fights for his rights in the street.” Throughout the book, Berman paints the street as a place of encounter and sociability between the atomized units of modern existence. The street is a place

⁵⁵ Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988 [1982]).

with the potential to “transform a multitude of urban solitudes into a people, and [to reclaim] the city street for human life.”⁵⁶

Berman’s argument helps highlight the importance of rights to free speech, free association, and assembly: where else in our society can voices of critical concern come together as one but in the street – the *public* thoroughfare? “Streets are for the people” is a popular rallying cry at public protests, and this sort of aural resistance, the voice of the people raised loud, is key to being ‘heard’ by both the general public *and* the powers that be. Indeed, as we will see in the pages that follow, noisemaking – involving whistles, drums, and singing in particular – has always been a key strategy for public protest. Dissent, the right to voice a contrary opinion, is a vital part of healthy democratic debate. The sounds of voices in the street will therefore be a key site of exploration in this thesis.

“To find one’s voice,” argues Douglas Khan, is a concept that implies finding oneself.⁵⁷ The voices raised during the 1960s were indeed “finding themselves”. Myriad movements organized around segments of society were driven to express their grievances, to give voice to their complaints, to speak words of bitterness and disappointment to their rulers. That so many people raised their voices in unison and used many of the same words and concepts to frame and make sense of their condition, speaks to the profoundly humanist nature of struggle and protest during this era. People took to the public streets, voicing their concerns through

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*: 155, 166.

⁵⁷ The human voice is embodied in our physical beings, generated by our airwaves, vocal cords, mouths, tongues, throats, and jaw, reverberating throughout our skull in such a way that makes our voices unique. For a good analysis of human embodiment and sound in the arts, see Douglas Khan, *Noise Water Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts* (Massachusetts Institute for Technology Press, 1999).

megaphones directed at symbols of power, through songs and chants raised in defiance and solidarity, with whistles and drums and noise pronouncing and confirming their existence against a hegemonic system whose logic too often deadens the vibrant human soul under the hum of artificial lights, the tic-toc clocks of artificial time, and the deafening drone of the modern urban metropolis.

Music and the “long sixties”

“There can be little doubt,” wrote Schafer, “that music is an indicator of the age, revealing, for those who know how to read its symptomatic messages, the means of fixing social and even political events.”⁵⁸ No sonic history of Montréal – especially one focussing on the 1960s and 70s, an era that still exerts a considerable influence on popular culture in North America – would be complete without the inclusion of music.⁵⁹

For most North Americans and Western Europeans, music is one of the most frequent ways that the idea of “The Sixties” continues to reverberate in the soundscape of our daily lives. Yet the use of scare quotes are to remind the reader that “The Sixties” have become reified as something much larger than simply a historical decade. This thesis proposes that “The Sixties” as an abstraction has long since become a way of homogenizing and over-simplifying North America’s complicated encounter with modernity in the third quarter of the twentieth century. “The Sixties” has, in many treatments, transcended its own decadal limits (1960-

⁵⁸ Schafer: 7.

⁵⁹ Many cities sport at least one, and larger cities several, radio stations devoted to ‘oldies’ or ‘classic rock,’ featuring artists such as the Beatles and Bob Dylan, England’s The Who and Canada’s Guess Who.

1969) and become instead shorthand for a romanticized era of peace activism and protest. This simplified and idealized view of history has a specific soundtrack – a canon of artists and songs that has become ‘representative’ of that decade. Such canon-formation has come to constrain a subtle comprehension of the era. It has tended to homogenize and oversimplify the past, reducing all of North America to one uniform soundscape. Over the following paragraphs I will outline the basics of this ubiquitous soundtrack before moving into a discussion of how this soundtrack limits our historical understanding, especially in Canada and Québec.

The general (somewhat simplistic) narrative about the birth of rock’n’roll starts with performers such as Bo Diddley, Elvis Presley, and Chuck Berry. The early years of rock’n’roll were highly contentious ones, especially given a popular perception that rock music fostered unrestrained sexuality, racial mixing, and juvenile delinquency. Notwithstanding its stormy début, rock’n’roll became enormously popular in Québec as elsewhere in North America. Québécois of a certain generation display unyielding admiration for Elvis. In 1964 The Beatles arrived on the scene with a style and attitude that revived rock’n’roll. Utilizing the commercial reach of the British Empire, Capitol Records marketed the Beatles heavily, with the result that they quickly became global pop superstars.⁶⁰

The overnight success of the Beatles developed into Beatlemania, flooding the North American market with “British Invasion” groups (native and foreign) playing a new kind of rock’n’roll expressive of the Beat and Mod youth subcultures of post-war England. In Québec, this process took shape as the *yéyé* movement, and

⁶⁰ For example, see Reebee Garofalo, *Rockin’ Out: Popular Music in the USA*, 4th ed. (Prentice Hall Publications, 2008).

achieved a widespread popularity despite the fact that this type of music was generally derided by Québec's more 'respectable' and 'serious' folk musicians, known as *chansonniers*. Indeed, for anyone familiar with the contentious historical relationship between the Québécois and the British, it will no doubt appear strange (even shocking) that hundreds of French-Canadian teenagers adopted the British rock model, re-recording English hits in French. Some groups even went so far as to give themselves anglicized names, as in the case of Les Merseys or Les Sinners.⁶¹

The Beat music popularized by British Invasion bands underwent another metamorphosis when Bob Dylan, darling of the folk movement, plugged in at the Newport Folk Festival and demonstrated (much to his audience's dismay) that the truth-to-power lyricism of the folk song could be given extra weight with the noisy power of electrified instruments. Dylan's move towards electrified folk alienated much of his audience, but was responsible for a major new musical genre, folk rock. From here, in the popular narrative, we see the formation of successful groups such as The Byrds, the Mamas and the Papas, or the partly-Canadian Lovin' Spoonful. At the same time, the "San Fran Sound" of Haight-Ashbury's psychedelic counterculture had its national coming out party in 1967 at the First International Monterey Pop Festival. Performers from the UK and US came together to organize what was hailed as the 'first outdoor rock festival.' This festival initiated a drive among major industry labels eager to cash in on the hip authenticity of the West Coast scene. Here was official recognition that rock'n'roll had become *the* popular music of choice for a whole generation of youthful consumers.

⁶¹ A more detailed discussion of the rivalry between the two genres appears in Chapter Two.

Festivals are important narrative devices in many stories about “The Sixties”. The ecstatic communal ritual that was the Woodstock Music and Arts Fair, happening two years after Monterey, demonstrates how enormously important the youth market had become. Over three days in late August 1969 over half-a-million fans converged on Max Yasgur’s farm, forming what was soon dubbed “the Woodstock Nation”, and forcing the State of New York to declare an emergency closure of the New York State Thru-Way. This is the high-water point of many North American narratives of ‘The Sixties,’ the turning point after which youthful optimism soured. The good vibes of Woodstock could not be sustained, and it all came crashing down only a few short months later at the disastrous Altamont concert, with its violence, hard drugs and then murder. Here was a descent into a disconcerting darkness, the Rolling Stones playing with the devil, and the Charles Manson murders. These moments came to constitute a highly influential soundtrack of ‘The Sixties,’ one that carried the implicit message that the period’s distinctive creative energies had been depleted by 1969.

Woodstock took on a mythical status almost right away. Festival planners around the world began comparing their local festivals to the New York event in advertising and promotional materials. Québec was no different. The Manseau music festival, held in a rural Québec town in August 1970, was not only touted as Woodstock North, but was also planned, in part, by one of the original Woodstock organizers. Manseau was, in a sense, a combination of both Woodstock *and* Altamont. There was a lot of hype about peace and love, but in the end the reality of hard drugs and poor organization left many concertgoers feeling ripped off.

Manseau proved to be the last straw in a series of poorly organized outdoor festivals. Premier Robert Bourassa, acting in an atmosphere of increasing fear of domestic rebellion during the summer of 1970, enacted a ban on outdoor rock festivals across the province. He, at least, had grasped something of the powerful connection between noise and power, music and hegemony.

The narrative of musical evolution from Beatles to Dylan to the San Fran Sound, and the triumvirate of festivals (Monterey, Woodstock, Altamont) has become an enduring and pervasive cliché. Recent works on the 1960s, even those published by major university presses, continue to fall into the same stale story. Historian Bryan Palmer, for example, references the music-festival narrative when he writes that by the 1970s “Woodstock had taken a deep dive into a very bad Altamont trip.”⁶² For a book on Canada’s 1960s, adherence to this declensionist Ameri-centric interpretation makes little sense. At the very least, Canadian authors looking to pin-point exactly which “day the music died”⁶³ *here* might reference Manseau, Canada’s very own Altamont, and Bourassa’s decision to outlaw outdoor music festivals. Yet in this thesis, I go beyond this, to suggest that “The Sixties’ in Canada did not come to an end in any sense in 1969: this period of rebellion and creativity persisted into the late 1970s, a decade which in fact saw dynamic and noisy rebellions that rivalled those of the years preceding them.

⁶² Bryan Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009): 247.

⁶³ The reference is to the song “American Pie” by Don McLean, but also references Gerard DeGroot’s 1960s monograph in which he cites Altamont as the day the music died. Gerard DeGroot, *The Sixties Unplugged: A Kaleidoscopic History of a Disorderly Decade*, (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2008).

While the music of the 1960s and 1970s clearly deserves a central place in any study of these decades, historians still need to be very careful about how they use this particularly rich source. Despite the innate ability of music to encapsulate the multiple dynamics of lived experience and hence enrich our historical understanding of the era, the ‘Sixties soundtrack’ has tended to create a homogenized and simplistic way of hearing – and remembering – the ‘60s and ‘70s. The nice neat narrative made possible through comparison of the major music festivals in America has often worked – particularly in music history and the history of popular culture – to demarcate start, peak, and end-points for “The Sixties”. This declensionist narrative, which appears in most standard music history texts,⁶⁴ is used to evoke a sense of decline or deterioration. By 1970, this narrative would have one believe, the ‘real’ Sixties are gone and exist only in the shape of commodities representative of a rebellious posture, sanitized for maximum public consumption and economic profit.⁶⁵

Stripped of radical political context and enveloped in a sort of generalized anti-establishment nostalgia, “The Sixties” have retained the air of rebelliousness, but with this declensionist narrative there is also a distinct sense of an *ending*. That “The Sixties” were over after 1969 seems obvious given the temporal endpoint, but what, exactly, ended? Insisting that there is a clearly demarcated end-point in this story (i.e. Altamont) is an effective denial of the fact that dissident movements continued to exist *after* 1969. The critical upheaval throughout North American

⁶⁴ For example, Reebee Garofalo, *Rockin’ Out*.

⁶⁵ For a discussion of how the counterculture was coopted and marketed, see Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

society did not subside at this point. In fact, it *intensified* throughout the early 1970s – this was the decade of Weather Underground bombings in the United States, and the FLQ crisis in Canada, when the sexual revolution burgeoned into feminism, the Front de libération des femmes, and the open celebration of queer genders and sexualities. And what of 1972, the year that massive strikes throughout Québec demonstrated the vulnerability of the capitalist economic system – a vulnerability made all the more glaring because of the energy crisis and warnings about the devastating effects that pollution was having on the planet’s natural environment? In many respects, the year 1969 marked the beginning, not the end, of Québec’s most intensive years of creative, noisy resistance.

The linear narrative provided by histories of popular music in this era has a very real influence on how we hear, and thus understand, “The Sixties.” In addition to foreshortening history, the musical narrative – which so often stands in for the general cultural narrative too – also represents a very white, male story. Figures such as Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix stand out precisely because they are deviations from the norm. The Sixties, this narrative seems to imply, were really all about young, white men – and American men, at that. Even when it has been applied to Canada, this “Sixties” narrative has been profoundly Ameri-centric.

Attentive readers will by now be wondering where Montréal stands in this discussion. The hard truth is that the American story of the Sixties has such power that it continues to hold great influence over the Canadian version of events. Readers of Doug Owsram’s history of the Canadian baby-boom generation, for example, might be forgiven for thinking that little of musical import happened north

of the 49th parallel. Owsram insightfully remarks that rock'n'roll music "may be the best place to begin in trying to understand the changes that occurred" during the 1960s.⁶⁶ Yet the vast majority of the people and events he discusses are American. While a few key Canadian artists such as the Guess Who or Neil Young are briefly mentioned, Owsram's treatment of music would seem to paint a picture of a Canada completely overtaken by American cultural imperialism.

More recently, the difficult relationship between Canadian musicians and the Anglo-American culture industries has been taken up by Ryan Edwardson, in both *Canadian Content* and his more recent work *Canuck Rock*.⁶⁷ The latter work, in particular, fleshes out the history of Canadian music in the 1960s and '70s without making it seem too derivative of its American counterpart, and traces the role played by music in the creation of a particular brand of Canadian nationalism. This analysis offers a more sophisticated treatment of music in Canada during this period – an approach that is largely lacking in Canadian historiography of the nineteen-sixties and -seventies. However, Québec gets short shrift in Edwardson's story. While he does acknowledge that Québec was "years ahead" of Canada in terms of using music to mediate a national sense of self,⁶⁸ his discussion of Québec occupies a scant four pages of his narrative. Limiting the discussion in such a way unfortunately works to deny the explosive nature of Québec's cultural

⁶⁶ Doug Owsram, *Born at the Right Time: A history of the baby-boom generation*. (University of Toronto Press, 1996).

⁶⁷ Ryan Edwardson, *Canadian Content: Culture and the Quest for Nationhood* (University of Toronto Press, 2008); and *Canuck Rock: A History of Canadian Popular Music* (University of Toronto Press, 2009).

⁶⁸ Edwardson, *Canuck Rock*: 10.

transformation during the 1960s and 1970s.⁶⁹ What's more, it misses the importance of Montréal as the epicentre of musical production and consumption in Québec.⁷⁰

Clearly, defining a soundtrack representative of Canada's sixties and seventies has been a somewhat difficult task. How much room should be given to American works? How to include Québec? Even these basic questions reveal larger issues at stake in the historiography of these years – years defined by resurgent English-Canadian nationalism in the face of increased American investment in the Canadian economy and the prevalence of American popular culture in the Canadian mass media, as well as the efflorescence of Québécois nationalism. With this in mind, it should come as no surprise that the assumptions underlying the typical Sixties Soundtrack are the same that have, until recently, structured the historiography. I will briefly summarize the major assumptions and trends in this, and more recent, historiography – maintaining that while our academic understanding of this era has been greatly expanded, the popular narratives about “The Sixties” have not yet integrated the insights of more current research. This has resulted in a ‘Sixties Soundtrack’ that now sounds tired, tinny, and nostalgic. Following the historiographical analysis I will take a few moments to ask how it might be possible

⁶⁹ Neglecting Québec artists also works to obscure a growing scholarly interest, especially since the 1990s, in Quebec's cultural history. For an interesting overview, see Colin Coates, “Introduction: Practices of Culture in Francophone Quebec,” *Canadian Historical Review* Vol. 88 no. 1 (March 2007): 1-5.

⁷⁰ For an interesting review of a key site of musical consumption in Montréal – the discothèque – see Jean V. Dufresne, “Sur un air des Beatles ou de Charles Aznavour” *Magazine Maclean* (July 1965): 17-19, 42. Historians of music in Canada might also consult Elaine Keillor's *Music in Canada: Capturing Landscape and Diversity* (Montréal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006) which acknowledges the importance of Charlebois and L'Osstidcho, but which limits this discussion to a scant few pages (understandable, given the wide temporal scope of music she covers).

to reconstruct, as it were, the sonic memory of this period, constructing a new soundtrack, or soundtracks, with sounds that are more representative of Montréal during this dynamic period of its history.

The idea mentioned above, that of the ‘long sixties’, is a periodization that attempts to expand the temporal frame of “The Sixties” to somewhere between the mid-1950s and the mid-1970s. The extended periodization that characterizes the ‘long sixties’ approach is, quite simply, an attempt to place the turbulence of the mid-twentieth century within a longer arc of history. This approach is one that emerged as a response to historiographical debate about the dominance of narratives based on the personal experiences of former participants in (or at least sympathizers with) the American New Left. These histories were largely movement or organizational studies of groups such as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) (and in Canada, the Student Union for Peace Action (SUPA) and the Company of Young Canadians (CYC)). Thus the student movement’s rise and decline often became a stand-in for the wider upheavals of the 1960s in general.

Writing in an era of resurgent conservatism, authors such as Todd Gitlin, Maurice Isserman, and James Miller, all former movement activists, had a vested interest in upholding the transformative potential of the New Left’s social, cultural, and political critique, while also having to explain its collapse in the face of Nixon’s ‘silent majority.’ As such, those who narrated their histories implied a story of declension. The early gains of the student movement were slowly eroded by countercultural elements or revolutionary radicalism (usually personified by the Weather Underground), which ultimately destroyed the left and paved the way for

conservative right-wing resurgence.⁷¹ This is the version of history which is replicated in our typical Sixties soundtrack. It is short, declensionist, dominated by male perspectives, and almost myopically American.

The narrative of declension that was utilized by early movement historians was usually reinforced by a standard explanatory trope of generational rebellion. This generational trope is based upon the disproportionate visibility of youth in the 1960s, and is backed up with the authority of demographic statistics. However, frameworks that reduce the period's heated and systemic political turbulence to the level of demographics and youth psychology seem a touch too simplistic, and may also miss important elements of the larger picture. More to the point, such explanatory tools are predicated upon a sense of generational exceptionalism that has haunted the 'baby boom' since its inception, and has therefore pervaded, all too thoroughly, the historiography.

The Canadian literature is no exception to this rule. By and large, both Anglophone and Francophone histories of these decades in Canada focus on generational rebellion and student politics. Titles such as *Born at the Right Time* or *La generation lyrique* focus on youth and use generational differences as a central

⁷¹ The importance of America's culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s in terms of their influence on historians' understandings of the 1960s can hardly be overstated. The playing out of these 'wars' through 60s historiography has spawned a whole sub-genre of polemics and bitter diatribes as historians battled over the highly contested terrain of one of America's most vibrant decades. See, for example Allen J. Matusow, *The Unravelling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984); Howard P. Morgan, *The 60s Experience: Hard Lessons About Modern America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991); Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America is Wracked by Culture Wars* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1995); David Burner, *Making Peace With the Sixties* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996); Roger Kimball, *The Long March: How the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s Changed America* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2000); and a recent 'corrective' of accusations of hedonism, Maurice Isserman and David Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). Using the counterculture as a scapegoat, of course, also absolved movement veterans-turned-scholars from taking a good, hard look at the weaknesses and tensions within the student movement.

explanatory factor, while other books, such as *Une douce anarchie* or *Chronique d'une insurrection appréhendée*, focus on the radicalism of the student movement.⁷²

The centrality of student politics in the histories that appeared throughout the 1980s and 1990s meant that such narratives obviously neglected many other aspects of the era's upheavals. While the student movement provided one particularly vibrant critique of Cold War politics and cold war culture, there were many other voices of critique during this time – Civil Rights, Anti-War, and Feminism, to name just a few. Thus, it is hardly surprising that by the mid-1990s a new cohort of “sixties” historians became concerned with expanding the scope of the scholarship beyond the narrow confines of the New Left.

One of the first issues addressed by this new cohort was their predecessors' focus on the primarily white, middle-class student movement – a focus that had come at the expense of other groups, notably women and African-Americans. This, as we have seen, is a defect that is also present in our soundtrack of this era. Both of these narratives tell the story of the sixties from a very privileged perspective, i.e. that of white, middle-class males. However, throughout the 1990s, the voices and stories told from the perspective of second-wave feminists, Black Power and Red Power advocates, as well as those involved in the gay liberation movement, gained increasing attention from historians. Looking at the history of this period from these other perspectives also made clear the importance of decolonization theory and

⁷² Doug Owram, *Born at the Right Time*; François Ricard, with Donald Winkler, trans. *The Lyric Generation: The Life and Times of the Baby Boomers* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co., 1994); Jean-Philippe Warren, *Une douce anarchie: les années 68 au Québec* (Montréal: Boréal, 2008); Eric Bédard, *Chronique d'une insurrection appréhendée* (Sillery: Septentrion, 1998).

national liberation movements in Africa and South East Asia.⁷³ These fresh approaches not only challenged the extent to which white males had monopolized the memories of the period's radicalism, but also provided an alternative periodization by tracing the trajectory of movements that were active well beyond 1969. It was partly through this focus on movements whose real gains were not registered until the 1970s (such as feminist politics, gay liberation, or the environmental movement), that the 'long sixties' as a periodizing concept has gained ground.

In many ways, these approaches can help us see how the historiography might be better understood as an attempt to categorize the various expressions of disenchantment, discord, and dissent that have since become consonant with our historical understanding of the mid-twentieth century. In other words, the historians have been busy trying to categorize all the different voices that were making themselves heard at this time. The long sixties as an era which saw the loud voicing of critique allows us to regain a sense of cohesion when surveying the vast upheavals of the period. Civil Rights, the anti-war movement, decolonization, feminism, gay rights, ecology, "counterculture," the New Left, the New Right, the student movement, labour, and a whole variety of other protests all participated in (and helped create) a generalized culture of critique, one extending far beyond educated elites. Social and cultural critique was, in a sense, democratized and brought to bear upon oppressive circumstances in a vast array of areas: sexual

⁷³ See especially Sean Mills, *The Empire Within* (2010).

relations and gender norms; race and ethnicity; socio-economics, politics, and the cultural differences pervading our day-to-day lives.

Of course, one cannot speak of a “democratization” of critique without addressing the global aspects of this era. As debates about the 1960s and ‘70s moved away from historical explanations based on personal experience and political contingency towards approaches that incorporated deeper structural analyses, the ‘global’ roots of the era’s upheavals began to emerge. Thus there is a growing cohort of historians who are dedicated to the study of how global perspectives and discourses of internationalism became ubiquitous during the 1960s. Decolonization and national liberation movements were perceived as part of a world-wide anti-imperialist struggle. Student radicals from diverse and disparate locales took advantage of a transnational public sphere, claiming solidarity with their brothers and sisters as far flung as Japan, Mexico, Czechoslovakia and France. Revolutionary developments in communications and transportation technologies combined to reduce space through time, shrinking the world, revealing the deepening interconnections between the local and the global – bringing, to borrow a phrase from Marshall McLuhan, “the global village” within view.⁷⁴ Québec’s activists,

⁷⁴ Marshall McLuhan, excerpt from *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, reprinted in Eric McLuhan & Frank Zingrone, eds. *Essential McLuhan* (Toronto: Anasi Press, 1995): 126. A few key texts that I would situate within this “global sixties” school include Karen Dubinsky, Catherine Krull, Sean Mills & Scott Rutherford, *New World Coming: The Sixties and the Shaping of Global Consciousness* (Toronto: Between The Lines, 2009); Paul Berman, *A Tale of Two Utopias: The Political Journey of the Generation of 1968* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1996), which compares student radicalism in the United States to similar movements around the world; British historian Arthur Marwick’s massive and unimaginatively titled *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy and the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), a comparative analysis of the demographics, economies, state-security apparatus, technological innovations, intellectual and artistic trends, of Britain, France, Italy, and the U.S. (which will be discussed in more detail below); Jeremy Varon’s, *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and the Revolutionary Violence of the 60s and 70s* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 2004), a comparative history of revolutionary violence and its

in particular, situated their struggle within the context of global decolonization and national liberation movements. They lived, that is, as self-reflecting agents in a time when time had annihilated space, when ideas of freedom voiced in Paris one day could echo in Montréal the next. They seized modernity as a moment of opportunity and not only as a juggernaut smashing their everyday worlds. This 'globalized' view is essential, as Sean Mills has argued, to a proper understanding of political activism during the later years of Québec's "Quiet Revolution."⁷⁵

Recent historiography and the 'culture wars' in United States and United Kingdom have clearly pitched the third quarter of the twentieth century as a site of acrimonious debate. But one thing that both sides could likely agree upon would be that "The Sixties" were cacophonous years. Indeed, it is instructive that the voters behind Richard Nixon's terms in office were described as a "silent majority" – those who had grown tired or fearful of the shouting in the streets and wanted a 'return' to social harmony. The third quarter of the twentieth century witnessed a proliferation of voices - voices asserting the presence of radically different

roots in a critique of imperial / colonial systems; and Jeremi Suri's *Power & Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003). Also of note is the growing literature on 1968, a year which has come to represent the epitome of the 'global' sixties. See Kristin Ross, *May 68 and Its Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Elaine Carey, *Plaza of Sacrifices: Gender, Power & Terror in 1968 Mexico* (Albuquerque N.M.: University of New Mexico Press, 2005); Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring & Its Aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics, 1968-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Paulina Bren, "1968 East and West" in Gerd-Rainer Horn & Padraic Kenney, *Transnational Moments of Change: Europe 1945, 1968, 1989* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004): 119-135; Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert & Detlef Junker, eds. *1968: The World Transformed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Mark Kurlansky, *1968: The Year that Rocked the World* (New York: Random House, 2005). Some of the more popular titles include David Caute, *Year of the Barricades: A Journey Through 1968* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988) or Charles Kaiser, *1968 in America: Music, Politics, Counterculture & The Shaping of a Generation* (New York: Grove Press, 1988), both released in time for the 20th anniversary of '68. See also Robert Vincent Daniels, *Year of the Heroic Guerrilla: World Revolution and Counterrevolution in 1968* (New York: Basic Books, 1989) and Jules Witcover, *The Year the Dream Died: Revisiting 1968 in America* (New York: Warner Books, 1997).

⁷⁵ Mills.

subjectivities. Some of the loudest shouts came from the margins of society, and the explosion of Québécois nationalism is a case in point.

There has been a clear evolution in historical thought about the 1960s and 1970s – at the scholarly level, at least. From New Left student movements to superstructural changes to an emphasis on the global nature of dissent, the stories we tell about ‘The Sixties’ have become more democratic and more sophisticated over the years. So why has our soundtrack of this era remained largely the same? How might a different – less reductionist, simplistic and clichéd – soundtrack promote new awareness of the dynamics of this period? How can we talk about music in the ‘60s and ‘70s *without* falling into the same old narratives and explanatory tropes? Québec, one submits, offers at the very least an alternative soundtrack – one that contains offerings that are radically distinct from the staples of Anglo-American cultural historiography. And perhaps a meditation upon the Québec case will serve a more general purpose of rousing the field of ‘Sixties Scholarship’ from the dogmatic slumbers and repetitive time-lines that have characterized it for too long.⁷⁶

Historiography and Québec’s “Quiet Revolution”

A significant obstacle to any such wider acknowledgement of the Québec case in Sixties scholarship is constituted by the reified and problematic summing-up of the province’s history in this period under the heading of the “Quiet Revolution.” For

⁷⁶ Chapter Two offers an analysis of musical styles in Québec and Montréal, putting local talent front and centre as an example of an alternative sixties’ soundtrack.

why should North Americans in general attend to a revolutionary moment whose passivity, tranquillity, and quietness is known at the outset?

For the average student of Canadian or Québécois history, it may not seem strange that Québec's particular experience of the 1960s and '70s has been designated the "Quiet Revolution" – or, to use its French-language equivalent, "*la révolution tranquille*." But it is a strange and contradictory term. As Québec sociologist Dorval Brunelle wrote in *La désillusion tranquille* (1978):

Concédon's d'emblée que la signification de l'expression elle-même est pour le moins ambiguë: on n'a pas l'habitude de rencontrer deux mots aussi antithétiques au sein d'une même formule. On a l'impression ici d'être berné: comment une révolution peut-elle être tranquille? Comment la «tranquillité» sur le plan social ou individuel, peut-elle constituer un ferment révolutionnaire? Ne serions-nous pas abusés par les termes? La première difficulté que soulève cette expression en est ainsi une d'interprétation des événements en cause: on ne sait pas très bien de quoi il s'agit quand on utilise l'expression «Révolution tranquille», mais quoi qu'il en soit, cela aurait été à la fois révolutionnaire et tranquille.⁷⁷

As Brunelle argues, the expression "Quiet Revolution" seems to be deliberately contradictory and obscure.⁷⁸ Indeed, labelling Quebec's third quarter of the twentieth century in such a way is by no means a politically neutral procedure. It is one, on the contrary, saturated in particular values and preferences. Since the 1960s, the term "Quiet Revolution" has tended to downplay the noisy and widespread nature of dissent (and dissonance) that occurred during this period of the province's history. In doing so the appellation serves a specific political agenda – one of marginalizing the unquiet, unaccommodating and unyielding aspects of Québec's years of transformation. It implies a process whose limitations were

⁷⁷ Dorval Brunelle, *La désillusion tranquille* (Montréal: Hurtubise, 1978): 11.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

inscribed in its very beginning. It is the general thesis of this dissertation that by 1965 the “revolution” in Quebec had become decidedly *noisy*, a fact which is demonstrated through three chapters of analysis of Montréal’s urban soundscape, Québec’s history of music, and language in Montréal. The fifth chapter goes a step further, suggesting, through an exploration of incidents of silencing, that continuing to reference this period of Quebec’s history as a “Quiet Revolution” is generally unsound – *unless* we come to see that the term “Quiet Revolution” in fact serves a political-nationalist agenda designed to shore up notions of Canada as a “Peaceable Kingdom.”

The following paragraphs explore, briefly, the history of the term “Quiet Revolution” and its place in the historiography of Quebec’s 1960s and 1970s, while paying special attention to works which consciously address the *sonic* nature of the events often brought together under this heading. Following this historiographical discussion there is an explanation of the methodology behind this project. The introduction concludes with a summary of the themes and topics covered in Chapters Two, Three, Four, Five and Six.

The term “Quiet Revolution” / “*révolution tranquille*” refers to the process of rapid modernization and socio/cultural change that followed the death of Québec Premier Maurice Duplessis on 7 September 1959. Duplessis’ departure from the political scene is thus read retrospectively as a signal of the end the period known as *la grande noirceur*⁷⁹ (“the long darkness”) – i.e. the dark and conformist 1940s and

⁷⁹ For background on the Quiet Revolution, see Pierre Godin, *La Révolution tranquille* (Montréal: Boréal, 1991); Alain-G. Gagnon and Mary Beth Montcalm, *Québec: Beyond the Quiet Revolution* (Toronto: Nelson Canada, 1990); Jean-Louis Roy, *La marche des Québécois: le temps des ruptures*

'50s. This common historical narrative describes the *grande noirceur* as a time when French-Canadians were dominated by both a backwards-looking Catholic Church and an authoritarian provincial government run by Duplessis' Union Nationale party, in cahoots with Anglo-American financial interests which kept the province's French-speaking labourers confined to low-paying (and often deafening) industrial jobs.⁸⁰ In such accounts, Duplessis' death and the subsequent electoral victory of the provincial Liberals signalled a key turning point in Québec's history, a period of awakening that precipitated the province's ascent to modern nationhood. This period of awakening and modernization is characterized as the "*révolution tranquille*" or "Quiet Revolution".

Jocelyn Létourneau has demonstrated the interpretive imbalance of this traditional narrative. He shows how students in Québec often come away with an understanding of this period of history as one that entails a simplistic dichotomy of a backward 'before' and a modernized 'after.'⁸¹ More recent works examining this period of Québec's history have critiqued the traditional narrative on precisely these grounds. They draw attention to critical voices that challenged Duplessis' and the Church's hegemony *before* 1960.⁸² Works such as these might suggest that the

(Montréal: Leméac, 1976); Robert Comeau, *Jean Lesage et l'éveil d'une nation: les débuts de la révolution tranquille* (Montréal: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1989).

⁸⁰ Michelle Lalonde, in her famous poem "Speak White", described this situation with the famous lines: "...nous sommes un peu durs d'oreille / nous vivons trop près des machines / et n'entendons que notre souffle au-dessus des outils." ("...we are a bit hard of hearing / we live too close to the machines / and hear only our breathing over the tools."). An analysis of this poem appears in Chapter Four.

⁸¹ Jocelyn Létourneau and Sabrina Moisan, "Mémoire et récit de l'aventure historique du Québec chez les jeunes Québécois d'héritage canadien-français: coup de sonde, amorce d'analyse des résultats, questionnements" *Canadian Historical Review* Vol. 85 no. 2 (June 2004): 325-356.

⁸² See, for example, Michael D. Behiels, *Prelude to the Québec's Quiet Revolution: Liberalism versus Neoliberalism, 1945-1960* (Kingston/Montréal: McGill/Queen's University Press, 1985); Nicole Neatby, *Carabins ou activistes? : l'idéalisme et la radicalisation de la pensée étudiante à l'Université de Montréal*

real ‘quiet’ revolution happened in the late 1950s, when people only whispered about ideas that would, a decade later, inspire clamorous shouting in the streets.

This dissertation adheres to a notion of the “long sixties”, a term popularized by historians who recognize that the currents of change which swept that decade had origins in the 1950s and continued into the 1970s. For the purposes of this dissertation, “Quiet Revolution” is given a similar treatment: it is intended to reference a period of accelerated change that extended into the 1970s. Québec scholars such as Sean Mills, Caroline Durand, and Léon Dion, for example, have demonstrated how the term “Quiet Revolution,” which initially referred to the period between 1960 and 1966, has since become a catch-all for the 1960s *and* 1970s.⁸³ Most historians of Québec now point to 1976 as the end-point of the “Quiet Revolution” – the year René Lévesque led the Parti Québécois to electoral victory.

The “revolution” experienced by Québec throughout the 1960s and ‘70s – that is, the political, economic, social and cultural awakening of the Québécois people – was in reality anything *but* quiet, especially in its largest urban metropolis, Montréal. So why do historians continue to refer to this period of Québec’s history as quiet? The origins of the terms “Quiet Revolution” / “*révolution tranquille*” are revealing. Contrary to popular belief, the designation of this period of history as

au temps du duplessisme (Montréal/Kingston: McGill/Queen’s University Press, 1999); E.-Martin Meunier and Jean-Phillippe Warren, *Sortir de la « Grande Noirceur » : L’horizon « personnaliste » de la Révolution tranquille* (Sillery : Les éditions du septentrion, 2002); Michel Gauvreau, *The Catholic Origins of Québec’s Quiet Revolution* (Montréal: McGill/Queen’s University Press, 2005). For insight into left-wing activity before the Quiet Revolution, see Robert Comeau and Bernard Dionne, *Le droit de se taire : histoire des communistes au Québec, de la Première Guerre mondiale à la Révolution tranquille* (Outremont : VLB Éditeur, 1989); Andrée Lévesque, *Virage à gauche interdit : les communistes, les socialistes et leurs ennemis au Québec* (Montréal : Boréal express, 1984).

⁸³ Sean Mills, *The Empire Within*; Caroline Durand, “Entre exportation et importation: la création de la chanson québécoise selon la presse artistique, 1960-1980” *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française* Vol. 60 no. 3 (2007): 295-324; Léon Dion, *La révolution déroutée, 1960-1976* (Montréal: Editions Boréal, 1998).

“tranquil” was not invented by Francophone observers or historians. Rather, the term was first used by Anglophone journalists attempting to understand the situation in Québec. As Léon Dion and others have reported, the term “Quiet Revolution” was first used by the English-language media. In 1961, Dion claims, Brian Upton used the term in an article for the *Montreal Star*. That same year, Peter Gzowski repeated it in an issue of *Maclean’s*.⁸⁴ Indeed, Gzowski spent that year in Montréal and published a series of articles in both *Maclean’s* and its French-language counterpart *Le magazine Maclean*, analysing what he dubbed the “Quiet Revolution” in Québec.⁸⁵ Despite his best efforts, Gzowski failed to understand the depth of what was happening in Québec. In 1964 he declared that the “Quiet Revolution” had already been won, and expressed consternation that French-Canadian nationalists continued to “criez encore plus fort”. With typically oblivious Anglophone privilege, Gzowski informed his readers that it was time Québec nationalists piped down and listened to what Anglophones had to say.⁸⁶

That Anglophones such as Upton and Gzowski were responsible for characterizing and popularizing the term generally applied to a predominantly Québécois phenomenon is revealing of the power dynamics at play during this era, when English-speaking people held a disproportionate amount of power and prestige in a majority-Francophone province.⁸⁷ For the meantime, consider the fact that it was only later that “Quiet Revolution” was translated from English into its

⁸⁴ Dion, *La révolution déroutée*: 47.

⁸⁵ Peter Gzowski, “Lettre ouverte aux nationalistes Canadiens-français,” *Le magazine Maclean*, novembre 1964: 10.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ The always crucial issues of how Québec speaks and how this linguistic particularity is reflected in politics will be dealt with in Chapter Four.

slightly less audible equivalent, '*révolution tranquille*,' which points less to a sonic dimension of quietude and refers more to a general idea of calmness.

By the early 1960s, the concept of a quiet revolution was by no means new. In the year or so before Duplessis' death in 1959 the term was used by *Globe and Mail* journalists to describe such disparate subjects as Pakistani democracy and Canadian medical practices.⁸⁸ However, by 1963 the concept was already being widely associated with the situation in Quebec.⁸⁹ Two of the earliest and most consistent applications of "quiet revolution" to Quebec can be found in the work of journalists Anne MacDermot and Thomas Sloane. MacDermot used the term to draw specific attention to the paradox inherent in Quebec's election of a female cabinet minister (Claire Kirkland-Casgrain) when the province still denied women many basic rights. MacDermot sensed the contradiction between the term and her subject matter, writing that the "revolution that is now sweeping the province" was in fact "not-so-quiet" after all.⁹⁰

Thomas Sloane used the term several times in 1963, and later took advantage of the sonic incongruence between the actual happenings in Quebec and the idea of a "quiet" revolution for the title of his book *Quebec: The Not-So-Quiet Revolution* (1965).⁹¹ "There are perhaps other words [than revolution] that could be

⁸⁸ William French, "Pakistan struggles bravely despite political and economic problems" *Globe and Mail* 9 July 1959: 7; "Monteith sees revolution in mental health program" *Globe and Mail* March 28 1960: 15; "178 young MDs aided in studies by auto pioneer" *Globe and Mail* 9 Nov. 1961: 10.

⁸⁹ It is an interesting coincidence that 1963 was also the year that witnessed the first wave of FLQ bombings, and is thus arguably the point at which the "Quiet Revolution" began to get noisy.

⁹⁰ Anne MacDermot, "French Canadians enjoy new role" *Christian Science Monitor* 30 April 1962: 4; Anne MacDermot, "Paradox in law confronts woman minister" *Globe and Mail* 21 Feb. 1963: 15.

⁹¹ Thomas Sloane, "A sort of English René Lévesque?" *Globe and Mail* 3 Aug. 1963: 6; "Demand for fiscal autonomy," *Globe and Mail* 20 Nov. 1963: 7; Thomas Sloane, *Quebec: The Not-So-Quiet Revolution* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1965).

used to describe [the process being experienced in Quebec],” Sloane wrote. “But when we consider the tremendous scope and impact of what is going on in Quebec, when we think of the speed and depth of the evolution of thought and institutions, the world revolution is not too strong.” Referring specifically to the idea of a “quiet” or “tranquil” revolution, he continued:

It is not a violent affair, except in some of its extremities; neither is it entirely consistent in all its parts. And perhaps the adjective *quiet* has been overworked in describing it. It is a lusty, brawling, enthusiastic and occasionally angry forward movement that often disagrees within itself. It is a vital movement that includes large measures both of action and reflection.⁹²

That Sloane, writing in 1965, could argue that the adjective “quiet” was already “overworked,” reveals the widespread use of the term. Léon Dion noted that René Lévesque also fretted about over-use of the idea.⁹³ One more example: Nick Auf der Maur, commenting on how patronage and corruption were alive and well in Québec, quipped that by the late 1960s the “Quiet Revolution” had become “the years of the Quiet Restoration”.⁹⁴

So if those who were popularizing the idea of a “Quiet Revolution” were also quick to point out the contradictions inherent in the term, why has it stuck? And why have the majority of Québec’s and Canada’s historians, who know very well that this period was one of the most vibrant and dissonant in Canadian history, consistently failed to question the use of such a misleading term? I would suggest that this failure is due to the specific political agenda followed by Canada’s ruling liberal order. To admit the cacophonous and dissonant nature of Québec’s 1960s

⁹² Sloane, *Quebec: The Not-So-Quiet Revolution*: x-xi.

⁹³ Dion, *La Révolution déroutée*: 47.

⁹⁴ Robert Chodos and Nick Auf der Maur, *Quebec: A Chronicle – 1968-1972* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1972): 3.

and '70s would be to admit the deep contradictions and inequalities inherent in our country's colonial past. In standard university curriculum textbooks and popular histories of Canada, the idea of the "Quiet Revolution" is used to downplay the revolutionary nature of this period and to reinforce the idea that Canadian history has been, by and large, devoid of serious conflict. In short, to perpetuate the idea of a "Quiet Revolution" is to perpetuate the notion of Canada as a "Peaceable Kingdom", rather than giving due to the hundreds of thousands of people who have faced state-sponsored violence, repression, and even death in their struggle to make Canada and Québec more just and equitable societies. As Brunelle put it, it just might be that during the *Révolution tranquille*, the revolution inherent in Québec's "social contradictions" was effectively "tranquilized" by the government.⁹⁵

Perhaps a few examples might serve here to reinforce the point. Let us begin with an article used in university-level history courses at one of Canada's top universities: David Seljak's "Why the Quiet Revolution was 'Quiet': The Catholic Church's Reaction to the Secularization of Nationalism in Quebec after 1960."⁹⁶ Writing about the fundamental changes within the Catholic Church at this time (especially the reforms of the Second Vatican Council), as well as the waning influence of the Church on Québec society and culture, Seljak argues that "generally, Quebec society avoided... the history of schism experienced by France, Italy, Mexico, Spain and other Catholic countries." Statements such as this understate the kinds of

⁹⁵ Brunelle: 12.

⁹⁶ David Seljak, "Why the Quiet Revolution was "Quiet": The Catholic Church's Reaction to the Secularization of Nationalism in Quebec after 1960" *CCHA Historical Studies* 62 (1992): 109-24 in J.M. Bumsted, Len Kuffert, and Michel Ducharme, eds. *Interpreting Canada's Past: A Post-Confederation Reader*, 4th edition (Oxford University Press, 2012): 368-377.

changes that *did* occur within Québec's religious order while also positing Québec as an anomaly by asserting its difference from other countries experiencing similar change during this era. In addition, presenting this article as the key example of "why the Quiet Revolution was 'Quiet'" leaves out a great deal of other socio-political factors at work in modernity in Québec – not to mention the questionable tactic of using the Catholic Church as the key indicator of social stability when (as Seljak points out) the Church's power throughout the province was in sharp decline.

While reams of paper have been sacrificed to histories of Québec's twentieth century,⁹⁷ only a very small handful of authors have directly addressed the concept of a "quiet" vs. "noisy" revolution. Take, for example, Donald Cuccioletta and Martin Lubin's article "The Quebec quiet revolution: a noisy evolution."⁹⁸ Challenging the historiography of Québec's twentieth-century modernization, ranging from the revisionists who claim that the "Quiet Revolution" was part of a longer process of change and modernity in Québec to the traditionalists who feel that this was indeed a period of rupture, the authors of this article argue that modernity was well underway prior to 1960 and that "the Quiet Revolution was less a revolution and more a noisy evolution." Pointing to important post-war developments such as the publication of Borduas's *Refus global* (1948) and the Asbestos Strike (1949), the authors make the important point that "the myth of modernity as stemming from the Quiet Revolution was an elite construct" and that "actual modernity had in fact already emerged from the masses and their popular culture." Here they point (albeit

⁹⁷ See, for example, aforementioned texts by Behiels; Neatby; Meunier and Warren; and Gauvreau.

⁹⁸ Donald Cuccioletta and Martin Lubin, "The Quebec quiet revolution: a noisy evolution," *Quebec Studies*, 36 (Fall/Winter 2003): 125-138.

tangentially) to some of the sonic factors involved, such as CKAC radio broadcasts of music from Radio City Music Hall in New York City during the interwar years and Montréal's popularity as a world-class centre for jazz music. "There were more jazz clubs per capita in Montreal in the forties and fifties than in New York," they remind us, and while this may be true, and while their article proves a necessary intervention into the simplistic before-and-after narrative typical of histories of the "Quiet Revolution", Cuccioletta and Lubin's article declines to explore the reasons why Québec's post-war "evolution" was, as they put it, "noisy."⁹⁹

Popular historian and satirist Will Ferguson, in his book *Bastards & Boneheads: Canada's Glorious Leaders Past and Present*, has a chapter dedicated to the events of October 1970, in which he argues that with the October Crisis the "revolution turn[ed] noisy."¹⁰⁰ While the October Crisis is obviously *the* case-in-point for questioning the validity of the 'quietness' of the Quiet Revolution, Ferguson's chapter displays many of the negative tendencies inherent in typical histories of this key event in Canadian history. No history of the "Quiet Revolution" would be complete without dealing with the FLQ kidnappings and Trudeau's decision to call the army into Montréal, and yet (as far as I am aware), very few histories of the "Quiet Revolution" have paid sufficient attention to the background of events leading up to October 1970. Somehow the eight years of nationalist struggle preceding 1970, the global context of radical revolutionary liberation movements (of which the felquistes felt themselves to be very much a part), and the

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Will Ferguson, *Bastards & Boneheads: Canada's Glorious Leaders Past and Present* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1999): 196-208.

active labour and anti-poverty movements, all receive but abbreviated treatments.¹⁰¹ Other phenomena – such as Montréal’s 1968 St. Jean-Baptiste parade riot, the 1969 strike of the Policemen’s Brotherhood (which created a crucial precedent of the army being called out in the streets), Mayor Jean Drapeau’s criminalization of public protest, the atmosphere of heightened linguistic tensions after *Operation McGill français* and the riots in Saint-Léonard – are all glossed over or left out completely. In such foreshortened histories it becomes all the more easy to dismiss the FLQ as a bunch of crazed fanatics, and to justify Trudeau’s decision to enact the War Measures Act. However, when all the other historical factors are taken into account, the crisis of October 1970 becomes suddenly much more understandable, more a logical outcome of historical factors and repressive government policies than a random act of lunatics. Within a broader context, it becomes much easier to understand why many Québécois were sympathetic to the FLQ’s demands, and why many Canadians were appalled at Trudeau’s decision to suspend civil liberties across the nation. The October Crisis was not evidence of a “noisy revolution” – more accurately, the Crisis was evidence of a silenced revolution. The five years of political dissonance and cultural cacophony leading up to 1970 were by no means quiet – until a dreadful hush descended upon Montréal in the early morning of 16 October 1970.

Finally, a selection of histories of Montréal helped provide background context for a deeper understanding of Québec’s largest city. Thanks to the efforts of dozens of talented historians over the past two decades, many of them associated

¹⁰¹ One important exception is Sean Mills’ excellent work on Montréal’s 1960s.

with the Montréal History Group, works examining the city's social and cultural history has acquired a depth and subtlety often missing in other Canadian centres. Michèle Dagenais has developed an environmental historiography focused on Montréal that suggests the extent to which Montréal imposed a new order upon nature and shows how Montrealers sought to manage this relationship.¹⁰² Denyse Baillargeon has imaginatively explored the ways Montréal families coped with the Great Depression.¹⁰³ Magda Fahrni has explored the ways in which families coped with the challenges of reconstruction after 1945 and has shown how the politics of resistance was gendered; she has also explored the extent to which Montrealers negotiated the risks and perils of industrial modernity.¹⁰⁴ Suzanne Morton has explored the gambling habits of twentieth-century Montrealers (among other Canadians),¹⁰⁵ and Jarrett Rudy, having explored the cultural history of the city's tobacco smokers,¹⁰⁶ has embarked upon a fascinating exploration of modernity and the regulation of time in the city (and in Québec in general).¹⁰⁷ These are only some of the scholars who have profoundly enriched our understanding of Montréal's

¹⁰² See especially *Montréal et l'eau. Une histoire environnementale* (Montréal: Boréal, 2011); with Stéphane Castonguay, *Metropolitan Natures. Environmental Histories of Montreal* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011); and *Faire et fuir la ville. Espaces publics de culture et de loisirs à Montréal et Toronto, XIXe et XXe siècles* (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université de Laval, 2006).

¹⁰³ *Making Do: Women, Family and Home in Montreal during the Great Depression*, trans. Yvonne Klein (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1999).

¹⁰⁴ Magda Fahrni, *Household Politics: Montreal Families and Postwar Reconstruction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); "La lutte contre l'accident'. Risque et accidents dans un contexte de modernité industrielle," in David Niget and Martin Petitclerc, eds., *Pour une histoire du risque* (Québec, Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2012, 181-202).

¹⁰⁵ Suzanne Morton, *At Odds: Gambling and Canadians 1919-1969* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

¹⁰⁶ Jarrett Rudy, *The Freedom to Smoke: Tobacco Consumption and Identity* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005).

¹⁰⁷ "Do you Have the Time? Modernity, Democracy, and the Beginnings of Daylight Saving Time in Montreal, 1907-1928," *Canadian Historical Review* 93, 4 (December 2012): 531-554; "Maternalisme, conflit de classes et les débuts de l'heure avancée à Trois Rivières, de 1918 à 1937," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 66, 3-4 (hiver-printemps 2013): 395-417.

history. Their work means that a sonic historian, although proposing a new way of understanding the city's past, works within a rich and well-developed historiographical context.

Methodology

Listening across a diversity of sources including music, press reports, and government documents, I arrived at certain questions to guide this research. What can sound tell us about Montréal's particular experience of modernity? What was loud and noisy? What was quiet or silent? Why? How has this decade been sonically represented – is there a particular 'soundtrack' that has become generally representative? More specific questions include: What kinds of sounds were becoming prevalent in Montréal, and which were becoming less so? What kinds of sounds were being broadcast by the media? What kinds of sounds were artists and musicians producing? What kinds of noises were prevalent in the streets? What did the press have to say about noise and silence, and how did they say it? Which voices might have been heard loudest and which were straining to be heard? Were certain voices or noises silenced? How might this have been achieved, and for what reasons?

These questions serve as guidelines for my methodology, which involves two basic strategies: listening for key "earwitness"¹⁰⁸ reports, largely published in the print media; and listening to audio recordings, mostly music but not entirely. Regarding the first: while it seems contradictory to attempt to construct an audible

¹⁰⁸ The term is Schafer's, "a source that reports experience of sound," and is therefore an aural equivalent of the "eye-witness." Schafer: 8.

past using silent print sources, Will Straw has argued that in Montréal during the 1960s and '70s “the newspaper remained the primary vehicle for news and information.”¹⁰⁹ Thus articles from major dailies such as the *Montreal Gazette*, the *Montreal Star*, *Le Devoir*, and *La Presse* provided the primary source materials for the project. Other publications, such as the left-wing Francophone journal *Parti pris*, the mainstream newsmagazine *Le magazine Maclean*, the underground newspaper *Logos*, and the Sir George Williams University student newspaper *The Georgian* also proved valuable. *The Georgian*, a student newspaper neglected by historians in favour of the higher profile *McGill Daily*, was particularly informative, especially given that students at Sir George were more likely than their McGill counterparts to have been born-and-bred Montrealers. In each case special attention was paid to any and all articles dealing with sound, noise, music, or silence.

A survey of Montréal’s major newspapers for literal and figurative references to noise, sound, and silence revealed moments of heightened attentiveness to the soundscape, as well as moments when sound or silence became prominent discursive devices. The media survey revealed the presence of “earwitnesses” – such as Montréal *Gazette* editor Andrew Collard, who displayed a persistent concern for issues of noise abatement; journalist Brian Stewart, who provided key “earwitness” accounts of contentious moments in Montréal municipal politics; or David Migicovski, a citizen who launched a community movement against the aircraft noise at Dorval airport. Press accounts also revealed noisy moments in Montréal’s history, such as the roar that met Charles De Gaulle’s declaration of “Vive le

¹⁰⁹ Will Straw, “Tabloid Expo,” in Rhona Richman Kenneally & Johanne Sloane, *Expo67: Not Just A Souvenir* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010): 225.

Québec...Libre!" in 1967, or the noise of whistles, chants and marching that could be heard heading westwards to confront McGill in March 1969. Reports also revealed silences, such as those arising from Mayor Drapeau's criminalization of public protest, Premier Bourassa's outlawing of outdoor music festivals, or the heavy *silences d'octobre* that occurred during the FLQ crisis of 1970.

The second methodological strategy involved attending to the actually audible. Music plays a large role in the dissertation, especially in Chapter Three, and references to dozens of recordings appear in the subsequent pages. Continued references to Robert Charlebois in both the Francophone and Anglophone press made it clear that his music was particularly representative of Montréal's musical milieu.¹¹⁰ Another key discovery was composer/poet Raoul Duguay and his participation in L'Infonie, an avant-garde musical ensemble under the direction of Walter Bourdieu. Duguay's inspired use of sound-poetry and L'Infonie's avant-garde compositions are unique products of their Québécois milieu, and their recordings are a treasure trove for historians of sound and the sixties.

Many of the recordings referenced throughout the thesis are given additional context via musical reviews and analysis from Francophone magazines such as *Sept-Jours*, *Perspectives*, and *Le compositeur canadien*. Non-musical audio sources consulted include documentary and feature films, archived radio and television broadcasts, and private video clips uploaded and made available on the internet. A handful of other sources such as government publications and internet blogs helped fill in some of the gaps.

¹¹⁰ An analysis of his life and music take up a significant portion of Chapter Two.

Assembling all these sonic fragments together into a coherent narrative presented a challenge. Events often overlapped, making a strictly linear narrative tricky, if not impossible. It was easier to conceptualize and assemble the research thematically. This study therefore departs from traditional histories in that it makes little attempt to provide a comprehensive linear narrative of this particularly vibrant period in Montréal's history. Rather, we will approach different facets of the city's soundscape through a series of studies or sonic snapshots. Just as Sherry Simon's work *Translating Montreal* uses the concept of translation to unpack "fragments of the social history of Montreal,"¹¹¹ this dissertation is the result of listening for and unpacking fragments of the sonic history of Montréal. In this sense, the dissertation owes more to the idea of tape montage, collage, or pastiche than it does to traditional literary narrative: diverse elements of Montréal's soundscape are juxtaposed to reveal themes and connections in terms of sound, noise, music and silence.

Chapter Summaries

Throughout North America as a whole, the early 1960s were characterized by a drastic increase in loud noises. Montréal, as one of Canada's largest cities, was by no means immune from this deafening trend. Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer, who was living in Montréal at the time, has said that 1965 was perhaps the

¹¹¹ Sherry Simon, *Translating Montreal: Episodes in the Life of a Divided City* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006): 16.

loudest period in human history.¹¹² The ‘revolution’ experienced by Québec throughout the nineteen sixties and seventies was in reality anything *but* quiet, especially in its largest urban metropolis, Montréal. Montréal in those decades was an exceedingly noisy place. Just as the Industrial Revolution announced its presence with the sounds of the factory, the steam engine, and the railroad, Québec’s rapid post-war modernization was proclaimed with the din of huge construction projects, the roar of jet aircraft and increased road traffic, transistor radios that blasted the new and aggressive sounds of rock’n’roll, as well as the shouts and clamour of protest and labour movements – in other words, the human sounds of those who bore the brunt of Quebec’s brave new modernity.

“There may be some noise in the province,” Quebec’s transport minister declared in 1966, “but it is the symphony of progress.”¹¹³ The idea of a “symphony of progress” is central to Chapter Two, which begins with an exploration of the church-bell in Montréal’s historical soundscapes before delving into more detailed discussions of the relationship between urban noise and notions of “progress” in Montréal in the 1960s and early 1970s. If one kind of sound predominated Montréal’s soundscape in the mid-1960s, it would be the sounds of construction: heavy machinery, the clear ring of tools striking metal, the hum of generators and compressors, and huge trucks rumbling through the streets. Between 1965 and 1975 Montréal residents experienced thousands of ground-shaking dynamite blasts,

¹¹² See: “*La Semaine du Son 2010* - Murray Schafer,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JX9VzICmKpA> (last accessed 15 Aug. 2014); as well as his forward to Jean Francois Augoyard & Henry Torgue, eds. *Sonic Experience: A Guide to Everyday Sounds*: xi-xvi.

¹¹³ James Ferrabee, “Quebec Now ‘Symphony of Progress’” 3 *Gazette* Feb. 1966: 29.

as workers and engineers transformed Montréal's physical landscape with dozens of major construction projects. In the mid-1960s the city built an underground metro system, and 250,000,000 tons of earth and gravel from the excavation were transported and dumped as fill in the St Lawrence river,¹¹⁴ creating the island complex that would house the Expo 67 exhibition grounds. Throughout the decade, new highway projects such as the Turcot interchange razed entire neighbourhoods to the ground. The Ville Marie tunnel and Complex Desjardins transformed downtown, while just to the east a giant new broadcasting tower was erected to house the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). Montréal's East End was further transformed through the early 1970s as construction began on the athletic facilities for the 1976 Olympics – a project so costly that Montréal taxpayers only finished paying it off some thirty years later. Another keynote during this era in Montréal was the ear-piercing screech of aircraft, which, especially during Expo 67, became a highly contested site of debate. The role played by noise pollution in the decision to build Mirabel airport is another major focus of Chapter Two.

Montréal was at the epicenter of shifts in Québec musical culture, and Chapter Three is devoted entirely to music. The discussion opens with an historiographical analysis of the problems inherent in creating national music narratives, particularly in Québec. There then follows a detailed discussion of how Québec musicologists have set up two particularly Québécois genres, *chanson* and *yéyé*, as binary opposites, resulting in an elevation of *chanson* as the central example of nationalist musical production in Québec, while at the same time dismissing *yéyé*

¹¹⁴ Inderbir Singh Riar, "Montreal and the Megastructure c. 1967," in Keneally & Sloane: 194.

as a degraded product of cultural imperialism and consumer capitalism. Chapter Three also explores how, in 1960s, cultural critics tied the unbridled sonics of rock music to larger societal fears about urban disorder, dismissing rock 'n roll music as little more than noise. Robert Charlebois, one of Québec's most beloved singer-songwriters, is the focus of the second half of Chapter Three, which examines the happenings of 1968 and 1969 and Charlebois' deliberate use of noise and feedback to reflect his experience as a modern, urban Montrealer.

The fourth chapter focuses on the human voice and what is perhaps *the* most well-known question about sound in Montréal: language and language politics. Examining how language became a central vector of nationalism during the 1960s - for both Anglophones and Francophones - the chapter examines various sites of linguistic debate: the project to define and catalogue a particularly "Canadian" English; debates within the Francophone community over language purity; and the political debates about *joual* (a Québec-specific argot) as a key signifier of decolonization for Québécois nationalists. This chapter also examines several noisy events related to language and the loudness of voices in public space: Charles De Gaulle's declaration of "Vive le Québec...libre!"; the passage of the Confederation Train through Montréal; the *McGill français* movement; and the riots over language and education that erupted in the Montréal neighbourhood of Saint-Léonard.

Chapter Five differs somewhat from its predecessors, in that its focus is not on noise but rather on the absence of noise. The central theme of the chapter is silence and silencing. It begins with an historiographical analysis of how ideas of Canada as a "Peaceable Kingdom" actually serve to silence political discord within

the historical record. The chapter then moves into a discussion of the anti-demonstration bylaws passed by Montréal municipal council in 1967, 1968 and 1969, which were specifically designed to silence political dissent in the name of a “silent majority.” The “silent majority” also became central to the 1970 election of Québec Premier Robert Bourassa, a “quiet” technocrat whom the media portrayed as the best option for voters who felt that Quebec’s “Quiet Revolution” had become too cacophonous. Chapter Five also takes on an analysis of the October Crisis, both in terms of silences within the historiography as well as the actual leaden silence that fell upon Montréal with the enactment of the War Measures Act on 16 October 1970. This chapter seeks to demonstrate how, by the 1970s, Québec’s “Quiet Revolution” can be more accurately understood as a silenced revolution.

“This city is getting to be a noise maniac’s paradise,” bemoaned one of Montréal’s journalists in 1966.¹¹⁵ While the “revolution” here may have been less violent than in other places, in Canada’s urban metropolis, things were *literally* becoming louder and louder. With such a cacophony of voices, noises and sounds, it is clear that during the “Quiet Revolution,” Montréal engaged with a multi-dimensional (and often deafening) modernity in a particularly energetic way. As such, this thesis contends that Montréal between 1965 and 1975 was anything but a quiet place undergoing a “revolution tranquille.” By listening actively to the sounds of the city, by placing these sounds in their soundscape and attending to their reverberations across time and space, we are able to pose new questions about Montréal – and about the country in which it is located, since to question the “Quiet

¹¹⁵ Al Palmer, “You said it,” *Gazette* 12 July 1966: 3.

Revolution” is also to question the Peaceable Kingdom in which this revolution supposedly took place. Given the preponderance of sound, both human and mechanical, an analytical perspective focused on the sonic aspects of Montréal’s past may provide some fresh insights to the histories of both Canada as “Peaceable Kingdom” and Québec during the so-called “Quiet Revolution”.

Chapter 2

“A Symphony of Progress”: Montréal’s Changing Urban Soundscape

“[T]he general acoustic environment of a society can be read as an indicator of social conditions which produce it and may tell us much about the trending and evolution of that society.”

– R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape*.¹

Faded sounds of the past

“When a city is transformed by time,” wrote Andrew Collard, “people most often speak of ‘the changing scene,’ and of how different the city looks to what it used to be. But the *sounds* of a city change as much as its appearance. A city comes not only to look different, but to sound different. Every generation of Montrealers has had its own sounds, [but] the sounds of yesteryear are heard only in the memory.”² Collard acted as editor-in-chief of the Montréal *Gazette* for almost two decades, but his real love was history. He held a master’s degree in history from McGill University, was married to an historian, and wrote a weekly historical column titled “All Our Yesterdays.” Collard had an unusually keen ear for the sounds of the past. “The teaching of history in the future may well have to include soundtracks,” he wrote in 1969, “the clip-cop of a horse on a city street, the clang of the

¹ R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: The Tuning of the World* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1977): 7.

² Andrew Collard, “The Sounds of Old Montreal,” *Gazette* 21 May 1966: 6. [emphasis added].

tram bell, the clank of the broken chain, the comfortable, reassuring, sleep-making click-clack of the rails...”³

Collard’s weekly historical column occasionally presented wonderful ‘earwitness’ testimony to the faded sounds of Montréal’s past, providing aural ‘snapshots’ of an urban soundscape in modernity’s flux. Two topics that appeared frequently in his sonic-histories, and are of particular interest to this chapter, were the changing sounds of traffic and of music. These kinds of sounds bear witness to the material progress of Montréal’s urban environment. The clip-clop of horses hooves on cobblestones was gradually replaced by the clang-clang of the trolley bell and the screech of streetcar rails, then by the particularly wintery sound of chain-clad tires on icy, snowy, pavement. By 1965, all of these sounds were extinct, except perhaps for the nostalgic horse-drawn carriages that still carry tourists through the streets of the Old Port. By the mid-1960s, buses had replaced streetcars, automobiles had replaced horses, and snow-tires had obviated the need for chains. The city was changing, and its soundscape was changing too.

One of the subjects upon which Collard lavished detail was the changing musicality of Montréal. In his columns one can discern a move from music as a public and communal experience to that of music as a private and individual affair. Writing of Montréal in the mid-1800s, Collard tells of how military bands would play on the Champ de Mars, and how the British garrison officers from nearby St. Louis street would gather to listen. He also remarked on how “sometimes, at the close of a long summer day, the sympathetic tones of a coronet came floating

³ Andrew Collard, “No click-clack,” *Gazette* 13 May 1969: 6.

weirdly over the house-tops.”⁴ The sounds of martial music would have been commonplace to Montrealers’ ears, but would likely have been heard quite differently by those within ear-shot. To Anglophone Montrealers, this was a familiar and reassuring noise, proof of their control and dominance over the city’s streets. For French Canadians, however, the sounds of Anglophone armies may have sounded quite different, eliciting frustrating feelings associated with their political, cultural, and economic submission to the Anglophone elites.

But martial music wasn’t the only melodious sound to be heard in Montréal. Less elite forms of entertainment echoed in the streets. “In the street itself,” Collard wrote, “wandering minstrels had recently introduced the banjo,” another spectacle that would draw curious listeners to the street corner or city square.⁵ Collard also reminds us of the old organ-grinders, itinerant musicians who were among the last to provide music on the streets before such things were severely curtailed. Between the 1920s and 1950s there was a trend across North America of enacting noise bylaws and city ordinances against panhandling and itinerance.⁶ Such laws were usually informed by upper-class desires for quiet and order, and were also, in many cases, based on racist assumptions about the ‘foreignness’ of the folk who wandered the streets plying their musical trades.

In the early years of the twentieth century, there would have been as many as fifty organ grinders wandering the streets of Montréal. “Heard too closely, the street organ’s puffs and wheezes were distracting,” Collard wrote. “But heard a block

⁴ Andrew Collard, “Rare music,” *Gazette* 6 April 1968: 6.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Lilian Radovac, “The ‘War on Noise’: Sound and Space in LaGuardia’s New York,” *American Quarterly* Vol. 63 no. 3 (Sept. 2011): 733-760.

away, through an open window in a morning in early spring, the music of the hurdy-gurdy man might echo with the very spirit of remote romance. There would be a few minutes pause, as the hurdy-gurdy man carried his street-organ another block, to set it down again on its leg. Then his other tunes, always including “La Marseillaise,” could be heard growing fainter and fainter, as he moved into the distance.”⁷ One of Montréal’s last organ-grinders was Arthur Lachapelle. Collard describes him in his later years, as an old man in a worn brown wide-brimmed hat, who had “a solemn way of bowing his thanks whenever a coin was given him.” Lachapelle played his hand-organ on Ste. Catherine Street, under the cover of the Morgan’s department store canopy, into the 1950s. But by that time the old hurdy-gurdy man was little more than a curiosity, a relic of a bygone era. “Today everyone has music in their homes,” Lachapelle is quoted as saying, “There is no need to go far to hear what they would like.”⁸

The sound of bells

One of the most striking changes in modernizing Montréal could be heard in the city’s bells. The sound of church bells is one aural element that links present-day Montréal to its past. Yet, as modes of transportation and modes of music-making both became mechanized, these new technologies produced a change in the sonic

⁷ Collard, “Rare Music.”

⁸ *Ibid.*

environment. As a consequence, though one can still hear church bells in Montréal, they are heard in a very different context than before.⁹

“If church steeples define the landscape in towns and villages across Quebec,” stated a recent feature article in the *Globe and Mail*, “church bells have long shaped their soundtrack.”¹⁰ To this day, approximately 80% of Canada’s bells are situated in Québec, an aural reminder of the importance of the Catholic church to Québec’s history.¹¹ With regards to Montréal, Mark Twain is often credited as giving the city one of its nicknames, *ville de cent clochers*: “city of a hundred bells.” Michel Rowan, Québec’s leading campanologist, estimates that there are approximately 1,500 bells in the 500 churches on the island.¹² Yet, while any resident of Montréal will still hear pealing bells every day, this sound is no longer the predominant feature of the soundscape that it once was, just as religion is no longer the predominant social force that it was up until the 1960s.

As Alain Corbin has written about the village bells of France, church bells used to play a vital role in regulating both the time and space of village life. Corbin’s *Village Bells* is widely acknowledged as a masterwork on the aural history of bells, which he reveals to have been complex markers of time, place and community –

⁹ The history of church bells is surprisingly understudied in Quebec, especially given the fact that religion has long been a favourite subject of its historians and social scientists. François Mathieu claims that most of the historiography surrounding bells relates to their use as musical items, but does point to a handful of publications that deal with Francophone North America’s ringing relics. See Pierre-Georges Roy, *Toutes petites choses du Régime français*, Vol. 2 (Quebec: Garneau, 1944); Clarence d’Entremont, “L’histoire des cloches acadiennes: celles du Port-Royal,” *Yarmouth Vanguard*, Feb. 6 1990; and Jeanne Pomerleau, *Métiers ambulants d’autrefois* (Quebec: Guérin, 1990).

¹⁰ Ingrid Peritz, “The ringing relics of Quebec’s past,” *Globe and Mail* 24 December 2011: A11.

¹¹ François Mathieu, *Les Cloches d’église du Québec, sujets de culture* (Québec : Septentrion, 2010): 12.

¹² See, for example, Colette Godin, ed. *Montréal, la ville aux cent clochers: regards Montréalais sur les lieux de culte* (Montréal: Editions Fides, 2002), and Marian Scott, “B is for Bells – ‘gift from god’.” *Gazette*, 26 June 2007, accessed online at

<http://www2.canada.com/montrealgazette/features/atoz/story.html?id=85826ff9-d64a-4df6-91dd-6f843d5ffe49> (last accessed 5 June 2012).

aural signals that structured the daily *habitus* of French villagers. Take, for example, the role of the bell as a marker of time. Before the advent of clocks (our modern time-pieces), the ringing of the church bell would have been the only regular auditory signal of the passage of time, what Corbin describes as “the temporal architecture of life.”¹³ This particular way of marking the passage of time has a very different feel to it than from our modern habits of clock-watching. Corbin describes the difference as essentially one between qualitative time (bells) versus quantitative time (clocks). In an earlier time, the peal of bells marked out sacred or meaningful moments throughout the week or the day. As the bell was rooted in space, up in the church bell-tower, it helped create a sense of time as rooted and immobile. As Corbin puts it: “Listening to a bell conjures up a space that is by its nature slow, prone to conserve what lies within it, and redolent of a world in which walking was the chief mode of locomotion. Such a sound is attuned to the quiet tread of a peasant.”¹⁴

Along with their function in marking out the slow passing of the hours, church bells also served (and continue to serve) as religiously-sanctioned markers of birth, marriage, and death. Many people also held superstitious beliefs that bells had the power to dispel storms, ward off demons, speed the dead towards heaven, or summon angels.¹⁵ As one of the loudest features of the pre-modern man-made

¹³ Alain Corbin, “Identity, Bells, and the Nineteenth-Century French Village,” in Smith, *Hearing History – A Reader*: 190-191.

¹⁴ Corbin: 184.

¹⁵ This superstition finds a curious parallel in modern motorcycle culture: some bikers attach small “guardian” bells to their machines in order to ward off the “gremlins” that can cause mechanical failure or accidents. There is even a company dedicated solely to the manufacture and sale of these trinkets: <http://www.guardianbell.com/> (last accessed 14 Aug. 2014).

soundscape,¹⁶ the sound of a bell was supposed to be heard throughout the parish's geographical territory. In this capacity it would also be used to warn residents of approaching perils – fire, flood, or invasion, or, in the case of Québec during the First World War, conscription agents.¹⁷

While the sound of a church-bell had many meanings depending on the context within which it was rung or heard, its main purpose was as a communication tool to alert or appeal to the churchgoing community. In this respect church bells were symbols of community, but as François Mathieu points out, they were also artefacts of an élite. Positioned at the top of the highest tower in the town, the church bell's location was as symbolic as it was functional. A symbol of the Lord's Voice from on high, unseen and untouchable, the bell in its tower was also meant to conjure a sense of the social elite as the "highest-placed interlocutors of the people."¹⁸ This function was literally inscribed upon the body of the bell itself: church bells often bear the names of prominent citizens who contributed funds towards their purchase.

Clearly, then, bells are rich signifiers of a religious community's history. In this respect, the story of Montréal's *gros bourdon*, the largest bell atop Notre Dame Basilica, is worth a few words. As mentioned above, it is important that the loudness of a bell is relative to the size and geographical extent of its congregation, for the call to mass must be heard by all members of the church community. While for a long time Notre Dame was the only church in Montréal, gradually it lost members to

¹⁶ The use of "man-made" here is deliberate: the vast majority of manufacturing, building, and landscaping projects in human history were undertaken by men.

¹⁷ Mathieu: 59.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*: 27.

other churches established across the island. In order to guard Notre Dame's status as the first and biggest church, it was decided that a larger edifice was needed, along with newer bells. The two bell towers of the new Notre Dame were built between 1830 and 1843, and in the spring of 1841 church officials communicated with Charles and Thomas Mears, directors of Whitechapel Bell Foundry in London. The brothers Mears had furnished churches with hundreds of bells, including Dunstan, "the great bell of three tons and tenhundredweight they had made for Canterbury Cathedral," Lincoln Cathedral's Big Tom, as well as bells cast for churches from Trinidad to Québec. The Mears Brothers' Whitechapell Bell Foundry is also responsible for two of the most famous bells in the world: Westminster's Big Ben and Philadelphia's original Liberty Bell. The bells of Notre Dame are therefore among good company.

Mears were asked to cast ten regular-sized bells for Notre Dame, as well as one big one, *le gros bourdon*, which was to weigh 15,000 lbs. – over 4000 lbs. heavier than Big Tom, and the biggest bell the foundry had made to date. When this bell was finished, curious crowds came look upon it in amazement at the Whitechapel foundry.¹⁹ The large bell had been inscribed with the words *getotiamini, dum venio. Omnis spiritus laudet dominum*, "Trade, till I come. Every spirit praise the Lord", and bore emblems of commerce and agriculture.²⁰ This inscription says much about Montréal's status as the British Empire's largest North American trading centre.

On 20 October 1843 the *gros bourdon* entered Montréal "in a triumphal procession. Draped and decorated and placed in a six-wheeled wagon, it was hauled

¹⁹ Mathieu: 102-113; Andrew Collard, "Of many things..." *Gazette*, 15 Nov. 1969: 6.

²⁰ Mathieu.

from the dock to Place d'Armes by strong arms pulling on cables." At Place d'Armes the bell was greeted with the welcoming peals of its ten sisters, which had been installed in the Tour de Tempérance earlier that year. *Le gros bourdon* of Notre Dame was baptised by Monseigneur Bourget with the name Jean-Marie Baptiste, and then – with the aid of no fewer than 16 men – was rung for the first time at noon on Christmas eve. However, a mere six months later, apparently on the eve of Saint John the Baptist's day, the bell's "glorious voice became suddenly cracked and harsh." Experts climbed the tower and discovered that the huge bell was flawed – there were two or three fractures visible on its surface. Upon weighing the bell it was discovered that it did not weigh as much as the original contract had stipulated. The bell was broken into pieces, removed from the tower and shipped back to London. Rather than taking the unfortunate event as a rebuke of their immodesty and pride in wanting the world's largest church bell housed in *their* church, the church officials requested the bell be re-cast with an added twelve tonnes: a bell at York had already supplanted Jean-Marie's claim as the largest bell, and Notre Dame's churchmen were not about to give up their claim to the title!²¹

The second bell arrived safely in Montréal and after it was baptised, this time as Saint-Jean Baptiste, preparations were made to raise it to the tower. As Andrew Collard wrote, this "formidable task" occupied the whole of 21 September 1848. Ropes and pulleys were borrowed from the Montréal and Lachine Railroads, and the bell was heaved, inch by inch, up to its tower home. The ascent took almost three hours, and when the bell reached the window through which it was to pass it was

²¹ Mathieu; Collard, "Of many things...".

discovered the window was too small. The bell was left dangling ponderously while masons frantically widened the opening.²² One can only imagine the anxious state this must have caused the church elders, who had already been forced to replace one bell and confronted the prospect of yet another bell crisis.

Finally *le gros bourdon* was safely lodged in its new home that evening. Collard writes that “The deep voice of the new ‘bourdon’ was even more powerful than that of its predecessor. It sounded over the island and the river, and was heard as far away as the mountains of St. Hilaire.” The mission of the church officials was successful – while Montréal was still relatively small and compact, Notre Dame’s bells would drench the city “in iron seas of sound...”.²³ It provided a solidly sonic reminder of the supreme power that the Catholic church held over the citizens of Montréal.

As the city of Montréal grew and changed over the years, the bells at Notre Dame (*le gros bourdon* in the western tower, and its ten sisters in the east), were called upon to provide various – often secular – services. During the springtime of 1866 there were plans to ring out a warning should Irish armies, with help from Fenians in Montréal, invade from the United States. It was declared that in such a case the alarm would be given by fifteen strokes of *le gros bourdon*, followed by two minutes of silence, then fifteen more strokes, after which the carillon in the eastern town would ring for several minutes.²⁴ Mercifully for locals’ eardrums, this warning never had to be given.

²² Collard, “Of many things...”.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

In an interesting convergence of modern and pre-modern communications technologies, the Corporation of Montréal once requested that a telegraph wire be attached to one of the bells to aid in communicating the event of fire. Collard tells of how “through the day and the night one of the bells in the eastern tower sounded the fire alarms. The number of strokes indicated [which] quarter of the city where the fire had broken out.”²⁵ This was not the only introduction of electrical technologies related to the bells of Notre Dame. The task of ringing *le gros bourdon* required the strength of sixteen men. With the advent of electricity it became possible to electrify the ringing mechanisms, thereby eliminating the need for so many arms pulling on the ropes. Although many churches were at first hesitant to introduce this kind of modern labour-saving device, one that began to appear in Québec churches in the 1920s, any uncertainties were eliminated when, in 1956, Pope Pius XI approved the installation of electric mechanisms in Rome’s churches.²⁶

Over time, as modern technologies began to compete not only with the Catholic Church’s bells but also with its traditional views of society and culture, and as church bells became the subject of various appropriations, the rules surrounding them became increasingly circumscribed. In this regard, François Mathieu points to *La documentation catholique No. 1290* (1958), which outlined some of the rules involved in using bells, including a very specific prohibition of electric amplification or imitation of the sound of church bells.²⁷ (The rule did allow for such innovations in case of certain carillons). It is interesting to note that in 1965, as details emerged

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Mathieu: 42.

²⁷ *Ibid.*: 43.

regarding a carillon that was being planned for Expo 67, some of the old apprehensions surrounding the sonic simulation of church bells resurfaced, demonstrating the anxieties inherent in the transition from religious harmony to modern dissonance.

Sun Life's electric carillon: “electronic marvel” or “synthetic sound machine”?

Québec’s transition from a hierarchical Catholic society – reflected in the harmony and well-ordered measures of its religious bells – to a society defined by the cacophony of modern industrial and commodity capitalism, was a transition that many French Canadians found to be unsettling. In the autumn of 1965, Montréal was already preparing for the giant international exhibition it was to host in 1967. The Corporation of Montréal had sent out a call for local businesses to take an active part in the World's Fair, and the Sun Life Insurance Company had answered this appeal with a unique idea: to fund the installation of an electric carillon atop the Lévis tower on Ile. Ste. Hélène. Sun Life envisioned that this instrument could serve as "the official musical voice of Expo." The idea of an electric carillon seemed inspired, a unique blend of tradition and modernity which reflected this dual character of Montréal itself. Yet within weeks of the announcement of their intentions, what was at first "only a discreet yet harmonious tinkling" soon risked "becoming a deafening cacophony."²⁸

A carillon, to the uninitiated, is a set of bells (at least twenty-three), tuned to each other by half-tones, and so able to play pieces of music over two or more

²⁸ Yves Margraff, "La Sun Life se fait sonner les cloches," *Le Devoir* 5 Nov. 1965: 11. [My translation, S.D.J.]

octaves. The bells are attached, via cables, to a console that resembles a piano keyboard except instead of keys there are stops which the carillonneur or carillonneuse plays with her fists and feet. One of Canada's most famous carillons is atop the parliamentary Peace Tower in Ottawa, but in Québec the most acclaimed carillon can be found at St. Joseph's Oratory, a site of religious pilgrimage perched atop the western part of Montréal's namesake mountain. The carillon at St. Joseph's has a rather illustrious history. According to François Mathieu, its history begins in 1952 when the Paccard bell foundry in France cast a carillon of forty-eight bells destined for the Eiffel Tower. However, when that project fell through, it was installed instead in a public park in the town of Asnières-sur-Seine. It was here that Father Elphège Brassard (who at one point was involved in the broadcast of Catholic radio programming) heard them. Enchanted, he requested that they be loaned to Montréal's Oratory for the occasion of that institution's 50th anniversary, in 1954. Many Montrealers found the notion of St. Joseph's boasting its very own carillon a pleasing one. Thanks to donors, the set of bells stayed in Montréal. The carillon's inaugural concert, 15 May 1955, was performed by Emile Vendette, Ottawa's Peace Tower carillonneur. The next year the Oratory hired Emilien Allard as resident carillonneur, a position he held until 1975.²⁹

As news of Sun Life's project broke, in the autumn of 1965, a small but determined group of purists – Allard would find himself among them – organized against it. Calling themselves "le Comité des amis du carillon" (the Committee of Friends of the Carillon), the group was initiated and led by Mme Lucie de Vienne, a

²⁹ Mathieu: 119-121.

French expatriate who had had a brief singing career in the 1930s and who was involved in Québec television during the 1950s and 1960s. The committee claimed to have the support of some of Montréal's musical *élite*, including Montréal Symphony Orchestra (MSO) conductor Wilfrid Pelletier and operatic tenors Raoul Jobin and Léopold Simoneau. Although it would be logical to assume that opposition to Sun Life's plans was based on the fact that the city already had a world-class carillon, this in fact was not the case. The opposition's primary focus was, rather, informed by an elitist, traditionalist philosophy that looked down on modern electronic music and opposed the project on the grounds that the electric carillon was nothing but an ersatz copy of a revered instrument, little more than "a synthetic sound machine."³⁰ "Synthetic sounds are striving toward a form of expression through the medium of electronics, but as yet, this is in its infancy," claimed a commentary printed in the *Gazette*, "Efforts to reproduce the sound of a bell are in themselves not entirely successful – a suit of such substitutes can but multiply the inadequacies which must be covered by layers and layers of sound. [...] Should the City of Montreal embarrass the holders of a Worldwide Expo by accepting a substitute for the real thing, in place of a carillon of bells?"³¹ Lucie de Vienne, the committee's head, had such distain for the project that she refused to even use the term "music" in connection with the electronic project.³² Indeed, Montréal's musical *élite* was well known to be made up of patricians disdainful of anything other than "high culture." At the same time, they were not undiscerningly noting that, for all the

³⁰"Carillon for Expo?" (letter to the editor) *Gazette* 28 Oct. 1965: 6.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² "Expo 67," *Gazette* 15 Nov. 1965: 17.

new project seemed designed to stabilize the sonic environment, in fact it was unmistakably part of its modernist transformation.

Emilien Allard, de Vienne and the other members of the Comité des amis du carillon, in their opposition to Sun Life's proposal, petitioned Mayor Drapeau and Expo 67's adjunct commissioner general Robert Shaw with a counter-proposal for the installation of a real carillon on Ile Ste. Hélène. Allard claimed that he had been working on such a plan since the summer of 1963, which included the construction of a special tower that would house the instrument as well as a campanile museum, to be situated on the first floor. Part of his argument for this project centred around the idea that the location of Ile Ste. Hélène was perfect, as the St. Lawrence river would carry the sound more clearly and over greater distance than a carillon situated elsewhere. Allard's proposal also took into account the opportunities presented by Expo 67. Each nation participating in the exhibition, he argued, could contribute a bell. The sizes of the bells could be tailored to the financial means (and, one suspects, the political weight) of each contributing nation.³³ Having Expo's participating members each contribute a bell could also help keep costs down - an argument made specifically for the benefit of the critics of the Comité, who argued that a real carillon would be much more costly than Sun Life's electronic project (which cost approximately \$150,000). Lucie de Vienne, speaking on a Radio Canada broadcast aired 4 November 1965, claimed that she had already approached several consuls with the idea of an "internationalisation of the carillon," and had thus far

³³ Margraff, "La Sun Life se fait sonner les cloches"; "Expo 67."

received "favourable" responses.³⁴ The idea of an "internationalised carillon" was highly symbolic of Expo 67's utopian internationalist ideals: with each member nation contributing a bell, the end result would presumably be that all the nations of the world would come together in an expression of musical harmony.

In the end, the Comité des amis du carillon, in effect not much more than a small but vocal minority, did not win the day.³⁵ Their critics pointed out that while the idea of an international carillon was nice, there was not enough time, in the eighteen months left before the opening of the Fair, to have so many bells cast. Sun Life prepared a long document countering the Comité's objections to "synthetic" bells by citing "noted" (but unnamed) American and English carilloneurs who claimed that the electric carillon "was a thing of great beauty with wonderful possibilities of musical expression" and which had "astonishing results and effects."³⁶ Sun Life also admitted that it had an ulterior motive in calling for an electronic, rather than a real, carillon, as their longer-term plan was to have the instrument re-located, after 1967, to their building overlooking Dominion Square, where it could be used to pipe Christmas music through the downtown shopping area.

Sun Life's carillon was an impressive undertaking. With 671 'bells' it was larger than the 610-bell carillon built for the Coca-Cola pavilion at the 1964 New York World's Fair. Indeed, this previous carillon was most likely the inspiration for Sun Life's project, as both instruments were constructed by the Schulmerich

³⁴ Yves Margraff, "L'Expo en devenir - Un autre son de cloche" *Le Devoir* 11 Nov. 1965: 5.

³⁵ Although it was reiterated several times that the Comité had the support of other people aside from the five representatives of the musical élite, these others were in fact never named.

³⁶ "Expo 67: Ding Dong," *Gazette* 2 May 1966: 25.

Carillon Company of Sellersville, Pennsylvania. The New York carillon was also 'electronic' - fifty-seven speakers transmitted sounds via a series of electronics that were housed in fifteen metal cabinets.³⁷ The Sun Life project was no less ambitious. Basically a modernized version of the technology behind the player piano, the carillon was controlled by rolls of dotted computer paper, each roll containing enough information for about twenty minutes of music. The perforations in these rolls sent signals to the equipment which would then cause a hammer to strike the appropriate 'bell', which were actually 671 small metal bars. The "ping" from this action could then be picked up by "an electrostatic device" which changed the tone into electrical impulses. These impulses were then amplified hundreds of thousands of times and broadcast via forty loudspeakers.³⁸ The carillon was also outfitted with the traditional console of stops, so that human hands could still wring music from the electronic device.

On 28 April 1967 Sun Life's Centennial Carillon (as it came to be named) chimed the public opening of Expo 67 "amidst fanfares and flourish." The insurance company claimed that its carillon was "the official musical voice of Expo"³⁹ and indeed the instrument had a strong sonic presence throughout the duration of the Exposition. At the Fair's opening ceremony it "played" the official Expo 67 theme song "Hey Friend, Say Friend," and every day it announced the opening and closing of the Expo grounds, automatically signalled the hours as the days passed, and also

³⁷ Bradd Schiffman, "Schulmerich Carillions at the New York 's Fair" *New York World's Fair 1964/5*, (online source), <http://www.nywf64.com/schulmerich02.shtml> (last accessed 14 Aug. 2014).

³⁸ "Automation hits bell-ringing," *Gazette*, 8 July 1968: 9.

³⁹ "Expo Music Chimes Out," *Gazette* 29 April 1967: 4.

broadcast the thrice-daily concerts of resident carillonneur Lucien Héту.⁴⁰ After the Fair closed, the carillon was relocated to Dominion Square where it chimed "delightful tones" daily at 9 a.m.⁴¹

New forms of capitalism – ones determined to penetrate the daily psychic lives of citizens – entailed the alienation of those citizens from time-honoured, religiously sanctioned ways of marking significant moments in life. Residents were required, like it or not, to reflect upon such changes and ponder their 'authenticity.' New spatio-temporal relations made it possible to easily change the location of the 'bells' and an orientation towards the future relegated those who protested against this wide-ranging change in daily life to the margins of public debate. The upshot of this cultural revolution was a carillon which no longer chimed out a religious message but functioned as an integral part of a fully consumerist capitalism. In this respect, though one might imagine the soundscape had stayed the same, its meaning and purpose had irrevocably changed.

The Urban Soundscape: Quebec's "Symphony of Progress"

While the chimes of the Sun Life carillon, the bong-bong of *le gros bourdon* and the ringing of a multiplicity of church-bells might have added pleasant musical tones to Montréal's urban soundscape, the city's dominant keynote during the 1960s and 1970s was far less pleasing to the ear. Aided by the impetus of Expo 67, Montréal underwent a massive building boom. Between 1965 and 1975 the city witnessed an almost constant flurry of construction activity. A quick list of the

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ "Loves Those Chimes," *Gazette* 8 July 1968: 6; "Automation hits bell-ringing".

projects undertaken during this period would include: the underground metro system, the Turcot highway interchange, Place Bonaventure, Place Radio-Canada, the campus of Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), Place Desjardins, the Expo Islands, the Olympic Park complex, Place Ville Marie, Place Alexis Nihon/Westmount Square, the Decarie Expressway, and the Montréal Stock Exchange. In a single year during the mid-60s, the city issued a record number of building permits, totalling over \$300 million. No fewer than 85% of these were for new construction.⁴² "It seems that every other day in Ourtown the gents in the metal helmets start a new building complex," wrote *Gazette* columnist Al Palmer. "You can even go as far as to say that if Ourtown has a complex, it's a building complex. Everywhere you look in the uptown districts you'll see tower cranes dotting the skyline; you'll see new shafts of concrete and steel stabbing at the clouds."⁴³ "Montréal n'est plus Montréal," editorialized *Le magazine Maclean*. "C'est un immense chantier, c'est une ville qui change sans cesse, qui ne cesse de se transformer."⁴⁴

The words most often used to describe this period are revealing of the sonic aspect of this activity, particularly the idea of a "building boom" and the "extraordinary rise in volume of building construction."⁴⁵ There is no aspect of human activity that does not reveal itself in sound, and construction is one of the noisiest of human endeavours. As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, those who lived through this vibrant period of Montréal's history would have been more than familiar with the warning whistles, booms, and echoes of hundreds of

⁴² "Montreal's building boom hits all-time high in '65," *Gazette*, 3 Jan. 1966: 3.

⁴³ Al Palmer, "The Complex," *Gazette* 26 Sept. 1966: 3.

⁴⁴ "Montréal c'est..." *Le magazine Maclean* décembre 1966): 19-20.

⁴⁵ "Montreal's building boom...". [Emphasis added.]

dynamite explosions, the rumble of heavy trucks and machinery, the clear ringing of tools striking metal, the clanks of chains and bulldozers, the annoying battering of jackhammers, and the hum of generators, compressors, and general activity. Only an exceptionally keen-eared Montrealer would have been able to pick out the sound of church-bells when this din was at its height.

Canadian sound-studies pioneer R. Murray Schafer once said that "wherever noise is granted immunity, there will be found a seat of power," and this could not be more true of Montréal during the '60s and '70s.⁴⁶ While construction would have been by far the noisiest activity in the city, it seems to have been granted an unstated immunity from people campaigning for noise abatement. Most noise complaints (with the notable exception of airplane noise, which will be dealt with below) targeted objects of the new consumer lifestyle, such as muscle cars, transistor radios, lawnmowers and motorcycles. Indeed, the editors of *The Gazette*, who spent years waging a wordy war against noise in the city, were only once taken to task for their apparent deafness to the clamour associated with construction: "[You have] failed completely to identify the real offenders," someone complained in 1969, "...the true culprits... are... heavy commercial vehicles in their present form. Equipment such as trailer transports, dump trucks and cement mixers are particularly offensive. Engine noise, exhaust discharge and tire noise all contribute at levels many times those of the picayune transgressors like motorcycle and sports

⁴⁶ Schafer: 76.

car drivers...".⁴⁷ But what could account for the willingness of Montrealers to put up with such an unholy din?

There are many possible answers to this question, but I would like to highlight two of them. Firstly, those who have to endure loud industrial noises such as those caused by construction, factories, or airplanes, are usually on the lower end of the socio-economic scale. Living closer to major transportation hubs such as airports and freeways, and working blue-collar factory jobs, working-class citizens are generally more exposed to noise than their middle- and upper-class counterparts. More affluent people being able to afford quiet places in the suburbs (or at least apartments with decent sound insulation) and/or work in corporate, sound-insulated white-collar jobs. Working class people, immigrants, and marginalized populations struggling to make ends meet generally have more immediate problems to contend with than noise – although the 'problem' of noise can be quite serious. Secondly, perhaps the primary reason why the clamour of construction was largely tolerated in Montréal is that these sounds were considered the necessary accompaniment of Montréal's material progress. To question the legitimacy of so much noise would be to question the legitimacy of the city's embrace of modernity. "There may be some noise in the province," trumpeted Claire Kirkland-Casgrain in 1966, "but it is the symphony of progress."⁴⁸

During the lead-up to Expo 67, as the city was transformed and its soundscape overtaken by the din of man and machine, there was an almost palpable mood of optimism about Montréal's progress. "Mayor Drapeau and his

⁴⁷ "The real noise makers," (letter to the editor) *Gazette*, 4 Aug. 1969: 6.

⁴⁸ "Quebec Now 'Symphony of Progress,'" *Gazette*, 3 Feb. 1966: 29.

administration deserve full credit for all they have done in giving impulse and encouragement to changing Montreal," the *Gazette* editorialized in 1965, "for helping create the mood of progress that has attracted here the immense amount of international interest, capital investment and technical knowledge that has enabled Montreal to share international advantages. So long as Montreal continues to look outward upon the world, avoiding the parochial mood, and limited and restrictive definitions, it will have an immense future."⁴⁹ Over and over, the cacophonous din created by the rapid change rolling over the face of the city and the province was romanticized as being "symphonic": "The roar of a hydroelectric dam, the scream of a chainsaw and the eerie hoot of a diesel whistle" thus became "an industrial symphony."⁵⁰ Indeed, it is telling that during the 1970 season of *Man and His World* (the yearly exhibition that took over the Expo grounds after 1967) the Québec pavilion was dominated by sound: "Every corner of the province's steel and glass box reverberates with the hums, roars, and crashes of industry – of pulp mills and mines, and of planes, trains and diesel trucks. And everywhere is the constant roar of the 80-foot waterfall which tumbles from ceiling to floor... This is Quebec: an economic power."⁵¹

"A Swift, Quiet Ride": The Montréal Metro

One of Montréal's crowning achievements during this period of rapid development was the city's underground subway system, the metro. Montréal's

⁴⁹ "International Montreal," *Gazette*, 24 Nov. 1965: 6.

⁵⁰ "Sound is in at Quebec Pavilion," *Gazette*, 18 Aug. 1970: 3.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

metro is an important marker of the city's modernity. At the time of its construction, there were approximately thirty other cities in the world that featured a similar system, and few that could boast one of the most highly prized qualities of Montréal's metro: the rubber tires which allowed the trains to move "virtually noiseless[ly]."⁵² The continued emphasis on the quiet nature of the metro during the months leading up to and just after its official opening in October 1966 is revealing of an awareness that the city, at least aboveground, was noisy, and that the other markers of Montréal's modernity carried with them this negative sonic complement – despite the romanticized notions of Québécois modernity as a "symphony of progress."

While civic boosters trumpeted the benefits of Montréal's ultramodern transportation system, the darker side of the metro project has been discussed less frequently. Constructed at great cost to the city and its taxpayers, this engineering feat employed thousands of people but was also responsible for the deaths of eleven workers killed during its initial construction, not to mention suicides facilitated by the speeding trains. Most likely the metro's boosters never considered that despite its marvellous modernity the metro might also function as a suicide machine. The results of one study, for example, found that between 1986 and 1995 there were 323 suicide attempts in the Montréal Metro.⁵³ Not everyone found the symphony of progress bearable. Modernity is widely associated with anomie and a sense of

⁵² "International Montreal," *Gazette*, 5 Nov. 1965: 6; "Metro a go-goes," *Gazette*, 19 April 1966: 3.

⁵³ "The Dream Comes True: Metro Opens," *Gazette*, 15 Oct. 1966: 1; Guy Chartrand, "Les 25 ans du Métro de Montréal" *La Presse*, 19 March 1991, accessed online at metrodemontreal.com, <http://www.metrodemontreal.com/history/index-f.html> (last accessed 14 Aug. 2014); Brian L Mishara, "Suicide in the Montreal Subway System: Characteristics of Victims, Antecedents, and Implications for Prevention," *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 44 no. 7 (September 1999): 690-696.

disconnection from one's own society, and Joy Parr, for one, has explored the extent to which dramatic changes in sensory surroundings can overwhelm previous ways of understanding and giving meaning to one's world.⁵⁴

Before the metro, Montréal's existing public transit was a fleet of noisy buses, the city having phased out streetcars in the 1950s.⁵⁵ The municipal bus system faced frequent criticism on the grounds that the vehicles were noisy and smelly: "...how much longer is the bovine Montreal public going to tolerate the ear-piercing squeals that are emitted from almost every fifth Montreal Tramway bus each time the brakes are applied?" bemoaned one citizen.⁵⁶ Paradoxically, one individualist solution to the problem of noisy and uncomfortable transportation was afforded by the private automobile, which offered each rider a greater degree of quietude and comfort while simultaneously adding grievously to Montréal's overall levels of noise and pollution. In an advertisement published in *La Presse* just a few days before the opening of Montréal's metro, Renault suggested that "Un monde de silence" awaited the driver of the Renault 10. Having treated "le bruit en ennemi," the car promised that the rider would not be deafened by a noisy ventilation system, and that the generous quantity of rubber foam used in the seats would help mute all noises. "Elle se conduit en tout quiétude," Renault promised.⁵⁷ In both the public and private spheres, rubber seemed to open a new gateway to restful and quiet travel.

⁵⁴ Parr, *Sensing Changes*: 44.

⁵⁵ The city paved over the rails rather than removing them, and from time to time these steel relics poke up out of the pavement, which creates a dangerous hazard for the city's many cyclists.

⁵⁶ "Letter to the editor" *The Gazette*, 24 Aug. 1965: 6.

⁵⁷ "Un monde de silence" (advertisement) *La Presse* 13 Oct. 1966: 41.

Un monde de silence.



La Renault 10, manuelle ou automatique, traite le bruit en ennemi. C'est la voiture la mieux insonorisée de sa catégorie. Grâce au système de refroidissement à circuit scellé, garanti à 40° sous zéro, vous n'êtes pas assourdi par un ventilateur bruyant. Les 4½ pieds cubes de caoutchouc-mousse

dont les sièges sont rembourrés contribuent aussi à étouffer tous les bruits. Si vous désirez vous procurer une voiture sans pour cela sacrifier votre confort, pourquoi ne pas venir essayer une Renault? Elle est fabriquée au Québec. Elle a subi 6 traitements anti-rouille (dont un revêtement sous carrosserie

contribuant aussi à l'insonorisation) et reçu 5 couches d'apprêt et de peinture canadienne. Elle se conduit en toute quiétude. Elle est tellement économique. Et mérite que vous veniez l'essayer. Vous pouvez vous procurer une Renault 10 pour environ \$2,000.

FABRIQUÉE

AU CANADA

RENAULT  **10**

Figure 1: "Un monde de silence" *LaPresse* (13 Oct. 1966 pg. 41).

"Mayor Jean Drapeau pushed a button and Montreal's first subway train silently glided forward," Jean de Guise reported in August 1966, a few months before the system officially opened to the public in October.⁵⁸ Amid the excitement leading up to the opening, journalists made a point of highlighting the fact that the new metro was easy on the ears: "The train, capable of speeds up to 50 miles per hour - is virtually noiseless. The only sound the rider hears is a low rumble from the rubber wheels."⁵⁹ Montréal's metro was the first in the world to employ wheels fitted with rubber tires. The decision to build cars with this type of wheel and tire had not been uncontroversial. Critics pointed out that they were subject to more wear and tear than steel wheels, and that their adoption also negated the option of extending the metro line into the open air. In the cold Canadian climate, rubber tires on icy cement would be considerably less safe than a steel rail system. Yet the rubber design won the day, thanks to engineers from the Régie Autonome des Transports de Paris, who had tested pneumatic rubber-wheeled vehicles in the Paris Metro.⁶⁰ Indeed, the French were so closely involved in the creation of the Montréal system that *La Marseillaise*, the French national anthem, was performed at the opening ceremony, and a metro entrance near the *Vieux Port* was constructed as a replica of Paris' own *métropolitain*.⁶¹

Attendance at the opening ceremonies was much larger than expected, and both Drapeau's and Cardinal Paul-Émile Léger's comments, broadcast over Berri-de-

⁵⁸ Jean de Guise "Mayor Drapeau drives first metro car," *The Gazette*, 25 Aug. 1966: 3.

⁵⁹ "Subway in Action - Briefly!" *The Gazette*, 19 April 1966: 3.

⁶⁰ "Voici le métro de Montréal," *La Presse*, 14 Oct. 1966: 4.

⁶¹ "Metro Official Opening Set," *Gazette* 15 Oct. 1966: 3; "French Contribution," *Gazette* 14 Oct. 1966: 36.

Montagny's public address system, were difficult to distinguish over the excited babble of the crowd.⁶² Reporters covering the opening of the metro, despite the distractions of the "fuss and fanfare" of a "hard-blowing brass band" and the "noise and confusion" of over 5000 excited first-time passengers, still made an effort to remind people that the rubber wheels equalled a "silent" ride.⁶³ Amid an explosion of flash photography, "the first gleaming blue and white wagon arrived silently at the quai."⁶⁴ "What's the reason the Metro's so pleasing?" asked one reporter, then answered: "Travellers get tiled stations, op art, spacious, comfortable cars, and a swift, quiet ride for their twenty cents." Senator Hartland de Montarville Molson declared, "It's the quietest and smoothest ride I've ever had."⁶⁵

Today's metro rider might scoff at such claims. While Montréal's subway cars do not squeal like the ones in Toronto, for example, they are hardly silent. Anyone who has had to shout to their travelling companions over the roar of an incoming train, or had to pump up the volume on their iPod upon boarding, knows better. Yet, as Jonathan Sterne has demonstrated in terms of recording technologies, ideas of noise levels and sound fidelity are relative.⁶⁶ "...[N]otre métro est relativement silencieux," editorialized *Le Devoir*.⁶⁷ In the context of what was probably Montréal's noisiest decade, the shiny new metro may well have seemed relatively silent.

One last feature of Montréal's metro system deserves comment here. Sometimes, alert passengers may detect a curious three-note melody that can be

⁶²"Montréal inaugure son metro," *La Presse*, 15 Oct. 1966: 1.

⁶³"The Dream Comes True: Metro Opens," *Gazette*, 15 Oct. 1966: 1.

⁶⁴"Montréal, qui l'a bien mérité, à son metro," *Le Devoir* 15 Oct. 1966 pg. 1.

⁶⁵Terry Haig, "Metro A-Moving. The Verdict... Magnifique," *Gazette* 15 Oct. 1966: 2.

⁶⁶Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Duke University Press, 2003).

⁶⁷"Nous avons le métro!" *Le Devoir* 15 Oct. 1966: 4.

heard as the train pulls away from the platform. A reproduction of this three-note sound has recently become a feature on the metro's orange line: it plays just prior to departure, alerting passengers to clear the doors. To the musically educated, these three notes may seem vaguely familiar. Indeed, they are the same three notes that open one of the most important musical works of the twentieth century: Aaron Copland's *Fanfare For The Common Man*. The opening notes of Copland's classic signal the departure of each train, seemingly a strange ode by machine to passengers. As Tom Vanderbilt has noted, the metro's little melody is strangely appropriate:

Fanfare for the Common Man, one of the most famous pieces of 20th century American music, is a kind of poetically appropriate choice. As Alex Ross notes in *The Rest is Noise*, its title was drawn from a speech by New Deal firebrand Henry Wallace, "Century for the Common Man," and if there's any place for celebrating such a creature and such ideals it's on the crowded platform of a grand municipal project. As music, moreover, it's stirring and anthemic — in a quiet way, if that's possible — and in the Metro it seems to bring a kind of heroism to the everyday departure.⁶⁸

But is the metro's little melody an accident of mechanical acoustics, or an appeal to our sonic imaginaries, triggering the piece in the minds of the masses as they hum through the subterranea of the metropolis? Bombardier representative David Slack, in an interview with Vanderbilt, helped clear up some of the mystery. It is only certain cars that make this sound, the MR-73s, whose traction motors feature something called a "direct current chopper." These choppers produce interrupted pulses of current as the train accelerates. However, a by-product of these pulses is a range of "undesirable harmonics and noises." In order to remedy this problem the

⁶⁸ Tom Vanderbilt, "Fanfare for the Common Commuter" *Design Observer.com*, 22 October 2008. Online source: <http://observatory.designobserver.com/entry.html?entry=7487> (last accessed 2 July 2014).

metro's engineers added a device to the motors designed to filter out these "unwanted harmonics," but this device doesn't filter out *all* the sounds, and, among tones that are undetectable by the human ear, the three tones of Copland's classic remain. "The fact that the remaining tones resemble music or Copland's piece is purely coincidental," David Slack claims. "They are somewhat pleasant, though, so the project engineers chose to leave this interesting characteristic intact during design of the trains." Vanderbilt wonders whether a Copland fan lurked amidst the ranks of the engineers. "What are the chances," he asks, "that this would happen in a city whose Expo 67 – a year after the metro debuted – featured as one of its theme songs *Fanfare for the Common Man*?"⁶⁹ Coincidentally or not, many Montrealers found they had a new keynote when they traveled on the metro – one that implicitly celebrated an onward and upward optimism about the annihilation of space by time.

"More to the problem than meets the ear" : Airports and airplane noise

Expo 67, which drew over fifty million visitors to Montréal, may have been the impetus behind construction of the city's "silent" metro system, but any 'aural gains' achieved underground were more than counterbalanced by 'aural losses' above it. Airplane noise regularly offended the ears of Montrealers. Some were sufficiently disturbed to vocalize their complaints. Most lived in the westernmost parts of the island: Dorval, home of Montréal's international airport; Ville St. Laurent, whose residents lived under the approach to runway 24 L; Pointe-Claire, an affluent suburb along the lakeshore; and the South Shore (which had a small airport

⁶⁹ Vanderbilt, "Fanfare for the Common Commuter."

of its own at St. Hubert). The town of Mount-Royal also endured its share of airplane noise, as jets circled the northern part of the island in their approach to Dorval.

Airplane noise, already an issue for many Montrealers, reached a peak during the International Exposition. Hosting tens of millions of visitors meant welcoming hundreds, if not thousands, more flights into the city. British Overseas Air Carrier (BOAC) increased its number of flights into Montréal by more than 20% in 1967. Eastern Airlines increased its Montréal-bound flights by 37%, which meant an additional nineteen flights a week, for a total of sixty-seven.⁷⁰ And these were only two of the many international airlines flying in and out of Dorval airport at that time. As early as 1966 airlines had announced an intention to triple their flights into the city.⁷¹ The airport was such a central factor in the city's Expo project that it featured prominently in the short video shot as a companion to the Expo 67 theme song "Hey Friend, Say Friend," which depicts singer Donald Lautrec deplaning from an Air Canada jet. He was then shown, along with a selection of pretty airline hostesses, gliding happily through the Dorval terminal on its futuristic moving sidewalks.⁷²

The airport at Dorval was receiving so much traffic in 1967 that it was forced to abandon the successful noise abatement measures that had been established the previous autumn. After only a few months of Expo's six-month duration had passed, Dorval Mayor Sarto Desnoyers became so fed up he wrote to the Federal Minister of

⁷⁰ "Expo 67: The Beat in Brief," *Gazette* 6 May 1966: 33; "Expo 67: Of People and Things," *Gazette* 6 April 1967: 31.

⁷¹ David (Mitchell) Migicovsky, "Threat of worse moves St. Laurent Resident to Demand Relief from Aircraft Noise" (letter to the editor) *Montreal Star*, 11 July 1966: 6.

⁷² Donald Lautrec, "Un jour, un jour = Hey friend say friend" dir. unknown. CBC film clip, accessed online at <http://vimeo.com/38309428> (last accessed 16 July 2014).

Transport – the second time in only a year that he had been given cause to do so. “The noise caused by continuous departure and arrival of jet aircraft is beyond description,” he wrote. “The noise factor has become intolerable.”⁷³ He urged the Ministry to consider the construction of a new runway diverting air traffic away from his community. Meanwhile, hundreds of citizens of Dorval signed petitions demanding that the local council do something about the “excessive noise from the airport,” especially the flights that tended to “scream” overhead at night.⁷⁴

Although Expo was behind increased complaints against Dorval airport, 1967 certainly wasn't the first time that residents had banded together in protest against the noise. During the summer 1966, residents of Ville St. Laurent organized against Montréal's International Airport, spurred on by a letter published by a resident who had heard one overhead racket too many. David (Mitchell) Migicovsky had endured the jets for many years prior to 1966, but for whatever reason, one day in early July 1966, he finally snapped. That fateful day Migicovsky was having a barbeque in the backyard of his St. Laurent home, trying to enjoy time with his family. As yet another jet engine roared overhead, rattling his body to the bone, he stuffed his fingers in his ears and yelled at the retreating machine. His two boys laughed at him, but Migicovsky did not find anything amusing in the “piercing, screaming, eerie kind of sound” that drowned out any attempt at conversation with his nearest and dearest. He wrote an exasperated letter to the *Montreal Star*, addressed to the presidents of all the airlines operating out of Dorval, as well as the Federal Minister of Transport and his fellow residents of the St. Laurent community: “Your fantastic multitude of

⁷³ “Jets screaming over lakeshore said ‘Making life unbearable,’” *Gazette*, 12 Sept. 1967: 3.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

planes is sickening, the screeching noise is downright unbearable, and the nerves are beginning to become uncontrollable," he wrote,

[...] Isn't it absurd that all conversation must cease when a jet passes? Isn't it ridiculous that people have to block their ear-drums from the irritation? Isn't it stupid in this day and age that everything must stop every few minutes, as one jet after another begins to descend? Well, I am thoroughly disgusted with all of this, and want to know what is going to be done. Not in 1968, not in 1967, but this month, this year. Wake up, St. Laurent. Don't be fools. The airlines are currently planning to triple, yes, triple, their flights in 1967. I want an answer to this open letter. I want to know where our community stands. I sincerely promise you, this is only the beginning.⁷⁵

The response to Migicovsky's anguished protest was overwhelming. Hundreds of fellow citizens sent letters, made phone calls, and visited his house to experience the jet roar for themselves. Not that many of them needed proof: they too were living directly under the cacophonous tyranny of the jet age. The MP for Dollard – St. Laurent telephoned his constituent, but was unable to sooth Migicovsky's jangled nerves: plans for a new runway that would divert traffic away from St. Laurent, and which had first been promised in 1960, were being deferred yet again, due to lack of funds. But Migicovsky didn't buy the argument: "I ask you, how can the government spend thousands of dollars on the Gerda Munsinger affair, millions of dollars on Expo, but cannot afford to build the runway?" He invited the Transport Minister to visit him. "I would like him to count the windows on the jets as they pass. I would like him to read the country origins. I would like him to talk on the phone, or to speak to fellow Canadians on our streets. You just have to live here to believe it!"⁷⁶

⁷⁵ David (Mitchell) Migicovsky, "Threat of worse moves St. Laurent Resident to Demand Relief from Aircraft Noise" (letter to the editor) *Montreal Star* 11 July 1966: 6.

⁷⁶ David (Mitchell) Migicovsky "More about Aircraft Noise in St. Laurent – and Dorval Too" (letter to the editor) *Montreal Star* 15 July 1966: 6.

“Seldom in recent years has there been such a sustained outburst over the nuisance of aircraft noise in a residential area as that arising from the St Laurent community during the last two weeks,” remarked the editors of the *Star*. Buoyed by the outpouring of support, Migicovsky organized a community meeting, turning “hundreds of other-wise quiet suburban citizens into political activists.”⁷⁷ Soon a delegation was invited to visit Ottawa. Ten people from St. Laurent met with federal aviation officials and John Turner, minister without portfolio, acting on behalf of Transport Minister Pickersgill. The federal officials promised to study and review the problem of aircraft noise, to punish airlines found in violation of regulations surrounding night-time flights, and to look into the possibility of a new runway, reminding the cabinet about this promise, made eight years previous. As we will see below, all of this eventually culminated in a plan, announced in 1969, to build a new airport off the island. But in the meantime, eardrums in St. Laurent continued to be assaulted with the screeching roar of incoming airplanes. “Everyone here is irritable and annoyed and tired of being disturbed,” wrote one resident. “I think it’s becoming a health hazard – we are human beings, you know.”⁷⁸ Citizens felt themselves entitled to contest the terms of the new soundscape that hurt their ears and disrupted their social lives.

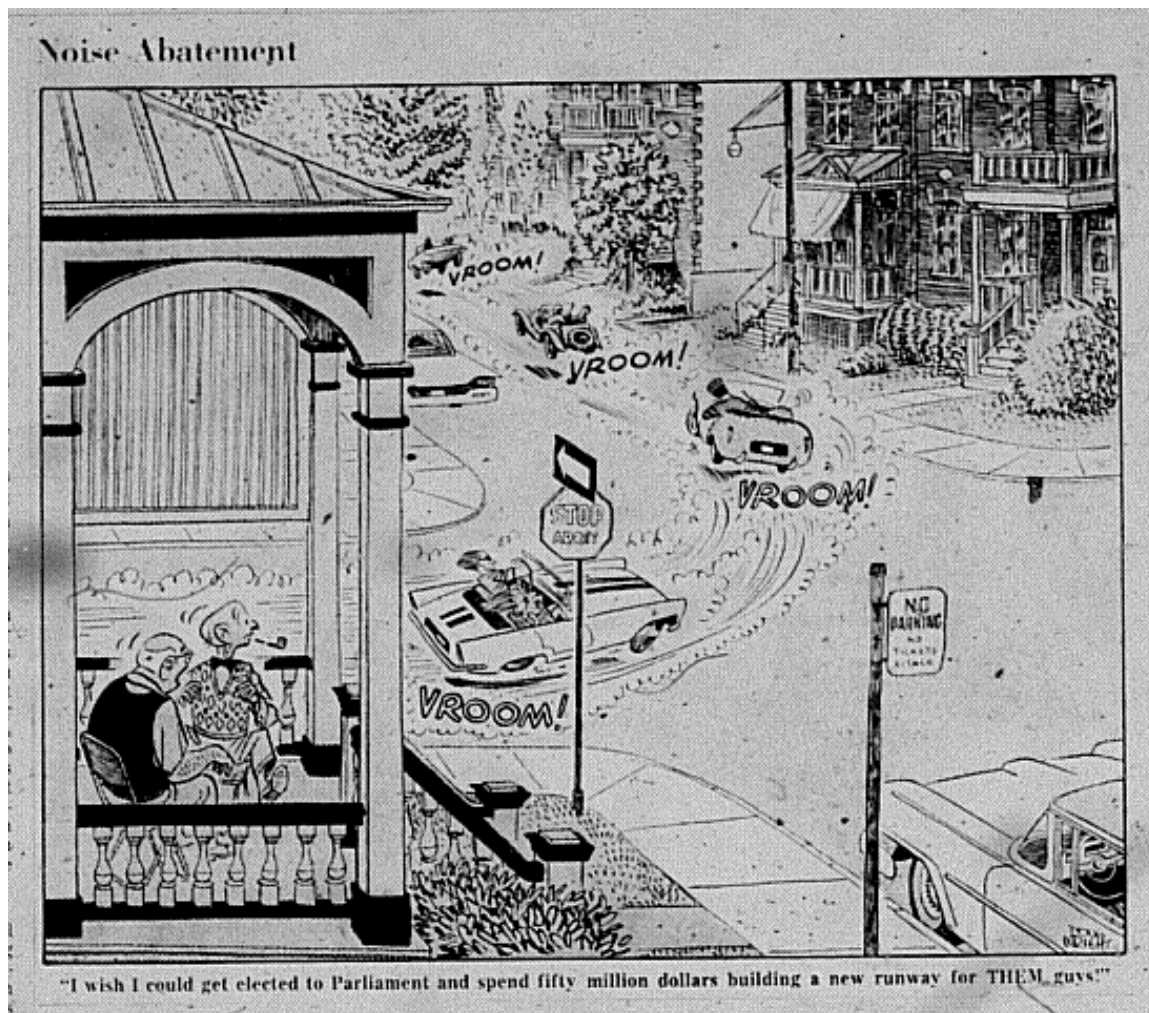
Indeed, prolonged exposure to loud noises can cause serious health problems. Aside from hearing impairment or hearing loss, noise can also cause (or contribute to) a host of physical and mental health issues including high blood pressure, heart attacks, digestive problems, headaches or migraines, muscle tension,

⁷⁷ “The Jet Din Drowns Mr. Migicovsky’s Shout of Protest,” *Montreal Star*, 22 July 1966: 4.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

stress hormone imbalances, insomnia, anxiety, irritability, and depression.⁷⁹ Even without being able to articulate what they found upsetting about the ‘muscle sounds’ of modernity, residents might nonetheless respond to its sound-track. And when, in the case of the airport noise debate, they could clearly identify the source of their distress, it was often the case that it seemed to arise from a vast, capital-driven logic far beyond their control—in this case, one whose consequences were unfolding in the distant skies.

Figure 2: "I wish I could get elected to Parliament and spend fifty million dollars building a new runway for THEM guys!". *Montreal Daily Star* (8 July 1961 pg. 8).



⁷⁹ H. Ising and B. Kruppa, "Health effects caused by noise: evidence in the literature from the past 25 years," *Noise Health*, Vol. 6 no. 22 (2004): 5-13.

While many people were sympathetic to complaints about airplane noise, those involved in the airline industry were quick to deflect such criticisms. One of the most common responses was to accuse protesters of being “anti-progress.” Paul Lacaille, Montréal’s regional superintendent of airways, was one of these: “This is the jet age. This is progress,” he argued. “[P]eople are going to have to learn to live with it.” One of his colleagues argued that it was a matter of education, that people had to be taught “how to live with jets in the jet age.”⁸⁰ But those who had to live directly under the jets refused to hum along with the symphony of progress. “I moved here before...the arrival of the jet age,” wrote Migicovsky. “Don’t give me the song-and-dance routine about progress. Progress is a two-way street. So far it’s been all one way – yours! You have your airlines and your profits. All we residents ever got is a big fat zero, except for increased taxation.” “[We] are victims of this modern age,” wrote one person in support of Migicovsky, while Mr. and Mrs. E. Hytner concurred: “Can whole communities be endangered and life upset and made unbearable without being heard or measures taken to help? Are we going to be completely taken over by multi-million dollar concerns in all areas where our 2 cents’ worth is not even counted as legal currency?”⁸¹

Another typical response to complaints was to point out that there were many factors accounting for the excessive noise caused by airplane traffic, making it difficult for officials to identify appropriate targets for noise abatement measures. It was not until the early 1960s that engineers began to take noise into account in the

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ David (Mitchell) Migicovsky, “Threat of worse...”; R. Taylor, letter to the editor, *Montreal Star*, 15 July 1966: 6; Mr and Mrs. E Hytner, letter to the editor, *Montreal Star*, 18 July 1966: 8.

construction of jet engines, and even through the later years of that decade airplanes were not required to pass noise certifications.⁸² Some of the worst offenders at Dorval were older-model British aircraft, which were described by Civil Aviation Inspector Hubert Salvador as sounding “like they’re dragging a long trail of noise behind them,” as well as French KC-135 military transports, which were eventually banned from Dorval after failing to comply with the airport’s request to keep the roar to a minimum.⁸³ Many pilots did what they could to avoid passing directly over populated areas, executing sharp (and sometimes dangerous) turns and reducing engine power immediately after liftoff. However, as R.M. Kidd, director of technical and air safety of the Canadian Air Line Pilots Association put it, “we do our best, but you just can’t tippy-toe a 350,000 pound aircraft out of an airport.” Dorval was especially problematic in this sense, since as the population of Montréal grew, officials succumbed to pressures to re-zone areas around the airport for residential construction. Despite opposition from airport authorities and pilots’ associations, zoning laws in Montréal actually permitted residential construction within only a few hundred yards of the runways – a situation that Lloyd Hinton, Executive Secretary of the National Aircraft Noise Abatement Council, considered to be “a dereliction of duty on the part of local zoning authorities” who had failed their local constituents “because of ignorance or lack of moral stamina.”⁸⁴

⁸² “Jet Noise: More to the Problem than Meets the Ear,” *Gazette*, 29 March 1968: 33; “End of Jet howl in sight?” *Gazette*, 13 Dec. 1969: 1.

⁸³ “Dorval device listens in on jets” *Gazette*, 12 Aug. 1970: 3; “French military planes may be banned by Dorval” *Gazette*, 11 Aug. 1970: 1.

⁸⁴ “Jet Noise”; “Where does responsibility for jet noise lie?” (letter to the editor) *Gazette* 9 May 1968: 6.

Aircraft noise, as various experts who were trotted out to deal with complaints frequently pointed out, is a complicated affair: “There is still no internationally accepted method to measure it, and so much depends on the weather, time of year, atmosphere, and the most unpredictable of all, the listener.”⁸⁵ Indeed, summertime could often be the worst time, and this season usually witnessed the most complaints. Although part of the problem was that people had their windows open to let in the warm summer breezes, summer weather also had a direct effect on aircraft engine performance and noise. During the summer of 1969, for example, a heat wave was partly responsible for an increase in noise complaints in Dorval. As an Official of the Dept. of Transport explained, hot weather made jet engines less efficient: “Pilots experience more difficulty in climbing through sluggish, muggy air, and so have to pour on more power.”⁸⁶ However, this did not mean that the winter offered a respite for sore eardrums! Although snow can act as an insulator, sound can also sometimes be carried great distances in cold air. Some unfortunate Montrealers discovered this fact in 1968 when a sonic boom, allegedly caused by a supersonic aircraft operating just south of the Canadian border, shattered windows in St. Eustache and the West Island.⁸⁷

During the 1960s the race to develop super-sonic transport (SST) caused great concern for residents of Montréal, as well as other communities across the world. While aircraft capable of supersonic speeds were already being used by military forces, Great Britain, France, the United States and the Soviet Union were all

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ “Heat adds noise to Dorval homes,” *Gazette*, 17 July 1969: 4.

⁸⁷ “Sonic Boom Shatters Windows,” *Gazette*, 22 Feb. 1968: 21.

heavily involved in projects aiming to translate this technology to civilian use. When Air Canada pre-ordered ten supersonics in 1966, Canada's national air carrier was quick to assure people that one of their stipulations required that the new airplanes not make any more noise than regular jet aircraft. Admittedly, this was not much of a consolation for those who were already complaining about the jumbo jets, and public protest quickly arose against the very idea of supersonic aircrafts. By 1968 protest against the project was so loud that the joint English-French project of the Concord seemed to be in jeopardy. Some protests from the Canadian side centered around an idea that had previously been expressed in terms of jet noise around airports: that the concerns of industry and the almighty dollar were always trumping the concerns of citizens. "These noises are made by companies who have absolutely no consideration for people," one man complained in the pages of the *Gazette*, "It is the dollar that is all important."⁸⁸ Writing of the SST project in 1968, the editors of the *Gazette* were clear about their position: "The development of the SST..., is probably the purest example of technology at loose. No one asked for supersonic travel. There was no public demand for it. But the airplane builders... could see nothing in their future after they had supplied the world's need for the present generation of jet transports. Because speed has always been civil aviation's big selling point, they decided to offer more speed, and the supersonic was the result."⁸⁹ Two years later, doubts still remained. "The supersonic transport is beginning to assume the appearance of a classic example of technology over-reaching itself," the *Gazette* observed. Noting that the Concord project was already

⁸⁸ "South Shore bothered by Jet Noise Too" (letter to the editor) *Gazette*, 29 Aug. 1967: 6.

⁸⁹ "Supersonic Protest," *Gazette*, 9 Oct. 1968: 6.

way behind schedule, and that a recent vote in the U.S. Congress regarding payments for Boeing's supersonic project had only passed by a narrow margin, the editors wondered if "the investment is entirely sound." "Is a saving of two hours crossing the Atlantic worth the effort? It is increasingly evident that it is not."⁹⁰

The issue of noise once again proved to be a major stumbling block for the project. In April 1969, Britain and France unveiled the Concorde. The Soviet Union quickly followed suit, unveiling the TU-144 the next month. The first public test-runs of the British-French project immediately put the lie to any claims that the aircraft would fly more quietly than existing jets: "The French 001 prototype took off with a thunder which penetrated the bones of everyone," reported one witness.⁹¹ "Boom tests" were conducted over the British countryside, as "ancient cathedrals, farm animals, and people [were] made the guinea pigs for the supersonic age."⁹² In Wales, the cathedral of St. David was used as a listening post as well as an example of how buildings within range of the Concorde's "boom carpet" (described as "a corridor of 50 to 80 miles wide") would handle the percussive thunderclap created by the aircraft. While it was claimed that worshippers at St. David's hardly heard the boom over their evensong service, or that it was no worse than "a prayer book dropping on the floor," other people, situated further north, described the sonic boom as "artillery firing" or "a double clap of thunder." The sonic boom was followed by a noticeable shock wave (registered at a pressure of 2 lbs per square foot). What would it be like to experience this kind of loud bang and pressure wave

⁹⁰ "Supersonic problems," *Gazette*, 26 Aug. 1970: 6.

⁹¹ "Churches, cows, Britons get 'boom' test," *Gazette*, 1 Sept. 1970: 35.

⁹² *Ibid.*

several times a day, locals wondered? Responded one: "It will drive my dog crazy."⁹³ When SST was tested over London, England, there were estimates that the double *crack* typical of super-sonic booms had registered 130 decibels, above the human threshold for pain. The "boom tests" did little to ease the public's misapprehensions, which were only deepened when there arose a hue and cry over the racket created when the Concorde landed at Heathrow. Britain considered banning supersonic flight over its territory, and it was expected that other countries would follow suit.⁹⁴

All this must have come as very bad news to one Pierre Eliot Trudeau, who had announced, in 1968, that his government would invest up to \$300,000,000 for a new supersonic airport, initially named Montréal II but later christened Mirabel. When plans for the new airport were made public, Federal Transport Minister Paul Hellyer expected that supersonic aircraft would be in wide use within five years.⁹⁵ Expanding Dorval to accommodate these new aircraft, which required more runway than existing jets, was out of the question due to the density of construction in the surrounding area, and the residents of nearby communities, with Expo traffic still ringing in their ears, had made it quite clear that they were absolutely unwilling to put up with another increase in aircraft noise. The location chosen for the new airport was hailed by the Canadian Air Line Pilots Association as "an ideal answer" to the problem of airport noise. The Trudeau government eventually expropriated a whopping 97,000 acres of farmland in a rich agricultural area about 30 km north of Montréal. Mirabel was to be the largest airport in the world. It was an ambitious

⁹³ *Ibid.*; "Concorde fears ease," *Gazette*, 3 Sept. 1970: 2.

⁹⁴ "Big Bang Makes Londoners Wobbly," *Montreal Star*, 18 July 1967: 1.

⁹⁵ "New supersonic airport is planned for Montreal," *Gazette*, 3 Aug. 1968: 1.

project, but the government had specific reasons to “go big”: future residential and commercial building sites would be built further away from the runways. In addition, the land directly under the flight-paths were zoned to prohibit residential construction. “With no residents suffering from aircraft noise, the pilots will not be forced to use the noise-abatement flying procedures they dislike so much,” noted the *Gazette*. The air traffic controllers association endorsed the site for similar reasons.⁹⁶ The link between Mirabel and the politics of noise was thus quite concrete: in this case the idea of the soundscape was hardly an abstraction, but rather played a leading role in decisions regarding the location of the airport.

While transportation associations were singing the praises of Montréal II, the negotiations were hardly harmonious. The Québec government was resistant to the idea, especially since it was assumed that the province would foot the bill for a new highway project (Hwy 13) as well as a projected high-speed rail link to connect Montréal and the new airport. More importantly, the residents of Ste. Scholastique, Ste. Monique, and nine other villages were rather unhappy with the idea. Not only was the government expropriating farmland that, in some cases, had been worked by the same families for over a century, but, partly in order to prevent grumbling about aircraft noise, the residents were told to move. Evacuations began in August 1970. Some 10,000 to 12,000 people were told to leave – “the largest evacuation of Canadians since the expulsion of the Acadians,” noted the *Gazette*. “Montreal will

⁹⁶ “Airport Noise,” *Gazette*, 29 April 1969: 6.

gain the most modern airport in the world but the inhabitants say that for at least some of them, the price of progress is too high.”⁹⁷

The story of Mirabel airport, officially opened in 1975, is a classic tale of government overreach and the human costs of “progress.” In a book of poetry inspired by Mirabel, Pierre Nepveu lamented the loss of community and spirituality that the gleaming new air terminal had announced:

...in this admirable triumph of reason
every two minutes a plane will blast off,
[...]
and we shall live in the recitation
of arrivals and departures...⁹⁸

Jean-Paul Raymond, president of a community action committee that fought for sixteen years for the return of lands expropriated for the giant airport, recalls the day the government came to Ste. Scholastique’s church to make their announcement: “The church was packed... We could hardly get inside. We had...come to be told that we were on land that was soon to belong to the largest airport in the world, that there would be lots of jets, that this international airport would be extraordinary.”⁹⁹ Federal officials and politicians made all kinds of lofty promises: there would be jobs for everyone, new communities would sprout up around the airport, high-speed rail would link them to Montréal, and there would even be a university built in nearby St. Jérôme. The plans for Mirabel were part of the larger opus of the symphony of progress that had captured Montréal’s imagination in the lead-up to Expo 67. The airport was going to be a modern marvel,

⁹⁷ Jean-Paul Raymond and Gilles Boileau, *La Mémoire de Mirabel* (Montréal: Méridien, 1988): 46; Kendal Windeyer, “It’s our new airport, but their homes and fields,” *Gazette*, 11 Aug. 1970: 3.

⁹⁸ Pierre Nepveu, *Mirabel*, trans. Judith Cowan (Montréal: Signal Editions, 2004): 30.

⁹⁹ Raymond and Boileau: 46.

its boosters proclaimed, and the residents were going to be the lucky participants in a gleaming future. Raymond recalls an interview he had with a Radio-Canada reporter who treated him like a country-bumpkin, asking him if he had electricity in his house and acting as if he was incapable of understanding the promise of progress. “She reproached us... for not believing in the beautiful future that was being offered us... A veritable Eldorado! [...] In her head, there would be employment for everyone, it was perfection on Earth, the most beautiful airport, the gate of entry to America, prosperity for everyone.”¹⁰⁰

In 1974, a year before Mirabel’s official opening, Robert Charlebois penned “Entre Dorval et Mirabel,” a song satirizing the situation and pointing to the negative effects of airplane travel: air and noise pollution. To a background of music originally composed by Ludwig van Beethoven but scored in a distinctly Zappa-esque style (complete with xylophone trills), Charlebois recounts a tale of how figures such as Beethoven, Picasso, and John F. Kennedy, from their lofty perches in the heavens, complain to him about the flights between Dorval and Mirabel:

[Beethoven] ma dit c’est pas le son qui me fait si mal	[Beethoven] said to me its not the noise that hurts me so
Mais le fond de l’air est si sale	But the high air is so dirty
Entre Mirabel et Dorval	Between Mirabel and Dorval
[...]	[...]

Picasso qui venait d’arriver au ciel	Picasso, just arrived from the sky
Déchira sa dernière aquarelle	Tore his last watercolour
En sacrant contre les mortels	Swearing about mortals
Bourassi Bourassa tes decibels	Bourassi Bourassa your decibels
Cassent les oreilles du soleil	Break the ears of the sun
Entre Dorval et Mirabel	Between Dorval and Mirabel
[...] ¹⁰¹	[...]

¹⁰⁰ Raymond and Boileau: 43-44.

¹⁰¹ Robert Charlebois, “Entre Dorval et Mirabel” *Charlebois* (Kébec Disc, 1974). [My translation, S.D.J.].

The sad reality of Mirabel was that it never lived up to the lofty rhetoric. After 3000 parcels of some of Québec's best farmland were expropriated and paved over with concrete, after some 12,000 residents were forced to sell out and move away from homes – some built with the sweat and blood of their ancestors – and after living through what Gilles Boileau described as “a difficult situation, unjust, humiliating and painful, sometimes even more dramatic than we could even imagine,”¹⁰² Mirabel never operated at anything more than 20% of its capacity. Originally designed to handle as many as 50 million passengers *per annum*, Mirabel never did better than 2.8 million. The highway was never completed and the rail-link never got past the planning stages. After winding down operations for years, down-grading to cargo from international passenger traffic, Canada's largest airport closed up shop for good in 2004. There were many reasons for Mirabel's failure. The anticipated future of super-sonic travel never panned out, the oil crisis of the 1970s put severe limits on airline traffic, and the flight of corporate headquarters from Montréal at the height of the independence movement played a role. As did the introduction of Boeing's 747, which was much quieter than previous jets, and which made residents of Dorval reconsider their opposition to the airport. In fact, they lobbied the government to keep the smaller airport open to domestic traffic, and eventually expand it.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Raymond: 14.

¹⁰³ Clifford Krauss, “End of Era Near in Montreal for White-Elephant Airport,” *The New York Times*, 3 Oct. 2004, at http://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/03/international/americas/03canada.html?pagewanted=1&_r=3&oref=slogin (last accessed 2 July 2014).

A cacophonous metropolis: noise complaints in Montréal

For the residents within earshot of Montréal's airports, the symphony of progress trumpeted by civic boosters didn't sound particularly melodious. Yet these "victims of the jet age" were not alone in their opinion that the sounds of the modern metropolis could be painfully cacophonous. This next section will deal with some more common complaints about Montréal's noise level, and will point to some of the gender and class assumptions involved in making noise and in demanding its restriction.

One of the prevalent keynotes of modern urban living is that of traffic. The twentieth century was the age of automobility, as affordable individual transportation became a major factor not only of consumer capitalism, but also of the urban infrastructure that arose around it. Automobility, as defined by Ben Bradley in his lengthy study of automobile travel in British Columbia, is "[t]he constellation of objects, spaces, images, discourses and practices surrounding the automobile and the roads along which it travels."¹⁰⁴ In the post-1945 era, people and places in North America came to be defined by automobility, in that the personal automobile embodied individualism and a sense of personal autonomy never before experienced on such a massive and standardized scale. The suburban housing boom, the construction of massive highway projects, shopping malls, and parking lots – in short, the trappings of 'the North American Dream' – became necessities with the explosion of automobile culture in North America. The phase of capitalism that characterised the twentieth century was not called "Fordism" for

¹⁰⁴ Ben Bradley, "By the Road: Fordism, Automobility and Landscape Experience in the British Columbia Interior, 1920-1970" (PhD thesis, Queen's University, 2012): 4.

nothing – indeed, the age of motorized mobility was glorified in countless Hollywood films featuring bad-boy bikers (think Brando in *The Wild Ones* and Fonda in *Easy Rider*) and thousands of rock'n'roll anthems celebrating greasers who raced (and crashed) souped-up hot-rods, “little deuce-coupes” and muscle cars.

In Montréal during the 1960s and 1970s gripes about the sounds of automobile traffic topped the list of most common noise complaints, just behind airplane noise and just above loud music, with the rumble of sports cars and motorcycles reserved for special attention. “Vehicles seem to get noisier all the time and there certainly are more of them,” noted the editors of the *Gazette*, “the growing popularity of sports cars and motorbikes is a sleep-shattering fact.”¹⁰⁵ “Ordinary traffic noise downtown... is to be expected in a big city,” noted one citizen, however “[my] complaint is about unnecessary noise; noise for noise sake; the cars and motorbikes purposely equipped by their idiot owners to create noise.”¹⁰⁶ “Why do these characters all fancy themselves as a second Foyt, Clark, Hill or Surtees?” bemoaned another, referring to the race-car heroes of the day, “It seems they can indulge in the Walter Mitty delusions to their hearts content, much to the disgust of the majority of the public.”¹⁰⁷ Even the Royal Automobile Club of Canada had a thing or two to say about the “muffler maniacs” whose cars “roar and whine like Batman’s Batmobile,” blaming what they called “Hollywood mufflers” for an epidemic of

¹⁰⁵ “Lungs and Ears,” *Gazette*, 25 April 1969: 6.

¹⁰⁶ Dorothy Markusson, letter to the editor, *Gazette* 11 Sept. 1968: 6.

¹⁰⁷ Al Palmer, “You Said It,” *Gazette*, 12 July 1966: 3.

“insecure exhibitionists” who believed that being noisy “shows you’re as virile and burly as Batman himself.”¹⁰⁸

Statements such as these betray the gendered aspect of this type of noise pollution. The vast majority of such noises were indicative of the same type of aggressive masculinity that characterizes rock’n’roll: loud, brash, fast, and in-your-face. Philip Tagg, in an article on the links between motorbikes and heavy-metal music, has noted that motorbikes in the 1950s and 1960s were a relatively cheap way for young men to assert speed and make noise that exceeded those of their more affluent peers (who tended to drive coupes or convertables).¹⁰⁹ By the 1970s, muscle cars such as the Ford Mustang and Dodge Charger were all the rage, featuring prominently in films such as *Bullitt* and television shows like *The Dukes of Hazzard*. Tagg argues that there is a distinct link between the loudness of the modern soundscape and the masculine penchant for noisy modes of transportation, which acted as a form of symbolic appropriation of the noises of real power in the environment (i.e. factories, construction, airplanes, “the symphony of progress”). “If you are subjected to those noises and rhythms that seem to symbolize real power in your environment,” he writes, “they might be made a little less overpowering if you appropriate them,” essentially “enact[ing] a drama symbolizing in sound the taming and defeat of an inimical system over which they in ‘real’ life felt they had little or no

¹⁰⁸ “Muffler maniacs ‘just exhibitionist,’” *Montreal Star*, 21 July 1966: 4.

¹⁰⁹ Philip Tagg, “Subjectivity and Soundscape: Motorbikes and Music” in Helmi Järviluoma, ed. *Soundscape: Essays on Vroom and Moo* (Tempere, 1994): 48-66.

control and in which they had to survive.” The loudness of motorcycles and sports cars were ways by which youth could demand to be heard.¹¹⁰

The animosity towards the ‘insecure exhibitionists’ straddling their motorbikes had much to do with an aggressive display of masculinity that was interpreted as ‘anti-establishment’ for its brash interruption of the ‘quiet life’ preferred by elites, and yet this kind of sonic rebellion perhaps acted more to reinforce the status quo than it did to challenge it. By revving the engines of their machines, men could re-assert their (sonic) dominance in a world where women’s voices were striving to point out the assumptions inherent in masculine privilege, breaking the submissive silence imposed by the social expectations of femininity. Indeed, the relationship between masculinity and loudness is a field ripe for exploration. One obvious area of study would be the link between blue-collar work and hearing-loss. Workers in industry, transportation, construction, and even farming (traditionally thought of as a quiet, pastoral life) are all subjected to the loud noises of machinery, and have been since the advent of the industrial revolution. Indeed, hearing loss and tinnitus (ringing in the ears) used to be known as “Boilermaker’s disease,” making explicit the link between this particular kind of labour and hearing loss. In the 1960s and 1970s (and probably still today) men had poorer and more variable hearing than women¹¹¹ – evidence of lives lived close to factory machinery, as well as the macho penchant for loud motorcycle pipes, the squeal of rubber, rock’n’roll, and power tools. Indeed, incidences of work-related

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*: 9-11.

¹¹¹ “The Noise Factor in Modern Life,” *Montreal Star*, 13 July 1966: 6. The article cites an American study that attempted to gauge hearing abilities in 2,500,000 people, noting especially the disparities between lower- and upper-class workers, as well as between men and women.

hearing loss or impairment need not have been as high as they were, if only men would overcome their macho aversion to earplugs or other forms of protection. “Certain factories have provided ear muffs for employees who work beside screaming machines,” noted Dr. G. J. Thiesson, speaking to an audience at Montréal’s Sir George Williams University in 1969, “But for most of those workers, a ‘he-man’ attitude prevailed and they refused to wear the ear muffs because it was unmanly.”¹¹²

There were also socio-economic issues at play with regards to work-related hearing loss. Blue-collar factory workers on the shop-floor or construction site were exposed to much higher volumes of noise than were white-collar office-workers, nestled comfortably inside office buildings that incorporated noise-reducing materials such as carpeted floors and sound-proofed walls. In Montréal this kind of inequality would have taken on an extra dimension, since the vast majority of blue-collar workers were Francophone, and the vast majority of white-collar office workers were Anglophone. The problems of hearing-loss and impairment would have been much more serious for Montréal’s Francophone population than for its elite Anglophones. It was this situation to which poet Michèle Lalonde referred when she wrote: “raise your voices, foremen / we are a little hard of hearing / we live too close to the machines / and hear only our breathing over the tools.”¹¹³ The same sort of situation appears in one of the opening scenes from *Les Ordres*, Michel Brault’s film about the October Crisis, when a textile worker holds a muffled

¹¹² Leon Harris, “Noise reaching nightmare level – MSs,” *Gazette*, 7 Nov. 1969: 2.

¹¹³ Michele Lalonde, *Speak White* (Montréal: Editions Hexagone, 1974).

conversation on the shop floor, the voices obscured by the noise of the factory's machinery.¹¹⁴

The factor of class played a significant role in Montrealers' noise complaints. Over and over again a similar refrain appears in published complaints about noise: "what's the use of moving into a quiet suburb to escape the shake, rattle, and roar of city traffic if some neighbour buys himself a sports car and zooms it up and down the street?" or "It is almost useless to pay high rent to live in a soundproof building if you are unable to open a window without street noises coming in."¹¹⁵ These letter-writers were relatively affluent, living in suburban homes or expensive downtown apartments. They likely believed that they were entitled to a little peace and quiet on their piece of property. People such as this, as Garrett Keizer has argued, are the ones who are prepared to reap all the benefits provided by the "symphony of progress", but who consistently argue "not in my backyard" when it comes to the noisy by-products of this kind of modern urban existence.¹¹⁶ Indeed, the author of the previous lines, the *Gazette's* Al Palmer, was a typical example of these – a curmudgeonly man who spent years waging a one-man noise-abatement campaign in his newspaper, targeting a vast array of irritants from traffic to power tools, transistor radios, dogs, children, and even "that mob of loud-mouthed birds which gather... and blast out an ornithological anvil chorus every sunrise."¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Michel Brault, dir. *Les Ordres*. (Les Productions Prisma Inc.: 1974).

¹¹⁵ Al Palmer, "Blast Off," *Gazette*, 15 Sept. 1966: 3; Al Palmer, "Our Town," *Gazette*, 10 July 1969: 3.

¹¹⁶ Garret Keizer, *The Unwanted Sound of Everything We Want: A Book About Noise* (New York: Public Affairs, 2010).

¹¹⁷ Al Palmer, "Our Town," *Gazette*, 4 June 1969: 3.

Advocates of noise-abatement, such as Palmer, much like their fellows concerned with airplane noise, placed the blame for cacophony upon various people whom they felt ought to take responsibility for keeping urban sound-levels within a tolerable range. In Montréal, part of the problem was that bylaw regulations surrounding noise were unclear, and thus police and bylaw officers remained reluctant to enforce them. In the 1960s and '70s, Montréal was still using the anti-noise bylaw that had been enacted in 1937 – an age prior to mass-automobile use, transistor radios, and the 1960s construction boom. Of the seventeen specific offences listed in the 1937 bylaw, only one was subject to routine enforcement: the prohibition of construction early in the morning or late at night, without a special permit.¹¹⁸ Throughout the 1960s citizens and politicians – such city councilor as P.E. Sauvageau – argued that the threat of arrest should be extended to all offences enumerated in the bylaw, especially those surrounding night-clubs, traffic noise, and police sirens. (Saveaugeau seems to have missed the contradiction inherent in asking police to enforce a law regarding their own use of sirens). However, such arguments generally lacked traction, and complaints about police unwillingness to crack down on noisy offenders persisted throughout the decade.

Aside from placing responsibility for noise upon the shoulders of those who made and enforced Montréal's bylaws, the other major target was, of course, individuals – usually men driving loud cars or rumbling motorcycles, or youths cranking up the rock'n'roll. During the 1960s there seems to have been only a small handful of people who were keen to point out that noise was a by-product of a larger

¹¹⁸ Myer Negru, "Anti-Noise Bylaw Strengthened," *Gazette*, 16 Jan. 1965: 3.

system – that of consumer capitalism – and that the corporations that created consumer items seemed to display a shocking lack of concern about the negative health effects of their products. It was not until the late 1960s and early 1970s, when medical professionals began to speak out against the rising volume of the urban environment, that ‘noise pollution’ became a concern, oftentimes listed as yet another damaging effect of ‘progress’ alongside pollution of the air, water, and soil.¹¹⁹ In 1969 two physicists, speaking to an audience of Montrealers, warned that “public noise is reaching nightmare proportions,” and that more and more people were falling victim to noise-related ailments. The social costs of noise pollution became a key argument in the fight against urban cacophony, and news articles attempted to educate people about the physiological effects of exposure to too much noise, beyond the obvious damage to our ears. “Slowly, in a sneaky sort of way, noise is ruining the health of hundreds of thousands of North Americans and bringing death years closer for thousands,” warned scientists at the 1970 annual meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Science. Claiming that noise was bad “for just about every bodily function you can name,” doctors, physicists, and psychologists pointed out that constant exposure to noise could cause everything from increased blood pressure, heart-attacks, strokes, nervous tension, trouble sleeping, headaches, confusion and irritability, as well as digestive troubles. One doctor, perhaps over-stating his case, warned that pregnant women exposed to too

¹¹⁹ “Montréal vue à travers un nuage de fumée et de poussière n’a rien de rassurant,” *Le Devoir*, 15 Oct. 1970: 15. For Montréal’s environmental history, see Michèle Dagenais, *Montréal et l’eau. Une histoire environnementale* (Montréal: Boréal, 2011); with Stéphane Castonguay, *Metropolitan Natures. Environmental Histories of Montreal* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011); and *Faire et fuir la ville. Espaces publics de culture et de loisirs à Montréal et Toronto, XIXe et XXe siècles* (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l’Université de Laval, 2006).

much noise risked giving birth to “deformed or retarded children.”¹²⁰ “NOISE!!! We’re up to our ears in noise... [...] At no time in history has man made as much noise,” warned students at Sir George. “The end result of all this noise: our health, mental and physical, is deteriorating.”¹²¹ Another social cost of noise, one that was less-frequently cited than health concerns, was loss of productivity. Noise causes fatigue, and fatigue causes workers to work less efficiently.

As the health and social effects of too much noise became better known, what had once been considered a ‘problem’ soon became known as a form of pollution. In the 1970s, groups such as the Society to Overcome Pollution (STOP) campaigned to raise awareness of all forms of pollution affecting Montréalers’ health.¹²² Although much has been written about the ecology movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s,¹²³ which witnessed growing concern for the environmental devastation caused by industrial consumer capitalism, most of this literature has focused on battles surrounding pollutants in the air, water, and soil, thus neglecting another vital element of the natural environment: the soundscape.¹²⁴ “Noise pollution is

¹²⁰ “Scientists are bugged by noise, too!” *Gazette*, 5 Jan. 1970: 7.

¹²¹ David Nayman & Evelyne Michaels, “Louder! I Can’t Hear You,” *Georgian* 14 Nov. 1972: 4.

¹²² See, for example “Open space and urban planning: a position paper by STOP” *Georgian*, 16 March, 1973: 14-17.

¹²³ See, for example: Michael Egan, “Shamans of the Spring: Environmentalism and the New Jeremiad” in Dubinsky *et.al.*: 296-303; Michael Egan, *Barry Commoner and the Science of Survival: The Remaking of American Environmentalism* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 2007); Donald Worster, *Nature’s Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Michael Brown and John May, *The Greenpeace Story* (Scarborough: Prentice Hall, 1989); and Mark Hamilton Lyttle, *The Gentle Subversive: Rachel Carson, Silent Spring, and the Rise of the Environmental Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹²⁴ Michèle Dagenais’s highly informative work on the parklands and riverscapes of the city is one exception, as it is susceptible to a ‘sonic reading,’ in that what so many Montrealers, especially those of the *élite*, were seeking was a natural environment whose soundscape bore little resemblance to the banging din of Canada’s premier industrial city. See *Montréal et l’eau. Une histoire environnementale* (Montréal: Boréal, 2011); with Stéphane Castonguay, *Metropolitan Natures. Environmental Histories of Montreal* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011); and *Faire et*

becoming just as serious a problem as other kinds of pollution,” editorialized the *Gazette*. “The control of noise pollution should be considerably simpler than the control of other forms of pollution. It should be undertaken with vigor. To the city-dweller, noise is the health hazard of every day.”¹²⁵ The student editors at Sir George Williams’ *The Georgian* displayed a similar, although perhaps more radical, attitude, making explicit reference to the various kinds and causes of pollution, including noise:

In the past ten years, due to the fantastic growth of industry, the population explosion and laziness on the part of our society, a new danger now exists, even more menacing than an atomic blast, the monster – Pollution. Mankind, through apathy, has allowed the problems evident in the last century to reach disastrous proportions. The air is no longer sweet to breathe. Our lakes and rivers are so polluted that two rivers feeding Lake Erie have been declared fire hazards. Increasing traffic circulation, rock bands and other elements of progress have caused noise levels that are damaging to our ears. The soil in which we grow our crops and bury our dead is becoming more contaminated daily...¹²⁶

In a city where noise was “reaching nightmare levels,” concerns about noise pollution were not to be taken lightly. Demonstrating a similar concern for the advances made in the last decade, editors at the *Gazette* asked: “Where will we be 10 years from now, if the problem of noise pollution is not tackled?” Taking their lead from a Canadian “industrial hygienist” by the name of L. K. Smith, who had warned that unless a serious effort was made to curb noise pollution, it would be much more difficult (and expensive) to control it in the future, the editors stated that “In the current drive by all levels of government to control water and air pollution, it would be tragic if the planners did not include some more comprehensive regulations

fuir la ville. Espaces publics de culture et de loisirs à Montréal et Toronto, XIXe et XXe siècles (Sainte-Foy: Presse de l’Université Laval, 2006).

¹²⁵ “Shattered by Noise,” *Gazette*, 21 Sept. 1968: 5.

¹²⁶ “Sir George and pollution,” *Georgian*, 17 Oct. 1969: 3.

covering noise pollution.”¹²⁷ In 1970 the Canadian government did make some efforts to deal with the growing concern about noise pollution, with an announcement that they were working on regulations to set limits to the amount of noise produced by cars, motorcycles, trucks, and that quintessentially Canadian mode of transportation, the snowmobile. Taking their lead from the Americans, who had already set noise limits at 85 decibels for cars and trucks (90 for motorcycles), the new regulations came into effect on all vehicles made after 1972.¹²⁸

As all this evidence suggests, as much as the "symphony of progress" was celebrated by the province's movers, shakers, and civic boosters as sonic proof of Quebec's newfound 'modernity', not everyone was willing to face the music. As the province's soundscape drifted away from a quieter past of church bells, horses hooves on cobblestones, clanging tramways bells and organ grinders, the increase in urban volume came with an increasing awareness that noise, beyond merely being irritating, had deleterious social, economic, mental, and physical health effects. Noise was a central factor behind the misadventure of Mirabel, mapping out a sonic geography of noise and human suffering beyond hearing range of both Montréal airports. And while civic officials and noise abatement campaigners may have turned a deaf ear to the din created by male construction workers, complaints about hot rods and motorcycles, and the desire to retreat to the quiet of the suburbs, revealed some of the dynamics of gender and class inherent in both making noise and wishing for less of it. Thus it was that by the end of the 1960s noise pollution was regularly being cited along with pollution of the air and water as evidence of the

¹²⁷ "If noise grows..." *Gazette*, 15 Oct. 1969: 5.

¹²⁸ "Vehicle Noise Crackdown on the Way," *Gazette*, 22 Aug. 1970: 4.

dark and dirty side of the "symphony of progress." Most important of all, the cacophonous din that sounded over Montréal's urban soundscape suggests that Québec's project of modernity during the 1960s and '70s was hardly a "Quiet Revolution."

Chapter 3

The Ubiquitous Soundtrack: Music and “The Sixties”

“There can be little doubt... that music is an indicator of the age, revealing, for those who know how to read its symptomatic messages, a means of fixing social and even political events.”

– R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape*.¹

If Montréal’s urban soundscape was becoming increasingly noisy in the 1960s, so too was Québec’s musical soundscape. Rock’n’roll music, interpreted in a style called *yéyé*, competed with the folk-tuned lyricism of *chanson*, and gradually the acoustic strumming of the *chansonniers* was replaced by electric guitars with the reverb pushed up to ten. Many people lamented this sonic turn towards electric noise and pounding rhythms. The speed, energy, and noise displayed in rock’n’roll bothered music many critics. “The howls and high-pitched screams of... delighted fans greeted the Beatles last night,” reported one newspaper in 1966. “The police were issued wads of cotton prior to the performance and many had stuffed their ears to shut out the din of screaming, high-pitched yells.”²

In 1968, the year after Expo, a young Montrealer named Robert Charlebois barnstormed through both the Anglophone and Francophone music scenes with an eclectic rock style informed by Latin rhythms and California psychedelia. Peppered with *joual*, *français*, hip slang and the occasional obscenity, Charlebois’ songs were unique aural representations of Montréal linguistic and technological soundscapes. His “Osstidcho” spectacles of 1968 and 1969, freewheeling shows featuring

¹ Schafer: 7.

² “Lots of noise but no naughty kids spanked,” *Gazette*, 13 Aug. 1966: 1. The Beatles played Montréal only once, in 1964. The quote above is in reference to a 1966 performance in Chicago.

cacophonous music, monologues, poetry, and skits all loosely critical of modern Québec culture and society, were widely celebrated “underground” events. Eventually even the mainstream got caught up in the excitement: *Magazine maclean*, for example, profiled this “plus grande spectacle du showbizz québécois” with a special feature article and a colourful cut-out comic-book interpretation of Charlebois’ “bande-sonores.”³ Charlebois and “L’Osstidcho” – the happenings with which he and his group were most closely associated, which shall be described more fully in a moment – exemplify Montréal’s distinctive responses to modernity, and an extensive discussion of the performances will take up the second half of this chapter. Here was a brash, dissonant, alternative response to Montréal’s supposed “symphony of progress.” In Charlebois, many Montrealers thought they perceived a harbinger of modernity’s cultural revolution.

This chapter is dedicated to Montréal’s music scene in the 1960s and early 1970s. It traces the relationship of music to nationalism and modernity, via analyses of the rivalry between two genres (*yéyé* and *chanson*), as well as critiques of rock’n’roll, dismissed by some as mere noise bereft of artistic value. There follows a detailed exploration of Robert Charlebois’s career and his music, focussing on his use of language, his pastiche of musical styles, and his deliberate use of noise and feedback. The chapter suggests a “Sixties soundtrack” that is more representative of local musical production and performance than the previous historiography,

³ Jacques Guay, “L’Osstidcho de Robert Charlebois – Dans le style POP, le plus grand spectacle du showbizz québécois,” *Le magazine Maclean*, novembre 1968: 32. Charlebois often described his music as “bande-sonores”, a sort of a sonic equivalent to the comic strip, or “bande-dessinée”.

focused so intently on big stars and turning-point festivals, that has furnished so many influential declensionist narratives about this period.

If the production of music in Canada during the 1960s and 1970s seems only tangentially related to the history of our country, continually overshadowed by more popular Anglo-American fare, the same cannot be said for Québec. Music was crucial to the development of Québécois nationalism during this period, and continues to be a key site of the province's distinct cultural identity. Québécois music became an important "national cultural symbol" in the 1960s and '70s.⁴ This identity never went uncontested. Conflicting ideas of nationalism and internationalism, as well as tradition and modernity, are evident in the songs produced by Francophone musicians, as well as in the debates that surrounded their cultural production. This section will discuss the importance of music to the development of a distinctly Québécois identity, followed by an analysis of the conflicting ideas present in the musical genres known as *chanson* and *yéyé*.

Modernity and Music in Montréal

In 1995, Québec City's Museum of Civilization sponsored the province's first exhibition of Québec national music, titled *Je vous entends chanter (I hear you singing)*. Writing about this exhibit, Line Grenier points out that Québécois music has become a "necessary partner of nationality and citizenship" and is inextricable from the history of the Québécois people. Drawing from Foucault, she argues that the museum exhibit "contributes to a government of memories" that also serves to

⁴ Caroline Durand, "Entre exportation et importation. La création de la chanson québécoise selon la presse artistique, 1960-1980," *Revue d'histoire d'Amérique française*, Vol. 60 no. 3 (2007): 300.

regulate the possible fields of action of Québec's cultural citizens. In the designation of three specific genres (*chanson*, *yéyé*, and *country/western*) that are implicitly understood to be the 'best' that Québec has to offer, the museum exhibit legitimizes and codifies a separation of genre that has become central to the historical narrative of Québec popular music.⁵

Québec's musical production became the subject of sociological study in the late 1960s.⁶ It was from this point that a particular narrative about Québec music became institutionalized. Studies of Québec tend to divide its music into two streams: the *chansonniers*, folk singers from traditional society who were valorised for their supposed authenticity; and *yéyé/pop* artists, rock'n'rollers and crooners who were characterized as little more than inconsequential and commercial. This division falsely sets up Québec musical production as a binary system (and leaves out country and western almost entirely), but it is a binary that has had remarkable staying power. Popular music journalist Benoît L'Herbier has described the rift between the two groups as a "cold war,"⁷ while Robert Giroux, who has written extensively on Québécois musical production, argued that *chansonniers* and *yéyés* inhabited two distinct worlds:

Chansonniers and *yé-yés* differed not only in their musical styles, but also in their thematic universes. The first group, following Felix Leclerc's example, occupied themselves with naming [Québec] in their poetic songs. The

⁵ Line Grenier, "Governing 'National' Memories Through Popular Music in Québec" *TOPIA The Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*, no. 6 (Fall 2001): 11-19.

⁶ Two of the earliest examples include MA theses by Pierre Guimand (1968) who argues that the *chansonniers* expressed the national identity of young Québec students, while popular song was anational, without real content, marketed at younger people, and a product of the 'star machine; and Suzanne Dumont-Henry (1972) who concludes that only *chanson* has value in and of itself, while popular music is essentially not worthwhile. See Durand: 300.

⁷ Benoît L'Herbier, quoted in Michèle Ollivier, "Snobs and *quétaines*: prestige and boundaries in popular music in Québec," *Popular Music*, Vol. 25 no. 1 (2006): 99.

countryside and forces of nature – specifically snow and the sea – occupy a central space and serve as support to a quest for identity and liberty, whether collective or individual. [...] On the other hand, *yéyé* artists, in order to distract their adolescent audience, sang, in their versions of American hits, about the preoccupations of daily life (school, film, dancing, flirting, etc.) in lyrics that were generally superficial and in music that was mostly just pretext for dancing.⁸

Michèle Ollivier, in her article “Snobs and *quétaines*,”⁹ paints a similar picture. In her representation of Québec’s cultural history, the *chansonniers* wrote about Québec traditions and geography in a French literary idiom, performed in *boîtes à chansons* with simple accompaniment and little media attention, and recorded mainly long-playing records made up of original compositions. *Yéyé* artists, in contrast, released mostly 45rpm singles, translated foreign pop songs, performed in cabarets, high school gymnasiums and community halls, were widely heard on the radio, and participated fully in the ‘star system.’ For their part, *Yéyé* artists accused *chansonniers* of being snobs, while the *chansonniers* accused *yéyé* artists of creating nothing but poor translations of low-brow commercial entertainment.¹⁰ A table describing the binary opposition of *yéyé* to *chanson* appears below (Figure 3).

The “institutional prejudices” against popular musical forms such as *yéyé* or *le western* run deep in Québec’s historiography. While Jacques Julien warned that the elitist views reinforcing this binary had created a void in most academic understandings of popular culture, the hard truth is that the vast majority of scholarly works on music in Québec rely heavily on the myth of the *chansonnier*,

⁸ Robert Giroux, Constance Havard, & Rock Lapalme, eds. *Le Guide de la Chanson Québécoise*, (Montréal: Triptyque, 1996): 56. [My translation. S.D.J.]

⁹ “Quétaine” or “kétaine” is Québec slang for someone who is unfashionable or outdated.

¹⁰ Ollivier: 99.

dismissing the *yéyé* phenomenon as nothing more than a fad – if *yéyé* is even acknowledged. Indeed, the differences in attitudes towards the two genres have become so deeply entrenched that one might be forgiven for concluding that the only music of value ever created in Québec was that produced by the *chansonniers*. As Grenier has argued, “Québécois *chanson* is conceived not merely as an influential movement but indeed as the only authentically Québécois genre... the bearer of the only music which can claim to be culturally significant and representative of the ‘Québécois’ people.” Grenier recalls her own personal experience of having been taught, in the early 1970s, to look down on pop music, because it wasn’t as ‘authentic’ as *chanson*.¹¹

Figure 3: A binary model of 1960s Québécois popular music¹²

<i>Chanson:</i>	<i>Yéyé:</i>
• Nationalist	• Anational
• Political	• Apolitical
• Lyrical	• Rhythmic
• Traditional	• Modern
• Intelligent	• Self-indulgent
• Authentic/Original	• Derivative
• Local	• Foreign
• Artistic value	• Commercial value
• Maturity	• Immaturity
• High culture	• Mass culture
• Intellectuals / students	• Popular audiences
• Influence of France	• Influence of America
• <i>boîtes à chansons</i>	• community halls
• 33 rpm LPs	• 45 rpm singles

¹¹ Grenier: 12, 15.

¹² This table was assembled with information culled from Durand, Grenier, Giroux, Ollivier and Drapeau.

Much like the narrative of Anglo-American pop music that appears in the introductory chapter, the official narrative of Québec *chanson* relies heavily upon certain key figures. As Will Straw has argued, “National music history... [often] stands as a series of milestones, in which the unfolding of individual careers produces the broader contours of a national tradition.”¹³ In the case of Québec, this narrative depends upon three iconic individuals: Félix Leclerc, Gilles Vigneault, and Robert Charlebois. Christopher Jones outlines the essentials:

Felix Leclerc was the authentic Québécois – with acoustic guitar, boots, and flannel shirts on stage at the Olympia in Paris – seemingly just emerged from the woods, representing the origin myth, an unspoiled New World Man. Gilles Vigneault symbolized a confident, expressive nationalism, embodied in Brel-like recitatives replete with Québécois landscapes and village narratives. Robert Charlebois was the assimilator, integrating California psychedelia and soul music, beginning the imaginative synthesis of North-American styles[.]¹⁴

If this narrative begins with the cultural validation that the French gave to the Québécois with their loud and enthusiastic applause for Felix Leclerc in 1951, its turning point occurs with Charlebois’s gang staging their legendary “Osstidcho” reviews, in 1968 and ‘69. After this, *chanson* could no longer compete with the vitality of Québec rock. What’s more, by 1967 artists were declaring that “yéyé c’est fini.”¹⁵ The pop-rock of the early Beatles became *Sgt. Pepper* and a new crop of ‘underground’ Québécois rockers emerged. By the mid-1970s rock music in Québec reached a new standard with Montréal’s own Beau Dommage.

¹³ Will Straw, “In and around Canadian music,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* Vol. 35 no. 3 (Fall 2000): 177.

¹⁴ Christopher M. Jones, “Québec Song: strategies in the cultural marketplace,” *Québec Studies*, 31 (Spring/Summer 2001): 50-60.

¹⁵ “Le yéyé c’est fini, dit Nadya,” *Le magazine Maclean*, janvier 1967: 43.

The *chanson* narrative reaches its apotheosis in 1974, when Leclerc, Vigneault, and Charlebois appeared together on stage before an ecstatic audience of over 125,000 people, assembled upon the symbolic ground of the Plains of Abraham, to open a world youth festival dubbed Superfrancofête. Described as an “apotheosis of nationalist liturgy,” and “un moment privilégié de conscience nationale,” the national importance of the event was further underlined by the presence of P.-E. Trudeau and Robert Bourassa. A year later a full-album-length recording of their performance was released: *J’ai vu le loup, le renard, le lion* (“I saw the wolf, the fox, the lion.”)¹⁶ After this, the decline. In 1976 Québec nationalism reached its peak with the provincial election of René Lévesque’s separatist Parti Québécois. That same year Patsy Gallant delivered the nail in *chanson*’s coffin: she recorded a disco version of Vigneault’s classic, “Mon Pays”.¹⁷

Just as the historiography of Québécois music has been myopically focussed on *chanson*, so too it has tended to revel in an almost mythical traditionalist view of the genre. This view sees *chanson* as a logical outcome of the practice of music making in French Canada, as an amalgam of traditional forms such as celtic reels, the quadrille, the polka, and contredanse. As imagined by those who revelled in stereotypical images of rugged flannel-wearing voyageurs and salty fisher-folk, the scene inside a typical *boîte-a-chansons* (venue *par excellence* of the *chansonniers*) was that of a young singer/songwriter, accompanied only by an acoustic guitar, his

¹⁶ Various Artists, *J’ai vu le loup, le renard, le lion* (Phillips, 1975). See also: Jacques Julien, *Robert Charlebois: l’enjeu d’<ordinaire>* (Québec: Triptyque, 1987): 28-9, 132; Renée-Berthe Drapeau, “Le yéyé dans la marge du nationalisme québécois (1960-1974)” in Giroux, Havard & Lapalme, *Le Guide de la Chanson Québécoise*: 200.

¹⁷ Patsy Gallant, “Mon Pays” (1976). Accessed online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6f2FSDS7MM> (last accessed 17 July 2014).

foot perched on a rickety chair, singing of rural villages with exotic (read: aboriginal) names such as Natashquan and Manicouagan, while his audience's rosy, upturned faces glowed in the flickering light of candles placed inside old bottles at the edge of each wooden table, all of them crowded into a small room decorated with fishing nets and other modest accoutrements.¹⁸

This kind of glorification of an idealized 'authentic' past obscures the fact that *chanson*, as a popular genre, was undeniably a product of its era – i.e. of Québec's post-1945 transformation. Québec's rapidly modernizing and urbanizing population, particularly the young, were searching for connections to the rural lifestyle of their grandparents.¹⁹ Another part of the appeal of *chanson* was that it was an authentically Francophone creation – an important quality for a post-war population concerned about the increasing influence of English-language mass media. The audience for *chanson* was itself a creation of the affluence of post-war society: the rapid expansion of post-secondary education and of the middle classes created an expanding segment of society with intellectual and literary pretensions. As Richard Baillargeon, Bruno Roy and others have pointed out, the clientele that frequented Québec's *boîtes à chansons* was mostly made up of well-connected college students, poets, and would-be philosophers.²⁰ Many, although looking more to France than the United States for musical and literary inspirations, might nonetheless have been mistaken for American beatniks.

¹⁸ Description courtesy of Robert Giroux, *Guide de la chanson québécoise*: 54.

¹⁹ Giroux: 16.

²⁰ Richard Baillargeon, *Destination Ragou: une histoire de la musique populaire au Québec* (Montréal: Triptyque, 1991): 34; Bruno Roy, "Attitudes linguistiques": 66; Drapeau: 180.

The nationalist awakening evident in *chanson* was also a product of the post-war era, and of course is one of the defining elements of Québec's "Quiet Revolution." The fear of American encroachment and the surge in nationalistic pride that began with the French affirmation of Felix Leclerc created a context within which French Canadians thirsted for songs by and for their compatriots. Artists such as Gilles Vignault, who sang "mon pays ce n'est pas un pays, c'est l'hiver," or Georges Dor, who used the northern hydro-electric project at Manicouagan as background to a love song,²¹ had broad appeal to a public hungry for music that echoed locally specific experiences and knowledge.

Because of *chanson's* emphasis on "authenticity," represented through lyrics about simple fisherfolk and woodsy northern villages, it could seem to be the direct emanation of the Folk of Québec. Yet such an impression overlooked the extent to which this 'Folk' culture followed international conventions and relied upon modern communications technologies. It was as much a commodity within capitalism as *yéyé*. It provided Quebeckers with a sense that they were responding to the "invasion" of American mass culture – typified by modern cinema, television and radio. Support for *chanson*, while weak at first, later manifested itself in a re-appropriation of these technologies in the interests of promoting French-Canadian culture. At the same time, the presence in Montréal of multi-national recording companies such as Polydor, Capitol, and Columbia provided the technological infrastructure needed to produce albums, especially given that a local infrastructure did not yet exist: Québec's first home-grown record label was not created until

²¹ Gilles Vignault, "Mon pays," *Collections* (Sony/BMG, 2004 [1964]); Georges Dor "La manic," *Quand je chante.. de deviens chanson*, 45 RPM (Polydore, 1966).

1959, when music retailer Archambault decided to get into the game with its own production company, Sélect.²² Yet, as Will Straw has pointed out, “If multinational recording companies invested in the new traditionalism..., finding value in its integrity or authenticity, these links to international capital could be dismissed as incidental when set alongside the music’s obvious rootedness in a local culture.”²³ This fact was not lost on Stéphane Venne, who later penned the theme song for Expo 67. In a 1965 article on Québec chanson, written for the political review *Parti pris*, Venne pointed out that many of Québec’s most beloved *chansonniers*, among them Vigneault, Léveillée, Gauthier, Calvé, and Pauline Julien, were represented by industry giant Columbia.²⁴ Ironically, while most people turned a blind eye to the *chansonniers’* dependence on multi-nationals, these same recording companies were often made out to be villains when they produced albums by artists other than Québec’s folksy singer-songwriters.

Given the ideological prominence given to *chanson* in histories of Québec’s “Quiet Revolution,” and its positioning opposite the denigrated and neglected *yéyé* genre, it might perhaps serve as a useful corrective to learn that, despite continued assertions that *yéyé* artists were nothing more than clumsy imitators of a foreign genre, *yéyé* was in fact enormously popular. *Yéyé* had great appeal, one evident around the world. It did so for a number of reasons. One was the fact that it seemed wonderfully modern, both technologically and culturally, and cosmopolitan, a music not tied to any particular place. Indeed, *yéyé* was so modern and international that

²² Danielle Tremblay, “Production des disques” in Robert Giroux, ed. *En avant le chanson!* (Montréal: Triptyque, 1993): pg. 81.

²³ Straw, “In and around Canadian music”: 181.

²⁴ Stéphane Venne, “La chanson d’ici” *Parti pris* Vol. 2 no. 5 (Jan. 1965): 63.

when it came time for the organizers of Expo 67 – an ultra-modern utopian paean to internationalism – to choose a theme song to showcase the Montréal World’s Fair to the world, they chose, from over 2,000 submissions,²⁵ a *yéyé* song.²⁶ Herein lies the paradox of the rivalry between the *chansonniers* and their *yéyé* counterparts: that the modern state of Québec has repudiated its most modern musicians, choosing instead to see itself in its traditionalist singer-songwriters rather than its ultra-modern rock’n’rollers. But the Expo organizers, knowing they had to find a song that could demonstrate Québec’s modernity to an international audience while still maintaining something of Québec’s Francophone character, chose to represent Montréal through a hip Donald Lautrec performance of a Stéphane Venne song. Two versions of this song, one English one French, were recorded and released together as A- and B-sides of a single 45rpm titled “Un jour un jour” / “Hey friend say friend.”²⁷

The privileging of *chanson* in the historical soundtrack of Québec’s so-called “Quiet Revolution” has resulted in the unfortunate silencing of those individuals who chose to express themselves through *yéyé* music, as well as those who preferred to listen to it. *Yéyé* was not an insignificant phenomenon. During the period of its popularity, roughly from 1962 to 1967, over 33,000 discs a week were

²⁵ Bill Bantey, “Beat the drum, ring the gong – the mayor’s in the market for a Montreal song,” *Gazette*, 7 Dec. 1966: 1.

²⁶ The song had its critics of course, many thought it too “popular” for an event of international significance. “Une chanson pour l’Expo?” *Le magazine Maclean*, mars 1967: 64.

²⁷ There are a number of Expo ’67-themed songs worth listening to, including three composed by Marc Gélinas: “Rendez-vous à Montréal” (1967) accessed online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JyaZtZM5TIA>), “La Ronde” (1967) accessed online at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2eY0Lq2_rU) and “Lorsque le rideau tombe” (1967) accessed online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtNkvjc18XA>). Another great Expo 67 song was produced by the Jamaican group The Melodians: “Last Train (to Expo 67)” (1967) accessed online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tpX-G-ETyFE>.

sold in the province of Québec. Hundreds of *yéyé* groups were formed, and they toured all over the province.²⁸ One of the most popular of these groups, les Jérolas, sold over 70,000 copies of their cover of The Coasters' "Yakety-Yak", while Les Classels had hit after hit on the Québec charts.²⁹ Les Sinners were reported to have sold close to a quarter of a million discs before a contractual dispute forced them to split, although they re-formed a short time later as La Révolution Française.³⁰ Many groups were good enough to merit exposure in the United States – Les Beaux Mark, for example, managed to hit #45 on the U.S. *Billboard* charts with "Clap your hands,"³¹ while La Révolution Française was granted a "Newcomer" award by *Cashbox* magazine, also charting on local radio stations in New York, California, and Washington state.³² The popular television show *Jeunesse d'aujourd'hui*, which showcased many of the best *yéyé* groups and was partly responsible for popularizing the genre, had a large enough audience that it stayed on the air for well over a decade. And while *yéyé* as a genre faded away after the late 1960s, it still had enough of a cult following to sustain 48 issues of a fanzine produced in the 1980s.³³ To this day, record collectors in Québec continue to seek out obscure *yéyé* singles, many of which are then digitized and uploaded to the internet so that they can be

²⁸ Bruno Roy, "La chanson au Québec: un discours élitiste pour une pratique populaire! (1950-1975)" in Giroux, ed. *En avant la chanson!*:122; Baillargeon: 44; Les Jérolas, "Yakety Yak" (RCA Victor, 1959) accessed online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M63ChGOiGm8>).

²⁹ Drapeau: 184, 189; Roy: 117.

³⁰ "The Sinners get the word," *Gazette*, 27 Aug. 1968: 8. Later when The Sinners became La Révolution française, they released an excellent politically-themed track called "Québécois" 45rpm (Capitol, 1969), complete with references to Mayor Drapeau, Expo 67 and the Montréal metro, and containing martial sounds such as sirens and a snare-drum march. Access online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPgmbISaMm8> (last accessed 17 July 2014).

³¹ Baillargeon: 44. Les Beau Marks, "Clap your hands" 45rpm (Quality, 1960). Accessed online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWdgr7QXMuk> (last accessed 17 July 2014).

³² "French Revolution (The Kids) hits big-time US recording scene," *Gazette*, 30 Aug. 1969: 39; "James Morrison, the greaseball poet," *Gazette*, 6 Sept. 1969: 43.

³³ Baillargeon: 7.

heard by an audience of bloggers and podcasters who continue to see the appeal of this vibrant type of music.

Soundtracks closely associated with national narratives are necessarily a product of ideology. In the case of *yéyé* music, many Québec nationalists saw Anglo-American popular culture as a danger to their society's culture, and therefore denigrated any individual or group who sought to imitate these styles rather than taking on the 'local' style that has become most frequently associated with *chanson*. That many of the influences that led to *chanson* were in fact also imports, notably from France, from Celtic cultures such as Scottish or Irish, or even from Latin America, tended to be minimized.

Conversely, *yéyé* came to be demonized, and has yet to find a respectable place in the historical record. It was seen as being 'commercial' or not 'Francophone' enough. It was also seen as American (an attribution which slighted the extent to which it often gave evidence of British influences). *Yéyé* became something of an American bogeyman. Renée-Berthe Drapeau, for example, argues that *yéyé* was primarily American, despite pointing to the fact that the explosion in popularity of *yéyé* music was largely fuelled by the British Invasion bands, especially after 1964 when The Beatles played to thousands of screaming teenagers in the Montréal Forum (although the show failed to sell out, and the Fab Four never again performed together in Montréal).³⁴ To overlook the British influence on Québec *yéyé*

³⁴ Drapeau. In 2013-2014, Montréal's Musée Pointe-à-Callière featured a year-long exhibition focused exclusively on this visit, which, despite being one of the only Beatles shows *not* to sell out, has since become the stuff of popular legend. See "The Beatles In Montreal" *Point-A-Callière* <http://www.pacmusee.qc.ca/en/exhibitions/the-beatles-in-montreal-50-years-later> (last accessed 1 Aug. 2014).

marginalizes the many groups who saw little to no contradiction in French Canadians taking on British performance personas. The existence of dozens of bands with anglicized names such as Les Merseys, les Beatlettes, The Sinners, les Miladys, les Sultans and solo performers such as Renée Martel (daughter of singing cowboy Marcel Martel)³⁵ suggested that many Québécois were quite willing to experiment with the new form. Les Sinners recorded a version of “Penny Lane,”³⁶ and Les Bel-Canto were photographed on London’s Abbey Road.

The popularity of *yéyé* music in Québec was in no small part related to the international musical phenomenon that was The Beatles. The Liverpool lads were the first of the wave of ‘British Invasion’ beat bands, which “hit England with a crash that reverberated around the world.”³⁷ Indeed, if there was one group that would feature on the historical soundtrack of most ‘modernized’ nations of the west, it would be the Fab Four. It is not mere coincidence, for example, that at about the same time as Québec musicians were fighting the “cold war” between *chanson* and *yéyé*, down in Mexico there were very similar debates going with regards to their own version of popular rock’n’roll, which were *refritos* (‘refried’ versions) of Anglo-American hits, also called *yéyé*. For Mexicans, as for Quebeckers, the appeal of *yéyé* lay in its sound, its internationalism, and its confrontational posture. *Yéyé* effectively

³⁵ Renée Martel’s music – such as her “Je vais à Londres” (1968) – bore witness to English influence. See Renée Martel, “Je vais à Londres,” accessed online at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGfyOVVhj_c. This cut was in fact a Québécois cover of The Rose Garden’s “Next Plane to London” (1967). Hear also Renée Martel, “Liverpool” (Mérite, 1967), accessed online at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9c7KHZuW_wA.

³⁵ Les Sinners, “Penny Lane” 45rpm (1967). Accessed online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPt2Acp7K7E>.

³⁶ Les Sinners, “Penny Lane” 45rpm (1967). Accessed online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPt2Acp7K7E>.

³⁷ “Today’s groups are good musicians who take their work seriously,” *Gazette*, 26 Sept. 1969: 27.

echoed the aspirations of a generation of Québec youth, providing them with an audible reference point and sense of belonging to a modern global community, the mastery of modern technology, freedom from patriarchal sex and gender norms as well as colonial race relations, the excitement of urban living, and access to the products and leisure time promised under multinational commodity capitalism.³⁸ For many critics, such qualities were often coded as the “foreign” antitheses of such authentic expressions as *chanson*, but they plainly did not speak for everyone.³⁹

Undoubtedly talented, The Beatles were also fortunate. Their act coincided with the imperatives of a globalizing capitalist economy after 1945. They also spoke to a British population whose pre-existing belief-system had been threatened by the rapid decline of the British Empire. Bolstered by an old system of colonial imperialism (of which Canada was very much a part) the British Empire capitalized on existing networks to promote a new, hip, humorous British identity – a refreshing cure-all for a British public coming to grips with its new, reduced position in the world. The Beatles’ appearance at the Montréal Forum in 1964 was a hit, as was a British Invasion lineup brought to the Forum a year later. Canada, like England and like Québec, in their own ways, was wrestling with its British colonial history.⁴⁰ The debate over whether to adopt the maple leaf as Canada’s national flag, or to stay with the Red Ensign, was evidence of this. In 1965, Herman, of British Invasion band Hermans’ Hermits, who was in Montréal to play as part of a British

³⁸ See: Eric Zolov, *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ For more on post-war Canadian nationalism see: José Igartua, *The Other Quiet Revolution: National Identities in English Canada 1945-71* (University of British Columbia Press, 2006); and L.B. Kuffert, *A Great Duty: Canadian Responses to Modern Life and Mass Culture, 1939-1967* (McGill/Queen’s University Press, 2003).

Invasion show at the Forum, expressed his preference for the old flag, “‘cause there’s a piece of my flag stuck on it.”⁴¹ Not many of Montréal’s nationalists would have agreed with him.

The reasons behind the reluctance of Québec’s historians to acknowledge British influence upon their culture is understandable, given the historical domination of French Canadians by the British after 1759. The same might be said for the emphasis upon American cultural imperialism, given the geographical proximity of Québec to the United States, and the power of the post-war American cultural industry. Indeed, concern over the influence and presence of American mass culture was a matter of shared concern for both Québec and Canada. In post-war Québec, many efforts were made to forestall the ‘invasion’ of American music. They included (but were by no means limited to) the establishment of song-writing competitions such as the ‘Concours de la feuille d’érable’ (1940s) and ‘Concours de la chanson canadienne’ (late 1950s); Abbé Gadbois’ national education program which distributed *La bonne chanson* songbooks to school children; and 1950s radio shows such as “Baptiste et Mariane” and CKVL’s “Parade de la chansonnette française.” One should also mention the efforts of Robert l’Herbier, who organized the first Concours de la chanson canadienne as part of his one-man battle against the encroachment of American and French culture into Québec. When he announced the competition in 1956 he was overwhelmed with thousands of submissions, and

⁴¹ George Radwanski “Pop Starts Invade the City,” [sic.] *Gazette*, 5 June 1965: 26.

the subsequent televised gala (which resulted in the pressing of an LP) was a major event in the history of Québec *chanson*.⁴²

Despite all these efforts, however, many young Québécois in the 1960s looked to Anglophone music for inspiration. And the fact that *yéyé* was denigrated by critics and self-designated cultural caretakers for its commercialism and ‘foreignness’ cannot override the reality that the practice and performance of this music was also inherently local. As Will Straw has pointed out, the importance of music such as *yéyé* might be “the new forms and sites of social interaction that resulted, the networks and personal trajectories that drew lines of movement across the map of national culture.”⁴³ Indeed, the popularity of *yéyé* led to the blossoming of a local music industry, in the formation of small independent record labels and the establishment of venues such as clubs and dancehalls, which presented exciting employment opportunities for Québécois young and old. Pointing out the paradox in labelling local practice, performance, and publicity for *yéyé* music as “foreign,” Straw writes that “the longstanding importance attached to the ‘local’ has often obscured attention to the fact that all music ‘lands’ somewhere, in one of many localities. Those styles that most obviously arrive from somewhere else [...] are often those that come to be most deeply rooted in the local, small-scale micro-economies of clubs, independent stores, and part-time employment.”⁴⁴

But what of the sonic qualities of this music? If the lyrics and performance styles were viewed as ‘foreign’, what did people have to say about the inherent

⁴² Robert Giroux, *Guide de la chanson Québécoise*: 28; Roy “Attitudes linguistiques”: 63; Drapeau: 181.

⁴³ Straw: 181.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

modernity of groups of youths plugging in electric instruments, and playing them with an aggressiveness and speed that mirrored the rapid modernization of their society? Here too we tend to find a blind spot in the historiography. Much commentary on the *chansonniers* focuses primarily on their lyricism, finding the ultimate value of this genre in its poetics. Once this methodological approach is transposed to the field of *yéyé*, the derisive results are predictable. Bruno Roy, for one, has mentioned how popular music became the object of derision at the same time as the textual content of *chanson* was being exalted.⁴⁵ *Yéyé* lyrics *did* tend to be somewhat superficial, filled with ‘nonsense’ words such as ‘yeah-yeah,’ ‘doobie-doo-bop-bop,’ and simple rhymes. Indeed, the repetition of yeah-yeah is likely the origins of the term ‘*yéyé*’ itself. More interestingly, the problem with *yéyé* lyrics may have been the use of slang and *joual*, during a time when cultural caretakers expressed concern about the degradation and Anglicization of Québec French.

The true appeal of Québec *yéyé* lies elsewhere than its lyrical content, in the expanded sonic palate made possible through the technological innovation of electric instruments. Indeed, the sonic properties of *yéyé* were so ‘in-your-face’ that they were hard to ignore. They generated plenty of comment. Bruno Roy has noted that *chanson*’s simple sonic dimension – i.e. acoustic guitar and voice – failed to resonate with modern sensibilities, attuned to a higher level of technological wizardry and perhaps hoping for more excitement. Pointing to the importance of technology, he argues that playing with and manipulating electrically amplified sound was a key factor in the appeal of *yéyé* and rock’n’roll forms. Music of the

⁴⁵ Bruno Roy, “La chanson au Québec”: 115.

young generation was a direct tributary of technology, and in this music one can find a central example of how people appropriated and translated modern technological innovation into a local expressive art-form. Indeed, it is instructive that the earliest *yéyé* groups, such as les Sultans, the Mégatones, and les Jaguars, were instrumentalists. Their songs were characterized by the sound of a Fender electric guitar with the reverb pushed to the maximum, played with a furious speed and accompanied by a pounding, frantic beat – in short, a truly modern sounding music.⁴⁶ One might draw an analogy back to *chanson's* (real or imagined) roots, in an orderly and predictable time; *yéyé* was rather more like the constant, beating, rhythmical ‘muscle sounds’ of the machinery that was drowning out Québec’s church bells.

While beat music, *yéyé*, and associated genres of the rock’n’roll style of the early to mid 1960s attracted great interest from the youth market, social arbiters of ‘culture,’ ‘taste,’ and ‘maturity’ evinced hostility towards it. Specific issues of concern here included anxiety about loosening sexual and gender norms, and racial fears about rhythm and Black ‘jungle’ music. In an article about the new dance moves – such as the Jerk, Watusi, Ska, Harlem Shuffle and Swim – that emerged alongside rock’n’roll music, the *Gazette* quoted professional ballroom dancer Michael Comte, who denied that these moves even merited the label of ‘dance’. They were “novelty movements – I couldn’t even call them dances,” he declared. “I don’t even think a lot of youngsters enjoy these modern dances – a lot of them are slightly suggestive at

⁴⁶ Roy, “La Chanson au Québec”: 120.

times...". Going on to brand "the Beatle-music" as "just jerky nonsense,"⁴⁷ the article was printed directly beneath a large photo of a young black woman demonstrating the Swim.⁴⁸ Al Palmer, the *Gazette's* 'man-about-town' columnist, declared that the only redeeming factor of the noisy, rhythmic 'beat' music was its ability to keep drivers alert while behind the wheel. Citing a study done by the British Motor Corporation of Canada, Palmer wrote:

The British motor people... say that international traffic experts, who know about these things, claim music sets the mood we drive by and they strongly favor the screeches and noise of the Beatles and their off-beat, mop-haired ilk to keep us all alive. They find we adults get noise-conscious when driving to the jungle rhythm of the Mersey beat but not aggravated enough to interfere with our concentration on the road ahead.⁴⁹

Two years later, Palmer took another swing at "the go-go, rock pop or schmop or whatever it is that's currently assailing the eardrums with the frantic sound of 1,000 trip hammers gone berserk." He asserted his preference for big-band jazz numbers or country music over "the screaming, the predictable sameness, the monotonous beat of the rockers... [and] another reason: you can always tell the girls from the boys."⁵⁰

Racist fears about the aggressiveness, sexual potency, and 'primitive' nature of Black music thus worked alongside fears about the subversion of gender norms. This issue found a focal point in a debate that challenged the masculinity of young men who sported long shaggy Beatles haircuts, who were mocked for appearing androgynous or even effeminate. Concerns about boys' haircuts were about more

⁴⁷ "Teen Dances - 'Awful,'" *Gazette*, 16 Jan. 1965: 11.

⁴⁸ Of course not everyone hated the new dances. *Le magazine Maclean*, for example, published a special "A GOGO!" featuring glossy photos demonstrating moves from the very same dances that Comte refused to acknowledge. "A GOGO!" *Le magazine Maclean*, avril 1966: 17-20.

⁴⁹ Al Palmer, "Mop Top Talk," *Gazette*, 24 June 1965: 3.

⁵⁰ Al Palmer, "Sound off," *Gazette*, 9 Jan. 1967: 3.

than hair: this issue served as a lightning rod for social anxieties about loosening gender and sexual norms. Women were asserting themselves in ever greater numbers, exhibiting modern sensibilities and independence that challenged a patriarchal culture that had once kept them silent and submissive. In Montréal, one group of women celebrated their modern femininity by appropriating the masculine rock posture for themselves, forming les Beatlettes. They had a moderate amount of success,⁵¹ but the group dissolved after two of their members were killed in a car crash while the band was travelling through southern Ontario.⁵² One wonders how many anxious parents interpreted this sad tale as a tragic warning about the dangers of letting their daughters get mixed up with rock'n'roll.

It was for all these various reasons that *yéyé* music, along with beat music, when measured against standards for 'culture' or 'good taste', was found wanting. It was just "screeches and noise,"⁵³ a symptom of "a general decline in taste."⁵⁴ Elite critics declared beat lyrics to be nothing more than "junky words,"⁵⁵ dismissing the urban argot of Black 'hip' 'jive-talk' that had developed alongside jazz music in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, and accusing writers of trying to slip drug references past the censors. To the ears of many of Montréal's cultural caretakers, Beatles music was comprised of little more than "ugly" sounds that elicited "howls and high-pitched screams" from youthful audiences.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Their hit "Only Seventeen," for example, is an excellent track and has since appeared on garage-band compilations such as *Girls With Guitars* (Ace, 2004).

⁵² "Entertainers, Student Killed in Car Crash," *Gazette*, 11 May 1965: 8.

⁵³ Palmer, "Mop Top Talk."

⁵⁴ "Modern Music reflects today's materialism, says Mischa Elman," *Gazette*, 14 May 1966: 4

⁵⁵ "Sly hidden meanings are the touchstone of the latest hits," *Gazette*, 26 Sept. 1966: 14.

⁵⁶ "Lots of noise but no naughty kids spanked."

This was a far cry from the polite, quiet audiences of the Place des Arts concert hall crowd, who demonstrated their appreciation with restrained but appreciative applause. The cultural caretakers of Montréal's musical *élite* often associated the cacophony of 'beat' bands with urban disorder, and were reluctant to offer the stages of Place des Arts to anything other than symphonic or operatic performances. In 1966, for example, jazz musician Dave Brubeck gave "a rather apathetic performance" before an "audience too restrained for jazz[.] The players have no energy to feed off of."⁵⁷

For the time being, let us focus a little more on the negative criticism that was levelled against rock'n'roll music in Montréal during the mid-1960s, which were part of a social trend that bemoaned the increasing popularity of 'mass culture' forms, at the expense of 'good culture.' Fears about "the emotional effects of their rhythms" led some educators to prescribe "an emergency shot of classical music" to children, "as an 'antidote' for the Beatles."⁵⁸ Experts frequently cautioned that exposure to the loud volume of electronically amplified music could be quite damaging to one's hearing, and the press would occasionally carry stories about musicians who had been electrocuted by faulty equipment.⁵⁹ Chiropractors warned that the "jerky" modern dances were physically harmful, and that youngsters who danced for hours, "hypnotized" by the beat, were "laying the foundation for becoming a nation of arthritics."⁶⁰

⁵⁷ "Carnival concert," *Georgian*, 15 Feb. 1966: 8.

⁵⁸ "An antidote for Beatles," *Gazette*, 27 March 1965: 19.

⁵⁹ "Rock n roll fans risk permanent ear damage," *Gazette*, 10 May 1967: 10; "Too Loud to Hear," *Gazette*, 30 Aug. 1968: 6; Dave Bist, "Down with the urge to play loud," *Gazette*, 22 March 1969: 46; "Too-loud music," *Gazette*, 3 Oct. 1969: 6.

⁶⁰ "Chiropractor sounds warning against excessive dancing," *Gazette*, 8 April 1967: 3.

Bodily disharmony, cacophonous music, and urban disorder seemingly all went together. In 1966, *Gazette* reporter Mark Starowicz spoke with American *émigré* and Russian Jewish violinist Mischa Elman, on the eve of a recital at Place des Arts. “There has been a general decline in taste today because artists think that if they live in an ugly world they must produce something ugly,” the old man said. “Today we are living in a materialistic world, and that materialism is amply represented in the quality of modern music.” There was too much emphasis on percussion, he thought, and he predicted a return to strings and harmony: “A string instrument is the nearest thing to voice, and must have melody. A violin can’t stand cacophony and dissonance.”⁶¹ No doubt Elman’s hosts at Place des Arts hoped for the same return to social harmony. The cultural *élites* who made the final decisions about who could grace its stages were notoriously opposed to “culturally unacceptable” popular music, “vulgar” shows “that could inspire hysteria among the members of the audience.”⁶² Even artists such as José Feliciano, who had performed at high-culture venues such as Carnegie Hall, and whose music sounds extremely tame by today’s standards, were turned down by the managers at Place des Arts because of “the type of audience it was felt the young Puerto Rican singer would attract.”⁶³

⁶¹ “Modern music reflects today’s materialism...”

⁶² “Culturally unacceptable,” *Gazette*, 3 Aug. 1968: 13; “Vulgar shows to cut Place des Arts deficit,” *Gazette* 24 July 1970: 3; “Should the Place des Arts re-examine its attitude to pop shows?” *Gazette*, 24 Aug. 1968: 18.

⁶³ “PdA’s swingin’ brass and some good signs,” *Gazette*, 16 Nov. 1968: 41.

However, by the turn of the decade, the Montréal Symphony Orchestra (MSO) was in trouble, and Place des Arts needed to generate revenue.⁶⁴ Maintaining a snobbish disregard for popular music no longer seemed practical. Dwindling attendance and a rapidly ageing concert-going public forced the venue's directors to think again about rock'n'roll. In desperate need of revenue the hall was slowly opened up to performers such as Robert Charlebois – whose appearance with the MSO in July 1970 was deemed “a complete triumph”: “The audience literally went wild. There were cheers and bravos like there have probably never been in the hall before.”⁶⁵

The raucous breakdown of social order that accompanied rock'n'roll, ‘teen dances’ and pop shows caused anxiety for the refined and restrained audiences accustomed to symphony orchestra performances at Place des Arts. Newspaper columnists often sensationalized coverage of popular music concerts such as that of the Rolling Stones, describing it as a “frightening experience,” making sure to get the details of exactly how many security guards – no fewer than 240 – it took to keep the “lusty shrieking and foot-stomping” audience in check. One also learned that “at least a hundred” girls had been treated at medical stations for “bouts of hysteria.”⁶⁶ Al Palmer reported that security guards had been “mauled” and gotten “caught up in the maelstrom of uncropped hair and strained lungs”. “Strangest thing about it,” he reported, “was that nobody listened to the music – or whatever it was.”⁶⁷

⁶⁴ “Save the orchestra,” *Gazette*, 7 Sept. 1968: 8; “What is the cure for the death of symphony orchestras?” *Gazette*, 18 Oct. 1969: 39. It should be noted that symphony orchestras were in trouble across North America at this time, and that the trend was by no means unique to Montréal.

⁶⁵ “Charlebois – MSO marriage a complete triumph,” *Gazette*, 22 July 1970: 17.

⁶⁶ “Stoned at the Forum,” *Gazette* 1 July 1966: 2

⁶⁷ Al Palmer, “The Screamers,” *Gazette* 5 July 1966: 5.

Rock music and urban disorder were linked together in many ways. One of the most popular of such linkages came in assertions that there were unknown “emotional effects of [the] rhythms” that preyed on young minds. The result might well include a young person’s “instability” and developmental delay, i.e. a failure to advance beyond “a certain phase in the musical development.”⁶⁸ It is worth noting that those who most often appeared as ‘victims’ of rock’n’roll’s destabilizing tendencies were girls (who were stimulated to hysterics at pop shows) and children (who were not to be ‘held back’ by the primitive ‘jungle’ rhythms of rock’n’roll). There were continued warnings about rock music being “one of the principal causes of instability” amongst youth, but also an awareness that it might also be the other way around: “that rock’n’roll might be caused by the instability of the times.” When, in early 1968, a seventeen-year-old boy in Ville-Émard “went berserk” and began firing bullets into the street from his mother’s bedroom window, *Gazette* reporters were quick to point out that the youth had been playing a “record, by an English pop-jazz group, [that] dealt with a man who had killed someone and had been put in jail. It was still on the portable record player in [his] sparsely-furnished bedroom when police examined the Hamilton street flat last night.”⁶⁹ And this coming over a year before Charles Manson took *his* inspiration from a pop record...

Despite the unfavourable responses of elite cultural caretakers to rock music, there was one thing that fans and critics could agree on: that rock’n’roll music was indicative of the new modern age, a youthful age, a “go-go age,” the age of

⁶⁸ “An Antidote for the Beatles”; “Rock ‘n roll cause of teen instability?” *Gazette*, 17 July 1965: 43.

⁶⁹ “An Antidote for the Beatles”; “Rock ‘n roll cause of teen instability?”; “A pop record told of killing,” *Gazette* 27 Jan. 1968: 2.

supersonics. “Rock and roll is an innovation of today’s generation, a type of music which was never heard before the Second World War,” one man pointed out in a letter to the editors of the *Gazette*, “Its quintessential energy makes it distinctly different from the music of any other generation.”⁷⁰ “The go-go music and dances that attract youngsters reflect their great energy,” Université de Montréal physics professor Gilles Cloutier observed. Perhaps, he hoped, this energy could be channelled and put to use as “science a-go-go.” Louis Dudek wrote that “action” was the word that best “expressed the spirit of the present in every facet of art and culture... It’s the key word, or the principle, in practically everything we see and do: in phrases like ‘where the action is’, ‘Go, man,’ ‘A-go-go’ and so forth.”⁷¹ But Harry Crawford, Presbyterian minister in St. Laurent, argued that modern society was all “go-go to nowhere,” that “the average person today is like a modern go-go dancer”, i.e. lots of movement, but not getting anywhere: “People of today are more active than ever before, but have little or no idea where they are heading.”⁷²

For some Montrealers, a suitable antidote for the existential meaninglessness of the new ‘go-go age’ was God. Within religious communities too, there was resistance to the sonic qualities of rock music, but at the same time many different congregations attempted to appeal to young people by offering “folk masses” that featured a group of young musicians translating popular songs into more spiritual interpretations. Although these special services were pretty tame by today’s standards, usually involving respectful renditions of songs such as “Kumbaya”,

⁷⁰ “Music of today’s generation,” *Gazette*, 9 Nov. 1966: 6.

⁷¹ “The Action – Frug, Twist, and a touch of Dostoyevski,” *Gazette*, 22 Feb. 1969: 37.

⁷² “Go-go to nowhere,” *Gazette*, 6 April 1966: 3; “Energy of today’s teenagers suggests ‘science a go-go,’” *Gazette*, 14 April 1966: 17.

“Blowing in the Wind”, “Michael Row the Boat Ashore”, and that classic of the Civil Rights movement, “We Shall Overcome”, not everyone believed that profane works belonged in the hallowed halls of the church, the cathedral, or the synagogue. One did not have to even attend such a service to grasp the sacrilegious nature of presenting “The Liverpool beat” as part of a holy ceremony. Witness a few letters written to the editors of the *Gazette*, which, while arguing that popular or mass culture did not belong at mass, also demonstrated a weak grasp of the differences between popular music forms, seemingly using folk, folk rock, beat music, and jazz interchangeably:

The purpose of music in the church is, presumably, for the greater glory of God. I cannot believe that the raucous screechings of any such group fulfils this purpose. The noises which emanate distract the attention of young people; whose thoughts go to the Beatles and their MBE... [T]he performance of such ‘folk masses’ etc in a Cathedral Church is a sacrilege and disturbances of this nature have no business taking place regularly.⁷³

We do not all praise God in the same idiom, and none of us can determine what certainly pleases God... we can only offer the best we have, and jazz is not the best idiom for the liturgy. The connotations of jazz are not those of prayer and contemplation... It takes a fairly steady head and a strong stomach to cope with daily life in this brave new Age of Dis-Taste, and the spirit of human being needs one place at least, of temporary retreat in which to recover its equilibrium, and to acquire some of the strength and inner peace needed to carry it through the irritations and batterings of today. When that spiritual sanctuary is violated by one component of the Universal Row man insists on making, to the detriment of his health and sanity, one is confused, disappointed, and regrettably, angered.⁷⁴

It is worth noting here the ideas presented in these letters: that the popular music of the third quarter of the twentieth century was nothing but “raucous screechings” and “noise,” that this noise seemed to be characteristic of a “brave new age” of base tastes and mass culture, and that features of this new age included the

⁷³ John Aimers, “Doesn’t think folk mass has place in cathedral” (letter to the editor) *Gazette*, 2 July 1965: 6.

⁷⁴ Leila Maclean, “Jazz is fine, but not in church” (letter to the editor) *Gazette*, 7 July 1965: 6.

loudness of the “Universal Row” alongside a sense of being irritated and battered by the forces of modernity. But not everyone was as resistant to the attempts at “thrusting religion into the far out space-age”: “The entire mass was a learning experience,” wrote one man, “The Folk Mass tries to bring the people into closer communion with God through participation... I would rather participate in the folk mass than sit listening to a well paid, albeit well trained, choir sing classical sacred music the meaning of which escapes me...”. It also seems that young people were drawn to these attempts at presenting “the church’s liturgy in the language of modern youth.” Interest in these special masses was high, drawing audiences of various ages.⁷⁵

What all of these criticisms of popular music (whether in its various forms as *yéyé*, beat, rock’n’roll, or folk masses) had in common was a sense that this quintessentially modern type of music was aggressively loud or noisy. Despite the denigration faced by rock’n’roll music in the early to mid 1960s, by the end of the decade there was growing appreciation for rock music’s ability to capture the essence of the age. ‘Serious’ artists began experimenting with rock music, incorporating its unique sound into symphonies, ballets, and theatre pieces. “Rock is a statement against our impersonal, mercenary, polluted, violent society which puts

⁷⁵ F. David Thomas, “Folk Mass a learning experience” (letter to the editor) *Gazette*, 7 July 1965: 6; “Liverpool Beat at Mass,” *Gazette*, 4 Dec. 1965: 51; Al Palmer, “The Mass,” *Gazette*, 18 Dec. 1965: 3; “Rock n Roll Service,” *Gazette*, 19 Feb. 1966: 7; “Selichot Service for Teens Only!” *Gazette*, 10 Sept. 1966: 22. Interestingly, the present-day Church has gone so far to welcome folk music into its services that Gilles Vigneault has incorporated folk idioms – and the Innu language – into St. Jean Baptiste celebrations in Rome. Apparently today “the fiddle and wooden spoons played during the Alleluia take nothing away from the grandeur of the chant and the solemnity of the prayer.” “Vigneault in Rome on St-Jean-Baptiste,” *Catholic Church of Montreal*, 30 June 2014 at <http://www.diocesemontreal.org/en/news/latest-news---en/reader/items/vigneault-in-rome-on-st-jean-baptiste.html> (last accessed 12 Aug. 2014).

people up against the wall,” declared one classically trained musician. “Rock’s basic, animal stuff – graffiti – and when I put that in my musical language I can convey the feelings I feel so strongly.”⁷⁶ There was a growing sense among young Montrealers of the need to come to terms with modernity by incorporating some of its forward-looking energy, its spatio-temporal iconoclasm, and its tendency to treat long-established forms as sites of conscious experimentation.

While rock music was being hailed for its ability to accurately represent the essence of a new modern age, it was also being denigrated for its appropriation and performance of modernity’s less pleasing qualities: repetition, speed, loudness, and violence. In one particularly revealing *Gazette* editorial the sonic similarities between rock music and the noises of advanced industrial capitalism were laid bare: “The sound produced by the average ‘rock combo’ with amplifiers is only one grade lower than that produced by a pneumatic drill, only two grades lower than the sound produced by a jet engine at 100 feet. And some music groups register higher than the average 120 decibels.”⁷⁷

The loudness of rock music became of special concern in the late 1960s and early 1970s as rock musicians pushed the genre further and further, testing the limits of both their equipment and the ear-drums of their audience. Here the association between deafeningly loud volume, noisy electronic feedback, and violence became ever more pronounced. Montrealers taking in a Who show at the Forum in 1968 “were bombarded by the deafeningly loud sounds from the stage”. “[The band members] play so long and loud that one’s head begins to ring,

⁷⁶ “Rock invades the finer arts,” *Gazette*, 15 Nov. 1969: 17.

⁷⁷ “Too loud to hear,” *Gazette*, 30 Aug. 1968: 6.

wondering where all the sounds are coming from. And all the time they move about and attack their instruments with a satisfying violence.”⁷⁸ “It’s the shock value of rock music that counts,” stated young music columnist Juan Rodriguez.⁷⁹

Rock music was designed “to attack all the senses”, according to one young composer, to overwhelm the human sensorium. Noted New York artist and critic Richard Kostelanetz commented on the trend towards louder and louder music. His detailed description of a typical popular music concert is worth quoting at length:

...a grandiose sheet of sound gushes out of the auditorium’s large loudspeakers, a sound amplified to, and perhaps beyond, the threshold of aural pain. The backdrop screen springs to life with a rich and animate profusion of brilliantly colored, metamorphic images projected from behind, that constantly change in rhythm with the music and the gyrating musicians. The audience begins to sway to the insistent beat. The music gets louder, more frenetic. The light show flickers faster. Frenzied fans, most of whom cannot even distinguish the words being sung, weep or shriek or run screaming to the stage to touch their idols. *More noise, more flashing lights, more amplification, more speed, until sight and sound reach truly inhuman levels.* As the tempo increases, the audience possessed by the music, actually loses control and performers, instruments, amplifiers, lights, screen, audience, mind, body, auditorium, building, street, earthy, sky, universe become one whole thumping, electric ear-shattering, eye-blinking, mind boggling **experience**. [...] There is no other word for it. Is this entertainment? A new art form, perhaps, or just a restless generation’s noisy protest? Or is it, as some have claimed, the first rumblings of this era’s most significant contribution to the evolution of music? [...] The use of loud volume and aural feedback afforded by the electronic amplification equipment is crucial. The loudness is partially an attempt to overwhelm the spectator’s nervous system, particularly his neural mechanisms, with extrinsic stimuli.⁸⁰

In Montréal, local bands participated in this pursuit, trying to achieve ever-more-deafening extremes of sound. Local band The Urge was warned that “[c]oming on strong is one thing, and you can overpower an audience and control them with

⁷⁸ “Rock reaches new high with the Who,” *Gazette*, 29 March 1968: 32;

⁷⁹ Juan Rodriguez, “It’s the shock value of rock music that counts to its indiscriminate fans,” *Gazette*, 6 July 1968: 20.

⁸⁰ “The new rock of ages is a different sort of song,” *Gazette*, 6 Dec. 1969: 13, emphasis in original.

music, but not with sheer volume.”⁸¹ A Toronto club called The Rockpile was featured in *Canadian Magazine*, because the venue was built in a concrete Masonic hall where “you can feel the sound through the soles of your shoes. You can feel it in the tips of your fingers; it is that loud, and it becomes more substantial than the concrete.” This overpowering sound was created by the Rockpile’s house-band, Transfusion, and their \$10,525 worth of equipment.⁸² When Led Zeppelin came to Montréal to play “their painfully loud brand of blues” through the Forum’s new PA system in 1970, “no one in the building could have escaped the vibrations” of the band’s “harsh, frantic sound.”⁸³ When Grand Funk Railroad played the Forum they “knocked everyone back with the loudest, most together hard rock ever heard.” “GFR is more than merely loud. This is a group that articulates beautifully at high volume. If you can stand the pain.”⁸⁴ A few months later, Procul Harum blew the speaker cones out of the \$32,000 Italian-designed Semprini sound system at Place des Nations, an amphitheatre constructed as part of the Expo 67 grounds.⁸⁵

Amid all this noisy music Andrew Collard made sure to remind the *Gazette’s* readers that “very loud electrically-amplified popular music” could cause serious hearing loss, even electrocution, and suggested that musicians look to workers in other loud industries, such as factories, plants, or workshops – spaces where unions had helped legislate the wearing of protective ear muffs.⁸⁶ Music critics, too, wondered to what end this was all heading. “Equipment becomes larger and more

⁸¹ Down with the urge to play loud,” *Gazette*, 22 March 1969: 46.

⁸² Barrie Hale, “\$10,525 is what makes a band ROCK all night,” *Canadian Magazine*, 23 Nov. 1968: 8.

⁸³ “Led Zeppelin dazzle 15,000,” *Gazette*, 14 April 1970: 20.

⁸⁴ “A lot of loud noise and a little good music,” *Gazette*, 11 May 1970: 10.

⁸⁵ “Sound system sabotages Procul Harum,” *Gazette*, 25 June 1970: 11.

⁸⁶ “Too loud music,” *Gazette*, 3 Oct. 1969: 3.

powerful, as groups and solo artists forget melody strains and musical quality, and concentrate upon their contracts with the Zenith and Beltone Hearing Aid companies to recruit more clients by thrashing out machine shop symphonies,” Stan Hollander wrote in a 1971 piece for the *Georgian*. “When, in ten years, the MORENOISE Record Company of Manson, California, starts complaining about lagging sales, due to an increasing amount of deafness among the consumer population, they’ll have no one to blame but themselves, Sony, the supersonics, and progress.”⁸⁷

Such criticisms can help us understand how rock music became a convenient scapegoat for those who wished to voice dissatisfaction with the consequences of modernity. It was no coincidence that *yéyé* music was targeted for being commercial, repetitive, vulgar, and materialistic; that beat music was deemed unfit for holy spaces; or that rock music was criticized for exhibiting, albeit in a more conscious way, the same sonic palate as the modern urban soundscape – speed, monotony, noise, and volume. The physical violence of noise, sound, and music in Montréal during Québec’s “Quiet Revolution” was overwhelming. Many believed that the human sensorium was not designed to take the ‘irritations’ and ‘battering’ of such modern urban experience. The feeling of being overwhelmed and overloaded with sensory data was a feeling that artists appropriated from their own experiences of modern cities like Montréal, and artists used this kind of feeling to create their own feedback, their own electric noises, mastering the sheets of sound

⁸⁷ Stan Hollander, “Music,” *Georgian*, 30 Nov. 1971: 9.

and throwing this sonic power back at the system that made it possible in the first place.

Robert Charlebois, Montréal's modern musical assimilator

Bruno Roy has said of Québec's 1960s that "the popular musical avant garde was linked to a vague notion of modernity, whose products bear its mark: cries, jerky rhythms, dissonance, free fashion sense, electrification of sounds, etc."⁸⁸ For Roy, the work that best exemplifies this sense of modernity is that of native Montrealer Robert Charlebois. His "Osstidcho" – a form of theatrical 'happenings' born in May 1968 to which our analysis will return – and his "gang" of musicians, poets, and alumni from Montréal's *École nationale de theatre*, all became famous embodiments of their age.⁸⁹

Charlebois played the role of cultural "shock trooper" for the youthful Québécois, using satire and sound to break through the tension between the *yéyé* groups and the *chansonniers*, assimilating the best of both genres into a uniquely modern Montréalais style of popular music – a colourful, vibrant kind of pop music

⁸⁸ Roy: 128.

⁸⁹ The gang included Mouffe (Claudine Monfette), who became Charlebois's partner, Louise Forestier, Yvon Deschamps, and Claude Péroquin, along with the talented musical improvisors that made up the Quatuor Jazz Libre du Québec The Quatuor (aka QJLQ, aka "Jazz Libre") was formed in 1967 and promoted improvisational music as a means of bringing about social and cultural change in Québec. The group, along with L'Infonie (who will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five) promoted artistic collaboration and was among the most celebrated avant-garde performers in Montréal during the late 1960s and early 1970s. See "Quatuor de Jazz Libre du Québec," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/quatuor-de-jazz-libre-du-quebec-emc/> (last accessed 11 Aug. 2014). While they only ever released one LP while still together (*Le Quatuor de Jazz Libre du Québec* (London: 1969)), a recording, made at Radio-Canada's Studio 13, 13 May 1973, has recently been released on the avant-garde Tenzier label: Quatuor de Jazz Libre du Québec, *TNZR501: Quatuor de Jazz Libre du Québec 1973* (Tenzier, 2012).

once described as a sonic cartoon strip.⁹⁰ His music came at a key period in the city's history, with the international festival atmosphere of Expo 67, then 1968, a year of global carnivalesque, and local upheaval with the establishment of the Parti Québécois, a series of student strikes in the province, a riot-marred and Trudeaumania-inflected federal election, a bitter police strike, Mayor Jean Drapeau's criminalization of protest, and the FLQ's longest bombing campaign (over forty bombings and dynamite attacks in a seven-month period).⁹¹ Here was the background to Charlebois's experiments. As Jacques Julien summarized it:

...Charlebois invented a Francophone kind of rock in Québec, and he attained the goals he set out for his music: hit the listener "hard, between the ears". Over a modern sound, he sang in a contemporary language, sometimes English, sometimes international French, sometimes a bastard mix of all that. And it worked because this bastardization assumed, in song, the social reality that could no longer be hidden on the eve of the 1970s.⁹²

"In the context of a not-so-quiet revolution," Julien concludes, "Charlebois, with his message, his music, his provocative and crazy style, arrived at just the right time."⁹³ Charlebois's remarkable ability to "channel the vibrations in the air" resulted in musical creations that "were exemplary translations of the urban mentality."⁹⁴ What's more, as Claude Gingras commented in 1968, Charlebois created a music that retained the best melodies, sonics, and literary qualities of his most advanced counterparts in the U.S. and Europe, applying these qualities to the "problem" of a Québec caught in an American environment.⁹⁵ Most importantly, Charlebois proved

⁹⁰ Gagnon, *Charlebois déchiffré*: 46.

⁹¹ A detailed timeline of FLQ attacks can be found in Louis Fournier, *FLQ: Histoire d'un mouvement clandestin* (Montréal: Lanctôt éditeur, 1998): 475-494.

⁹² Julien: 28. [my translation S.D.J.]

⁹³ *Ibid.*: 156. [my translation, S.D.J.]

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Gingras, quoted in Durand: 316.

to his compatriots that the Quebecker could be at home anywhere in the world, and didn't have to live in a "blinding nationalism."⁹⁶ In this section we will explore the modern qualities of Charlebois's musical creations, his philosophy, and his performance, with a particular focus on his unique internationalist vision (which often drew the ire of Québécois nationalists), alongside important signs of his divergence from the *chansonniers*, such as his use of *joual*, his embrace of mass culture, his use of noise and electric feedback, and finally his hip, urbane, knowing relationship with the conventions of modernity.

Robert Charlebois, the grandson of the proprietor of Echange Mont-Royal (reputedly the first RCA Victor distributor in Montréal), grew up with a keen ear for sound, a theatrical flair, and a rebellious streak. He learned piano as a child, but with the advent of rock'n'roll he and his teenage chums scratched together a band. Although they most often played in their parents' living rooms, Charlebois was always looking to find space with better acoustics: a garage, for instance, or even a bathroom. He and his friends would go see bands play at the famous Esquire Show Bar – music journalist Benoît l'Herbier recounts one particular night when Charlebois was impressed by Shotgun Kelly: "He played a drum solo for an hour, often without the drum-kit, on the tables, the chairs, the columns in the place."⁹⁷

Despite his rock'n'roll roots, after dropping out of school Charlebois split his time between his two passions: he started touring on the *chanson* circuit, eventually becoming (along with his childhood friend Jean-Guy Moreau) a house favourite at their local *boîte-à-chanson*, Le Saranac, while at the same time entering l'École

⁹⁶ Placide Gaboury, quoted in Durand: 316.

⁹⁷ Benoît l'Herbier, *Charlebois, qui es-tu?* (Montréal: Editions de l'homme, 1971): 36-53.

nationale du théâtre, and performing interactive theatre skits in Montréal's public parks. At the same time, Charlebois was pursuing the typical path of the *chansonnier*. He found a certain amount of success in the mid-1960s, and in 1965 his song "La Boulé" earned him a Grand Prix du Festival du Disque for best new performer.⁹⁸ That same year he and his friends presented a show at the Totem: "Yéyé vs. chansonniers" with Mouffe as a *yéyé* girl and Jean-Guy as *le chansonnier*, their heterosexual relationship working as a gentle commentary on the state of Québec music at the time, i.e. split between modern rock'n'roll and folksy *chanson*.

The years 1966 and 1967 were pivotal. Charlebois and Mouffe, now a couple, travelled together to Martinique. Here Charlebois had a first-hand experience with black rhythms (particularly the bossa-nova) – experiences which had two profound outcomes: the first was that he found a whole new sonic palate from which to draw musically, and the second was that he gained a valuable internationalist perspective, which helped inform the political foundations of his work. Two important songs came out of this period, both exemplifying his internationalism: "Bossa Nova des Esquimaux"⁹⁹ and "La Complainte de Presqu'Amérique," both of which dealt directly with Charlebois's vision of Québec as culturally 'frozen,' too tied to the distant past and too resistant to the reality of Québec's politico-economic and socio-cultural relationship to its American neighbour, i.e. "un pouce et demi en haut des Etats-Unis" ("an inch and a half above the United-States"):

⁹⁸ L'Herbier, 76.

⁹⁹ Charlebois's repeated references to Canada's northern aboriginal peoples is problematic, and will be dealt with in detail below.

« Bossa Nova des Esquimaux »

*Nous les bâtards de l'Amérique
Nous les glaçons de la Samba
Nous les torchons de l'Atlantique
Nous les Esquimaux de la Bossa Nova
Quand on aura fini d'invoquer
Les saints qui baptisent nos rues
Quand on aura fini de chanter
L'histoire des Hurons qu'on n'a jamais
connus...¹⁰⁰*

We the bastards of America
We the icicles of the Samba
We the rags of the Atlantic
We the Eskimos of the Bossa Nova
When we are finished invoking
The saints who baptise our streets
When we are finished singing about
The history of the Hurons whom we never
knew...

"La Complainte de Presqu'Amérique"

[...]
*Dans ma ville grise de Presqu'Amérique
Je m'endors
Sous le vent du nord
Engourdi je m'enlise
Demain si la mort
Ne m'abrille pas je ferai ma valise
Et je crierai
Please help me in I need your swing, I want to
see what's happening
Let me feel cool before I freeze the in-crowd is
for fun and peace
Quand je reviendrai par l'autre chemin
Vous serez Anglais ou Américains
Ou vous serez morts pour deux pas de folklore
Et quelques promesses d'or
Un pouce et demi en haut des Etats-Unis.¹⁰¹*

[...]
In my grey city of Almost-America
I am asleep
Under the north wind
Numb, I'm stuck
Tomorrow if death
Doesn't take me I will pack my bags
And I will cry
Please help me in I need your swing
I want to see what's happening
Let me feel cool before I freeze
The in-crowd is for fun and peace
When I come back the other way
You will be English or American
Or you will be dead two-steps from folklore
And golden promises
An inch and a half above the United States.

What is clear from the music of this period is that Charlebois was chafing under the limitations of Québec's popular music scene: anything too close to *yéyé* was deemed commercial clap-trap, while everything coming out of the *chanson* circuit was mired in a traditionalism that Charlebois felt was old and tired, "dead two-steps from folklore." His lyrical references to Québec being 'frozen' tied him to a tradition of wintry Québécois lyricism (think Vigneault, "Mon pays ce n'est pas un

¹⁰⁰ Robert Charlebois, "Bossa nova des esquimaux" *Robert Charlebois* (Gamma, 1967). Sound recording. [My translation, S.D.J.].

¹⁰¹ Robert Charlebois, "La complainte de presqu'Amérique" *Robert Charlebois* (Gamma, 1967). Sound recording. [My translation, S.D.J.].

pays, c'est l'hiver"), but it also set him apart from his compatriots. Québec culture, according to Charlebois, was frozen in time, obsessed with a past of *coureurs-de-bois* and too wary of the American flavour of its modernity. As musical chronicler Benoît L'Herbier explained at the time, "Charlebois compares us to Eskimos, always in relation to the Americans. Our cold climate keeps us in our folklore and prevents us from progressing. In the south, music evolves normally, year round, while here we only have two months during which to catch up." What's more, "[Charlebois] tells of the ennui he feels being Québécois, of not having any culture to identify with. He dips into the United States in order to inject new blood into Québec, to break free from the dusty old folklore."¹⁰²

In suggesting that Québec was culturally frozen, Charlebois was not alone. *Le Devoir* editor André Laurendeau, in an editorial titled "Nous sommes un peuple pénétré par l'hiver," asked whether one shouldn't perhaps migrate towards the south: "On éprouve le besoin de se refaire, on voudrait changer de brûlure. Ou plutôt, l'on désirerait vivre dans un air tiède, au sein d'une nature foisonnante. Pour se reposer, oui. Mais aussi pour que le cerveau redevienne allègre." His mind boggled at the cultural stamina of Canada's northern aboriginals, having survived for so long in the extreme North, resisting the urge to migrate south.¹⁰³

Robert Charlebois could not resist this urge. A trip to California supercharged Charlebois' creativity and honed his internationalism even further. From this point forwards, he incorporated the psychedelic sounds typical of San Francisco bands

¹⁰² L'Herbier: 105, 107.

¹⁰³ André Laurendeau, "Nous sommes un peuple pénétré par l'hiver," *Le magazine Maclean*, février 1966: 44.

such as The Jefferson Airplane. It was thanks to this period that he and Louise Forestier penned one of the biggest Québec hits of the 1960s, and one of the first “acid-rock” songs produced in the province: “Lindbergh.”¹⁰⁴ This song has as its premise airline travel (a key feature of Montréal’s modernity, as we have already seen), and internationalism. Amid spaced-out flighty sonics (provided by Forestier), Charlebois sings about flying all around the world in search of his lover, Sophie:

Des hélices:

Astrojet, Whisperjet, Clipperjet, Turbo
A propos suis pas rendu chez Sophie
Qui a pris l’avion St-Esprit de Duplessis
Sans m’avertir

Alors suis r’partie
Sur Québec Air
Transworld, Northern, Eastern, Western
Puis Pan-American
Mais j’sait plus où j’suis rendu

J’ai été
Au sud du sud au soleil bleu blanc rouge
Les palmiers et les cocotiers glaces
Dans les pôles aux esquimaux bronzes
Qui tricotent des ceintures fléchés farcies
Et toujours ma Sophie qui venait de partir

J’suis r’partie
Sur Québec Air
Transworld, Northern, Eastern, Western
Puis Pan-American
Mais j’sait plus ou j’suis rendu
[...]¹⁰⁵

The propellers:

Astrojet, Whisperjet, Clipperjet, Turbo
A propos I didn't go to Sophie's
Who took the plane St-Esprit de Duplessis
Without telling me

So I took off again
On Québec Air
Transworld, Northern, Eastern, Western
And Pan-American
But I don't know where I am

I've been
To the south of the south in blue white red sun
The palm trees and frozen coconuts
The poles with bronzed Eskimos
Who knit *ceintures fléchés farcies*¹⁰⁶.
And always my Sophie had just left

So I took off again
On Québec Air
Transworld, Northern, Eastern, Western
And Pan-American
But I don't know where I am
[...]

¹⁰⁴ L’Herbier: 112.

¹⁰⁵ Robert Charlebois “Lindbergh” *Robert Charlebois & Louise Forestier* (Barclay, 1968). Sound recording.

¹⁰⁶ A colourful sash typical of the traditional French Canadian “coureurs de bois.” There is no accurate English translation.

The internationalist philosophy behind much of Charlebois' music of this period was related to his belief that music and sound worked as a kind of international language. "I don't believe in language anymore," he claimed. "If we have to have a mix of Italian, of French or English or Chinese, too bad. Song, for me, is what is best at bringing more understanding to the world."¹⁰⁷ Two songs, in particular, exemplify this philosophy. One, a simple song he wrote in English for his grandmother's birthday, contained the lyrics "I'll just find a melody / one that's simple, nice and easy / so that I can tell / my song over the fence / and make the whole world dance."¹⁰⁸ Another, entitled "Mur du Son" ("Wall of sound" or "Sound barrier"), featured lyrics that were in fact written by Mouffe, but which nonetheless did a nice job of capturing her partner's sense of music as a universal language:

Je veux franchir le mur du son	I want to cross the wall of sound,
Et propulser cette chanson	And propel this song
Mixer les rythmes, trouver le ton	Mix rhythms, find the tone,
Les instruments, la voix, la clé,	The instruments, the voice, the key
Donner la note qui fera chanter	Give the note that will make sing
Trois Amériques à l'unisson.	Three Americas in harmony. ¹⁰⁹

Robert Charlebois' internationalism seemed unique to music critics used to the insular provincialism of the *chansonniers*. Placide Gaboury, commenting on this in *Le Devoir*, wrote in 1969 that Charlebois's music was "international in its mentality and its vision. His world is clearly North-American, not only Québécois. [...] Charlebois seems in effect to show that we can be Québécois without being

¹⁰⁷ Robert Charlebois, quoted in l'Herbier: 155. [my translation, S.D.J.].

¹⁰⁸ Robert Charlebois, "The Greatest Idea" 45rpm 1972. Sound recording.

¹⁰⁹ Robert Charlebois and Claudine Monfette, "Mur du son" *Robert Charlebois (aka Fu Man Chu)* (Barclay, 1973). Sound recording. I suspect the reference to "three Americas" is a reference to the three major language groups on the North American continent, i.e. English, French and Spanish – yet it might also be a reference to the three geographical Americas, i.e. North America, Central America, and South America.

closed in to a blinding nationalism, that we can be at ease anywhere in the world... Might this be an indication of a new current that is emerging among the public – especially among the young – a current of international consciousness and sensibility, of which Charlebois’ music may be a sign?”¹¹⁰ Charlebois’s own response to such questions was clear: “I am an American,” he claimed, “since I live in North America. I belong to the Global Village – that is to say, the entire world.”¹¹¹

The unique sense of cosmopolitan internationalism espoused in songs written by Robert Charlebois and his collaborators was not, however, without controversy. For many of his compatriots, his refusal to see Québec as independent because of its geo-political distinctiveness in North America, coming as it did during an era of intense Québécois nationalism, seemed almost treasonous. Charlebois was “align[ed] to a sense of Québec that surpasses traditional nationalism... What he sings, is something like this: ‘Let us be Québécois before being separatist...’ [...] This is far from whiny nationalism! As if everyone feels a belonging to the global tribe, our earth!”¹¹² Charlebois’s opposition to separatist politics got him into trouble at least once: in 1969, he had been asked by the Jean-Guy Cardinal Youth to perform as part of a Union nationale convention in Québec City. He had been performing at a pop festival in Toronto, but had to cut his stay short to travel up to the provincial capital, missing, to his chagrin, a performance by James Brown. During the Union nationale show, halfway through the song “California,” Charlebois sang some lyrics in English (something the Montrealer did often in his songs). This elicited loud boos

¹¹⁰ Placide Gaboury, “Robert Charlebois: cantre des villes?” *Le Devoir*, 29 March 1969: 22.

¹¹¹ Charlebois quoted in “Qui est Robert Charlebois?” *Le compositeur canadien*, mai 1969: 35.

¹¹² Georges Kahl, “Un ‘retour’ apocalyptique de Robert Charlebois,” *Le Devoir*, 8 Sept. 1970: 13.

from part of the crowd. Charlebois was incensed, and, according to reporter Brian Stewart, the following exchange ensued: "Listen," Charlebois said to his audience, "I'm stopping this right here. I've had enough of this... I've been watching your crummy little show [i.e. the convention] on television tonight, and I'm not interested in your little Nazi quarrels." With that, he shouted "Vive les Anglais!" and began to walk off the stage, only to return to shout a stream of obscenities into the microphone. Fights broke out as the crowd swelled around the stage. The performance was over.¹¹³

Charlebois was always upfront about the fact he was not interested in separatist politics. "Robert is not separatist, he's a unionist," explained Mouffe, in the sense that "he's a plug that puts people together; he's for the universe, for the ultimate union of peoples."¹¹⁴ "Everyone would like for me to be a political guy, but I'm not a political guy," Charlebois explained. "I'm a singer. I'm a man of the stage."¹¹⁵ Indeed, this singer thought the political process so ridiculous that he ran as a candidate for the satirical Rhinoceros Party in the 1968 election, declaring "I'm not nationalist. It seems to me that it's a plague, nationalism in the world. That and racism! [...] I'm for the world. For a united world, for international understanding. I think the whole world should be bilingual, multilingual. But, you have to listen [to each other]!"¹¹⁶ One month later, when asked if he believed in separatism, Charlebois replied:

¹¹³ Brian Stewart, "Pop idol shakes young conventioners," *Gazette*, 23 June 1969: 10.

¹¹⁴ Claudine Monfette, quoted in *l'Herbier*: 146.

¹¹⁵ Robert Charlebois, quoted in Jacques Julien: 131.

¹¹⁶ Robert Charlebois, quoted in "Les idées-choc d'un Rhinocéros - Un entrevue-éclaircie de Robert Charlebois" *Sept-Jours* no. 31, 19 avril 1969: 10-13.

Don't make me laugh. How can we be separatist when we're an inch-and-a-half above the United States? How can we be Québécois when we're *in* America? Look at the streets, the stores, the brands on our food, the investments at the [Montréal] stock exchange, the life-insurance companies, the clothes, the clubs, the television shows, the cars, the films... [...] We're in a city of American allure and American values, on the American continent, using money based on the American economy. Only we don't have the rights that Americans have. We're in a situation that's worse than that of the Blacks and the Mexicans. We're the white niggers of America. [...] I'm an American, since I live in North America. I belong to the Global Village – that is to say, to the entire world.¹¹⁷

Charlebois' constant use of "Eskimos" in songs and his reference above to Blacks and Mexicans highlights a very important aspect of Québécois modernity and nationalism: the concept of the "Québécois" as the "white niggers of America." This was a phrase (appearing in its original form as "Nègres blancs d'Amérique") made popular by FLQ member Pierre Vallières, whose book of the same title was published in 1968.¹¹⁸ Vallières's book, drawing from works by Black national liberation theorists such as Frantz Fanon and Malcolm X, outlined the colonial condition of the Québécois in relation to the Anglophone Canadians who held all the power in Québec society. While Vallières's book was the pre-eminent example of this idea, it was in fact part of a wider trend of using the struggle for civil rights in America as a model for understanding other relationships of power and subordination: Jerry Farber used the concept for his famous 1967 essay "Student as nigger" (which later appeared in book form),¹¹⁹ while in 1972 John Lennon and Yoko Ono released their controversial single "Woman is the Nigger of the World."¹²⁰ In Québec, there existed important precedents for these theories of *négritude*, which

¹¹⁷ Charlebois, quoted in "Qui est Robert Charlebois?"

¹¹⁸ Pierre Vallières, *Nègres blancs d'Amérique* (Montréal: Editions Typo, 1994 [1968]).

¹¹⁹ Jerry Farber, *The Student As Nigger* (New York: Pocket Books, 1969).

¹²⁰ Plastic Ono Band "Woman is the Nigger of the World" *Some Time in New York City* (Apple Records, 1972). Sound recording.

perceived Francophone labourers as “indigènes” and the Francophone elites as “roi nègres.” Sean Mills has discussed this history at length, and traces it back at least as far as 1958, when André Laurendeau called Maurice Duplessis a “roi nègre” – meaning the premier was ruling over the Québécois in the same manner as African leaders who had been co-opted by their British colonial masters.¹²¹ Poet Michèle Lalonde used a similar concept for her famous poem “Speak White,” a work inspired by the kind of racist Anglophones who demanded that their Francophone employees communicate with them in English:

[...]
 Speak white and loud
 qu'on vous entende
 de Saint-Henri à Saint-Domingue
 oui quelle admirable langue
 pour embaucher
 donner des ordres
 fixer l'heure de la mort à l'ouvrage
 et de la pause qui rafraîchit
 et ravigote le dollar

[...]
 Speak white and loud
 So you can be heard
 From Saint-Henri to Saint-Domingue
 Yes, what an admirable language
 For employing
 Giving orders
 Fixing the hour of death in the factory
 And the break that refreshes
 And revitalizes the dollar

[...]
 Speak white
 tell us again about Freedom and Democracy
 nous savons que liberté est un mot noir
 comme la misère est nègre
 et comme le sang se mêle à la poussière des
 rues l'Alger ou de Little Rock...¹²²

[...]
 Speak white
 Tell us again about Freedom and Democracy
 We know that liberty is a Black word
 As misery is black
 And like blood mixes with the dust of the
 streets
 Of Algeria or Little Rock...

It is important to note, however, that while Pierre Vallières's understanding of *négritude* was rather sophisticated, informed as it was by readings of theorists of national liberation, post-colonialism, and Marxism, the appropriation of such language by a people who had originally come to the North American continent as

¹²¹ Mills: 75-84.

¹²² Michèle Lalonde, *Speak White* (Montréal: L'Hexagone, 1974).

colonizers is highly problematic. In the case of Robert Charlebois, the appropriation of *négritude* was even less informed than was that of Vallières. Charlebois's comparisons of French Canadians to peoples of colour had playful intentions but fuzzy political logic. The term was toned down a little for mainstream audiences in a feature article on Charlebois, appearing in *Le magazine Maclean*, as "négre drabe d'Amérique" (and in the comic-book cut-out making a second, coded, appearance in a black and white rendering of Charlebois as "Nègle Dlabé D'Amé-Rique") (see Figure 4).¹²³ This reference suggests an image of French Canadians as drab or boring, *nègres* without even an awareness of their colonial condition, a culture frozen and immobile.



Fig. 4: Charlebois as half-white, half-black, a "Nègre drabe d'Amérique". Image from *Le magazine Maclean* (Nov. 1968).

¹²³ Guay, "L'Osttidcho de Robert Charlebois."

There are numerous instances of Charlebois comparing the Québécois people to mixed race, colonized, and oppressed peoples of the world, including references to Canada's First Nations as well as to people of the Jewish faith. We have already seen examples of his use of 'Eskimos,' which is troubling enough, but even more problematic was his frequent appropriation of aboriginal iconography, used to symbolize an identity as a minority, a subject of British or American colonialism and imperialism.

During the second incarnation of "L'Osstidcho," Louise Forestier appeared on stage sporting a large Native-American-style feather. Charlebois took this even further for a performance at Place des Nations in 1970: he appeared on stage wearing a full Native headdress, wielding two tomahawks, and proceeded to act out his interpretation of a traditional Native dance. In 1975, taking a break from singing to pursue a career as a film actor, he played a *métis* in a spaghetti Western, alongside Terrence Hill and cult-television hero Patrick McGoohan.¹²⁴ In interviews about the film he declared: "The fact that I'm Québécois really helps me understand my character... still today many Québécois deny what they are. To become my character, who is ashamed of being an Indian, I think about everything that makes me ashamed of Québec. It's a character that, at bottom, is not so far removed from my reality. [...] I think that the Québécois are the last reserve of geographically grouped Métis in America... The Québécois in America are a minority like the Indians."¹²⁵ The comparisons to other minorities didn't stop there. In 1973

¹²⁴ Damiano Damiani, *A Genius, Two Partners and a Dupe*. 1975. Film.

¹²⁵ Robert Charlebois, quoted in Louis-Bernard Robitaille, "Charlebois ne rêve plus que de cinéma," *La Presse*, 26 April 1975.

Charlebois declared that “It’s harder to be Québécois than to be Jewish.” As late as 1987, Charlebois biographer Jacques Julien summed it up like this: “It’s a bleak vision of a Québec drowned out by America, and Quebeckers as a disappearing minority. Within the formidable Anglophone environment, we are related to Indians, Eskimos, Cajuns and creoles.”¹²⁶

Needless to say, the appropriation, by white settlers in the New World, of Native American or Black identities also worked to marginalize many people who continue to live in oppression within Canada, Québec, and Montréal. While Charlebois could ‘play’ or ‘act’ at being an “Indian,” there is little evidence to suggest that he ever attempted to reach out in solidarity with members of the burgeoning Red Power movement, nor did he forge links with activists in Montréal’s Black community. This is not to say that he was a racist – more that he displayed a painful ignorance of how his white privilege worked to oppress others, at the same time as he (and many Quebeckers like him) became aware of his own politico-economic subjugation at the hands of Anglo-American élites.

If Charlebois’s internationalism was one clear indication of his modernity (and his difference from Québec’s other singer-songwriters), it was by no means the only one. At least four other modern features characterize his work, and it is to these that we now turn: his use of *joual*, his embrace of mass culture, his use of loud noise, and his urbanism. The following section will deal with each of these factors in turn.

¹²⁶ Julien: 143.

Modernity à la Charlebois

Although Robert Charlebois was not quite the first to use *joual* in music,¹²⁷ he was certainly the first to bring *la musique joualisant* to a mass audience. Indeed, part of the success of the “Osstidcho” performances was the way it harnessed the spoken language of Montréal’s Francophone labourers, much in the same way Michel Tremblay had used *joual* to great (but controversial) success in his play *Les belles soeurs* (1965). Charlebois used *joual* for many reasons, primarily because it was typically Québécois, typically *Montréalais*, but also because it worked well musically, with the lyrics and rhythm of rock’n’roll. As Bénéôit L’Herbier has explained, English contractions such as “I’m gonna”, “I’ll”, or “I wanna” are practical replacements for the longer, formal versions of words. Similarly, *joual* substitutes “chu” for “je suis”, “qu’y a” for “qu’il y a”, and “ç’t’un” for “c’est un”, etc. *Joual* is basically Québécois slang, just as “I wanna” is Anglophone slang.¹²⁸ As Jean-Philippe Warren pointed out, in a discussion on *joual* and *franglais* (a hybrid of French and English), this kind of language is related to ideas of irony and sacrilege. It is “an attitude *cool* that *swings* just for *kicks*... The grimace, the farce, the preremptory refutation (“that’s shit!”) and irony are part of the arsenal of young people that signifies their refusal to march in line and hold their tongues.”¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Richard Baillargeon has noted the underground movement of “duos rythmés” who recorded a few singles in *joual* in the early 1960s. These are crude and hard-to-find singles, but they also represent (according to Baillargeon) some of the first authentically Québécois punk music in existence: Les Satallites “A mort”; Lionel & Pierre “Pis après”, “Avez-vous mon pote” and “Lionel & Pierre twist”; Les Rythmos “Petite Nancy”, “Twiste que tu es belle” and “Frisette.” Some of these tracks have appeared on the hard-to-find LPs *14 bonnes chansons jouals* (REEL, 1959) and *Pour teenagers seulement* (Fleur de Lys, 1959). Baillargeon: 50-51.

¹²⁸ L’Herbier: 114.

¹²⁹ Warren: 119.

Critics thought that Charlebois was using a language that was poor or corrupt, but the singer was very popular in Québec, partly for using a language that was authentically French-Canadian.¹³⁰ As Charlebois himself put it, in a quote originally peppered with *joual*: “I’m goddamned fed-up of talking ‘bout this, as if talking was a goal in life. People seem to forget that language is nothing but a vehicle in service of an idea... I find it criminally backwards that the intelligentsia persist in their snobbish attitude in 1974. This only impoverishes those who speak without irony, humbly and simply, because they don’t know any better. [...] I know very well that the use [of *joual*] by lots of artists (including myself...) harnesses emotions that belong only to us.”¹³¹

Indeed, Charlebois’ ability to play with language – especially through mixing English and French – contributed greatly to his success, and went a long way towards building an appeal that helped him break through to an Anglophone audience. In June 1969, for example, Charlebois was the first French Canadian to play at the legendary Esquire Show Bar, “Montréal’s temple of rock,” a fact that was hailed as helping to break down the traditional division along the Main – viz., Boulevard Saint-Laurent, often seen as the dividing line between the Anglophones in Montréal West and the Francophones in *Montréal est*.¹³² Charlebois also may have been the first Quebecker to participate in a bi-cultural outdoor rock festival, inspiring “enthusiastic applause” from the crowd of 30,000 at the Toronto Pop Festival, where he appeared on stage in gold lamé pants and a *Canadiens* hockey

¹³⁰ L’Herbier: 5.

¹³¹ Robert Charlebois, quoted in Gagnon: 142-3. [My translation, S.D.J.]

¹³² L’Herbier: 87.

jersey, and held his own against such powerhouse performers Steppenwolf and Blood, Sweat and Tears.¹³³ His single “Lindbergh” (with Louise Forestier) received frequent airplay on CHUM-FM, Montréal’s Anglophone rock-radio station, as did a later single, “Les ailes d’un anges,” with its popular sing-along refrain “un deux trois quatre cinq six sept Québec!” and its *franglais* lyrics.¹³⁴ What’s more, Charlebois’s national appeal helped garner him a spot aboard Festival Express, a train-tour of Canada where he shared the bill alongside big-time performers such as The Grateful Dead, Janis Joplin, The Band, The Flying Burrito Brothers, and Ian and Sylvia Tyson.¹³⁵ All that said, while Charlebois was certainly known across the country, one must be careful not to oversell his pan-Canadian renown. In 1972 Richard Flohil reported on Charlebois’ appearance in Toronto, as part of a promotional tour through English Canada, arguing that many of the reporters covering the show weren’t really sure who he was. His performance at Massey Hall was a critical success, and the audience was “enchanted” but also a bit mystified by his music. Still, Flohil said, “they applauded him and wish him good luck.”¹³⁶

Using *joual* as a modern form of expression to articulate particularities of Québec’s reality (i.e. a Francophone population in close physical proximity to an Anglophone cultural-economic powerhouse) was just one indication of the

¹³³ *Ibid.*; “Charlebois au Canada anglais” *Le compositeur canadien*, septembre 1970: 23.

¹³⁴ Although sometimes used perjoratively, I do not use this term in any such sense. *Franglais* as I use it references a hybrid French-English argot especially popular amongst younger generations of Montréalers who grew up in mixed Anglo-Franco families and communities and who are therefore adept at code-switching between the two languages.

¹³⁵ Julien: 56; “Charlebois au Canada anglais”; *Festival Express Official Website* <http://www.festivalexpress.com/usa/index2.html> (last accessed 23 June 2014); Bob Smeaton and Frank Cvitanovich, dir. *Festival Express* (Apollo Films, 2004) Film.

¹³⁶ Richard Flohil, “Portrait d’un artiste hors de son milieu,” *Le compositeur canadien*, novembre 1972: 5.

modernity of Charlebois' music. Another key factor of this modernity was his embrace of mass culture, particularly American culture. "There's a lot of traditional Québec culture in everything Charlebois does," wrote Dane Lanen, "But by adding, for example, a little bit of good old American crassness to it, it makes it supremely exciting to the people in whom that culture has been buried."¹³⁷ The supreme symbol of American mass culture, for Charlebois, was fast-food. The film *A soir on fait peur au monde* (a documentary about his appearance at the Olympia in Paris),¹³⁸ for example, was launched at a french-fry joint on the Main, not at the sort of posh venue normally used for such occasions.

Charlebois's passion for mass culture is evidenced most obviously in his embrace of the term "pepsi", a reappropriation of a derogatory term for French Canadians. In 1971, for example, Reggie Chartrand (founder of Les Chevaliers de l'indépendance) was booed by students at Sir George Williams, and bore the brunt of a stream of insults including "dim-wit" and "dirty Pepsi."¹³⁹ "What is Pepsi?" asked Herbert Aronoff, music reviewer for the *Gazette*.

In the bad old days, Pepsi... was an Anglicism that condescendingly described a French Canadian in much the same way that wop, spic, nigger and yid described others. But not anymore... Pepsi has not only become respectable, its downright complimentary. What it now means is the urban French Canadian (more specifically Quebecker and Montrealer) as characterized in the songs of Robert Charlebois... The modern-day Pepsi is the man who has come to terms with his environment as a Frenchman in Quebec, surrounded by English and breathing American air.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ "A great show with Charlebois," *Gazette*, 8 Sept. 1970: 38.

¹³⁸ Jean Dansereau and François Brault, dir, *A soir on fait peur au monde* (VOF, 1969). Documentary film.

¹³⁹ "Lemieux, Chartrand Jeered by Sir George students," *Georgian*, 15 Oct. 1971: 1.

¹⁴⁰ Herbert Aronoff, "Pop is dead, long live Pepsi," *Gazette*, 26 April 1969: 29.

The concept of “pepsi” was a way of coming to terms with the reality of commercialism in Québec culture, of American cultural and economic imperialism. Although Charlebois did release a song entitled “Miss Pepsi” (lyrics written by Mouffe), the best example of the “pepsi” lifestyle of the modern Montréaler may be found in the song “Mon pays,” aka “Mon pays (ce n’est pas un pays, c’est un job)”. This song was once described as the “proletarian and prosaic antithesis of Vigneault,”¹⁴¹ i.e. of Vigneault’s “Mon pays,” with its refrain “mon pays ce n’est pas un pays, c’est l’hiver”: “my country is not a country, it’s winter.”¹⁴² “Mon pays” (the Charlebois version), was first released as a B-side to the 1970 hit “Ordinaire,” later appearing on the LP *Un gars ben ordinaire*.¹⁴³ The lyrics were written by Réjean Ducharme, who creates a colourful portrait of a typical Montréal labourer’s workday in the factory:

<p>[...] Cé les coffée breaks qui t'fatigue Une demi-heure dans vant-midi Une demi-heure dans près-midi A mangé des chips des palettes de chocolats des lifesavers des maewest A boire du coke du seven-up du chocolat au lait Planté d'avant l'truck d'la cantine. [...]¹⁴⁴</p>	<p>[...] It’s the coffee breaks that tire you out A half-hour before noon A half-hour in the afternoon Eating chips, chocolate bars, lifesavers, maewest, Drinking coke, seven-up, chocolate milk Planted in front of the canteen truck. [...]</p>
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“It’s butch, it’s a guy from The Main, it’s hot-dogs, it’s Molson [beer]...” wrote one critic, describing Charlebois’s music in 1970.¹⁴⁵ The focus on fast-food and junk-

¹⁴¹ Julien: 42.

¹⁴² Gilles Vignault, “Mon Pays” *Collections* (Sony BMG, 2004 [1964]). The song was originally composed in 1964 for an ONF documentary called *La neige a fondu sur la Manicouagan* (1965) and has since become something of a Québécois ‘anthem.’

¹⁴³ Robert Charlebois & Réjean Ducharme, “Mon pays (ce n’est pas un pays c’est un job)” *Un gars ben ordinaire* (Unidisc 1971).

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ “Pop-Pénélope,” *Le Devoir*, 24 Jan. 1970: 20.

food, as a central part of the average Quebecker's daily life, is clearly a sign of mass modernity that would never have appeared in songs typical of the *chansonniers*. While those singers revelled in the imagined simplicity of a rural, agrarian past, Charlebois's work was replete with references to the über-modernity of life under the sign of multinationals, which had dug so deep into the lives of Quebeckers that their bodies were quite literally constituted by hot-dogs and pepsi: after all, you are what you eat.¹⁴⁶

If *joual* and *pepsi* were two indications of Charlebois's modernity, his utilization of electronic feedback and very loud noise was another. Charlebois knowingly, self-reflectively transgressed the auditory expectations of his audiences, inviting them into new ways of responding to their sonic environment that bore little resemblance to those of, say, patrons of the Montréal Symphony Orchestra. His use of feedback was often mis-understood, and drew the ire of many critics – particularly regarding its use within “L’Osstidcho.”

“L’Osstidcho” became one of the things for which Charlebois was most famous and which, in retrospect, establish his credentials as a gifted explorer of the new world of hyper-modernity into which Montréal had plunged. The seeds of “L’Osstidcho” can be found in the 1967 satirical review “Terre des bums.”¹⁴⁷ After Expo 67, that expression of a utopian internationalist modernity, Québec *chanson*

¹⁴⁶Indeed, the association between being Québécois and eating junk-food was given a most poignant reference point in the film *Les Ordres*, Michel Brault's stark film about Montréalers unfairly arrested under the War Measures Act of October 1970: when desolate prisoners are finally permitted a meal, they are each handed a brown paper bag containing a can of Coke and a bag of potato chips. Brault, *Les Ordres*. Interestingly, there is another more tangible connection with Charlebois and his gang: Louis Forestier had a major acting role in the film.

¹⁴⁷ A recording of the show was released that same year. Robert Charlebois, Jean-Guy Moreau, Mouffe *Terre des bums* (Phonodisque, 1967).

went into a quick decline. How could Montréalers be expected listen contentedly to the dry, insular strumming of acoustic guitars once they'd lived through six months of screaming airplane noise, babbling crowds of foreigners, glistening displays of cutting-edge technology, and the freedom cry that accompanied De Gaulle's speech from city hall? As Louise Forestier explained, "After Expo, the *boîtes à chanson* were closing one after the other, and there were less and less engagements [for musicians]. We wanted to distance ourselves from the conventional shows, wanted to find a new formula, or the semblance of a new formula."¹⁴⁸ One night in May 1968 Charlebois, Forestier, Mouffe, and Yvan Deschamps were fooling around at a party, and it all came together. Essentially a "revue," "L'Osstidcho" featured instrumental free-style music by the Quatuor de Jazz Libre du Québec, Yvon Deschamps delivering monologues on a variety of topics, and of course Charlebois singing songs – many of which would later appear on the album *Robert Charlebois – Louise Forestier*.

As Jacques Julien has described it, "The show was a tentative kind of 'total madness,' well in the vein of the theatrical *happenings* of the era." With its emphasis on participation, improvisation, and exuberance, the revue was an attempt at the comprehensive integration of arts, sound, image, gesture and movement.¹⁴⁹ The aural component consisted of monologues and poetry, songs and music, and pre-recorded segments such as one featuring the voice of Martin Luther King, interrupted by a gunshot. Then silence. There were references to the war in Vietnam, a skit about unions, and a number consisting of Mouffe repeatedly

¹⁴⁸ Louise Forestier, quoted in L'Herbier: 80-1.

¹⁴⁹ Julien: 27.

shouting “ass!”¹⁵⁰ The original performances of “L’Osstidcho” took place May 1968 at the Théâtre de Quat’Sous. This first incarnation proved a smash hit (and has since evolved to mythical proportions), so it was mounted a second time, under the title “Osstidcho King Size,” from 2 to 8 September on the stage of the Comédie-Canadienne. A third run, in January 1969, as “Osstidcho meurt” (i.e. “Osstidcho is dying”) was performed on the hallowed stages of Place des Arts. By then the show had become formulaic and mainstream, in total opposition to its original incarnation, loose and without formal structure, which was designed to shake up Montréal’s music scene.

The title, “Osstidcho” or “Osstid’chaux”, was a play on the sacreligious swear “hostie” and the English word “show.” Loosely translated it means something like “that goddamned show.” “Cho” or “chaux” was also a play on the French word for “hot” (i.e. “chaud”), harkening back to Montréal’s golden days of burlesque clubs featuring *le jazz hot*. Those working at the Théâtre de Quat’Sous during the first run called the revue by its name, but at this point the title only existed in an audible form: there was a conscious decision to only speak the title, never having it appear in print - or, if it had to, only as “... de chaud,” in the hopes that the public would fill in the rest themselves, much like we are expected to fill in the blanks for four-letter words like “f**k.” By the time of the show’s second run, as “L’Osstidcho King Size,” there was plenty of confusion about the title: one radio personality speculated that it was some kind of new “king-sized” product, while staff at the Comédie-

¹⁵⁰ Jacques Guay, “La gang à frisé,” *Le magazine Maclean*, novembre 1968: 32.

Canadienne were asked if the show consisted of a Soviet dance troupe – despite the fact that the performers’ names were all decidedly Francophone!¹⁵¹

At the time it was produced, “L’Osstidcho” garnered critical attention for its free-wheeling nature, but also drew the ire of critics for its heavy-handed use of loud volume, noise, and feedback. Reviewers of the “spectak” seemed both enchanted by the brazen performance and irritated by the sonic dissonance blasted from the amplifiers. The *Gazette’s* arts reviewer wrote that “L’Osstidcho King Size” was “free-spirited, swinging, untrammelled by tradition or discipline, totally unself-conscious, overflowing [with] talent, and... highly imaginative.” But, she added, “it is also self-indulgent, often easily self-satisfied, frequently repetitious and relies much too much on pure noise.” There was “[too] much very, very loud music,” and the “lively beat and clever popular harmonies were presented with sadistic over-amplification. This not only blasted the hearers’ ears enough to bring cries of protest from the public, but also blasted the sound... right out of the hall.”¹⁵² A year later, another *Gazette* reviewer wrote that “Charlebois and his Groupe du Jazz Libre du Québec ripped open the seams of French Canada’s corset and brought into the world the most vibrant, meaningful, and just plain marvellous sound and fury ever to emerge in Montreal.” The link between the “sound and fury” of the show and the daily experience of living in Montréal was not lost upon this reporter: “Charlebois stuffed the color, the sound, the flavor and the rhythm of life the way he – and millions of others – see and feel the world around them.” “The music is not just loud,

¹⁵¹ Claude Gingras, “Osstidcho: troupe russe ou nouveau produit?” *La Presse*, 24 Aug. 1968.

¹⁵² “Musical review L’Osstidcho King Size opens Comedie-Canadienne season,” *Gazette*, 3 Sept. 1968: 11.

it's deafening. Charlebois' voice... is as cutting as a fog horn in the raucous numbers. And it all works, battering the words and music off the walls like some mighty Wurlitzer juke box at your corner greasy spoon. [...] [the] array of electronic sound boosters...must be an electrician's nightmare ...the whole thing blew a fuse last night in the middle of a number."¹⁵³ Claude Gingras qualified the first run of "L'Osstidcho" as "dissonant" and "anti-mélodique,"¹⁵⁴ and wrote that the second incarnation contained "sonic and verbal delirium" in which the singers' words were "drowned under the noise of the instruments." The spectators complained – some against the "infernal noise," others against incomprehensible lyrics. "In this kind of 'happening'," Gingras commented wryly, "the phenomenon of 'feed back' is regarded by some as a problem, and by others as a quality..."¹⁵⁵

There is a clear connection between the "sound and the fury" of "L'Osstidcho" and the era that produced this marvellously creative revue: *dissonance*. Jean-Philippe Warren, writing of Québec's experience of 1968 (the year of the first "Osstidcho"), argues that this year was typified by a "brutal desire to destroy, demolish, to liquidate," and by a kind of satiric critique of society that worked via parody, massacre, and destruction.¹⁵⁶ Charlebois and his gang deliberately levelled loud sonic feedback against their audience, throwing sound outwards in a symbolic re-appropriation of the violent tendencies of their society, in a fiercely loud repudiation of social order. In much the same way that loud and noisy rock'n'roll

¹⁵³ Herbert Aronoff, "Charlebois: the sound and the fury," *Gazette*, 13 May 1969: 30.

¹⁵⁴ Claude Gingras, "Folie partielle, musicale et verbale..." *La Presse*, 22 May 1968. [My translation, S.D.J.]

¹⁵⁵ Claude Gingras, "Happening à la Comedie-Canadienne," *La Presse*, 3 Sept 1968. [My translation, S.D.J.]

¹⁵⁶ Warren: 118-119.

was interpreted as a sign of social disintegration in 1965 and '66, the dissonant feedback generated by "L'Osstidcho" was designed to enact a symbolic kind of social disintegration. Charlebois was very conscious of this relationship: "We have to make it well known that songs aren't only a treat, but can become a formidable weapon. [...] The violence of 'pop' music... had a very precise motivation at first: to make as much noise as war with instruments of peace."¹⁵⁷ This sentiment was also echoed by Jazz Libre's Yves Charbonneau, who once stated: "Avant d'être musicien, je suis révolutionnaire. Au lieu d'avoir une mitraillette, j'ai une trompette."¹⁵⁸

Charlebois' embrace of loud noise and electronic feedback as a central feature of his musical palette was evidence of a particularly Québécois (perhaps more accurately, Montréalais) modernity. Nowhere was this made more evident than the "scandal" that occurred in 1969 when Charlebois and Forestier, along with the Quatuor Jazz Libre de Québec, took their show to Europe. The tour came hot on the heels of the successes of "L'Osstidcho," and "Lindbergh" was making waves, charting on French-language hit-lists across Europe.¹⁵⁹ In Paris, everything had been arranged by Bruno Coquatrix, proprietor of the famed Olympia, and one of the few French impresarios to bring Québec acts to France. What followed caused something of an uproar (in Québec as in Paris) and had everything to do with concepts of noise, sound, and language.

That Charlebois's appearance in Paris became something of a scandal was due to several circumstances. Not least of these was the fact that his performance

¹⁵⁷ Robert Charlebois, quoted in Gagnon: 143-4.

¹⁵⁸ Charbonneau, quoted in "Le Quatuor de Jazz Libre du Québec".

¹⁵⁹ "Charlebois: la France c'est un ghetto" *Sept-Jours*, no. 13 avril 1969: 10-13.

would be upon the stages of the Olympia, the same venue where Felix Leclerc, in the previous decade, had won over French audiences to Québécois music, gaining critical approval from Paris sophisticates and thus proving to Quebeckers that their music could hold its own in international venues. If the audiences that showed up to see Charlebois were expecting something along the lines of Leclerc's homey folk songs, they would have been sorely disappointed. Charlebois's stage antics and unflinching use of volume and feedback alienated his Parisian audience. Despite the fact that France had recently been through the tumult and anarchy of May 1968, many Parisians seemed taken aback by the Montrealer's excesses. France's *Nouvel observateur* described the show as "a dose of Québécois alcohol, so strong that it upset more than one French stomach."¹⁶⁰

As Caroline Durand has explained, Parisians did not understand the act. They'd never seen anything like it.¹⁶¹ Perhaps they were encountering a purer, more anarchic force than those unleashed the previous year, or perhaps the concert-goers who attended Charlebois's performance had been expecting a quaint and folksy *Canadien* rather than a group of radically dissonant Québécois. The audience at the Olympia was uncomfortable with Charlebois's use of swear words and argot, which ranged from religious *sacrés* to *joual* to hip Anglo slang. More than that, however, it was a dispute over the sound system at the Olympia that caused the most tension. Just like at home, Charlebois, Forestier and the Jazz Libre made liberal use of loud volume and feedback in their performance. But Paris wasn't ready for such raw music. *Figaro* complained that the two singers were "crushed" by the sheer sound

¹⁶⁰ Quoted in L'Herbier: 85.

¹⁶¹ Durand: 310.

emanating from their accompaniment, while *Echo-Vedettes* spilled a lot of ink describing the failings of the sound-system at the Olympia, and the conflict that exploded between Charlebois and the sound-engineer.¹⁶² The sound-engineer, used to tamer acts, kept lowering the sound volume, but Charlebois *wanted* it loud – he wanted the very feedback that the engineer was trying to ‘remedy’. One evening Charlebois got so frustrated that he gave up on his guitar and went to sit at the drum kit instead. But, seeing that things still were not going well, that the audience was uncomfortable and the sound engineer wasn’t cooperating either, Charlebois got angry and kicked over the bass drum, which proceeded to roll down into the audience. The press (in both Québec and France) seized upon this moment, blowing it out of proportion by printing stories claiming that Charlebois had hurled the drums at his audience in a rage.¹⁶³ That this incident resulted in so much media attention attests to the power of Charlebois’s performance, and to the fact that the noisy kind of dissonant rock music that was being celebrated by Québec audiences was almost totally lost on audiences across the ocean in France.

Another aspect of Robert Charlebois’s modernity can be found in his unique urban sensibility. This was of course a key factor in the appeal of Québec rock and its eclipse of *chanson*, and for good reason: as of the mid-1960s more and more of Québec’s population was living in urban centres. While *chanson* had provided a sort of touchstone for those looking to keep in touch with their rural roots, rock music was more in tune with the modern urban lifestyle lived by the vast majority of Québec’s population. As Placide Gaboury observed in the pages of *Le Devoir*, “The

¹⁶² Quoted in L’Herbier: 86.

¹⁶³ L’Herbier: 86.

songs of Robert Charlebois are urban and open to the entire world. They revel in a distinctly urban mentality, if, for example, we compare them to the songs of Gilles Vigneault.” Charlebois’s unique kind of music was perfectly attuned to his world, as a music “of ‘hipness,’ of violent shocks and supersonic flights.”¹⁶⁴

Aside from the expected references to Montréal’s urban geography (Ste. Catherine’s store windows, Peel street, the metro, etc.), Charlebois often signified his experience of urbanism through the use of onomatopoeic sound-effects in his songs – particularly those representing transportation: airplanes, cars, trucks, and motorcycles. This was something the singer-songwriter had practiced since childhood: when playing with toy cars and trucks, he would often become irritated if his friends did not make the proper sounds of engines or brakes while playing.¹⁶⁵ There are numerous examples of Charlebois using urban sound-effects and onomatopoeia in his songs, such as a truck hitting a hydro pole or the sound of arcade games in “Ritz,” the police sirens in “Dolores,” guns and ducks in “La samba des canards,” the sounds of an engine turning over in “Trouvez mieux”¹⁶⁶ or, as we have already seen, the flighty imitation of airplane travel heard in “Lindbergh.” Another good example of Charlebois’s fondness for sound-effects can be found in the song “Broches de bécik,” which contains several vocal approximations of revving automobile engines.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Placide Gaboury, “Robert Charlebois: cantre des villes?” *Le Devoir*, 29 March 1969: 22.

¹⁶⁵ Denise Boucher, “Robert Charlebois ou la chanson coup de poing” *Perspectives*, no. 9 novembre 1968: 6.

¹⁶⁶ Julien: 63.

¹⁶⁷ Robert Charlebois, “Broches de bécik” *Québec Love* (Gamma, 1969) Sound recording.

One last example of Charlebois's unique take on Québec's brave new urbanity can be found in the song "Petroleum." This song demonstrates Charlebois's awareness of the role played by multi-national petro-chemical companies in Québec's economy and of Quebeckers' dependence upon cheap fuel for the new culture of automobility. The song wove together descriptions of the socio-economic cultural and geographical landscape of Québec. And it spoke of larger geo-political contexts, such as American imperialism in both Québec and, interestingly, Vietnam (as demonstrated by coded references to General Westmoreland and Henry Kissinger). A version of this song that he sang (in English) for audiences in Toronto is worth quoting at length:

I don't want to sell / My Laurentians / To the crazy Americans
I think they're not well / I don't want to sell / My house and land
To General 'Wastemoreland' / Hope it rings a bell

Just gimme gimme some / Petroleum
Oh! Gimme gimme gimme gimme some
Gimme gimme some / Petroleum
Oh! Gimme gimme gimme some
And the big yellow sun / I get out mister Fun

Where did mister Fun go / Asked Sky Chief Texaco
I guess he went to hell / Answered sister Shell
Maybe he became a hippy / Shrieked lady B.P.
I can't believe it's so / Mumbled Esso
Gime them wings on marijuana / Said princess Petrofina
Isn't that all they wanna, wanna wanna
It's about time we close / Said virgin White Rose
We all did our best / Ended Jesus-Christ-Super-Test,
Kissing-her...¹⁶⁸

Charlebois, like many Québec artists of his generation, was wrestling with what it meant to be both modern *and* Québécois. Creating works that appropriated the noises of urban life, echoed the modern language of Montréalers, and at the same

¹⁶⁸ Robert Charlebois, "Petroleum," lyrics reprinted in Gagnon, *Charlebois déchiffré*: 118-119.

time moved to a global rhythm, Charlebois stands as a uniquely rich symbol of, and a critical response to, the “symphony of progress” playing out in modern Montréal.

Chapter 4

Discordant Tongues: Voice and Language in Montréal

“Parlez-vous Québécois? Because this is where we live. Not in an English ghetto, but in a French nation. Not in a culture of Shakespeare and Red Skelton, but among Ti-Coq and his friends. Of course learning the curves and flats of a people takes time. Syntax bugs everyone.”

– *Georgian* (1969)¹

Introduction.

Thus far we have examined the “symphony of progress” composed of the loud noises of industry and transportation, and we have explored some of the noisy musical elements of Québec’s “Quiet Revolution” as well. Québec’s decade between 1965 and 1975 was loud in the realms of industry, transport, communications and entertainment, yet the latter phase of the “Quiet Revolution” was, more than anything else, a highly *vocal* affair. Perhaps the most significant feature of Montréal’s soundscape is the sound of the *people* of Montréal, and therefore no sonic history of this city would be complete without a discussion of human voices – of language – too.

In the sixth decade of the twentieth century, many people in Québec were engulfed in linguistic tensions and debates, some struggling actively to transform Montréal’s soundscape by limiting the social prominence of English and boosting the presence of French. The province’s language question perhaps came to be its single most famous soundtrack. Yet anxieties over language were not exclusive to

¹ “Parlez-vous Québécois?” *Georgian*, 10 Jan 1969: 2.

this province. The 1960s and '70s witnessed Canadian nationalists publishing dictionaries of Canadian English. Québécois *nationalistes* upheld the significance of *joual*. Both groups debated what kind of English or French best represented their respective nations. Anxieties over language also came to the fore in debates about the “humiliation” of accents, the presence of new hybrid languages such as jive and *joual*, and about efforts to shore up the “purity” of language.

This chapter is also about speaking up and speaking out, about how people are heard, and where. It is about shouting in the streets, about language as a noisy issue. We will also examine how the geography of language in Montréal has been structured by the city’s colonial past as much as by Québec’s modern present. All in all, this chapter is about the multitude of tongues and voices that makes up the discordant babble of language in Montréal, and how language soundscapes reveal an overall hegemonic drive to regulate what can be said and heard in the public sphere.

While today no one would dispute the importance of language to Québec culture and politics, it was not until the middle of the twentieth century that language became *the* central vector of French-Canadian nationalism. Québec historians such as Jean-Philippe Warren and Marc Levine have argued that the question of language did not become an autonomous issue in Québec until the 1960s. Until this point, the traditionally central elements of French-Canadian identity were Catholicism, and a notion (pursued by historians such as Lionel Groulx) that French and English Canadians were members of two different “races.” Catholicism had changed with reforms of the Vatican II. They had the sonic consequences of releasing the sacrament of the mass from a Latin tongue

inaccessible to all but a minority. Now the mass was performed in the vernacular. Just as conservative Montrealers had objected to the secularization of the church bells, now some Catholics confronted an almost unthinkable radical change in the observation of their faith. It was also a transformation that opened the door to the growing noise of multilingualism, since many Catholic denominations, in Montréal as elsewhere, were drawn from ethnic groups speaking different languages. The gradual eclipse of Groulx's concept of "race" could seem no less destabilizing. If to be a Québécois was no longer a matter of blood-lines, of what did its essence consist? As Warren explains, since the 1960s, "the main vector of identification and definition [of what it means to be Québécois] has become linguistic."² Marc Levine, in his classic analysis of the Francophone "reconquest" of Montréal, agrees. As he remarks, after "two centuries in which Montréal remained surprisingly free of overt linguistic conflict, in the 1960s the city's linguistic climate changed rapidly."³

The 1960s were turbulent, cacophonous years throughout the globe, and Montréal was no exception. Against the already vibrant backdrop of noisy anti-Vietnam war protests, New Left student radicalism, Black Power movements, and labour unrest, in Québec there was always the burning issue of language. Throughout the decade, language debates spawned numerous street demonstrations, political agitation, hundreds of acts of terrorism, and at least three full-blown riots. The politics of language in this city are notoriously complex, and a comprehensive history of language in Montréal is far beyond the scope of this

² Warren: 57.

³ Marc Levine, *The Reconquest of Montréal: Language Policy and Social Change in a Bilingual City*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990): 39.

dissertation. While Québec historians such as Marc Levine, Karim Larose, and Marcel Martel have made significant contributions to our understanding in this area, Larose and others have remarked on the absence of a comprehensive history of the French language in Québec.⁴ Therefore, just as Sherry Simon's work *Translating Montreal* uses the concept of translation to unpack "fragments of the social history of Montreal,"⁵ this chapter is the result of listening for some the most vocal fragments of linguistic relations in Montréal during the late 1960s and early 1970s. We will listen in on several noisy events: the thunderous roar that erupted in July 1967 when Charles De Gaulle uttered a slogan most readily associated with the FLQ from the balcony at Montréal City Hall; the noisy confrontations related to the passage of the Confederation Train through the city a few months later; the police response to *Opération McGill français* in March 1969; and then the eruption of violence in September 1969 at a school in the predominantly Italian neighbourhood of Saint-Léonard. These events demonstrate the importance of language as a central factor of life in Montréal. They also show how pivotal Montréal's voices had become to the future of Québécois and Canadian identity. The events described in this chapter therefore point to some of the ways in which language in Montréal is inexorably tied up with questions of nationalism, class, and race. Through these events we will also explore other sites of nationalism in the language debate, such as *joual*, unilingualism, and projects that expressed a desire for a standardized "Canadian" language.

⁴ Readers may find Larose's history of language in Québec instructive. Larose, *La langue de papier*. See also Levine, as well as Marcel Martel and Martin Paquet, *Speaking Up: A History of Language and Politics in Canada and Québec*, trans. Patricia Dumas (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2012).

⁵ Sherry Simon, *Translating Montreal*: 16.

Notes of Discord: Charles De Gaulle's "Vive le Québec...libre!"

We begin back in the summer of 1967. Montréal buzzed with the excitement of Expo 67, and even if the residents of Dorval were getting an earful of airplane noise, civic boosters were trumpeting the World Exhibition's great success. Against the daily Expo soundscape of flapping flags, the singing and playing of national anthems, and the general hubbub of the crowd, French President Charles De Gaulle was about to add "a deplorable note of discord"⁶ to the boosters' harmonious international oeuvre.

The French statesman's visit was highly anticipated, and was expected to rival that of Queen Elizabeth in terms of sheer grandiosity. Right from the start there was tension between the French and the government at Ottawa – interestingly, partly over two nationalist symbols: flags and anthems. The old war hero had decided to enter Canada by sea, sailing up the St. Lawrence in a French battleship named *Colbert*. First there arose disputes about whether the flotilla of Canadian ships accompanying the *Colbert* should be under the command of a French naval officer or a Canadian one. Then, as the battleship entered Canadian territorial waters, its captain reportedly neglected to observe a common naval courtesy: the French warship did not hoist the Canadian flag but rather continued to fly the French flag as it sailed on toward Québec City. A minor journalistic storm erupted and soon the Canadian press was also reporting on a breach of federal airspace during welcoming ceremonies, as well as the deliberate rerouting of press vehicles

⁶ A deplorable note of discord," *Gazette*, 26 July 1967: 6.

to bypass federal ceremonies.⁷ More interesting are reports of the irritation displayed by the French contingent at the frequent and prominent playing of “O Canada” and “God Save the Queen” during various stops on the drive from Québec City to Montréal. *Le Devoir*, for example, reported that a chorus of boos expressed displeasure at the first stanzas of “God Save the Queen” when De Gaulle stepped off the *Colbert* at l’Anse-au-Foulon.⁸ As would be so often the case in these turbulent years in Québec, the aural tactic of using Canada’s national anthem as a sonic assertion of Canadian nationalism was combatted with the no-less-nationalist tactic on the part of many Québécois of undermining the music with boos and chants.

The general’s final act of defiance came 24 July 1967. De Gaulle, in a short six-minute speech from the balcony at City Hall, succeeded in both thumbing his nose at federalists and throwing fuel on the nationalist fire. It is revealing to compare various journalistic reports of this event with each other. If one listens to recordings made of that historic declaration (as we will do in a moment), the noisy responses from the crowd are revealing, but what is equally revealing is what is *not* heard. While recordings of De Gaulle’s speech exist, earwitnesses at City Hall reported a series of aural events that occurred just prior the commencement of the speech, but which have been omitted from ‘official’ audio-video recordings of the historic event. The *Globe and Mail*, for example, reported that just prior to his speech, a small but vocal group of Québec nationalists began chanting “Vive le Québec libre!” It was also

⁷ “De Gaulle visit foreseen as best yet,” *Gazette*, 11 July 1967: 1; “The de Gaulle visit: Ottawa-Quebec hassle deepens,” *Gazette*, 24 July 1967: 12; “Politicians come out swinging in battle for de Gaulle,” *Globe and Mail*, 21 July 1967: 1; “Query French admiral’s titular command,” *Globe and Mail*, 22 July 1967: 3; “The Colbert hove into view – a symbol of French power,” *Globe and Mail*, 25 July 1967: 4.

⁸ “Il a suffi de quelques mots, d’un geste et la foule québécoise éclata en bravos,” *Le Devoir*, 24 July 1967: 1.

reported that Gen. De Gaulle had heard a large portion of the crowd boo as the Montréal Firemen's Band played "O Canada."⁹ This sonic evidence of dissent does not appear in the recordings, which begin just after the playing (and booing) of Canada's national anthem.

The film clips, which are segments of CBC television coverage of the event,¹⁰ open upon a jubilant crowd as the *Général* begins his speech: "C'est une immense émotion qui remplit mon cœur en voyant, avant moi, la ville de Montréal française!" – with a distinct emphasis on *française*. Next, there is laughter from the people crowded below the balcony as the general shows his humorous side, telling the people assembled in front of him that he will share a secret with them that they must not repeat: that that evening in Montréal, and all along his route, he found himself in an atmosphere of liberation. At the mention of *libération*, an enormous cheer erupts from the people massed on the streets and sidewalks below. Praising the province for its progress, development, and efforts towards *francisation*, the French statesman noted that if there was a city anywhere in the world exemplary for its modern successes, it was the city of Montréal.

De Gaulle was also careful to remind the crowd of France's historical claim on Québec, and the fondness of the French people towards their French-Canadian cousins. He then added that he felt obligated to support Québec, and to that end he and his *ami* Premier Johnson had signed accords that would ensure that both sides of the Atlantic could work together on the same *oeuvre français*. At this point the

⁹ "Long live free Quebec' De Gaulle tells Montrealers," *Globe and Mail*, 25 July 1967: 1.

¹⁰ "Vive le Quebec libre! – Charles De Gaulle" accessed online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0LQBcygNew> (last accessed 17 July 2014).

crowd applauds its approval, and after the general reminds Québec once again of its obligation to help the *vieux pays*, he winds down his ovation by declaring: “The whole of France knows, sees, hears what is happening here... Vive Montréal, vive Québec, vive le Québec...libre!”¹¹ This utterance, now famous, energized the crowd. In recordings of this event, the exuberant roar of cheering, whistling, chanting, clapping, arms and flags waving that followed De Gaulle’s declaration continues for a full 24 seconds before the *Président* ends his oration with “Vive le Canada-français, et vive la France!”¹²

“In the space of an instant,” described Marc-André Robert, “time stopped. The crowd stood in disbelief. Then suddenly, euphoria. A thunder of joy and cries echoed around City Hall.”¹³ De Gaulle’s echo of the FLQ, cried from the balcony of Montréal city hall, was an oral bombshell. Benoît Gignac, in his biography of Jean Drapeau, writes that De Gaulle’s words created a “shock wave.”¹⁴ The *New York Times* characterized the event as having “electrified” the province.¹⁵ *Parti pris* recalled the “explosion of enthusiasm” and characterized it as “un événement choc dans l’histoire du Québec.”¹⁶ The *Gazette*’s reporter wrote that “the tumult was deafening.”¹⁷ The *Globe and Mail* reported that “the crowd burst into delirious

¹¹ [My translation. S.D.J.]

¹² “Vive le Quebec libre! – Charles De Gaulle” YouTube video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-FxowN5W0> (last accessed 16 Nov. 2013); “Vive le Quebec libre! – Charles De Gaulle” YouTube video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0LQBcygNew> (Last accessed 17 July 2014). [My translation, S.D.J.]

¹³ Marc-André Robert, “ ‘Vive le Québec libre!’: la moralité au coeur d’une polémique. Réactions publiques entourant la visite du general de Gaulle au Québec en juillet 1967” *Bulletin d’histoire politique* Vol. 21 no. 3 (2013): 134. [My translation, S.D.J.]

¹⁴ Benoît Gignac, *Jean Drapeau: le maire qui rêvait sa ville* (Montréal: Editions LaPresse, 2009): 150

¹⁵ “Two years of troubles,” *New York Times*, 8 Oct. 1969: 3.

¹⁶ “Vive le Québec libre!” *Parti pris*, Vol. 5 no.1 (Sept. 1967): 3-6; Gilles Bourque, “DeGaulle, politique et stratégie” *Parti pris*, Vol. 5 no. 1 (Sept. 1967): 7-17.

¹⁷ “DeGaulle tells Quebec ‘Become your master,’” *Gazette*, 25 July 1967: 1

cheers.”¹⁸ The federal government was appalled. Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson broadcast a firm rebuke, stating: “The people of Canada are free. Every province of Canada is free. Canadians do not need to be liberated.”¹⁹ The *Gazette* editorialized that De Gaulle’s speech struck “a deplorable note of discord.”²⁰

Canada and Québec’s ruling elites may have met De Gaulle’s speech with shock and horror, but the citizens who were down in the street watching *le grand general Française* were ecstatic. “Côté rue, lundi soir, c’était l’explosion d’enthousiasme,” *Parti pris* editors wrote. From the leftist journal’s point of view, the speech and the reaction against the speech threw into relief class and language divisions present in Québec society, and crystallized the political forces present in the province: “unmasked by the populace’s enthusiasm which threw off the cover of servitude, our ... elites attempted – in vain – to minimise the event and to tranquilize the masters’ anger.”²¹ By 1967 the nationalist movement for Québec self-determination was well underway, and while De Gaulle’s cry of “Vive le Québec libre!” did not ignite the fire – arguably the tinder had caught in 1962, the year of the first FLQ attack – the general’s action definitely threw fuel on it. De Gaulle’s declaration was important in that it gave global exposure to the struggle of Quebec for self-determination – something FLQ members Pierre Vallières and Charles Gagnon had attempted two years earlier when they staged a press conference at the

¹⁸ “Long live free Quebec’ De Gaulle tells Montréalers,” *Globe and Mail*, 25 July 1967: 1.

¹⁹ “DeGaulle rebuked by Pearson for pro-separatist remarks,” *Gazette*, 26 July 1967: 1; “DeGaulle rebuked by Pearson,” *Globe and Mail*, 26 July 1967: 1.

²⁰ “A deplorable note of discord,” *Gazette*, 26 July 1967: 6.

²¹ “Vive le Québec libre!” *Parti pris*, Vol. 5 no.1 (Sept. 1967): 3-6.

United Nations in New York, an action for which they were still, at the time of De Gaulle's speech, being held without trial by Canadian authorities.

Gilles Bourque, a leftist sociologist, argued that De Gaulle's declaration was an act of decolonization:

En criant « Vivre le Québec libre » du balcon de l'Hôtel de Ville, le Général plaçait le Québec sous un éclairage total : il le mettait en situation sur la scène internationale, il le révélait à lui-même, il obligeait tous les intérêts, autant canadiens que québécois à prendre position sur le problème de son développement.

In analyzing the importance of De Gaulle's speech, Bourque was careful to point out the global context of Québec's own movement for decolonization and national liberation:

Nos alliés sont en Asie, en Afrique et en Amérique du Sud. Ils ont la peau noire ou jaune ou le teint basané. Notre point d'insertion se situe quelque part sur une ligne de force...partant de Cuba, passant par l'Algérie et le Vietnam et, qui, faisant le tour dur globe s'arrêt dans les ghetto de Détroit et de Harlem. Les Noirs américains ont ceci de commun avec les Québécois qu'ils sont des colonisés de l'intérieur. Ils héritent donc d'une tâche commune au sien même du monstre, celle d'amener son pourrissement en agissant en son cœur même. On a dit que les combats des Vietnamiens aidaient les mouvements de libérations nationales en Amérique du Sud, aussi bien que les Noirs américains et même les Québécois. On peut renverser le raisonnement et affirmer que chaque coup porté par les Noirs et les Québécois à l'esclavagisme yankee sert l'ensemble du mouvement de décolonisation. C'est donc dans cette conjoncture que se trouve notre seule voie de réussite.²²

The irony of the French president 'liberating' the Québécois, given France's own history of colonial imperialism in Vietnam and Algeria (to name only two of France's many former colonies), was not lost on the writers at *Parti pris*. As we will see further on in the discussion of *joual*, Québécois such as Bourque identified with the struggles of Algerians, the Vietnamese, Cubans and other formerly colonized

²² Gilles Bourque, "DeGaulle, politique et stratégie," *Parti pris*, Vol. 5 No. 1 (Sept. 1967) pp. 7-17.

peoples. They called for Québec to be part of a global socialist revolution. Indeed, Marcel Rioux, a historian-sociologist of 1960s, argued that Québec's history made it an ideal place to establish a socialist government. For him, "French Quebeckers as a whole formed an 'ethnic class' of proletarians, united over and above their inner economic disparities and social hierarchies."²³

This kind of thinking had many observers worried that Québec had the potential to become a kind of Cuba of the North. The comparisons between Québec and Cuba were frequent during this period. In 1966 René Lévesque had warned that if Montréal's Anglophone elites did not rid themselves of their "état d'esprit Rhodésien" (a reference to the oppressive English minority that governed the African state of Rhodesia) then it was possible that Québec might end up like Cuba.²⁴ Claude Wagner, provincial justice minister, was one such believer. Wagner's fears about the possibility of socialist revolt in Quebec may, in retrospect, seem paranoid, but at the time many people – including Montréal Mayor Jean Drapeau – believed that the cacophonous events at the end of the 1960s were prelude to violent rebellion.²⁵

The Confederation Train

Charles De Gaulle's speech emboldened the separatist movement. In the wake of his visit came an escalation of noisy and confrontational tactics. On 27 July, after a long halt in the FLQ's bombing campaign, the Mouvement de Libération de

²³ Warren, pg. 82

²⁴ Jan Depocas "à joul sur...une ou deux langues" *Parti pris* Vol.3 no. 8 (Mars 1966): pp. 57-60. pg. 58.

²⁵ This is a topic we will return to in Chapter Five.

Québec (MLQ) (a terrorist group similar to the FLQ) exploded a bomb at Greenfield Park City Hall. In September, a “near riot” occurred in suburban Pierrefonds when the police used tear gas and clubs to enforce social order after Pierre Bourgault, leader of the Rassemblement pour l’indépendance nationale (RIN), and his supporters clashed with local youths over the issue of building a French-language school in the district.²⁶ A few days after the Pierrefonds riot, loud explosions rocked a high school where two bombs had been placed. There was more trouble at the end of the summer of 1967, as the Confederation Train rolled into Quebec.

The Confederation Train was a major government project aimed at celebrating Canada’s past, present, and future. Purportedly the brainchild of John Diefenbaker (who also recorded a confederation-themed album called “I Am A Canadian” featuring the former Prime Minister telling stories and relating the history of Canada)²⁷ the Confederation Train may have been inspired by a similar rolling-museum project undertaken in the United States at the outset of the Cold War.²⁸ Operated jointly by Canadian Pacific and Canadian National, the Confederation train featured a CP locomotive numbered 1867 (which was fitted with a horn that played the opening bars of “O Canada”) and a CN locomotive numbered 1967. Inside six exhibition cars were displays depicting Canada’s aboriginal peoples, early immigrants and explorers of Canada such as Jacques Cartier and Samuel de Champlain, the story of the signing of the British North

²⁶ “Police use gas to quell clash in Pierrefonds” *Gazette* 6 Sept. 1967: 6.

²⁷ “Recording star” *Gazette* 2 Sept. 1967: 8.

²⁸ The Freedom Train was a rolling exhibit from 1946-1949, designed to showcase examples of American freedom in a world awakening from the horrors of Hitlerism. See “Eric Foner on the Freedom Train” (Norton History Interview). Accessed online via YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WD4hPTLCLdM> (last accessed 27 July 2014).

America Act in 1867, the addition of the other provinces to the nation of Canada, the country's participation in the First and Second World Wars, and finally a celebration of Canada's achievements in modern science, medicine, politics, and industry.²⁹

While the Confederation Train had proven popular in English Canada, Québec nationalists such as Pierre Bourgault and Reggie Chartrand were critical of the project. They charged that the displays lacked representation of Canada's Francophone populations, especially French-speaking minorities outside Québec. They also blamed the federal government for having avoided thorny issues, such as the deportation of the Acadians from Nova Scotia. There was bound to be friction, therefore, as the train was a symbol of pride for English Canadians while at the same time representing, for some Québécois, the continued marginalization of Canada's French-speaking peoples.

The trouble started when the train, travelling east from Ontario, made its first Montréal stop at Dorval. Manpower minister Jean Marchand was on hand to open the Confederation Train to the public and to congratulate the city of Dorval on the occasion of its 300th anniversary. Also on the platform were Bobby Gimby, composer of the Centennial song "CA-NA-DA", and a group of school children who were to sing at the end of the ceremony. Just as the minister commenced his speech, about twenty people started throwing leaflets into the crowd and eggs at the platform. They shouted "separatist slogans" and at least one person was arrested for disturbing the peace. Marchand reacted with "angry outbursts" which were met with noisy cheers from the protesters. As the children sang Canada's national

²⁹ David Graham & Laura New "From sea to shining sea: Millions journeyed through Canada's past aboard the Confederation Train" *Quebec Heritage News* Vol. 4 no. 4 (July-August 2007): 18-19.

anthem, the group of protesters responded with their own songs and slogans, one of which, “clearly heard” was: “Les Québécois marchent à victoire!”³⁰

The competing sounds of one group singing “O Canada” while others sang songs associated with Québécois nationalism were highly symbolic. Indeed, throughout the decade there appear many examples of people using “O Canada” as a sonic tactic to drown out Québec nationalists at rallies, protests, marches, meetings, and lectures. Events such as the Confederation Train incidents present examples of a symbolic unification of voices raised together in the name of Anglo-Canadian nationalism attempting to drown out or silence the angry and frustrated voices of Québécois nationalists, unilingualists or “separatists.” It should be noted that at the time not much distinction was made between these labels. Almost any display of Québécois nationalism was branded “separatist” by the Anglophone media, a habit that only muddied the waters of Québec’s language debates by erasing the differences between radical groups such as the FLQ, rabblers such as the Ligue pour l’intégration scolaire (LIS), and ‘respectable’ political parties such as the RIN and, later, the Parti Québécois.

About a week after the Confederation Train made its stop in Dorval another, much more serious, incident occurred further down the tracks at Jean-Talon station. Five hundred people, led by Pierre Bourgault and Reggie Chartrand, showed up to protest the train. Close to a hundred people broke through a CPR police barricade to attack the rolling Confederation museum, splattering the numbers “1967” with black and yellow paint on four of the train’s cars. Shouting “Maudit Canada!” and

³⁰ “Confederation train draws separatists’ ire” *The Globe and Mail* 28 Aug. 1967: 4.

“Confederation train, no! Québec, yes!”, the protestors also broke lights and a wooden barrier. Several people were injured as protesters scuffled with CPR police and the RCMP. After the police dragged away a dozen of the protesters, Pierre Bourgault regrouped the rest of his supporters behind the train station. Addressing the small crowd, he promised that actions would escalate if the government continued to provoke the Québécois with its propaganda.³¹

Language and Nationalism: Defining a Unifying Canadian Language

The incidents surrounding the Confederation Train’s arrival in Montréal demonstrate the different notions of nationalism at play within Canada and Québec. While many Anglophone Canadians and federalists viewed the Confederation Train with a sense of pride, some French Canadians and Québécois saw the train as a symbol of English colonialism and their own humiliation. Such differing interpretations were hardly surprising, as the late 1960s and early 1970s were years of heightened nationalism all across Canada. Language, as a central vector of nationalist identity, became a key site of debate during this decade, for both Anglophones and Francophones alike.

Remember that this was the period just before Trudeau’s Official Languages Act enshrined bilingualism as a fundamental aspect of Canadian identity. Increasingly concerned about the emergence of Québec separatism, André Laurendeau – the *éminence grise* of *Le Devoir* and a frequent commentator on cultural questions in *Le magazine Maclean* – proposed an investigation into

³¹ “Separatists hurl paint at Confederation train” *The Globe and Mail* 8 Sept. 1967: 2; “4 separatists charged in train row” *The Globe and Mail* 9 Sept. 1967: 3.

Québec/Ottawa relations. The outcome was the creation, in 1963, of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, chaired by Laurendeau and Davidson Dunton. Laurendeau would serve in this capacity until 1968. The "B and B" Commission brought out a number of reports, and published many background papers. Unable to reach agreement on the ultimate political consequences of its findings, however, it never did bring in the final volume of its report. Its preliminary publications nonetheless ignited a storm of controversy across the country. Laurendeau was startled to discover the extent to which Anglo-Canadians did not accept the 'French Fact' in Canada and declined to accord the French language any particular status in the country.³² As Lisa Schrenk suggests, the coming of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism represented a moment of "directed cultural change" in Canada, one that elicited often strident commentaries from Anglo communities unwilling to cede their privileges to upstart Francophones.³³ This was perhaps first time that the entirety of Canada was forced to wake up to the reality of Canada's multiple linguistic identities, and when people from coast to coast (be they Anglophones, Francophones, First Nations peoples or Allophones) engaged in a national conversation about language rights.

Anxieties about the historically dual nature of the Canadian character raised questions about identity that few were equipped to answer. If we speak two languages, if we live in two separate cultures, how can the totality of Canada be

³² André Laurendeau, *The Diary of André Laurendeau Written During the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism*, trans. Patricia Smart and Dorothy Howard (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1991).

³³ Lisa Schrenk, "Directed Cultural Change and Imagined Communities: The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism Encounters the Language Question in Ontario, 1964-1967," (M.A.Thesis, Queen's University, 1993).

expressed in language? With which voice does Canada speak? What kind of voice would it have? Such questions essentially boiled down to a profound question: What constitutes a 'typically' Canadian voice? What does – and what should – 'Canada' sound like?

This was the era that witnessed attempts to create a 'standard' 'Canadian' English, one that was independent from both British and American usage. When W. J. Gage Ltd. published its *Dictionary of Canadian English* in 1967, it was an attempt to liberate Canadian English from its colonial British heritage, which "keeps our language forever at the colonial and dependent stage of development."³⁴ Steven High has described how the publication of this dictionary during Canada's centennial year was the culmination of a series of attempts to document and prove that the English spoken in Canada contained unique words as well as differences of spelling and pronunciation – differences that made Canadian English distinct from its British and American cousins. The words collected in this project, as well as in the *Dictionary of Canadianisms*, also demonstrated that the language which Canadians speak has been shot through with words that originate in French and aboriginal languages, words that reference the northern geography and climate of this nation, words whose legacies lie in the bush camps and shanties of *coureurs de bois*, Irish labourers, and Native peoples.³⁵ Attempts by lexicographers to document

³⁴ "Is there a Canadian language?" *The Gazette* 22 April 1967: 20.

³⁵ Steven High, "The 'Narcissism of Small Differences': The Invention of Canadian English, 1951-67" in Magda Fahrni & Robert Rutherford, eds. *Creating Postwar Canada 1945-75: Community, Diversity & Dissent* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008): 89-110.

Canadian English also led to attempts to create a standard French-English dictionary designed for Canadian and Québécois usage.³⁶

Debates about the possibility of a new 'Canadian' language reveal the fraught nature of all such questions in the country. In a nation as diverse as Canada, how can one language *ever* be fully representative? In 1965, a Winnipeg minister addressed the Royal Commission on Biculturalism and Bilingualism, proposing "a sort of proportional representation pot-pourri of tongues." "If we had a will for it," United Church Reverend G.H. Hambley submitted, "we in this nation could build up a united Canadian speech that would be distinctively Canadian. It would have to be about one-half English, two-sixths French and one-sixth from other languages that have joined our culture – German and Italian and so on."³⁷ Aboriginal languages were completely omitted from this gentleman's conception of Canadian identity. It is also noteworthy that he was apparently opposed to the teaching of French outside of Québec, lest "the Church of Rome" exert too much influence over education and ethics.³⁸

Others weighed in on the debate about a unified Canadian language. One person wrote to the *Gazette*, "It seems that what we require to bind us together in our bed of thorns is a distinctive language of our own – something truly Canadian." "I...suggest Latin as being the logical choice," this person continued. "Unilingualism would flourish and we could cast aside the bonds of French and English, both of which are barbarian offshoots of Latin." There would, of course be complications.

³⁶ The only effort to produce a Canadian bilingual dictionary prior to the 1960s had been one issued by the military during the Second World War.

³⁷ "New Canadian Language Urged" *Gazette* 11 Dec. 1965: 2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

Telephone key pads and license plates would have to be expanded to accommodate the lengthy strings of Roman numerals...³⁹

The suggestion that Canadians should use an aboriginal language as the common tongue was also raised on occasion. What about Iroquois? One man suggested the idea, then quickly retracted it as impractical. But he was not alone. Two Anglican Bishops who worked in remote northern areas of Quebec and Manitoba presented a brief to the B and B Commission were quoted as saying “The English and the French demand for themselves what they deny the first citizens of North America and this is not right.” Speaking especially of the Cree community, they argued that Cree children should be given instruction in their native language. To prove his point, Bishop J. A. Watton then addressed the commission in Cree.⁴⁰

Not everyone was on board with such schemes. Arguing that there was no real ‘choice’ to be made about Canadian languages, and that Canada needed to sound bilingual, one Francophone Montréaler wrote to the *Gazette*: “The choice has already been made for us by history. The hard fact of Canadian life is that we have two languages. ... [W]e have to cultivate and further both of them. Completely, without restrictions, in all walks of life. Without exclusions. Without comparisons. Without a superiority complex. How can we expect any Canadian to recognize Canada as his own country when his language is a source of debate? How can we exclude one of Canada’s languages from certain phases of our life and hope to see its users display great enthusiasm for this country?”⁴¹

³⁹ “Forward to unity via Latin” (letter to the editor) *Gazette* 15 Dec. 1965: 8.

⁴⁰ “Indian language protection urged,” *Gazette* 16 May 1970: 3.

⁴¹ “Playing a game of brinkmanship with Canada’s future” *Gazette* 19 March 1970: 6.

Debates about what a ‘typically’ Canadian voice should sound like also arose in the area of national broadcasting. In 1968, certain members of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation prepared a brief which argued that the corporation showed a marked partiality for British accents over other types of voices in news reporting. *The Gazette* editorialized that “...there are many more British voices in Canadian news reports than there used to be... there seems an even chance, these days, that the reporter’s accent will sound more like the BBC than the CBC.” The editor continued: “There is no question that the official broadcast voice of Canada, the national network, should be an authentic Canadian voice, with a Canadian accent.”⁴² In explanation for the antipathy in Canada towards voices that sounded too British, Steven High quotes Walter Avis, one of the men at the centre of attempts to document Canadian English. Avis stated that a rejection of Britishisms in Canadian language was “a rejection by a former colonial people of British attitudes after a century and a half of domination of Canada by Britishers whose condescending ways and superior airs have come to be associated connotatively with British speech and mannerisms.”⁴³

The Gazette editorialized that Canadians expected to hear British accents in British broadcasts, and American accents in American broadcasts. “In Canadian broadcasts, they expect to hear Canadian accents, at least most of the time. The ‘voice of Canada’ should be a Canadian voice.”⁴⁴ Just what, exactly, a “Canadian accent” or a “Canadian voice” sounded like, was not explained.

⁴² “A Canadian Voice,” *Gazette* 20 May 1968: 6.

⁴³ High, “The Narcissism of Small Differences”: 93.

⁴⁴ “A Canadian Voice”.

Interestingly, perhaps the opposite discussion was happening with regards to French-language radio broadcasts. Longtime radio personality Gilles Proulx, for example, published a book in 1972 titled *Pour une radio civilisée* in which he took Québec radio announcers to task for the poor quality of their French.⁴⁵ “Que penser du venin qui se crache dans les micros de plusieurs postes du Québec?” he asked. “[L]es annonceurs....ont peu de respect et une méconnaissance outrancière de la langue française.”⁴⁶ Proulx himself seemed to have little respect for Québec radio audiences, however. He alleged that the typical listener was a lazy hot-dog-eating dupe, incapable of reason over emotion and speaking French with a lower-class accent. He praised Radio-Canada for being the only station that spoke “real” French.⁴⁷

As the above paragraph demonstrates, Québec’s Francophones were also having serious debates about the differences of tongue and voice within their communities. Unilingualists argued that Québec should be entirely Francophone, but what *kind* of French should be spoken in the province was a subject of heated debate. Some people advocated the use of a ‘standard’ or ‘pure’ French such as that spoken in France, a language ostensibly free from Anglo influence. Others debated the merits of *joual*, a Québec-specific, working-class variation of French which contained plenty of English words, slang, and strings of words slurred or contracted together. The French language within Québec was (and is) highly stratified, and class divisions often came to the fore during debates about language politics.

⁴⁵ Gilles Proulx, *Pour une radio civilisée* (Montréal: Éditions de l’homme, 1972).

⁴⁶ *Ibid*: 18, 22.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*: 22, 62-3.

Unilingualism and French purity

The politics of language in Canada and Québec are complex. Montréal has often functioned as a proving ground for federal, provincial, and municipal policies of bilingualism, biculturalism and multilingualism. This was a period of intense nationalist passions within Québec, but also within Canada. During the 1960s and '70s, many Montréalers disputed such visions. They favoured instead a unilingually Francophone Québec.

The province's first attempts to map out a coherent language policy came in 1965, when Pierre Laporte, minister of cultural affairs for Jean Lesage's government, set up a committee to establish a White Paper on cultural policy. Much of the focus of its work was on existing efforts to improve the quality of French spoken in Quebec, such as the *bon parler* campaigns, which they viewed as "insignificant in the face of grave linguistic problems" faced by French Canadians.⁴⁸ Laporte's White Paper was never released. The Lesage government never acted upon its recommendations, as the Premier did not believe that the French language was losing ground in Québec. Indeed, he believed that any such trend had been reversed in recent years and that fears about the disappearance of the French language reflected an inferiority complex amongst the Québécois.⁴⁹

Much of the passion behind unilingualism came from a belief that if decisive steps were not taken, the French language would be "eradicated" from North America. Such arguments were often framed in terms of opposition to Anglo-American economic and cultural imperialism, which threatened to annihilate the

⁴⁸ Levine: 54

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

unique society of Québec under a tidal wave of automobiles, soft drinks, and pop records. A corollary to this was the argument that a strong French culture would prove an effective bulwark against Americanization. Over and over again we hear references to the dangers of French disappearing from this continent if unilingual policies were not enacted. A new concept entered public discourse: *minorisation* – the idea that without specific protections for the French language, French speaking Quebeckers would become a minority in their own province.

This argument gained cogency in the late 1960s when influential demographer Jacques Henripin projected that Montréal's French-speaking population would shrink to 52.7% of the total by the end of the twentieth century. Unilingualists often cited this study as proof that their fears for the future of a Francophone Québec were well-founded. Despite the popularity of Henripin's projections, however, his analysis was flawed. Marc Levine has called it "unduly alarming," and pointed out that such projections failed to take into account significant demographic trends such as Anglophones leaving for Ontario and the influx of French speakers from the rural regions of Québec. Henripin's conclusions were also in contradiction to studies such as the Gendron report, which had projected a solid French majority in Montréal through to the end of the twentieth century. Even the worst-case scenarios, Levine has noted, projected little danger of Francophones becoming a minority in Montréal.⁵⁰ Finally, let us not forget that the Québécois are not the only Francophone population in North America. Québécois unilingualist fears about the eradication of French from the continent tended

⁵⁰ Levine: 62, 96-97; Guy Bouthillier & Jean Meynard *Le choc les langues au Québec 1760-1970* (Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Québec, 1972): 45.

sometimes (but not always) to be very Québec-centric, ignoring or dismissing the presence of other Francophone communities across North America such as the Acadians, the Cajuns, Franco-Manitobans, Franco-Ontarians, as well as the inhabitants of St. Pierre and Miquelon, the small French islands just off the coast of Newfoundland.

“Speak White”:

Race, class, labour and the “humiliation” of language in Montréal

Supporters of unilingualism clearly feared the infiltration of English into the everyday usage of French in Québec, a symptom, they believed, of an Anglo-American cultural imperialism determined to assimilate everyone into a common English-speaking community – hence the existence of campaigns such as *bon parler*, designed to minimize the influence of English in Québec French. The examples of the close proximity and privileging of English having had an irrevocable effect upon the language spoken by Québec’s Francophones were plenty. Victor Barbeau, for example, a philosopher, journalist and professor of language and literature, published several works – *Le Ramage de Mon Pays* (1939), *Le Français du Canada* (1963), and a *Dictionnaire bibliographique du Canada française* (1974) – that collected and catalogued words demonstrating the infiltration of English into everyday French by way of borrowed or “disguised” words. Barbeau had a sense of the socio-economic dynamics of language in the province, having warned on the eve of the Second World War that “[d]espite the gild of our lounges, the tin of our

churches, we are poor, terrifyingly poor. We are proletarians, workers, manufacture fodder.”⁵¹

While some, such as France’s Education Minister Alain Peyrefitte, praised French-speaking Canadians for having kept their language alive through “inventive genius,”⁵² others condemned the kind of French spoken throughout the province, fearful that it reflected a poverty of class and education. One particular incident threw into relief these divisions. In early 1970, members of the Gendron Committee on the status of French stopped in Montréal to hear briefs presented by members of the public. One young man, a nineteen-year-old CEGEP student, attempted to address the committee but was severely rebuked by one of the Committee’s members. Madeleine Royon-Ferland listened while the young man told the commission that he supported unilingualism, even though his working-class background had taught him the “joul of the people of Quebec” and not the “precise international French of the educated classes.” “That’s no excuse,” Mme Royon-Ferland snapped at the young man. “You’ve had everything you need to develop your language, you have schools and libraries, everything. If that is the kind of unilingualism you want how can you expect French to survive in Quebec?” The young man stood his ground, arguing that without unilingual policies he would be assimilated by the English. “If you can’t speak French properly,” Mme Royon-Ferland replied, “it won’t be difficult to assimilate you. If we speak like you the language will certainly die.”⁵³

⁵¹ Warren: 76.

⁵² “Quebec’s creative patois lauded,” *Gazette* 13 Sept. 1967: 4.

⁵³ “Bad French ‘may be the real threat’” *Gazette* 13 May 1970: 17.

Incidents such as this point to fact that the French language is deeply stratified within Québec. “What exactly is French in the province of Quebec?” asked one curious professor. “Is it the normative, correct usage or metropolitan French, or is it a characteristic form of expression which we call Québécois?” The divisions within language use in Québec are particularly interesting because they reflect socio-economic divisions within the population. Those who upheld notions of normative or “correct” usage, “a highly conservative form of expression,” tended to be in more dominant positions of social and financial security. “Proper” French requires greater levels of education, “meaning that it has certain mandarin aspects,” writer Albert Jordan observed. “If you are in a position, as the French say, to possess your language... then you also possess the means to material and social favour. So if you’re on the way up, you have a definite vested interest in maintaining the correct usage.”⁵⁴

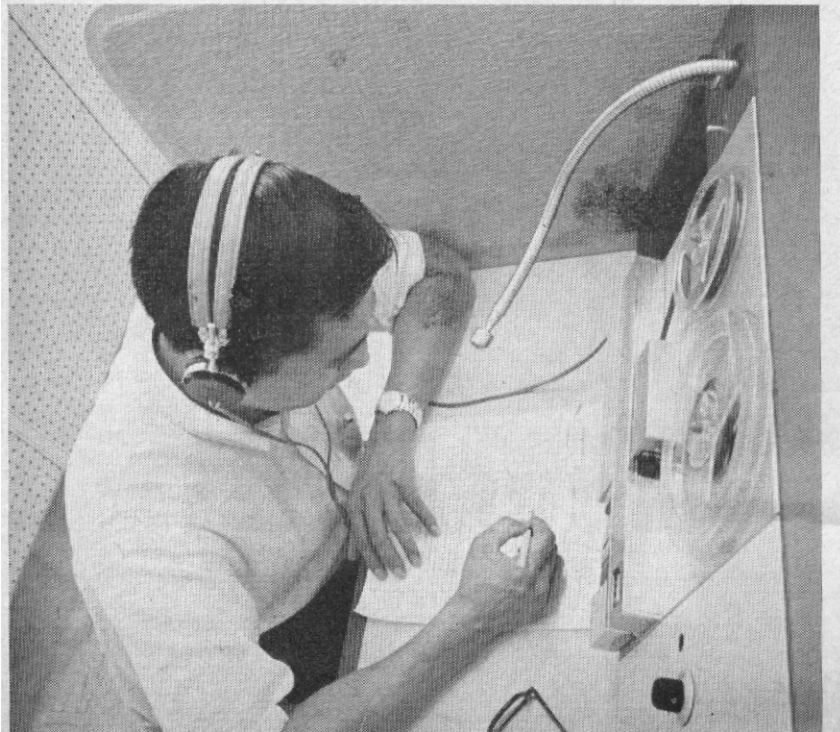
In the early 1960s, in an interesting use of recording and listening technologies, the department of linguistics at l’Université de Montréal set up specialized language laboratories designed to help “rescue” Québec French. Sitting in rooms filled with specialized equipment, students listened to recordings that demonstrated the “proper” pronunciation of words and phrases, then recorded themselves repeating the same phrases. Their own voices were then compared to that of the instructional recording in order to demonstrate precisely where they had gone wrong.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ “Albert Jordan – Oxford Français,” *Georgian* 2 March 1973: 6.

⁵⁵ “Sus au joual! Une innovation qui fait parler: le laboratoire de langues vient à la recousse du français au Québec,” *Le magazine Maclean*, septembre 1963: 28-29, 55-57.



manettes, microphone . . . Un Américain apprend le français. Au Québec, l



Figures 5 and 6: Students at l'Université de Montréal's language lab use listening and recording technologies in order to learn how to speak "proper" French. "Sus au joual!" *Le magazine Maclean*, septembre 1963.

Discussions of *joual* vs. “proper” French occurred at roughly the same time as debates over the advisability of teaching ‘Black English’ in the United States and over the elite status of ‘BBC English’ in Britain. New Leftists such as popular historian Léandre Bergeron celebrated *joual* as a language of the people. Yet less populist scholars raised questions. Those who read sociologist Pierre Bourdieu came to understand that, because each individual occupies a position in a multidimensional social space and was largely destined to perform in his or her life in accordance with access to social capital, it was utopian and illusory to imagine a language-form like *joual* would, simply because it was ‘democratic’ and ‘of the people,’ come to prevail over its elite competitors. Like it or not, speakers of *joual* were reiterating their socio-cultural positions in the very words that came out of their mouths. Having inherited a relationship with their language from birth, they tended to reproduce in their linguistic relations the situation of inferiority to which they had been consigned by a capitalist society. The *joual*-speaker could not, then, realistically dream of having a “right” to be listened to, to lecture authoritatively, and to register his or her disagreements with the prevailing cultural order with any degree of persuasiveness.⁵⁶

Bourdieu’s insights into the social relationship that accompany particular dialects and languages were paralleled by those of Antonio Gramsci, who, although he defended the acquisition of Sardinian as a working tongue in childhood, also urged the importance of subaltern groups acquiring access to standard Italian.

⁵⁶ See Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984); for discussion, see Craig Calhoun, ed., *Pierre Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

Gramsci was keenly alive to the “irreversible” processes of acculturation and learning that conditioned “the level of reception and degree of assimilation of the messages produced and diffused by the culture industry, and, more generally, of any intellectual or semi-intellectual message.”⁵⁷ He was especially alert to the *physical* challenge those unused to intellectual labour confronted as they struggled to study for hours upon hours. A child in school – and here Gramsci recalled his own experiences in Sardinia – who was easily conversant in the official language might well be placed in a “position of superiority” over his dialect-speaking classmates, even though such a student might seem to be more intelligent and quick, “whereas sometimes this is not so.”⁵⁸ Someone without Italian, or who spoke a regional dialect, was apt to be handicapped by their limited perspective on questions accessible to others.⁵⁹ This same process was reflected in assumptions that Francophones who used *joual* were uneducated (and, by implication, unintelligent), demonstrating that the kinds of sounds people make when they talk – the aural shape of their words and the rhythms of their speech patterns – have serious and immediate socio-cultural implications. “Parlez-vous Québécois?” asked a student at Sir George Williams. “Because this is where we live. Not in an English ghetto, but in a French nation. Not in a culture of Shakespeare and Red Skelton, but among Ti-Coq

⁵⁷ Peter Mayo, *Gramsci, Freire and Adult Education: Possibilities for Transformative Action* (London and New York: Zed Books, 1999): 118.

⁵⁸ Antonio Gramsci *Letters from Prison, Vol. I*, ed. Frank Rosengarten and trans. Raymond Rosenthal. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994): 240.

⁵⁹ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, trans. and ed. Quintin Hoare (New York: International Publishers, 1971): 325.

and his friends. Of course learning the curves and flats of a people takes time. Syntax bugs everyone.”⁶⁰

Every Montrealer, no matter their background, has invariably experienced what many observers at the time called “the humiliation of language”. In 1970, Pierre Bourgault, the fiery leader of the RIN, published an editorial in his magazine *Point de mire*, simply called “Humiliation.” The article told of an incident when a group of friends visited a west-end discotheque, and asked, in French, for a beer. The simple act of ordering beer turned into a humiliating experience when they asked to be served in French. Accused of “making politics,” they were told to leave the establishment. “In Montréal, in 1970,” Bourgault editorialized, “to order beer in French is making politics.” This was no trivial incident, and Montréal’s conservative Anglophone daily took time out to comment in an editorial that the majority Francophone population of the province “know[s] this kind of humiliation all too well. It’s a daily thing, and everybody has his own story – or stories – to tell.”⁶¹

Take, for instance, Jean Forest’s novel *Le mur de Berlin PQ*, “...the tragic-comic story of a childhood lived in unwilling bilingualism.” Told from the perspective of a child growing up in Montréal during the 1960s, the story essentially traces the constant humiliations caused by the discovery of the myriad ways that English has crept into the every day French of Montrealers – “the dark, uninvited presence of the other tongue.”⁶² The daily little “humiliations” of language was something many Anglophones just did not comprehend – as evidenced also by a series of letters

⁶⁰ “Parlez-vous Québécois?” *Georgian* 10 Jan. 1969: 2.

⁶¹ “Despite humiliations... Attitude on French: glimmer of changes,” *Gazette* 17 Aug. 1970: 7.

⁶² Simon: 43.

published in *Le magazine Maclean*. These letters were written in response to Peter Gzowski's 1964 editorial ruminating upon why, since (in his estimation) Québec's "Quiet Revolution" already been won, nationalists were yelling even louder than before. The responses to Gzowski provide many examples of the daily humiliations faced by Francophones. In a Montréal flower shop, complained one reader, one heard the following from the clerk: "I don't speak a damn word of French!" "Do you imagine what you miss?" "Nothing." Or a university student told by his Anglophone colleagues, "You bastard French-Canadian... speak white." Or how Francophone names were often Anglicized when appearing on electoral lists.⁶³ The real litmus test of Francophone-Anglophone language relations, one reader concluded, was "le respect dans les contacts quotidiens."⁶⁴ Montréal repeatedly failed the test.

Despite the frequency of linguistic humiliations, by the late 1960s French Canadians began to turn the tables on their linguistic superiors. Indeed, Marc Levine has noted that as more and more people pushed for the use of French in everyday and workaday Quebec, as workers would no longer bow to racist demands to "speak white," Anglophones began to face new fears about *their* language use in public, especially fears about triggering a linguistic confrontation.⁶⁵ Early in 1970, for example, in the lead-up to the provincial election, Québec's assistant ombudsman warned that a series of inflammatory "scare speeches" delivered by prominent members of Montréal's Anglophone elite were a clear indication that English

⁶³ "Réponse à la lettre ouverte de Peter Gzowski" *Le magazine Maclean* décembre 1964: 10; "Pour répondre à la Lettre aux nationalistes de Peter Gzowski (Nov. 1964)" *Le magazine Maclean* mai 1965: 14.

⁶⁴ "Réponse à la lettre ouverte de Peter Gzowski".

⁶⁵ Levine: 39.

Montréalers were “afraid of losing the privileged position” that they had held for so long.⁶⁶

Joual

As the incident between a member of the Gendron committee and a young CEGEP student whose French was deemed unworthy demonstrates, the subject of the humiliation of language came up most prominently in discussions of *joual*. This working-class, Anglicised form of French will be discussed next, with a focus on how debates about *joual* revealed dynamics of race and class in Québec’s largest metropolis.

As we saw with regards to Robert Charlebois and the use of *joual* in rock music, *joual* is a derivative of French that is especially popular in Montréal. It is essentially an urban working-class dialect which reflected many Montrealers’ experience of living and working close to or amongst Anglophones. The sound of *joual* was an important keynote in the vocal soundscape of Montréal. Intense debates about *joual* played out between Francophones. Some, such as *Le Devoir* editor and co-chair of the B and B Commission André Laurendeau, saw *joual* as a degraded and uneducated form of French.⁶⁷ Trudeau, too, criticized the language spoken by some in the province, setting off something of a controversy when he charged a group of young separatists with speaking “lousy French.”⁶⁸ Others,

⁶⁶ “Ombudsman aide attacks English ‘scare speeches.” *Gazette*. 10 Feb. 1970: 1.

⁶⁷ For an analysis of the B and B Commission’s work regarding language policy in Québec, see Marcel Martel and Martin Paquet, *Speaking Up: A History of Language and Politics in Canada and Québec*. Trans. Patricia Dumas. (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2012).

⁶⁸ “‘Lousy’ remark misinterpreted says Trudeau,” *Gazette*. 4 March 1968 pg. 1.

especially the individuals involved with *Parti pris*, defended *joual* on the grounds that it was an accurate reflection of the socio-economic position of Francophone workers in Montréal. For them, *joual* was a complex marker of both race and class, presenting evidence of colonial and imperialist relations. Writers, poets, and playwrights such as Gérard Godin, Paul Chamberland, and Michel Tremblay were well known for deploying *joual* in order to paint a more accurate portrait of their milieu and in the hopes that through their art they could somehow give a voice to people who might otherwise go unheard.

Joual is a modern, sometimes vulgar language that, for some, was evidence of the colonized status of the Québécois people. While elites thought *joual* an ugly, uneducated tongue corrupted by English, others celebrated *joual's* lyrical and literary qualities. Malcolm Reid, an Anglophone Quebecker who has dedicated his life to understanding the province, had a keen ear for the tongue being spoken in the neighbourhoods east of Montréal's downtown. In *The Shouting Signpainters* (his exploration of the people involved with *Parti pris*) Reid highlighted the musical qualities of Québec speech patterns, especially *joual*.⁶⁹ Jacques Rénaud, whose 1964 novel *Le Cassé* stands alongside Michel Tremblay's play *Les Belles Soeurs* as two of the era's prime examples of *joual* in the arts, shared Reid's sense of the musical nature of *joual*. "[L]e joual," Rénaud wrote, "peut être lyrique, peut être un chant, du

⁶⁹ Simon: 29. Malcolm Ried, *The Shouting Signpainters: A literary and political account of Quebec revolutionary nationalism* (Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, 1972).

vrai Grégorien, ou bien de la gigue satanique, Montréal qui chavire et moi qui coule avec...".⁷⁰

As Sherry Simon has noted, a central literary project of the 1960s was the rehabilitation of *joual*. Writers such as Rénaud and Tremblay were part of a "revolutionary project [that] was focused on language." *Joual* "materialized their anger and alienation. Their goal was to turn a language characterized by colloquialisms, intrusions from English, and incorrect syntax into a badge of honour, to turn its negative condition into one full of hope."⁷¹ Gérald Godin, the poet-politician who went on to have a celebrated career with the Parti Québécois, wrote in 1965: "Our elites, who are short-sighted, act as if it was the language that was sick, while it's the nation that's gone bad, the national culture that is rotten, the Québec state that is infirm and the Québécois soul that is deeply wounded." "Good French is the future Quebec wishes for," Godin argued, "but *joual* is its present. I'd rather be proud of a mistake than be humiliated by a truth."⁷²

The language spoken in Montréal's east end was, for the *Parti pris* crowd, "a language that explains and combats colonial oppression...".⁷³ Thus the project of rehabilitation of *joual* was deeply political. "We must invent, create, renew or, more simply, give a voice to those who speak too poorly to make themselves heard," wrote Jacques Rénaud. For him, it was natural that the context within which the Québécois of Montréal's east end lived should make itself heard through their

⁷⁰ Jacques Rénaud "Comme tout le monde ou le post-scriptum," *Parti pris*, Vol. 2 no. 5 (Jan. 1965): 20-24.

⁷¹ Simon: 29.

⁷² Gérald Godin, "Le joual et nous," *Parti pris*, Vo. 2 no. 5 (Jan. 1965): 18-19. [My translation. S.D.J.]

⁷³ Simon: 12.

language. What's more, for Rénaud, *joual* was a particularly sonic reflection of the French-Canadian condition:

When everything fails or the roof leaks or when everything goes haywire, I hum or I shout and all kinds of terrible sounds. [...] Because pretty words are used to soften up future victims. [...] But I don't find my revolt in the language of Camus. Nor my suffering. (But I could maybe find my submission, as much as in English.) My revolt is that of a French-Canadian, whose words and turns of phrase are French-Canadian, more specifically Montréalais, *joual*. [...] I was born in Montréal, lived most of my life here, I wasn't born on the moon. The language of my revolt is part of the process, part of the milieu, this is for me a very normal thing.⁷⁴

"To write is to choose to write poorly, because it reflects the poverty of life," wrote poet and *Partipriste* Paul Chamberland. "It's the well written that's the lie, it's the correction of the aberration, it's the purity-of-style that is, here and now, insignificant. Today I vomit the antiseptic jabber that they propose as a model of writing, this golden delirium that deadens these wounds of mine, and betrays them."⁷⁵ To write in a way that was honest about the real language of Quebec was to take up an insurmountable challenge, according to the well-respected Chamberland.⁷⁶ It meant bearing witness, through language, to disorder and destabilization imposed by two centuries "of oppression and slow genocide." "To write badly," he proclaimed, "is to descend into the hell of our impoverished lives."⁷⁷

For artists such as Chamberland, Rénaud and Godin, to be humiliated by their own language was something they would not tolerate. "It's not *joual* or those who speak it that make us ashamed," Godin wrote, "it's the situation that caused such a

⁷⁴ Rénaud: 21. [My translation. S.D.J.]

⁷⁵ Paul Chamberland, "Dire ce que je suis – notes," *Parti pris*, Vol. 2 no. 5 (Jan. 1965) : 33-42. [My translation, S.D.J.]

⁷⁶ For a discussion of Chamberland's work, see Kanaté Dahouda, *Aimé Césaire, Paul Chamberland et le pays natal* (Québec: Les Editions Africana, 2001); Claude Beausoleil, *Le motif de l'identité dans la poésie québécoise (1930-1995)* (Montréal: Estuaire, 1996).

⁷⁷ Chamberland, "Dire ce que je suis – notes." [My translation, S.D.J.]

cultural infirmity that makes us ashamed, and it is those who accept this situation that makes us ashamed.”⁷⁸ This situation, as Chamberland hinted above, was the colonial oppression endured by the Québec people since the Conquest. The individuals who wrote for *Parti pris* interpreted this situation in terms that reflected the larger global context of their times, that is, in terms of national liberation movements and projects of decolonization such as those experienced in places like Cuba, Algeria, and Vietnam. “We speak *joual* like the Africans educated at the Sorbonne who broke with French to speak the language of their tribes or their country,” Godin explained, drawing once again upon the idea of the Québécois as the *nègres blancs d’Amérique*. “African-Americans have a *joual* too. They called it ‘jive-talk,’ ‘pig-latin,’ ‘dog-latin’ or ‘gumbo.’ [The use of such languages] became a common reflex in order to put off the White man. Our use of *joual* is nothing but a repetition of a mechanism that has functioned amongst Blacks for a long time. Blacks practice obscurantism of their language to protect themselves, to defend themselves, to separate themselves from Whites.”⁷⁹

Joual developed amid the Francophone workers whose labour was responsible for the success of the city’s industry. It was these same workers, those who toiled under an inherently racist and classist socio-economic system of Anglophone dominance, who appeared in Michele Lalonde’s poem “Speak White” (1968), a classic work of Québécois poetry that gives an angry and eloquent voice to the relationship between language and class in Montréal. The poem speaks about not being deaf to the genius of language, of a language of industry and enterprise

⁷⁸ Gérard Godin, “Le joual politique,” *Parti pris*, Vol. 2 no. 7 (March 1965): 57. [My translation, S.D.J.]

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*: 59.

that commands workers to ‘speak white,’ the “soft language of Shakespeare with the accent of Longfellow” but also the “pure and atrociously white” French spoken in Vietnam or the Congo. “Speak white, it’s a universal language, we were born to understand it, with its tear gas words and its billy-club words. Speak white, tell us again about Freedom and Democracy, we know that freedom is a black word, like misery is black, and like the blood and dust of the streets of Algeria or Little Rock.”⁸⁰

By the time Lalonde’s poem unmasked the dynamics behind the command to speak white, the debate about *joual* had, like so many other issues at the time, become more radically politicized. In 1968 Pierre Vallières published *Les nègres blancs d’Amérique*, a work that further detailed the condition of Québécois oppression, comparing the situation facing the province’s workers to the struggles for Civil Rights in America and decolonization movements across the globe.⁸¹ That same year Gérald Godin defended *joual* as a form of “literary terrorism,” while Jan Dépocas argued for a “not-so-quiet revolutionary politics of language.”⁸² Early in 1968 a delegation of Québec radicals visited Cuba as part of the Cultural Congress of Havana, where Richard Lacroix read a statement outlining the parallels between Quebec and the Third World: “It is hardly an exaggeration to consider Quebec an exploited colonized nation and, in this respect, in a situation similar to that of many

⁸⁰ Lalonde.

⁸¹ Pierre Vallières, *Nègres blancs d’Amérique* (Montréal: Editions Typo, 1994 [1968]).

⁸² Jan Dépocas, “Pour une politique ‘révolutionnaire pas si tranquille’ de la langue,” *Parti pris*, Vol. 3 no. 8 (March 1966): 60; Gérald Godin, “Le joual, c’est une forme de terrorisme littéraire,” *Echos-Vedette*, 14 fev. 1967.

Latin American countries and to the whole of the Third World.” The title of his statement was “Québécois as Nigger.”⁸³

The appropriation of blackness by people who were themselves both colonizer and colonized is obviously problematic, yet was a common device used in radical circles. American journalist Jerry Farber had famously published a piece called “Student as Nigger,” and Yoko Ono later argued that “woman is nigger of the world.”⁸⁴ Had Québécois nationalists worked as hard for the liberation of Canada’s indigenous peoples or people of colour in Montréal as they did for their own liberation, such terms might have been excusable. Even though Stokely Carmichael once famously told a Montréal audience “I don’t speak white either,”⁸⁵ he also distanced himself from direct comparisons between the oppression experienced by French Canadians and the oppression experienced by people of colour.⁸⁶

Arguments about the Québécois as ‘nigger’ today seem painfully ignorant. As David Austin has made clear in his history of Blacks in 1960s Montréal, the writings of Black nationalist writers such as Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon “spoke a language that French Canadians, after being battered and bruised by the Anglophone minority in Quebec, could relate to.”⁸⁷ And yet, while “[t]he appropriation of blackness might have been an effective tool for French Canadians; ...it was problematic for blacks then, and it remains so now – at a time in which

⁸³ Richard Lacroix, “Québécois as Nigger,” (Statement presented at the Cultural Congress of Havana, Jan. 4-11 1968) *Logos*, Vol. 1 no. 5: 3.

⁸⁴ Jerry Farber, *The Student As Nigger* (New York: Pocket Books, 1969); The Plastic Ono Band, “Woman is the Nigger of the World” *Some Time in New York City* (Apple Records, 1972) Sound recording.

⁸⁵ “Carmichael draws big crowds during local campus talks,” *Gazette*, 25 Feb. 1967: 2.

⁸⁶ David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex and Security in 1960s Montreal* (Toronto: Between The Lines Press, 2013): 65-66.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*: 57.

Blacks and other groups have long been reduced to the status of the ethnic, the immigrant, and other epithets that work to exclude them from Quebec's national story and diminish or negate their social standing."⁸⁸ The term "nègres blancs" could become so popular precisely because many, including Pierre Vallières, believed that Québec did not have a "race" problem. For him, "anti-Black racism, exploitation and oppression did not exist in his home territory. Blacks, in essence, did not exist. As Quebec Blacks might rightly have asked, 'If you're a *nègre*, then what am I?'"⁸⁹

Blacks in Montréal were rightfully angered by the appropriation of their language and style by "hipsters" and adherents of the New Left: "'Black' has not only come politically all-pervasive, but also ubiquitous in the jargon of the imitative white New Left and their reactionary elders," argued C.J. Munford in a feature article in *Uhuru*, a Black community newspaper published in Montréal. "It is... 'in' among the 'swinging set.' Some whites 'try to play it cool.' Others seek to 'jive' and 'groove' to the deep thunder of harmonious 'Afro-Blue laughter'." Munford continued:

White acquiescence in and appropriation – at little cost – of the more "swinging" and harmless aspects of Black cultural nationalism – for that is what the recent surge of interest in Black expressions from the worlds of music, food, sex, clothing and history represents – is nothing more than a political surrogate, a hypocritical manoeuvre to avoid the dangerous implications of real black **political** nationalism.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*: 54.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*: 69.

⁹⁰ C.J. Munford, "On the Importance of Being Black," *Uhuru*, Vol. 1 no. 3 (31 July 1969): 4. Emphasis in original. See also "On Blackness," *Uhuru*, Vol. 1 no. 5 (2 Sept. 1969): 1.

**Saint-Léonard and *Opération McGill français*:
language and education in Montréal**

The issue of language in Quebec was on a slow burner in the 1950s and early 1960s. Then, amid efforts to rationalize Montréal's many school-boards, the issue of language of education came to the fore. In the Spring of 1969 unilingualists and Québécois nationalists organized *Opération McGill français*, wherein tens of thousands of people faced down armed riot police outside the McGill University gates, having gathered there to voice their displeasure at the privileged and exclusionary institution perched on the slopes of Mount Royal. Then, in September, violence flared between Francophone unilingualists (many of whom had been actively involved in *Opération McGill français*) and Anglo-Italian families in the neighborhood of Saint-Léonard. Police were forced to read the riot act for the first time since the Rocket Richard riots in the 1950s. And all this against the background of FLQ attacks: six explosions in January, including one targeting the Police Chief's residence, four bombings in February, including a massive explosion at the Montréal Stock Exchange which injured over twenty people, a bombing and a hijacking in May, several bombs during the summer, and many more, including one at Drapeau's house, in the autumn.⁹¹

The FLQ attacks were not unrelated to issues of education. Education had become a flashpoint of language debates. As Marc Levine explains, "By the late 1960s, Montréal had become both the centre of French Qubec's new urban culture and the setting where immigrant Anglicization threatened that culture. It was now

⁹¹ Fournier: 475-494.

the centre of French-Canadian nationalism – and the locus of Anglophone power. In this setting, Francophone anxieties over cultural security and school system jobs made Montréal ripe for a major linguistic conflagration.”⁹² McGill University was a complex symbol of Anglophone domination. It represented at once the legacy of settler colonialism and its reproduction of educated Anglophone *élites*, the inadequacy of the Francophone education system, and the technocratic anti-humanism of corporate America.⁹³ Saint-Léonard, meanwhile, a largely Italian neighbourhood of Montréal, “presented in microcosm the dilemma facing French-speaking Montréal in the late 1960s,” Marc Levine argues, “public schooling seemed to be functioning as an instrument for the progressive Anglicization of the city.”⁹⁴

There was already heightened anxiety in 1966 with the release of the Parent Report, which recommended centralization and rationalization of Montréal’s many different boards of education. Anglophones were very wary of these changes, especially amendments to funding policies, as they were afraid of losing the privilege of autonomy over their own high-quality, well-funded, English-language schools. But there were also more legitimate concerns that the continued presence of English schools undermined Francophone education. This became especially apparent with regards to many immigrant communities choosing to have their children educated in Montréal’s English-language schools rather than in the French ones. Immigrants understood that the issue was not just about which language their children would be taught, it was also about reproducing English-speaking citizens –

⁹² Levine: 65.

⁹³ See Mills: 146-8.

⁹⁴ Levine: 65.

citizens who would be better placed to succeed socially and economically than would their French-speaking counterparts. For many, the Saint-Léonard debate essentially sparked a recognition that English speakers controlled the reins of Montréal's economic and political system, that Anglophones wanted schools to reproduce generations prepared to inherit the command posts of the Montréal economy, and that immigrants and other minority language groups would be more likely to be deemed successful if they educated their children in the more privileged language.⁹⁵

The Parent Report's conclusions were debated for two years after its release, but were soon overshadowed by more pressing language issues. In November 1967, as part of an effort to rationalize Montréal's school boards, a decision was made to eliminate all bilingual schooling in the district of Saint-Léonard. All students entering the school starting in September 1968 would therefore be required to attend French-only schools. When the backlash from parents turned out to be more vitriolic than expected, the school board decided to delay implementation for one year.⁹⁶ This, of course, only postponed the inevitable. In 1968 students in Saint-Léonard school occupied their school, angered by Raymond Lemieux and his group, the *Ligue pour l'intégration scolaire* (LIS), which supported the idea of replacing English schooling with unilingual French education. The mainly Anglophone and Italian-Canadian St.-Léonard Parents' Association, seeking assurances that their language rights as members of minorities would be respected, organized a trip to Ottawa to meet with Trudeau.

⁹⁵ Levine: 48-9.

⁹⁶ Levine: 68.

The issue continued to fester over the winter. Meanwhile, unilingualist activists were busy. Early in the spring, organizers brought together a remarkable coalition to demand the *françisation* of McGill. Calling for an end to McGill as an *élite* Anglophone institution, students, workers, community activists, members of the Mouvement de libération de Taxi, the Comité Vallières-Gagnon, and the Montréal central council of the CSN all mobilized under the banner *Opération McGill français*.⁹⁷ Alongside LIS founder Raymond Lemieux, radical leftist McGill professor Stanley Gray was the operation's most visible leader. *McGill français* was "not just one more sixties demonstration," Sean Mills has argued. It was a moment when solidarity crystallized between unilingualists and student activists, and the event "played a decisive role in articulating and popularizing a leftist interpretation of language rights" in Montréal.⁹⁸

While many, even on the left, distanced themselves from the radical demands of the *Opération McGill français* militants, the symbolism of an *élite* Anglophone institution out of touch with modern Québec realities hit home. Laurier LaPierre, a McGill professor and outspoken public figure, argued in an editorial for *Le Devoir*, that the university found itself confronting this crisis because it was completely out of touch with modern Québec society and had failed to grasp "la nouvelle réalité québécoise." The solution required a total transformation of the "linguistic regime", a real *françisation* of the institution rather than a token few researchers studying and translating French literature. "McGill ne peut plus se contenter d'être *au*

⁹⁷ Mills: 148.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*: 139, 146.

Québec, mais doit concrètement être *du Québec*,” LaPierre wrote.⁹⁹ Tensions mounted in the days before the protest march was scheduled. McGill students were told to watch for agitators looking to provoke a violent confrontation between Anglophones and Francophones.¹⁰⁰ In Québec’s National Assembly, Jean-Jacques Bertrand and Jean Lesage appealed for cooperation between protesters and police, denouncing any who planned to use violence.¹⁰¹

The moment of *McGill français* represented an escalation in municipal police response strategies and demonstrated an increasing concern with how municipal forces handled incidents of public dissonance. On the eve of the march *Le Devoir* editor Claude Ryan noted that, given the recent waves of FLQ bombings, the “forces of order” in the city had been manifesting “une nervosité compréhensible,” but also “une nervosité excessive” and “dangereuse.” The terrorism “de la matraque et de la répression” was no more acceptable than the terrorism of bombs, he warned.¹⁰² Days before the march, all the utility holes on the streets around McGill were welded shut. The Army was put on alert. The evening of the march, over 2,700 security officers were deployed, hundreds at the ready on McGill’s campus, some at QPP HQ, many in full riot gear waiting on the street.¹⁰³ Barricades were erected and

⁹⁹ Laurier LaPierre, “McGill et la société québécoise: être du Québec et non plus seulement au Québec,” *Le Devoir*, 24 March 1969: 4. [Emphasis added].

¹⁰⁰ “Mise en garde d’étudiants de McGill contre les agitateurs,” *Le Devoir*, 25 March 1969: 3.

¹⁰¹ “Bertrand et Lesage lancent un appel aux initiateurs de la marche sur McGill,” *Le Devoir*, 27 March 1969: 1.

¹⁰² “La nervosité dangereuse des ‘forces de l’ordre,’” *Le Devoir*, 25 March 1969: 4.

¹⁰³ Mills: 139.

loudspeakers were installed to facilitate crowd control.¹⁰⁴ Fire trucks, transport buses and ambulances waited on nearby streets.¹⁰⁵

The evening of 28 March 1969, 10,000 to 15,000 “shouting, whistle-blowing, chanting demonstrators stage[d] a massive and noisy” march westwards through Montréal’s downtown core, towards McGill, intent on staging a symbolic occupation of the campus. Hundreds of protesters tweeted dime-store whistles while others played musical instruments or chanted “McGill français!” “McGill aux Québécois!” “McGill aux travailleurs!” and “Vallières-Gagnon innocents!” overwhelming the public space with a disorderly racket of aural opposition. They directed their dissonant voices squarely at one of Montréal’s most prominent symbols of empire.¹⁰⁶ Outside McGill, a small counter-protest of conservative youth yelled insults and met the crowd’s noise with renditions of “God Save the Queen” and “O Canada.” The sound of police helicopters echoed overhead, the noise bouncing off concrete office towers and adding to the cacophonous atmosphere. The sound of breaking glass punctuated the air, as windows of businesses around campus were smashed. Garbage cans were set alight. Dozens of people were injured in scuffles with the police (and with the anthem-singing counter-protesters) as organizers, speaking through megaphones, failed to make their voices heard over the din. The coming together of various movements as part of *Opération McGill français* was a powerful indicator of the depth of feeling regarding the politics of language in Montréal in the late 1960s. Yet despite the fact it constituted the largest street

¹⁰⁴ “Policiers et services de l’ordre: la marche sera bien encadrée,” *Le Devoir*, 28 March 1969: 1.

¹⁰⁵ “L’Opération McGill,” *Le Devoir*, 29 March 1969: 1.

¹⁰⁶ “Several hurt by stones, fights,” *Gazette*, 29 March 1969: 1; Bryan Palmer: 287; “L’Opération McGill”.

demonstration since the end of the Second World War, the marchers never achieved their goal of occupying the university.¹⁰⁷

Six months later, at the outset of the next school year, tensions remained high. The issue of unilingual French education had been smouldering for years and September 1969 marked the anticipated implementation date of the new rationalized Montréal school board plans. Fears of a “racial explosion”¹⁰⁸ proved well-founded when the LIS clashed with Anglophone and Italian parents at École Jérôme le Royer in Saint-Léonard. Violence flared, and the shouting, yelling, chanting, singing and sounds of crashing chairs and broken glass only subsided once Montréal police read the riot act over a megaphone.

Robert Lemieux was holding a meeting of the LIS at École Jérôme le Royer but he found it impossible to call his meeting to order over the noisy crowd and loud hecklers. “From the moment [Lemieux] stepped to the microphone, he was booed by Italian and English parents, who occupied the rear of the gym.” Francophones responded with chants of “Québec au Québécois.” “Shouts and threats were fired back and forth when suddenly a chair was tossed into the French section.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Mills: 139, 13; Levine: 77; “Several hurt...”; Bryan Palmer: 287-8; “L’Opération McGill”.

¹⁰⁸ Levine: 78.

¹⁰⁹ “Ethnic group disrupts rally,” *Gazette*, 4 Sept. 1969: 1.

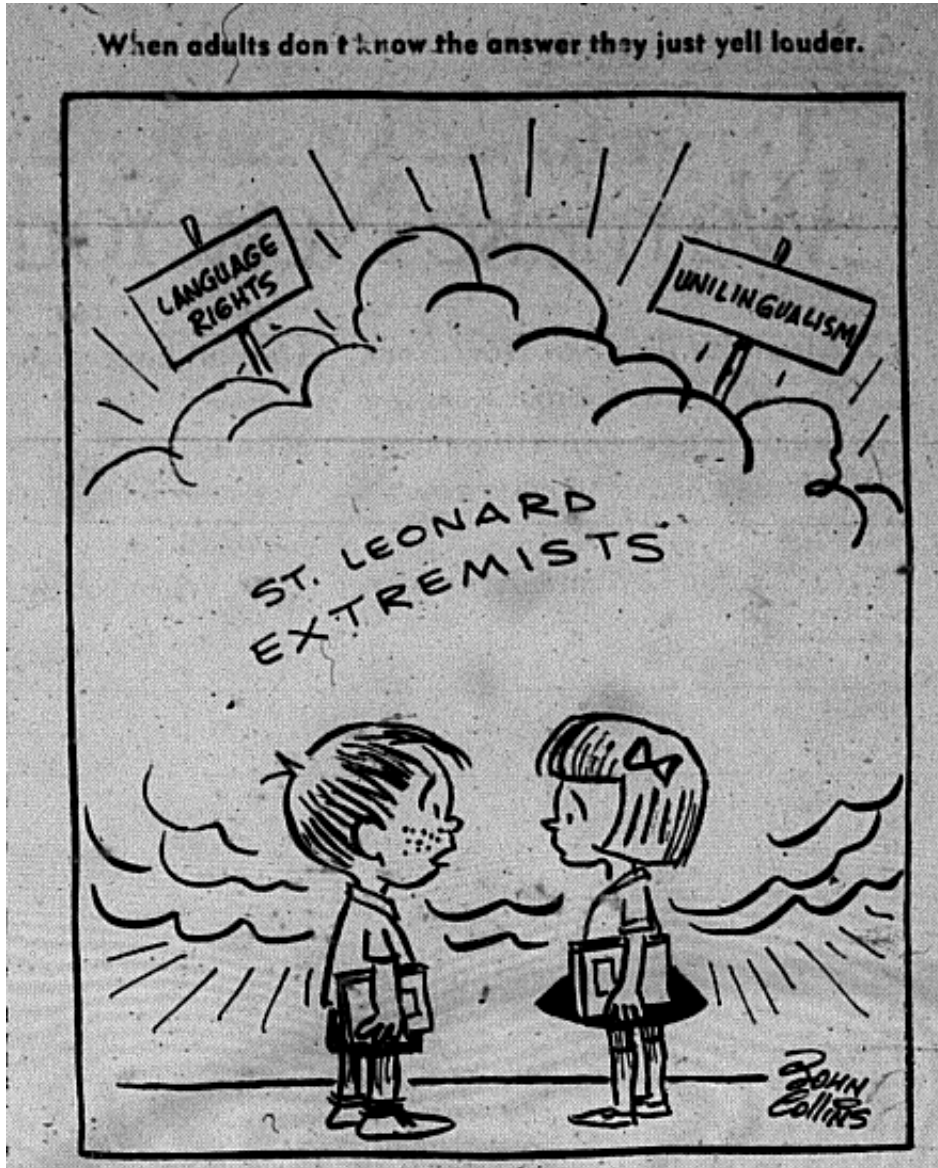


Figure 7: "When adults don't know the answer they just yell louder." *The Gazette* (Sept. 10 1969 pg. 5).

The LIS fought back with "a deliberately provocative march" in support of unilingual schools. Italian Canadians from the neighbourhood lined the parade route to heckle the marchers, and it was not very long before violence exploded once again. The sounds of chanting, shouting, and the loud *crack* of broken glass from over thirty storefronts mingled with police sirens. The angry unilingualists paraded

down Jean Talon, confronted by local parents. By the time police read the riot act over the megaphone there were over 1,000 people involved. More than 100 people were injured, and the police made 50 arrests.¹¹⁰ On 29 September, an FLQ bomb destroyed the front façade of Jean Drapeau's Rosemont residence.¹¹¹

Trudeau, asked to comment on the unrest in Montréal, feared the possibility of "mob rule" in the city, but pointed out that it was up to the province, not the federal government, to take firm steps to interject a tone of calmness into the noisy affair.¹¹² Both the CBC and the QPP responded with attempts to impose silence. When René Lévesque spoke on the Radio-Canada public-affairs television show *Aujourd'hui*, for example, he was abruptly cut off and films were aired for the remainder of the episode. While the CBC's spokesperson assured everyone that the incident was due to technical problems, many wondered aloud whether Lévesque had been "gagged" as a "deliberate attempt to silence him."¹¹³ Regardless of whether Lévesque had been deliberately targeted or not, more ominous were the actions of the Québec Provincial Police. In the wake of the incidents in Saint-Léonard, the QPP, armed with warrants signed by Sessions Judge René Drouin, visited ten Montréal radio and television stations. They seized tapes covering the period of the Saint-Léonard riots (from 3 September to 13 September 1969) from CKAC, CKVL, CBC, CFTM, CBFT, CFCF, CJAD and CKGM. CKLM executive vice president Guy Darcy-Labrosse, however, responded with a press conference, during which he explained that tapes had already been submitted to the CRTC in accordance with a federal law

¹¹⁰ Levine: 78.

¹¹¹ Fournier: 475-494.

¹¹² "Mob rule worries Trudeau," *Gazette*, 12 Sept. 1969: 1

¹¹³ "Lévesque suddenly 'gagged'" *Gazette*, 7 Sept. 1969: 1.

requiring all stations to keep recordings of their broadcasts, to be submitted to the governing communications council upon request. The tapes, M. Darcy-Labrosse explained, were already at the disposal of the courts. He denounced the “Gestapo” tactics as a dangerous precedent which threatened the freedom of the press. “I refuse to be used as an instrument in the establishment of a system of political terror in my country,” he warned.¹¹⁴

Darcy-Labrosse’s warning was ominously prescient, doubly so when compared with Claude Ryan’s concern over the “excessive nervousness” of Montréal’s “forces of order.” But there was no reprieve. On 7 November 1969, two months after the incidents in Saint-Léonard, seven bombs exploded across the city, targeting Montréal City Hall, the headquarters of Montréal municipal police, the offices of the *Montreal Star*, and several banks.¹¹⁵ The next week, Montréal municipal council voted overwhelmingly in support of a controversial bylaw that criminalized the public voicing of dissent. Allegedly acting to secure the “silent majority’s” rights to public peace and quiet, the powers at Montréal City Hall clearly felt that Québec’s so-called “Quiet Revolution” was becoming altogether too noisy. It is to Mayor Drapeau’s campaign of silence that we now turn.

¹¹⁴ “CKLM refuses police request,” *Gazette*, 18 Sept. 1969: 3; “Seizure of riot tapes said ‘abuse of power,’” *Gazette*, 19 Sept. 1969: 3.

¹¹⁵ Fournier: 475-494.

Chapter 5

Silent Majorities and the Peaceable Kingdom: Silencing Montréal's Not-So-Quiet Revolution

“Peaceable kingdoms, spared the ordeals of civil and colonial wars, have little experience of terror; that is part of their charm. It is also part of their weakness. [...]

Canada is no longer a peaceable kingdom. Troops patrol her city streets. Shock and fear assail her citizens. The knock on the door at five a.m., symbol par excellence of the totalitarian police state, echoes ominously across the land.”¹

– “A primer on terror,” *The Georgian* (Oct. 22 1970).

The previous chapters of this work have demonstrated how Montréal's industrial, musical and linguistic soundscapes were quite noisy during the latter years of the period known as the “Quiet Revolution.” Documenting loudness, whether it be complaints against noise, styles of music, or reports of people shouting in public space, is generally not too difficult to do. Loud things draw attention to themselves.

But what about those spaces between, within, and underneath the noise? What about the quiet moments? What was happening at lower volumes and lower registers? Where can we find evidence of things such as whispers, tongues held, quiet moments, people whose voices are not heard or listened to? Evidence of whispers or rumours can be harder to find than noise. But it is there.

Sometimes silences are documented in contrast to the loudness that preceded or followed it. Take, for example, the quiet whispers of racism that haunted Sir George Williams in the lead-up to the Computer Centre Riot in 1969,

¹ “A primer on terror,” *Georgian* 22 Oct. 1970: 7.

and which lingered on afterwards. Consider the eerie early morning stillness of a city waking up from a nightmarish police strike that same year. Or a city stunned into silence during the traumatic events of the October Crisis, 1970.

Sometimes silences come to light because they are imposed – and resisted. During the 1960s and 1970s Montréalers faced laws designed to silence public demonstrations of political dissidence and dissonance. Quebeckers were also victims of censorship of the media as well as martial law, not once, but *twice* between 1969 and 1970. And let us not forget that during this era there was much made of the idea of a “silent majority” – the everyday citizens who were uncomfortable with loud and disharmonious public protests of dissent. For the “silent majority,” the Quiet Revolution had already become altogether too noisy, as evidenced in appeals for peace and quiet.

Events in Montréal between 1965 and 1975 also reveal how notions about Canada as a Peaceable Kingdom and about Quebec undergoing a “Quiet Revolution” are both unsound. The previous chapters have detailed how this era trended towards noisiness rather than quietude. Yet, if one looks also at the rare moments of peace and quiet that did occur in Montréal at this time, it becomes apparent that while such moments of quietude were relatively rare, moments of stillness can be just as revealing as moments of clamour and noise. In Montréal, during the decade after 1965, the moments of silence that are most evident in the historical record tended to be imposed from above. What I mean by this is that rather than Montréal being a part of a peaceable kingdom where a “silent majority” of citizens were responsible for moments of calm, quite the opposite is true: the most historically

significant moments of quiet were imposed upon the population through a variety of tactics designed to stifle and silence voices of dissent. This chapter argues that the authorities often sought, through coercion, to silence or eliminate disharmonious voices in Montréal. Most often such coercion was orchestrated by the municipal government of Montréal under Mayor Jean Drapeau, by the Montréal police (particularly the Morality Squad and, as of 1968, the newly-formed Riot Squad) and the Québec Provincial Police (QPP),² as well as by the RCMP and the Canadian Armed Forces, acting under orders from their federal “political masters.”

Montréal Municipal Bylaw 3926 and the silencing of social dissonance

Our analysis of silence and silencing in Montréal will begin with a dramatic episode that played out towards the end of 1969. In November of that year Montréal municipal council voted for an anti-demonstration bylaw designed to silence public protest in the city’s streets. Mayor Drapeau, acting on rumours about an imminent revolution, “gave one of the most impassioned speeches of his career in office,” pounding his desk and shouting about the priority of public peace and quiet.³ Drapeau’s right-hand man, Lucien Saulnier, pleaded with council to “protect the liberty” of the “silent majority” by supporting the demonstration ban.⁴ The irony of Saulnier and Drapeau’s argument for “liberty” was not lost on the liberty-loving crowd of demonstrators who faced police outside City Hall.

² The Sureté de Québec (SQ) is the current name of the police force formerly known as the Québec Provincial Police (QPP). Throughout this chapter the force will be referred to by the name used in the 1960s and 70s.

³ Brian Stewart, “Protest ban now law,” *Gazette* 13 Nov. 1969: 1.

⁴ “La déclaration de Saulnier” *Québec-Press* 9 Nov. 1969: 2.

Brian Stewart (a young reporter covering the municipal beat in 1968, who has since become one of Canada's most respected journalists) provided a key eyewitness account of that moment at City Hall. He reported that the whole evening had an "unreal atmosphere" and was pervaded with a "sense of the weird." Policemen guarded the council floor while "outside, police sirens shrilled in the night and the sound of helicopters overhead could be heard." Council acted with the silent majority in mind, passing the bylaw with 49 votes for and only 3 votes against. Somehow, due to "procedural chaos", the three council members who voted against the bylaw were not listed as dissenters, effectively silencing their opposition.⁵

This particular event resonates with my thesis on multiple levels. While noisy public protest had become common in Montréal, there were many people who were willing to argue loudly in defence of the silent majority – meaning those citizens who found the 1960s culture of protest distasteful or downright alarming. The November 1969 bylaw vote highlights issues such as silencing of dissent, the importance of low-volume communication such as rumour and whispers, and finally the martial sounds of armed law enforcement, noises that, paradoxically, epitomized and enabled the more profound process of silencing.

We will come back to Drapeau's demonstration ban in a moment, but first we must consider what I think is the most important question to be asked about this event: If Quebec's "Quiet Revolution" was so quiet, why then the need for (and support of) bylaws to silence dissent and enforce social tranquillity? And going

⁵ Stewart, "Protest ban now law" *Gazette* 13 Nov. 1969: 1

further, what does Montréal's willingness to enforce silence, even to the point of martial violence, say about the idea of Canada as a Peaceable Kingdom?

The primary question to keep in mind throughout this chapter is this: if Québec's "Quiet Revolution" was indeed inherently quiet – quiet because of the underlying nature of the country and society in which it occurred, a Peaceable Kingdom prone to settle all its disputes reasonably and calmly – why do we find so many and so vigorous efforts to silence dissent and enforce social harmony? One is led to wonder why, in Montréal at least, there was such a preoccupation with quelling an apprehended insurrection and urging a "silent majority" to re-make the city's political landscape. Are we truly dealing with an *essentially* quiet revolution? Or are we not rather dealing with a *silenced* one? Could there be anything more 'typically Canadian' than such an ambiguity, about an event most historians would place at the very heart of the country's twentieth-century history? We have already seen how other authors have highlighted the incongruity of the label. I go beyond many of them in suggesting that the very rubric "Quiet Revolution" has become misleading and unsound.

One way I differ from these authors is in my evaluation of the October Crisis. For many historians, the terrorist actions of the FLQ in October 1970 present *the* one example of events in Québec turning noisy. In terms of public media volume, yes, the October Crisis was a major event. But I am not interested in the loudness of October. I'm much more interested in how October 1970 presents and reflects numerous examples of silence and silencing. For me, what stands out is not the October Crisis as a noisy exception to sedate life in the Peaceable Kingdom, but the

October Crisis as an exercise in mass silencing, a state response to a host of movements and issues, many of them far removed from the FLQ.

Canada as Peaceable Kingdom

While the origins of the idea of a peaceable kingdom lie in the Biblical prophecy of Isaiah, it was popularized in Canada and reached its apotheosis through the works of writers such as Northrop Frye, who used the term to capture a sense of Canadian literary tradition in 1971, and William Kilbourn, who subtitled his 1970 collection of essays on Canada: “A guide to the peaceable kingdom.”⁶ At the heart of narratives about Canada as a Peaceable Kingdom are beliefs about the relative absence or infrequency of various types of violence throughout Canadian history, notably revolution, civil war, mob violence, frontier wars and so on. Canada, the story goes, has grown up on the basis of the active rejection of other societies’ violent origin stories, such as the revolutions experienced by France, the United States, or Russia. Canadians are said to be pragmatic, law-abiding and tolerant.⁷ This reputation was further cemented with Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson’s intervention in the Suez Crisis, which saw the creation of NATO peacekeeping forces and resulted in Canada’s international reputation as a leading actor in peacekeeping roles throughout the globe.⁸

⁶ Judy Torrance, *Public Violence in Canada* (Montréal/Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1988): 100.

⁷ Torrance: 101.

⁸ For a critique of the myth of Canada’s history as a peaceful nation, see Ian McKay and Jamie Swift, *Warrior Nation: Rebranding Canada in an Age of Anxiety*, (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2012).

Many Canadians still subscribe to this pacific interpretation of Canadian history and the Canadian character. During the 1960s and '70s, nationalists who felt themselves part of a history of restraint and moderation often understood violence as something foreign to Canada, something that existed elsewhere or had been 'imported' by 'others.' When Montréal Police became concerned about "separatist" violence in 1966, for example, they were told to look out for protesters who "speak French with a European accent."⁹ In 1968, not too long after an FLQ bomb exploded at the U.S. consulate in Montréal,¹⁰ the *Gazette* published an editorial, titled "Keep violence out of Canada." It upheld the idea that Canada, because of its history of "moderation," was somehow exempt from global forces of violence:

In a world that seems to be turning, more and more, toward brutality and violence, riot and discord, Canadians have all the more reason to value their own tradition of moderation, and to cling to it. The Canadian tradition is all the more to be cherished because there is nothing in it that is invulnerable. Canada has plenty of scope for hate, and its own potential for violence. It may only be hoped that the heritage of moderation will be valued beyond any temptation to join the viciousness and hate, the law-scorning and law-breaking that have turned so much of the world into a downward path.¹¹

In February 1969, a group of Black students at Sir George Williams University occupied the university's Computer Center, frustrated that their charges of racism against a professor were not being taken seriously by the institution's administration. The issue had been festering for many months with no satisfactory action and so students, taking matters into their own hands, occupied the data centre on the tenth floor of the Hall Building in downtown Montréal. After a stand-off that lasted nearly two weeks, Montréal's riot squad raided the occupiers and

⁹ "Police check long-haired demonstrators," *Gazette* 21 July 1966: 3.

¹⁰ Fournier: 475-494.

¹¹ "Keep violence out of Canada," *Gazette* 10 June 1968: 8.

someone set fire to the expensive computer equipment. As the Hall building burned, white students stood on the sidewalks shouting “Burn, nigger, burn!” and “Let the niggers burn!”¹² Here was an ugly form of violence, one that too many Anglo-Canadians were quick to deny: racism. In the aftermath of the fire, critics and pundits were quick to point out that many of the students involved were “foreigners.” While it was true that many of those involved were of West Indian origin, labelling the Black protesters as foreign deflected attention away from the real issue: the underlying violence of racism present in Canadian and Québec society.

Rather than acknowledge that violence in Canada may be a natural product of our history as part of the French and then the British colonial empires, many Canadians saw violent aberrations in Canada’s history of moderation as something ‘foreign’ or ‘other,’ and therefore as ‘un-Canadian.’ For many people, understanding violence as something foreign to Canada tends to rely upon traditional conceptions of violence as physical attack (armed rebellions, civil wars, or assassinations). But during the 1960s and ‘70s more conservative Canadians came to view noisy protest culture as a form of violence too (especially when protest marches deteriorated into destruction of private property, such as smashing windows or throwing paint or rocks). At the same time, more progressive Canadians (especially leftist activists) had an alternate and more nuanced understanding of violence, which often took into

¹² Dennis Forsythe, ed. *Let the Niggers Burn! The Sir George Williams University Affair and its Caribbean Aftermath* (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1971):97; “Let the niggers burn! Let the students rot!” *The Statement*, 19 Feb. 1969: 5.

account deeper structural factors such as political policing, economics, and racial discrimination.

In a February 1970 look back on the 1969 Computer Centre riot, for example, professor Leo Johnson argued that the computer-smashing and other violent protests in Montréal “shouldn’t surprise anyone.” “When Canadian historians compare Canada to the United States,” he said, “they unanimously agree that one fundamental difference between the two peoples is the non-violent nature of Canadians in contrast to the crime-ridden, six-gun-toting, negro-lynching Americans.” It was this kind of reasoning that led people to decry the “foreign” influence of some of those involved, calling them “communists” and “Un-Canadian.” Yet Johnson, in response to the question, “Is Canada a ‘non-violent’ country?” replied: “Every labour union member who has faced police protecting strike breakers, every Canadian Indian who has to break through the barriers of legal discrimination, every French Canadian who has attempted to exercise his inherited cultural rights, knows that violence and repression exist in Canada.”¹³

Dorval Brunelle argued in 1978 that institutionalized violence wasn’t only *visibly* present in strikes, for example, but was a totalizing (and perhaps very sensory) experience of “physical dispossession, frustrations and humiliations, plunder, privation and suffering felt by all members of a collective deprived of the possibility to influence the development of their society.”¹⁴ Laurier LaPierre once wrote: “Violence is not the prerogative of a few terrorists. [...] [Violence] is in fact a normal condition of men and the everyday instrument of the governmental

¹³ “Violence is part of the Canadian way of life,” *Georgian* 11 Feb. 1970: 10-11.

¹⁴ Brunelle: 182.

establishment and of the seekers of the *status quo*.”¹⁵ In such conceptions, state violence becomes an everyday part of our human experience, a *habitus* of inequality that leaves its traces physically and emotionally but which often operates invisibly. And – to remember our thesis – inaudibly: there is nothing inherently violent about noisy activity, and there may be much that is deeply violent about silence, especially the coerced silence that emerges from a conscious state program of repression.

Many people were unwilling to face the uncomfortable fact that terrorist violence, such as that espoused by members of the FLQ, could find fertile soil in Canada. In 1963, for example, *Le magazine Maclean* published an editorial that stated: “Cubain le FLQ? Communiste? Anglais? Algérien? Français? Belge le FLQ? Autant de dérobades. Le FLQ vient de nous. Ce Belge est des nôtres. Ceux qui l’entourent sont des nôtres. C’est sorti de nous tous autant que Saint-Anne-de-Beaupré et les familles nombreuses. Incroyable, non?”¹⁶ They took to task those who argued that FLQ terrorism “était une importation qui n’avait pas de racines au Québec.”¹⁷

In 1972, Jacques Larue Langlois, a young socialist militant and journalist whose support for political prisoners Pierre Vallières and Charles Gagnon led to his arrest during the October Crisis, explained his view of violence in Canada:

There are different levels of violence. What I call violence is 200,000 unemployed in Canada, 200,000 people who don’t know if the family is going to eat tomorrow. This is a violent situation. [...] To tolerate such things is to tolerate a climate of violence. In Montréal, 59% of the workers don’t even earn \$5,000 per year, 59% of the workers! It’s impossible to have a decent life with a family to support. That’s violence! And you have violence on some

¹⁵ LaPierre, “Quebec: October 1970”.

¹⁶ Louis Martin, “Editorial: le FLQ et nous” *Le magazine Maclean*, juillet 1963: 2.

¹⁷ “Les terroristes” *Le magazine Maclean*, avril 1967: 1.

job sites where a guy will get killed because the boss did not want to spend enough money for security. That's violence too!

Langlois made it clear that he didn't support terrorist violence, but he understood how the system pushed some people towards such radical acts: "...I'm not planting any bombs, for the moment. I don't quite agree on the need to plant bombs today; but I fully understand those who do. I support them and I will help them when arrested because the system makes a special case of these persons, and in doing so oppresses them."¹⁸

During the 1960s and '70s, Quebec leftists like Langlois were often victims of political policing, i.e., attempts to silence their critiques of capitalism, colonial imperialism, as well as Canadian federalism. As Whitaker *et. al.* have explained in *Secret Service: Political Policing in Canada* (their excellent history of the Canadian security services):

What lies behind attempts to police political behaviour is the notion that there are limits to ideas acceptable in the public sphere. Democracies like Canada pride themselves on their openness and on the freedom of their citizens to express themselves... Yet, from the beginning to the present, certain ideas have been regarded as subversive, beyond the pale: those who espouse such ideas are deemed suspect – security risks – and those who attempt to actually advance or implement these ideas are to be isolated and silenced.¹⁹

It is vitally important to recognize that generations of Canadians have suffered from the oppression of political policing simply because they “exercised their democratic and civic right to express and promote political, social and economic ideas that might be at some variance with the prevailing orthodox wisdom.”²⁰ In Montréal

¹⁸ Jean Sicotte, “Decolonization in Quebec: as seen by Jacques Larue-Langlois,” *Georgian* 18 Jan. 1972: 4.

¹⁹ Whitaker, et al. *Secret Service*: 10.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

during the 1960s and '70s, the municipal government practiced a sustained campaign of political policing through a series of anti-demonstration bylaws aimed squarely at silencing dissent. It is to these bylaws that we now turn.

Expo 67: The First Anti-Demonstration Bylaw.

The dramatic municipal council vote for a ban on demonstrations in Montréal in 1969 came as the climax of a refrain that the Drapeau-Saulnier administration had been playing since before Expo '67. In April 1967 Montréal City Council adopted “a severe bylaw” designed to preserve peace and public order on the Expo grounds and approaches. Lucien Saulnier assured council members that the bylaw was not intended to threaten “fundamental rights of protest recognized in our democracy,” despite the fact that the resolution encompassed potentially punitive fines or even jail time as punishment for such offences as unauthorized public demonstrations and speech-making, the carrying of placards, posters, banners or “other signs or symbols of such nature,” and the soliciting of signatures for petitions, letters, or other documents. In addition, the non-official use of audio equipment “that generates noise or sounds,” such as musical instruments, amplifiers and megaphones, was also banned. “There is a time and a place for everything,” Saulnier argued, “and Expo was neither the time nor the place for demonstrations.”²¹

Of course not everyone agreed with this assessment. For politically-minded souls, especially those concerned with world events (particularly American

²¹ “City asks demonstration ban” *Gazette* 20 April 1967: 1; “Protest bylaw passed” *Gazette* 22 April 1967: 3.

involvement in Vietnam), the presence, at Expo, of various high-profile heads of state provided a golden opportunity for the expression of dissent. A prime example of this occurred at the height of Expo, during the July 1967 visit of American President Lyndon B. Johnson. Five people, including Barry Lord, a Toronto journalist and art expert who was co-editor of *artscanada* (the Canadian contemporary arts magazine) and who had assisted with the selection of works for the contemporary art exhibit at the Canadian pavilion, were charged with disturbing the peace. Lord had shouted “Murderer!” and “Bloody butcher!” at Johnson as the President approached the U.S. pavilion. Lord’s vocal stand against the American intervention in Vietnam led to charges under Article 160-(a)-(i) of the Criminal Code which made it an offence to cause “a disturbance in or near a public place... by fighting, shouting, swearing, singing or using insulting or obscene language.” In rendering the verdict in Lord’s case, the judge said: “The accused not only shouted in a way to disturb the crowd, but there is not a shadow of a doubt that the words, which he admits using, were offensive and insulting and were of a nature to cause resentment among the crowd.” He added: “There was a definite danger of someone getting hurt.” The judge admitted he was making an example of Lord under “the principle of keeping the peace.” For his part, Lord argued that the only reaction from the crowd that he could recall was that of “a young lady from New York who told me she agreed with me when I shouted at the president.”²² Lord was in essence punished for appropriating the state’s exclusive right to be noisy on a state-controlled site – a reminder, as per

²² “Insults shouted at president during expo trip bring fines,” *Gazette* 20 July 1967: 3.

Schafer, that “[w]herever Noise is granted immunity from human intervention, there will be found a seat of power.”²³

Jean Drapeau, public morality, and the police war on ‘hippies’.

Jean Drapeau was willing to go to extreme lengths to protect his vision of Montréal, one exemplified by Expo 67. Expo represented the ideal Montréal: clean, futuristic, cosmopolitan – and harmonious. An international city where everything hummed along smoothly, with no discordant notes of dissent to spoil the symphony of progress. This idealized vision of Montréal clashed with the city’s other international reputation as a “wide-open city” or “city of sin.” This reputation was born in the 1930s, during the era of Prohibition in America. As a major city close to the U.S. border, Montréal became a key city for underworld networks of bootleggers. In the decades that followed, Montréal came to be known internationally for its jazz, its nightclubs, and its free-flowing alcohol (a rare commodity during the war years), but also for its red light district, which featured hundreds of “blind pigs” and houses dedicated to gambling, alcohol, drugs, and prostitution.²⁴ Vice in Montréal, a highly lucrative business, was allowed to continue because of a complex and professional system of graft and corruption involving the municipal police force and members of City Hall. In the 1950s, when Pacifique “Pax” Plante rose to prominence for his high-

²³ Schafer: 76.

²⁴ William Weintraub, *City Unique: Montreal Days and Nights in the 1940s and '50s* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1996). The Centre d’histoire de Montréal recently capitalized on this colourful chapter in the city’s history with an exhibit focussing on gambling, prostitution, alcohol and organized crime in the 1940s and 1950s: “Scandal! Vice, Crime and Morality in Montréal, 1940-1960” *Centre d’histoire de Montréal* (Nov. 15 2013 – Oct. 2015) http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/page?_pageid=9077,118275570&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL (last accessed 11 Aug. 2014).

profile campaign against vice, corruption, and sin in Montréal, Jean Drapeau, a man of strict morals, found himself inevitably drawn into the drama.

Jean Drapeau held the office of Mayor of Montréal for almost thirty years, and will be a central figure in this chapter. “Mr. Montréal” first rose to prominence in municipal affairs due to his association with Pax Plante’s high-profile attempts to clean up police corruption in the early 1950s. Jean Drapeau, “a prude who was raised under strict religious observance,” found his city’s reputation distasteful.²⁵ He favoured Pax Plante’s morality campaign against prostitution, drugs, gambling, municipal corruption and organized crime, one that became famous for its heavy-handedness and its success. Montréal had gained a reputation as a sin city (especially during the years of Prohibition in the United States and then on through to the 1950s). When Plante brought his case to a special commission on police corruption, organized crime, and municipal collusion, a young and legally-trained Jean Drapeau was the man who diligently wrote the entirety of Plante’s 1,000-page-long deposition. He also acted as a key prosecutor on Plante’s legal team. Drapeau became such a prominent part of Plante’s morality campaign that he was dubbed “monsieur moralité.”²⁶

By the 1960s “monsieur moralité” had become mayor, and with Place des Arts, the new metro system, and a World’s Fair all under his belt, Drapeau’s new nickname became “Mr. Montréal.” He, more than anyone else, embodied *l’esprit* of

²⁵ Bénédict Gignac, *Jean Drapeau: Le maire qui rêvait sa ville* (Montréal: Éditions LaPresse, 2009): 65. [My translation, S.D.J.]

²⁶ Gignac: 67; Susan Purcell and Brian McKenna, *Jean Drapeau*, trans. Danielle Soucy (Club Quebec Loisirs, 1981): 100.

Montréal's big construction projects.²⁷ Yet the issue of public morality was never far from Drapeau's mind. In fact, from the mid-1960s through to the early 1970s, the mayor's office, aided by the municipal police and the city's new riot squad, carried out a determined campaign designed to harass and ultimately silence "separatists" (Quebec nationalists who were all believed to be terrorists with possible connections to the FLQ) and "longhairs" (people we would consider "hipsters" or "hippies," and who were generally believed to be either armed and dangerous drug pushers, sexual perverts, or political agitators). Security service agents – who did not always distinguish between potentially violent groups such as the FLQ and legitimate political parties such as the RIN – compiled thousands of dossiers on Québec nationalists.²⁸

Indeed, by mid-decade, as the FLQ stepped up their terrorist bombing campaigns, Montréal officials responded by cracking down hard on "pseudo-intellectuals" and "the long-haired, scruffy types who wear ill-fitting clothes, suede boots, speak French with a European accent and relish carrying placards."²⁹ As Expo 67 opened its gates to the world, Expo authorities issued a memo banning "beards, Beatle hair and mini-skirts" during working hours.³⁰ The demonstration ban worked alongside other such efforts to sanitize the Expo 67 experience. Those who supported the demonstration ban, such as the editors at the *Gazette*, did so out of belief that "Expo should be the supreme example of civilized cosmopolitanism" and that therefore the threat of "interruptions, clamour, blockage, or, worse..." should be

²⁷ "Montréal c'est..." *Le magazine Maclean* (décembre 1966): 19-20.

²⁸ Whitaker *et. al.*: 279.

²⁹ "Police check long-haired demonstrators," *Gazette* 21 July 1966: 3.

³⁰ "Hairy types get the word to clean up," *Gazette* 28 April 1967: 3.

pre-emptively dealt with. “Surely this great international gathering can be made an area of peace and tolerance,” argued *The Gazette*. To “have demonstrators shout, sit, march, or fight, would cripple one of the world’s rarest opportunities to declare a truce to strife and to create an atmosphere of friendship and understanding.”³¹

Montréal municipal council first adopted its demonstration ban as part of wider efforts to harmonize the Expo experience. However, after 1967, the bylaw became a key element in a more determined effort to silence the insistent voices of social, cultural, and political dissonance in Montréal. The summer of 1968, for example, witnessed a great deal of discussion about whether Montréal police were waging a deliberate campaign of terror against hippies. Jean Drapeau, a “man from another time,” did his utmost to “keep his city in ‘order’ and in accordance with the cherished morality of his crusade of the 1950s.”³² While other politicians remained flexible and understood the currents of progressivism sweeping the province, Jean Drapeau continued to adhere stubbornly to a social conservatism that was becoming rapidly outmoded. This rigid attitude, while perhaps resonating with the “silent majority,” had a profound impact upon municipal governance and police actions in Montréal.

During the summer of 1968 Drapeau became very concerned about reports that “thousands of the long-hair set planned to swarm into Montreal,” and City Hall quickly adopted a “get tough” attitude. A spokesman for the mayor compared hippies to “a cancer” which “must be cut out and discarded,” while stating that “the

³¹ “Expo and the demonstrators,” *Gazette* 24 April 1967: 6.

³² Gignac, p. 161. [My translation. S.D.J.]

City's parks and playgrounds were meant for the taxpayers and their charges, not a bunch of unruly youths."³³

It should be noted here that such attitudes towards hippies were not exclusive to Montréal. As Stuart Henderson has shown regarding Toronto, Michael Boudreau regarding Vancouver, and Marcel Martel on efforts to legalize marijuana,³⁴ hippies were viewed by various municipal authorities around the country as "something sick in our society."³⁵ They constituted love-child communities that were "festering sore[s]" in the body politic.³⁶ But while municipal authorities in other provinces of Canada used equally harsh rhetoric regarding these young people, Montréal police quickly developed a reputation for using violence and repression in a "war" against hippies, developing a rhetoric of rights and liberties that framed hippies as people out to rob other Montréalers of their well-earned right to peace and quiet.

The Montréal police and its morality squad deliberately blocked efforts within the hip community to organize and assist the youth who came to Montréal that summer. The police stopped a plan to use Carré Saint-Louis as a "feed-in" similar to the efforts put on by the famous Diggers of San Francisco. Maurice St. Pierre argued that to allow hippies to use the square would be "to the detriment of the general public." The *Gazette* argued that "The individual liberties of a person or a

³³ "City says 'no' to hippies as flower power blooms," *Gazette* 7 June 1968: 3

³⁴ See: Henderson; Michael Boudreau, "'The struggle for a different world': The 1971 Gastown riot in Vancouver" in Lara Campbell, Dominique Clement & Gregory Kealey, eds. *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012): 117-133; and Marcel Martel, *Not This Time: Canadians, Public Policy, and the Marijuana Question, 1961-1975* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

³⁵ Quotation from Stuart Henderson, *Making the Scene: Yorkville and Hip Toronto in the 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011): 207.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 248.

group extend only to the point where they begin to interfere with the equal liberties of others.” Within this ideological framework, the liberties of the “silent majority” trumped those of the “unsilent minority” crowding the city’s parks and squares. Hipsters who had hoped Montréal would provide a welcoming space to explore their alternative lifestyles were thus to be discouraged. Even the efforts of Contact, a centre designed to help itinerant youth find a safe place to sleep, employment, legal council and basic medical aid, were to be discountenanced. Left unsaid was any clear argument as to how the presence of hippies actually undermined the rights and liberties of other citizens.³⁷

During the summer of 1968 Montréal police staged a series of raids on show-bars and coffee houses favoured by “the long-hair set.” They routinely harassed hippies in the streets. As early as June young people were feeling the crunch, as stress, fear and paranoia about police brutality swept the hip community. “If nothing else,” the *Gazette* commented, “Mayor Jean Drapeau has given Montreal hippies a bad case of nerves.”³⁸ By July of that summer, Montréal Police Director Jean-Paul Gilbert had warned of “an all-out crackdown” on the “dirty hippie-types,” a campaign so ruthless that even the *Gazette*, which had previously supported such efforts, began to have second thoughts. Warning that the Police Director’s efforts could be interpreted as “an attempt to enforce conformity through police authority,” the conservative Anglophone daily argued that

The extension of the police role beyond enforcing law and order to include ‘the rights of citizens in general’ and ‘elementary decency and morality’ is bound to be controversial. The contemporary view is that both these fields

³⁷ “Hippie helpers warned by police,” *Gazette* 12 June 1968: 19.

³⁸ “Hippie helpers...”.

are outside the purview of police power in a democracy, with the human rights field recognized as the jurisdiction of courts and legislators, and private morality being a matter for the individual conscience.³⁹

Montréal police most often charged hippies with such things as obstructing pedestrian traffic, loitering, publishing or distributing obscene materials, selling newspapers without a permit, or interfering with a police officer. The city's noise bylaw was also frequently used to shut down coffee houses such as The Image, to raid houses where hippies lived or congregated, or even used as a pretext to smash someone's guitar on the sidewalk.⁴⁰ It did not appear that the hippies were considered part of the public at all, nor that the police could be guaranteed to safeguard public peace rather than disrupt it. Charges of police brutality began to surface with reports that peaceful youth were being beaten and harassed by police officers.⁴¹ One of the individuals associated with Contact warned that "Drapeau is trying to drive us out by his tactics. But all they're doing is driving us closer together. You'd think they'd realize that by looking in any history textbook." Some theorized that the police were deliberately trying to provoke violence. A group of hippies responded with a deliberately quiet tactic, holding a "chat-in" at Ville-Marie where they "talk[ed] quietly to passing strangers about recent alleged police harassment."⁴² Still, the atmosphere was tense. An anonymous leaflet distributed on the streets warned: "You're sitting on a firecracker, brother, light your matches carefully. ONE wrong move, by just ONE wrong person can start a human meat grinder like you've never seen." The *Gazette* warned that "A potential volcano is

³⁹ "Police set controversial policy on 'hippiedom,'" *Gazette* 5 July 1968: 7.

⁴⁰ "They charge deliberate campaign," *Gazette* 27 July 1968: 25.

⁴¹ "Special Report: Are the Police harassing the hippies?" *Gazette* 27 July 1968: 25.

⁴² "Hippie helpers..."

smouldering in the hippie district. Any further escalation by either side could lead to a tragic blow-up in Mayor Drapeau's – and our – 'swinging city.'"⁴³

The local, national, and global contexts for some of the fear expressed in Montréal should not be glossed over here. In 1968, one found audible intimations of a "global revolution," with riots, strikes and huge protests happening in places as diverse as Mexico City, Paris, and Chicago. In May, Paris was paralysed as students and workers joined together in a massive strike. Charles De Gaulle, hero of 1967 with his "Vive le Québec...libre!" turned villain and was forced to flee France's capital city. Students in Montréal took the lessons of Mai '68 to heart. That summer students were quietly working towards the massive protests that, over the next autumn, would shake the city, help transform the province's higher educational system, and leave an enduring legacy for student activists in the twenty-first century.⁴⁴ Nationally, 1968 was an election year, the year of Trudeaumania and of the famous riot at Montréal's Saint-Jean Baptiste parade where Trudeau (accompanied by a visibly shaken Jean Drapeau) refused to leave his seat despite the threat of being pelted with rocks and bottles from a surging, angry crowd of Québec nationalists. The FLQ stepped up their terrorist bombing campaigns during 1968, mounting its most sustained series of attacks. Montréalers experienced the loud, startling sounds of bombs exploding as the FLQ targeted a Seven-Up bottling plant, the United States Consul, several factories, several outlets of the Société d'alcools de Québec (SAQ), the Macdonald Monument on Dominion Square, the

⁴³ "They charge deliberate campaign".

⁴⁴ The 1968 student strike eventually led to the establishment of the CEGEP system as well as the Université du Québec system. The student strikes of 1968 have become a touchstone moment for a city known to this day for its ardent student activism.

office of the Minister of Labour, the headquarters of the Québec Liberal Party and the Union nationale, a Voyageur bus terminal and a CN rail station, the Montréal Chamber of Commerce, and, in a rare daytime attack, the downtown Eaton's department store. Finally, in perhaps the FLQ's particular way of ringing in the New Year, on 31 December 1968, four bombs exploded in Montréal.⁴⁵ And, of course, 1968 was also a summer of great language tensions, as we have discussed in Chapter Four.

The police repression of "separatists" and "longhairs" in Montréal was linked to all of these events. Jean Drapeau saw many young adults as potential (or actual) agitators and revolutionaries. That summer he famously went to Ottawa with a file allegedly proving that the Company Of Young Canadians was really a front for groups plotting armed rebellion and the overturning of the Québec government.⁴⁶ This type of paranoia was well established in the mayor's office, and played a key role two years later during the October Crisis.

The plain fact of the matter is that however visionary Jean Drapeau was in terms of building up Montréal's international reputation as a first-rate modern metropolis, his social and cultural attitudes belonged to a past of pious Catholicism. Indeed, it was within this same prudish and religious type of strict morality that the seeds of the "Quiet Revolution" had been sown, as people began to push back against the church and to define their own modern sensibilities. Many citizens of

⁴⁵ Fournier: 475-494.

⁴⁶ See Carly Ciufu, "Partipriests and Frèrequistes? Parti Pris, the Front de liberation du Québec, and the Catholicity of Québécois Anticlericalism, 1963-1970," MA thesis (Queen's University Dept. of History, 2012): 86; Kevin Brushett, "'Federally Financed Felquists': The Company of Young Canadians and the Prelude to the October Crisis," *Québec Studies* Vol. 55 (Spring/Summer 2013): 77-99.

Montréal resented the fact that City Hall was expending resources on the enforcement a singular, and *passé*, vision of “correct” public morality: “What is most frightening... is that this selective application of the law may become a publicly acceptable part of police procedure,” argued Montréal illustrator John F. Weldon.⁴⁷ “Perhaps [the police] would be less successful had [they] chosen some other minority group, say the Negroes... I imagine that under those circumstances, a question such as, ‘Should we let them clutter up streets and parks, let them caress and embrace each other lasciviously in public areas?’ would provoke some sort of public outcry...”.⁴⁸ “I wish to express my deep disgust at the recent behaviour of the Montreal Police Force,” wrote another Montréaler,

I used to brag to my friends in Toronto about how progressive and enlightened the City of Montreal was. Now they ask me if “1984” has really arrived in Montreal. Our police force is doing their best to bring the “Big Brother” concept into reality. [...] The police department is continually crying about the lack of respect of the average citizen, but I say that they will only get the respect that they earn and they could start by spending more time combating crime and less time stepping on other people’s freedom in order to shore up their antiquated ideas of moral and social behaviour.⁴⁹

Aside from harassing guitar-strumming youths on the streets of the city, Montréal law enforcement agents also worked to silence Montréal’s “underground” (or in today’s parlance, “alternative”) press. *Logos*, an underground newspaper which first appeared in 1967, was one high profile target of the mayor’s campaign to silence dissent. Beginning in the spring of 1968, police routinely harassed and arrested *Logos* street vendors. Paul Kirby, the paper’s editor, argued that police

⁴⁷ As a cartoonist, Weldon was best known for his NFB animation of Kate and Anna McGarrigle’s “Log Drivers’ Waltz.” John F. Weldon, “Canada Vignettes: Log Driver’s Waltz” (NFB, 1979) https://www.nfb.ca/film/log_drivers_waltz/ (Last accessed 11 Aug. 2014).

⁴⁸ “Hippie treatment not new,” *Gazette*, 12 July 1968: 8.

⁴⁹ “Resents Moralistic Interference by Police,” *Gazette*, 25 July 1968: 6.

were deliberately targeting his paper because of its focus on social and political issues, such as conformity, capitalism, and opposition to the Vietnam War. Kirby argued that the police were using a bylaw that forbade street vending without a permit, since charges on the grounds of obscenity would never have held up in court. However, Kirby had applied to City Hall for permits to sell his paper, as per the bylaws. He had repeatedly been denied. Kirby vowed to fight any charges against his paper, his employees, or his volunteers, in court.⁵⁰ Kirby's battle against the city's efforts to silence him eventually led to a high-profile court case that witnessed many debates surrounding freedom of the press.

While Assistant Police Director St. Pierre was arguing that "These people may yell and scream about their liberty, but they forget that they are not the only ones whose liberty must be protected,"⁵¹ Police Director Jean-Paul Gilbert declaimed that his "department [would] do everything in its power to see that every citizen be free to go about his business without fear or hindrance." The *Gazette* wondered if that statement "carries with it the realization that so-called 'hippies' are also citizens."⁵² For Jean Drapeau, at least, it seems that they were not. As far as Drapeau was concerned, the hip youth of Montréal were dangerous, and the "good and honest" citizens of his city (read: the silent majority) needed to be "protected" from these ne'er-do-wells: "we are just reminding the good and honest citizens that they will be protected and no section of the city will be left open for any kind of life

⁵⁰ "11 more arrested in Logos row," *Gazette*, 18 April 1968: 26; "Untitled" *Logos* Vol. 1 no. 7 (May 1968): 5; "Police want obscenity definition," *Gazette*, 10 July 1968: 3; "Logos vendor fined," *Gazette*, 2 Aug. 1968: 3.

⁵¹ "City says 'no' to hippies..."

⁵² *Ibid.*; "Police set controversial policy on 'hippiedom'".

that does not contribute prestige to the city and which can only exist at the prejudice of other citizens.” “I have seen the weapons they carry,” he continued, “the bottles of drugs... if people only knew what these people carry, they would be harder and ask us to be harder.” When asked whether he believed that hippies had equal rights to other citizens, the mayor replied:

What I call decent citizens, those who work, those who earn a living, those who are not carrying weapons, have also the right to be assured that other citizens will not carry weapons. [...] They are not welcome. Real *bona fide* tourists are welcome. I am against the impression that those who don't want to work – who want to live at other people's expense – will be welcome. This is clear: they are not welcome. [...] ...the bylaws exist for [ordinary citizens] and the ordinary rules of good living... We have the right to say: Not here.⁵³

Of course, in actuality, and despite the Mayor's obvious scaremongering, he did not have the right to say who did and who did not get to live in Montréal. While people such as immigration officers have the authority to decide who gets to live in the province of Québec, in fact no one has the authority to decide where in Québec any one person (or group of people) gets to live. Claude-Armand Sheppard, a Montréal lawyer and onetime president of the Civil Liberties Union, understood this. In a July 1968 article on the hippie situation in Montréal, Sheppard was quoted as saying: “I don't think the authorities have the right to decide who is going to come and live or work in any community as long as these people don't break the law. I think our system of law and the political system will not tolerate police or elected officials deciding who can live here.” Furthermore,

The danger is that when you start with hippies or separatists, not only do you strengthen the movement you are trying to control, but you're in effect creating a precedent that allows you to use it against any minority you don't like. Every hippie who is wrongfully arrested or whose rights are declined

⁵³ “City Hall: ‘They are not welcome’ – Mayor,” *Gazette* 27 July 1968: 25.

should sue the city and sue the police... [...] The lesson to be learned is that if you're not going to stand up, your rights are going to be whittled away. All minority groups have learned this. Freedom is something you have to fight for every day of your life.⁵⁴

The concern about civil liberties did not stop there. The same month that Sheppard's comments were published, a group of Montréal hippies involved with Contact (the social aid group) met with former Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, himself an ardent advocate for civil liberties. Diefenbaker took time to listen to their concerns about police activity, and while he declined their offer to appear as counsel in the case against Francis Charet, one of Contact's principles, he did appear to take an interest in their case.⁵⁵ A few days later, the Civil Liberties Action Committee held a public meeting to discuss the problem. Sheppard was there, and noted that Montréal was experiencing an "extraordinarily high" number of arbitrary arrests. Dr. Wilson Head, Vice President of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA), agreed: he observed that the city had witnessed "a high level of suppression of civil liberties" that summer.⁵⁶

Montréal police must have noticed the shift in tactics towards defence of civil liberties, because only a few short days after Contact's people met with Diefenbaker, Police Director Jean-Paul Gilbert had some pretty emphatic words to say about the topic: "These organizations, including the Civil Liberties Action Committee, are completely anti-authority. They are extremely hostile toward presently accepted norms of society. I'm almost convinced that these people, who would claim to be interested in the civil rights of one minority... are actually attempting to incite the

⁵⁴ "Civil Liberties' defender questions actions of police here," *Gazette*, 27 July 1968: 25.

⁵⁵ "Hippies seek Dief's help," *Gazette*, 29 July 1968: 8.

⁵⁶ "Citizens urged to protest against 'arbitrary' arrests," *Gazette*, 9 Aug. 1968: 19.

hippie towards disregard of fundamental authority.” Comparing the hippie “problem” to that of criminal motorcycle gangs, Gilbert admitted that “we have set up a special squad to deal just with them. But it is difficult. Hippies are being organized. They are pressured and pushed into doing things that put them into jeopardy.”⁵⁷

What is clear from all of this is that the Mayor, and the Police Department, believed that hippies represented an armed, organized, and serious threat to their authority. One might also argue that hippies also presented a sensory threat to bourgeois conventionality: visually their clothes were flamboyant and their style often bordered on androgyny. Olfactorily, hippies were often believed to stink of patchouli oil or to have a distinctly unwashed smell. Even in terms of tactile sensation, young people’s intimacy and immodest gestures in public signalled, for uptight bourgeois morality, an absence of regulation. Aurally, their language, smattered with ‘hip’ words, was foreign to many. Their music, too, liberally laced with psychedelic sounds meant to recreate the sense of an acid trip, could be heard as incomprehensible noise.⁵⁸ In short, hippies were multi-sensorial, all-encompassing challenges to the commonsense and propriety of a modern liberal order, whose very existence suggested that the self-reflexivity characteristic of modernity could encourage ways of thought and life opposed to the smooth functioning of the status quo.

⁵⁷ “Police answer hippies’ charges,” *Gazette*, 3 Aug. 1968: 3.

⁵⁸ See Marcel Martel, “‘They smell bad, have diseases and are lazy’: RCMP officers reporting on hippies in the late sixties,” *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 90 no. 2 (June 2009): 215-245; Henderson, *Making the scene*.

From the perspective of the twenty-first century such fears might seem almost laughable. Young people wearing beads and flowers and strumming their guitars hardly seem to constitute security threats. Yet mid-twentieth-century Montréal was abuzz with fears of a hippy menace. In October 1968 Brian Stewart reported that City Hall was rife with rumour: “Mayor Jean Drapeau’s office is in a state of siege. It is beset by a plague of dark rumours, by infectious, formless innuendo, by mysterious murmurings that fly in the night... While the public remains blissfully unaware that evil things are loosed upon the grey, ever impassive walls of City Hall, the mystery grows and with it the plague.”⁵⁹

While City Hall buzzed with rumour about impending armed revolt or a possible assassination attempt on the mayor, Drapeau was nowhere to be seen. His whereabouts were unknown and officials at the *Hotel de ville* were mum on the subject. Citizens tuning into their local talk radio stations heard wild speculations about the mayor’s reasons for keeping a very low profile. Had Drapeau suffered a heart attack? Had he been the victim of an assassination attempt? “[Fo]r its part, the mayor’s office has done scant else in the past seven days but dig in and deny,” reported Stewart “– deny rumours of the mayor’s death; deny rumours of his whereabouts; his envoys; his intentions; his appearances...”⁶⁰

There is no direct evidence regarding the mayor’s activities that October, and, perhaps tellingly, Bénéoit Gignac’s biography of Drapeau makes no mention of October 1968 at all. But perhaps it is worth remembering that several major events took place in Montréal at the same time as Drapeau’s disappearing act. Inspired by

⁵⁹ Brian Stewart, “Mayor’s office under siege,” *Gazette*, 18 Oct. 1968: 33.

⁶⁰ Stewart, “Mayor’s office under siege”.

events in Paris the previous May, students across the province went on strike for two weeks.⁶¹ Halfway through the month, the Parti Québécois held its founding convention. That same weekend, McGill University hosted Black Power heavyweights at the Congress of Black Writers. Speakers at the conference included Stokely Carmichael, Walter Rodney, C.L.R. James, James Foreman, and Michael X, alongside more local Black Power advocates such as Rosie Douglas and Nova-Scotian Rocky Jones.

David Austin's work *Fear of a Black Nation* provides vital context for the 1968 Congress of Black Writers, which he describes as an "electrifying moment," in the history of Montréal's black community, "almost cosmic."⁶² According to Austin, the Congress caused significant anxiety within the RCMP.⁶³ One can only extrapolate from there that the forces of order in Montréal, i.e. City Hall and the Montréal Municipal Police, must also have experienced a sense of disquiet about the heightened profile of Black Power that October, especially given Austin's description of the event as "a kind of revival meeting organized to spur Black Canadians into political action; it was also an exorcism of the pent-up anguish and frustration that had accumulated after centuries of slavery, colonialism, and racial discrimination."⁶⁴

Secrecy and silence reigned in the mayoralty during October 1968, and while Gignac has no explanation for the Mayor's keeping a low profile, Susan Purcell and Brian McKenna hint that Drapeau was perhaps considering stepping down once his term was up. Supporting this theory is evidence that John Diefenbaker approached

⁶¹ See Eric Bédard, *Chronique d'une insurrection appréhendée* (Québec: Septentrion, 1998): 29-31.

⁶² Austin: 104.

⁶³ *Ibid.*: 107.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*: 109.

Drapeau to suggest he make the move to Federal politics.⁶⁵ Quietude was by no means out of the ordinary for the mayor, however. Gignac has described, for example, a common scene from Drapeau's restaurant: dinner music would be played each night, but, as at a symphony hall, the audience was asked to adhere to a policy of total silence. Diners had to eat silently and not make a sound, or M. Drapeau would stop the orchestra and shoot the offender an evil eye.⁶⁶

Given the mayor's low profile and paranoia regarding rumours of rebellion and assassination, it was a slice of genius when *Logos*, the underground newspaper that had been repeatedly targeted by municipal authorities, pulled off a wonderful stunt, publishing and distributing a satiric spoof of the *Gazette* with a screaming headline: "Mayor Shot By Dope Crazy Hippie"! The prank, brainchild of Paul Kirby, was a "perfectly timed piece of guerrilla theatre." Well-coordinated and close enough to the *Gazette* (whose layout, typesetting, and editorial style Kirby had strategically studied) to be taken at face value, hundreds of Montréalers were fooled. News of an assassination attempt on the mayor hit local radio stations and quickly spread, even as far away as Ottawa.⁶⁷ The mayor's reprisal was swift. Police raided the *Logos* office, and, as Ron Verzuh described it, "a dragnet" ensued.⁶⁸

The paranoia experienced by Drapeau, Gilbert, and other municipal figures (and capitalized upon by the people at *Logos*) was exaggerated, but they weren't alone in their concern about the possibility of rebellion. In 1968 Trudeau spoke

⁶⁵ Purcell & McKenna: 180-181.

⁶⁶ Gignac: 162-163.

⁶⁷ Stewart, "Mayor's office under siege"; Ron Verzuh, *Underground Times: Canada's Flower Child Revolutionaries* (Toronto: Deneau, 1989): 70-82.

⁶⁸ Verzuh: 82.

publicly about his concerns *vis à vis* the potential for a North American rebellion. “In my scale of values,” Trudeau remarked, “I am less worried about what will happen over the Berlin Wall than about what might happen in Chicago or in our own great cities.”⁶⁹ Trudeau was aware that Canada was more threatened by internal pressures such as hunger, unemployment, and racial strife than it was by outside pressures such as intercontinental ballistic missiles. He was also aware of the intersectionality of these internal pressures. It was possible, he argued, that the Civil Rights issues being fought for in the United States could “overflow” into Canada and “link up” with organizations and underprivileged people in Canada.⁷⁰

Trudeau’s comments constituted an implicit acknowledgement that Canada was not the Peaceable Kingdom its inhabitants had been taught to revere. They tacitly admitted that Canada had generated its own share of discontented people. Lucien Saulnier shared Trudeau’s concerns. In November of 1969 he argued that Canada was a country “sans défense”: “La défense ne s’applique pas seulement aux dangers extérieurs,” he stated, “mais à tout action qui doit être posée pour empêcher la destruction d’un pays par l’intérieur.”⁷¹ Like Trudeau’s comments, this was an acknowledgement that discontent was perhaps widespread enough to warrant fear of a domestic rebellion. Moreover, anxiety over “separatists” (whether they be FLQ terrorists, outspoken Québec nationalists, or supporters of unilingualism) which fuelled attempts at the national, provincial, and municipal levels to silence political dissent and social discord, demonstrates that there was

⁶⁹ “N. American rebellions pose greater fear” *Gazette* 9 Nov. 1968: 1.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ “Montréal ne peut plus porter seul le poids de la lutte contre subversion,” *Le Devoir*, 28 Nov. 1969: 1.

also an acknowledgement that Québec's "Quiet Revolution" was getting louder. As Benoît Gignac has written, "le tonnerre gronde toujours en ville": thunder was rumbling through the city.⁷²

On 24 June 1968, a few months before the "Mayor Shot" spoof, a riot exploded at a parade celebrating Saint-Jean Baptiste day when separatists hurled rocks and bottles at Pierre Trudeau. Forty-four policemen were taken to hospital – most had been defending the podium from which Trudeau and Drapeau were watching the parade.⁷³ On 25 June Montréal municipal police placed an order for new riot equipment, including plastic shields, helmets with plastic face guards, and three-foot clubs. On 4 July the Montréal police announced that they were planning to establish a special 450-man "strike force" "to quell outbreaks of violence in the city." (*Le Devoir* reported that hippies were also of special concern to this new squad).⁷⁴ Thus Montréal became only the second city in Canada to establish a dedicated riot squad (the other city was Toronto). Once formed, Montréal's new riot squad had 111 full-time members and 86 more in an auxiliary squad.⁷⁵ In 1970, the Front d'action politique (FRAP) – a municipal coalition that ran in opposition to Drapeau – declared its wish to abolish the riot squad, considering it to be a "political armed

⁷² Gignac: 173.

⁷³ "Canada's police and threat of riots: tread softly, be ready is their policy," *Gazette*, 20 Aug. 1970: 41.

⁷⁴ "Boucliers et masques transparents équipent les policiers de Montréal," *Le Devoir*, 4 July 1968: 3.

⁷⁵ "Canada's police and threat of riots..."; "Riot squad 'firm but tolerant'" *Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph*, 6 Oct. 1970: 12. This in effect is the pedigree of the current Montréal Riot Squad, which, especially since Quebec's *Printemps d'érable*, continues to face allegations of violence and brutality. There is a march every year in Montréal, in early spring, in opposition to police brutality. In 1995, a group was founded, Collectif opposé à la brutalité policière (COBP). Their goal is to denounce police harassment, violence, intimidation, wrongful arrests and abuse of police powers. They also inform citizens about their rights, as well as support and advocate on behalf of victims of police brutality. *Collectif Opposé à la Brutalité Policière* <https://www.cobp.resist.ca/> (Last accessed 25 April 2014).

police force.”⁷⁶ Maurice Rioux, criminologist at the University of Montréal was quoted as saying “The work of police have changed in recent years – they now have a political task.” Meanwhile, the *Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph* reported that the riot squad was “firm but tolerant.”⁷⁷ This may have seemed little consolation for people, such as Jacques Guay of *Le magazine Maclean*, who had been observing the development of Montréal’s police force over the years. In 1967, Guay, responding to increasing rumours amongst Québec’s lawyers that police were becoming increasingly violent and lawless, asked whether whether Québec was becoming a police state. “Depuis quelques années,” he wrote, “il y a un malaise qui ne cesse de grandir.”⁷⁸

By the autumn of 1969 the paranoia at City Hall, fuelled by the violence in Saint-Léonard, the noisy events of *Opération McGill français*, years of sustained FLQ terrorism and whispers and rumblings about an impending attempt at armed revolution, had reached nightmare proportions. Claude Ryan warned that the “forces of order” were suffering from a dangerous and excessive “nervosité.”⁷⁹ In early October, negotiations between the municipality and the Policemen’s Brotherhood over the police pension fund broke down, and on 7 October 1969 policemen all across the city walked off the job. The walk-out was co-ordinated by none other than the city’s new elite riot squad, who moved quickly from station to station seizing control of police buildings and the police communication system. At

⁷⁶ “Quebec 70: FRAP: People’s politics,” *Georgian* 15 Oct. 1970: 7.

⁷⁷ “Riot squad ‘firm but tolerant’”.

⁷⁸ Jacques Guay, “Le Québec est-il un état policier?” *Le magazine Maclean*, février 1967: 9, 29-32; “La PP de Duplessis à Wagner,” *Le magazine Maclean*, mars 1966: 9-11, 28-32; “Le policier, brute ou héros?” *Le magazine Maclean*, avril 1965: 24-32.

⁷⁹ “La nervosité dangereuse des ‘forces de l’ordre,” *Le Devoir* 25 March 1969: 4.

Police Headquarters, the Chief of Police, Jean-Paul Gilbert, was cut out of the loop. So was City Hall, where Lucien Saulnier had been left in charge while the Mayor was away. Soon the only information available to Gilbert and Saulnier were the reports being broadcast on local radio stations. Taking advantage of the city's inability to protect itself, agitators with the Front de libération de taxi attacked the garages of the Murray Hill limousine company. The taxi drivers had been lobbying against the Anglophone company's monopoly over airport fares, and that night their protest resulted in a torched bus, a torched garage, and a pitched gun-battle, during which one man was shot dead.⁸⁰ Gangs of looters roved through Montréal's downtown, smashing windows and committing over 450 robberies.⁸¹

Amid the violence, Québec's National Assembly rammed through an Emergency Police Act legislating the police back to work. In the meantime, in an act unprecedented in peacetime, over 700 armed troops from Valcartier were sent into Montréal's streets.⁸² Over a decade later, Police Chief Gilbert described his experience of the police strike as having been very nearly a *coup d'état*.⁸³ The events of October 1969 left Mayor Drapeau quite shaken, and as Brian McKenna has described it, "...relations between the police and the city would never be the same. The city administration now watched the police like a wild animal tamer regarding a tiger that has tasted human blood." Drapeau kept the army posted at City hall for

⁸⁰ Interested readers might like to check out the CBC film clip "Montréal's night of terror," *CBC Digital Archives* at <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/politics/civil-unrest/general-27/montreals-night-of-terror.html> (last accessed 1 Aug. 2014).

⁸¹ Gignac: 168

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ "I want you to become the next PM," *Gazette* 26 Nov. 1980: 10.

days afterwards, having learned he could no longer count on the unconditional loyalty of his own police.⁸⁴

By November 1969 Montréal had witnessed a staggering 97 demonstrations, twenty-one of which occurred between October and November. It had also endured over a dozen FLQ attacks.⁸⁵ After a month that had witnessed the frightening lawlessness of a police strike, and a loud demonstration calling for the liberation of FLQ members Pierre Vallières and Charles Gagnon, Montréal Municipal Council moved to again extend its already controversial demonstration ban. In the surreal and fearful atmosphere of the November 1969 vote, with Mayor Drapeau loudly proclaiming the need to protect “peace and quiet” whilst helicopters buzzed overhead and protesters outside shouted their opposition, Montréal city council quickly and overwhelmingly voted in Bylaw 3926, a law of questionable constitutionality that suppressed dissent and silenced a myriad of disharmonious voices across the city.

Essentially a replacement for the traditional Riot Act, which could only be used once there was already a riot in progress, the new demonstration ban was designed as a pre-emptive measure that prohibited assemblies, parades, protests, and other large gatherings in public spaces, thoroughfares, parks or other areas under the city’s jurisdiction. It gave the city the power to declare, *at any time*, i.e. pre-emptively, that a gathering was illegal, forcing people to disperse and leave the

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Letter from J-P Gilbert to Lucien Saulnier, dated Nov. 21 1969. Full text of letter incl. in final report of Supreme Court of Canada, *Dupond v. City of Montréal et. al.* [1978] 2 S.C.R. 770. Accessed online at <http://www.canlii.org/en/ca/scc/doc/1978/1978canlii201/1978canlii201.html> (last accessed 12 May, 2014). See also Fournier: 475-494.

scene. As with the previous demonstration bans, this one was designed to reinforce social peace and tranquillity. It was, in effect, a measure protecting the “rights” of the silent majority, designed as it was to protect citizens and property against gatherings that could “cause tumult” or “endanger tranquility, safety, peace or public order” in the city.”⁸⁶

The text of the bylaw was written by Drapeau’s legal counsel, Michel Côté,⁸⁷ and so it is perhaps understandable, if ironic, that City Hall’s rhetoric surrounding the bylaw, as well as the language of the bylaw itself, took on arguments about rights and liberty. Bylaw 3926 read as follows: “By-law relating to exceptional measures to safeguard the free exercise of civil liberties, to regulate the use of the public domain and to prevent riots and other violations of order, peace and public safety.” Montréal council ordained that the bylaw was necessary in order to “provide for the protection of citizens in the exercise of their liberties, safeguard public peace and prevent violence against persons and property.”⁸⁸ Drapeau stated that the regulation would be applied with rigour, “pour assurer que ceux qui ont droit à la paix puissent jouir de la paix et la tranquillité.”⁸⁹ Quoting Saulnier, the *Gazette* reported that the city had been forced to act after “considering the violent abuses which these demonstrations have caused recently; considering the

⁸⁶ Supreme Court of Canada, *Dupond v. City of Montréal et. al.* [1978] 2 S.C.R. 770; “City seeks veto power,” *Gazette* 10 Nov. 1969: 1.

⁸⁷ Fournier: 319. Côté was probably a major player in the October Crisis, despite the fact that his name rarely pops up in histories of the event. According to Fournier, Côté had helped set up Montréal’s Combined Anti-Terrorist Squad, which cut its teeth harassing *Logos* and went on to play a major role in the arrests of October 1970. Côté was also responsible for a first draft of the regulation in virtue of the War Measures Act, where he defended the power to arrest and detain without warrant or justification.

⁸⁸ Supreme Court of Canada, *Dupond v. City of Montréal et. al.*

⁸⁹ Drapeau, quoted in “La réglementation sera appliqué avec rigueur – M. Drapeau,” *Le Devoir*, 10 Nov. 1969: 3.

exorbitant cost for society to uphold this false concept of liberty; and considering the dangers that this concept of liberty implies for true liberty.”⁹⁰ The editors at that paper argued that the administration at Montréal’s City Hall “now believes it is fully justified to exercise all the powers the law provides and implicitly imposes upon it, to assure full rights for all citizens to true liberty.”⁹¹

The liberty that was implied in such comments can be understood as a sort of “freedom from,” that is, freedom from the loud violence of political or social dissent, freedom from the damages inflicted upon private and public property when demonstrations turned violent, and freedom from fear of these things. As Isaiah Berlin had argued in *Four Essays on Liberty* (1969), one could draw a sharp distinction between “negative liberty” and “positive liberty.” The first denoted freedom from the deliberate intervention of other human beings within areas within which a subject could otherwise freely act. The second denoted actions designed to enhance the self-development of human beings. For Berlin, safeguarding the first was the first responsibility of liberals, whereas the second form of liberty could lead to all sorts of authoritarian dangers, in which elites forced individuals to be free (but only according to their beliefs). C.B. Macpherson, in his critique of Berlin, argued that his dichotomy was a misleading one. Berlin excluded all the coercions that might be suffered by an individual as a consequence of the intended or unintended actions of a class of owners. And by conflating all the things a state might do under the heading of “positive liberty,” Berlin had in essence stacked the deck against it, misleadingly attributing value-saturated vanguardism to measures that might

⁹⁰ “City seeks veto power.”

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

simply be designed to ensure each individual a level of cultural competence in his or her own society.⁹²

As Lucien Saulnier put it, the measure was “strictly to assure liberty and to protect the lives of our fellow citizens, their children and their property.”⁹³ This definition provides a key to the kinds of citizens whose rights were given veto power over the rights of others to free speech and assembly. The same kind of appeal to the silent majority featured in the *Gazette’s* editorial the day after the November 1969 vote, in which the right to freedom from disturbance trumped the rights of others to protest. Without the ban, the *Gazette* argued, “anarchy will gradually establish its right of freedom, while the freedom to live and work in peace will be gradually eroded. To a disturbing degree, this is what has happened here already.”⁹⁴

Claude Ryan, noted editor of *Le Devoir* and keen observer of Québec society, may have foreseen the shift in rhetoric about rights. On the eve of *Opération McGill français*, six months before Montréal city council voted on Bylaw 3926, Ryan had written an editorial warning about the use of excessive police force in a democratic society:

Un principe fondation doit guider les forces d’ordre tant et aussi longtemps qu’un état d’urgence n’a pas été décrété: ce principe veut que chaque citoyen soit d’abord et avant tout un sujet de droit, un homme possédant des droits inaliénables qui échappent à la volonté arbitraire des plus hautes autorités. Ces droits sont tellement prioritaires que l’autorité n’existe, à vrai dire, que pour les protéger, non pas pour les supprimer ou les étouffer.⁹⁵

⁹² Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969); C.B. Macpherson, *Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973): 95-119.

⁹³ “City seeks veto power”; “Montréal veut se donner pleins de pouvoirs pour limiter les manifestations,” *Le Devoir* 10 nov. 1969: 1.

⁹⁴ “Montreal’s anti-demonstration bylaw.”

⁹⁵ “La nervosité dangereuse des ‘forces de l’ordre.’”

Certain municipal figures, Ryan pointed out, in their zeal to protect public order from things they found “irritating,” had far surpassed their mandates. “Ce n’est pas ainsi qu’on protège les libertés des citoyens. Où ces libertés existent pour tous et sont les mêmes pour tous, où elles n’existent plus.”⁹⁶

Reading for the assumptions behind whose rights to freedom seemed to be so threatened by the loudness of dissent in Montréal, we can see from comments such as Drapeau’s, Saulnier’s, and the *Gazette*’s that the rights being referred to were those of fully employed heterosexual child-rearing and property-owning couples. The freedom of this class of people, defined as freedom from fear of violence or harm to family and property, was thus considered more important than the rights of fellow Montrealers struggling to find representation and justice in their city: blue-collar workers and the unemployed, Québec nationalists, unilingualists, women’s rights advocates, students, hippies, pacifists, Black Power advocates, First Nations people, and more. Freedom from fear of property damages trumped freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and, essentially, freedom to voice opinions that introduced loud notes of discord into Montréal’s harmonious symphony of progress.

The Mayor, elaborating on Saulnier’s definitions of liberty, declared in a civic radio address broadcast on CJAD, that it was “time for liberty.” It was unacceptable, the mayor stated, that parents be afraid for their children, and for businessmen to be afraid of damages. “The time has come to make sure that true liberty is ensured,”

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

he argued.⁹⁷ Lucien Saulnier, in a declaration published a few days before the council vote, argued that certain groups upholding “a false sense of liberty” were costing the city exorbitant amounts of money, and that therefore the municipality felt justified in using all their powers to ensure that “la vraie liberté” of citizens and their goods was upheld.⁹⁸ The bylaw was designed to ensure the liberty of “[t]ous les citoyens de notre ville – l’immense majorité silencieuse, tout au moins,” Saulnier stated. Drapeau claimed that “tout la société, d’une seule voix,” supported such drastic measures.⁹⁹

The motivations behind the City’s anti-demonstration bylaw were clear to many who opposed it. “The city’s ban is to protect the silent majority,” editorialized the students behind Sir George Williams’ University newspaper the *Georgian*: “Over 80 per cent of Montreal’s population is working class. The demonstrations that the city is worried about are the ones that fight for the liberation of the workers.”¹⁰⁰ Gaétan Robert, president of the Comité pour la défense des droits démocratiques du peuple (CDDP) declared that the bylaw was in direct violation of the 1960 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and that the public disturbances experienced by Montréal in no way justified the encroachment upon rights of public speech and assembly.¹⁰¹ Speaking at a press conference, Michel Chartrand (militant president of the Montréal Central Council of the CSN) called the bylaw a “macabre farce” and promised that building tradesmen would join the demonstration outside city hall as

⁹⁷ “Time for liberty – mayor,” *Gazette* 10 Nov. 1969: 1

⁹⁸ “La déclaration de Saulnier,” *Québec-Presse* 9 Nov. 1969: 2.

⁹⁹ “La déclaration de M. Saulnier sur l’interdiction des manifestations,” *Le Devoir* 10 Nov. 1969: 7.

¹⁰⁰ “King Jean to ban demonstrations,” *Georgian* 12 Nov. 1969: 6.

¹⁰¹ “Réaction” *Québec-Presse* 9 Nov. 1969: 3.

the municipal council passed their repressive bylaw. “We will never consent to tell people they can’t demonstrate,” he said defiantly.¹⁰²

The “macabre farce” was made even more surreal when Eaton’s department store acceded to a request from Montréal Police, calling off the annual Santa Claus Parade. One wonders how children in Montréal felt about this decision – City Hall cancelling Christmas too? The Police apparently believed there was a threat of “infiltration of the parade by demonstrators bent on violence.”¹⁰³ The Drapeau-Saulnier administration’s move was condemned as “undemocratic” by the Vietnam Moratorium Committee, whose plans for a candle-light march were among the first to be declared illegal. “This clearly indicates the bias of the city administration, but will only encourage us to demonstrate our opposition to the U.S. war against the Vietnamese people ever more strongly. To this we now must add our opposition to the undemocratic regime in the City of Montréal.”¹⁰⁴

Strident Feminists: Voice of Women and the Front de libération des femmes.

Opposition to the Drapeau-Saulnier administration’s policy was not unanimous, but it was widespread. The administration’s attempts at silencing dissent were met with challenges from disparate groups affected by the measure but the first, and one of the most vocal, were a group of women from the Front commun des Québécoises.

¹⁰² “Quebec justice ‘macabre farce” *Gazette* 12 Nov. 1969: 1.

¹⁰³ “No parade: Eaton’s accedes to police,” *Gazette* 15 Nov. 1969: 1.

¹⁰⁴ “Ban halts Vietnam parade,” *Gazette* 14 Nov. 1969: 1.

Emerging from a period that some historians have qualified as one of “quiet feminism,”¹⁰⁵ women in Canada and Quebec began raising their voices with increasing confidence throughout the 1960s, voicing opposition to patriarchy, sexism, gender inequality and homophobia. Perhaps the best known women’s group from the 1960s was Voice of Women / Voix des femmes, which staged many high-profile campaigns that expressed opposition to the war in Vietnam and support of Vietnamese women, wage equality, and liberalized abortion laws (to name but a few of the VOW/VDF’s causes).¹⁰⁶ By the late 1960s, however, newer groups of women began to articulate a more radical type of feminism (although, as we will see below, for many people, men especially, the VOWs causes and tactics already seemed pretty radical).

Sean Mills, in his excellent analysis of post-colonial thought and political activism during Montréal’s 1960s, has described how women’s groups from the city’s two anglophone universities joined with Francophone women from unions, leftist political organizations and community groups, creating the Front commun des Québécoises, “a loose organization that had no leader, spokesperson or official ties to any feminist organization.”¹⁰⁷ The Front commun des Québécoises (which soon became the Front de libération des femmes, or FLF), had a direct rebuttal to

¹⁰⁵ Micheline Dumont, Michèle Jean, Marie Lavigne and Jennifer Stoddard, eds. *Quebec Women: A History*, trans. Roger Gannon and Rosalind Gill (Toronto: The Women’s Press, 1987): 324-325.

¹⁰⁶ See: Christine Ball, “The history of the Voice of Women / la voix des femmes: the early years,” PhD dissertation (University of Toronto, 1994); Frances Early, “‘A grandly subversive time’: the Halifax branch of the Voice of Women in the 1960s,” in Judith Fingard and Janet Vey Guildford, eds. *Mothers of the Municipality: Women, Work and Social Policy in Post-1945 Halifax* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005): 253-80; and Frances Early, “Re-imagining War: The Voice of Women, the Canadian Aid for Vietnam Civilians, and the Knitting Project for Vietnamese Children,” *Peace & Change* Vol. 34 no. 2 (2006): 148-163.

¹⁰⁷ Mills: 119-120.

Mayor Drapeau's claims to be defending the silent majority. FLF member Pierrette Bérubé, in a press conference held shortly after municipal council outlawed protest, stated that the women "exprimons pour une fois le point de vue de la plus grande majorité silencieuse qui puisse exister au monde, celle des femmes."¹⁰⁸ Other women, such as Sylvia Gelber, Director of the Women's Bureau at the Federal Department of Labour and author of *The New Role of Women* (1969), echoed this statement, arguing that women should cease to provide "silent services" in society. She demanded that domestic housework be recognized as economically valuable and added into calculations of the Gross National Product.¹⁰⁹

For many of the people who identified with the concept of the silent majority, old adages such as "silence is golden" and "a still tongue makes a happy life" applied especially to women. When conservative newspapers such as the *Montréal Gazette* reported on women's issues, there was a tendency towards shaming women's attempts to speak up, by characterizing women activists as "hysterical," shrill or shrieking.¹¹⁰ The sonic stereotype of "shrill feminists" was gradually consolidated. This heavily-weighted characterization undermined the legitimacy of women's protests, reinforced the idea of feminists as strident and unattractive, and suggested that women would be better off if they kept their voices soft and sweet.

¹⁰⁸ "Le Front commun des Québécoises descendra dans la rue, ce soir," *Le Devoir* 28 Nov. 1969: 11. See also Mills: 120, who cites Véronique O'Leary & Louise Toupin, *Québécoises deboutte! Une anthologie de textes du Front de liberation des femmes (1969-1971) Vol. 1.* (Montréal: Remue-ménage, 1982): 55.

¹⁰⁹ Sylvia M Gelber, *The New Role of Women.* (Canadian Dept. of Labour: Women's Bureau, 1969); "No quiet revolution" *Gazette* 15 Nov. 1969: 8.

¹¹⁰ Dumont *et. al.*: 353-4. It is interesting, for example, that coverage of rock concerts used similar language, which often characterized young female fans as "shrieking", "frenzied" and "hysterical". See: "Stoned at the Forum"; "The new Rock of Ages is a different sort of song".

That the most prominent Canadian feminist organization was called Voice of Women / Voix des femmes, is indicative of the imperative that female voices (and, by implication, female issues) be heard beyond the domestic sphere. While some felt that the Voice of Women was “loud enough for most,” by the late 1960s the VOW seemed somehow to have “lost the incensed quality of the early years, a quality that raised hackles and hate from coast to coast.”¹¹¹ Other groups such as the FFQ and FLF stepped up and led the feminist charge in the 1970s, making gains in a province that had been, prior to the 1960s, one of Canada’s most retrograde on women’s issues. Indeed, Judy Rebick has suggested that the Québec women’s movement of the 1970s may have been the real “not-so quiet revolution.”¹¹² By the early 1970s feminists and women’s liberationists were confidently voicing their concerns about abortion, wage parity, and sexism, but had gained a reputation with some media for being loud, noisy, and screeching. Strident feminism, as it became known, is interesting particularly because the focus of much of the backlash against women’s demands was aimed squarely at the sound of women’s voices. There are many examples of how the arguments made by feminists were undermined or ignored by claims that they were simply being “noisy ladies.”¹¹³

Such claims were not limited to the more radical feminists, either. When describing MP Grace MacInnis’s interjections in Canada’s House of Commons, for example, the *Gazette* characterized it thusly: “When [MacInnis] falsetto cuts through the usual baritone drone of the Commons chamber, spectators and MPs

¹¹¹ “The Voice of Women: is it as loud as before?” *Gazette* 10 Oct. 1969: 7.

¹¹² Judy Rebick, *Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution*, (Toronto: Penguin, 2005): 47-58.

¹¹³ “Noisy ladies will get more so,” *Gazette* 16 June 1970: 30.

alike come awake; the effect is that of an intruder.”¹¹⁴ Even more striking is the language used in a 1970 editorial on the women’s rights movement, which defined the feminist movement as “a loosely organized movement that compensates for [its] deficiency by stunning its opponents with sound waves in the style of Lucy Van Pelt of Peanuts.” Going even further, the editorial continued: “Screaming abuse and the like are the tactics of social misfits, the drop-outs, the malcontents. The sexes are not meant to clash. [...] The activists have forgotten the old saying: you catch more flies with honey. Perhaps what is wrong with women’s liberation is that the wrong kind of women are running it.”¹¹⁵

Such arguments “struck a harmonious chord”¹¹⁶ with many readers of the *Gazette*, and while it may seem surprising today, this attitude was not limited to those of the masculine persuasion. Many women also perceived the public voicing of women’s issues to be hard on the ears. Thérèse Casgrain, for example, a key figure in the beginnings of Second Wave feminism in Québec,¹¹⁷ once voiced her agreement with principles of women’s liberation movement while at the same time urging women to be “more feminine” in their fight for equality. As she put it: “if you are just too emotional and exhibitionist it’s no good.”¹¹⁸ Vivien Kellems, an unmarried American industrialist and hero of the tax protest movement, argued that that feminists were “giving this whole cause a black eye. [...] I don’t like this shrill, strident approach. It has alienated thousands of women.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ “No quiet revolution,” *Gazette* 15 Nov. 1969: 8.

¹¹⁵ “Militant feminism,” *Gazette* 8 Aug. 1970: 6.

¹¹⁶ “It’s la difference,” *Gazette* 17 Aug. 1970: 6.

¹¹⁷ See Mills: 122.

¹¹⁸ “On women’s rights: fight with sense – not screams,” *Gazette* 26 Aug. 1970: 14.

¹¹⁹ “Suffragette doubts methods” *Gazette* 26 Aug. 1970: 14.

The focus on the sound of women's voices served to distract attention from the actual causes being fought for by feminists, and were imbued with multiple assumptions about the role of women in society and in the public sphere. Women were expected to defer to their husbands and brothers, and to refrain from commenting on any subject that was not associated with household management or child-rearing. When women voiced their arguments in the public or political sphere, characterizing female voices as shrill or noisy was essentially a way to suggest that the voices of women's advocates were out of place, unfeminine, or even hysterical. "[M]ost serious discussions of politics and society are carried on by males, while the females are relegated to the role of the audience," observed the *Georgian*. "The occasional girl who challenges this state of affairs is considered a masculine bitch whose opinions are not to be taken seriously."¹²⁰ When the VOW held a public protest on Ste. Catherine Street in 1968, for example, passersby were quoted as saying "Why don't you go home and mind your own business," and "You need your heads examined."¹²¹

"The feminist burden is that ours is the only civil rights movement in history which has been put down, consistently, by the cruellest weapon of them all – ridicule," wrote Donna McCombs in the *Georgian* supplement *The Nook*:

The male response (and often the female response – indicative of the extent to which she has been conditioned to accept her oppression) is often laughter and disbelief. "What do they want?" "She just needs a good screw." She's frigid – a dyke – ugly – a castrating female. [...] To take action in the world, to be active, to be creative, to be adventurous, to be angry when injustice is felt, are actions defined a priori as masculine. These same characteristics, however, are important in developing self respect, human dignity and critical intelligence. Defining them as masculine instead of

¹²⁰ "Playboy typifies perversion" *Georgian* 24 Sept. 1968: 6.

¹²¹ "Burning and boycotting with the VOW," *Gazette* 7 Dec. 1968: 9.

human characteristics is to prevent women from actualizing their potential.¹²²

Given the mainstream media's attempts to undermine feminists' arguments by characterizing their voices as shrill or strident, and given the attempts by the Drapeau-Saulnier administration to criminalize the voicing of dissent in Montréal, it becomes all the more clear why the first people to openly challenge Montréal's demonstration ban were women. No longer content with being the world's largest "silent majority," and being all-too familiar with tactics of silencing, the Front commun des Québécoises led the charge against Montréal City Hall's anti-demonstration ban. On the evening of 28 November 1969, 200-odd shouting women streamed out of the Théâtre Monument-National, sat down in the middle of Saint Laurent Boulevard and raised their voices together in "a chorus of chants" of "Vive la grève illegal de police!" and "Liberté! Liberté!" Less than a half-hour later over 160 of the protesters were arrested by members of Montréal's new riot squad. The women took their arrest in "good spirits, singing songs and chanting slogans" as they were herded into police paddywagons.¹²³

As mentioned above, there were many groups openly defying Drapeau's repressive bylaw. Five hundred students from McGill took to the streets at the end of November, ostensibly with permission of the police department. On 10 December there emerged a major challenge to the bylaw, when a group of prominent citizens, including militants such as Marcel Chaput, Raymond Laliberté, and Robert Lemieux, the outspoken singer-songwriter Pauline Julien, acclaimed husband-and-wife

¹²² "The creation of sleeping beauty," *The Nook* 19 Nov. 1969: 3.

¹²³ "Activists seek revolution," *Gazette* 29 Nov. 1969: 1; "171 women arrested in first test of bylaw 3926," *Gazette* 29 Nov. 1969: 3; "Groups chained together," *Gazette* 29 Nov. 1969: 3.

theatrical team Lionel Villeneuve and Helen Loiselle, celebrated poet Pierre Vadeboncoeur, Michel Bourdon, secretary of the journalists' union at Radio-Canada, and prominent Dominican priest Vincent Harvey walked arm-in-arm from the Théâtre Monument National onto Saint Laurent while chanting "Liberté! Liberté!" The march was held to mark the 21st anniversary of the United Nation's Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man as well as protest Bylaw 3926, an infringement "on the fundamental rights of association, assembly, and speech." When police demanded the demonstrators disperse, they took their lead from the Front commun des Québécoises, and sat down in the middle of the Main, all the while continuing their loud chants for freedom.¹²⁴

Major newspapers also printed open letters contesting City Hall's actions. On 20 November 1969, for example, *Le Devoir* published a letter signed by a group of Québec intellectuals who argued that the bylaw was "un silence imposée." Arguing that freedoms were not luxuries that a government could simply revoke, the intellectuals also pointed out that the measure was a very serious threat to the liberty of expression, especially given that the bylaw risked pushing people off the streets and into secret, clandestine action instead.¹²⁵

Protests against the anti-demonstration bylaw also took the form of court challenges. Many of them pointed out that the municipal regulation violated Canadian constitutional rights enshrined in the British North America (BNA) Act. Mere days after city council voted in favour of the demonstration ban, Claire

¹²⁴ "Students' march protests anti-march bylaw," *Gazette*, 29 Nov. 1969: 3; "March against bylaw halted," *Gazette*, 11 Dec. 1969: 3.

¹²⁵ "Quand le droit risqué de devenir un luxe," *Le Devoir*, 20 Nov. 1969: 5.

Dupond began collecting signatures for a petition alleging that the bylaw violated freedoms of speech and assembly guaranteed under the BNA. Dupond argued that all legislation concerning criminal offences was restricted to Parliament, and that therefore a municipal government did not have the authority to legislate or enforce such regulations. Dupond's petition was presented to Montréal's Superior Court on 28 November 1969, and Justice Paul Trépanier spent the next few months listening to arguments from council for Dupond as well as from city councillors who supported the bylaw.¹²⁶

Another court challenge came from the 134 women of the Front de libération des femmes (FLF) (and one man, a Canadian Press photographer) who had been arrested for openly violating the anti-demonstration bylaw when they sat down in the middle of Saint Laurent and chanted for their freedom to do so. Towards the end of February 1970 Judge Pascal Lachapelle of Montréal's municipal court ruled that the anti-demonstration bylaw was valid, and that the court proceedings against the women would go ahead as planned. Lachapelle rejected arguments that the bylaw violated guarantees of freedom of speech and assembly guaranteed under Canadian law.¹²⁷

After hearing arguments from both sides during March, Social Welfare Court Judge Gaston Lacroix declared the protest ban illegal on 14 April 1970. In a twelve-page document, Lacroix concluded that in passing the bylaw the municipal

¹²⁶ "City's bylaw being fought," *Gazette* 18 Nov. 1969: 1; "Anti-march bylaw constitutionality under fire," *Gazette* 17 Dec. 1969: 5. Dupond would be involved in several challenges to the bylaw over the years, as the Montréal Superior court and the Court of Appeals in Québec both appealed rulings that had been found in her favour. This culminated in a Supreme Court of Canada ruling in 1978, in favour of the city of Montréal.

¹²⁷ "Anti-demonstration bylaw ruled valid," *Gazette* 21 Feb. 1970: 9.

government had assumed a power which fell exclusively within Parliament's powers. Bylaw 3926 had created a "new crime" despite the fact that the authority to introduce new criminal legislation fell exclusively within Federal jurisdiction. He agreed that the bylaw had violated guarantees of freedom of speech and of assembly and that, furthermore, the bylaw's use as a preventative measure involved the creation of "a crime of intention" which exceeded even the jurisdiction of Parliament.¹²⁸ Two months after Lacroix's ruling, in June 1970, Justice Trépanier, in the case presented by Claire Dupond, also held that the municipal anti-demonstration bylaw was illegal. Citing many of the same reasons outlined by Justice Lacroix, Trépanier held that the Drapeau-Saulnier administration's attempts to circumvent freedom of speech and assembly were illegal because only the Federal Government had the authority to enact criminal legislation.¹²⁹

The Silent Majority and the 1970 Provincial Election

All of the rhetoric supporting Drapeau's anti-demonstration bylaw was aimed squarely at defending the "rights" of a "silent majority" of citizens. (Of course, the very "silence" of this supposed "majority" made its very existence inferable but not demonstrable: it always carried about it the whiff of the counter-factual). This concept played a key role in politics of the late 1960s and early 1970s. It formed part of Drapeau's campaign against public protest, but also figured in the provincial election that was held only months before the October Crisis. This next section will

¹²⁸ "Protest ban declared illegal," *Gazette* 15 April 1970: 3.

¹²⁹ "City anti-demonstration ban ruled illegal," *Gazette* 20 June 1970: 3.

deal with the concept of a “silent majority” and will analyze the role this idea played in the April 1970 election.

The idea of a silent generation had been around since the 1950s. It referred to those people who put their heads down and went to work quietly rebuilding their lives and families following the Second World War. The silent generation was sometimes played opposite to the beat generation, a group much more willing to rock the boat. By the late 1960s, Richard Nixon was campaigning, with great success, with an appeal to the American silent majority – mainly characterized as “everyday people” opposed to the loud and disruptive protest politics typical of that decade. But the idea of a silent majority was not exclusive to American politics – it also played out north of the border. In Montréal, a city shaken by years of FLQ terrorism, student and anti-war protest, labour unrest, a violent police strike and language riots, the idea of a silent majority and a return to social harmony was music to many citizens’ ears.

The idea of a silent majority in Montréal (and Québec) comes out in letters to various newspaper editors, such as this one from the *Gazette*, November 1968, at the height of anti-war protests, a massive student strike, and the second municipal ban on public protest:

Surely it is time that some observation be made as to what is happening to our application of Democracy that is presently causing the general mass of the public to be influenced and intimidated by small vocal groups demonstrating on behalf of doubtful causes. Because the large mass of society is not organized and is largely apathetic, its wishes for peace and quiet are not being presented, and the small militant groups are getting publicity far beyond their merits.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ “Vocal groups – doubtful causes,” *Gazette* 4 Nov. 1968: 8.

Such sentiments were repeated in a 1969 editorial entitled “Where is the moderate majority?” and by responses that asked “Why are the moderates hiding and keeping silent?”¹³¹

In Montréal, the political appeal to a silent majority played out at both the provincial level and the municipal level. Provincially: the Liberals played to the silent majority during the 1970 election with their characterization of Robert Bourassa as a “quiet, studious” man – an antidote for the cacophonous events that had played out during the late 1960s. At the municipal level Jean Drapeau felt he had the support of a silent majority when his council enacted bylaw 3926. The rationale for such a draconian move was the protection of the “right” of citizens to peace and quiet.

The provincial election of 1970 was fraught with tension and high political drama. One student newspaper editorialized that the election was held within “an atmosphere of fear and hate.”¹³² The election was the first time that René Lévesque’s Parti Québécois fielded candidates, and the popularity of the PQ’s ideas was frightening to Anglophones and to Francophone federalists alike. This was also the election during which the Royal Trust Company, in order to frighten people into voting Liberal rather than PQ, staged what has become known as the Brinks “show.” The banking trust assembled a convoy of nine Brinks armoured trucks allegedly carrying securities from Montréal to Toronto. Images of the trucks hauling away Montréal’s wealth to the safety of Toronto vaults were highly charged warnings to a wavering citizenry. Splashed across the front pages of major daily newspapers, the

¹³¹ “The silent moderates,” *Gazette* 4 March 1969: 8.

¹³² “Onward and upward?” *Georgian* 7 Jan. 1971: 4.

images were part of a deliberate attempt to call out the silent majority to vote in order to protect Montréal's economy from the potentially disastrous economic consequences of a PQ victory. Add in Premier Jean-Jacques Bertrand's failure to take decisive action to cool down the inflammatory issue of language rights, the noisy *McGill français* protest, the ongoing battle against Drapeau's demonstration ban, and the vigorous solidarity campaigns of feminists and trade-unionists, as well as frustration over high unemployment, and the heightened atmosphere of tension becomes all the more palpable.

At first there were doubts about whether Robert Bourassa, the Liberal candidate who was strong on economics but was also fairly young and inexperienced, had what it would take to provide leadership to the troubled province. The other two contenders for the Liberal leadership were Pierre Laporte, who would be murdered by the FLQ only a few months after the election, and Claude Wagner, who positioned himself as the "law and order" candidate but whose tendency toward paranoia and hyperbole made some voters uncomfortable. Against the dramatic rumblings of discontented workers, feminists, students, and militant unilingualists, punctuated by the frequent explosions of terrorist violence, Robert Bourassa was consistently portrayed as a low-volume candidate: a quiet technocrat attractive to people frightened by and weary of the agitation all around them.¹³³ In a May 1970 feature about the new Premier, one of Montréal's Anglophone daily newspapers described Bourassa as "quiet" and "scholarly," "a new kind of leader."¹³⁴

¹³³ Charles Denis, *Robert Bourassa: La passion de la politique. Vol.1.* (Quebec: Editions Fides, 2006): 21.

¹³⁴ "Quiet, scholarly Bourassa new kind of leader," *Gazette* 5 May 1970: 32.

This same newspaper reported a few days later that the naming of the new cabinet was carried out with “quiet ceremony.”¹³⁵

The sense of Robert Bourassa as quiet and calm is repeated in the historical record. A 2003 biography of the man was titled *Robert Bourassa: un bâtisseur tranquille (Robert Bourassa: a quiet builder)*.¹³⁶ A 2006 biography described him as “flegmatique,” meaning calm and imperturbable.¹³⁷ This image was partly innate to the man himself and partly cultivated. Paul Desrochers, who was the mastermind behind the assembly of Bourassa’s team heading into the 1969 Liberal leadership race and the 1970 provincial election, reportedly had a streamer with the words “calm, serene and efficient” posted above the couch in his Montréal office.¹³⁸

Despite the cacophonous political atmosphere in Québec during the 1960s, and the excitement surrounding such noisy events as Charles De Gaulle’s declaration, the 1968 student occupations and *Opération McGill français*, there is evidence that the majority of Quebeckers were indeed uncomfortable with all the hullabaloo. For example, the results of a survey (commissioned by the Liberal Party and conducted by Social Research) released in 1969 indicated some important factors about Québec society. While citizens wanted strong, capable leadership and were concerned about the economy, people in Québec were also disquieted by the idea of revolution – for them the “Quiet Revolution” was “already noisy enough.” The predominant opinion in Québec “privileged peace and harmony.”¹³⁹ Jean Lesage

¹³⁵ “Bourassa: quiet ceremony. Cabinet naming today,” *Gazette* 12 May 1970: 2.

¹³⁶ Guy Lachapelle (ed), *Robert Bourassa: Un bâtisseur tranquille* (Quebec: Presses de l’Université de Laval, 2003).

¹³⁷ Denis: 9.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*: 53.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*: 52.

and Paul Desrochers believed that Robert Bourassa personified these qualities. On 17 October 1969, ten days after the city suffered the violence and cacophony of the police strike, Robert Bourassa announced his intention run for leadership of the party. The quiet young economist would become successor to Jean Lesage, architect of the “Quiet Revolution.”¹⁴⁰ Within months of his election, Bourassa faced the most significant challenge of his career, when a British diplomat was kidnapped and the FLQ plunged the Quebec government into crisis.

October Crisis I: Silences in the Historical Record

In histories of the October Crisis, all of the background described in this, and previous, chapters tends to be truncated, and many other details omitted entirely.¹⁴¹ Typically, students of the crisis are not informed of the tumultuous protest culture in Montréal that led to Drapeau’s demonstration ban. Focus on a truncated history of October 1970 obscures other, more fundamental, crises. Students are not given a full understanding of the issues regarding language rights and education in Québec.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*: 57.

¹⁴¹ A short bibliography of works on the October Crisis would include Eric Bédard, “The Intellectual Origins of the October Crisis.” In *Creating Postwar Canada: Community, Diversity, and Dissent, 1945-75*, Magda Fahrni and Robert Rutherford, eds. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); David A Charters, “The Amateur Revolutionaries: A Reassessment of the FLQ” *Terrorism and Political Violence* Vol. 9 no. 1 (March 1997): 133-169; Bernard Dagenais, *La crise d’octobre et les medias: le miroir à dix faces, essai* (Ville Saint-Laurent: vlb éditeur, 1990); Louis Fournier, *FLQ: The Anatomy of an Underground Movement* (Toronto: New Canada Publications, 1984); Laurier LaPierre, “Quebec: October 1970,” *The North American Review* Vol. 256 no. 3 (Fall 1971): 23-33; Manon Leroux, *Le Silences d’Octobre: Le discours des acteurs de la crise de 1970* (Québec: VLB éditeur: 2002); Michael McLoughlin, *Last Stop, Paris: The Assassination of Mario Bachand and the Death of the FLQ* (Toronto: Viking, 1998); John Saywell, *Quebec 70: A Documentary Narrative* (Toronto: U of T Press, 1971); Francis Simard, *Talking it out: The October Crisis from the Inside* (Montréal: Guernica Editions, 1987); William Tetley, *The October Crisis 1970: An Insider’s View* (Montréal: McGill/Queens University Press, 2010); Pierre Vallières, *The Assassination of Pierre Laporte: Behind the October ’70 Scenario* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1977).

They are not informed of the police strike and the decision to call in the army in October 1969. The change in provincial government from Bertrand to Bourassa, 29 April 1970, is glossed over, as is the full story of the Montréal municipal election that occurred *during* the crisis. The importance of Pierre Laporte, who was Bourassa's Labour Minister and was tasked with negotiating with the Front Commun of trade union workers, is never fully developed – but the kidnapping of the Labour Minister during a time of high unemployment was intentionally symbolic. The negotiations with striking medical specialists, which was ongoing during the negotiations with the FLQ kidnapers and which occupied the National Assembly in Québec City in the hours before Bourassa requested the War Measures Act, is almost never brought up at all. And finally, the martial build-up of Montréal Police forces, the federal government's defence planning for civil disorder, and the precedent of troops being called into the city a year previous, are almost never mentioned. These are all *crucial* elements to a full understanding of what happened in October 1970 and why.

The FLQ crisis did not happen in a vacuum. The social, cultural, and political atmosphere in Montréal was the context of the FLQ's actions as much it was the context of the responses of politicians and policemen. Different kinds of Montréalers responded in different ways to the noisy crisis into which their city had descended. Moreover, the popular impression that the Crisis itself was confined to October is mistaken. Troops remained in Montréal well into January 1971. Any reconstruction of this time of silences and sirens, manifestos and mass arrests, must respect the complex historical and sonic setting in which it unfolded.

The events of October 1970 continue to be described with analogies to silence. As Léandre Bergeron wrote, “Despite the noise of the [FLQ’s] intermittent bombings, a heavy silence permeated Québec society.”¹⁴² Manon Leroux’s analysis of public statements made by the “actors” involved in the crisis, from the government to the security services, the press and the FLQ, is fittingly titled *Les silences d’octobre*. “Les discours des acteurs d’Octobre, essentiel mais incomplet, indispensable mais parfois douteux, est truffé de silences,” she observes. “Ces silences ont donné, depuis trente ans, l’occasion aux imaginations de s’emballer, ont ouvert la porte aux plus folles élucubrations comme à des theories plus modestes.”¹⁴³ Through a quantitative analysis of those who have, since 1970, spoken publicly about the October Crisis, Leroux discovered that former FLQ members’ perspectives were well-represented, while others, such as those of the government or security services, were not. Of the 497 people arrested under the WMA, “la grande masse silencieuse des prisonniers d’Octobre”, only twelve ever made public statements. Perhaps, suggests Leroux, they didn’t believe it necessary to speak out after *Les Ordres* hit theatres, projecting the political prisoners’ experiences in stark audio-visual black and white.¹⁴⁴

Most audibly absent in the historical record is any word from the Drapeau-Saulnier administration. Neither the mayor, nor his right-hand-man Lucien Saulnier, ever reminisced openly about the events of October. Indeed, only *two* statements ever presented the perspective from City Hall, and both were made by Drapeau’s

¹⁴² Léandre Bergeron, *The History of Québec: A Patriote’s Handbook* (Toronto: New Canada Publications, 1971): 229.

¹⁴³ Leroux: 141.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*: 110.

chief legal council (and author of Bylaw 3926) Michel Côté.¹⁴⁵ This is troubling given the centrality of Montréal to the story of the crisis, especially in light of Nick Auf der Maur's contention that most of the intelligence upon which the federal cabinet had made its decision had come by way of the Montréal police force and the Mayor's legal council, i.e. Côté, as well as the fact that Bourassa was facing "extreme pressure" from the Drapeau-Saulnier administration. "Bourassa was left with the feeling that he had virtually no control over Quebec's most powerful police force," Auf der Maur wrote, "while being faced with a Trudeau-Drapeau axis that was calling all the shots."¹⁴⁶ The fact that Drapeau's version of events has gone unnoticed is striking. All eyes have been on Trudeau and Bourassa, notwithstanding the fact that Drapeau and Saulnier had been shaping events in Montréal for years. Curious researchers hoping to find answers in the mayor's archives may be frustrated by yet more silence: Jean Drapeau's archival records are sealed until 2019.

Manon Leroux identified the provincial government as another missing voice in the story of October 1970, but the publication, in 2010, of William Tetley's "insider's view" offers the perspectives of the hawks who pushed for a tough stance against the FLQ. Essentially agreeing with Leroux's position that there are too many silences in the historical record, Tetley laments that supporters of the decision to enact the WMA "have been so silent."¹⁴⁷ True to his hawkish proclivities, Tetley heaps blame on the felquistes for not being sufficiently forthcoming about October. Yet he does admit that government officials have, through their reticence,

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: 109.

¹⁴⁶ Chodos and Auf der Maur: 65.

¹⁴⁷ William Tetley, *The October Crisis 1970: An Insiders' View* (Montréal: McGill/Queen's University Press, 2010): xxv.

contributed to the controversies and conjectures that continue to swirl about the Crisis. In the end, however, he reveals little about the government's decision-making process that is not already a matter of public record.

Tetley characterizes the October crisis as “an extraordinary event that occurred in extraordinary times in Quebec, Canada, and the world,”¹⁴⁸ managing both to acknowledge the Montréal convergence with revolutionary movements and protest cultures across the globe while also depicting events at home as unique. This may be yet another way of suggesting that the kind of violence perpetrated by the FLQ is generally “foreign” to Canada, and does not fit in the history of the Peaceable Kingdom. Suggestions such as these, as well as the fact that FLQ members were influenced by revolutionary movements in Cuba, Algeria, and elsewhere, essentially work as arguments that the FLQ were “not of us,” were somehow un-Canadian, despite the clear evidence that the FLQ was an expression of frustration and disappointment with the legacies of Canada's particular experience of imperialism and colonialism. Accounts such as Tetley's work hard to minimize systemic inequalities inherent in Canadian and Québécois society, painting the FLQ as an aberration in the history of the Peaceable Kingdom rather than a predictable product of a system that visited economic and political violence upon people whose ideas and beliefs could not be harmonized into the prevailing commonsense.

One more work on the Crisis deserves mention here: Eric Bédard's *Chronique d'une insurrection appréhendée*. Bédard, like other authors who have tackled the complex events of October 1970, neglects much of the background context to the

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*: 15.

Crisis, choosing to focus solely on the student milieu in Montréal. While his perspective provides valuable information about student radicalism in the lead-up to October, including the events of *McGill français* and the Sir George Williams Computer Centre riot, his emphasis on the university setting unfortunately leaves little room for discussion of other background context to the FLQ's actions in the autumn of 1970.¹⁴⁹

October Crisis II: Context, context, context

As mentioned above, much of the context leading up to the events of October 1970 has been omitted from historical accounts. We have already examined how the media and the provincial Liberals played on the idea of Bourassa as a “quiet” technocrat in appeals to the “silent majority” who felt that Québec’s “Quiet Revolution” had become altogether too loud. This is a very important piece of the story, but it is not the only one.

In August of 1970, for example, Bourassa made a controversial decision that reflected tactics of silencing typical of the decade, and which demonstrates how regulation of sound in Québec was a key component of political and cultural order. In August 1970, just two months before the October Crisis, Bourassa enacted a province-wide ban on outdoor music festivals. After the August 1969 weekend that was the Woodstock Music and Arts Fair in Bethel, New York, large outdoor music festivals started “popping out all over.”¹⁵⁰ Like Woodstock, these events were poorly organized and often experienced problems with crowd control, ticket collection, and

¹⁴⁹ Bédard, *Chronique d'une insurrection appréhendée*.

¹⁵⁰ “Festivals are popping out all over,” *Gazette* 28 March 1970: 41.

finance. Woodstock had ended up being “free” only because the huge crowd crashed the gates before tickets could be collected. And Altamont, of course, was a security disaster, resulting in violence and even murder. Although a “pop festival” had been held without incident at the Montréal Autostade in 1968, the serious problems of order epitomized by Woodstock and Altamont were of concern to authorities in Québec. In a province where the Santa Claus Parade could be cancelled for fear of infiltration, the thought of a huge mass of youths assembled together was not one authorities entertained lightly.

In May 1970, 10,000-odd anxious music fans assembled outside the Montréal Forum in anticipation of a rock festival featuring Grand Funk Railroad, the Amboy Dukes, and Robert Charlebois. The crowd was nervous as the police formed a ring around them, then some people smashed windows in an effort to get inside.¹⁵¹ The next month it was revealed that Montréal authorities had squelched a plan for the Festival Express Train to make Montréal the first stop on the festival’s trans-Canadian tour. Planned for the evening of the St. Jean-Baptiste holiday, the show was cancelled at the request of Lucien Saulnier, who felt that the proposed event roused a “concern for public safety.”¹⁵² It is clear that Montréal’s civic administration felt that a large rock festival during “la St. Jean” was not a good idea. That month the Québec Justice Department prompted provincial police to dissuade farmers from renting out their lands to festival organizers.¹⁵³ In July, Provincial Minister of Revenue William Tetley, speaking on CJAD radio Montréal, admitted that

¹⁵¹ “10,000 in attendance,” *Gazette* 11 May 1970: 10.

¹⁵² “Pop Festival Express derailed on police advice,” *Gazette* 10 June 1970: 1.

¹⁵³ “No Quebec pop festival ban,” *Gazette* 27 June 1970: 2.

Québec was considering a festival tax, primarily to help out in the event that youthful hordes might overrun “some little municipality and ... trample down thousands of acres, destroy roads and leave garbage around.”¹⁵⁴ While the Province was not ready to ban festivals outright, it was clearly a question authorities were considering.

In August 1970, a “mini-Woodstock,” allegedly planned by some of the backers of the original Woodstock,¹⁵⁵ was held in the small Québec town of Manseau, about 175km north-west of Montréal. Organizers of the Manseau festival were ambitious, promising to bring in such superstar talent as Led Zeppelin, Joe Cocker, Jethro Tull, Dr. John, Johnny Winter, and Grand Funk Railroad alongside Montréal’s own L’Infonie and, of course, Robert Charlebois.¹⁵⁶ In the end, stoned crowds at the festival were ripped off, as none of the big-name talent, other than Dr. John, showed up. People waited hours in the rain as bands dealt with hassles backstage, and “the only sounds were recorded music backed up by the steady chug of generators and the roar of news helicopters.”¹⁵⁷ Kids had come “trying to summon [the] reluctant ghost” of Woodstock, but they were disappointed. “They journeyed to Manseau to build their own temporary world of the young,” one reporter wrote, “and they have wound up being treated more like animals... Tough looking men from Montreal’s East End, maintaining ‘security’ on the site, and riot-equipped Provincial Police on the road are their keepers.”¹⁵⁸ Fights broke out on

¹⁵⁴ “Pop festivals may be taxed,” *Gazette* 13 July 1970: 15.

¹⁵⁵ “Mini-Woodstock slated here,” *Gazette* 29 June 1970: 3.

¹⁵⁶ “The Quebec Pop Festival,” *Gazette* 27 June 1970: 39.

¹⁵⁷ “Downpour, hassle spoil first night,” *Gazette* 1 Aug. 1970: 3.

¹⁵⁸ “Youngsters seek elusive spirit,” *Gazette* 1 Aug. 1970: 3.

stage and off, fifteen people were arrested, dozens of kids freaked out on psychedelics, someone was stabbed, and there was at least one reported case of rape as well as rumours of a gang-bang.¹⁵⁹

Immediately in the wake of Manseau, Robert Bourassa called for an inquiry.¹⁶⁰ Québec Provincial Police Director Maurice St. Pierre said if it were up to him, there would be no more rock festivals in the province.¹⁶¹ A few days later the hammer fell: Bourassa declared that the province had seen its last pop festival – there would be no more music festivals for the remainder of the year.¹⁶² And so, 6 August 1970 was, in Québec, “the day the music died.”

Aside from the fraught elections of April 1970, the October Crisis also occurred during a municipal election in Montréal, with Drapeau’s Civic Party running against a new coalition of critics opposed to his policies: the Front d’action politique, or FRAP. Criticism of Drapeau’s policies focused on several issues, but amongst the most pressing were opposition to his anti-demonstration legislation, and City Hall’s neglect of Montréal’s urban poor. FRAP had coalesced around leftist community organizers and anti-poverty activists. It was dedicated to bringing services to Montréal’s economically insecure population (largely Francophone and working-class). It focused particularly on health care and affordable housing. FRAP

¹⁵⁹ “Pop festival fades away,” *Gazette* 3 Aug. 1970: 3; “Manseau: One big garbage dump,” *Gazette* 4 Aug. 1970: 31.

¹⁶⁰ “Manseau,” *Gazette* 4 Aug. 1970: 6.

¹⁶¹ “Manseau: One big garbage dump”.

¹⁶² “No more festivals premier declares,” *Gazette* 7 Aug. 1970: 1; “Festivals out,” *Gazette* 14 Aug. 1970: 1.

was, first and foremost, dedicated to voicing the concerns of the “silent poor of this city,” fighting for social justice on behalf of the less fortunate.¹⁶³

The role of economic depression in the events of October 1970 cannot be overstated. At the time of the Oct. 1970 municipal election, unemployment rates were high: while Canada’s unemployment rate was 6.9%, Montréal’s was 9% and rising.¹⁶⁴ FRAP candidates attempted to criticize Drapeau for pursuing expensive projects and draining the municipal coffers for public entertainments like Expo ‘67, Terre des Hommes, and the Expos baseball team. FRAP was also concerned that Drapeau’s (ultimately successful) bid to host the 1976 Olympic Games would only perpetuate the trend. FRAP candidates and their supporters were concerned about the lavish spending on such events, which did much to raise the international profile of the city, but little to improve the city’s dismal housing, unemployment, and health record.¹⁶⁵

Taking advantage of the situation presented by the FLQ kidnappings, Drapeau successfully manipulated the electorate by painting the picture of a city teetering on the brink of anarchy and revolution. A few days before the municipal election, Trudeau cabinet minister Jean Marchand, in an interview on Vancouver radio, equated FRAP with the FLQ.¹⁶⁶ Drapeau held a similar opinion. He too considered the FRAP to be a political arm of the FLQ. Although entirely untrue, the insinuation proved to be politically efficacious. As Whitaker *et al.* have pointed out,

¹⁶³ Anne McLean, “Urban renewal I: Jeanne-Mance” *Georgian* 11 Dec. 1968: 14; “Little Burgundy: Urban renewal II” *Georgian* 11 Dec. 1968: 15.

¹⁶⁴ “La situation de l’emploi continue de se détériorer,” *Le Devoir*, 16 Oct. 1970: 9.

¹⁶⁵ Gignac: 183.

¹⁶⁶ Saywell, *Quebec 70*: 113.

during the 1960s and '70s many politicians “did not always make clear and appropriate distinctions between terrorism and legitimate political activity.”¹⁶⁷ At the height of the hysteria in October 1970, it suited the incumbent mayor to blur those lines, painting everything remotely “anti-establishment” as dangerously anarchist. Campaigning under the motto “C’est encore l’heure du courage, c’est toujours l’heure de l’expérience,”¹⁶⁸ Drapeau’s party won a landslide victory. Taking a whopping 92% of the vote, the Civic Party won every single seat in the municipal government. Drapeau was now free to govern completely unopposed for the next four years.¹⁶⁹ For some, this may have seemed like the real *coup d’état* that occurred in October 1970, when compared with the imagined *coup* that hysterical politicians were talking about with their references to an “apprehended insurrection.”

Drapeau’s role in the crisis should not be overlooked. He ruled over Canada’s largest city (although by the time of the October Crisis, Toronto was beginning to eclipse Montréal). Drapeau had been courted by the federal Conservatives. Even more, he was rumoured to hold membership in a secret society of very influential (and very conservative) Quebecers known as the Order of Jacques Cartier.¹⁷⁰ His loud assertions of imminent armed rebellion were heard in the highest offices of the state, and he was not unimportant in determining the ultimate outcome of the October Crisis. We have already explored, in the section on the crackdown on “hippies,” how Drapeau exhibited a significant amount of paranoia during his

¹⁶⁷ Whitaker et al.: 273.

¹⁶⁸ Gignac: 184.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*: 184-5.

¹⁷⁰ Purcell & McKenna: 74-81. *Le magazine Maclean* once published an investigative report on the Order: Charles-Henri Dubé, “La vérité sur l’Ordre de Jacques-Cartier,” *Le magazine Maclean*, mai 1963: 23-26, 65. See also Denise Robillard, *L’Ordre de Jacques Cartier, 1926-1965: une société secrète pour les Canadiens-français catholiques* (Montréal: Fides, 2009).

leadership. Montréal's mayor had also travelled to Ottawa, armed with an extensive file expressly designed to substantiate his claim that the Company For Young Canadians (CYC), a federal youth initiative, was in fact a front for revolutionary anarchists.¹⁷¹ According to Nick Auf der Maur, his evidence was "laughed out of town."¹⁷² Believing himself to be a target for potential assassins, for a while the Mayor had availed himself of personal police protection. After the police strike of 1969, and an FLQ bombing of his house (which he apparently suspected of being executed by police sympathizers) he no longer trusted his own municipal police force. Instead, he had his chauffeur armed with a handgun and acquired a huge bull mastiff named Duc, "l'ombre silencieuse du maire."¹⁷³

The mayor's tales of grand conspiracy, however exaggerated, were listened too and believed by some members of the Québec legislature and the federal cabinet. The crisis had "left the country reeling" and there was an atmosphere of "hysteria" in Ottawa and Quebec City, which only grew amid "cries" about "armed uprisings," "coups" and "apprehended insurrections."¹⁷⁴ It is unclear how much influence the Mayor's conspiracy theories had on the handling of the crisis itself, although Nick Auf der Maur (long-time Montréal journalist who was at the time a member of the *Last Post* editorial collective), upon his arrest during the Crisis, ascertained from the questions being asked him during his interrogation that the security services believed that "every demonstration, bombing and strike that had

¹⁷¹ For analysis of rumours suggesting the CYC were "federally financed felquists", see Kevin Brushett, "'Federally Financed Felquists': The Company of Young Canadians and the Prelude to the October Crisis" *Québec Studies* Vol. 55 (Spring/Summer 2013): 77-99.

¹⁷² Chodos and Auf der Maur: 54.

¹⁷³ Gignac: 175; Purcell & McKenna: 231.

¹⁷⁴ "Santo Domingo of Pierre Elliott Trudeau" *Georgian* 5 Nov. 1970 1; Chodos and Auf der Maur: 49-50.

happened in Quebec in the last two years was part of the conspiracy.”¹⁷⁵ In retrospect, such beliefs appear ludicrous. The FLQ was never anything more than a bunch of poorly-organized cells, and membership at the time of the crisis was no more than a couple dozen people. While student groups and left-wing nationalists may have expressed sympathy for the FLQ’s aims, there is no evidence to suggest that these groups participated in the FLQ’s acts of terrorism.

That said, at the time of the Crisis, and before, it is clear that no one truly understood how marginal and unorganized the FLQ really was. Moreover, the FLQ actions fed into politicians’ concerns, at various levels of government, about domestic security, a concern that was a significant factor in the way politicians understood, and handled, the FLQ kidnappings. In the years leading up to October 1970, the Canadian state took significant steps to ensure Canada was prepared to deal with radical groups: there was a concerted effort to build up municipal police forces, as well as review of precedents for declaring martial law. At the federal level, there was a clear shift in defence department planning away from foreign threats and towards the possibility of domestic rebellion.

At the municipal level, we have already seen how Montréal police built up a specialized riot squad after the police strike of 1969. In June 1969, Montréal Police Chief Gilbert told the Canadian Society for Industrial Security that it was legitimate for troops to be called out to city streets in the event of social unrest.¹⁷⁶ This indeed became the case during the police strike, when the Quebec National Assembly rammed through an emergency measure that authorized the deployment of

¹⁷⁵ Chodos & Auf der Maur: 52.

¹⁷⁶ “Police must be ‘cool’” *Gazette* June 3 1969: 1.

hundreds of armed soldiers onto the streets of Montréal. In an eerie foreshadowing of what was to come twelve months later, dozens of people were interrogated without being formally charged, threatened and perhaps even beaten, while the property of individuals and leftist organizations was seized or destroyed. A special request from City Hall successfully ‘managed’ the news coverage that appeared in the major daily newspapers.¹⁷⁷ The 1969 police strike prompted a review of procedures governing the use of troops in times of “civil emergency.”¹⁷⁸ Fearful of what this kind of activity meant for the province, students at the *Georgian* asked, “Are we heading for a New Order in Quebec?”¹⁷⁹

A visible increase in martial police response was also evident during the summer of 1970. In July there was a “massive” police presence at a march of Québec nationalists, with approximately 700 police deployed in the streets of Montréal. Police also installed loudspeakers atop a municipal building, for purposes of crowd control.¹⁸⁰ In August 1970 the *Montréal Gazette* published a special feature on the riot police, evidence that law and order was a significant concern. The article declared that the policy guiding the riot squads in Montréal and other Canadian cities was “tread lightly, be ready.”¹⁸¹

Concern over civil defence was not confined to the municipal government. At the Federal level, too, politicians became increasingly concerned about the potential for armed rebellion in Canadian cities. Such concern was evident as early as the fall

¹⁷⁷ “King Jean to Ban Demonstrations.”

¹⁷⁸ “Civil disorder becomes national defence priority,” *Gazette* 23 May 1970: 7.

¹⁷⁹ “King Jean to Ban Demonstrations.”

¹⁸⁰ “Policemen bottle up separatist march try,” *Gazette* 2 July 1970: 3.

¹⁸¹ “Canada’s police and threat of riots: tread softly, be ready is their policy,” *Gazette* 21 Aug. 1970: 7.

of 1968, when Trudeau commented that he was concerned about domestic unrest in Canadian cities. Expanding on his statement, the Prime Minister said that he believed civilization in North America was more menaced by internal disorders than by any external threats. “Mr Trudeau said that if there are great riots and the beginnings of civil war in the U.S. in the next half dozen years, they might overflow to Canada and link up with under-privileged people such as the Indians and Métis,” reported one newspaper. “Canada [is] not threatened by Communist or fascist ideologies, by atomic bombs or intercontinental missiles, but by the hungry and by large parts of society who [do] not find fulfilment.”¹⁸² Such statements provide evidence that the Prime Minister, at least, was aware that the primary threat to social harmony in Canada came from underlying causes of disquiet such as unemployment, poverty, and the legacies of colonialism. On his own analysis, the major threat to “peace and quiet” came not from foreign communists but from underprivileged people rising up in anger against the system. In fact, this was a key insight, as suggested by the level of popular support for the FLQ *Manifesto* during October 1970.

This shift in federal defence department planning should not be underestimated. The authors of *Secret Service: Political Policing in Canada* point to a December 1969 Federal Cabinet Meeting of the Committee on Security and Intelligence as taking on “considerable significance in retrospect” to the events of October 1970.¹⁸³ At this cabinet meeting the committee was instructed specifically to shift national security priorities away from Cold War “obsessions” and to “direct

¹⁸² “N American rebellions pose greater fear.”

¹⁸³ Whitaker *et. al.*: 301.

them much closer to home.”¹⁸⁴ The focus of this meeting was on domestic rebellion and the threat posed by separatists – once again demonstrating a blurring of the line between threats to national security and threats to national unity. Defence Minister Léo Cadieux argued for an expansion of the military role in Quebec, thinking this could be of use to the Federal Government.¹⁸⁵ There are indications that in May of 1970 the Federal cabinet had discussed the possibility of using the War Measures Act in circumstances of domestic unrest. This same month (incidentally Bourassa’s first month as Premier), Montréal media reported on this shift in defence department planning, drawing attention to the fact that there had been “an over-all review of procedures governing the use of troops in times of civil emergency.” One veteran officer of the Defence Department commented that he had “never seen a time when more attention was paid to the role of servicemen in aid of the civil power.”¹⁸⁶ All of this evidence suggests that various security services, as well as their political masters, were wary of rumblings in their Peaceable Kingdom, and were taking steps to ensure that Québec’s revolution stayed quiet.

October Crisis III: The Silences of October

For some, 1970 had been “a singularly quiet year” compared with 1969. “The streets [of Montréal] have been “quiet, relatively,” reported the *Georgian*, a few days into the crisis.¹⁸⁷ This may have been because of enforcement of Drapeau’s demonstration ban, or because the FLQ had scaled down its bombing campaign

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*: 272.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*: 299.

¹⁸⁶ “Civil disorder becomes national defence priority”.

¹⁸⁷ “The Santo Domingo of Pierre Elliott Trudeau” *Georgian* 5 Nov. 1970: 1 (reprint from *Last Post*).

during the election, but most likely the silence arose because the terrorist group was busy planning a switch of tactics. In late February, a police patrol investigating a suspicious rented truck found a sawed-off shotgun and, in one man's pocket, a press release indicating a plot to kidnap the Israeli Trade Consul in Montréal. In June, police raided a cottage in Prévost, finding leaflets referring to the kidnapping of Harrison Burgess, United States Consul-General in Montréal. The kidnapping had been planned for the Fourth of July, the day Americans celebrate their independence. Despite police foiling these plots, things began to get louder when the FLQ detonated a bomb on 24 June (Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day) at the Department of National Defence in Ottawa, resulting in one death. The day after Dominion Day, 2 July, another bomb loudly exploded at a Petrofina refinery in Pointe-aux-Trembles, at the eastern tip of the island of Montréal.¹⁸⁸

Then, on the morning of 5 October 1970, a group of FLQ members walked into the home of James Cross, the British Trade Commissioner in Montréal, kidnapping him in broad daylight. A ransom note demanded the release of 23 people the FLQ considered to be "political prisoners," along with \$500,000 in gold, the broadcasting and publication of the *FLQ Manifesto*, public release of the list of names of police informants, an aircraft to take kidnappers to Cuba or Algeria, the rehiring of Lapalme postal truck drivers, and cessation of all police search activities. The next day, a French language Montréal radio station (CKAC) began receiving notes from the FLQ. That same day, many Francophone newspapers chose to publish the *FLQ Manifesto*, despite efforts to suppress publication of the document.

¹⁸⁸ Fournier: 475-494.

One Trudeau aide reportedly argued for hours with the editor of *Montréal Matin*, begging him not to publish, but the paper ran it anyways. It is notable that the manifesto was not published in its entirety by the Anglophone press in Canada. What and how much to tell the media became a concern for the government. As Anthony Westell, Ottawa editor of the *Toronto Star*, reported, “As the week wore on, the question as to how to quiet the Quebec media came more frequently into conversations around the government.”¹⁸⁹

This question, “how to quiet the Quebec media” became more pressing as the crisis wore on. Trudeau and his cabinet ministers believed that the crucial battle was one for public opinion. Although Trudeau may at first have been against airing of the *FLQ Manifesto* on national television, he also believed that making it public would turn opinion against the kidnapers. On 8 October, Radio-Canada announcer Gaétan Montreuil read the manifesto on national television, his “near-monotone” voice laying out the various demands and grievances being voiced by the FLQ.¹⁹⁰ If Trudeau had hoped the manifesto would turn public opinion against the terrorists, he was sorely mistaken. The plain language of the manifesto, almost *joualissant* in parts, as much as the manifesto’s contents, appealed to some Québécois at a grassroots level. Its language and their language coincided. Trudeau had gambled on public opinion in Québec, and, to a certain extent, had miscalculated. There was more sympathy for his FLQ enemies than he had reckoned.

¹⁸⁹ Anthony Westell, “The agony behind Trudeau’s decision,” *Toronto Star* 17 Oct. 1970. Quoted in Chodos and Auf der Maur: 57-60.

¹⁹⁰ Chodos and Auf der Maur: 61.

On 10 October 1970, Robert Bourassa, who had refused to cancel a trip to New York to discuss economic plans with the Americans, returned to Québec. That same day, Provincial Minister of Labour Pierre Laporte was kidnapped off his front lawn. It was at this point that events in Québec took on crisis proportions. Authorities in the province were flooded with requests for protection.¹⁹¹ On 12 October, troops were dispatched to protect individuals and sites in Ottawa. Trudeau, in an impromptu interview with CJOH reporters in Ottawa, defended himself against charges that his actions were those typical of a police state, not a liberal democracy. “Yes, well there are a lot of bleeding hearts around,” the Prime Minister said, “who just don’t like to see people with helmets and guns. All I can say is, go on and bleed, but it is more important to keep law and order in the society than to be worried about weak-kneed people.” He added: “I think the society must take every means at its disposal to defend itself against the emergence of a parallel power...”. Challenged to state just how far he would go, Trudeau famously said: “Well, just watch me.”¹⁹²

In the days that followed, while the FLQ’s representative, Robert Lemieux, negotiated with the government on behalf of his clients, the flood of communiqués, press conferences, and rumours of arms caches and bomb scares “reache[d] a pitch unsurpassed to this day.”¹⁹³ The Federal cabinet met to discuss what to do, which included a discussion of the possibility of enacting the War Measures Act. On 15

¹⁹¹ Bélanger, “Chronology of the October Crisis”.

¹⁹² This famous moment was caught on video, and the incident can be seen here: “CBC Archives: Just Watch Me” (via YouTube) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XfUq9b1XTa0> (last accessed 30 July 2014). For full text of the interview see: “Trudeau’s ‘Just watch me’ interview” *Documents on the October Crisis* (online). <http://faculty.marianopolis.edu/c.belanger/quebechistory/docs/october/watchme.htm>. (Last accessed 30 July 2014).

¹⁹³ Bélanger, “Chronology of the October Crisis”.

October Bourassa announced that he had asked the Canadian Armed Forces to send in troops to protect “the safety of people and public buildings” in Montréal,¹⁹⁴ as well as to lend a “strong hand” to the police.¹⁹⁵ This request was made under the terms of “Aid to Civil Authorities” under the National Defence Act. Within the hour, 1,000 armed soldiers from the Royal 22nd Regiment occupied key positions within the city. More troops would arrive over the next few days. By December there were many thousands of soldiers in Montréal.¹⁹⁶

That same night, over 3,000 students and supporters held a noisy rally at Paul Sauvé arena, where they voiced sympathy with the FLQ’s grievances and demands. Speeches were given by FLQ intellectuals Pierre Vallières and Charles Gagnon, union leader Michel Chartrand, and Robert Lemieux. Present were prominent Québec personalities, including René Lévesque. With fists raised in solidarity, the rally ended with chanting waves of “FLQ! FLQ! FLQ!” Plans were made for public demonstrations the next day, “just as Ottawa was preparing to make their cry illegal.”¹⁹⁷

Despite the fact that the rally had been called partly as an appeal for “coolheadedness,” with activists advised to “just go about propagating the goals of the movement, building support in a quiet way,” this “tenor” of calm escaped the press and the government.¹⁹⁸ As Claude Bélanger has noted, “This boisterous show of support for the FLQ worried the authorities and was raised frequently afterwards

¹⁹⁴ LaPierre, “Quebec: October 1970”.

¹⁹⁵ “L’armée prête main-forte à la police,” *Le Devoir*, 16 Oct. 1970: 1.

¹⁹⁶ LaPierre, “Quebec: October 1970”.

¹⁹⁷ Chodos and Auf der Maur: 66.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

to justify the invocation of the War Measures Act.” Quebec minister Jean-Luc Pépin, for example, supported the WMA on the grounds that it would deter protesters who might otherwise have taken to the streets and “deepened the disorder.”¹⁹⁹ Early in the morning of 16 October 1970, Pierre Trudeau enacted the WMA. The preamble of the Order-in-Council stated that “conclusive evidence that insurrection, real or apprehended, exists, and has existed.” The Federal cabinet further justified its decision by stating that letters from Bourassa, Drapeau, and the Montréal Police had requested such action, although there is conclusive evidence that the letters were sent to the federal government at the last minute and only *after* the government had requested them.²⁰⁰ In the House of Commons that afternoon, the only people to criticize cabinet’s decision were members of the NDP. David Lewis argued that the authorities were not attacking the real cause of the problem: the frustrations of the Québécois people.²⁰¹ Tommy Douglas stated that the government was using “a sledgehammer to crack a peanut.”²⁰²

Under the War Measures Act, the Front de Libération du Québec was declared an unlawful association and any person who was an FLQ member, or who supported the FLQ in some way, became a criminal. Proof that someone was a

¹⁹⁹ Whitaker *et. al.*: 291.

²⁰⁰ See Bédard: 107. Laurier LaPierre pointed out that the letters only arrived in Ottawa at 3 a.m. on the 16th, a mere hour before the Federal Government declared the War Measures Act to be in effect. LaPierre, “Quebec: October 1970”. Fournier says much the same thing, Fournier: 334-335. The text of these letters was printed in *Le Devoir* on 17 October and are also reproduced on Claude Bélanger’s website. See “Lettre de M. Bourassa,” and “Lettre de M. Drapeau,” *Le Devoir* 17 Oct. 1970: 6; and “Letters from the Quebec Authorities requesting the implementation of the War Measures Act (October 15-16 1970)” *Documents on the October Crisis* (online) at <http://faculty.marianopolis.edu/c.belanger/quebechistory/docs/october/letters.htm>. (Last accessed 30 July 2014).

²⁰¹ Fournier: 341.

²⁰² Tommy Douglas, quoted in Rod Bantjes, *Social Movements in a Global Context: Canadian Perspectives* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2007): 201.

member of the unlawful association, if not immediately evident, could be shown by having attended a meeting of the FLQ, speaking publicly “in advocacy” of the FLQ, or communicating statements on behalf of the FLQ. Paul Savriol of *Le Devoir* wrote that the Act applied to “écrits et publications, aux déclarations, aux communications par téléphone, par radio-diffusion ou par d’autres moyens visuels ou sonores.”²⁰³ Thus the WMA suspended freedom of speech and freedom of association – not only in Québec, but across Canada. Two days after the government suspended civil liberties, Pierre Laporte was found dead in the trunk of a car near St. Hubert airport.

The WMA gave police forces across the country a pretext to round up a wide array of political dissidents, including draft dodgers, anti-war activists, socialists of various stripes, student activists, militant trade unionists, dissident poets and writers, hippies, community organizers, militant unilingualists, members of the Parti Québécois, and more. In Montréal, the municipal and provincial police did their duty with zeal. Within the first 48 hours of the declaration of the WMA, they had arrested over 250 people. By the end of October that number surpassed 400. By 20 October, there had been 1,629 raids. In the end almost 500 people were arrested and detained, the largest mass arrest in Canadian history until the 2010 G20 summit in Toronto.²⁰⁴ By 1971 over 238 complaints related to police actions under the WMA had been lodged with Quebec’s ombudsman, relating to damage to property done by police raids, injuries suffered, and the conditions of detainment.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ Paul Savriol, “La loi des mesures de guerre et les droits civiques,” *Le Devoir*, 17 Oct. 1970: 4.

²⁰⁴ Bélanger, “Chronology of the October Crisis”; Leroux: 110. Approximately 1,100 people, mostly peaceful protesters, were arrested at the Toronto G-20 summit in 2010.

²⁰⁵ Bélanger, “Chronology of the October Crisis”.

Eric Bédard suggests that the government's decision to enact the WMA was a deliberate "psychological shock" to the body politic of Québec.²⁰⁶ The metaphor is apt. A heavy silence of fear and censorship fell upon Montréal that October, punctuated only by the sounds of police pounding on doors, sirens screaming through the streets, and helicopters hovering above the city.²⁰⁷ "Canada is no longer a peaceable kingdom," wrote students at Sir George. "Troops patrol her city streets. Shock and fear assail her citizens. The knock on the door at five a.m., symbol par excellence of the totalitarian police state, echoes ominously across the land."²⁰⁸ "In the middle of the night, citizens whose only crime was to have come to the notice of the police at some point or another, were awakened by great noises on their doorsteps and in the streets around their houses," wrote Laurier LaPierre.²⁰⁹ It was a passage that reflected the startling scene from *Les Ordres* when police bang loudly upon a union leader's door. The loud and insistent banging – which can hardly be described as a "knock" – is followed by the sound of breaking glass and the frightened scream of the man's teenage daughter.²¹⁰

"Fear and terror dominated the people of Quebec. The downtown area was abandoned. The macabre atmosphere of Montreal made things impossible. People were afraid to talk in the metro. Tavern politics ceased..."²¹¹ Even the soldiers patrolling the city's streets had been ordered to remain quiet, upon penalty of a

²⁰⁶ Bédard: 108.

²⁰⁷ For an excellent sense of Montréal's soundscape during the October Crisis, see *Les Ordres*. The film's soundtrack is as stark as its cinematography, containing no background music but presenting many sonic symbols of a city subdued by its sudden transformation into a police state.

²⁰⁸ "A primer on terror," *Georgian*, 22 Oct. 1970: 7.

²⁰⁹ LaPierre, "Quebec: October 1970."

²¹⁰ Michel Brault, dir. *Les Ordres* (Les Productions Prisma Inc. 1974).

²¹¹ "Only doing their job," *Georgian*, 29 Oct. 1970: 3.

hefty fine.²¹² As Nick Auf der Maur put it, “silence became the order of the day.”²¹³ Jean Drapeau hoped that Laporte’s murder would “open the eyes and ears of the population,”²¹⁴ yet quite the opposite happened, as gag orders and censorship threw a veil of opacity over events. The provisions of the WMA quieted the streets of Montréal and silenced the discussion of politics in public places, while that silence created space for an enhanced awareness of sounds such as police sirens and ominous night-time knocks on the door. “In the face of the state’s brutal crackdown,” writes historian Sean Mills, “...few movements or organizations dared to publicly voice their opposition.”²¹⁵

As much evidence shows, the WMA also effectively silenced the Canadian, and especially the Québec, media. There is plenty of evidence demonstrating mass censorship of the press occurred during the October Crisis. As we have already seen, “the question as to how to quiet the Quebec media came more frequently into conversations around the government.”²¹⁶ Trudeau believed that the press was giving too much attention to the FLQ, and during cabinet discussions of the matter, he was a leading advocate of censorship of the press.²¹⁷ According to Bernard Dagenais, the federal government made attempts to influence the media in not publishing the *Manifesto*.²¹⁸ Jerome Choquette later admitted that he wanted to ask

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ Chodos and Auf der Maur: 68.

²¹⁴ Drapeau, quoted in “Abattement, stupeur, indignation,” *Le Devoir*, 19 Oct. 1970: 7. [My translation, S.D.J.].

²¹⁵ Mills: 22.

²¹⁶ Anthony Westell, quoted in Chodos and Auf der Maur: 60.

²¹⁷ Chodos and Auf der Maur: 60-61.

²¹⁸ Dagenais: 135-137.

the federal government to impose temporary censorship on news media.²¹⁹ The CBC even censored long-time satirist Max Ferguson, refusing to air a skit about the mass arrests made the WMA. In the skit, Jerome Choquette visits a Montréal jail where prisoners are being held. “In the background one prisoner is heard pounding on the bars of his cell and protesting his incarceration.” The noise builds “until this one voice becomes predominant and we are made aware that it is Trudeau, saying that cabinet is probably wondering about his whereabouts and that he would like to contact them.” Other examples of censorship at the CBC led a Toronto journalist to condemn the behaviour of CBC brass as “cowed” and smacking of “cowardice.”²²⁰

John Diefenbaker, heading the Federal Opposition in Parliament, criticized cabinet’s censorship of the media, citing the case of student newspapers.²²¹ The underground and student press were hit hard by the WMA, and across Canada, young journalists who tried to inform readers about the situation in Québec were silenced. At the University of Guelph, copies of the *Ontarion* were seized. Toronto *Varsity* reporters were ordered to have their copy in early so it could be double-checked by editors before going to press. Students at the Toronto paper *Harbinger* suddenly had difficulty finding a printer. *The Journal* (St. Mary’s, Halifax) discovered that the printers had left large white spaces, having taken it upon themselves to censor editorials and Canadian University Press stories about the WMA. Reporters for *The Meliorist* of Lethbridge, Alberta faced threats of expulsion, arrest and seizure of their paper, as were people involved with the *McGill Daily*. Many other

²¹⁹ “Papers must be censored” *Georgian* Nov. 19 1970: 3.

²²⁰ “Max Ferguson censored for first time in 23 years,” *Georgian* 12 Nov. 1970: 13.

²²¹ “Dief objects to censorship,” *Georgian* 19 Nov. 1970: 3.

underground and student papers imposed a form of self-censorship.²²² *Logos*, long a target of the Montréal police, was forced to shut down and its editors were charged with printing obscene material.²²³ A letter in the Sir George Williams's *Georgian* argued that "the government has refused to allow free discussion of politics while at the same time proclaiming that this is not censorship. [...] If the government prohibits free speech it is replacing the FLQ terrorism with a more insidious brand of its own."²²⁴

Censorship also quieted Montréal's radio stations. The WMA made it illegal to communicate statements on behalf of the FLQ. This provision prevented CKAC from broadcasting any communiqués from the FLQ, effectively silencing the conduit through which the FLQ occasionally attempted to speak directly to the public. Another case of radio censorship was that of Rod Dewar, a morning-show host at CJAD who "was not shy about voicing his disenchantment with the government's move to bring in the troops." Dewar believed that there were enough powers under existing legislation to deal with the kidnapping situation, and that therefore the WMA "was a step too far." After the emergency legislation had been passed, Dewar wrote an editorial voicing his opinion of the WMA. When he presented it to his station manager, the manager told him he could not read it on air. He suggested Dewar take a holiday and even threatened to reassess the station's morning show programming. The duty announcer was in fact already on the air announcing that Dewar had taken a holiday when Dewar walked into the studio, sat down next to the

²²² "War Act stifles student papers," *Georgian* 29 Oct. 1970: 7.

²²³ "The F.L.Q. crisis," *Georgian* 29 Oct. 1970: 10-11.

²²⁴ "Untitled," *Georgian* 19 Nov. 1970: 13.

duty announcer and told his listeners precisely what was going on: that he had resigned over the issue, and that he was being silenced. He left the job he had held for fifteen years.²²⁵

Dewar, and many people like him, felt that the WMA had been as much about politics as it was about anti-terrorism. Some historians now ask, was the decision to enact the WMA a piece of political theatre, orchestrated by Trudeau and his allies in the federal cabinet? The authors of *Secret Service* suggest that Trudeau and his Québec colleagues had perhaps decided on use of the WMA “as a kind of *coup de théâtre* to intimidate the separatists of all stripes and stiffen the backbone of the federalists.”²²⁶ It is certainly the case that solid evidence of any kind of “apprehended insurrection” has never surfaced. The pretext that the FLQ presented a threat national security, and that this therefore required such drastic action, was debunked by none other than Canada’s state security service, the RCMP. The RCMP never advised invocation of the WMA, was not consulted as to its usefulness, and would have opposed the decision had they been asked. In testimony later given as part of an inquiry into the RCMP’s actions in Québec, a veteran of the service told the commission that the RCMP thought that the WMA was dangerous because it gave authorities too much power, and had been misused especially by local police. RCMP Commissioner William Higgitt made it clear that at the time of the Crisis he had never been asked his opinion about invoking the WMA.²²⁷

²²⁵ “Rod Dewar on October 70” *Georgian* Nov. 4 1975: 7. Dewar was so disenchanted that he went into self-imposed exile from Canada for half a decade.

²²⁶ Whitaker *et. al.*: 289.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*: 287-288.

The question of whether Trudeau enacted the WMA as a *coup de théâtre* may hit near the mark. The political situation in Québec was of great concern to Trudeau, who was afraid that the federal government was losing the battle for public opinion in the province. The Prime Minister had made many claims over the years that journalists, especially at Radio-Canada, were too sympathetic with the nationalist movement. He also believed that there were perhaps “thousands” of well-placed people in Québec who sympathized with or were even members of the FLQ. Pierre Trudeau may have made a critical blunder when he allowed the *FLQ Manifesto* to be read on CBC television. While this had been one of the demands made by the FLQ, Trudeau believed that reading the manifesto to the general public would shore up opinion against the kidnappers. However, Trudeau seriously underestimated the extent of social and political dissent in Quebec, and thus failed to understand that the slangy, down-to-earth passages in the manifesto might resonate with people across the province.

The people “loudly calling for law and order” in October 1970 did not understand the situation in the same way that others, for example, the student editors at Sir George Williams, did. “It is not the poor people who are frightened by the FLQ in Quebec, nor is it the poor who are being protected by the army,” stated the *Georgian*. “The poor don’t live in Westmount. It is the wealthy businessmen who are being protected and who are frightened.”²²⁸ Trudeau failed to see that the grievances voiced by the FLQ in their manifesto would resonate with some people – especially with working-class Francophones living at the edge of poverty,

²²⁸ “In order to find out what the real rules are...” *Georgian* 29 Oct. 1970: 5.

unemployed or working hard hours in front of the deafening machines described in Michèle Lalonde's poetry. For many of these people, the FLQ's manifesto had a ring of truth. While most would be quick to condemn the violent tactics of the terrorist group (especially after the murder of Pierre Laporte), the issues touched upon in the manifesto did strike a familiar chord. Nick Auf der Maur reported that when the manifesto was broadcast on 8 October, the "grievances were real, and much of it gained wide support."²²⁹ Liberal MP Marcel Prud'homme was surprised that a poll in his constituency found that "the vast majority of the young supported what the FLQ did, and that the older constituents violently condemned the tactic but frequently expressed some sympathy for the content of the manifesto."²³⁰ Claude Ryan editorialized that the government would do well to remember the socio-economic structures under which Québec had existed for over 100 years. He worried that the opacity surrounding the crisis had thickened with the WMA, and risked deepening the frustrations that gave rise to groups like the FLQ in the first place.²³¹ Students, too, understood the larger story behind the FLQ's actions: "The general opinion of the students was this: most students sympathized with the FLQ's goals, but they did not agree on the way the FLQ wanted to reach their goals."²³² Many shared the opinion that "it is perhaps easier to believe that the FLQ is a small group of criminal madmen than to accept the possibility that the anger and frustration which gives rise to such violent actions may fairly accurately reflect the

²²⁹ Chodos and Auf der Maur: 61.

²³⁰ "The Santo Domingo of Pierre Elliott Trudeau...".

²³¹ Claude Ryan, "Dans l'épaisseur d'une nuit tragique," *Le Devoir* 19 Oct. 1970: 4.

²³² "Last week at Vieux Montreal," *Georgian* 29 Oct. 1970: 3

feelings of a much larger group of Canadians.”²³³ While most people sympathetic to the FLQ’s goals repudiated their acts of violence, it was also contradictorily true that the FLQ’s “highwayman élan” “left many Québécois inwardly pleased.”²³⁴

On 2 November 1970 the Federal Government issued “a new Public Order Temporary Measures Act, 1970”, a replacement for the original regulations of the WMA. These new regulations were in effect until 30 April 1971. The regulation was approved in the House of Commons by a vote of 152 to 1. The lone dissenter was David MacDonald, a Progressive Conservative who felt that the War Measures Act had had “very detrimental effects.”²³⁵ On 9 November Jerome Choquette requested that the army stay in Montréal for another thirty days. According to defense minister Donald MacDonald, the number of troops in Montréal peaked at 7,500. By 9 November this number had fallen to roughly 5000.²³⁶ On 3 December 1970, after negotiations with his captors, James Cross was freed. Trudeau nevertheless announced that troops would not leave Montréal until 4 January 1971. Robert Bourassa requested that the Public Order Act be extended past 30 April 1971, but his request was denied.

Many years later a special commission was struck to look into the events of the October Crisis. Upon the release the commission’s report, commission head Jean-François Duchaine concluded that “authorities used the occasion of the October crisis to carry out mass repression” and that the WMA “[r]epresented a maneuver to intimidate all dissenting Quebec political groups.” *La Presse* argued that the WMA

²³³ “In order to find out what the real rules are...”

²³⁴ “The Santo Domingo...”

²³⁵ Bélanger, “Chronology of the October Crisis.”

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

and the presence of armed soldiers “was made with the intention of giving public opinion in Quebec the same type of shock treatment used in psychological warfare.”²³⁷ Another official body, the Keable Commission, found that the War Measures Act “was used to carry out repression toward protest groups in Quebec.”²³⁸ Laurier LaPierre wrote that “...the government fought terrorism with terrorism, the only difference being that that terrorism of the FLQ was directed at only a few, while the terrorism of the governments involved the entire population of Quebec.” Refusing to mince his words, the prominent CBC personality, writer, professor and politician argued that “It is doubtful if in the history of democratic countries such flagrant injustices, such terrifying arrogance, or such utter disregard for life and liberty have ever been committed in the name of law and order and for the purpose of protecting the society and achieving the security of the state. The most dangerous terrorists were not the members of the FLQ... The most dangerous terrorists were the Prime Ministers of Quebec and Canada, the Ministers of Justice of these two countries, the Mayor of Montréal, [and] the members of the cabinets of Quebec and Canada...”²³⁹

After October 1970, it was increasingly difficult for many Canadians to consider Canada a peaceable kingdom. LaPierre, writing in 1971, said of the Crisis

²³⁷ “The Duchaine report: The October Crisis served as a pretext for widespread repression” *La Presse* 10 Oct. 1980. Accessed online at:

<http://www.histori.ca/peace/page.do;jsessionid=426F776879A708CB696203FE0097FB7C.tomcat1?subclassName=Document&pageID=388> (Last accessed 16 June 2014).

²³⁸ Bélanger, “Chronology of the October Crisis”.

²³⁹ LaPierre, “Quebec: October 1970”. Laurier had been through a very personal experience of silencing when he was terminated as host of the popular CBC television news programme *This Hour Has Seven Days* for reasons of “unprofessionalism”. His dismissal really had more to do with what was thought to be his unmasculine display of emotion and a general unwillingness to blindly follow directives from the CBC brass.

that “The people and government of Canada will...have to learn many lessons, one of which is that the Canada they have known is no longer there.”²⁴⁰ Montrealers of many stripes were deeply affected by the events of October 1970, but the silences of October were soon overcome with ever more strident voices demanding social justice in Québec.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Chapter 6

Sound/Silence, Québec/Kébek

“Du total sonore au total silencieux. Tout n’est que résonnance, écho. La parole est écho du silence et de la musique, la musique est l’écho du silence et de la parole.”

– Raoul Duguay, *Manifeste Infonie* (1970).¹

“Écrire l’histoire, écrire des histoires, n’est qu’une façon de donner champ – de l’espace, de l’air – au contretemps des choses: accueillir et en recevoir les échos...”.

– Karim Larose, *La langue de papier: Spéculations linguistiques au Québec 1957-1977* (2004).²

Striving to articulate their identities as modern people throughout the 1960s, many people in Québec shed the name of French Canadians (or *Canadiens*) and named themselves Québécois and Quebeckers.³ This act of self-naming, much like the reclamation of *joual*, was an act of decolonization of the self, of shedding identities imposed by others, and of “finding one’s own voice” in the process. Even if, quite suddenly, these newly-discovered voices were silenced in the vast prison Montréal had become, such silencing could hardly erase the quiet work of self-reflection upon the alienating life of liberal capitalism that had made these new names possible. One might temporarily silence the Québécois, but returning them to a meek acceptance of their status as “French Canadians” was not likely to happen.

¹ Raoul Duguay, *La Manifeste de l’Infonie : le ToutArtBel*. (Montréal: Messageries du Jour, 1970): 91.

² Karim Larose, *La langue du papier: Spéculations linguistiques au Québec 1957-1977* (Montréal: Presses de l’Université de Montréal, 2004): 7.

³ Marcel Martel has done work in this theme. See *Le Canada français: récit de sa formulation et de son éclatement, 1850-1967* (Ottawa, La Société historique du Canada, 1998) (Collection: les groupes ethniques du Canada. Brochure no. 24).

Nor, unless one was truly willing to make War Measures a permanent fact of political life, and thereby flagrantly abandon any pretence of liberal democracy, could one guarantee that quietude would prevail forever. People were forced to shut up, but they did not permanently lose their voices.

One of the main locations where a multitude of Québec voices had come together to find themselves was in the street. Protest and public confrontation was, as we have seen, particularly loud during this decade. Against the backdrop of De Gaulle's verbal bombshell (which echoed those of the FLQ), *McGill français* and language riots, French Canadians came together in the streets to resist the silencing of their voices – and in so doing found themselves to be Québécois. In Marshall Berman's classic *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, the works of Beaudelaire – a figure, incidentally, revered by many of Québec's counter-cultural intellectuals – and Dostoyevski are used to demonstrate the social possibilities of modern urban life: “At the ragged edge of Beaudelaire's imagination we glimps[e] [a] potential modernism: revolutionary protest that transforms a multitude of urban solitudes into a people and reclaims the city street for human life.”⁴ Exploring how “the modern city works as a medium in which personal and political life flow together and become one,”⁵ Berman argues that the “essential purpose of this [modern street] is socialibility”: “[C]ommunication, and the message of the street as a whole, is a strange mixture of reality and fantasy: on one hand, it

⁴ Berman: 166.

⁵ *Ibid.*: 229.

acts as a setting for people's fantasies of who they want to be; on the other hand, it provides true knowledge – for those who can decode it – of who people really are.”⁶

Thus it was significant that October 1970 marks not the end but the mid-point of twentieth-century Montréal's vibrant culture of demonstrations and protests. After the nightmare of silence, the city's streets re-awakened. After 1970 Québec workers and artists continued to explore and articulate their identities as Québécois. Yet they did so now as a people profoundly marked by that silence.

The labour movement in Montréal, one of the most vocal opponents of the anti-demonstration bylaw as well as the War Measures Act, continued to bring the noise. For the labour movement, the presence of troops on the streets of Montréal and the heavy-handed silencing made possible by the War Measures act “became an important symbol of the colonized nature of Québec.”⁷ As Sean Mills has written: “In the early 1970s, workers in Quebec were radicalized to a degree not witnessed in North America since 1919, and the new tone of labour politics got the attention of radicals throughout English Canada and the United States. In this tumultuous period, the speeches of labour leaders and the official documents of the organizations gave voice to the anger of workers.”⁸

One year after the FLQ crisis, in October 1971, a march to show solidarity for workers caught in a bitter labour dispute with *La Presse* demonstrated labour's resolve to voice their grievances with Québec's “symphony of progress.” On 29 October 1971, a march organized by the city's three major unions met a massive

⁶ *Ibid.*: 196.

⁷ Mills: 187-8.

⁸ *Ibid.*: 198.

police response. Despite the union leaders' attempts to negotiate with the armed police squad, things turned ugly and the police charged the crowd. Student journalist Jacqui Wall was one of the thousands caught in the chaos, and provides a unique eyewitness account: "As I reached St. Denis Street a phalanx of motorcycles came roaring down once again on the crowd," she wrote. "The general level of noise, punctuated by sirens, and confusion of people running at top speed in opposite directions made it hard to know what was happening where." People were disoriented in the narrow streets between the buildings, which made it "impossible to know what was happening even one block away." As she made her way homewards, she reports having "heard all kinds of incredible rumours. ...Paul Desmarais had been killed when his house was bombed. The army had been called in. No one was sure of the facts."⁹ The facts emerged soon enough: rumours about troops proved untrue, but the FLQ had bombed the Westmount home of one of the owners of *LaPresse*, 190 people had been injured in the protest and one woman, Michèle Gauthier of the Front de liberation des femmes, had been killed.¹⁰

In March 1972, frustrated and angry with the government's unwillingness to listen to the concerns of Québécois workers, the CEQ, CSN and FTQ began planning for an unlimited general strike. For a few weeks in April, factories and construction sites fell silent as workers walked off the job. Bourassa's government legislated the workers back, but in May 1972, when a provincial court sentenced three union leaders to one year in jail for counseling workers to defy the government order, a massive strike swept the province. Across Québec, the usual industrial drone fell

⁹ Jacqui Wall, "The police plan was to break up the crowd," *Georgian* 2 Nov. 1971: 3.

¹⁰ Fournier: 492; Mills: 193

silent as workers laid down their tools, shut off their machines, and walked off their jobsites. It was one of North America's largest-ever general strikes. The initiative came not from the leaders, but from the rank-and-file. Workers took spontaneous action, and major industries, even whole towns and villages, were shut down or taken over. More than twenty radio stations across the province were occupied, broadcasting news of the walkouts, union messages and "the music of the resistance." "This station is now in the hands of the workers," came the sound from the radio. In Saint-Jerome, just north of Montréal, workers left the microphones live and chanted "solidarité! solidarité!" as police dragged them from the studio.¹¹ By the end of the year work-stoppages had racked up a record number of work-days lost: 7.8 million over a 12 month period.¹² By acting together, the workers of Québec had effected a radical change of tone and rhythm in the province's "symphony of progress."

Workers in Québec took to the streets in record numbers in the 1970s, and the events of 1972 proved a watershed moment for labour. As *Le Travail* put it in May 1972, Québec workers were learning "to be respected" and "to believe in ourselves."¹³ By coming together in the streets and the union halls, often in defiance of injunctions or bylaws ordering them to be quiet and go back to work, the human labourers behind the "symphony of progress" found their voices as well as their ability to speak truth to power.

¹¹ Ibid.: 198-202.

¹² "Winter strikes?" *Georgian* Sept. 24 1974: 7.

¹³ "La colère des travailleurs," *Le Travail* (May 1972), quoted in Mills: 203.

Community activists in Montréal continued their work too. FRAP, despite its disappointment in the October 1970 municipal election, continued to agitate on behalf of, and coordinate services for, the city's "silent poor." Gay rights activists added to the growing chorus. Groups such as Front de libération des hommes, Gay Montréal Association, Montréal Gay Women, Gay McGill, Gay Activist Alliance, and Androgyny bookstore refused to be ashamed of words "usually still said in a whisper," such as lesbian or transsexual.¹⁴ Indeed, histories of gay liberation in Montréal invariably take on metaphors that suggest a transition from the fearful silences and whispers of the 1950s and '60s to angry shouts and proud declarations by the 1970s and '80s.¹⁵

If a large and diverse population of Québécois were finding their voices by coming together in the streets, there was a similar process happening in the arts. This section will explore the sound poetry of Raoul Duguay, the renowned Québec poet and musician, and his move from total cacophony towards silence in the early 1970s.

Just as the trade unions came together in the 1970s, marked by their experience of October 1970, artists were profoundly affected by the arbitrary arrests and detainment that many of them had experienced under the War

¹⁴ Evelyne Michaels, "Gay Lib," *Georgian* 29 Feb. 1972: 8-9; Fran Halter, "Happiness is being a homosexual in Montreal," *Georgian* 15 Oct. 1974, *Synapse* supplement: 4-5; Evelyne Michaels, "Lesbian Conference in Town," *Georgian* 24 Jan. 1975: 4.

¹⁵ See Ross Higgins, *De la clandestinité à l'affirmation: pour une histoire de la communauté gaie montréalaise*, trans. Alain Beauvais (Montréal: Comeau & Nadeau, 1999); and Irène Demczuk & Frank W. Remiggi, *Sortir de l'ombre: histoires des communautés lesbienne et gaie de Montréal* (Montréal: VLB Éditeur, 1998). Jason B. Crawford and Karen Herland have recently explored the many narratives that arose out of a raid upon the Sex Garage, a particularly important queer hangout in Montréal, revealing not just the malleability of memory but the importance Montréal's authorities attached to the regulation of a particular soundscape. See Jason B. Crawford and Karen Herland, "Sex Garage: Unspooling Narratives, Rethinking Collectivities," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 48, 1 (Winter 2014): 108-131.

Measures Act. Raoul Duguay was no exception. Francophone artists in the 1960s and 1970s were working hard to express "Québec" amid efforts to silence political nationalism and restore the orderly drone of industrial modernity. Duguay was a central figure in the avant-garde musical ensemble known as L'Infonie, a group led by composer Walter Boudreau. L'Infonie saw itself as "l'humble robinet de la Respiration miroir polysonore de la Lumière." The ensemble's "mission" was to classify all the different kinds of human sounds (modal, polyphonic, classic, rock'n'roll, bepop, etc.) as well as the "bruit de la matière," "bruit des assemblées belles, bonnes, paix," and, importantly, the "bruit de l'Histoire."¹⁶ Along with the Quatuor de Jazz Libre de Québec, L'Infonie was at the cutting edge of modernist Québec culture. Duguay's work within the group resulted in several sound-poems that sought to express "Québec" in a fundamentally aural fashion.

Born in Val d'Or, Duguay was a central figure in the "Osstidcho" happenings of the late 1960s. In 1967 Duguay, Boudreau, and Pierre Leduc had staged "Jazzpo" at the Expo Théâtre, a "global" spectacle entailing audience interaction and sound sculptures. He performed his poetry as part of "Opération Déclit" (1969) and was an integral part of L'Infonie throughout in the late 1960s and early 1970s.¹⁷ In 1969 L'Infonie released their début album, titled *Vol. 3*. The first track from this album is a stunningly prescient orchestral piece that today recalls the chaos of the late 1960s and the aftermath of the October Crisis. "Ode à l'affaire – ouverture" opens on

¹⁶ "Possibilités musicales de L'Infonie" *Québec Underground 1962-1972* (Montréal: Les éditions Médiart, 1972): 101. For work on earlier and somewhat parallel musical movements that raise interesting issues for sound historians, see Douglas Khan, "Noises of the Avant-Garde," in Jonathan Sterne, ed., *The Sound Studies Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013): 427-448.

¹⁷ "Raoul Duguay – Yagud Luoar" in *Québec Underground*: 413.

immediate cacophony: screaming voices, electronic blips, sirens, crashing cymbals. The musicians and noise get louder and louder before suddenly falling mute. A moment of silence ensues before birdsong and cellos suggest dawn or awakening.¹⁸

Vol. 3 was followed up with *Vol. 33* (1970), L'Infonie's interpretation of avant garde composer Terry Riley's *In C*. The group released the third and last album of the triptych, *Vol. 333*, in 1972. The numerology of threes provide a key to the complex musical and philosophical ideas that structured the group's work. It was also apparent in pieces such as "L'Affaire," a satire of the Catholic Holy Trinity: "Combien y'a t'il d'affaires?" a voice asks. "Il'y a une seule affaire," comes the chanted reply. "Combien y'a t'il d'affaires dans l'affaire?" "Il y a trois affaires dans l'affaire."¹⁹

In 1970 Duguay composed and published *Le manifeste de l'Infonie*, a document that sought to explain the grand philosophy that animated the group. In it he explains how L'Infonie was interested in "la phonétique, l'acoustique, la phonologie et la micromacro-physique atomique et cosmique."²⁰ L'Infonie believed that the fundamental binary that structured the cosmos was the opposition of "son/silence". Being part of the emerging Québec *underground*, L'Infonie considered sound/silence to be conceived in a similar fashion to yin/yang:

La parfaite réalisation de l'oralité poétique consiste dans l'arrivée au son pur. La parfaite réalisation de la musique consiste dans son retour au silence. Le silence contient toutes les musiques et toutes les paroles qui se

¹⁸ L'Infonie, "Ode à l'affaire – ouverture" *Vol. 3* (Polydor, 1969).

¹⁹ L'Infonie, "L'Affair" *Vol. 3* (Polydor, 1969).

²⁰ "Pain-Beurre, Poème-musique, silence-son, vibration-percussion, yin-yang" *Manifeste de L'Infonie*: 82-95. This essay primarily describes the ideas behind "Pain-Beurre", a 25 minute sound-poem written by Walter Boudreau and performed by L'Infonie at Radio Canada studios with the help of Robert Blondin.

puissent imaginer. De même que la musique contient la poésie, de même la poésie contient la musique. Et le silence contient l'une et l'autre.²¹

As part of L'Infonie, Raoul Duguay was “à la recherche d'une expression poétique sonore, vibrante, troubadour dont le cri viscéral émane des tripes mêmes de terre QUEBEC.” Duguay's sound-poetry is meant not to be read but to be heard and felt: “On ne raconte pas Duguay. Il se lit à haute voix. Pour mieux saisir la force des sonorités. Il se voit, s'écoute, se ressent.”²²

On 24 January 1971, with James Cross having been freed only the month before, and the weight of the War Measures Act still hanging heavy over the city, Duguay, along with the Quatuor du Jazz Libre du Québec, Michèle Lalonde, Pauline Julien, Louise Forestier, Georges Dor, Yvan Deschamps, Raymond Lévesque, Gilles Vigneault and others came together at the Théâtre Gésù for a night of song and poetry titled *Nuits de poèmes et chantes de la résistance 2*, an event designed to protest the imposition of the WMA.

The silences of October had deeply affected Duguay, who later recalled – in a French that deliberately mocked standard spelling – how it was the beginning of a new awareness about the collective identity of the Québécois. “On m'a dit à ce moment: ‘Duguay, ferme ta yeule’²³ et moi je suis pas le genre de gars à ki on peut dire ce genre de chose. Alors là j'ai pris conscience, si j'écrivais un article où je disais ‘je suis le FLQ’ comme tel, j'étais emprisonné à cause de la loi. Il fallait un

²¹ “Pain-Beurre, Poème-musique”: 87.

²² Armande Saint-Jean “Raoul Duguay, son et lumière de la poésie” *Perspectives* 27 (April 1968). Reprinted in *Québec Underground*: 414-415.

²³ “Yeule” is an alternate spelling of “geule” which more closely represents the *joualisant* pronunciation favoured by Québécois such as Duguay.

compromis: dire ce ke je voulais dire, mais en d'autres termes."²⁴ "[Octobre 1970] m'a blessé pas mal," Duguay later recalled, "Ca m'a touché d'une manière assez radicale en-dedans parce ke là, pour la première fois de ma vie, j'ai pris conscience de mon appartenance à une entité ethnique. [...] Tout était basé sur la parole et le silence, le vrai et le faux."²⁵

Duguay performed a nationalist monologue at *Poèmes et chantes de la résistance 2*, which spoke of the heavy silences he felt as well as the importance of standing up and speaking out. Later that year Transworld discs issued a recording of those nights, including Duguay's performance. Titled "Kébèc Ô mon bô bébé,"²⁶ the poem begins with Duguay launching into a stuttering/bebop-skat vocalization as his voice seemingly struggles to articulate itself: "akekekekakekekeKébèk!" he finally sings, then falls to a mournful blue jazz before launching into the monologue proper:

O mon beau blonde blanc blue beau bébé d'amour.
Je suis un enfant libre du Québec,
et le Québec est mon enfant.
Je ne suis qu'un simple petit Québécois parmi les Québécois et je veut
devenir grand.
Le parole est mon acte supreme.
[...].²⁷

At the same time as Duguay argued for speech as the supreme manifestation leading towards the liberation of all Québécois voices, he marks his performance with three references to silence: near the beginning of the poem he sings, Vigneault-style: "Je suis mon pays, je suis ton peuple dans le prison de ton silence." Later on he

²⁴Interview with Raoul Duguay, published in *Transit* (Cégep du Vieux-Montréal, 1972). Reprinted in *Québec Underground* pp. 420-423.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Raoul Duguay, "Kébèc Ô mon bô bébé," *Poèmes et chantes de la résistance 2* (Montréal: Transworld, 1971).

²⁷ *Ibid.*

states “le silence, le silence est ainsi comme une épine dans la gorge.” And a third time, five minutes into the track: “Le silence est une bombe amorcée dans la bouche de Québec.”²⁸ “J’habite dans ma bouche,” Duguay says at the top of a key passage regarding language in Quebec:

Ô mon bô bébé
que tout-un chacun dit Kébèk
soit un salut active et créatrice de la libération totale du
Kébèk.
La première liberté est de vouloir pouvoir savoir parlez à qui
l’on veut ou l’on veut quand on veut comme on veut de quoi-
ce qu’on veut dans la langue du Kébèk!
Toulmonde est demandé au parloir!²⁹

Later that same year (1971) Duguay travelled to Europe, performing in Paris and finding, like Charlebois, that the French just did not get it. In recounting his trip, via a story about a magical bird (Wéziwézo), Duguay explained: “Wéziwézo comprend qu’il est un étranger. Chez lui, (la terre entière est son pays) il chante ce qu’il veut, où il veut, quand il veut, comme il l’entend. Dans la forêt, tous les oiseaux chantent et aucun oiseau ne dit à l’autre: ‘Tu chantes faux’ ou ‘Si tu veux rester, apprends notre chant.’” When Wéziwézo shouts “Vive le Kébèk libre!”, “même les Parisiens ont compris, enfin un certain nombre pensaient à de Gaulle sans savoir le poids de cette phrase. Les Français ne connaissent pas la différence entre les mots Canada et Kébèk.”³⁰ “Wéziwézo, oiseau exotique, bizarre et rare, n’avait aucune intention de violence ou d’agression,” Duguay recounted, “Son chante est joie intérieure. Il est arrivé que ceux qui ouvraient leurs oreilles et leur coeur

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Raoul Duguay, “Wéziwézo Kébèc à Bobino,” *Perspectives* 29 May 1971, reprinted in *Québec Underground*: 416-418.

comprenaient et ceux-là vibraient au même diapason que Wéziwézo. Ceux qui avaient fermé leurs oreilles demeuraient dans leur confusion.”

In 1972 Duguay started toward a different direction than the total cacophony of L'Infonie. Having confronted the silences of October in his poetry, he had internalized them, moving from the imposed silences of the WMA to a meditative sort of silence typical of the counterculturalist milieu within which artists such as Duguay lived and worked. The experience was transformative. Other artists too were turning to silence, many influenced by avant garde composer John Cage. In the early 1970s Duguay travelled to Darmstadt to work with Karl-Heinz Stockhausen. “Je m'en vais vers le silence, pour moi la seule et unique solution pour transformer l'Amérique du Nord. C'est la prise de conscience du pouvoir du silence parce que remarque bien que tout le système est basé sur l'empêchement radical d'être seul dans le silence.”

Much like those who were fighting noise pollution as an integral part of the ecology movement in the 1970s, Duguay became more and more aware of the noises and sounds that were everywhere in modern Québec. He began to see how little silence there was in day-to-day life. Where is the period of silence in our day?, he asked. When is there time to stop? Against the urban soundscape, the broadcast media, and everyone talking all at once, he argued, a moment of total silence would be revolutionary:

Moi je dis que [...] si il y avait au même instant partout à travers le monde, un silence total, vraiment total, pendant cinq minutes, peut-être seulement trois, mais vraiment total. K'y aie pas un maudit chat qui ouvre la bouche à nulle part sur la terre, là: t'as une révolution nette, tout de suite en parlant.³¹

³¹ Interview in *Transit*.

The New Quietism

Raoul Duguay's turn towards quietude in 1972 had much to do with his experiences during and after October 1970, but he may also have been part of larger cultural trends as well. For example, in 1971 the student newspaper *The Georgian* reprinted a *Last Post* news-service piece on the "New Quietism" – a trend in music and politics that featured quiet introspection rather than aggressive confrontation. This was not the silence of resistance or revolution envisioned by Duguay, however:

From 1967 on, favourite reading ...has included Fanon, Cleaver and Malcolm X, disquieting authors whose formulations were clearly designed to wreak havoc in the free marketplace of ideas. In 1971, all has changed. Work boots and lumberjack shirts may still prevail, but all in all the new fall semester marks a retreat from the confrontation politics of the late sixties. The failure of both Yippie and SDS brands of social activism to make an appreciable dent in the horny hide of Leviathan liberalism has taken its mournful toll. The new quietism includes music. James Taylor and Elton John massage the wounded ego. The music itself propagates a message of cosmic helplessness.³²

While the idea of a "new quietism" may have been comforting after the traumatic events of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and while it is true that popular music took a turn towards introspective singer-songwriters such as Joni Mitchell or Harmonium (Québec's beloved 1970s folk-rockers), the authors of this quote were clearly more focussed on American movements (hence the references to SDS and Yippies) than they were on events closer to home in Montréal. And while singer-songwriters such as James Taylor and Carole King dominated the playlists on top-40 radio stations, rock music in the 1970s actually got louder and more aggressive as the 1970s progressed, spawning genres such as hard rock, heavy metal, and punk.

³² Patrick MacFadden, "Futurology," *Georgian* 15 Oct. 1971: 5.

Certainly the governments of Canada and Québec tried their best to maintain social quietude in the wake of October 1970. State repression continued beyond 1970. Throughout the 1970s, for example, the RCMP began using illegal tactics and “dirty tricks” in campaigns against radical groups. After October 1970 there followed “a much more aggressive and intrusive pattern of intelligence targeting of Quebec separatism by the security service.”³³ These actions were later the focus of federal and provincial commissions, which found the RCMP had been involved in actions that went beyond lawful limits and liberal-democratic ethics.³⁴ In Montréal, Drapeau continued his morality crusades and silencing tactics. Newspaper vending boxes, for example, were banned from the city’s streets. Another memorable attack included a move to ban astrology, which saw astrologers have their offices raided and their files, books, and manuscripts seized under an obscure and ancient section of the criminal code dealing with witchcraft, sorcery and enchantment. This move included passage of a municipal bylaw prohibiting practicing of “occult sciences” for a fee.³⁵

Censorship continued in other places too. There was, for example, the famous case of three ONF films suppressed in the wake of the October Crisis: *Cap d’espoir* (dir. Jacques Leduc, 1969), *On est au coton* (dir. Denys Arcand, 1970), and *24 heures ou plus* (dir. Gilles Groulx, 1976 [1972]). *Cap d’espoir* was banned because it was critical of such politicians as Bertrand, Drapeau, and Saulnier.³⁶ *On est au coton* was

³³ Whitaker *et. al.*: 275

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ “Local scientist asks airwaves ban on astrology ‘myth,’” *Gazette* 22 Sept. 1970: 8; “Manolesco’s star dims,” *Georgian* 7 Jan. 1971: 6.

³⁶ Pierre Hébert, Yves Lever and Kenneth Landry, *Dictionnaire de la censure au Québec* (Québec: Éditions Fides, 2006): 107.

Denys Arcand's first full length documentary. Two versions of this film were made. The first version was canned because Dominion Textile owner Edward F. King complained that the film was too critical of him and his company.³⁷ A second version of the film (one without scenes featuring King) was secretly videotaped, bootlegged and widely seen via underground screenings throughout the province.³⁸ The third film, *24 heures ou plus* (dir. Gilles Groulx, 1976 (1972)) was director Gilles Groulx's attempt to capture the politics that shaped the day-to-life of many Québécois. The documentary film contained scenes recorded in a variety of settings, including the 1971 strike at *La Presse*; a CSN rally at the Montréal Forum; the launch of a new journal, *Recherches amérindiennes*, highly critical of the James Bay hydro-electric project; and the Santa Claus parade in Montréal, with commentary from Jean-Marc Potte, the Marxist intellectual who had written some of the most analytically ambitious articles in *Parti pris*. When NFB commissioner Sydney Newman published an article in *Le Devoir* arguing that Groulx's film could never be released because it "advocates the complete rejection of the current democratic and economic system in Canada,"³⁹ Groulx published a response in *Québec Presse*. Taking Newman to task for refusing to communicate with him directly, the filmmaker accused Newman of acting like a Latin American dictator: "You even go as far as to preach in the newspapers, about democracy," Groulx argued, "all while declaring with the same breath that you will muzzle a film, that you will put ideas in prison."⁴⁰ In 1972 Newman relented to public pressure, allowing Groulx to complete the film, but the

³⁷ It may be worth mentioning that Dominion Textile had also been singled out in the FLQ manifesto.

³⁸ Hébert, Lever and Landry: 147-8.

³⁹ *Ibid.*: 297.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*: 298.

project was shelved again the next year. In 1976, with a new provincial government in office, new ONF commissioner André Lamy finally released all three films. By this time, *24 heures ou plus* seemed a bit outdated: the militant rhetoric of the early 1970s was already *passé*.⁴¹

After the October crisis many radical militants, including Pierre Vallières, renounced violence and began to work for the liberation of Québec through less inflammatory means. In 1976 Québec voters brought René Lévesque's Parti Québécois to power. That same year, Montréal hosted the Olympic Games. One wonders how many Montréalers were conscious of the sonic similarities between 1967 and 1976, between Expo and the Olympics. The sound of flags snapping in the wind, national anthems being sung and played, the hum, cheers and applause of the crowd – all of these sounds from 1976 recalled those of the previous event. Indeed, the noise of the Olympic Games would have been as tightly controlled and organized as was the soundscape of Expo 67. One might have imagined that nothing much had changed.

Yet, in fact, a lot had happened between 1967 and 1976. Residents of Dorval, for instance, heard less noise as a result of the opening of Mirabel airport in 1975. By 1975 Montréal industry was in decline, as factories gradually fell silent all across North America. In Montréal there was the added question of language: many corporations and businesses moved their headquarters to Toronto. There was talk of Anglophone flight, of English-speaking Montréalers not wishing to face the uncertainty of what it would be like to live under a separatist government. There

⁴¹ *Ibid.*: 298.

was also a pattern of Francophone return. In 1976 Robert Charlebois returned from self-imposed exile in France and released *Longue Distance*, an album which contained the ballad “Je reviendrai à Montréal,” a wintry love song to his city. The album was much less noisy than his 1960s offerings. The title evoked the distances he had travelled in both time and space since the 1960s. Still, much of the imagery was the same, and it still spoke of modernity’s transformation of time and space: “Je reviendrai a Montréal,” Charlebois sang, “dans un gros Boeing bleu de mer...”.⁴²

Much in the way that Raoul Duguay, Walter Boudreau and the rest of *L’Infonie* believed that sound/silence structured the universe, this dissertation has argued that a sense of urban life is structured by sound and silence – and that historians would do well to recognize this fact. Listening to the cacophonous build-up in urban noise, in music, and in the streets prior to the hush of October 1970, and then sensing the subtly transformed soundscape that came afterwards, one in which planning and premeditation displaced some of the wildness and spontaneity of the earlier tempo, one comes away with a new appreciation of the 1970s as a time when the energies of the prior decade were not so much lost as redirected. “Silenced Revolution” conveys more truth – and more complexity – than the “Quiet Revolution” that has so preoccupied generations of commentators, critics, and historians. Silenced, but not destroyed. Montrealers did not meekly assent to the new political order and, in 1976, they would vote in large numbers, and with great bursts of noisy enthusiasm, for a politics they hoped would both preserve and transform the energies of a previous day.

⁴² Robert Charlebois, “Je reviendrai à Montréal,” *Longue Distance* (Solution, 1976).

Conclusion

In the year 2000, Walter Boudreau (formerly of L'Infonie) used the public space at St. Joseph's Oratory to stage an ambitious and "democratic" work called *Symphonie du millénaire*. This "manifestation artistique historique" featured fifteen musical groups, including the Montréal Symphony Orchestra, the Société de musique contemporaine du Québec, the Royal 22nd Regiment marching band, and a children's choir. It also combined the Oratory's pipe organ and carillon; fifteen of the city's other bells (pre-recorded); 2000 hand bells distributed to 2000 ringers; and two firetrucks.¹ Working through seven movements of themes appropriated from religious music, the climax of the oeuvre comes when all the elements, "dans un immense tintamarre, mêlant le son des instruments, des sirènes, des percussions et des cloches, aux voix du public, étonneront à l'unisson l'hymne grégorien *Veni Creator*."²

The work was designed to move spatially around the site of the Oratory, flowing progressively from the centre to the periphery and back, creating a stereophonic effect that Boudreau dubbed "la toutpartoutphonie," a phrase that echoed his work with L'Infonie thirty years previous. In Boudreau's words, the objective of the *Symphonie du millénaire* was to "[p]ermettre à un nouveau public, beaucoup plus large que l'habituel public de la musique de création, de découvrir les

¹ Mathieu: 125.

² "Symphonie du millénaire" SMCQ Société de musique contemporaine de Québec (website) <http://www.smcq.qc.ca/smcq/fr/symphonie/description/> (last accessed 12 July 2014).

compositeurs et leur travail par l'intermédiaire d'un projet 'populaire' par sa forme mais au contenu hautement contemporain."³

Boudreau's opus utilized a historic place to present contemporary music as a symbol of the continuum of time. He appealed to a "popular" audience by drawing in "non-musical" elements such as the firetrucks in order to symbolize the noises of modern-day life in Montréal. No fewer than 2000 hand bells were passed out to members of the public, adding a highly participatory element to the event. Finally, the sound and the music moved through space rather than emanating from one static location.⁴ The work thus invited a diverse group of people, musicians and non-musicians alike, to perceive how their quotidian soundscapes formed part of an all-encompassing oeuvre. Boudreau's work, in other words, invited Montréalers not only to hear the "symphony of progress" that is life in the urban metropolis, but also to understand how we ourselves are contributors to its tone. In the sense that all movement reveals itself in sound, we are all of us musicians, all the time, everywhere.

* * *

"For some time," R. Murray Schafer wrote in 1977, "I have...believed that the general acoustic environment of a society can be read as an indicator of social conditions which produce it and may tell us much about the trending and evolution

³ Boudreau, quoted in Mathieu: 126.

⁴ Marc Chénard, "La Symphonie du millénaire – Un opus pour le début des temps 1er volet: le défi musical" SCENA.org (1 May 2000) <http://www.scena.org/lsm/sm5-8/symphonie-fr.htm> (ast accessed 12 July, 2014).

of that society.”⁵ The sentiment of this quote has been echoed throughout this dissertation, as we examined noise, sound, music and silence in Montréal in order to achieve a heightened sense of Québec’s so-called “Quiet Revolution.”

As described in Chapter Two, Montréal’s soundscape evolved from a time regimented by Catholic recitation and the church-bell to a time dominated by the “low-fi” drones of industry and transportation. The unsettling noise from traffic and aircraft became targets of noise-abatement campaigns, during which various citizens of Montréal expressed frustration with the sonic side-effects of Québec’s “symphony of progress.” Implicit acknowledgement of these negative effects was manifested in comments about the silence of Montréal’s metro. Finally, the year 1975 witnessed a radical relocation of one of Montréal’s central keynotes when Mirabel took over from Dorval airport – a relocation that was the sad precondition for the relocation of tens of thousands of farmers and villagers from the areas around Québec’s new supersonic facility.

“Bourassi Bourassa tes decibels cassent les oreilles du soleil, entre Dorval et Mirabel,” sang Robert Charlebois, the Montréal musician who played a central role in Chapter Three. By the time Charlebois and L’Osstidcho made the scene in Montréal, the city’s musical soundscape, like the urban soundscape, had undergone distinctly audible changes. The folksy lyricism of *chansonniers* such as Felix Leclerc was joined by the modern beat music known as *yéyé*, an international phenomenon that was critiqued on grounds of Anglo-American cultural-imperialism, but which also expressed the aspirations of young Quebecers across the province. Members

⁵ Schafer: 7.

of the elder generation disparaged the new rock styles for being little more than “noise,” “all go-go to nowhere,” but the genre has since become a major touchstone of “The Sixties.” L’Osstidcho and Charlebois’s brand of rock’n’roll echoed their time and place. Charlebois’s preoccupation with non-musical elements such as loud feedback and sound effects was distinctly modern, and his use of *joual*, *franglais* and hip slang located him firmly in and of Montréal.

Montréal’s linguistic soundscape added to the noise happening in the city, as some nationalists defended *joual* and others became violently militant about unilingualism. Language issues in Montréal, from Saint-Léonard to *Opération McGill français*, reflected socio-political structures left over from Montréal’s colonial history as a City of Empire. Against the backdrop of exploding FLQ dynamite, much of it filched from the city’s many construction sites, Francophones who wrestled with Québec’s colonial history found their voices. In so doing, workers throughout Québec gained the confidence necessary to demand policies that transformed Montréal’s linguistic matrix.

Language politics reflected other political concerns of the day, and Montréalers took to the streets to champion many causes, from national liberation to feminism to workers’ rights. All the shouting got the attention of the city’s municipal administration, which worked assiduously to silence protest and dissent. A bylaw criminalizing public protest in Montréal was put to work alongside the city’s new riot squad: two weapons used by the Drapeau-Saulnier administration in its campaign to protect peace and quiet – the “right” of Montréal’s “silent majority.” The “dangerous nervousness” of the city’s ruling order peaked in October 1970. An

audible silence fell across Montréal as its citizens awoke to find their city occupied by the army, their civil liberties suspended until further notice.

The silences of October had a great impact on all Québeckers, but they did not signal the end of an era. In the early 1970s the labour movement bravely stood up to state-sanctioned violence, effecting a profound change in Québec's soundscape in 1972 when workers shut down their machines, their factories and even their towns, took over Québec's airwaves, and demanded that the grievances of the province's Francophone workers be heard. The early 1970s also witnessed artists such as Raoul Duguay incorporating silence into their work, while at the same time articulating new and exciting expressions of "Kébèk!"

While the sounds of the 1976 Olympics – singing of national anthems, the crack and flap of waving flags, their rigging clanking in the breeze – may have brought to mind the similarly nationalist and well-ordered soundscape of Expo 67, in the years between Montréal had undergone one of the most violent periods of its history. Reflecting upon all the noise we have heard – from the "low-fi" drones of industry to the screeches of transportation, electric feedback and frantic rhythms of music, feet marching in the streets amid shouting, chanting voices using languages that echoed socio-economic relations – we return to the question posed in the Introduction: What does it mean to call Québec's 1960s a "*Quiet Revolution*"?

It seems clear from all we have learned above that the phrase "Quiet Revolution" is indeed overworked and problematic, just as its originators feared it might be. In his 1978 work *La désillusion tranquille*, Dorval Brunelle wrote that while there is a contradiction of opposites inherent in the term *Révolution tranquille*,

a solution may be found “dans ce fait simple que la société québécoise était secouée de soubresauts révolutionnaires, c'est-à-dire enferrée dans des contradictions sociales explosives, mais que ces remous ont été récupérés, c'est-à-dire «tranquillisés» par le gouvernement en place.”⁶ A social revolution, in other words, had been “tranquilized” or stilled by the forces of order. If this was the case, Brunelle continues, the “Quiet Revolution” could be interpreted as a period that was simultaneously socially liberating and politically regressive, even counter-revolutionary.⁷ The noise kicked up by protesters throughout the 1960s and 1970s is evidence of these “explosive social contradictions.”⁸ They made various governments nervous. Drapeau, Bourassa and Trudeau all attempted to tranquilize social disorder and silence dissent.

Given Brunelle’s (perhaps too neat) sociological explanation, the question may therefore become, “What does it mean to *continue* to call Québec’s 1960s a ‘Quiet Revolution?’” Clearly historians invested in shoring up ideas of Canada as a Peaceable Kingdom will balk at the notion of discarding the term, and its usefulness as a recognizable keyword goes without saying. Perhaps we may conjecture that “Quiet Revolution” was less about the history that had actually occurred, and more about what the people writing the histories *wanted it to have been*. They longed for compromise, peace, order, good government, deference, civility, and decorum. When they did not, and could not, find it, they then saw in all the many indecorous, noisy, spontaneous, democratic, and at times uncivil eruptions of actual Montréal a series

⁶ Brunelle: 12.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

of aberrations and abnormalities. In the face of revolutionary tumult, with all its spontaneity and alarming and noisy explosiveness, they sought the measured calm of a tranquil, steadily-evolving political order. They found – or had hoped to find – Quiet where others, more realistically, found Clamour. They hoped to find acquiescence where others found resistance. They hoped to embalm the Revolution in the depths of their learned studies, well before any such funereal operation could be in the least plausible. From a different perspective, the various experiments we find throughout this work suggest the crafting of an alternative modernity, one that responds to new forms of capitalism with heightened and more radical forms of self-reflexivity, that derives strength from the new transnational solidarities made possible by contemporary spatio-temporal relations, that dares to imagine a different future is stirring in the present, and undertakes cultural revolutionary forms answering to these insights. All these experiments can still speak, and some can still inspire, today's no less vital and difficult engagements with the modern world.

And what of the implications of this thesis for the relatively new field – in Canada at least – of the history of the senses and sound history? Interrogating the “Quiet Revolution” as a silenced revolution raises the spectre, forcefully exiled from many a class-free and capitalism-free study of ‘sensual history’ and ‘sound history,’ of a contested terrain over the meaning of and prospective transformation of a ‘soundscape.’ Unlike, for instance, the approach taken by Joy Parr, whose tendency is to emphasize how people in general “respond” to sensual change instead of how they themselves create it, I have consistently put forward a dialectical and conflict-

based approach. Rather than seeing a series of ‘megaprojects’ succeeding in reducing the “people in the way” to silence, I see modernity and its projects as often providing new conflictual spaces for the assertion of subaltern energies and projects. One might remember, for instance, the thefts of dynamite from the construction sites that dotted Montréal’s landscape in the era of megaprojects – acts that made possible much of the era’s manifold explosions. Or one might remember the extent to which, responding to the oppressiveness of the modern mega-university, scholars from the Caribbean crafted a transnational form of struggle that echoes to this day. This thesis has told a hundred stories in which “the people in the way” were also “the people with an increasingly powerful voice.”

There is, then, in much of this emergent Canadian historiography on the megaproject, an almost palpable anti-modernism, as historians evoke the folkways, innate knowledge, and corporeal wisdom of generations gone by. Yet many Montrealers felt little nostalgia for the ‘good old days’ of a sonic order governed by the confessional and the church bell. Young Montrealers especially gravitated to *yéyé*, forsaking the quieter folk musings of *chanson* and Vigneault for the noisier challenges of Charlebois and L’Infonie. To my ear, Montréal in the 1960s and 1970s does not sound much like a city whose residents were mourning a past soundscape. It often sounds like a city whose residents were embracing the dangers and opportunities of an alternative modernity. Yet what made Montréal distinctive – and controversial – was the extent to which many of its ordinary (and often marginalized) residents *could* contest aspects of the soundscape in which they lived their lives. They *could* demand, and do so noisily, the *francization* of their city,

including so imperial an institution as McGill. They *could* fight, and to a point transform, the din created by increased traffic, both in the air and on the road. They *could* respond to the projects of modernity with counter-modernties of their own. And rather than stoically assenting to the silence imposed by the War Measures Act, many of them mobilized forces that would create North America's largest post-1945 general strike and in 1976 elect a government that refused to harmonize with the Peaceable Kingdom. Montréal's sonic politics, I conclude, cannot be easily fit into the emergent model attractive to Canada's other 'sensory historians.'

If a symphonic work is known to be over when the players fall silent, then Quebec's "Symphony of Progress" is still being composed, still being performed. In this sense, there is no quiet, comfortable sense of a conclusion. However, as Murray Schafer concluded in *The Soundscape*, "...all research into sound must conclude with silence – not the silence of negative vacuum, but the positive silence of perfection and fulfilment."⁹ So too our exploration must conclude, not with silence but with the sounds of Montréal's not-so-Quiet-Revolution still ringing in our ears.

⁹ Schafer: 262.

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