Université de Montréal

Disunion City:

The Fashion of Urban Youth in Montréal, Québec

par

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Abstrait

Ce petit échantillon d'une étude ethnographique, fait à partir de la méthode d'observation participante, interroge la nature de la tendance de la mode auprès de jeunes citadins au coeur d'un centre urbain francophone du Canada. Les participants identifient un « look » comme étant emblématique du Plateau, un arrondissement de Montréal qui est démographiquement divers et contenant beaucoup de commerces dynamiques.

Le Plateau a été promu par les organisations de la ville de Montréal comme le point central de la mode, arts et culture. Locaux ou simples touristes voient le Plateau comme un environnement aidant à la transformation personnelle et à l'autoréalisation, particulièrement chez les locaux de 18-30 ans. Plus particulièrement, les membres appartenant à cette tranche d'âge conçoivent leurs propres interprétations de la mode et participent à un certains nombres de projets créatifs en vue de réaliser d'authentiques et véritables expressions de soi. Cependant, à cause de la commercialisation de la mode présentée pour les consommateurs du Plateau, la jeune population perçoit le courant dominant du « hipster » comme n'étant plus l'authentique représentation à leur course à l'authenticité individuelle dans un monde en perpétuel globalisation. La chercheuse a découvert l'existence d'une idéologie de l'individu restreint à ce quartier.

Vu l'animosité présente parmi la population locale du Plateau pour le courant principal hipster, l'ensemble de ces données montrent qu'il y a un besoin d'une meilleure compréhension de la relation entre la commercialisation de la mode occidentale et de ces acheteurs au niveau de l'individu et au niveau local dans les espaces urbaine en perpétuel globalisation. Le contexte de la mode dans cet environnement est contraint par l'hypothèse de la valeur qu'être différent est imaginé et digne d'intérêt dans cette communauté si et seulement si quelqu'un est confiant au point de se tenir debout avec ses idéaux au milieu des autres.

Mots clés : Montréal, ethnologie, de la mode, l'authenticité, identité, anthropologie urbaine

Abstract

This small-scale ethnographic study conducted through methods of participant-observation investigates the nature of fashionable trends among a selected urban youth populace found in a large urban center in French-speaking Canada. Participants identify one "look" as emblematic of the Plateau, a demographically diverse and commercially dynamic borough.

The Plateau is promoted by its municipal organizations as a hub of Montreal's fashion, arts and culture. Locals and tourists treat the Plateau as an environment which facilitates the performance of self-realization and transformation, particularly among locals aged 18 to 30. Members of this age set appropriate fashionable dress and participate in many creative pursuits in order to make real authentic expressions of their embodied selves. However, as commercial fashions are introduced to local consumers, the youth perceives the mainstream "hipster" look to be an inauthentic representation of their quest to be authentically individual. The researcher discovers the existence of an ideology of individuality restricted to the boundaries of the borough.

Given the animosity present among the Plateau's local population for the mainstream hipster look, collectively these findings suggest there is a need to better understand the relationship negotiated between commercial Western fashion and its consumers at the level of the individual and in the local in ever globalizing urban spaces. The context of fashion in this environment is branded by the assumption that the value of being different is imagined and worthwhile in this community only if one has the confidence to stand alone within its disunion.

Keywords: Montreal, Ethnography, Fashion, Authenticity, Identity, Urban Anthropology

Table of Contents

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For Brad…

CHAPTER 1

The Research Problem

This research has to do with the relationship between fashion and authenticity for young people trying to succeed in increasingly diverse urban environments. We can begin to reflect on this relationship by looking at what has been written about fashion. "The fact that fashion is at the same time an (immaterial) idea and an (material) object makes all discussion [of its nature] partial and therefore limited to one aspect or the other" (Riello 2011:2). According to fashion historian Giorgi Riello, typically, there are two ways of approaching the subject of fashion, "historical" or "interdisciplinary." To come at fashion in the way of the former begs the researcher to accept more often than not, clothing, as the subject to be examined. By this logic, the evolution of fashion's material dimension is, theoretically, quite straightforward. One needs only to locate objects of fashion in clothing in order to arrive at an interpretive chronology of what could be termed "fashion history." Overall, this approach to the study of fashion is inductive. It leads the researcher to analyze the object as a material form, placing greater emphasis on the form or the role of individual designers and less emphasis on the larger social, political or economic context (2-3). Scholars such as Valerie Steele insist that it is inappropriate to interpret fashion as a collection of artifacts, or rather semiotic representations of social relations. Instead, it is "crucial to analyze the culture of fashion from several perspectives, not limiting ourselves to a narrative account of the creations of the great designers" (Steele 2005: 1).

Following the important early work of Simmel (1957) and later Bourdieu (1984), contemporary "fashion studies" takes an interdisciplinary rather than a historical approach to

the study of fashion's development, influence, and logic. This interdisciplinary approach to fashion intends to explain how fashion can exist, for example, as a negotiation on the part of consumers and as such, representative of their cultural ideals and/or standards (Svendsen 2006). More importantly, this approach allows for the potential of a nonrepresentational argument by way of tangible case studies of objects that are not necessarily clothing but nonetheless relevant to the study of fashion. Bodil Olesen's examination of blue jean's role in altering American normative values associated with ethical consumption and environmentalism (Miller and Woodward 2011: 69) is an example of such an approach. Olesen asserts campaigns for the donation of blue jeans such as those set off by Cotton Inc. propel consumers to make associations between the act of wearing blue jeans with values and ideals associated with American culture, such as patriotism or doing good for the environment (80).

This thesis uses what here is referred to as the interdisciplinary approach, given that consumers negotiate the identities they have constructed with the help of fashionable dress in tandem with the ideals put forth by the fashion industry. Authenticity becomes related to fashion in this instance because the consumer must determine what material and immaterial qualities of dress are authentically individual and which are just products of the system[1] (Woodward 2007). However, how shoppers cope with this relationship is becoming increasingly unclear, given "authenticity" is one of several brands' newest marketing strategies (Miller and Woodward 2011:186) such as Levi Strauss (Potter 2010:104-106). It should be noted that the object of my analysis is not an object in the material sense, rather it is a "look",

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[1]The fashion system is a category created to express the numerous industries associated with textile production, design, manufacturing and retail distribution of fashion's products (Tortora and Eurbank: 2005). This system is not to be confused with "fashion." Fashion's definition for the purpose of this thesis, presents adornment as neither a moral or ethical negotiation (Niessen and Brydon 1998: Introduction) the wearer must make in order to be fashionable.

commonly referred to as "hipster". This look is produced, sold, and consumed by various actors and institutions, not all of which are physically present in the place of my fieldwork (the Plateau of downtown Montreal). I am interested more in the "event" of this look than its "advent". In particular I argue that the animosity expressed about this look may make it possible to learn something about the way that young people in modern urban environments use the notion of authenticity in order to express something about identity. In doing so, my research focuses on fashionable objects that are seen and worn at the local level. The awareness at the local level of how to dress fashionably presumes fashionable looks are created both outside and within what Tortora and Eurbank term the "fashion system" (2005). At the point of sale it is the individual who chooses what they can and cannot wear to be stylish. Yet, Woodward (2007) acknowledges the choices consumers make regarding what to wear is necessarily influenced by what the fashion system deems appropriate.

As a study, this thesis will address the changing relationship between fashion and authenticity for young people trying to succeed in increasingly diverse urban environments. In order to document this relationship it is necessary to ask several secondary questions about the Plateau's urban landscape and what sort of fashions are found amongst the young people living in this area. Determining how research participants interpret the Plateau's boundaries in relation to other boroughs in Montreal will be the first step. Next, it is necessary to identify the fashionable "look" or looks specific to a segment of the Plateau's youth population and to determine in which contexts they are invoked. Once the "look" or looks have been identified we will be able to explore how to elicit knowledge about something so subjective and immaterial by investigating how one particular fashionable look, "hipster", is acquired among the young people who participated in my research.

These questions have been used as organizing principles for the ethnographic chapters of the thesis. Much of the material here explores the process of how young people in the Plateau negotiate a relationship between fashion and authenticity in an effort to perform the self. This connection will be made apparent by way of a discussion about how participants conceptualize authenticity as the creation of a valuable experience during their pursuit of fashionable lifestyles. In the following section 1.2, titled "Research Objectives" I will address these secondary research questions in greater detail. At the end of this chapter I will give a brief summary of the overall organization of the thesis, including some information about the preliminary results of my research.

1.1 Research Objectives

Mapping Montreal

The Plateau was chosen as the site of my ethnography because the city actively promotes this borough as the hub of the municipality's fashionable activity, not only in terms of fashion but also in other areas such as nightlife and culinary endeavors. However, it became apparent during fieldwork that knowledge of the boundaries of this borough depends to some degree on familiarity with the habits of the local population. Rather than rely only on maps provided by the city, or the resources of Federal and Provincial organizations, I decided to gain an understanding of the Plateau's geography and its relationship to fashion by focusing on local perceptions of the borough's geography and boundaries.

The Plateau, Montreal's population continuously fluctuates in part due to its proximity to three prominent universities in the province: Concordia University, Université de Québec à Montréal, and McGill University. Many of this borough's new faces are international students

who come from predominantly French speaking countries, or countries where French is a second language (Germain and Radice 2006), but also other parts of North America. Due to the sampling technique used to conduct this research, the sample population is not limited to students of these universities. However, the influence that student enrollment at these three universities has on the Plateau's local demographic is apparent. The majority of specifics regarding what percentages of these universities' populations are foreign-born will be presented in Chapter five. Here, I will provide several percentages concerning student enrollment at these universities. These statistics are premised on the idea that the Plateau, although characteristically urban in terms of its infrastructure and demographic diversity, has a village culture according to participants that is characterized by community-based behavior and intimate relationships.

McGill University located southwest of the Plateau and about 15 minutes by foot from this borough is composed of 37,835 students both full and part-time for the fall 2011 term. Of this figure, 54% claim Quebec residency, 25% are residents of the rest of Canada and 20% are international students (including the U.S.). Of the total student population 17.9% of students claim French as their first language. Concordia University's student enrollment is slightly higher in comparison to that of McGill. During the 2011/2012 academic year Concordia recorded their total student enrollment as 45,954. Of this figure, 53.7% of students claim English to be their mother tongue, while 21.4% claim their mother tongue to be French, and 24.9% list another language as their native language. 55.8% of students report using English in their day-to-day lives, while 25.4 % claim they use French. Lastly, UQAM located just steps from the Plateau reported 41,296 for the fall 2012 semester. Of this number 2951 were

international students coming from 89 different countries. All of these figures are available at the respective websites of these three universities.

These figures are of significance due to the Plateau's unified, yet slightly compartmentalized arrangement of ethnic groups. We will see in Chapter five, for example, how "the Main" (the commercial corridor that runs through the heart of the Plateau) functions as a division between the Francophone and Anglophone populations of this borough. As such, a degree of continuity with Montreal's history is observable, whether or not residents of different origins are conscious of this history.

In addition to those coming from abroad, a percentage of students at these universities are Canadian citizens who come to study from outside of the province of Quebec. Many of these students are aged approximately 18 to 30 (see chapter five). This section of the population contributes to the borough's ambiance by participating in the consumption and the dissemination of not just the borough's fashionable dress, but also in the perpetuation of the local nightlife, culinary endeavors, and various other recreational enterprises specific to the Plateau. This segment's influence on and by the local is emblematic of their collective performance of the Plateau's cosmopolitan identity (*ibid*.2006). This tendency to be "of Montreal" by acknowledging local boundaries and supporting enterprises found within the borough's limits is affected by this area of the city's deeper and more recent history. Generally speaking, the fluctuation of the youth population, a portion of which is university age students, has contributed to the reconfiguration of urban space and boundaries in the Plateau. As a result, this borough visibly embraces a series of trendy and popular scenes that are intended to be appropriated by the local youth and other members of the viewing public (Straw 2001).

If it is true as Bauman has argued that "the elusive goal of the modern space war was the subordination of social space to one and only one, officially approved and state-sponsored map" (Bauman 1998:31) then determining participants' geographic representation of the Plateau will make it possible to see the relationship between the practices of fashion (through a specific style, "hipster") and particular locations or social spaces. The question of whom or what is creating this style can be addressed through a discussion of where this look occurs or is performed. In chapters five and six, the hipster look is presented as both a physical and nonphysical unifier of urban youth, particularly those between the ages of 18 and 30 who live in the Plateau and who attend or have formerly attended a local university.

Participants in this research describe this look as specific to a particular district, even particular streets. In so doing, their active participation in the representation of their community's boundaries within Montreal's spatial geography is affected by what they consider to be significant with regards to fashion. Both dissemination and expression are key factors in the determination of fashion's relationship to authenticity. Participants' bounded spatial representations of the look's occurrence will be shown to be linked to a collective ideology concerning what is considered fashionable and why within this portion of the community this look is so recognizable.

Making Sense of Fashion

Western fashion is understood as having a global logic that manifests itself in particular localities (Eicher and Roach-Higgins 1992, Reischer and Koo 2004). However, less is known concerning fashion's role as a purely local phenomenon, a question that will be central to the analysis presented in this thesis. Despite being generally related to clothing and areas of dress,

fashion is not always something that is worn and fashionable people use more than clothing to express and interpret style (Svendsen 2006). Instead, fashionable or stylish people develop these competencies around certain "looks". *This thesis will focus on the articulation of the hipster look within the Plateau and the animosity associated with its popularization in fashionable dress.*

With the exception of sociologist Ashley Mears' (2011) examination of New York and London's fashion systems' cultural production of "look," in fashion studies and anthropology it is difficult to find a comprehensive analysis of what a look appropriated at the local level entails, despite the fact that the term commonly appears in theoretical and professional writing on the subject of fashion. I will not offer an etymology for the term look, however it remains an object that is at the center of my analysis. The material presented here will provide an ethnographic description of the hipster look, but also the ideology of the hipster look that coincides with its occurrence in a particular locality. My field research suggests that looks require time to develop because they are cultivated and they are visual but are not intended to be replicable. Participants in the Plateau described their community as being overtaken within the past decade by the prevalence of one look in particular. As we will see, this "hipster" look can very easily be construed as a generic label for a fashionable, young, urban-dwelling resident.

In this area of the city, the existence of particular lifestyle narratives affect shoppers' choices: the youthful, urban resident searches for the self by way of consuming local commodities. The origin of this narrative is debatable, but courtesy of the recent introduction of brands like "American Apparel" and the proliferation of publications promoting popular culture such as *Vice* or *Cult Montreal,* this narrative is part of the local's mainstream youth

culture in the Plateau. The acknowledgement and performance of this narrative within the Plateau by residents and non-residents is believed to construct new traditions of dress at the level of the local among certain youth. However, given fashion is a commodity to be bought or sold, the value of what one will pay to adhere to the doctrine of a brand's advertising strategy is subject to consumer discretion. Not only this, but shoppers are encouraged by particular marketing strategies to consider certain brands' products as authentically individual, rather than coming directly from a previous era in fashion history. *To what value can this authenticity be attributable, considering it is intrinsically problematic?*

Those who appropriate fashion's material products in the Plateau determine the relationship between fashion and the value of authenticity in this borough. In so doing, these actors approach the process of getting dressed by taking into account both their perspective of their dressed bodies and also anyone they can imagine is looking at them. Testimony provided by participants concerning the nature of the Plateau's fashion leads me to believe participants' conceptualize the act of dressing fashionably as a necessary part of the process of self creation. In light of these preliminary findings, the value of fashionable clothing is considered constantly changing and subjective. As such, it is the actual act of deciding—what one wants or prefers—that creates authenticity for participants, and not necessarily the presence of any particular object of fashion or purchase. Being fashionable concerns both the physical occurrence of dress and the imagination of its potential realization by consumers.

Fashion exists, and continues to do so, because it thrives on particular representations of society's traditions that are eventually transformed into valuable commodities; fashion is worthless if it fails to make statements and set precedents (Svendsen 2006: 113). From the

perspective of the fashion industry, products that claim to be good for everyone end up being undesirable. It is argued in Chapter six that American Apparel's image in Montreal is stigmatized in this way. Through an elaborate series of print and visual advertisements, this brand capitalizes on the essence of fashion's relationship to authenticity through the presentation of the hipster look as a sexualization of everyday life. This brand image seems to be a mainstream interpretation of hipsterism (Rouleau 2012). As such, many young people in the Plateau deem the brand's message as not only fake, but sometimes as an attack on what it means to be individual and local.

Given that fashion always blends elements of individualism and conformity (Smelik 2011), one has to decide for whom to dress: the self, other or the entire community. By making this choice, the consumer is also speaking to the community for which he is dressing in order to arrive at a satisfactory representation of his identity through fashion. It is for this reason that fashion's value, on the local level, could potentially be negative for the shopper. In this sense, participants speak about the purchase of fashionable items as not only an expression of the lifestyle they subscribe to, but also as a contribution to the formation and performance of the self (Miller 2008). As such, it is necessary to ask if fashionable experiences, despite their potential to be moral (Taylor 1989) monetarily and emotionally, are always classified as having a positive value for the consumer. Couture fashions, such as those of Jean Paul Gauthier, have been venerated in museums. They exists as unique, valuable artworks, not only as objects of clothing. These fashions are not supposed to be accessible to everyone. Otherwise, they would lose value conceptually. Brands such as American Apparel mass produce clothing and market the brand as a "lifestyle" not the clothing. This lifestyle is

purchasable and accessible to consumers, even if, among my sample, to shop for such clothing is considered a compromise to individual identity. I will explore why this is the case in Chapter six and later in the Conclusion to the thesis.

Participants' interpretation of value are significant with regards to understanding how people in the Plateau choose and perform a "look" as something individual or unique. Whether or not the look in question can be characterized with the term "hipster" alone is debatable. Overall, fashion and the habits of consumption associated with the term "hipster" can tell us a great deal about how we construct the self and individual space within local communities. Fashion is not just an extension of how we are perceived, but is also a representation of the choices we make and the way they are influenced by a larger cultural ethos. The conceptualization of the hipster look by the local youth population is a demonstration of the existence of anxiety associated with the process of self-realization (Woodward 2007) in the midst of acrimony. I will discuss this topic in the Conclusion.

Identifying the "Look"

Ethnographic evidence from the Plateau suggests that to be fashionable the consumer must perform with confidence, a "look" of "good taste" (see chapter 2). In the Plateau, the hipster look, at times an assemblage of fashion-forward attire, is not considered good "fashion" by everyone who lives in the Plateau. The reason for this tension between onlookers, those who acknowledge the hipster look, individuals performing themselves in fashion, and brands supplying "hipster" fashions is believed to be the fact that onlookers, do not understand what it is they are looking at when they see a hipster. Whenever participants were asked to define a hipster I received a long list of not just clothing, but activities and places associated

with this term. By observing manifestations of this look my intention is to better understand the reasons for animosity towards its expression in the local by locals.

One constraint associated with this study was the challenge of producing ethnographic material that would accurately describe the Plateau's identity as a fashionable borough. It is believed that the area's particular identity is part of what makes this part of the city appealing to outsiders: tourists, students, and various other sorts of temporary residents. This charm draws a specific sort of consumer, the hipster, to the district. Several exhibitions found within local museums in Montreal actively reinforce the Plateau's identity as a fashion-forward borough in terms of clothing, such as the McCord Museum's permanent collection of Costume and Textiles. The McCord Museum also held an exhibition dedicated to promoting Montreal's fashion week in February 2012. In addition, the publicity surrounding the 2011 Jean Paul Gaultier, Planète Mode exhibit featured in Downtown, Montreal at the Museum of Fine Arts is another example of this phenomenon.

In methodological terms, the main objective of this thesis is to document participants' responses to my interactions with them as a student-researcher. In so doing this ethnography is necessarily a story about what contributes to the Plateau's character as a fashionable space with stylish inhabitants. I will rely primarily on observations and interviews with people living in the Plateau, but I am also interested in public and official representations of the Plateau's "vibe," such as those found in Montreal's local museum exhibitions. The colloquialism "vibe" is mostly unexplored in terms of urban anthropology and the anthropology of fashion. Museums are important not only as public institutions, but as spaces of representation that attempt to speak, at least in part, to tourists and foreigners.

The proliferation of the hipster look/style is representative of a larger trend within Western fashion towards the fashion industry's commodification of "authenticity." Here, authenticity in fashion refers to the popularization of the image of consumers as constructed by the mainstream, and thus desire to perform his or her own version of himself or herself by way of fashionable objects (Smelik 2011). Whether the promotion of authenticity's desirability as a marketing tool encourages shoppers to value or devalue their relationship to the fashion system is not a new question consumers face. Fashion marketing today is undeniably based on the idea of individual authenticity, and consumers are aware of this fact. However, the degree to which a community's ideology is threatened by the presence of such marketing has yet to be addressed in fashion studies. In the Plateau, hipsters do not *self-identify* (a fascinating phenomenon that I will address in chapter 6 and the Conclusion), making it difficult to pinpoint the source or the spread of their look. It is my assumption consumers who identify with a fashionable look are uncomfortable with admitting their interpretations of certain styles are authentically individual. None of this study's participants admitted to being hipsters. However, several such as W admitted to involuntarily dressing like a hipster. For these reasons, an accurate depiction of a hipster's look is only possible in so much as participants speak about others they consider to be hipsters and not their own specific aesthetic tastes or moves.

The main concern of this ethnography is the motivation to dress fashionably, or even to look fashionable, in a physical and nonphysical sense. What motivates people to perceive another's fashionable existence as either authentic or inauthentic? What is more, why does this group applaud the former and condemn the latter? The analysis presented in the Conclusion

will explore whether or not fashion's newest trend, "authenticity," is a viable categorization for the expression and performance of the self, especially in globalizing urban spaces. Preliminary findings suggest that the Plateau is perceived by participants as an ideal place to perform authentic versions of themselves that cannot be replicated, in part because of the ephemeral qualities of its local fashions. The occurrence of the hipster look is found, not at specific times of day, but instead is perceived as a state-of-being and a way to consume fashion by participants.

Understanding how members of the local population can achieve this look will make it possible to understand the processes by which the look is replicated elsewhere. If this look has the potential to be copied amongst brands and consumers, then it should be possible to arrive at a clearer understanding of the relationship between fashion and authenticity with regards to the hipster look in the particular context of the Plateau. My participants' methodology of style and its application will be discussed in chapters six and seven.

In sum, Chapter two discusses how field research was conducted and how the sampling technique generated a hypothesis concerning fashion's relationship to authenticity in the context of the Plateau. Chapter three presents a review of literature on the subject of fashion's relationship to authenticity. This discussion will portray how theoretically one may ask questions regarding the ways in which consumers interpret the value of authenticity in relation to the performance of the self. In addition, this section presents the basis for the expression of "character" as a fashionable "look." Chapter four contextually situates Montreal geographically and historically in terms of Canadian, American and Quebec relations pre and post 9/11. This section also highlights several aspects of Montreal's local fashion scene.

Chapter five is the first of three chapters with ethnographic description. This section discusses the Plateau's demographic situation in detail using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. Chapter six presents how members of the Plateau's youth population perceive the Plateau as fashionable and how these individuals conceptualize value. Lastly, the Conclusion presents a hypothesis concerning how several participants interprets fashion's ideology and whether the terms *hipster*, *scenester* or *tag* are appropriate colloquialisms to express its principles. Concluding remarks will concern the conscious focus on uniqueness and creativity each participant aspires towards in the cultivation of their own look. The relationship between authenticity and ideal fashionable looks will be postulated to be located in the consumer's determination of what motivates the consumer to strive towards a particular ideal. Reasons as to why the hipster look resonates with the young and the Plateau will be discussed as well.

CHAPTER 2

Methods of Research

This chapter details the development of the research problem by looking in greater detail at the evolution of the field research. This description presents an account of how changes in my previously established criteria for the selection of participants, the subject of interviews and the opportunity I had to participate in the Plateau's local economy affected the nature and the objectives of my research. Relationships negotiated in the field helped to articulate the research question's viability in congruence with the limitations of the resulting anecdotal data.

I needed to figure out what participants thought they had succeeded or failed to do with regards to living fashionably in Montreal. The development of rapport during the different stages of participant observation permits the researcher to penetrate the lives of locals and create relationships that make it possible to gather information about their practices and beliefs. Given that many dimensions of practices associated with fashion are private (Woodward 2007) establishing rapport with the local population is particularly important. In order to address this study's main question--"How does fashion relate to authenticity for young people trying to succeed in environments of ever-increasing globalization and urban diversity?"--research involved a combination of both direct and unobtrusive modes of participant observation. The following section 2.1 discusses how field research was conducted in order to generate a hypothesis concerning fashion's relationship to authenticity in the ethnographic context of the Plateau.

2.1 Field Methods

I began fieldwork in the fall of 2011. Several months after the beginning of my research I realized what a former anthropology professor had said during a lecture years before. "Doing interviews" does not necessarily mean, "doing anthropology." Until January 2012, for me, the substance of my interviews was limited by the fact that I had neglected to determine exactly what information I was looking for. Through the process of participant-observation I came to understand later that participants' responses to questions were representative of several trends related to the Plateau, an area which is marketed as a space for individuals who, for example, associate positive value with the borough's culture of creativity and negative value with commercial fashion's sexualization of daily life through mainstream hipster dress.

From Winter 2011 until Summer 2012, performing fieldwork became about learning to conduct interviews that made it possible for research participants and myself to get to know one another's standards of value, personal tastes and or differing understandings of how these elements are related to being fashionable. The ethnographic description in the following chapters is a presentation of participants' ideologies of style which was made explicit by their responses to my presence in their lives. Given the subjective nature of the object of this study—individuals perceptions about what is and what is not fashionable—I needed to become good at having conversations about this topic in local terms in order to pinpoint its occurrence and the factors that motivate the event of its performance. I did not expect semi-structured interviews to fully describe the essence of the local population's culture of fashion. Thus I needed first to understand with whom I needed to speak concerning these matters and

determine some ground rules for why people in this community would agree to talk to me about such behavior.

The Participants: Criteria and Sampling Techniques

> "The person who *sees through* his playing partners to something beyond the understandings involved in their relationship, that is, does not take the game they are playing seriously, is a spoilsport whom one avoids" (Habermas e.g. Gadamer 1998:317).

This quotation relates to the ethnographer's role as a serious player in pursuit of knowledge, or from another point of view, data. This does not mean that it is necessary to agree with participants' testimony or beliefs. Rather it is necessary for the researcher to approach a dialogue with participants as an authentic experience of the present moment (Fabian 1996). In other words, take those who one elicits information from seriously. With this in mind, aside from one person who would eventually move in the winter of 2010, upon arrival I had no friends in the city of Montreal. Building a network was then just as necessary to make a comfortable space for myself within this locality, as it was to successfully acquire community-based knowledge (Peacock 2008). The art of meeting new people and finding a way to incorporate them into one's life is a skill that ethnographers perfect and it is one that I am still learning to do. As my research progressed I became more comfortable with this skill.

In the fall of 2010 I came to Montreal to document the relationship between commercial fashion, the body and globalization through an understanding of the expansion of Victoria's Secret consumer products from the United States to Canada. During this stage of my research, I intended to work with people between the ages of 18 and 30, who consider themselves female and who were students at a university located in Montreal. In addition, I looked for individuals who had been residing in this city for at least five years, if not natives

who spoke French or English. After preliminary canvassing in September 2011, which entailed randomly approaching individuals on the street, explaining the project, which was then about women's underwear, a sample of qualified participants had been gathered[2]. Overall, the experience was positive. The project advanced at a good pace and my French improved during the course of research. I managed to move into a new apartment on St. Dominique and Prince Arthur, a very busy area of the Plateau with a bubbly 25-year-old, bleach-blonde girl from Nova Scotia. Nonetheless, as time went on, the primary focus of the research began to change. This shift in focus was not due to my lack of interest in the initial subject, but primarily because I began to make new friends and navigate in different social networks.

By December of 2011, several of my new friends became interested in my research on underwear and this seemed to facilitate friendly relations. I was integrated into their group based on their perception of me as somewhat of an oddity that needed to be guided by them in order to successfully integrate the community of the Plateau Mont-Royal. By December of 2011, I had made the decision to abandon my random sampling technique in favor of a snowball sampling method at the advice of two friends; these two friends became key informants. I valued their opinions regarding the sampling technique given their fluency with the ephemeral qualities of the Plateau's "look" and their popularity among the locals. Both led me through this transformation by introducing me to new people and scenes that would eventually lead to the generation of an entirely new research question centered on the Plateau's

[2]In order to discern how women in Montreal negotiate a reciprocal relationship in an age of globalization between commercial fashion items and the production of the self as manifest in one's physically dressed body, consumption habits of products by subsidiaries of Limited Brands, Victoria's Secret and La Senza were initially examined in 2011.

look and feel and how people who live there make links between the place and a particular way of being fashionable.

Anonymity was promised to all those involved in my research. Following a series of consultations with the people who participated in my research, I decided to give participants aliases composed of letters and numbers (for example "O" or "A1"). Given it was often the first time I had ever sat down with the participant alone, I did not feel comfortable giving them a pseudonym such as Jane or Antoine. Instead, I asked what they would like to be called during the research process in an effort to encourage their participation in the research. If participants opted for me to choose the alias, out of convenience I used letters and numbers to categorize their testimony on tape. Only two participants chose to formulate their aliases. I learned later that very often aliases are assigned much later in the research process, usually closer in time to the process of writing up research results. I also understand the use of letters and numbers is somewhat unconventional in ethnographic writing and that this decision may make some readers uncomfortable, perhaps because numbers and letters can be perceived of as dehumanizing. Nonetheless, I decided to retain this nomenclature for the following reasons: Firstly, the majority of individuals who participated in this research were acquaintances who I intentionally developed friendships with over the course of research. The continued use of the nomenclature referenced above helped me to better establish boundaries in regards to when and how to speak to a "research participant" as opposed to when and how I could continually encounter and cultivate personal relationships with these same individuals after the collection of ethnographic data had ended. Secondly, I preferred the use of numbers and letters as they are, to a certain degree, more objective in the case of the Plateau's demographic. Many individuals residing in this borough have names which reference more than one of their

families ethnic origins and identities. For example, I was uncertain as to whether or not I should assign only English or French aliases to Allophone participants.

In September 2011, my interviews began to touch upon much more than fashion in clothing. As a result, every interaction I had seemed relevant to my research. The beginning and end of fieldwork was often blurred by my failure to distinguish what constituted participation-observation as I began to allocate time and effort towards producing a new sample based on the instincts of my key informants. Informant, like *anthropologist*, is a particular nomenclature. It designates a specific sort of character to occupy a particular purpose outside of everyday practice. Informing me, the non-native, was not necessarily a privilege for them as much as a favor to me. In essence, the term *informant* is not enough to describe our relationship, which went beyond the data we shared for the purposes of completing this thesis. Participants were able drop out of the project at anytime, for any reason, and in this case their testimony was abandoned.

A *key informant* is a means of conducting fieldwork (Bernard: 2011), not just a person. Specifically, the participant who came to be known as "O", provided emotional support during the transformation of my initial subject and this was invaluable. The participation the person who became known as "A1" (as well as that of O) was essential to my integration and familiarity with scenes of day and night life in the Plateau. Both O and A1 insisted on finding people for me to talk to once they learned of my interest in perceptions about fashionable dress. A1 was a promotional model and often told stories of her experiences marketing fashion and other commodities to the public in Montreal and across Canada. O provided insights specific to the Plateau daily life such as how to be friendly with locals, what is valued in the community in terms of dress and how his adult life has been affected by living in this area of

the city. Both also expressed interest in being interviewed. In sum, the contributions of participants O and A1 saved me a great deal of time and energy, but also illuminated an aspect of living in the Plateau that I had not yet experienced. O and A1 made me aware of how particular players within the community are able to facilitate and orient the research process if they consider a relationship with the researcher as mutually beneficial.

Kevin Dwyer, in his book *Moroccan Dialogues,* advises that the anthropologist's responsibility is to ask what the relationship between the anthropologist and the participant is built upon. In addition he asks what significance such a relationship has for the practice of anthropology. For example, O and I did not have our first recorded interview until February 2nd, 2012. Befuddled, once he told me not to use my "interview voice", our informal conversation gave our dialogue a breath. I am not certain, but suspect, given the evidence to be presented later, O found me valuable because I provided for him an alternative to his daily routine. He knew no one else pursuing a degree in the anthropology. I believe A1 found me valuable because eventually, my research topic provided an outlet for her to exist as an authority during her process of self-reflecting on her relationship to fashion, sales and life in the Plateau.

I met O in the fall of 2011 after being introduced by my roommate, the blonde girl, A1. In the case of O, accepting his contributions to the project was difficult. I had never intended for him to be part of the research given my initial focus and previous sampling criteria. He knew he did not conform to my original research sample. However, he wanted me to meet all his friends after learning about my personal interest in fashion and city life. Events to be discussed later led me to open up to O and vice versa. His earnestness to participate resulted in the implementation of a snowball sampling technique that made explicit a particular

population of young people within the unit of analysis. O would say, "Oh, she is perfect for your thing Chels." The same approach to getting involved with the study was true of A1. I put trust in the testimony and recommendations of these two participations. Both O and A1 had a great deal to say about their respective scenes, in part because of their relative marginality within these scenes (a topic I will discuss below). Between October 2011 and June of 2012 I met and interviewed some of their closest friends in the city.

Lastly, O and A1 became key participants not only because of the activities and people with whom they put me in contact, but also due to their particular position within the Plateau's community. For example, although admired for his "coolness" by some locals in the Plateau, the majority of O's closest friends are not from Montreal. He asserts often there is no one worth meeting from this city, especially the Plateau. In fact, the first time we met he refused to speak to me later admitting he is apprehensive to meet foreigners and locals outside of immediate circle of friends and acquaintances. He thought I was, "just another Plateau girl" meaning a hipster. O has developed ill feelings towards this area's local residents. For example, he told me he hated school. In 1988, after immigrating to Montreal, while encountering first grade, his classmates picked on him for being different. He did not understand why people were mean. Contrary to O, A1 is from outside of Montreal. She seemed quite fashionable given her primary occupation is promotional modeling, which gave her access to her multiple networks and professional benefits. Despite being well known in the Plateau, she was not well liked by many locals. During the several months we lived together it was apparent she could feel this distance from the community. It troubled her. Yet, despite it all she tried to make Montreal work for her. In sum, through O I met participants, C, S, W, Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens. A1 introduced me to participants N, NR and O. Through my

explorations in the community I met participants L, V, SH, M, ML and MR. In total, I have 15 participants with a mean age of 25 (excluding NR and W who are over 30, and as such outliers), eight of whom are Montreal natives and the remaining seven are from other parts of Canada, all of whom I would characterize as permanent residents of the Plateau (people who have attempted to make their lives here and intend to stay for a longer period of time). This definition for permanent residents will function throughout this thesis as the definition for "local." Only Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens identified themselves as Anglophone while the remaining ten referred to themselves as: Francophone, Allophone or Bilingual in French and English.

Two individuals O introduced me to were his bandmates and friends Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens. These participants were the only two who opted to choose their own aliases. Their familiarity with the indie music scene in Montreal contributes largely to the subject of the final chapter concerning the difference between fashionable actors and those subscribing to the hipster look. Their clothing (acquired by thrift), living arrangements (formerly a damp basement with a hole in the floor for a toilet near Parc Jeanne-Mance, now an expansive, somewhat rundown loft in St. Henri), age (early twenties), education (recent graduates of Dawson College and Concordia University), origins (Canadian, but not Quebecois), professions (musicians), or put more generally, their *lifestyle* was typical of what I refer to as "locals" of the Plateau. Through conversations and observation of like-minded people in the Plateau, I came to gradually understand the tight-knit relationship between fashion, youth and a particular urban landscape.

When interviewing participants, questions had to address their lives, not just what I thought I wanted to know about their lives. Approaching interviews in this way allowed for

31

patterns in the ideology of participants' personal tastes to emerge. I began asking participants not just about how they dressed and why, but why they found fashion a fulfilling practice and outside of fashion in dress how they found ways to create value in their own lives.   Out of the twenty interviews conducted between January and June of 2012, everyone interviewed seemed to take pleasure in our discussions. I did not, however, eliminate the initial interviews on women's underwear that took place in the fall of 2011. They were kept, some data being extracted from them, but were mostly used as examples of what had not worked so far in the course of research. All participants were asked on tape if our meetings could be recorded and why he or she decided to participate. The final interview was recorded on June 12th, 2012.

The final sample was not restricted to a particular sex or gender. I preferred Canadians, especially residents of the Plateau and university graduates given these individuals described living in Montreal as a space conducive to the realization of personal transformations. A set age was desired (18-30). Two exceptions were made: participants W (35) and NR (40). Noting Western fashionable dress does appear to favor the young, W and NR proved young at heart. Their perspectives concerning the fashion industry, Montreal's geographic relationship to the rest of North America, and Canadian politics were helpful in that their testimony helped me understand what questions I needed to ask regarding such factor's relationship to fashion in Montreal. They also provided, in theory, a more historical perspective and a kind of generational cross-comparison in relation to other participants' testimony.

In 2008, Montreal was designated the 16th most liveable city in the world and "Canada's cultural capital…" by the Economist and CNN International for its unbounded variety of leisure activities, outdoor spaces and community initiatives, as described by *Tourism*

Montreal. Still, what do these activities entail? More importantly, is a particular demographic perceived as the beneficiaries of these cultural events? Is the Plateau the same as Montreal?

The Interviews: Questions and Responses

Several participants expressed the desire to participate in focus groups for this study. However, due to time constraints and conflicting schedules focus groups were not feasible. In future research I think this option would be very useful for gathering information about fashion. In my case, such an activity might have allowed the researcher to discern the negotiation of multiple interpretations for a look's successful performance and how such performances contribute to the realization of personal and community values in the presence of other community members.

Interview questions concentrated on identifying trends between the five W's (where, when, why, what, who) and how participants conceptualized style and its importance in their lives. Interviews began by establishing:

> Where research participants originated from
> When they arrived
> Why they came to or remain in Montreal
> What is the Plateau?
> Where do they shop for clothes?
> Who do they hang out with?
> What do they consider valuable in their lives?

Interviews followed this structure. Participant's responses to these questions generated the central questions and objectives detailed in Chapter one. Participants, depending on their expertise and roles within their community, created associations between fashion, themselves and the Plateau in varying ways. However, all mentioned a disdain for what they referred to as the Plateau-going, "hipster, scenester and tag." Their mentioning of this title prompted me to ask, "What is a hipster?" or "Could you describe a hipster for me?"

33

As O and A1 introduced me to people throughout the research, this made it possible for me to conduct more interviews and become more comfortable with my place in the neighborhood. Interviews were conducted in either English or French depending on the participant's first language. All meetings were done one on one with the exception of one meeting which involved two participants. Overall, the nature of interviews was relaxed and informal. Participants were not compensated monetarily. On average, interviews lasted for one hour. I allowed conversations to go where they went as long as they adhered to the theme: Personally, how valuable is fashion to your self-expression and how do you create something valuable?

Unobtrusive Methods

This thesis relies on a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. Participants were one of the sources of qualitative data, not quantitative. As a result, comparisons of participants based on various demographic factors such as income or age will not be made. However, such identifiers will be used to contextualize participants' relationship to the fashion and the urban landscape of the Plateau. In tandem with interviews, I actively sought out experiences away from or separate from participants. These activities resulted in my familiarity with the local community outside of my participants' circle of friends and acquaintances. The following unobtrusive methods to data collection were used not as a means to establish ethnographic facts. Instead, these side activities served my efforts to understand the more transient qualities of life in the Plateau. These experiences were gained in a number of different personal and professional contexts: working in the Plateau's bilingual customer service industry, relating to new residents' experiences and hesitations associated with their

determination to assimilate to the local culture, and writing about fashion for an audience outside of anthropology.

I became involved in several community activities in the Plateau between Summer 2011 and the present: volunteer receptionist at a yoga studio, volunteer French teacher for recent immigrants at a community center in the Plateau, a waitress in several popular restaurants on the St. Laurent Boulevard, a fashion blogger and freelance model. Some of these activities are directly related to fashion, while others concern life in the Plateau more generally. In addition, I was able to practice French during most of these occupations. These activities forced me to learn how to work in an office, how to give recent immigrants the confidence to start speaking in a foreign language, how to sell food in French and English, how write about fashion for general audiences, and how one can promote one's self in the fashion industry. On several occasions, O joined me. We worked together to teach the French class from the fall 2011 until summer 2012. Until becoming involved with these activities as a form of research rather than as hobbies or work experience, I did not understand what it meant to live in the Plateau. As Volosinov argues, passive listeners cannot understand the meaning of words (1973). So it goes for ethnography. Due to my interactions with participants and participation in the Plateau's community, this ethnography came to concentrate more on an understanding of fashion's logic as an echo of certain behaviors capable of cultivating the self, rather than focusing only on how specific sorts of individuals appropriate certain fashion items.

"Fieldwork is not only the subject of controversies once it is done; it should be recognized as being confrontational *while* it is done and the same goes for each of the steps we take when we document, interpret, and present ethnographic knowledge" (Fabian 2008: 118).

Given I had to confront myself in a role I had never played before in order to accomplish this research, doing fieldwork made me uncomfortable. In order to do this I had to let people know why I came here alone and what pursuing a M.Sc. in anthropology has to do with them. Eventually, once we started it was hard to let each other alone. However, it is also true that "We need not to be let alone. We need to be really bothered once in a while. How long is it since you were really bothered? About something important, about something real?" (Bradbury 1953:52). The genuineness of fashion's existence in the local, as a fundamentally social activity, was made apparent by participants' animosity towards the popularization of the mainstream hipster look. This look's sexualization of everyday life made participants uncomfortable given their awareness of its performance involved them seeing part of themselves in people who were "outsiders", appropriating a particular style or state-of-being.

CHAPTER 3

Fashion and Authenticity: A Conceptual Framework

The intimate relationship between fashion and authenticity is apparent in the culture of fashion's production, dissemination and consumption. This thesis will argue that authenticity is a model for a way of dressing, not just a characteristic present in objects of clothing. As contemporary brands such as American Apparel impart interpretations of authenticity onto the clothing they produce with the intent to further capital gains, the consumer is positioned to question authenticity's value. If authenticity's worth is tangible in the context of mass-produced western fashionable dress how does its value manifest from the perspective of the consumer?

As individuals pursue the expression of their selves by consuming items of fashion, shoppers are situated as mediators between a brand's claim to authenticity's connoisseurship and fashionable clothing's capacity to appeal to the consumer who chooses clothing to perform the self. Contemporary western clothing designers and brands present authenticity as a quality associated with products of intrinsically high value for consumers seeking to express themselves as one of a kind (Smelik 2011). As a characteristic, according to Smelik, authenticity is arguably the newest ideal standard for shopper's appropriation of western fashionable clothing and lifestyles. Yet, despite its appearance within the materiality of today's fashion brands authenticity is not guaranteed with purchase.

For the purposes of this review, fashion is assumed to be more than a matter of clothes (Svendsen 2006:11). In the analysis that follows, fashion in clothing will be treated as both a medium for and a product of the expression of consumer ideologies of individuality. The

authority of these claims will be addressed through texts referring to the study of fashion, authenticity, and youth in the fields of fashion studies, anthropology and western philosophy.

3.1 Authenticity: Fashion's Newest Standard

Ideally, an authentic person, place or situation should produce layers of recognition within the viewer (Svendsen 2006:126-130). We will see later in Chapters five, six and seven, how western fashion uses everyday images and objects in order to create an aura of authenticity, thus making this characteristic trendy. With this in mind, the discourse of fashion claims to describe particular worlds comparable with Ricoeur's discussion of narrative identity's role as a mediator (1991) between the events of discourse and action (1986:206-213). In addition, Charles Taylor's evaluation of narrative will be presented later in an effort to better understand the process the consumer engages in, in order to create a character of the self. I argue an individual's character is what is being expressed when one who dresses fashionably seeks to perform authenticity. According to Ricoeur the concept of character is informed by narrative (1992:142-143). In order to understand how consumers interpret the value of authenticity in relation to the use of fashion to perform the self, we must first determine where fashion and authenticity's narrative begins within fashion's discourse. Afterwards, we may then address the expression of character as a "look".

This chapter addresses fashion's use of authenticity as a marketing tool. However, the scholarly literature about consumers' relationship to fashion acknowledges the impact of these selling strategies on style. Today, authenticity is not just a stylish item, but also a way of putting together the self through dressing. The act of dressing involves the consumer's desire to embody individual style through the act of narrating the self with the help of clothing.

Taylor refers to narrative as, "…a notion of how we have become, and of where we are going" (1989:47). This characterization implies narratives illustrate the direction human life can take in the past, present and future. Taylor goes on to say "…in order to have an identity, we need to have an orientation to the good, which means some sense of qualitative discrimination, of the incomparably higher" (1989:47). Regarding fashion's performance, the direction Taylor describes shares a relationship with what Ricoeur terms as character. Characters are those who imitate action during the event of discourse, specifically the events of spoken and written language (Ricoeur 1992:143). If the performance of the individual by way of fashion is comparable to discourse, and consumers are actors of this discourse we can view the process of fashionable dress for individual consumers as the language, of character production. However, written and spoken language are both part of fashion's discourse. In assuming a comparison between the material and immaterial performance of fashionable dress one wonders to whom or what we owe the existence of authenticity's narrative in western fashion. The answer becomes more elusive as globalization prompts shoppers to continue to embrace the differences in tastes in fashionable dress. Nonetheless, the intelligibility of being fashionable depends on what Ricoeur and Taylor describe as the mutual recognition of "us" through our interactions with others. In terms of fashion, this means a stylish look cannot be seen as authentic unless one's self and others see it as such, but in so doing recognize the look as oriented towards good taste.

Fashion in dress is a culturally specific category that "prioritizes 'becoming' over merely being" (Kaiser 2012:20). Both a style's image and its materiality should then be envisioned as capable of transforming the wearer's self into a genuine or ersatz version of an authentic or stylish individual. Fashionable style is perceived as a relatively accessible

narrative for individuals to represent a sense of who they are becoming (2010:20). As a result, rather than being an essential quality located within clothing's materiality, the responsibility rests on the wearer to convince others his or her use of stylish dress is "authentic." Therefore the purchase value of fashion items is only part of what qualifies such commodities as having value in terms of authenticity.

Certain scholars have referred to "fashion" as a distinctive system for the production and marketing of attire that emerged in the modern West (Breward 1998, Brydon and Niessen 1998, Scott 2005). However, fashionable clothing has been subject, like many other global commodities, to the effects of globalization. As a consequence, its sizing systems, aesthetics and governing logic, have effectively been globalized (Tomlinson 1999), decentralized (Kearny 1995:548), and made transnational (Skoggard 1998:58-60). Yet, what keeps fashion going, what defines its essence, according to George Simmel, is the interplay between consumers' desires to be of and/or not of (1904) its standards and norms.

When referring to fashion, some scholars address the changing tastes in dress as encouraged by different historical contexts (Breward 1995). Others wonder if the processes of imitation (Simmel 1904, 2004), differentiation (Veblen 1953, Barthes 1983) and negotiation (Svedsen 2006:115-119) associated with fashion's appropriation are motivated by the pursuit of self-indulgent enhancement (Edmunds 2010) or by the gendered politics of personal appearance (Scott 2005). Svedsen (2006:9-11) asks if such practices are universal and what sorts of effects these pursuits have on fashion itself and on particular material forms of clothing such as denim (Miller and Woodward 2011). According to Grant McCracken "consumer goods are one of the most important templates for the self" (2005:3). Given fashion is an event to be performed it seems logical that fashionable style would be related to

the way that individuals construct or narrate their individual identities. However, to be authentically "you" in the realm of fashion also requires consumers to adhere to a process governed by the same principles of imitation and differentiation (Simmel 1957) evident within an individual's pursuit of authenticity in the context of Western Enlightenment thought and modernity (Taylor 1989).

How, why and when this shift occurred, from the authenticity of the fashion industry to the authenticity of consumer style, has yet to be postulated in fashion studies. For the time being it would seem that fashion theorists are primarily concerned with how to explain Western fashion in terms of the concepts of "performance" and "authenticity." Anneke Smelik (2011), addresses authenticity in fashion in terms of Gidden's ideas on the "self" (1991). Yet, she notes western fashion exists as a spectacle (Smelik 2011: 82) to be seen and appropriated. Smelik feels it is hopeless for consumers express authenticity by trying to be themselves in fashion because the former quality implies those who dress fashionably are those who are dressing to be seen. If we are seen, our identity is not clandestine and becomes subject to recognition visible as a copy viewed by Smelik as inauthentic. According to this model, which can be read as deeply pessimistic, the consumer's desire for authenticity is insatiable given consumers keep searching for authenticity in fashion.

Smelik situates "authenticity", historically as a product of existential philosophy (77). She argues that consumers are expected to perform authenticity by outwardly portraying their identity for others and themselves. Smelik's commentary is interesting because it enables a bottom up approach to the interpretation of fashion's logic. Such a view allows the theorist to understand an individual's agency in relation to the profit-based logic of capitalist enterprise and global economic structures. Smelik concurs with Tulloch that this logic pushes consumers

41

of fashionable items to document their lives through the appropriation of collectively influenced style-narratives (*ibid*). The popularization of the fantasy of the "authentic" then becomes about much more than the self. It is a cultural or social issue (Entwistle 2009) just as much as it is a question pertaining to the self.

What is at stake then for the consumer is the authentic representation of his personality, his "essence," not his definition of fashion. The expression of an authentic self could be affected by the capacity a shopper has to appropriate objects of quality thereby marking the self as "distinctive" or "distinguished" (Bourdieu 1984). For Simmel (1957), society sets such standards. For both Bourdieu and Simmel, standards of quality are seen as essentially tied to distinctions based on social class. In particular, Simmel articulates individuals' motivations for seeking differentiation from others as the result of historical context, comparing the project of dressing fashionably with that of a framed image. He states,

> "fashion…is a product of class distinction and operates like a number of other forms...Just as the frame of a picture characterizes the work of art inwardly as a coherent, homogeneous, independent entity and at the same time outwardly severs all direct relations with the surrounding space, just as the uniform energy of such forms cannot be expressed unless we determine the double effect both inward and outward, so honor owes its character, and above all its moral rights, to the fact that the individual in his personal honor at the same time represents and maintains that of his social circle and his class…Thus fashion on the one hand signifies union with those in the same class…and…the exclusion of all other groups (544).

Rather than continue to focus on why people seek to differentiate themselves from other, I would like to draw attention to Simmel's observation of how to qualify the value of fashionable dress. He asserts fashion's value within a historical context is contingent upon an individual's performance of the following three interrelated categories expressed in dress: utility, difference, and ideas. Simmel affirms it is the role of the individual to utilize these three categories in a way that makes social distinction possible (ibid). Similarly, Lars

Svendsen notes that shoppers appropriate dress after it is already charged with the symbolic value standard of "fashionable." What is more, for Svendsen fashion-based identity exists only in the now, and not in the future or past. Nonetheless, I would argue that in order for a consumer to be fashionable today he has to successfully emulate the fashion system's interpretation of authenticity at any given historical moment. Undoubtedly there is a great deal of diversity surrounding public narratives about authenticity (Bendix 1997). In Bendix's discussion of "...the essentializing search for national or individual character" (123) present within the commodification of folk melodies in the Americas we see the concept of authenticity portrayed as a type of experience that can be appropriated by consumers of folk music. Bendix presents folk melodies as having the potential to be bought and sold by those interested in collecting an authentic experience of a culture (143-153). Kaiser (2012) characterizes the consumption of fashionable items similarly. She states "...styled-fashioned-dressed bodies tell political, creative and cultural stories whose endings escape our grasp and extend our reaches" (194). She continues on insisting individuals "style themselves in ways that articulate their most recent thoughts about who they are (becoming)" (192). Here she insists fashion is locally constructed and distributed globally (193). From Bendix and Kaiser we may view the experience of authenticity in fashionable dress today as possible, but affected by globalization at the level of the local.

Through a historical analysis of transformations in San Juanense ceramics, Les Field examines the concept of authenticity as related to specific periods in history (2009:508). Referencing Walter Benjamin's 1936 essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Field discusses the role of authenticity in individuals' reception of art works. Benjamin was interested in the qualities of the "copy" rather than being concerned, like

Adorno, with questions of standardization, industrialization and alienation as presented by White (2011:105). White's interpretation of Adorno's understanding of alienation in relation to aesthetic is particularly relevant to the material and immaterial dimensions of fashionable commodities. He clarifies that Adorno acknowledges not that art exposes alienation, but instead that alienation is contingent upon the existence of aesthetic (106) which, in order to be understood in relation to the standardization of popular culture should not be taken as a result of a consumer's critical reflection (108) regarding popular music's aesthetic, but instead as a quality inviting the viewer to develop rapport with the corporeal and/or immaterial manifestations of popular culture's (*ibid*) products. For Benjamin, the ability to copy a work of art constituted a new development of the early twentieth century. From this point of view, a copy of an artwork, by virtue of being a copy, necessarily calls into question the authenticity of the original (Field 2009:509). According to Field, this creates the possibility to consider authenticity in four ways: ethnographic authenticity, authentic original high art, engineered authenticity and brand-named authenticity (2009:509-511). All four are pertinent to the analysis I will present in this thesis. Nonetheless, and perhaps it is a result of Field's chosen objects of analysis, he chooses not to make a link between the producers of authentic objects and the individuality of people who consume such items. For Field, time and space are historically charged but empty of subjective experience.

Joanne Entwistle (2000) remains one of few fashion theorists to identify historical changes between "fashion" and the project of the self. Entwistle speaks to the ever-present gaps in fashion theory and cultural studies' theory by making a case for the idea of clothing as lived experience. Starting from a discussion of how the relationship between dress and body is socially mediated, she investigates the garment industry's dissonant relationship between its

44

products' formation and consumption. Unfortunately, she makes no attempt to bridge the gap between studies of the "fashion system" and a semiotic approach to the reading of style and image through fashion. She finds interpretations of the latter are intimately linked to the idea that the individual influences fashion in addition to being a product of fashion (ibid 2000).

For Entwistle, the fashion system creates needs for the individual, but it does not need the individual, but instead consumers of individuality. In any case, the reader is left wondering what, if any relationship exists between the fashion system and its alienated products (2000). One might guess the link can be found in the opportunities created by the democratization of fashion for consumers to express themselves as individuals. Entwistle's observation is also the reason why fashion's relationship to authenticity remains subjective. Shoppers are yearning for what Regina Bendix characterizies as, "…the craving for experiences of unmediated genuineness" (1997:8). Fashionable experiences, although externally mediated, are generated internally. "Fashion, like culture, is both a social process and a material practice" (Kaiser 2012:12).

The externalization of the self (Gell 1998) is central to various discourses of western fashion. An object's relationship to the self was not taken seriously in anthropology until Daniel Miller began to observe how objects transform subjects by way of pattern habits of consumption. The standard of an object's economic value, he says, deteriorates as a shopper includes it into his everyday life (Miller 1998:8). Following Miller's reasoning, and basing her observations on ethnography of women's closets in London Sophie Woodward concludes garments of fashionable dress are essential to understanding a woman's relationship to the act of getting dressed. However, scholars must also examine for whom an individual is dressing. In the context of her ethnography, Woodward seeks to identify who women think are looking

at them during the act of dressing. For Woodward, knowing how women view themselves in relation to their onlookers will allow us to better understand why women wear what they wear. In relation to authenticity, Woodward concludes,

> "…Many layers of viewing…are present within the reciprocal relations of seeing and being seen. Women see themselves through the fantasy image in their own minds, fuelled by past successes, good photographs…and comments. They consider their reflected dressed body in terms of what they aspire to look like, which may in turn be refracted through wider media images of body ideals" (2007: 99-100).

A fashionable self is one with an identity communicated through clothing choice to these many layers of viewing Woordward describes. It not necessary for a fashionable self to adhere to what is deemed fashionable by media images. Overall, Woodward's ethnographic analysis exhibits her participants' anxiety to choose what to wear for specific contexts. At times, her participants insist they have nothing to wear because of participant-specific issues surrounding gender, the body, sexuality, and individuality (2007). Woordward presents these issues as those that are not always tangible for the consumer, but rather as imagined during the process of dressing. What Woodward's ethnography adds to fashion studies is what Entwistle fails to account for: the link between the fashion system and semiotics is the individual.

Globally, studies of fashion seem to burn the candle at both ends. On the one hand the macro-level issues of production and dissemination need to be addressed given how both influence fashion's relationship to consumers (Breward 1995). On the other hand, the individual's role in the appropriation of fashion items cannot be underestimated. In theoretical terms but also in terms of praxis these perspectives cannot be seen as mutually exclusive. Both are propelled by capitalist ideology to continuously create, sell, and destroy (Adorno and Berstein 2001:70). This becomes clear when we look at shopping, which seems to occur for consumers between production and destruction in the fashion system, clearly to be understood

46

as a socially affected process (Miller 1998). Yet, the degree to which an "authentic" choice in fashionable dress can be considered, "…a desirable state of being" (Bendix 1997:25) cannot be measured scientifically. Very often the choice about what is fashionable boils down to a "yes" or "no" decision for the consumer affected by their perception of what fashion is, what it should be or could be. Since, as Simmel (1957) observes fashion's distinctiveness diminishes as it spreads, the extent that mass production and standardization have stemmed fashion's potential to negotiate a relationship with the individual consumer by providing to shoppers the opportunity to decide what is fashionable for them personally is unknown.

Fashion theorist Simona Segre Reinach acknowledges in her article titled "If you Speak Fashion You Speak Italian: Notes on Present Day Italian Fashion Identity" authenticity is not solely a question of determining provenance. Reinach explains in a globalized world the proliferation of "national fashions" has augmented among contemporary brands and retailers in Italy. According to Reinach, authenticity was used in the 1980s by Italian designers as something reminiscent of the Italian Renaissance's association with artisanal creativity (2010:59). In contrast, Smelik seems willing to disregard the potential for authenticity in fashion, declaring, "…there really is no such thing as authenticity…[it] is a way of talking about things in the world, a way of making judgments, staking claims, and expressing preferences about our relationships to one another, to the world, and to things" (2011:13). Potter (2010) addresses the sinister nature of an "inauthentic existence" by proposing a distinction between something genuinely authentic and the fake authentic. Concerning the former, he states, "the implicit authentic is far more pernicious, because its status as a genuine experience or product or service is not in question" (135). According to Reinach, authenticity is something to be situated at the level of global markets and modes of production. In this

analysis, the globalization of Italian fashion complicates Italian marketing of authentic fashions given that luxury brands such as Armani are produced in China and ready to wear fashions are produced in Italy, often by Chinese factories that have relocated there (2010).

3.2 Authenticity is Good Taste

According to Potter (2010), in 18th century Western Europe the pursuit of consumerism became equated with the desire to be virtuous. With the increasing democratization of the market, the middle class began to engage in leisure activities and increased spending activities. During the same period, individuals, not just the middle classes, became "fashion conscious" (Breward 1995:112). In the late 18th century, the fashion industry continued to develop new trends, but the speed with which new trends were procured and passed on for new ones augmented substantially (Kaiser 2012:35-40). As Andrew Potter notes, "one person's consumption is another person's production" (2010:39). According to Breward, the occurrence of this style revolution in the 18th century allowed for the eventual broadening of fashionable tastes among 19th century consumers (*ibid*.147). In addition, the dissemination of fashionable clothing was made more accessible to all classes due to the development of department stores and proliferation of magazines in the second half of the 19th century (166). "Consumption itself became a substitute for being bourgeois" (169). Breward describes twentieth century fashion as "spectacle" (228) making its existence contingent upon other's recognition of its performance in time and space.

Fashion's subjective appropriation at the level of the consumer is central to an understanding of how a look is interpreted and acquisitioned by consumers. I believe, the relationship consumers negotiate between the fashion system's products and authenticity is

best understood using the concept of "taste." Gadamer (1975) conceptualizes fashion as having an implicit sense of "taste" as an erratic law present within its larger continuous whole. I view this relationship as analogous to the "fashion system's" interpretation of authenticity present as and fashionable dress available for sale. For Gadamer, taste involves the acknowledgment of the distinction between "good taste" and "no taste."

> "Taste is practically defined by the fact that it is offended by what is tasteless and thus avoids it, like anything else that threatens injury. Thus the contrary of "good taste" actually is not "bad taste." The opposite of the latter is to have "no taste." Good taste is sensitivity which so naturally avoids anything obvious that its reaction is quite incomprehensible to someone who has no taste" (Gadamer 1975:35).

From this passage we see good taste can be anything but tasteless. For Gadamer as taste becomes fashion, he acknowledges the relationship between the changing state of taste and fashion quite definitively. "Fashion is the ideality of good taste" (35). According to Gadamer's logic, those items that are fashionable, and those that are of "good taste" are mutually exclusive. Whether anthropology ought to promote the study of fashion as "good taste" is not of issue, but the question of taste is relevant in so much as taste is exercised only by those who act in accordance with fashion. Fashionable actors, according to Gadamer are those who are unable to follow styles that do not adhere to their personal taste. In so doing, an individual striving for more than "no taste," must be aware of her "self" as a fashionable. Taste is then, just as anything else, specific to the subjectivity of the actor and determined by the "fashion system" in so much as consumers are captured by what Manning (2010) calls the semiotics of a brand.

"By opening the door to art as a mass commodity, the age of mechanical reproduction created a crisis of authenticity" (Potter 2010:97). This idea is nicely expressed in the writing of Walter Benjamin:

"For the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual. To an even greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility. From a photographic negative, for example, one can make any number of prints; to ask for the 'authentic' print makes no sense. But the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice – politics" (Benjamin 1936: IV par 2).

For fashion, the question of which version of a garment is "real" is clearly related to the processes of reproduction. However, the determination of fashion's value in a culture, I believe is influenced by what Miller and Clarke characterize as a consumer's anxiety present in response to a fear of social embarrassment felt while trying to locate what he wants to wear (2002).

What is of good taste may be fashionable, but not all clothing of good taste can be considered fashionable. In their ethnographic study of female consumers in London, Miller and Clarke observe that the "last three decades have seen a clear decline in what had become the traditional form of fashion authority that is an authoritative claim as to what fashion is for a given year" (2002:145). According to Miller and Clarke, the freedom resulting from consumers being able to choose what they want leads female shoppers, in particular, left with anxiety and the desire for self-reassurance (*ibid*). Miller has noted elsewhere that the act of shopping actually helps individuals negotiate social and familial relationships in terms of expectations and patterned behaviors and practices (2001:17-56).

For Miller and Clarke, women negotiate what they believe they should be wearing, with what they want to wear. The resulting expression of identity must with commercial fashion's representation of standards of "good taste" and an individual shopper's standards of taste. For young people trying to succeed in environments of increasing globalization and urban diversity, the relationship between fashion and authenticity is of critical importance.

50

Yet, the standards of western fashion are capable of generating conflicting ideas about the self. Is it possible that the value of dressing fashionably becomes negative, if dressing in a fashionable look essentially contradicts one's authentic image of one's ideal self?

These questions and others will be addressed in the subsequent chapters, which are much more descriptive in nature. If Smelik (2011) is correct in asserting that fashion's newest trend is authenticity the extent to which authenticity is implicit in stylish clothing and considered as a genuine experience of the outwardly performed self is no longer questionable. Given what we have seen, assuming that anyone attempting to be fashionable will look exactly the same is irrational. There are too many ways to be "authentic" with fashion given the complexity of its flows and movements commodities (Kaiser 2012:58). The notion of authenticity is built around the narrative that traditions are articulated in the neighborhoods and public spaces of fashionable places, cities (Breward and Gilbert: 2006). Whether or not the self can be defined by consumerist activity is of issue (McCracken 2005). This perception relates to an experience of fashionable dress as embodied (Entwistle 2000, Hansen 2004) performance and as such quite real.

Fashion filled cities (Breward and Gilbert 2006), while they may not be composed entirely of young people, are often aligned with the discourse of youth and regeneration. Some view youth as a transitory stage, during which participants are temporarily outside of society until they are initiated back in through ritual (Turner 1967), but youth does not always follow what is prescribed by social norms (Becker 1997). However, youth's at times perceived misuse of established societal norms leads this group to be seen collectively as creative agents (Létourneau 1997, Jewsiewicki and Létourneau 1998, Gable 2000). Youth in this sense is a

sort of character situated within the city's narrative identity, to use an expression proposed by Ricoeur (1991). In cities like Brooklyn, where particular "looks" have emerged, one of those looks happens to be "hipster," but people who correspond to this social category are not the creators of art, just consumers (Rouleau 2012). Concerning consumers' relationship to art, White states "…consumers of world music, buying a CD constitutes a gesture of solidarity between the consumer and the artist, who represents (or at least stands for) people that are struggling for economic and political survival" (2011: par 9).

The chapters that follow are not just about the hipster look as an occurrence of fashion's trending of authenticity. They concern some of Montreal's tastemakers, those fashionable people that are able to sense what is "cool", even before it happens. The look they have is an identity that polarizes space (Létourneau 1997:27). These spaces in Montreal are scenes that provide the cityscape and inhabitants with a structure, and a look that can be replicated and potentially commodified as scenes (Straw 2002: 249). Given the past two years of living here, it seems scenes in Montreal find those who look for them, and look like them. The matter of belonging to one depends on how cosmopolitan (Scheffler 2001[1999]:11-20) one is willing to be in the midst of their search for the perfect fit.

CHAPTER 4

Context

The historical context in which fashion and the hipster look are performed in the Plateau merits attention. This thesis addresses the historical context of the fashion system's commercialization of authenticity and its relationship to one's genuine performance of the self. This chapter is divided into two sections. Beginning with a vignette provided by O, the first section gives a general overview of political relationships between the United States, Canada and Quebec pre- and post-9/11. Section two addresses the Plateau's local fashion industry, as influenced by the presence of globalization. As seen from O's observations, Canadian/American isolationist foreign policy and post-9/11 consumerism have affected national identity at the local level for residents of the Plateau, given the area's increasing urban diversity, a correlate of globalization.

4.1 The In-Between: Relations between the U.S., Canada and Québec

O speaks three languages: English, French and Urdu. Some of his family lives in Canada, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United States. He is a Canadian and a non-practicing Muslim, however he participates in Islam's religious holidays. Recently, he takes care to maintain an amicable relationship with his parents and younger brother.

In March 2005, at the age of twenty, O was arrested for possession of narcotics (a small portion of marijuana) by an American border patrol officer and was subsequently barred from re-entering the U.S. Though he desires to return, he has not taken legal action to gain a pardon. His family knows nothing of this incident. Since his ban, he has missed one wedding and two

funerals for close family members living in the U.S. This incident's impact on his life has lasted for several years.

O states,

"I lost belief in myself not that there was much there in the first place. I was already suffering from anxiety and depression it sent me into a deeper hole of self-loathing and anger. It took me a long time to pick myself up and deal with many of the consequences. I had to re-establish my care for myself and the world" (interview February, 2012).

After September 11, 2001, the once sparsely protected U.S.-Canadian border was flooded with security (Fry: 178) rendering stories like O's arguably more commonplace among Canadians traveling to and from the U.S. According to Marita Sturken, author of *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero,* photographs of the event and its aftermath endure with a sort of cinematic glory in the States (2007:171). When the World Trade Towers fell, they were transformed into Ground Zero. This space was reportedly off-limits to cameras. The event's "essence of spectacle is an erasure: the awe-inspiring image of the explosion masks the bodies that are incinerated within it" (172). By definition, Sturken argues, terrorism is equated with spectacle, as well. Sturken thus concludes that the United States suffered from an image of defeat at the level of a global spectacle. In a separate publication, Louis Balthazar, professor emeritus at The University of Laval in Quebec City, asserts "Generally speaking, Americans have difficulty understanding the experience of being dominated, ignored, and overwhelmed culturally" (2011:491).

Sturken's observations address U.S. construction of collective memory as fostered through consumerist practices. According to Sturken, the U.S., and New York City specifically, recovered after 9/11 in a relatively brief period of time by transforming the site of Ground Zero from one of chaos and destruction into one of tourism (2007: 211).

She cites this ad campaign by American Express in downtown Manhattan as an example:

"Their electricity has come back. Their phone service has come back. Now it's your turn." (211)

The *New York Times* suggested restaurants to eat at after visiting Ground Zero. Even on the West Coast, the *Los Angeles Times* published a similar ad in 2002:

"Going out to dine in the shadow of ground zero would be unthinkable if it weren't an act of defiance in the face of terrorism and a vote of support for the beleaguered neighborhood."

The event led to the creation of a site associated with action and rebirth, not just destruction and death. In doing so, this space became a *tourist destination* with a very strong association to American patriotism. Sturken emphasizes this area of Lower Manhattan as a place where *kitsch* commodities such as FDNY (New York Fire Department) hats, T-shirts and various other items made in China are sold. Even the first of these products, the "I Love New York" stickers, came from China (2007: 214). These objects are considered souvenirs of New York, despite contextually unrelated origins. In addition, after the events of 9/11, producers of these souvenirs in China and Korea (I am assuming she means South Korea, but it is not specified) realized the desirability of souvenirs with images of the former towers. In fact, by September 12th manufacturers had already created blueprints for new merchandise picturing or modeling the towers (214).

These sorts of souvenirs are presented to the public at large in New York City and abroad, as embodiments of American patriotism. However, these objects which have come to express American patriotism are not made in the U.S. at all, but abroad. What ideals are consumers of these items intended to appropriate regarding American patriotism by purchasing these souvenirs? Concerning the valuation of authenticity, would a made in

America "I Love New York" T-shirt be worth the same as a T-shirt made in China from the perspective of an American? What about a New Yorker? The subjective quality of authenticity's definition here makes it seem, no matter what adversity it faces, New York is a flourishing site of commerce, resulting from the diversity of their consumers' tastes.

Montreal, Quebec, is a centre of commerce as well. O has told me it is like a miniature version of New York City. However, according to Balthazar, Montreal is declining in economic strength and population in comparison to the rest of Canada. I interpret M. Estellie Smith's response to Richard Handler's publication concerning "Nationalism and Cultural Objectification in Quebec" as representative of these circumstances. She wonders what has led the Québécois only recently after some 300 years to formulate explicitly a nationalist ideology, given such tactics affect the province's political and economic relationships with the United States and the rest of Canada (1984:67).

Balthazar stresses that Québec views its relationship with the United States in the form of a triangle. Québec, throughout its history, has sought to maintain its identity against the threatening presence of all of Anglophone North America. For example, during the American Revolution, although there were periods of strategic alliance, Québec had to defend itself against not only British North America but also the United States. At present, Canada is the North American nation to which Quebec is politically linked. Generally, Balthazar refers to Quebecers as a collective who desired to maintain autonomy within British North America in order to preserve their collective identity and exist now as present-day Quebec (2011: 475).

After the British conquest of New France in 1759, Montreal incorporated others into its landscape and grew into an area of ethno-cultural diversity. By 1905, the largest community of immigrants within Montreal was composed of Yiddish-speaking Jews fleeing the czarist

governments of the Russian empire. Many of them chose to settle along St. Lawrence Boulevard (Anctil 2002). Also, according to Annick Germain and Martha Radice (2006), in the early twentieth century came the Scottish, English and Irish immigrants who established separate neighborhoods according to differentiating factors such as language, religion and socio-economic status. In 1970, a significant proportion of non-European immigrants arrived in Montreal. According to the 2004 Census data, 28 percent of the general population of the city of Montréal was made up of permanent residents born outside of Canada (116). These figures are increasing rapidly. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Germain and Radice refer to the municipality as "[…] an island city, convinced of its own uniqueness, many of whose inhabitants define their allegiance to Montreal first and foremost, and then in relation to other cities" (129).

While native English speakers are among some of this percentage, Montréal attracts individuals from places where French is a typical second language such as Haiti,[3] Vietnam, Romania and North and West Africa. At present, there is a resurgence of individuals arriving to Montréal from France (*ibid* 2006: 8) and increasingly from the rest of Europe (due to economic crisis in the EU). My first roommate in Montreal was a 27-year-old Frenchman from just outside Paris. He came to Montreal on a one-year working holiday visa in 2010. Since 2010, two of his friends from Paris have come to the city using the same sort of visa. Before arriving, my former roommate had already completed his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in

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[3] Up to 1971, Haitian immigrants were mainly professionals who fled the Duvalier regime. The then-expanding Quebec economy was able to absorb Haitian doctors, nurses and teachers (Déjean 1978). Until 1971, the majority of the Haitian immigrants had at least thirteen years of formal education. Mass immigration started in the seventies when the worsening economic conditions for working class Haitians caused them to seek refuge in Quebec (Bastien 1986). Last year there was again a surge in immigration from Haiti due to the worsening economic conditions resulting from the destruction caused by the earthquake in January 2010.

International Relations. He is currently working at the *Musée des Beaux-Arts* as a ticket agent. He recently completed his certificate in Journalism at the Université de Montréal. "Montreal's multiethnicity is inscribed in the fabric of the mixed neighborhoods that have come to replace the old ethnic villages" (*ibid*:5). However, since the mid-1980s, immigrants have found it increasingly difficult not only to find gainful employment but also to find jobs in their fields of study despite having completed many years of formal education, such as my former roommate. This trend appears more pronounced among members of linguistic and visible minorities (5-8).

O, has been employed as a dishwasher in a local pizza place in Montreal's Mile End neighborhood for a little over one year. The year before, at 28 years old, he completed his Bachelor's in History at Concordia University. This achievement successfully put an end to a past that he described as being filled with negligence, self-condemnation, and substance abuse. He then got a job in the private sector to clear his head. He regularly wears the same stained white T-shirts he used to wear to work in the kitchen under his civilian clothing, usually his blue Montreal Expos[4] shirt.

In 2012, to celebrate Montreal's founding 370 years ago, thirty-five museums took part in the event *Montreal, City of History*. In presenting this event, its initiator, the Pointe-à-Callière Montreal Museum of Archaeology and History, and the association of Montreal History Museums aimed to showcase the historical character of the city. According to one participating museum, le *Centre d'histoire de Montréal*, Montreal became cosmopolitan in the twentieth century. No clear definition of cosmopolitanism was provided, but the exhibit used

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[4]The Montreal Expos were a Major League Baseball team located in Montreal, Quebec, from 1969 through 2004, holding the first MLB franchise awarded outside the United States.

the term to refer to more than the influx of immigrants coming from other countries to the city. The following is a label near the first use of the word *cosmopolitan* on the first floor of the museum:

> "Canadian Metropolis – Up until 1960 when the Toronto Stock exchange edged out of the Montreal exchange, our city and its extraordinary concentration of power and money held an exceptional place on the geopolitical and economic scene in the Americas. After being rocked by the First World War, the Montreal economy took off again at high speed. The city looked like one enormous Meccano set. New neighborhoods, new houses, new factories, but most impressive of all, skyscrapers – the height of economic fashion! As the economy soared, company head offices kept up. And it was the birth of a new class too, white-collar workers, with legions of secretary-typists in their nylon stockings, clattering away on their typewriters and making an infernal racket"

This description reminds me of Balthazar's use of the term "Americanization." This term refers to an American way of life that gives U.S. citizens the confidence to assert the ethos that U.S. ideals are the same for everyone the world over. In this case, "the United States of America is a microcosm of the world and sets a standard for the rest of the world to follow and be in favor of …" (2011: 488). Fashion theorist Susan Kaiser states,

> "…the hegemonic U.S. way of developing its national identity has tended to revolve around the myth of a melting pot of ethnic diversity…and the idea of absorbing and appropriating difference. This model…is associated with global capitalism. American companies such as Anthropologie, Forever 21, and Gap…represent [this] hybridization as they absorb and appropriate cultural and national differences" (2012:60).

This observation speaks to Montreal's urban landscape and its residents' origins. Since 1960, the downtown area of Montreal has grown up along René-Lévesque Boulevard. It is lined with skyscrapers, albeit not ones as tall as those in New York City. This expansion led to the remodelling and urban revival discussed on the second floor of Le Centre d'Histoire de Montréal, in the temporary exhibition *Quartiers Disparus*. Many buildings with historical value were demolished in the second half of the twentieth century during the thirty-year period

Jean Drapeau was in office as mayor. He and his subordinates were interested in bringing about the

> "…rise of a new kind of French Canadian nationalism in the1960s, one interested in taking on all the trappings and responsibilities of the modern nation and state, pressed both city and provincial elites to look for external validation of their identity…He also brought to Montreal almost singlehandedly two of Canada's greatest international spectacles: the 1967 World's Fair and the 1976 Summer Olympic Games" (Paul 2004: 579).

What would now be very old residential areas are today,

> "Place Ville-Marie, the Place Bonaventure, the Place des Arts, the city's subway system, manmade islands in the St. Lawrence River, the Olympic Stadium and the Olympic Tower (579).

In addition to all this, thousands of low-income residents were displaced in the process of urban renewal. Out of all three floors, the museum makes little mention of fashion.

In terms of fashion today, Montreal has offices for three mainstream fashion magazines: Elle Canada, Elle Québec, and LouLou. Any drugstore has the latest issues of *Vogue, Allure, Glamour, Cosmopolitan, Harper's Bazaar* and *Marie Claire*, all in French and English. In August 2012, Montreal had its annual Montreal Fashion and Design Festival, or *Festival Mode et Design Montréal*. It is characterized by *Tourisme Montreal* as:

> "Organized and produced by Groupe Sensation Mode, this highly glamorous event serves up a varied program that brings together the leading international labels, a host of renowned designers, exciting musical performances, design in real time, and countless special events, all in a decidedly unique ambiance".[5]

In May 2012, while working a short-term contract with a private school in Westmount as an exam reader for children with autism, I was surprised to notice the French as a second language examination for ninth graders was composed of a series of reading comprehension,

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[5]To view this article, please visit the following: http://www.tourisme-montreal.org/What-To-Do/Events/montreal-fashion-and-design

listening and writing exercises about Montreal's fashion industry. I recall one of these activities introduced the accomplishments and biography of one of Montreal's only locally grown couture giants, Denis Gagnon.[6]

4.2 The Plateau: "It's so Montreal"

The Plateau is marketed to tourists as emblematic of Montreal's identity. In addition, this borough's urban environment arguably contributes to the individualistic nature of its fashions. Yet this look is only as unique as the sources from which it originates. Today, Commercial Western fashion's dispersal is aided much in part by its involvement with the new global economy (Wallerstein 1974, Harvey 1989, Kearny 1995, Pieterse 2008). In Canada, such an economy has much to do with NAFTA (Balthazar 2011). In Montreal, today, Stahl (2001) characterizes the city as having two very dissimilar yet related narratives. The first associates Montreal with a floundering local economy due to tense intercultural relations surrounding language issues and sovereignty debates, while the other characterizes the city as resilient towards these forces. Montreal remains through its struggle to survive economically a source of Canada's cultural life, the scene of its arts. Stahl does not pinpoint in which part of Montreal's urban landscape these narratives are present. I assume he is talking about the Plateau. He goes on to argue that Montreal is an "anglo-Bohemia" (115) for the reason that it "promises…a local flavour and non-local appeal…founded on its apparent laissez-faire contentment" (*ibid*.). In my opinion, Stahl's generalization of Montreal's urbanity as an "anglo-bohemia" reduces the ephemeral qualities of experience concerning the overall look

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[6]Denis Gagnon is a Canadian designer. In 1988, he attended College Lasalle where he discovered his passion for design. For more information, please see his website: http://www.denisgagnon.ca/fr#/fr.

and feel of local commerce. Nonetheless, Montreal's fashion scene is hardly trivial and appears to be taken quite seriously by its participants, even if the Plateau residents' styles of dress do appear quite relaxed. In sum, Stahl does not address from where these narratives come and from whose perspective on the city they take. This ethnography intends to fill in these gaps with which Stahl chooses not to engage in his analysis by directly confronting members of this "anglo-bohemia."

According to a research article in the discipline of Urban Studies by Diane-Gabrielle Tremblay, Montreal contains 75% of Quebec's garment industry. The labor force of this industry in the city of Montreal is the third largest of its kind in North America. Coming in just after those found in Los Angeles and New York, Montreal's garment industry is concerned with achieving both international recognition and the augmentation of its presence in the local economy. Today, the industry concentrates on production at the level of fashion design. Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, Tremblay infers that Montreal's garment industry is transforming into a service centered fashion industry. What she means by this is that fashion design is happening both within manufacturing companies, but also among self-employed fashion designers. The latter are arguably the catalyst for the industry's recent competitiveness in the global economy. Overall, Tremblay claims Montreal is a second-tier fashion city: it is trying to position the identity of its garment industry between the extremes of haute couture found in New York or Milan and those countries focused primarily on entering the fashion industry through low-cost manufacturing (2012:1-2).

Mode Montreal,[7] is a blog run by the city of Montreal with the goal of promoting the

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[7]To view this website, please visit: http://www.modemontreal.tv/

city's local fashions and designers. Just below the site's interactive map, titled "Carte de Mode," the organization states, "It is time to choose fashion created by locals. To choose Montreal fashion!" This *Carte de Mode* is fabricated using the widget Google Maps. For *Mode Montreal,* the map's function is to allow the site's users to locate any and all local retailers, workshops and boutiques utilized by Montreal-based designers. The map is organized by street name. The highest concentration of local fashion designs appears to be found along St. Laurent Boulevard and St. Denis in the Plateau, Mont-Royal, and in the Mile-end, with several pockets of activity in the Lower Plateau. These districts will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five. However, there remains a large concentration of local fashion activity south of the "mountain," in the vicinity of the Old Port of Montreal along Notre-Dame Street and Saint Catherine West.

Inner-city neighborhoods such as the Plateau and Mile-end communities have arguably been shaped and are being reshaped in part by succeeding instances of marginal gentrification. Gentrification refers to the "transformation of deprived, low-level, inner-city neighbourhoods into new wealthy areas based on population change and on improvements to the built environment" (Van Criekingen and Decroly 2003:2451). Marginal gentrification refers to a similar transformation led by "fractions of the new middle class who were highly educated, but only tenuously or modestly earning professionals, and who sought out niches in inner city neighbourhoods as renters…or coowners of modestly priced apartment units" (2454). The authors continue to describe such individuals as being employed in the arts, culture or communication sectors. In Montreal, according to Van Criekingen and Decroly, marginal

gentrification is present in inner city areas such as the Plateau, Mont-Royal, and the Centre-Sud districts. As the authors draw on quantitative data gathered in order to compare waves of gentrification within Montreal and their own city, Brussels, they notice many newcomers in the Plateau are young professionals fitting the profile described above. In addition, Van Criekingen and Decroly concur with Sénécal's conclusion that it is young, single persons, holding university degrees with unstable employment that fuel Montreal's marginal gentrification (Sénécal:1995:357).

Concerning the observable clothing styles prevalent along the streets of the Plateau, young people wear old sweatshirts, jean jackets with macramé, iron-on, animal print, high-tops, bowties, skinny ties, colorful socks, neon stockings, mezzo-American inspired satchels, homemade skirts, and hair tied up in messy buns. Some choose to shave their long hair in favor of a more androgynous high n' tight, pixie or a-line fringe. There are thick-rimmed glasses, leather bomber jackets and denim cut-offs, in addition to other versions of the similar mass-produced items of fashion kitsch. Lastly, in Montreal there are only two seasons—winter and not winter—and while the cold can certainly affect an individual's choices of what to wear, fashion seems to happen despite temperatures of minus 30 degrees Celsius. More importantly, participants described two sorts of people that have a lot to do with fashion here, regardless of the season: hipsters and everyone who hates hipsters.

CHAPTER 5

The City of Disunion

Figure: 1.1 The Plateau, Montréal QC, Hôtel-de-Ville at de Pins (photo by Chelsea Woodhouse spring, 2012)

Is Montreal different from other Canadian cities? This was the first question I posed to my participants. Responses varied greatly. The majority were ambivalent, citing both negative and positive aspects of the city's metropolitan life such as high transportation costs, low housing costs and a fluctuating population. One response, by comparison, was strikingly definitive:

"Montreal is the soul of Canada."
(Recorded interview, April 15th, Participant W)

This chapter will begin with an overview of my ongoing impressions of the Plateau, Mont-Royal and several of its surrounding boroughs. Quantitative data is employed as a means to present the reader with a bird's eye view of Montreal's demographic development resulting from immigration and various age sets. In contrast to the former, qualitative data I

have gathered is presented here with the intent of describing several qualities typical of a portion of the Plateau's demography and culture.

5.1 The Plateau and its Surrounding Boroughs

Streets I have come to frequent, Laurier and Duluth for example, are replete with commercial enterprises. In an area where breadth of choice is as time-honoured as it is world-renowned, deciding what to wear is not straightforward. There are too many options in this city of disunion.[8] In terms of authenticity and fashion this breadth of choice has the potential to make the articulation of one's self either easier or more difficult for the consumer given there exists so many interpretations of fashionable dress in this borough. Case in point is the Mile-End's latest "It" girl of experimental music and fashion, Claire Boucher, or "Grimes," as she is also known. Her popularity gives rise to thoughts on how the dressed body is rationalized. Given her eclectic style, it seems her motivations to dress as she does are not embedded within the fibers themselves; rather, the "discourse of fashion," as Lars Svendsen calls it (2006:11), contains within itself one essential characteristic: its need to be acknowledged as physical by the wearer and those who observe the wearer's dress. Outside this discourse, the choice to be fashionable in the everyday sense is made relative to the individual. Arguably fashion's discourse is just as much a person as the person who expresses its look physically.

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[8]"Disunion" was chosen to describe the ambiance of Plateau, Mont Royal. While it does refer to a lack of unity, to discord or to that which is separate, I think its association with these not necessarily negative qualities best portrays the borough's (as well as the city's) intermixed and diverse factions of residents and consumable goods and services, which are nonetheless at times typical of mainstream North American. A sense of a unified division is hence created, and many residents consequently identify with, for example, "being of Montreal," despite being of another nation. They do not necessarily identify with being "of Quebec" or even "Canadian." See Deirdre Meintel's publications for specific information addressing the nature of ethnicity and urban diversity in Montreal.

66

Figure: 1.2 Claire Boucher or Grimes, www.heartymagazine.com

This chapter and those that follow reference ethnographic and, accordingly, personal experiences of living in the Plateau as relevant to the representation of the borough's geography and its local ecology, made up of fashionable people and commercial enterprises. *Tourism Montreal,* the (now defunct) *Mirror,*[9] *Nightlife, Voir,* and other local publications inform residents of the current trends and fashionable activities in this borough. This ethnography makes use of anecdotal evidence in combination with quantitative data. Ethnographic experience is described here to foreground the dialogue that occurs between researcher and participants, as well as to make accessible the description of a particular neighborhood physically and ideologically bounded by its architecture and dress—in other words, by its fashions. Fashion is not being used as an alternative for culture, but instead as a subcategory of it. As in Fleischer's study of Beijing, Montreal's spaces will not be treated as neutral backdrops (2010: Introduction). At times, residents try too hard to prescribe to several trends of the mainstream at once. In his blog, www.CultureBy.com*,* Grant McCracken[10] characterizes "non-mainstream" or "margin" in capitalist society as that which does not need

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[9]"Montreal's last English-language alternative weekly…" for more information go to:
http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/story/2012/06/22/montreal-mirror-closes.html

[10]To view this post, "Hunting the Cool Hunt" by Grant McCracken visit the following url:
http://cultureby.com/2002/12/hunting_the_coo.html

to adhere to popular taste. Likewise, the "mainstream" is that which must be observed in the public, by the public in order for it to exist. By this logic, McCracken states the mainstream must "incorporate the new into whatever they market…[otherwise] someone else will" (2002: par 2). Overall, sensitivity to "good taste" in fashion is what separates the "natives" from the "tourists." In this city, as in other cities, to be in the city as a visitor and to be of the city as a resident are not mutually exclusive (White 2011), but certainly visitors can try to look like natives.

Since arriving in Montreal in July 2010, I have left the city only on a handful of occasions, totalling little more than a month. Within these two years, and with the advantages that come from subleasing apartments, I quickly became acquainted with the Plateau's "vibe." This colloquialism primarily references the local quality of the Plateau's fashions. This chapter intends to depict this borough as the "soul" of Montreal. It is my hypothesis fashionable dress found in the Plateau is affected by a local consumer's desire to construct an authentic self in dress. The ephemeral qualities specific to the Plateau's look are articulated in local consumer's choices of dress. Thusly, the Plateau's vibe, look, attitude or feel is perceptible only by way of lived experience. In the case of this thesis, my lived experience has been translated for the purposes of academic inquiry into ethnography of fashionable dress among a segment of the Plateau's youth population.

My first three apartments were located in the Plateau, while my last move was to Jean-Talon. It seems the city's apartment scene endorses a sort of "nomadic" lifestyle. Overall, it has been my experience rent prices are reasonably low in comparison to other metropolitan

cities in Canada such as Toronto. Sublets are also commonplace in Montreal making frequent moves possible. I changed my residence four times since arriving, most recently in September 2012. My roommates spanned a range of occupations, ages, genders, sexes and places of origin. I have lived alone twice; I have shared sublets with a 40-year-old massage therapist, a twenty-something-year-old Québécois, an aspiring French journalist, an American, a promotional model, a film studies major from out-of-province with a fetish for black clothing, a chef and a First Nations digital media artist from Winnipeg. Throughout these variable living arrangements, I was in school, working part-time and learning French. My hair colour changed almost as much as my home life. The instability of both my personal appearance and my living situation helped to familiarize me with the Plateau Mont Royal's urban diversity, its architecture and its fashions. My experiences here were conditioned by my own and participants' "processes of subject formation…located in time and space in an embodied way, in the form of the subjects positions of age/generation and place" (Kaiser 2012:178). Given that "narrative imitates experience because experience already has in it the seeds of narrative" (Mattingly, 1998:45), the experience of documenting is one that becomes more than a prescribed ethnographic practice (Gable 2012). Engaging with the reality of this space since moving here has enabled me to look past the prescribed narrative of the city as an "anglo-bohemia."

My choice of lodgings corresponded to the metro's orange line, starting at Mont Royal, moving to Laurier and finally Sherbrooke. During the writing of this thesis, I was located on Prince Arthur and St. Dominique, in a basement apartment. This place had a distinct character An anonymous man in his mid-twenties was found, for example, wedged within the threshold

69

of my front door, shooting heroine. Monday through Wednesday, foot traffic is relatively calm, but from Thursday to Saturday intoxicated youths acknowledge the apartment through song, litter, and urine, at times shaking the rusted metal caging in the front patio. Some exclaim, "Wow! It would be so cool to live there." Approximately 300 hundred feet to the north this street smells of roast chicken during the day and in the early evening.

5.2 Paint by Numbers

Though offering only a partial view of Montreal, the following statistics provide fairly detailed information about the demographics of the island and city that I could not have collected through fieldwork alone. The city proper is located in southwest Quebec, at the meeting of the Saint Lawrence and Ottawa Rivers, and covers the majority of the Island of Montreal. The port is situated at one end of the St. Lawrence Seaway and stretches from the Great Lakes into the Atlantic Ocean (Centre d'histoire de Montréal).[11]

As of 2011, Montreal is the second most populous metropolitan area in Canada. Since February 8th, 2012, the only data on population and dwelling counts released to the public come from the 2011 Census. Counts concerning age, sex, language and various other demographic figures will be made available only after the projected submission date of this thesis. For these reasons, I will rely mainly on statistics from the 2006 Census and several reports from 2010 and 2011. According to a 2011 report, "Greater Montreal's Vital Signs,"[12]

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[11]A partial view of the city of Montreal can also be conceived of as a modern arena identifiable by traditions that are both locally and internationally influenced. More specifically, what has been found in Montreal, in particular within the Plateau, is the negotiation of tradition (architectural preservation) and social change (the constant flux of residents within, in particular, the Plateau close to the universities), akin to what is seen in Robertson's study of newcomers in Japan (1991).

[12]This report and others can be accessed at the following url:
http://www.fgmtl.org/en/vitalsigns2010/index.php

published by the Foundation of Greater Montreal, the Greater Montreal area includes the islands of Montreal and Laval, the agglomeration of Longueuil and the North/South Shore communities. All together, the region's inhabitants totaled 3,859,318 in 2010. At the time, this was about half of Quebec's population. The island of Montreal itself had 1,934,082 residents, a little over a quarter of Quebec's total population.

In the 2010 report, Greater Montreal underwent a demographically unique period: "…the populous baby boomer generation, born between 1946 and 1965, will reach 65 years of age in 2011". No contextualization is given in regards to this statement in the report. It appears as an introductory phrase to the section titled, "Demographic Context." However, according to its sources,[13] the island of Montreal will continue to grow, but at a slower rate than its surrounding regions. By the year 2031, the age group for the majority of this projected population will be between 35 and 39. In 2026, it is estimated that, for every 115 people aged 20-29, there will be 100 people aged 55-64. It is specified that, by 2026, 23% of the areas of Longueuil and Laval will be composed of senior citizens. In fact, it is predicted that, by 2026, one person in five (20.7%) in Greater Montreal will be a senior, compared to nearly one in four (24.4%) throughout the rest of Quebec, while the overall population of the island of Montreal will increase only by 15%. In addition, in 2009, the unemployment rate for those under 25 was 17.8%. As a city, Montreal is predicted to become, by 2020, the second largest Canadian city in terms of the number of retirees, after Vancouver. Most likely these

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[13]Les perspectives démographiques par municipalité régionale de comté et territoire équivalent (MRC), 2001-2026, Institut de la   Statistique du Québec: http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/donstat/societe/demographie/persp_poplt/mrc2001_2026/index.htm
 Portrait statistique régional des aînés du Québec, par Thomas Druetz, Association québécoise des retraité(e) s des secteurs public et parapublic, 2007: http://www.aqrp.qc.ca/portrait.pdf

individuals will be women with post-secondary degrees and relative financial autonomy. Further specifics regarding these predictions were not found, but several other statistics were.

For several years, the island of Montreal has struggled to retain its residents, especially its young adults. From 2001 to 2006, 17% of Francophones aged 25 to 44 left the city of Montreal, while only 11% of Anglophones and 11% of Allophones in the same age range left the city and relocated to neighboring municipalities. Francophones (3%) chose to stay on the island less often than Anglophones (26%) and Allophones (11%). Nevertheless, demographic growth in this age range is predicted for the population of Montreal over the next few years. Linear population growth will likely be attributed to international immigration. According to Statistics Canada, in 2006 Montreal contained 12% of Canada's immigrant population (3rd among all Canadian cities). More than 200 different immigrants' origins were reported in the 2006 Census. Overall, it appears Montreal has the largest number of different ethnic groups in comparison to Toronto and Vancouver. However, it has a smaller absolute number of immigrants. In addition, in 2010, 3.6% of residents on the island got married, compared to 3% in Greater Montreal and 2.9% in the province as a whole. Among couples, one of the two partners was more likely to have been born abroad (Greater Montreal's Vital Signs, 2010). Deirdre Meintel and Josiane Le Gall address how such unions have affected the couple's relationships to family members who live outside of Québec. Meintel and Le Gall speak to a common theme shared by these couples. While they acknowledge the tension their union creates among their nuclear and extended family, the couples nevertheless remain confident in their desire not only to preserve but also to pass on to their children « l'esprit de famille » (2011).

The degree to which Montreal integrates its foreign residents is variable (Radice 2011). In *Montreal's Vital Signs* and *Immigration Québec*, education appears to serve as a unifying tool among the diverse community. However, the transition is not always smooth. As a child, Participant O came to Montreal from Pakistan. He described his integration into Montreal's school system as follows:

> "[It was] terrifying, just, just because of the cultural shock, the initial cultural shock I'll never forget. Seeing snow for the first time [pause] I remember blonde hair really weirded me out…I hated school so much [pause] you get picked on for being different [pause] I was just trying to figure out where I fit in." (interview, Feb. 2nd, 2012).

O identifies himself as a resident of the Plateau and a "Montrealer" (the latter according to him, refers to a permanent resident of Montreal). Despite his fraught childhood in the city, he chose to remain in Montreal until his present age, 29. He pursued a Bachelor's program in history at Concordia University. Only now is he considering leaving the city indefinitely for Kingston or perhaps Western Europe. I met him in August 2011 at Sparrow, a popular hipster hangout in Montreal's Mile-End, according to the 'Best of' the former Montreal *Mirror* and Will Straw (2001).

Figure 1.3: Participant O, rue de Mentana , the Plateau, Montreal (photos: Chelsea Woodhouse, Spring 2012)

In 2009, *Greater Montreal's Vital Signs,* 55.8% of public elementary and high school students on the island of Montreal came from "culturally diverse origins." Concurrently, 55.6% of the region's population 15 years or older had a diploma for post-secondary studies, a higher percentage than either Toronto (54.1%) or Vancouver (51.6%), but lower than Ottawa (62.9%) and Calgary (57.2%). The trend continued in 2010, when Greater Montreal had its highest level of post-secondary diplomas: 56.9% of students older than 25 had a college or university education, compared to 51.8% across Canada. In the same year, Montreal welcomed 11,558 foreign students. At the end of the year, there were 24,904 foreign students in Greater Montreal. Only Toronto (50,134) and Vancouver (43,425) fared better. A large number of these students chose to stay in Montreal or became economic partners when they returned to their home countries (Greater Montreal's Vital Signs 2009). Within the city of Montreal, the Université de Montréal had 6,944 international students during the academic year of 2010/2011. Concurrently, in the fall 2011, McGill University had 7,715 international students (20% of 37,835), Concordia had 5,515 (12% out of 45,963) and University of Quebec in Montreal had 2,741 (15.2% out of 41,731), according to their respective websites.

As of the 2011 Census for Montreal's Metropolitan Area, its total population is stated to be 3,824,221 (2nd in Canada behind Toronto), while Quebec's total population is 7,903,001. In the same year, the city of Montreal's population is recorded to be 1,649,519. This illustrates a 1.8% increase from 2006. After Toronto and Vancouver, Montreal is the Canadian Metropolitan Census area (MCA) with the highest population of immigrants (21%). Nearly one Montreal resident in two is a first generation immigrant or a child of immigrant parents

(Nous Sommes Ici, Centre d'Histoire de Montréal). Such is the case with participant O. As it appears from these statistics, Montreal's population is in flux, its numbers rising as the city is transformed by the globalizing realities of immigration and emigration. However, conclusions will not be formed solely by these numbers. These statistics are merely suggestive of how residents of Montreal might negotiate their shared urban spaces. As numbers, they appear varied, perhaps dissimilar. It is for this reason I will begin to provide a description of my lived experience in the Plateau, as both an American tourist and student at the Université de Montréal.

Figure 1.5: Row Houses, rue Hôtel-de-ville (photos: Chelsea Woodhouse spring, 2012)
Le Centre d'Histoire de Montréal

Visiting museums is one way to become familiar with a new city (Handler and Gable 1997). In Montreal, I learned of three must-see locations during my first few months: *Le Musée des Beaux Arts*, *Le Musée McCord* and *Le Centre d'Histoire de Montréal*. I had visited them all by July 2011, a year after my arrival. At this time, I had still believed fashion's essence to be embedded in re-contextualized textiles or in art. Jean Paul Gaultier had his own exhibit and parade at the *Le musée des Beaux Arts* from June 17th, 2011, to October 2nd,

2011. Thank goodness a friend from out of town insisted I play tour guide and accompany her to *Le Centre d'Histoire* one afternoon. This museum coordinates what their brochure terms the "Mémoire des Montréalais." The situation was opportune. I could learn more about the object of my study's environment, Montreal, and spend a relaxing time with a friend, forgetful of looming thesis-related guilt. I returned twice in 2012, once with O and once alone. My intent both times was to learn through what narratives Montreal came to become itself.

Once inside, upon my request, O left me. I did not want my research to dominate his trip through the exhibition. After two hours, we both grew tired and left. I asked O if he enjoyed the trip to the museum. Stroking his Vandyke, he exclaimed without hesitation, "I did and I sort of understand why Montreal is the way it is, now. It's so screwed up." Before viewing these exhibitions, O characterized the Plateau historically as a degenerate, bohemian area. He learned from this museum that the Plateau is where immigrants settled and continue to do so. He also learned the row housing and townhouses of the 1960s were viewed by the municipality as a necessity because the city did not want to build ghettos. By O's perspective as per the museum exhibition, the Plateau's current urban landscape owes a lot to the way it was settled, but also to the development of its infrastructure in the 1960s. As O repositioned his latest purchase against his brow, a pair of black, thick-rimmed glasses, we walked through the Old Port to find food. On rue Bleury, on the way to the museum, I saw this advertisement for "hipster glasses" according to O, for the first time:
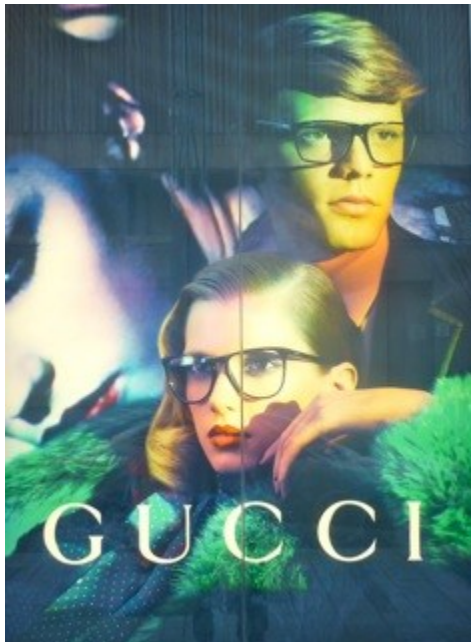
Figure 1.5: Gucci Advertisement, rue Bleury, the Plateau, Montreal (photos: Chelsea Woodhouse spring 2012)

The exhibition helped me understand the city's demographic and geographic development chronologically. I relied on it as one would a textbook, noting details I thought were relevant to the development of this ethnography. For instance, many of the labels were sourced from Statistics Canada, national archives or witness testimony. Aside from allusions the exhibit labels made to the efficacy of technological advancement, O and I were left to our own devices in regards understanding to what motivated the development of Montreal today in terms of its infrastructure, architecture and demographics. The first floor's permanent collection contained sequential descriptions of the city's demographic and urban changes, of its relations with Europe and the rest of North America and of events surrounding the first person killed by an automobile. The temporary exhibitions on the second and third floors portray "Montreal's urban fabric…[as] subjected to a colossal restructuring…" The stories of the neighborhoods formerly referred to as the Red Light, Goose Village and Faubourg à

77

m'lasse "begin elsewhere[,] …[and are] now part of our collective story. To discover them will allow us to better understand the world and the city that we live in" (Quartiers Disparus). In English, "Vanished Neighborhoods," Quartiers Disparus is an exhibit that documents collective memory among the former residents of, and those who demolished the Goose Village, Red Light and Faubourg à m'lasse districts. Intrigued by this museum's second and third floors, upon my second visit I searched meticulously for data within the artifact and summary labels, only to learn that the mid-18th century version of Montreal's urbanscape was a network of grids. Today, the city is composed of squares, producing corners, streets and row houses much like other North American cities (Permanent Collection, Centre d'Histoire de Montréal).

Conceivably an appropriate extension of this tetragonal planning, the duplex appears in working-class neighborhoods in the 19th century. This type of housing combines multistory townhouses and one-story Scottish flats built right up to the sidewalk and hence to the exclusion of any possible peripheral vegetation. In the Centre d'Histoire, there is a label describing the origin of such housing. This label is sourced from *L'Autre Montreal*, "a group dedicated to introducing people to non-tourist aspects of Montreal," according to its webpage. While this organization does not offer such a service, in hindsight, a guide for choosing my own apartment on the Plateau would have been helpful. Below is a photograph of the front door I shared with A1. In addition, below is an image of the living room of an apartment I sublet for several months in 2011. The owner of the apartment was a single woman with a degree in fine arts and a massage therapy business. This room is one of my favorites to date. I find its color scheme to be quite exceptional.

Figure 1.6 and 1.7:: left photograph of my current front door; right, former living room on St. Denis and rue Gilford (photos: Chelsea Woodhouse spring, 2011).

5.3 The Plateau: "It is what it is"

"Que diriez-vous d'explorer vraiment Montréal? Que diriez-vous de circuits - en autobus ou à pied - qui vont au cœur des débats actuels, éclairent des zones d'ombre de l'histoire, dépoussièrent l'idée que l'on se fait de certains quartiers ?"

"Have you ever wanted to explore Montreal for real? L'Autre Montreal's guided tours go to the heart of today's urban issues, shed light on forgotten aspects of Montreal history, bring you to places you've never seen... and offer a fresh perspective on neighbourhoods you thought you knew."

The above are excerpts from L'Autre Montréal's homepage. The following is a partial list of tours given regularly by this organization:

- Between River and Mountain: A First Encounter with the City
- From Villages to Metropolis: Three Hundred Years of Montreal History Catalogue
- The Multicultural Quilt: From Early Immigrants to the Cultural Communities of Today
- Grey or Green: Environmental Issues in Montreal
- Women in Montreal: A History of Women's Presence in the City
- Neighbourhood Alleys: The Hidden Side of Montreal
- A School for All: Education in Montreal, Past and Present
- Racism in Montreal: Struggles and Victories
- Where People Work: Montreal Workplaces and Their Impact on Montreal Neighborhoods
- Cities Built by Developers: The Industrial Boom in the East
- Côte-des-Neiges: Crossroads of the World
- Parc Extension: Immigration and Cultural Communities in Montreal Today
- Along the Main: Discovering St. Lawrence Street

These tours address Montreal's geography, race, ethnicity, group solidarity, collective memory, environment, personhood and—overall—collective identity, but nothing about fashion directly. I remember arriving on the Plateau and thinking, "What are people doing here? Nothing they wear matches." Such is a value judgment and should not be taken as fact.

Not knowing what to expect at the moment of arrival, I trusted my French friends when they suggested I should stay on the Plateau. I was told there was "nothing" around my university's campus (UdeM), and no mention of anywhere on the blue, yellow or green metro lines—orange was the new pink, so to speak. In fact, as I write this section, I am watching for the third time a two-minute, bird's eye-view tour of the city and its neighborhoods on *À la Montréal*, a website by *Tourisme Montréal*. The Plateau, Mont Royal has its own section.

To understand the organization of a city, it is important to map its neighborhoods. The city of Montreal is divided into 19 boroughs (*arrondissements*) and 15 "breakaway" municipalities that, since January 2006, despite being located on the island, are considered autonomous suburban units. While the city lies on a grid, its orientation is such that it is inconvenient to give precise cardinal directions. Thus, in local terms, the meaning of the words

East, *West*, *North* and *South* have been changed to mean "Northeast", "Southwest", "Northwest" and "Southeast", respectively (Interview, April 15th, 2012, Participant W).

From 1642 until the early 19th century, most of the population of Montreal was concentrated between the Saint Lawrence River and the steep incline today called rue Sherbrooke. Eastward, the large flat area known as the Plateau, Mont Royal, was home to several convents and villas, but no residential neighborhoods. It was not until the beginning of the 20th century that this land was converted into working-class and middle-class residences (Laterreur, Schwartz, Laurin and Bronson: 2008, 45-47). Similar structures remain today, if not the originals. Le Centre d'Histoire describes this sort of housing as having a front-life and a back-life. Today, for example, when it is warm, back alleys are filled with overfed cats, school children, BBQ fumes and traces of pot smoke. When it is cold, some insulate their backyard terraces with waterproof tarps. Some still use their BBQ grills through the winter months.

Pictured below, the label for the housing model states:

Front Life: "Out front, carefully swept wooden sidewalks and (of course) the neighbor peeking at the wedding party."

Back Life: "And in back, the alleyway, for delivering wood, coal or oil in winter and fruit, vegetables and ice in summer (notice the sheds), taking out the garbage, drying the wash on Monday, playing street hockey or holding pretend masses, creating a makeshift rink or, at dusk, stealing a kiss from the pretty girl next door…"

Fig. 1.8: Back life model, *Centre d'Histoire*
(photos: Chelsea Woodhouse fall, 2011)

Fig. 1.9: Back life, rue St. Dominique
(photos: Chelsea Woodhouse fall, 2011)

The first apartment I had on Chambord and Mont Royal had a back terrace with trees, a wrought iron spiral staircase and a six-toed cat named Mr. Kevin. My Québécois roommates told me that this is typical in Montreal, even that exact sort of cat. While this may be true, after visiting O several times, who lives on Hotel-de-Ville and Rachel, I noticed that his back terrace resembles much more closely the museum's model. It is a bit older. There is still a spiral staircase, but it is made of wood. Six cats and his Portuguese[14] landlady live below.

What videos or maps of the Plateau do not show, however, are streets comparatively closer together than those found downtown; many are lined with trees, narrow sidewalks, back alleys and community gardens. There are often several clusters of cyclists, cars, tardy buses

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[14]In the 1950s and 60s, Canada experienced an influx of Portuguese-speaking immigrants due to political turmoil in Portugal and its neighboring African territories. The Canadian government began to recruit railway and agricultural workers from these areas during the period. Immigrants chose to settle in urban settings. Within Montreal, the Portuguese community is contained between rue St. Denis (East) and rue Sherbrooke (South), and it is responsible for constructing the urban space, such as Portugal Park, located on Blvd. St. Laurent at the corner of Rue Marie-Anne. For more information please see: "Imagining the Built Environment: Montreal's Portuguese Community" by Claudia Oliveira at:

http://cityaspalimpsest.concordia.ca/

and delivery trucks. Businesses, including clubs, retail stores, and vintage shops, exist alongside or below residential apartments. In addition, there are numerous grocery stores, cafés and yoga studios. Typically, pedestrians walk slowly, in many directions, queue for public transit and are often seen waiting for traffic lights. A few dogs often wander without leashes in warm weather. All share this amalgam of spaces collectively termed the Plateau.

The Plateau also contains several of the city's principal arteries: Boulevard St. Laurent (St. Lawrence Street, The Main), Avenue Laurier, Boulevard St. Joseph, Avenue Mont Royal, rue Sherbrooke and rue St. Denis. Street names are presented in French because that is how I was first introduced to them, although most locals I have met refer to each as just, for example, "Laurier" or "Sherbrooke." At this time I will describe the Main briefly, explaining its significance in regards to the Plateau's current demography and venues. However, subsequent sections will reference commerce and nightlife found on all these streets.

"It's a division, it's the beginning…it's a Friday night riot and a Sunday afternoon stroll…" (À la Montréal). Boulevard St. Laurent is the island's informal divide. It has created an east/west split between Montreal's French and English communities since 1905. It extends from north to south (Northeast to Southeast). When walking southwest towards rue Sherbrooke, much more English than French is heard and vice versa when going northeast. Moreover, the boulevard is a partition of intercultural relations; it serves as a time capsule. Several businesses along its walk have been around since its inception, even before its path followed all the way to the Old Port's cobblestones. This boulevard is home to rehabilitated factories, some of which now contain stunning or semi-dilapidated apartments, remnants of the 1950s red-light district, gastronomic tourist attractions (Schwartz's Delicatessen) and

83

many of Montreal's immigrant communities (Centre d'Histoire de Montréal). In 2002, then-minister of heritage, Sheila Copps, named the Main a National Historic Site of Canada. Despite concerted efforts made by the city to keep the street clean, the section between rue Shebrooke and Avenue Rachel is often quite dirty. There is trash everywhere, especially after the snow melts in the spring, revealing fragments of cigarettes, animal feces and debris left over from the fall and winter. Such a trend is not limited to just the Main. Residents identify the trash as coming from the nearby bars and nightclubs, all with different dress codes, leftover by partygoers. Natives often remarked wryly that spring is the city's ugliest season.

Figure 1.10: Two views of Blvd. St. Laurent (photos: Chelsea Woodhouse spring, 2012)

My current apartment is on the corner of Prince Arthur and St. Dominique, just next to the Main. Towards the beginning of spring 2012, a former co-worker accompanied me along St. Dominique to my home after work. She exclaimed, without my prompt:

84

"All other streets are cuuuuute here! Not this one, this one looks like a SLUM!"

Stated in reference to the state of rue St. Dominique

(Unrecorded conversation, March, 2012 – Misa)

She appeared aghast when I approached my front door, a rusted gated-in front terrace, stairs still caked with about 15 centimeters of ice, accumulation from the melting icicles hanging from its metal awnings. "You live here?" she asked. "Yes," I answered. "It's scary," she said. "Yeah, I guess so, but it's ok inside," I replied.

The Plateau's charm derives from its housing options, not really the Main's late-night leftovers according to participants. In fact, in 1992, the City of Montreal adopted a Master Plan that recognized about 30% of the Plateau's landscape as "exceptional" and about 40% as "interesting." While I can speculate as to the value of these judgments, I will leave it to the reader to define these terms. Over 100 individual buildings were classified as having heritage value. In 2002, the amalgamation of the island of Montreal with the city ("une île, une ville"[15]) (Leblanc, 2006: 571) led to the creation of the present-day boroughs. In addition, the amalgamation led to the decentralization of urban planning and heritage management. It then became the individual borough's responsibility to create heritage bylaws, and it remains so to this day[16] (Laterreur *et.al* 2008: 46-49).

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[15]Until 2001, the island of Montreal was divided into 28 municipalities: the city of Montreal proper and 27 independent municipalities. These formed the Montreal Urban Community (MUC). On January 1, 2002, the 27 independent municipalities of the island of Montreal were merged with the city of Montreal, under the slogan, "Une île, une ville" ("One island, one city"). This merger was launched by the Parti Québécois across Quebec. However, in 2006, a demerger took place, creating 19 boroughs and 14 individual municipalities. Plateau, Mont Royal is a borough. Luc Fernnandez is the current Mayor of Plateau, Mont Royal. According to CBC, he is currently being criticized for being on vacation and failing to attend council meetings, effectively threatening his seat: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/story/2012/08/23/montreal-plateau-mayor-poor-attendance-council.html.

[16]Montreal's former mayor, Gérald Tremblay included in Montreal's 2012 operating budget the goal of augmenting the annual average investment in the city's renovation and revitalization of infrastructure from 265 million (2001) to 1.5 billion.

The Plateau is an area of the city where one can find the duplexes and even triplexes mentioned earlier, though the ones I have entered are often not equipped with modern amenities, like dishwashers and air conditioners, and are in need of far more than cosmetic repairs. During our interview, the brazen Participant SH placed herself upright in the crook of her leather couch, wearing yoga pants and a white t-shirt. She described the change of heart she had over her move from the Plateau to metro Papineau, on the green line:

> "…You can't expect to live around St. Laurent and keep getting older…and you know if it weren't for me buying I probably wouldn't have moved for a while. [pause] You get sucked in it you know? It's, it's your home…and you get to know [the area]…I mean I lived there for like seven years or so, but I moved from [Avenue] Coloniale to this [pause] to only two, three blocks away from each other…moving [away from the Plateau]…it ripped me apart, but you know, also, like the Plateau is poor, [pause] the Main, around that area [pause] poor, poor area back in the day, so that's why it's even ghetto a bit. You know, these houses haven't been renovated since like 50 years ago...and you're paying a fortune for this crummy apartment…I just could never picture living like that again…it's just shitty […] it is what it is" (interview, March 2012).

The "Quartiers Disparus" exhibition contextualizes the restructuring of urban life in Montreal that SH mentions. The destruction of the Red Light district, Goose Village and the Faubourg neighborhoods between 1950 and 1970 allowed Montreal to become, according to this exhibit, a "…clean, well-functioning, modern city," although the results of the demolitions "…left behind a mixed legacy; gains and losses…" The exhibition asks, in the end, "What will be your choices for your city's future?"

Since the previous decade, Montreal's population has struggled to negotiate life with less than up to date municipal infrastructure (roads/water supply systems/housing/snow removal etc). However, the source of the city's urban revenue is largely (66.8%) generated by property taxes. As the central city, Montréal is responsible for administering the urban agglomeration's financial operations on behalf of all of the related municipalities" (2012 Operating Budget). Of the funds allocated for the city's budget from property taxes, 4.4 cents from every dollar collected will go to "urban planning and economic development", while 9.6 cents will go to "recreation and culture." To view the budget, please visit: http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/SERVICE_FIN_EN/MEDIA/DOCUMENTS/BUDGET-2012-ATAGLANCE_CORRIGE_JAN_2012.PDF

SH's description is anecdotal evidence for the existence of the trope of youth movement introduced earlier in this chapter. According to her testimony, as she developed an appreciation for her new neighborhood, she became aware of what she believes is a reality associated with the Plateau and its housing options. SH believes rent prices for apartments found in parts of the Plateau are not proportionate with these lodgings' amenities. She appears to attribute her "change of heart" to the realization that she is now getting more for her money in her new neighborhood. She alludes to developing an adult sense of taste resulting from her change in environment.

According to *MontrealBits*, a website listing apartments for rent in Montreal, "Although several high-rises exist (particularly along rue Sherbrooke on the southern edges of the neighborhood), most of the Plateau dwellers live in "two to three story row houses…older apartments [that] often have high ceilings…" In fact, more than half of 56,800 homes here were built before 1946. Rather than demolishing old housing, in 2003, Montreal's citizens, marked by "Soirees du Plateau," initiated a movement for the valuation and protection of their urban heritage and its atypical (yet proliferated) architecture. In the end, Montrealers decided they needed to integrate new buildings within existing structures. In addition, the community insisted on a heritage policy that called for an "innovative, contemporary approach to the development of their neighborhood, rather than an approach that relied solely on replication of historical features" (Laterreur *et al*, 2008). In contrast to the preservation of individual monuments or residences, as Sturken (2007) documents in *Tourists of History* as a very American way to foster collective memory, residents of the Plateau decided instead to declare all buildings within its boundaries to be protected by the same heritage policy. Before implementing any regulations, the borough conducted a typomorphological study that, as a

result, divided the Plateau's territory into subgroups that were contingent upon their architectural typology.

In 2006, the Plateau was effectively partitioned into five sections based on their particular periods of construction and urban form: Saint-Louis du Mile-End, Village De Lorimier, Mont Sainte Famille, Square Saint-Louis and Sainte-Jean Baptiste. While these boundaries are still recognized by residents today to some degree, the responses I received from my participants all assert that there are only four areas of the Plateau, not five: The Plateau, the Lower-Plateau, the Mile-End and the McGill Ghetto. Each of these neighborhoods can be distinguished by their relationship to specific streets and to particular forms of housing. After being asked to map the Plateau, participants defined the neighborhoods as follows:

> **The Plateau** – From Avenue du Parc to rue Sherbrooke. It goes north to St. Joseph and east to Papineau. This area is the "core." It encompasses everything around Parc la Fontaine, the entrance to parc Mont Royal, avenues Mont Royal, Laurier, Rachel, St. Denis, Berri, Duluth and Prince Arthur.

> **The Lower Plateau** – From rue Berri and Ontario it goes east all the way to the village. It encompasses everything up until the Old Port. The West is cut off by St. Laurent; beyond that point, it becomes the Place des Arts structure. Anything below Sherbrooke (north) South Rene Leveque, East (de Lorimier)

> **The Mile-End** – St. Joseph all the way north to Jean Talon. Its west end is Boulevard Acadie and its east end is Papineau.

> **The McGill Ghetto** – McGill Avenue (west) to Parc (east); Pins (north) to Sherbooke (south). It encompasses the McGill campus.

The only demographic figures specific to the Plateau, Mont Royal, that I found were given in terms of the borough's electoral divisions, which differ from both the heritage and the participant descriptions. There are only three neighborhoods defined: Delorimier (the Lower Plateau), Jeanne Mance (Plateau/McGill Ghetto) and Mile-End (Mile-End)

Delorimier: Population: 33,735; French is spoken in 97% of households; 16% of those 20 years or older do not have a high school diploma; 44% hold a university degree; average income is $43,092, lower than the average in Montreal; 78% of residents are tenants and not home owners; immigrants represent 11% of the total population, the majority coming from France (33%).

Jeanne Mance: Population: 35,719; French is spoken in 65% of households; 13% of those 20 years or older do not have high school diploma; 55% hold a university degree; average income is $40,136, lower than the average in Montreal; 80% of residents are tenants and not home owners; immigrants represent 28% of total population, the majority coming from France (17%), Portugal (11%) and China (10%).

Mile-End: Population: 31,910; French is spoken in 70% of households, English 15% and another language (15%); 18% of those 20 years or older do not have a high school diploma; 47% hold a university degree; average income is $41,787, lower than the average in Montreal; 75% of residents are tenants not home owners; immigrants represents 26% of total population, the majority coming from France (16%), Portugal (15%) and Greece (7%).

Within the exhibition "Quartiers Disparus," there is a video just at the end narrating Montreal's dwindling youth population. It declares, "Something is going to have to happen to keep the young people in Montreal." I was not made aware of the possibility this characteristic's relationship to the Plateau, for those living close to the Main, until being chauffeured one mid-afternoon to my new apartment on St. Dominique. My driver was a 33-year-old, male resident of the Mile-End and a local DJ, who, as he stared out the car window to escape the traffic on Boulevard St. Laurent, lamented:

"Wait, what's that? (Pause)

Me: What do you mean?

The turnover on this street, it's (pause) crazy."

(Remarks concerning the closing of a local business)

(Unrecorded conversation, August, 2011)

At the time, I initially took his comment as disingenuous, a generalization. I also found him very dirty. His white V-neck T-shirt had several grease stains, and his grey skinny jeans

just amplified my disdain for what I took to be his interpretation of nineties grunge. I did not understand what he meant until some months later. His comment evokes the Plateau's shifting demographics and economic activity. First, the turnover of businesses, particularly restaurants, is extremely high in this area of the city; many gain massive popularity over a one- to two-year period after opening, only to fall by the wayside. Take, for example, the former Pistol on St. Laurent and de Pins—super popular, super hip, then super dead. The property is now leased to Big in Japan, another popular eatery that was recently featured on Anthony Bourdain's Montreal-based episode of "The Layover." Second, as I spoke more with my participants, many of whom, by the fall 2011, were fast becoming friends, they told me stories of departures by non-native students, tourists, and immigrants living on the Plateau. That population is perceived by these individuals as being in the same flux as that of local businesses, even while the buildings they inhabit remain constant, protected by heritage law and venerated in local museums. Temporary residents are therefore held accountable, by the museums and the neighborhood's Master Plan, for integrating modern styles into this historic architecture, resulting in a city space where no two scenes are exactly alike:

> "The thing about Montreal, and its not only Montrealers who say it, is being able to sip a beer at an outdoor café, savour fabulous international cuisine, dance the night a way, gamble at the casino, buy the latest gadget, plant a garden on your balcony, shop for clothing by young, high-flying designers, browse through antique shops, admire a church…Take in museums, concerts, shows, studios, theatres, festivals, film shoots, cocktails, launches… Participate in debates, symposia, and international conventions… Chat in and hear French, English, Spanish Chinese etc. You can find everything in Montreal, Everything to help you hide your eyes in regards to some uncomfortable truths." (Label, Centre d'Histoire de Montréal).

Fashioning life on the Plateau requires its residents to observe distinctions in housing as an investment in "a representation of a collective individual" (Handler 1984: 60). The following chapters present the common values that surround the fashioning of one distinct

look in particular: the hipster. Montreal may or may not be the soul of Canada, but "[Montreal]…it is a North American city..." (Recorded interview, April 15th, Participant W). This quotation hints at the undercurrent of globalization present due to the relatively high volume of immigration Montreal experiences annually from many European and French-speaking countries formerly colonized by Europeans. W's comments also allude to the trade relationships between Quebec, Canada and the United States discussed in Chapter 4. Both factors, I believe contribute to the nature of the Plateau's look, one that is cosmopolitan and global in essence, but still quite local.

CHAPTER 6

Getting the Look: A Methodology of Shopping?

Chaos ensued. Stressed, wondering whether or not what I was doing was even anthropology, I met SH at her condo near metro Frontenac for our first interview. Early in our conversation, I remarked that her street reminded me of Brooklyn, even though I have never been to Brooklyn, NY.

> "I KNOW. I know (laughs)…everyone always says when they come here, I feel like I'm in Brooklyn right now, don't you feel like you're in Brooklyn?" (Interview SH, March 14th, 2012)

Her apartment really did "feel" like Brooklyn, those huge windows stretching from floor to ceiling, that panoramic view of the bridge and stunted skyline. However, her living room was contemporary, filled with black leather sofas, stainless steel appliances and granite counter tops. It was appealing to me visually, and that confused me. I did not expect the décor to be so modern. Honestly, I had developed a fondness for the allure of the "Old World" after residing in the Plateau for two years. My participant was as candid and relaxed as her dress— running slacks and a t-shirt, with her hair pulled back: "Personal style enables a sense of subjectivity in a visual way, representing to those around us, and to ourselves, some tentative idea about who we are and are becoming" (Kaiser 2012:172). I found the streamlined structure of her attire and living environment to be peaceful. The taste SH exhibited in her dress and apartment struck me as identifiable of the "Brooklyn Look" Bee-Shyuan Chang of the *New York Times* describes in her article "The Curator of the Brooklyn Look[17]" as "…decidedly

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[17]To view this article please visit http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/27/fashion/jennifer-mankins-and-the-brooklyn-aesthetic.html?pagewanted=all

feminine…it's more about day-to-day coping and nesting than peacock like display" (2012: par 1).

In fiction, "…social rules do not regulate the character's conduct, nor do they ensure the reproduction of the established social order; rather, they give significance and value to pragmatically pursued social action" (Handler and Segal 1990:3). I contend that context is similarly valuable in fashion. Context fuels not just the consumption of trends, but their reprocessing as well, according to another of my participants. Participant NR is the president of an underwear brand in Montreal that has reprocessed its own image this past 2011 in order to expand the demographic of its consumer market. Contextualizing a new image for this brand, which according to NR was previously popular only among minute factions of Montreal's gay community, was made possible by developing an image that lent itself to the tickets of "youthful" and "vibrant" rather than "sexy." "Live like a kid!" was the resulting campaign for this brand.

First some information about SH's back-story: she is a native Montrealer, primarily Anglophone but fluent in French, who works as a make-up artist for Yves Saint Laurent, based out of Holt Renfrew in downtown Montreal. During our conversation, she mentioned that she felt more American than Canadian due to her seven-year stay in Vermont and Upstate New York in her adolescence. Lastly, after living in its core for seven years, SH no longer lives on the Plateau. As a recent outsider of the Plateau, her testimony exemplifies a common antipathy held for those "young nerdy-looking kids," known colloquially as *hipsters*, found often along the Main, in the McGill ghetto and within the Mile-End. This chapter will describe the value of consuming dress. The consumption of dress will be presented here and later in the

conclusion as a practice the consumer views as capable of authenticating the self and therefore good for themselves and the community. According to participants, this sort of behavior involves a shopper actively distinguishing between clothing items as either helpful to the realization of the self or as a hindrance to the performance of the self. This distinction appears to be connected to certain clothing's associations with the local community's ideology of the self, and also with the Plateau's ephemeral "look" discussed in the previous chapter. The following chapters will address how brand name versions of these fashions are then appropriated by a sample of the Plateau's youth population, disdainfully referred to as "hipsters" by several participants.

Generally, fashion scholars agree, the democratization of Western fashionable dress occurred in the eighteenth century (Breward 1995). Lars Svendsen writes, "Hardly any present-day Westerner lies outside its domain" (2006:9). Moreover, Svendsen argues that the influence of fashion goes beyond what people put on their bodies. Principally, he draws connections between fashion and visual arts. He states,

> "An important reason for art having remained in fashion could be that it actually manages to say something important from time to time, whereas fashion is caught in a loop where it mainly repeats itself and means increasingly less. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that today's fashion finds itself way down in a creative trough" (110).

However, popular discuss regarding Western fashion today remains decidedly different. As Stanley Tucci's character says in the popular film *The Devil Wear's Prada* "[Fashion] is greater than art, because you live your life in it".

Commercial fashion disseminates by more than brick and mortar retailers, but by way of plates, magazines, billboards and, more recently, online portals. Fashion is as much a three-dimensional medium of self-realization (Svendsen 2006) but also an instantiation of an ethos

94

associated with performativity. Individuals are tasked with the project of "making themselves" into fashionable beings. This activity involves the process and physical components of dress, but also a conceptualization of fashion as contemporary art, albeit, "…fairly insignificant art" (*ibid*:109) despite the self-reflexivity of its performance. By this logic, clothes alone do not make individuals; rather, a person must take an active role in the processes of fashion, whether by buying a magazine, making their own outfits or objectifying the version of themselves they can see in the mirror. A person looking for a change in their wardrobe seeks to negotiate an understanding of "what works" for them and what does not in terms of clothing (Woodward 2007). The effort exerted in the search for, and later acquisition of, fashionable dress is a manifestation of this process. It is the choice to participate in what is recognized as fashionable. Individuals must then determine how far she or he is willing to go in order to live fashionably, a process which does not spontaneously occur. More parties than its disseminators create fashion and in the Plateau the movement to and from the city taking place within the youth population is perhaps representative of Montreal's identity as a city of self-fashioning people looking for a way to change themselves.

Before undertaking this research, I thought there was only one version of fashionable dress: the styles presented in magazines, shows, or commercials. Popular culture is where I assumed fashion to reside. In addition, I thought it was the name on a label that made something fashionable. This view was naive. If *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue* were the definitive guides to Western style, then there would be much less uncertainty about how, what, and when to wear the right fashions. I will return to the creation of authentic representations of fashionable dress later. Right now, it is essential to engage fashion's polysemic meanings.

95

It is not so much the term *fashion* as it is the intention behind the term. Daniel Miller notes the rise in consumption of western products was a threat to the anthropological object of study "culture" (2005: 263). Western goods, appropriated to non-western settings were seen as threats to the sanctity and uniqueness of local culture. This perspective is not surprising given such products are often associated with mass-production and standardization, both of which are characteristics revered in the modern world by some as catalysts of the alienation consumer must endure when purchasing name brand anything. However, consumers—in my ethnography, primarily female shoppers within the city of Montreal—are hardly standardized. The women I spent time with did not even share the same clothing sizes. Each one of them experiences the fit of garments in a different way and consequently interacts with fashion, in terms of dress, differently. What we wear is also affected by what is available to us by globalized markets. As such, like urban space, a commodity can never be neutral. In western dress, clothing is a commodity because it is valued. However, Bauman writes, "it is often said that the consumer market seduces its customers. But in order to do so it needs customers who want to be seduced" (1998:83). The difficulty of interpreting value lies in determining its source, not examining its objective reality (the material arrangements of an item of clothing). In addition, not everyone adheres to a prescribed mainstream fashion, as we will see with SH and V. These participants nonetheless considered themselves fashionable.

Upon moving to Montreal, what surprised me most was not the city's fashionable flair, but the practice of bartering and trading goods and services through Craigslist and other public online sales websites; clothing, furniture and various personal items were commonly sold this way, all with relative ease. At this point, Montreal's fashion, for me, seemed flat, meaning humdrum and outdated. Perhaps the city's fashion sense eluded me at first because, as

96

Tourisme Montreal describes, that fashion is "innate." Montreal's residents do not consume popular fashion trends, but set them, often by creating mixes of original styles using *fripperies* and second-hand stores or even making their own. Shoppers do have access to big department stores like Holt Renfrew, Simons, and The Bay, and several participants admitted to shopping at big name retailers such as these in addition to buying underwear at Dollarama. These name brand retailers are often small, however, with incomplete selections of merchandise in comparison to the "real" ones in New York City or Toronto. In the end, the residents do not adhere to a specific canon of what is fashionable, but insist on trusting their own judgment while shopping. In the fall of 2011, I decided to trust my own and started using Craigslist myself.

Through this virtual portal, I met H, a 22-year-old girl from South Carolina. She moved to Montreal to improve her French,[18] which she had studied extensively throughout college, working as a teacher's assistant. She also had a fondness for magical realism. As a creative writer, mostly through the medium of blogging, she came to Montreal insisting the city was one stop along her journey of self-discovery. She asked me to give modeling a try with her. This opportunity dovetailed nicely with my thesis, given modeling's associations with fashion, identity and the body, so I thought, "Why not try to kill two birds with one stone?" In mid-February, we had our first photography session with a male photographer, all thanks to Craigslist.

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[18]According to the 2006 Census data, only 7,215 Americans have immigrated to Montreal since 1991 between the ages of 25 and 54 inclusively. However, during the same period and within the same age group, 1,215,765 Americans have either held a valid work or study permit or were refugee claimants at the time of the survey. Of that population 1,069,250 held a university degree, certificate or diploma. To view the data please see: www.statcan.gc.ca

As taboo as Craigslist seemed in my home state of Virginia, once I got to Montreal, that was no longer the case: "Whenever you get to a new city you can be a new you," as A1 once told me (Recorded interview, December 2011). After posting an advertisement describing H and I's interest in gaining modeling experience, I received a reply from RGate, a middle-aged man from Montreal. He said he had a home studio and was willing to pay us for our time. H came along with me for paid experience, moral support and a lifeline in case the photographer turned out to be a sexual predator. He lived out near Namur metro. Neither of us had ever been that far from the Plateau at the time; we had no reason to be. According to SH, when you live on the Plateau, "…you are your area" (recorded interview March 14th, 2012). It is true, once you get your spot here, one really does not have to go far very often. It is possible to work, shop for groceries, live and socialize within a fifteen-minute walking radius of all the neighborhoods on the Plateau. In fact, most of my participants only go to places within walking distance or with an accessible bike path. Public transit is situated far from metro stations in some neighborhoods. Monthly transit costs are actively rising and quite expensive without the student discount.

Once we got there, the photographer gave us suggestions about what to wear from the wardrobe we brought with us and how to pose. He even let us look over the photos in between sessions to see what was working and what was not. At the same time that the photographer invited our input, he knew what he wanted. He had his own style. We were not sure that we shared it from the outset, but, after the fourth hour of our shoot, H had come around. She was swaddled in an enormous piece of light blue foam, a matching headdress, all the while *sans culottes*. I was a bit envious of her capability to trust the photographer.

After participating in several other freelance photo shoots with different local photographers, H and I came to realize that sessions such as these were good for the photographer as well as the model, because both get a chance to develop their personal style. Our experience with RGate exemplified this exchange, thanks to H's willingness (and in spite of my own unwillingness) to trust his personal style. I was not willing to be fashionable, extreme on camera, for an unknown photographer. The corporeality of the absence of clothing made me nervous. In December 2011, A1 expressed the same anxiety as she recalled several of her photo shoots with lingerie that touched, at times, on erotica. Of course, fashion does not always entail sexy, but it is always sensual in the sense that it wants to be seen, touched, and appreciated for what it is. Marc Jacobs, for instance, managed to remove three-fourths of Victoria Beckham's (the model's) body in a recent advert from 2011, as he strategically places Beckham inside of the bag with her legs flopped outwardly over the bag's seams, falling into the embrace of a disposable take-away bag marked with the designer's name.

In Montreal, rarely does anyone pay full price for his or her fashion. The YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association), for example, funds clothing swaps. I attended several with H in Spring 2011, before the official start of research that fall. At these swaps, one drops off one's old clothes, receives tickets corresponding to the amount of items deemed exchangeable, and then picks new items from the stock available at the event of the swap. *Reduce, reuse, recycle* applies equally to the values of fashionable dress on the Plateau, according to Tourism Montreal, as it does to the environmental initiative.

One behavior my participants share, whether or not they chose to dress fashionably in a conventional sense, is how transformations in their life manifest through wardrobe changes. In

the end, to my dismay, H left Montreal. She said she had experienced everything the city could offer her in terms of personal transformation. However, several months prior to her departure, she participated in a fashion show for an up-and-coming underwear brand with a huge following in the gay community here in Montreal. It was at this fashion show that H met my (now former) roommate, A1, who later introduced me to participants N, NR and O. It is through these individuals that I would learn how brands were legitimated as valuable within the communities of the Plateau and what importance confidence was to fashionable dress.

6.1 Getting an Image, Becoming a Brand

Living in Montreal is not only for Canadians (Meintel and Fortin 2002, Le Gall and Meintel 2011). Montreal is a city situated within the province of Quebec—"a society enriched by its diversity," according to the Quebec Government—that states the following are common values held by all inhabitants the province:

> Speaking French is a necessity
> A free and democratic society
> A society enriched by its diversity
> A society based on the rule of law
> Separation of the political and religious powers
> Men and women have the same rights
> Individual freedoms and the collective well being

These and other entries are found at the ministerial website *Immigration et Communautes culturelles, Quebec,* providing overviews of what to expect when moving to the province. Moreover, "To facilitate the integration of new immigrants in Québec…the information session *Vivre ensemble au Québec* (Living together in Québec)…Offered in French, presents the common values in Québec and how they shape the daily lives of Quebecers."

In the summer of 2010, I read this website's contents several times before arriving to study at the Université de Montréal. I did not anticipate a huge cultural shock. In fact, aside from the houses and the clothes I saw people wearing, I did not notice many differences from Fredericksburg, Virginia, where I went to university—aside from many speaking in French, the use of Celsius, specialty grocery stores and these places called *dépanneurs*.[19] During my interview with SH, I asked her to invent a hypothetical advertisement for fashionable dress on the Plateau. This paragraph is an excerpt from her response. I had seen something similar to its description while living in Fredericksburg, VA and in the Plateau.

> Me: "If you could make an advertising campaign for the Plateau what would it be, as far as fashion is concerned?
> SH: "I guess it would kind of have to *funky*. [Pensive] I guess it would be these kids in their early twenties [pause]. Because I could do it cool tastefully or kind of *scenestery generic* [pause] but I guess, because of the sales person in me, I should do it scenestery generic since it's to sell something…So, it would be a nice sunny day [pause] it would be on the Main [pause] kind of like the picture on the Beatles album when they're crossing Abby Road [pause] it would be two kids, with their bikes [pause] it would be a girl and a guy that were about to meet [pause] and they would have a smile on each other and the guy, he would maybe have a flower that he picked [pause] and they would have that very look I was talking about, that nerdy look [pause] that's how I would do it" (Recorded Interview, March 16th, 2012).

There are several things to note: First, I did not ask her to describe the individuals in the ad other than their clothing. In my mind, I had pictured two Caucasian individuals, but only because that is who I have seen on the Plateau, along the Main, wearing that "nerdy look." This photo, taken by O, represents the type of individual that came to mind; neither of us knows the people pictured. Second, given her background in sales, SH notes the prejudice in her choice to portray a "scenestery generic" version of Montreal rather than an accurate one. Is this description an authentic representation of the Plateau's look? SH answered "no."

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[19]A convenience store all usually carrying the same variations of instant noodles, condiments, canned goods, cleaning supplies and tobacco products, among other things. To be found throughout the city, usually along major streets.

Figure 2.1 Subject: The Plateau, the look of youth (photo: Participant O spring, 2012)

Do residents of the Plateau understand what it means to be branded or to have an image? How many of them know how brands are created? This photograph, taken by O, is of inhabitants of the Plateau. According to O, when the individuals pictured asked why he needed the photograph, he told them, "My friend is doing a project on the Plateau." The guy in the hat replied, "Yeah, [pausing, examining himself] we do look like the Plateau, don't we?"

According to NR, the person advertising a product has to know:

"A name is not a brand and every successful product has a good story. The customer has to buy into that story so it has to be credible. Without a good story it is just another product. The narrative gives it a sense of worth" (Paraphrase, interview, October 29th, 2011).

Because he could not stand his own voice, N refused to be recorded electronically. I took notes by hand during our conversations. As one of my first recorded interviewees, he was helpful in articulating tactics of sales, such as gorilla marketing, and how e-commerce worked, all in relation to what it was like to market underwear in Montreal. His brand was trying to expand its consumer base outside the gay/lesbian community of the city. The brand is known as "the darlings of the underwear industry."

Plateau fashion, like all fashion according to NR, is connected to narratives. I will articulate these narratives in more detail below. Participants perceive fashion in the Plateau as a lifestyle that is innate to this urban space, but at the same time, purchased by way of valued commodities specific to this area of the city such as low-cost and/or noncommittal housing, diverse food choices and eclectic clothing. However, "…consumption takes time...[and] consumer's satisfaction ought to be instant" (Bauman 1998:81). Perhaps this logic is one of the reasons participants perceive the Plateau's narrative of fashion in terms of pedestrian street style. Here, however, contrary to the argument I have made that Plateau fashions are a hodgepodge of personal tastes, the city has taken up the task of identifying and marketing to its potential visitors, the Plateau's fashionable character as that which is, "daily life" for locals. Thus, fashionable dress, and the concept of being fashionable merge into the background, no matter how visually interesting the garments a consumer may be wearing.

Figure 2.2 Blvd. St. Laurent: They were just there on the side of the road (photos: Chelsea Woodhouse spring, 2012)

A 24-year-old French-Canadian blogger from Montreal, Participant MB discusses the Montreal fashion show GRISFFÉ[20] in a recent online post:

> "It's important to create a lifestyle around clothing. Not only because it makes it stand out, but because it also helps everyone to figure out what it can be worn with and for what kind of situations."

I worked briefly with MB for a website's fashion and beauty section from the period of July 2011 until March 2012. We were in charge of advising readers on how to dress fashionably. The majority of our articles addressed women. Quite a few of the articles were interviews with

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[20]The GRISFFÉ fashion show is organized by Gris-Montreal, "a non-profit organization whose mission is to ensure a better awareness of the homosexual and bisexual reality and to make it easier for gays, lesbians and bisexuals to integrate into society," according to Gris-Montreal website.

Montreal-based designers or fashion and design students from Lasalle College, or on beauty tutorials and the street styles of the Plateau. When I had the opportunity, I would write posts about the resurgence of retro fads like sequined tuxedos (Dolce and Gabana winter 2012), platform boots (summer 2011), colored denim (fall 2011) or knee socks (fall 2011). In this context I was writing with the goal of gaining more readers, and ultimately more hits for the website. As long as the editor liked what we wrote and the readership increased, everyone was happy. I stopped writing for two reasons. One, eventually I had to start putting more time into this thesis. Two, it was becoming tiresome writing from the same didactic perspective on in-style fashion. The writing I was doing for the website drove me to reconsider my own relationship to fashion. This reflection made me aware that my own definition of fashion contrasted with that of the one I had been asked to put in writing for readers.

MB was trying to get her own business started as a stylist. She had to figure out how to encapsulate herself in order to make her product—her services as a stylist—comprehensible to the public. During our conversations, which occurred at the initial stages of her independent business, MB was unable to answer what she considered valuable in terms of fashionable dress. Such was not the case for all participants. Participant C talked about wanting to move to the next stage of her life. She mentions changing her clothing as a principle way she will recreate her self-image as *woman*, in addition to being a 24-year-old, bilingual, university-educated, social worker from Montreal who lives near the Côte-Vertu metro but works on the Plateau. Participant V discusses trying to live a healthier lifestyle, finishing her degree and enjoying her new apartment that is no longer located on St. Laurent near Studio Bliss Yoga; she lives instead near Avenue Laurier because "…it's quieter there…the people are lovely." SH talks about how leaving the Plateau was difficult, but felt so good once she did after

several months; she now only returns to do her grocery shopping or go to the parks when it is warm. SH actually discouraged one of her friends from moving there by referencing the Main's chaotic club scene: "…Go there at one o'clock at night (pause) just…just to see…needless to say she didn't take the place (laughs)" (recorded interview, March 14th, 2012). O is in the process of deciding whether or not to abandon his 30-year-old roommate, a drug addict, for a place to himself near metro Jarry, off the Plateau entirely. H left the Plateau after seeing all there was to see. N moved to Germany to be with her boyfriend. And Participant A1—well, A1 has no plans to leave; the same with Participant S. A1, a native of Nova Scotia, and S, from British Columbia, came to Montreal in search of themselves. Both are 25 years old and have a working knowledge of French. The commonality present within the testimony of all participants is each came to the Plateau and will remain in the Plateau in an effort to develop the self. A1 and S came in search of the opportunity to create their own story. Just as NR did with the underwear, so to would A1 and S attempt to rebrand themselves by way of consuming fashionable dress, in stylish ways. However, we will see in the following Conclusion neither succeed in becoming stylish in the sense of the Plateau's local culture due to their inability to appropriate the values commensurate with fashionable consumption here. Both fell prey to a well-known effect of life on the Plateau associated with its nightlife. As SH remarks, "…you can't get old living on the Plateau, you just can't," (recorded interview, March 14th, 2012) although you can always reinvent yourself (paraphrase, Participant A1, interview December 2012).

6.2 Buying New: How do you know it's new?

Vincent, my former roommate from my first apartment on rue Chambord and avenue Mont Royal, gave me a book in Spring 2011 called, *Formes et Modes: Le costume à Montréal*

au XIXe siècle. The book discusses the McCord Museum's collection of historic dress. It is the largest in Quebec of its kind, "uniquely Canadian and focuses mainly on Montreal" (Beaudoin-Ross, 1992:15). The author understands collective taste as something that governs changes in fashionable dress, though only for women's fashion. Beaudoin-Ross believes collective taste to be the result of the more rapid dissemination of fashion plates and news among North America, Europe and specifically Montreal during the nineteenth century. However, she assumes at the same time that fashion, in terms of dress, is propelled by some "internal dynamic of change" (50). In addition, the author attributes changes in the silhouette of women's garments to "consumer-oriented bourgeois society [and]…it's members' desire to distinguish themselves through fashion from others less fortunate and to feel reassured of their position" (15).

How much this observation still applies to the Plateau's fashion is uncertain. We know the majority of the Plateau's residents make below the yearly average income of all Montrealers. However, this is not evidence to support the assumption current residents of the Plateau seek to distinguish themselves from those other Montrealers. In my participants' case, what is valued most is not the price but the freedom to choose what to wear and from where it originates. This development makes sense, given that, from the 1930s to the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, Montreal became associated with several narratives meant to describe its evolving cultural landscape. Some of these accounts portray this period in terms of the city's deteriorating urbanity, particularly its infrastructure (note the city's comparatively cheap rents and high rates of under-employment), while another narrative affirms the city's continued existence as a hub for the production of arts, music and literature (Stahl 2001:100). This Bohemian narrative is not new and it even lives within the confines of the city's museums, as

106

we have seen from the exhibit *Les Quartiers Disparus* presented in the previous chapter. Today, the youth population, visible outwardly, in part, by their choice of dress, perpetuates this legacy.

When asked about how they shopped, the majority of my participants said they liked to do it alone and take their time. I am unsure of whether to paint the city as gendered or not in terms of the availability and appropriation of commercial and nonmainstream fashions. However, in the Plateau the androgynous nature of the hipster look is noticeable. Nonetheless, while there are clothing stores for men and for women, there are also stores on the Plateau that cater to both genders, such as American Apparel, specifying a clientele by age instead (18 to 30), of course there is the occasional outlier. There are three American Apparels located at 4001 St. Denis, 967 Mont-Royal Est, and 4945 rue Sherbrooke (there are also two more in the downtown core: one on St. Catherine and one on Peel). I single out American Apparel because participants consider this brand to be one that has turned their own day-to-day lives in the Plateau as independent, youthful and creative individuals into a sexualized, mass-produced commodity. Of course, American Apparel is only capitalizing on the image of these qualities; a brand is capable of turning such things as "youth" into a commodity, at least authentically by Bendix's interpretation of authenticity.

> "As tourists, we can choose between a cruise to the last real headhunters, a stroll through the back alleys of famous places in search of the hidden authenticities of everyday life, and the opportunity to witness authentic belief experiences among parishioners in Harlem's churches. For all of our senses and all of our experiential cravings, we have created a market of identifiable authenticities" (1997:3).

According to their website, American Apparel started as a wholesale brand. It is now a vertically integrated clothing manufacturer, distributor and retailer, based in Los Angeles, California. It is proud of being a 'Made in USA' company that does not outsource its labor to

sweatshops overseas. This brand's garment factory is supposedly the largest in the United States and exports to more than 20 countries, Canada being one of them.

Recently, *Time* Magazine reported that American Apparel introduced the "Next BIG Thing" contest to find "booty-ful" models for their new line of XL clothing. Nancy Upton, 24, was the winner of the competition, according to a public online voting poll. However, American Apparel refused to award her the prize. Upton posed for a series of photos that included one of her sprawling in a tub full of ranch dressing and another mischievously stealing from the fridge after dark. *Time* reports her entry description as: "I'm a size 12. I can't stop eating." Upton received the most votes on the contest website, thanks in part to her personal blog. In the past, American Apparel has received criticism for its ads that show young women and men in sexually suggestive advertisements. According to the brief biographies located in the corner of these advertisements that list the name, occupation, age and interests of the model, these models appear to be American Apparel employees. Dov Charney the brand's CEO and Montreal native was sued by multiple American Apparel employees for sexual misconduct. The company's creative director Iris Alonzo responded to Upton, rather than Dov Charney, by sending her a long email. This message was distributed to the press. It criticized the media's disapproving coverage of the company in general. According to *Time*, the message reads:

"There are thousands of brands in the market who have no intention of supporting natural, and completely normal, full-figured women, and American Apparel is making a conscious effort to change that, both with our models and our line. If every brand that tried to do this was met with such negative press, we may have to wait another decade for the mainstream to embrace something so simple.

I suppose you have read a few too many negative pieces about us that have helped to form your opinion of who we are and what we stand for, and perhaps this has clouded your ability to give us a chance. I get it. I read some of it too. As a creative who isn't always the most tactful and tends to stay away from the limelight, maybe I haven't spoken up as much as I should have over the past 8 years that I've worked at American Apparel. Perhaps I could have shed some light on some issues that have been left cloudy over the years. However, sensational media will always need something to latch on to and success, spandex and individuality (and mutton chops circa 2004) are certainly easy targets.

Oh, and regarding winning the contest, while you were clearly the popular choice, we have decided to award the prizes to other contestants that we feel truly exemplify the idea of beauty inside and out, and whom we will be proud to have representing our company."

The main reason for this American Apparel interlude is the observance of the dichotomy present between commercial fashion's definition of "fashion," and a consumer's interpretation of this definition. In the case of Nancy Upton, given her obvious parody of the brand's arguably distasteful advertisements, her entry was meant to offend supporters of the proliferation of American Apparel's image. I am speculating, but by Upton's perspective as a plus size, female consumer American Apparel's current image and recent outcry for the public's assistance was hardly authentic by her standards of self and therefore well-worth the offense and quite necessary.

V, a 27-year-old Montreal native pursuing her Master's in Philosophy at Concordia University, states, "…there's something scary and unnecessary about true fashion" (Interview, Spring 2012). When I first met V in January 2012 for a training shift at a restaurant on St. Laurent Boulevard, I noticed immediately her huge, delicately black-rimmed glasses, resembling those pictured in the Gucci ad of the previous chapter. She had a slim silhouette and wore pixie cut strawberry blonde hair and orange lipstick. In my mind, she oozed

confidence. She controlled the floor. She offered me water, remaining taciturn until I mentioned my age—"I'm 22"—and education—"I'm doing my Master's in cultural anthropology."

Just as I had with SH, we lost track of time talking about how people conceptualize value. She shared this interest and sympathized, as did other student participants, with the trials of balancing work, school and personal transformations. She often spoke about her friend, SH, who I had yet to meet, often adding that I really needed to meet and interview her. As weeks passed, and my experience with fashionable dress and workload intensified, I began to understand fashion in its physical form as being about extremes. At this point my hair was still black, but I was contemplating going bright red. I am unsure as to how influenced by contemporary fashion I was, but red happened to be a big color for hair in the winter of 2012, and still was in the spring of 2012. How and why red got to be popular is a whole other process.

Sophie Woodward asserts that in order for something to be fashionable, it has to be found authentic by being worn (2007). Its value is created through being worn. However, in being worn fashions age. However, being *new* seems to be one of mainstream fashion's characteristic features (Svendsen, 2006). In order to remain in style, consumers have to appropriate what is new in the mainstream or create new fashions outside of the mainstream. When discussing how shoppers negotiate fashion's paradoxical relationship with modernity (Miller and Woodward, 2011, Woodward, 2007), former trends always have the potential to be recontexualized by consumers and remade into new and consequently fashionable items. For example, V admits to recycling her own clothing:

> V: Well I have a shirt, and it was a bad Simon's purchase when I bought it, but I liked it for a while…it was one of the ones I would have considered throwing away…and now I put it on again and for whatever reason my body's changed…but now when I wear it, I can always go to that sweater and I feel really nice [in it], you know?...But I almost gave it away, I hated it for years. So you recycle your own clothes. (Interview February 6th, 2012)

Many of those between 18 and 30 on the Plateau think *hipster* means 1980s denim cut-offs and using cassette tapes.[21] V's statement is important as it illustrates her desire to be fashion-forward, but in a way that does not compromise her relationship with her changing body and self-image. She chooses to wear the shirt only when its presence contributes positively to her self-expression, or makes her "feel nice" (Interview February 6th, 2012).

As discussed by V, O, SH, C and MB, the Mile-End is a neighborhood a little north of the Plateau. Many young students, artists and musicians whom attend or have attended McGill or Concordia, if they attend university at all inhabit this area. According to participant testimony, many of its residents are Allophone and originate from other countries or out-of-province, but have chosen to stay in Montreal. This neighborhood is also an out-and-out vintage retreat, with no American Apparel insight, unless residents are wearing selected pieces. The nondescript nature of this brand's clothing makes the identification of its individual pieces difficult, but at least the brand carries a large range of sizes for men and women. In contrast to American Apparel, not everyone who would like to can wear vintage clothing. Typically, vintage sizes run small, and there is of course a minimal selection to choose from in specific sizes regardless of age or gender. However, the lack of available copies, in a large range of sizes makes vintage clothing unique. The context in which it was

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[21]REC-STOP-PLAY is a documentary about cassette tapes, featuring participant O, but not a documentary about history. Focusing on the continuing trend of cassette releases out of Ottawa. It's trailer can be viewed here: http://www.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3D9pMOXNWr-F0andh=4AQGjXdgI

initially fashionable may contribute to its desirability among consumers. Superficially, however, being the only one capable of not only acquiring, but wearing a piece makes it authentically "you" even if you have no idea from when or where it originates in the trajectory of fashion's history.

When V asserted, "there's something scary and unnecessary about true fashion," (Interview February 6th, 2012) in the same breath she also described who she considers to be one of her most fashionable friends, Dana. V referred to Dana, a Plateau-going Montrealer, as "a flaming ball of extreme existence." This account is evidence that fashion in the Plateau is not just about selling an aesthetic, but is about articulating the valuation of this way of being. The question thus becomes: how is value determined not in the case of clothing, but in the case of living fashionably? I asked V, as I did others, what she considers valuable in her life and in terms of clothing:

> "Meeting new people, re-meeting old people you know? People who are really interesting to talk to and [who] do interesting things in their lives (pause) that's a value." (Recorded Interview V February 6th, 2012)

6.3 Can Value be Negative?

Well, of course, but what good does selling an item for a deficit do for business? The question, "Can value be negative?" occurred to me during my second interview with V. I find SH's definition of fashion pertinent its answer, as well. SH states: "Fashion, it's a way to experience the world that you are paying for" (Interview SH, March 14th 2012). The Plateau and Mile-End's availability of vintage clothing is a well-known characteristic of both neighborhoods' local fashion cultures. However, having vintage stores does not in itself make the areas more fashionable or unique than another location. Every city has vintage, and it is often expensive. SH did not mention vintage when describing her hypothetical ad campaign

for the neighborhood. She discussed more the look and overall ambiance, contextualized by the scenery and other objects with which her nerdy-looking characters interact. While these neighborhoods are saturated by just as many local boutiques and mainstream stores as they are vintage shops, for now attention will nonetheless rest on vintage clothing and style, due to the Plateau and Mile-End communities' appreciation for its authentic character. Mile-End even maps their vintage stores:
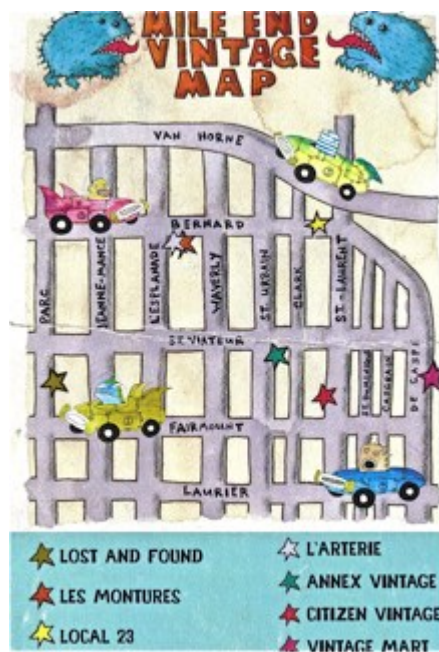

Figure 2.2 Mile End Vintage Map (gift from Participant O, Winter, 2011)

V values vintage because she considered it unique given its perception as a reusable historical artifact and its rarity. Couture fashion thrives as its authenticity like that of "art before the age of mechanical reproduction" exists without copies (Svendsen 2006:103). In this sense, authenticity is the absence of a convincing copy of the original. Commercial fashion thrives on the democratization of its accessibility according to Svendsen as a result of mass production. Vintage is slightly different. It was formerly commercial or couture, but gained

113

value and prestige over time in part because many copies of its merchandise were destroyed. In the present, vintage items exist as fashionable due to their rarity in addition to their association to a particular historical context one may view as worth something.

I asked many participants where and how they liked to shop. I also asked if they liked online shopping, which usually led to questions regarding proper fit. The problem expressed by most, in regards to shopping online, is that garments cannot be tried on. Participant L, a 27-year-old Montreal native pursuing doctoral research in the social sciences, admitted to using shopping as a late-night guilty pleasure, although L prefers brick-and-mortar retailers. The majority of my participants did not have particular stores in mind. However, on the subject, SH comments:

> "I have always been a person that shops within my environment. So, when I lived in the Plateau I (pause) which now, I hate myself for it, but I never took the metro or took my bike (although I took my bike sometimes) to go shopping in downtown. Like I always shopped in the Plateau which is ridiculous….I would go to SOHO I would go to UandI which, and I love UandI though and I still love the SOHO that I bought from there, like I don't regret that at all, but I wish I had given myself a bit more options, you know?...they [the Plateau's streets] have a lot of stores, but I would never really be attracted to them" (Recorded Interview March 14th, 2012).

The popularity of the stores she cites is subjective, but her not being "attracted" to them illustrates another reason for the Plateau's high turnover: competition. Just along Mont-Royal alone, from Boulevard St. Laurent to Papineau, there are 57 clothing stores and 3 *fripperies*. It takes about twenty minutes to walk from each end of the street, keeping in mind the boundaries of the Plateau and the Lower Plateau described in Chapter One. Here, "you are your area....it's like *oh my God*, I can really see myself here…" (Interview SH, March 14th 2012). When these individuals are shopping, it appears what is most valuable to consumers, other than the convenience of close geographical proximity, is the determination of whether

114

the item fits them. Perfect fit can be interpreted in many ways at the level of the consumer. During my conversation with V, she describes the conditions of a valued fit as:

> V: "Seeing something that you've seen in your head before (pause) that's exhilarating…that moment when you see the thing you've always wanted…like the shirt that's cut specifically this way, and some designer that has never met you in their life has sent a pattern to a factory in Indonesia that has made this thing that finally fits you exactly right. It goes with the jeans that you exactly had hoped they would, you know?"
> Me: and it seldom happens, if at all…
> V: yeah…
> Me: and we keep buying things.
> V: yeah, waiting…
> (Recorded Interview, February 6th, 2012)

By my perspective, V appeared fashionable by these standards of perfect fit. According to V, "fit" is more than how clothing sets on the body. That day, V wore skinny jeans and a grey/purple shirt, cotton that hung loosely against her figure. It looked like it fit her; it was just as I had imagined her to dress outside of work. Her look was "smart" and "casual." She looked authentically V to me. Given the sincerity with which she spoke I assumed she was comfortable with presenting herself to me in this way, I have chosen to generally acknowledge her as "smart" or "casual," but this description is subject to interpretation.

Regina Bendix attempts to "render authenticity as a scientifically verifiable entity" (1997:46) in order to further question how groups have come to search for authenticity, as it exists within modernity. Bendix comes to view the idea of authenticity as a means to acknowledge human alienation from the natural; authenticity, here, asserts their recognition of, for example, nationalist narratives that encourage the belief in positive aspects of "German-ness" (*ibid*). For V, being authentic meant having a certain look. In order to achieve it, she had to get physical, using fashion as a tool to convince others of the physical expression of her imagined self (Giddens, 1991). In this case, the perfect fit, however elusive, results in the

recognition of the embodied self as authentic—or, in V's words, in the realization that an outfit is ideal because it is representative of her desired self.

I must also draw attention, to the significance of time when shopping. Authenticity, if articulated as local validation is linked to consumer's ability to move in space. In terms of shopping for a perfect fit, authenticity is characterized as a consumer's ability to locate brick and mortar retailers they perceive as spaces representative of the self. In regards to allocation of personal space and time while shopping, participants not only preferred to shop alone, but also acknowledge the amount of time they spent shopping. Participants also preferred to shop during the mid to late afternoon. Referencing the commentary by Participant L, it would be interesting to speculate why online shopping occurs for her late at night and alone. An ethnography of such activities, similar to Daniel Miller's 1998 account in a *Theory of Shopping*, would be interesting given the tendency of my participants to shop only alone when looking for items for themselves. Given the social framework of authenticity in fashion as the recognition of the embodied self by way of perfect fit, it seems odd participants would not feel obliged to shop for themselves with another. Also, given the ever-increasing traffic of online sales and the convenience of personal computers and retail websites, ethnography of online shopping is necessary to study the influence of the Internet on issues of globalization. However, I will only pose the following question: does the lack of a brick-and-mortar retailer make the experience of online shopping less valuable of an experience for urban youth of the Plateau? E-commerce has its pros and cons, but is it a knock-off of the *real* experience of physical shopping? Lastly, if fashion is more than just material clothes as Svendsen insists, part of its allure must be found in the physical experience of shopping. The attempt virtual

116

retailers make to copy the essence of this experience is notable, especially since actual material clothing, such as vintage, is supposedly incapable of being replicated to the standards of authenticity.

6.4 Fashion thrives on knock-offs.

Me: "Do you have a lot of knock-offs?"
V: "No I'd rather not knock-off, at least consciously anyway" (Interview V, Feb. 6th 2012)

American Apparel is not a brand that is venerated among my participants, but it is one that is well known, for its ordinary clothes and resented for the profane nature and prolific dissemination of its advertisements. I conjecture Nancy Upton felt the same, given her photographs were deemed by American Apparel ersatz and unworthy of their brand. The Upton controversy raises the question: Can there be a knock-off of American Apparel? The company has become famous by sexualizing, not eschewing the ordinary. At the end of the day, they are selling cotton, and from what I understand they were quite successful at it in the beginning. Founded as a wholesale business in 1998 by Dov Charney, in 2000 it moved into retail, and by 2005 it was a trendy brand, starting first with T-shirts and cotton basics offered in many colors for low prices. The brand justified its markup during its 2005 expansion through provocative acts of advertising. Reminiscent of Playboy's early spreads, although here both women and men are pictured, the company's ads represent clean-living and all that is ordinary escorted by, to some, distasteful details.

Other Mont-Royal retailers do not offer as diverse an array of merchandise as American Apparel, so the colorful storefront entices even my skeptical participants:

"Are their clothes, [pause] do they look cool, [pause] yeah, they still look kinda *cool*. I think…now it represents these kids going back to the uh scenester thing…I think now even their image, even their mannequins look like these annoying kids that we see in the clubs, you know what I mean? And, it's like [pause] I think if someone were to naturally dress like that they wouldn't be wearing American Apparel. They would be wearing other brands or they would be making them themselves. Like seriously, if someone were to dress like a mannequin from American Apparel, so, I think it's just not real." (Recorded Interview SH, March 14th, 2012)

Their prices are relatively high. A pair of shorts, for instance, ranges from 30 to 100 Canadian dollars, plus tax. Given that the stores are each located in three districts of the city where the average income of residents is less than the Quebec average, the prices suggest the brand will not bode well among local consumers. However, not everyone who shops on the Plateau lives there, of course. There are tourists and residents of other areas of the city who come to participate in this activity. Advertisements are found pretty much all over the Plateau, even on two of the most popular news weekly arts and entertainment papers, *The Mirror* and *Voir*.

I am reminded immediately of O's coffee shop tirade when I presented him a copy of the *Mirror*, curious if he could help me understand the back cover's American Apparel advertisement. O's response:

" It's on buses, in the metro…this shit [American Apparel] is always in my FUCKING face! No! I can't. Why would I want to?" (Participant O, April 10, 2012)

His reaction surprised me, but it was enlightening on several levels. American Apparel is creating a brand based on eco-friendly, vertically integrated, sweatshop-free company policies yet, through their marketing practices, sending a contradictory image of excess and mass production. Their philosophy seems to be, turn anything someone uses everyday into a sexual fetish, be it a T-shirt, highlighter or glasses. In this instance, it is not the copying of the photograph that nullifies the brand's potential look of authenticity (Benjamin 1936), but by

the brand's disregard for the consumer's perspective of its advertisements' affects on the locality in which they are presented. Dov Charney even says in a 2005 press release[22], "American Apparel is make-believe. We can do whatever the f--- we want." The name *American Apparel* is printed prominently alongside every image to reestablish that brand. I agree with Appadurai's interpretation of Georg Simmel's account of value. Value is never inherent within objects, but instead made through a subject's interaction with those objects: "Commodities can provisionally be defined as objects of economic value" (Appardurai: 3). However, in the case of American Apparel, a brand that is actively losing its consumer base and workers,[23] the company's attempt to create the impression of an ethical business raises questions regarding the value of fashionable dress in relation to augmented profits and seemingly linear progressions of new trends. Fashion, irrespective of its design, contains within its representations a particular discourse. Svendsen writes:

> "And if we widen our gaze from the realm of clothes and consider fashion as a phenomenon that encroaches on all other areas of consumption, and that its logic also encroaches on the areas of art, politics and science, it is clear that we are talking about a phenomenon that lies near the centre of the modern world" (2006:10).

The Plateau is an area of the city whose attention to its arts, urban landscape and politics is explicit, as made evident by the *Mirror*, *Voir* and former Montrealer, Gavin McInnes, co-founder of *Vice* magazine. With that spirit in mind, the goal of this chapter was to present an image of the Plateau's ideology of style. I considered how residents and former residents invested value into their clothing. The value of perfect fit, I concluded, is not

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[22]This press release titled, "Dov Charney, Like It or Not – Inc – American Apparel" is viewable at:
http://www.americanapparel.net/presscenter/articles/20050900inc.html

[23]*The New York Times*, "Immigration Crackdown With Firings, Not Raids" published in September 2009, discusses the events surrounding firings of 1,800 immigrant employees of American Apparel due to regulations imposed by US immigration authorities.

necessarily something physical, but imagined first in the form of a narrative of authenticity. As MR states, value is "quelque chose qui touche ton essence" (Recorded Interview, Spring 2012). Such stories are often projected onto objects that are out of the ordinary, or in the case of V's grey/purple shirt quite ordinary. In the case of the Plateau, value is placed onto the Montreal of years past. The following chapter elaborates on the scenes in which these narratives are set. In understanding the difference between what is and is not fashionable in the Plateau, I offer a refined description of that *nerdy look,* where it is worn and what wearing it entails in regards to being authentic in dress.

> "This is the first time I've ever liked to wear glasses in my life, you know? The way that you take up space in the world, the way you experience the world, to trend that onto fashion is fascinating…" (V interview, February 6, 2012)

CONCLUSION

We have seen in Chapters Five and Six how participants characterize the Plateau both in terms of its geography and in terms of the hipster "look." This character of the Plateau is influenced, to a degree, by the municipality's continued preservation of historic sites, in particular residential buildings. It is also influenced by the value system underpinning the choices participants make when shopping for fashionable dress locally. However, the manifestation of fashionable looks on the Plateau, such as the hipster look, has yet to be addressed in detail. The final chapter will begin with a discussion of the Plateau's day and nightlife and the sorts of fashionable youth involved in the proliferation of the hipster look. From there, I will consider how to elicit knowledge about something as subjective as a fashionable look by identifying what my participants recognize as authentic in regards to its performance. The chapter will conclude with an account of the limitations of this approach and raise questions for future inquiries into fashionable dress in urban settings.

7.1 Tagging a Hipster

Saint Laurent Boulevard and Prince Arthur border the Plateau and the McGill ghetto. This space serves as a passageway for, in particular, pedestrian traffic on Saint Laurent Boulevard. Daily rituals revolve around the operating hours of businesses such as coffee shops, specialty grocery stores, clothing boutiques, bars, and restaurants. In the morning, you see elderly residents grocery shopping at Segal's.[24] By mid-afternoon, people swoop in and out of the Café Dêpot on the corner of Prince Arthur and the Main for a quick lunch. In the

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[24]Located on St. Laurent Boulevard, just next to the Cinéma de l'amour, this grocer is supposedly one of the least expensive the city has to offer. It is also known for its large selection of organic products.

evening, restaurants and bars on the Main are full, as are many others located on side streets, such as Prince Arthur, Roy and Duluth, as well as on Laurier and St. Viateur in the Mile-End. Beginning around midnight, usually from Thursday until Saturday, stretching down the Main from Mile-End to the Old Port, sidewalks are crowded by young adults queuing for clubs like Rouge, Tokyo Bar, or Korova. Some of them are smoking; others are waiting in line for a late-night bite.

Such is the nature of the Plateau's nightlife scene. The occurrence of this social and cultural activity bunched together without specific and clearly defined boundaries for such groupings seems common on the Plateau. However, according to Straw, individuals participating in the creation of these sorts of collective differentiations are distinguishable from those who are not participating in "the loosely defined social activity around which they [the boundaries] take shape" (Straw 2004:412). Groups of young consumers, are there to enjoy the evening by looking good and spending some cash. Not everyone in these scenes are enjoying themselves. Some people involved in these scenes are making a living at this time of night as servers or bartenders. Some people are trying to sleep. Some people are trying to forget or figure out who they are by abusing drugs and alcohol. Straw characterizes *scenes* as follows:

> "… A default label for cultural unities whose precise boundaries are invisible and elastic. '
> "Scene'" is usefully flexible and anti-essentializing, requiring of those who use it no more
> than that they observe a hazy coherence between sets of practices or affinities" (2002: 248).

During the evening, regardless of the temperature, young people cluster along St. Laurent Boulevard in the way Straw describes. Hemlines and other choices of attire, such as red felt squares indicating solidarity with the student protests (discussed below), for the moment, mark the group affiliation of particular clusters, although dress does vary among

members. In the context of the Plateau's nightlife, fashionable dress appears to be a physical representation of an individual's back-story and affiliation to a particular scene within the local community. Here, you may notice girls in their late teens and early twenties, clad in short skirts and stilettos, running across the street from Rouge towards Café Campus on Prince Arthur, just to use the bathroom so they will avoid having to recheck their coats. You may also see small groups of guys and girls dressed entirely different, in vintage-casual: high-waist jeans or kakis with a distressed graphic tee. You may see, as well, groups with bohemian-inspired ensembles. The possibilities are innumerable.

These observations were made in the winter of 2012. However, these observations were made possible given my previous work experience in summer 2011. Confident at work dressed in black from head to toe, I navigated marbled floors in my pencil skirt and apron. My manager, Greek, cheerful and portly, embraced me frequently with outspread arms. During my shifts, he invited me to join him in mocking the American Apparel advertisements in the *Mirror*. During this period I decided to share an apartment with a popular and recurrent patron of the Plateau's nightlife, who was knowledgeable of several of its scenes. This person would become participant A1 (white, mid-twenties, coming from a middle-class family) in September 2011.

Assuming she was like me, another girl in her twenties discovering where she fit in the city, I decided to trust her. I made a point of getting to know her after we moved in together. A1 loved getting dressed up for a night out. She was interested, given her work experience as a fashion model, in the collaborative relationship between photographer and model, as well as in the promotion of commercial retailers through photography. However, A1 found it difficult to find a steady source of income specific to the Plateau in this field. It is for this reason she

123

worked instead under contract as a freelance model with several staffing agencies based in Canada.

During our first month in that apartment (September 2011), A1 was mainly traveling across Canada as a promotional model. Upon her return, we spent six months together, sharing our space with centipedes and spiders. There was even a hole in the bathroom floor. The backdoor to the apartment was without a handle; our landlord had concealed this blemish with duct tape. This description is a setting that happened to be in close proximity to popular nightlife scenes on the Main. We were living in a semi basement on the corner of Prince Arthur and St. Dominique, steps away from the Main and in the remains of the Plateau's former Red Light district.

The first time I met A1, her personality made me uncomfortable. She was late and untidy; she dressed in leggings, cowboy boots and a bright green cotton hoodie. Her style seemed cool, but I found it confusing. From what I observed, during our cohabitation A1 did not wear American Apparel. Her boisterous nature gave the impression of indifference to others' opinions about her appearance. After this first impression, I did not see her again until being dragged to her birthday party mid-summer 2011 by H. Weeks after, A1 invited me to Sparrow,[25] on St. Laurent. According to her, *the* place to be. That evening, she mentioned she needed a new place to live. I mentioned I needed a new roommate. Despite our initial differences, the potential for a perfect fit seemed to exist.

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[25]Listed as one of the top ten "hipster bars" in Montreal, according to www.Nightlife.ca.

Figure 3.1 Photo by Chelsea Woodhouse, Winter 2011, former Riomar restaurant/Swingers Bar, we lived in the basement.

Association governs memberships to scenes on the Plateau and in Mile-end. If you hang out in a scene, you most likely share similar values, desires and tastes as your company. Each scene also appears to have a particular dress code, although its aesthetics are transient; blue hair is popular one day, green hair the next. Nonetheless, there are a number of features common to the nightlife scene. I met participant MR while volunteering at a yoga studio on St. Laurent Boulevard. After speaking to her, a 28-year-old Montréalaise Francophone musician for the Canadian army, who received her Bachelor's from the Université de Montréal in music, I learned a new French word, a label for a sort of fashionable young person: *Tag*. In the Plateau and Mile-End areas, SH described what MR termed *tag* as *that nerdy look*. I wanted to find out what the look had to do with the Plateau, Mile-End, Lower Plateau and McGill Ghetto in addition to its occurrence in local nightlife. It became apparent that this was a look my participants tried to avoid, yet could not.

According to MR, a *tag* is:

"…Comme un nametag par exemple [pause] tu sais que tu viens de Mile-End, t'habilles comme ça [le Mile-End]. T'es haute que t'est Mile-End…moi, j'ai marqué ça vraiment pour le Mile-End, mais peut-être un peu Plateau aussi, mais concernant le Plateau [a un "look"] avec un coup des cheveux vraiment bien fait…[C'est] un look plus actifs que passifs" (Recorded interview MR, Spring 2012).

"…Similar in usage to a nametag for example [pause] you know that you come from the Mile-End, you dress like that [the Mile-End]. You are high [class] being Mile-End…Me, I associate this [attitude] truly with the Mile-End, but maybe a little bit with the Plateau also, but the Plateau, [has a look] with very well-cut hair…[it is] a look that is more active than passive."

"Tag," according to MR, is not a specific category. Instead, it is a label used to acknowledge the occurrence of a fashionable look specific to the Plateau and Mile-End areas. As per her description, for instance, I interpret residents of the Mile-End to wear a relaxed dress and to be proud to be of their neighborhood. The same appears to be true of their well-groomed, active, more commercial neighbors of the Plateau. Irrespective of their use of the word *tag*, and even of their native language, all other participants described a common look to me: the "hipster" or "scenester." Only O and SH used the term *scenester* to describe individuals wearing the look discussed below:

"There's *like* a constructed hipster guideline, and there's a *natural* (draws out the phrase, gesturing with his upturned palms to form an arc in midair) hipster that is more *hippy-ish* [pause] the natural hipster who *like* smells really bad, [is] a more actual descendent from the [pause] beat generation. It's like a mesh of all, [pause] I think it's become a very simple label to put on a young person. But if you don't fall into that you're *gonna* fall into something else…There are *lame-streamers* too…" (Mcgubbens, Interview June 12th 2012).

The hipster look is a style worn night and day by many frequenters of the Plateau, the Mile-End and the McGill Ghetto. The hipster look is most noticeable around St. Dominique and Prince Arthur, where I lived with A1, especially in the evenings and in the afternoons when the weather is nice. The hipster look saturates the Mile-End and adjacent streets on the Plateau: Avenue Mont Royal, Laurier, Avenue du Parc, and St. Joseph. Moving further north, towards the blue metro line, even more streets are populated by this look: St. Viateur, de

126

l'Esplanade and Maguire. Allow me to shift focus for a moment away from the hipster look specifically on the Plateau (and surrounding areas) in the present day to the hipster look as historically imagined in contemporary popular discourse.

According to Julia Vallelunga, blogger at *à la mode Montréal*:

"La culture hipster serait une contre-culture qui a émergé fin 1999 et qui tranquillement fait sa place dans la société. On a cru à sa mort vers la fin 2003…mais non, fausse alerte, la culture hipster s'est développée."

"Hipster culture was a counter-culture that emerged towards the end of 1999 that slowly made its way into society. It was believed to have died by the end of 2003…but no, false alert, the hipster culture has progressed."

To describe the hipster look, Vallelunga references an advertisement for a reality television series, posted on the MTV website in August of 2010. The advertisement reads:

" Do you own skinny jeans, old school chucks, cabbie hat, the 70's vest, an ironic t-shirt or hat, a fitted sweater, flannel shirt, or chunky lens-less glasses? Do you drink PBR, have an ironic mustache, have a blog that allows you to post pictures you took with your digital camera? Been called a hipster? Deny being a hipster, but own various wardrobe and sport an asymmetrical hair style that is considered Non-Mainstream? Smoke Parliaments? Got any cool tattoos? Perhaps one of a star, maybe on your wrist or elbow? Own a vintage dress or have an awesome beard?"

This description is not only what the majority of all participants described, but participants include their interpretation of several of these elements into their personal styles—O, A1, N, MB, V, W and S—all adhered, in varying degrees, to this portrayal of a fashionable look. The question then became whether or not the look represented a lifestyle and, if so, whether the participants were aware of choosing it.

According to an interview with Gavin McInnes in Montreal's *Mirror*, titled "Drugs and Other Kid's Stuff," the famed co-founder of *Vice*, is attributed with popularizing the hipster look in Montreal through his *Dos and Don'ts* column. According to NBC New York, McInnes left *Vice* and Montreal in 2008, reportedly saying:

> "…I partied my ass off from 14 to 35…There's something about my generation where people become wrinkled teenagers and get lost in the party phase forever. In Montreal in the 90s, with so many guys doing heroin, I think they got caught up in the sort of cool decadence of it…and it's just so tragic…"

O references a similar experience of the city:

> "It's just gotten to the point of where it's stupid. Three years ago it was all people in their twenties. Now it's 13 and 14 year olds doing it. It's, (pause) twelve year-olds look like hipsters […] we're all just reverting back to the 90s…we're just sort of loose…because they are grungy, hipsters. I'm wearing the same thing I used to wear only I used to get made fun of for it." (O, Interview March 8th, 2012)

A1 fit all of the above behaviors and physical descriptions. The same was true of S. However, during my interview with S, she made the point of differentiating herself from those who currently adopt the hipster look, asserting that she was the first, for example, to wear real fur on the Plateau (Paraphrase, interview January 29th, 2012). A1 differentiated herself as well, insisting that she herself was one of the only residents of the Plateau who wears leather cowboy boots; a distinction she used to assert her performance of the self as authentic.

7.2 Choosing a Name

> Just as "…all pictures necessarily exclude some alternative view" (Scott 2005:134), "cultural principles necessarily contain unrealized alternatives (Handler and Segal 1990:7).

A1 went by many names. The given name on her passport, two nicknames, and the one I give her in this ethnography. She used certain names when around certain people.

Montreal once had two names. The name *Montréal* first referred to the mountain, then to the island, and finally to the city itself. Before then, when the Société Notre-Dame pour la conversion des Sauvages (the missionary society) sent Maisonneuve to found a city on the island of Montréal in 1642, the settlement was named Ville-Marie. From the very beginning, the settlement of Ville-Marie and the mountain were each known as Montréal. In regards to cartography, "the conception of perspective achieved a double fear…it depersonalized the

consequences of the subjective origins of perceptions…" (Bauman 1998:32). In the 18th century, with no official justification, the name Ville-Marie was changed to Montreal. The terms *Montrealer* or *Montréalaise* do not appear within any of the labels at Centre d'Histoire de Montréal until the showcase's mid-19th century subdivision. To my understanding, these terms refer to individuals either native or foreign-born, who reside within the city limits Montreal. Within the museum, no definition for either term is presented. However, on the third floor of the exhibit, which addresses immigration to Montreal, there are definitions for the following words: *migration, immigration, emigration, exile, refugee, totalitarian regime, perpetrator, survivor, war, mass violence, organized violence, hope, resilience, genocide* and *denial.* These words appear in French and English. It is my assumption these terms the local community intends for viewers (tourists and locals) to perceive these terms as valued by the local community in Montreal. These expressions are more significant to the definition of Montreal's demographic population in contrast to the titles Montrealer or Montréalaise. On the second floor, the last panel of the exhibit on Montreal's urban renewal reads:

> "Urban planning is your business and you should be more interested in it…What occurs in matters of urban development concerns and affects all of us. Being a citizen should mean being engaged in questions of urban planning, architecture, and landscapes."

I presume the "you" in this quotation refers to both foreign-born immigrants residing within the city limits and to Montreal natives. By the 1980s, the Mile End was run down, suffering from urban neglect. However,

"Montreal's corporate and state elites have struggled to re-imagine and re-construct the city over the past 25 years in a global mode. In the 1960s and 1970s, Montreal was led by an entrenched political class supported by small local property owners and national anglo-Canadian capital devoted to building the city's world-class stature through premier cultural events and elite architectural signatures. In the 1980s, a new class of large transnationalizing Francophone capital rose to power in Montreal with interests in turning the city into a node in the global economy and the administrative apparatus of the city and province toward global linkages rather than global status." (Paul 2004: 573).

In particular, artists and students were attracted by the city's variety of architecture and residents, which initiated a period of marginal gentrification, according to the Centre d'Histoire de Montréal. The authors of this exhibit sought to make the value of Montreal's residential housing known to the public. In addition, issues surrounding the integration of immigrants were given their own floor. A1 is an example of a newcomer who tried to find a home in Montreal. She rented a room of her own and surrounded herself with objects of her own style. She was comforted by the way her things differentiated her from everyone else. The environment she created, I suspect, provided her with the reassurance that her identity was unique. During our interview in December 2011, she insisted on her hatred of the city. She felt the people here were psychologically cold. She also said they made fun of her lack of fluency in French and did not appreciate her extroverted nature.

I will introduce shortly several participants in Montreal who likewise make fashionable choices in order to define the self. The image A1 created for herself is analogous to that of Montreal's preserved historic spaces. She felt continuity with the past but was open to the present. She was keen to acquire objects she found new and interesting, but she had many used items and vintage belongings, too. Anyone entering our apartment was immediately confronted with a deluge of her knick-knacks, clothing and possessions. She owned an original Louis Vuitton bag. She prized gifts from friends back home: perfumes, lipsticks, and

Clinique cosmetics from years ago. She seemed averse to throwing anything away. She was also very generous. She frequently offered our houseguests, as well as me, clothing, money for alcohol, or praise and attention. She shopped at Value Village (a popular thrift store) and at the chain of vintage shops along St. Laurent Boulevard just before rue Duluth and rue Napoleon. She could also be found downtown at HandM or Forever XXI, both American brands with reasonably priced inventories. She would often shop at these outlets for clothing to wear on nights out.

According to O, A1 was not a hipster, but a scenester, a person who frequents various scenes to be seen. As far as style goes, the *looks* of these labels (tag, scenster, hipster) do not appear different form one another. The main characteristic that each share is their association with a nonconformist attitude, although brands like American Apparel have capitalized on the essence of these looks and made them part of conventional, mass-produced, mainstream commercial fashion. Determining how to dress depends on what the shopper intends to get out of what he or she buys, fabricates or designs. Do you "sell out" for the thick-rimmed glasses without lenses because they look cool, or do you just wear your own eyes? Some, like O, do need to wear glasses. O hates the black, thick-rimmed pair he purchased in Winter 2012. He thinks they make him look like a hipster. I understand O's apprehension towards his eyewear as an instance of fashionable objects affecting the image of the self negatively given the consumer seeks to distance himself from the object's connotation as a fashionable object because of its physical resemblance to trendy mainstream paraphernalia. However, we will see in the following section how the distinction between conformists and nonconformists consumers is becoming increasingly negligible. As such, the trinity of *hipster, scenester* and

131

tag is vestigial as distinctions between these three individually and collectively in opposition to "do it yourself" looks are becoming less and less significant.

The next half of this chapter deals with the regulatory nature of fashion's logic. I will present a hypothesis about how several participants construct their lifestyle through their interpretations of fashion's ideology manifest colloquially by the terms *hipster*, *scenester* or *tag*. All concluding remarks will concern the conscious focus on uniqueness and creativity each participant aspires towards in the cultivation of their look. So far,

> "from all this we see that fashion furnishes an ideal field for individuals with dependent natures, whose self-consciousness, however, requires a certain amount of prominence, attention, and singularity. Fashion raises even the unimportant individual by making him the representative of a class, the embodiment of a joint spirit" (Simmel 1957:548).

I will present the prevalence of the hipster look as an example of what V describes as fashionable dress's most endearing relationship to the consumer's construction of an authentic self:

> "There's confidence in fashion, but I think we look for it to give us confidence as well."   (Interview V, February 6th, 2012)

7.3 History Written in Clothing

> […] Like unity. Unity I think is a better term than codependence." – Mcgubbens (recorded interview, June 12th, 2012)

> "Yeah. Unity, but I'm also saying codependence because you're depending on everyone to play their part and listen to each other." – Mcgibbens (recorded interview, June 12th, 2012)

The above quotations come from participants Mcgubbens (age 21) and Mcgibbens (age 21), in response to the following questions:

> "So for you guys as musicians, in your mind how do you put on a good performance? What does it [performing] mean to you? What makes you feel like you've accomplished something?"

132

Fashion concerns more than the creation, promotion and sale of material belongings. Within fashion's process,

> "Union and segregation are the two fundamental functions which are here inseparably united, and one of which, although or because it forms a logical contrast to the other, becomes the condition of its realization. Fashion is merely a product of social demands, even though the individual objects which it creates or recreates may represent a more or less individual need." (Simmel 1957:544)

As union (being of a governing collective) and segregation (operating as distinct from a governing collective) converge to create fashion, could an individual's need to be fashionable exemplify a desire for that which hinders the maintenance of the self, such as an addiction might? Thus far, fashionable lifestyles have been characterized as user-dependent, as negotiations between one's personal taste and society's established values. In the case of counter-culture fashions, such as the hipster look, one has to make social sacrifices in order to be stylish. We see this with several participants—A1, in particular—but also in the case of American Apparel's model contest, described in the previous chapter. A1 chose to belong to a particular scene, one involving after-hours clubs, and harmful self-depreciation brought on by her desire to, in part, adhere to a particular aesthetic necessary for her look. The latter involved a woman who chose to parody her eating habits in a way that challenged the American Apparel's popularization, fetishization and commodification of day-to-day vices, and puncture the representation of these habits as "vice." However, one may notice from American Apparel's response to Nancy Upton that something was lost in translation between the two. American Apparel failed to acknowledge its questionable sexualization of daily life apparent in its explicit advertisements for what, as SH acknowledges, are unnecessarily costly wardrobe basics: "…They're charging $60.00 for a cotton sweatpant [sic]!" (Recorded interview, SH

March 14th 2012). The potential destructiveness of fashion is found in the motivations for its appropriation at the local level.

Actors, such as Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens, depend on others to willingly engage in their scenes in order to maintain them. For instance, to integrate successfully into the indie music scene on the Plateau, Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens must get to know everyone (other bands, promoters, venue proprietors, artists, etc.) in order to find an audience. They want to make music for a living, but they do not want just any audience. They want one that will do their best to recognize the music they make not just as new or different, but also as an art form that is worthwhile to appropriate both monetarily and morally. This appropriation is a form of flattery in the local. However, the music Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens perform is not fashionable in the sense that it does not carry the essence of many mainstream commodities, like those associated with the images of Audrey Hepburn or Britney Spears. Also, for Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens, music is an activity they insist on doing for themselves. Playing makes them feel good. They compose music regardless of whether they are paid or not. According to Rouleau (2011:125), the recognition of the hipster, by those who assert they are not hipster, but instead look like hipsters in terms of their behavior expressed in their choice of fashions, results in a classification of hipsters as both bohemian and followers of mainstream trends. The distinction between these two terms becomes less and less pertinent, as this alternative lifestyle becomes more and more popular in the mainstream. I am not classifying Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens as hipster, but instead drawing a parallel between their relationship to creating and performing music and the hipster look. What motivates Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens to make music also allows them to be characterized as tastemakers

in the realm of music. The two have fashionable personas, given that their music is a product of what they have been and are presently becoming.

Of course, their fashion could be commodified, but the origins of their desire to create music are authentic by their standards and therefore ideal in regards to the maintenance of their fashionable look, which is more bohemian than hipster in the Plateau. Nonetheless, they do acknowledge how onlookers within their artistic community on the Plateau could refer to them as hipsters, scenesters or tags, thus making it seem as if fashion is an immanent quality of its wearer's intentions rather than that which takes on value by its connection to social arrangements. By this logic, the relationship between authenticity and ideal fashionable looks is located in the consumer's determination of what motivates the consumer to strive towards an ideal. In addition, the consumer must generate the model for the ideal, for consumers seeking to perform themselves authentically. Charles Taylor summarizes the quality of this agency in relation to identity construction nicely as he states:

> "…We have to determine our place in relation to the good, therefore we cannot be without an orientation to it, and hence must see our life in story. From whichever direction, I see these conditions as connected facets of the same reality, inescapable structural requirements of human agency" (1998:52).

Music is one of the reasons Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens came to Montreal. According to the two, both were searching for a space of their own, absent of others' expectations. In fact, they finally saved enough money to rent a sizeable loft in St. Henri, the quasi "punk district," where they have space to play music and even a miniature stage for all their equipment. It is an improvement upon the small, damp, run-down basement apartment on St. Famille and des Pins where they used to live, with only a marginal increase in cost of living. Overall, these two make real their selves through a look of confidence that is fashionable but not translatable into

commercial success or empirical measurement. This look is one expressed not just physically through fashionable dress, but through the willingness to call oneself authentic, despite claims of not being so. However, is it possible to refer to the lifestyles these two have made for themselves in Montreal in terms of good or bad taste? In addition, can a relationship be found between good taste and an authentic look? If so, what does this look entail, specifically in the context of these former residents of the Plateau?

Mcgibbens, according to his bandmates, has a compulsion to make music. He is the band's front man, performs lead vocals, and knows how to play many of the instruments in the band. Mcgubbens is the drummer, the pacemaker. He has a degree from Dawson College in sound recording, has knowledge of music theory and can play many other instruments in the band as well. The group is large. Matt is its oldest member, with his friend O a close second. In total, they usually number between seven and eight on stage: two guitarists, vocals, drums, tambourine (sometimes), violin, trumpet, bass, a recently added cello and synthesizer (usually played by Mcgibbens). Sound technicians are horrified when the group shows up at venues. The group believes they sound like a Montreal band. In fact, W once remarked to O that they reminded him of Arcade Fire, an experimental indie band from Montreal. Arcade Fire's favorite spot to play, according to O, was Casa del Popolo on St. Laurent. According to A1, their favorite bar to patron was Sparrow, on St. Laurent.

In terms of dress, Mcgibbens and Mcgubbens have various do-it-yourself, stick n' poke tattoos and enjoy wearing genuinely distressed jean cut-offs when it is warm. Sometimes they wear no shoes, on stage and off. Lately, Mcgibbens bleaches his hair blonde. I believe he just gave Mcgubbens another tattoo. They are romantically involved. According to O, they grow more comfortable with their relationship being known among band mates as time passes.

When I interviewed them, they lounged on my sofa, Mcgibbens's toes mischievously fondling Mcgubbenss' right thigh. I assumed the uninhibited touching to be a reflection of their comfort with my presence.

7.4 Ideally Be Authentic

According to Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens, "…Montreal in general is a scene, internationally known as the place in Canada to do art, or music…or even [have] a party" (Recorded interview, June 12th 2012). After December 2011, my interviews operated as sessions dedicated to understanding how fashion fit into participants' lives. Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens immediately linked fashionable dress to the performance of a particular image, but also to musicians' stage looks. In addition, we spoke about their perceptions of neighborhood boundaries, which led to their interpretation of the looks and feels of the Plateau's various boroughs. At this point, I had not mentioned the word *hipster*. I usually waited for participants to say hipster in the other interviews as well. After they identified the majority of the Plateau's youthful residents as having a hipster look, I asked them if they themselves had the same. I asked them if they were hipsters themselves. The word has become taboo amongst participants because of the ways in which commercial fashion has capitalized on it. In the vernacular anthropology (Gable 2011), to be a real hipster is to do what you feel, no matter if one is watching your performance or not; in terms of fashion, it means to dress in what fits your perception of yourself. Likewise, to be a fake hipster is to be a sell-out; in this case of fashionable dress, to be someone who shops at American Apparel or other commercial retailers. Hipster as an identifier has hence been commodified, and by consequence the hipster look has been turned into products that can be replicated and discarded once a new trend

comes along. Every participant denied being a hipster. Although Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens admit why others might mistake them for hipsters, given the way they dress and their careers as underground musicians, they nonetheless assert that their styles are authentic representations of themselves. They believe they are not followers of mainstream popular culture and fashion society.

Interviews closed with participants' thoughts on the creation of value. Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens, both of whom chose their aliases, came to Montreal for the music scene. Mcgibbens also came for the opportunity to study art and philosophy at Concordia University; a fortune teller told him he had to leave his hometown in order to become something, a conclusion he distinguishes as being predetermined within his consciousness. At age sixteen, he left his home, "…this hamlet of like 50 people called Mayburly[,]… for Perth" (Recorded Interview, June 12th). He did not feel valued in his hometown due to the widespread anxiety among members of this community towards his eccentric character. Neither musician has yet to realize his goals, and, according to O, each does succumb to feelings of hopelessness when they feel they are not recognized for what they have already achieved. However, they persist, doing everything they can to raise money for their band and meet the right people. They have played many shows over the past years at various fake or real (you can be the judge) hipster hot spots such as Casa del Popolo, Bistro de Paris, Divan l'Orange and Jack and Judy's. They acknowledge they are part of the experimental pop/rock music scene. Mcgibbens asserts that he and Mcgubbens are not

> "Contrived personalities…those party people…the next party…the next whatever. There are those people that are just about that…they just don't give a shit" (Recorded interview, June 12th 2012).

Accordingly, they have taste: the desire and realization of a persona.

Commercial fashion is about convincing someone else not just to recognize, but understand why dress should exist as a product. This task involves creating the desire among consumers to exist as stylish. Consumers have to be willing to communicate fashionable dress as a story, given brands use narratives to make this desire accessible to consumers. Mcgubbens insists, "I think that fashion is, in a sense, what is popular. I don't prescribe to trends very often" (Interview, June 12th 2012). Fashions also depend on the consumer's tendency to create personal tastes. We have seen taste in dress is influenced to a variable degree by scenes, and the places they occupy physically and figuratively in society. Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens prefer to shop at thrift stores for the challenge of finding the perfect outfit for fewer than eight dollars.

However, brands like American Apparel, Urban Outfitters and even Anthropologie[26] have found a way to capitalize on this way of shopping. Bauman discusses how, in modern consumer-driven society, shoppers ideally find what they need as quickly as possible (1998:83). However, what typically contrasts thrift from commercial retailers appears to no longer exist at some retailers in the Plateau. For example Urban Outfitters on rue St. Denis has three floors. The ground floor is devoted to new arrivals. The upper floor has dressing rooms, lingerie and more expensive merchandise. The basement floor has sale items. The clothing is "dumped" into piles or mixed into unsorted combinations on wire racks; these commercial retailers are designed to imitate thrift stores, with lights, full-length mirrors and accessories

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[26]Founded in 1992, it is a retail outlet and subsidiary of Urban Outfitters that sells women's apparel and accessories, home furnishings, imitation found objects and an array of gifts and decorative items. Anthropologie is geared toward women looking for unique, one-of-a-kind designs. Its marketing technique is about selling a lifestyle, not just products. According to *Elle* magazine, the brand launched a project in 2009 called "The Anthropologist." It is reportedly, "a website devoted to creative endeavors without a single retail catch." The *Elle article is viewable here: http://www.elle.com/news/culture/anthropologies-new-project-the-anthropologist-270*

pinned to the wall like a make-shift closet. This imitation, like American Apparel, centers on making the ordinary trendy and capitalizing on the virtue of shopping for thrift. Consumers on the Plateau want this experience, according to these retailers. These outlets are typically found in metropolitan centers worldwide. In Europe, the United States and Canada, there are 170 Urban Outfitters. Montreal has 2 of these.

The way people dress on the Plateau is different from that in other boroughs. I believe the reason for this is partially related to the way residents use the space. However, the neighborhood also has a history of being a haven for the city's artists and musicians. The art, music and cultural capital these residents produce create a lifestyle that is so unique it is difficult for it to be monetized. Unfortunately for the Plateau's arts and fashion scenes, there is a limited market for them in this borough because a large portion of the population is composed of residents who live below the poverty line with little disposable income, such as artists and students. According to Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens, the performance of the self-engendered by this community fosters a sense of "togetherness" that dispels the hopelessness they feel when not recognized as valued and capable of performing with confidence their authentically individual selves. Locals feel this attitude to a degree, whether it is true or not. This observation is what eventually led to the question of whether or not value can be negative. When posing the question I assumed negative value to oppose that of commercial fashion's material products as tending to positively value a linear trajectory of newness present as an increase in sales and customer satisfaction. However Mcgibbens responded by articulating addiction as fashion's demonstration of negative value at the local level:

"You could just be wrong, and like killing yourself…like just totally screwing the value system…it's definitely to each their own…If you consider something is value, it's at least something that you want to do." ("if it's what you wanna do") It might not be good for you, you might admit that it's not good for you, but…you know? You're going to do it anyway if it's what you want," (interview, June 12th 2012)

The hipster look is not just a fashion; it is a lifestyle, one that is resented and mocked by those who choose to be outside of its ways. MR described it as *pretentious*, as we have seen in the previous section. However, Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens raise important points about the dichotomy present among those who adopt this lifestyle, those who choose to remain outside of its boundaries, and those who practice the ersatz version of hipsterism, discussed above. Mcgubbens asserts *hipster* is a simple label for a young person. I remain confused as to why. What is it about this look that resonates so much with the young? How do Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens conceive youth? Hipsters are believed to be young, discriminatory in their music choices, rebellious and non-conformist (Rouleau 2011: 74).

Another characteristic among my sample is that they prefer not to consume mainstream products whenever possible. However, they do copy the mainstream's fashions and trends using their own chosen mediums of dress acquired by shopping in thrift stores. "Copycat," similarly to the word *hipster*, carries a connotation of "sameness." Copies are threatening because they negate the value of that which was originally copied (Benjamin 1936). Yet by copying others, some individuals become themselves. Whether young people are more apt to participate in copying, I am uncertain. Musicians often do covers of old songs before they make their own recordings, according to Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens. However, a good cover, according to these two is not an exact replica. It uses the original version as an inspiration for a contextually different version of what once was.

Nothing can ever truly be new because the tradition of its past is always with us (Gadamer 1975), but we do not have to be stuck in a trajectory of thinking that only allows us to exist as consumers of what was. I asked Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens, as citizens of Canada in 2012, if they thought there were similar or identical looks that existed years before the one they described as hipster. They responded with:

> "I was thinking today how, I didn't even notice what was happening necessarily. You know? It's like this look was transforming everyone's *like*, just sense and attitude. But I think that they're [pause] I just find it so different and sometimes it's timeless in that it will never change. Like in smaller towns the way that they dress and the way that they act will never change, but when you're in a city like this [Montreal] the way I see it is people just naturally go towards different styles and senses all together and then when you look back on it ten years later it is obviously going to be completely different, you know?" (Interview, June 12, 1:04:06)

Létourneau asserts that, in our contemporary world, certain forms of media link youth in a globalized society: clothing, language, music, images, and slogans. The underlying purpose of turning all these items into commodities is to make them appear unfamiliar, exciting and extreme forms of self-representation that cannot be reproduced (1997) by consumers. As members of the youth population, we copy what is offered to maintain our integration within society. In Montreal, the youth population is not stable in terms of commitment to time and place. They come to Montreal, for varying periods, in order to transform their selves through various types of education and experience. Everyone I interviewed said they preferred to shop alone when they were searching for clothing, so they would not have to be rushed by the presence of another person. Is this analogous to how visitors behave in Montreal? Are they unwilling to interact with the local population, to share their preferences and ideals with them, in order to break out of routine investigations of their own self-hood? To what degrees can these individuals even be integrated into the cultural environment (Meintel and Fortin 2002)? Are all international students that do not engage the local population during or after their

142

studies here "tourists"? Given what we have come to refer to as globalization (White 2012), the process of self-reflecting is an identifiable trait that can manifest in a person's look expressed in their dress. The hipster look has been adopted as such a form of self-reflection, yet its potential for reflexivity is nullified given those who perform themselves as hipster refuse to self-identify. To be a hipster entails nostalgia for the material, for the use of physical objects to express themselves, which is no different from other fashions. Such a trait is found in their appreciation for vintage, which is augmented by the belief in distinguishing what came before from what is now.

Because of the way neighborhoods located on and around the Plateau are constructed, one need not go more than a fifteen-minute walk to get everything one needs, be it food, clothing or shelter. Close-knit scenes result from condensed urban landscapes such as this. These scenes have resulted in the popularization of vintage style clothing on the Plateau, Mile-end and McGill Ghetto. To seek vintage is to aspire to differentiate one's self from others of the present moment by appropriating objects of the past and recontextualizing them to suit one's needs. However, brands like American Apparel, Urban Outfitters and Anthropologie today present shoppers with an alternative: diversity within one's wardrobe is desirable, these retailers suggest, because it alludes to one's self as being unique (Woodward 2007). I view this formulation of fashion and authenticity as different from others because rather than calling a particular quality "unique," "uniqueness" is presented by these brands as detached from a historical context. Instead, "uniqueness" is the ubiquitous state of being one's self which entails continuity with one's subjectivity and expressing this continually in dress. Consumers who subscribe to this marketing through purchase are actually more pluralist than before. Commercial retailers want shoppers to buy new, not re-use the old. Where is the money, where

143

is the brand's recognition, if consumers only buy the old? Brands create the illusion of the old in the new. Various labels have capitalized on the look of vintage as something they want consumers to believe encapsulates the qualities of being different. According to Mcgubbens, this commodification results in the ersatz hipster look.

In addition, vintage is presented as something that can be re-created, replicated and given a new context within commercial fashion. Brands seek to weaken the value of tradition by inflating the popularity of their name. Brands create structure that leads to a communicable sense of togetherness felt by shoppers. American Apparel tried to speak to the youth of North America by photographing representations of this demographic's "true" narrative identities (Ricoeur 1991), positioning them as promiscuous consumers of recreational drugs and experimental music. This strategy did not seem to function; the company was on the brink of bankruptcy in 2011, according to *The New York Times Business Day,* and today still attempting to refinance with new investors. Perhaps these photographs are not authentic representations of the ideals of youth, despite being fashionable. What American Apparel has also attempted to do is sexualize the "nerd," or those North American late-teens and "twenty-somethings" who are getting a university education. In 2008, Quebec's percentage of international students with respect to the rest of Canada was 26.1%, a marked decrease from having 37% of all international students in 1999[27]. According to the 2006 Community Profile compiled by Statistics Canada, out of Montreal's total population aged 25 to 34, 116,565 had a university

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[27]To view this report titled " Changing Portrait of International Students in Canadian Universities" by Kathryn McMullen and Angelo Elias please visit: http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-004-x/2010006/article/11405-eng.htm

degree, diploma or certificate[28]. This number represents nearly 50% of the city's population in this age group. All participants testified to putting a great deal of value into formal education and higher education, and only O voluntarily expressed disdain for the recent student protests happening in Montreal over the increase of tuition fees.

7.5 We [Red Square] Montreal

Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens told me that on stage it is important to move around and make a lot of noise to get the crowd to notice you. The following is a summary of events as reported by *the Gazette, CBC* and *Le Devoir* and word of mouth regarding the student demonstrations in Montreal. In March of 2011, Finance Minister Raymond Bachand announced Quebec's intention to raise tuition fees, beginning in September 2012. The plan was to raise tuition by $325 a year over a period of five years. The total increase would amount to an additional $1,625. It would have raised Quebec tuition to $3,793 by 2017. These tuition rates would still remain the lowest in Canada. However, students in August of 2011 began protesting the tuition hikes peacefully through November 2011, united by the emblem of little red felt squares pinned to their backpacks and shirts. The idea for the squares came from the saying *carrément dans le rouge*, which means "squarely in the red." This phrase addresses how students would find themselves in debt because of tuition increases and cuts in governmentally funded bursaries.

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[28]To view this report please visit: http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-591/details/page.cfm?Lang=EandGeo1=CDandCode1=2466andGeo2=PRandCode2=24andData=CountandSearchText=MontrealandSearchType=BeginsandSearchPR=01andB1=AllandGeoLevel=PRandGeoCode=2466

Due to instances of vandalism and intimidation tactics on the part of a select few protestors, the education minister decided to quit on May 14, 2012. Just two days later, students shut down classes at the Université de Québec à Montréal (UQAM). Then came Bill 78. Bill 78 was a piece of emergency legislation that would suspend the current semester for many CÉGEP and university students. Classes would be postponed until August 2012. The announcement was met with strife, and thousands of students gathered in Québec City and Montreal for late-night protests. The bill, they argued, was about more than education: it challenged the constitutional freedoms of expression and assembly. Suddenly, it was the Maple Spring.[29] Mass arrests occurred from May 20 to the 22, the majority of which being students who would later face police fines. Encapsulating its very essence, the city spoke back with a do-it-yourself, community-initiated activism: "Pots against Bill 78." Every night, at 8PM, the people of Montreal, young and old alike, would bring pots and pans and bang them in contestation of Bill 78 while marching through the streets.

Promotion of the campaign was done artfully in an online short film titled *Casseroles – Montréal, 24 Mai.*[30] The black-and-white film opens on a street flooded by members of the community—residents of all shapes, sizes, ages and dress codes, banging pots with wooden spoons. The majority of participants in the film appear to be twenty-something and Caucasian. The soundtrack is in French. The viewer follows the demonstrators as they walk the streets and collect more followers. It ends with an image of a young girl in bohemian-chic attire, standing next to the road with arms outstretched against the breeze of passing cars; then the

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[29]For more information on the Maple Spring. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQwUc79VGmMandfeature=youtu.be

[30]To view this film, please visit the following URL: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Imc33eOxPrY

scene cuts to people's shadows marching along the sidewalk at night. The video promotes the collective conscience that, despite its diversity, the community of Montreal is known for its resilience in the midst of hardship. How could one not like the people of Montreal after seeing this video and not want to be part of the student movement? I do wonder how many of those taking part were international students.[31] Rather than propose the "red squares" as fashion, I will emphasize the movement's relationship to locality and authenticity that shapes this ethnography be drawing attention to this collective's initial motivator: to prevent the augmentation of tuition fees. To stand for this, according to the "Red Squares" was to be part of the city. In the end, the movement turned into being about more than tuition given the historical context in which it occurred. Less than one month ago, the Quebec student associations cheered the newly elected "Pauline Marois (leader of the Parti Quebecois) [as she] announced on her first day in office that her government was scrapping the tuition hike and canceling Bill 78" (CBC News, Sept. 20th 2012). As long as Québec is part of Canada, those residing within the province will pay taxes to both Ottawa and the provincial government.[32]

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[31]"In recent years, international students have disproportionately felt the impact of tuition deregulation…facing the same hikes as Quebec residents (albeit from a much higher baseline) but also significant increases in differential fees above and beyond this amount, to the tune of a 35% overall increase in fees since 2005.8 Many professional programs have been completely deregulated for international students, including administration, engineering, law, and computer science, meaning that universities can increase their tuition by however much they like at any time for students in these programs (Concordia did so by 50% for JMSB graduate students in 2009) (Robert and Burrill 2011:9-10).

[32]This section on the student movement is presented not in an effort to form any conclusions regarding the protests' relationship to recent politics on the national or provincial level. Instead, it is brought to light mainly to present to the reader recent events taking place within the city and their possible relationship to fashionable dress among Montreal's youth population on the Plateau, given that many of these protests, in addition to occurring downtown, occurred along both rue St. Denis and Boulevard Saint Laurent.

Fig. 3.2 Flyer promoting international students at UdeM

"Uniformity breeds conformity, and conformity's other face is intolerance. In a homogenous locality it is exceedingly difficult to acquire the qualities of character and the skills needed to cope with human difference and situations of uncertainty; and in the absence of such skills and qualities it is all too easy to fear the other, simply for reason of being an-other – bizarre and different perhaps…" (Bauman 1998:47).

7.6 Limitations and Questions for Future Inquiries

On September 1, 2012, nearly finished with school, I moved out of the Plateau. I left with my former coworker, Misa, a Japanese sous-chef. We live in Jean-Talon now. The scenery is different from where we used to live. There are no 24-hour grocery stores, kitschy clubs or hip bars. Consequently, there are no "Frosh" parades of university students, no outdoor line-ups for cover charges, no smoke breaks. There is a large open-air market. It is much quieter. Convenience stores are not on every corner, families surround us, and I think there is a cat mafia outside in the back alley. In Montreal, moving day is often the first of July.

In the United States, there might as well have been a media blackout concerning Montreal's student protests. However, CNN just recently posted two videos on Montreal's art and fashion scenes.[33] Both of the videos are about six minutes each. One of the interviewees

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[33]To view these videos visit: http://www.cnngo.com/explorations/life/cnngo-air/cnngo-tv-montreal-310562

walks her dog to Café Névé (a hipster nest), and in the other the camera films an artist as he eats a sandwich at Schwartz's deli.

Fashion is not just about extremes that can be appropriated in various degrees by consumers. Mainstream fashion and individual reactions to mainstream fashions are closely related to the everyday and the ordinary. On the Plateau, to be ordinary means to seek difference. In this context, actively differentiating one's self from another involves the desire to be recognized as unique. On the Plateau, unique also means bilingual. In June, when speaking to Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens regarding their facility with French, they responded with the following:

> "Not very well. It has been an issue for me, yeah, getting to know people. I took [French] immersion from grade 5 to grade 12…it just didn't snap. I'm just not a language person. I don't even know how I know English. I think it would open up another community and help with finding a job" (Recorded Interview, June 12th, 2012).

Participant-observation has its pitfalls, especially in an urban setting. Most obviously, there are just too many people. I decided to cut my losses and go with the flow. That is how I got involved with this sample beginning with O and A1. I think it would have been equally interesting to obtain a sample of students, with a standard age proportional to the separate population of the Plateau's adjacent universities. Clearer conclusions regarding the appropriation of the mainstream hipster look, demography of a particular age set in the city, and the motivations behind the use of such a style may be easier to form with such a sample. Such a sample may have also led to an investigation of the relationship between Allophone, Anglophone and Francophone youth culture within areas of fashion and commerce. It would

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http://www.cnngo.com/explorations/life/cnngo-air/cnngo-tv-montreal-310562

be interesting to focus on the hipster look, in this case, to better understand how its characteristic androgyny, typically referred to as "nerdiness," contributes to its ability to permeate the student youth culture within university settings.

Such a sample could have been selected using a "snowball" technique. I think, for the Plateau, this method remains the most appropriate. It forces the researcher to knowingly negotiate a relationship with participants in order to meet more members of the community, thereby disclosing her motivations for interacting with the group. This technique is also useful because it allows the researcher to notice how participants have built a scene for themselves within the city. In regards to the presentation of field research, this method permits both the researcher and participants to observe and develop reflexivity about the group and its members' positions within its structure, which is necessary when studying fashion, given that we dress for others as well as for ourselves. Had time-permitted it, I believe going on shopping excursions with participants would have led to exciting conclusions about how individual shoppers apply the value system they described during our meetings together.

The idea that one can choose to acknowledge not just how others see one's self, but participate in the construction of such a presentation is a function for which fashionable dress is already known to serve. We dress for others, just as much as we dress for ourselves (Svendsen 2006). I dressed as the student-researcher; the participants looked strangely familiar. They resembled hipsters, yet the majority behaved akin to bohemians. It was strange being "inside" their scene for so long. Overall, I feel more familiar with Montreal, my understanding of how its social structures work. Due to the unforeseen nature of fieldwork (Fabian 2008: 120), this research is still quite limited and only representative of the cultural world that I experienced. It seems scenes in the Plateau are as real as the characters' looks

150

within them. From the outside, in regards to the student strike, W commented, "They [students] are supposed to be idealists. They're young" (April, 2012).

As in fashion, people see what makes sense to them and, from this partial sight recognition begins to form. It is easy for me to assume, for example with O, that his story will have a happy ending. Little has changed his behavior since we met. He is working the same job, doing the same things and has the same friends as before. He still teaches with me. Yet it is not my place to tell him to change, despite his repeated claims of being dissatisfied with, for example, his area of work or living situation. Living with A1 helped me realize that the relationship between the sale and marketing of commercial merchandise is a motivating factor for why someone believes they need a fashionable lifestyle. She is the reason I know O and others who participated in this research. Most importantly, given the affinity I've developed for the Plateau, I want to be part of this community (Létourneau and Trépanier 1997), part of Montreal. However, I have not yet discovered what to offer to the city.

According to Balthazar, the triangular perspective of relations between the US, Canada, and Quebec is specific to Québec. For the U.S., there is no triangle: only a sense of being American (Balthazar 2011:475). Perhaps to be Canadian abroad is different from being American abroad. When I arrived in Montreal and told people where I was from, I was told everyone would want to talk to me because I am so different. I was different on two counts: not being Canadian or Quebecer, maybe even three (Meintel and Fortin 2002).[34] In the beginning, I tried to ignore this difference and pretended to be one with the natives. I still

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[34]I could be wrong, but I think the term "Quebecer" refers not just to residents of Quebec, but also to English-speaking residents of the province. It is unclear if the term functions in this way or is only an English translation of "Québécois," (assuming, Québécois refers to only French-speaking residents of Québec).

cannot imagine what it would be like to refer to myself as Quebecer/Québécois, but I will now call myself bilingual with pleasure given how difficult it is at times to learn another language.

To speak multiple languages is a skill that takes patience and willingness to put forth the effort to develop one's capacity with language's structure and orthography. I started teaching French and English with O. Our students were recent immigrants to the Plateau. Many of these individuals were female, married and looking for work to contribute to the household income. Many were also students from out-of-province or from French-, Portuguese- or Spanish-speaking countries. It was inspiring to see students' willingness to come to class and be okay with learning from someone who was learning the same language at the same time. Overall, teaching here served as an invaluable experience that allowed me to become more familiar with the anxiety recent immigrants experience when trying to acclimatize themselves to the Plateau's community. By fashion's sense, distinctions arising from provenance occur when one ignores or, intentionally attaches a moral valuation to being different that overlooks the contexts in which differences occur. Many of our class discussions were on the subject of how to dress, how to find a job and how to get an apartment on the Plateau to assuage the anxiety students described as resulting from not knowing how to acquire these necessities.

Rather than finding my participants, they found me. I belonged to their scene from late winter until now; I was their new marginal figure, not totally in with them, but not entirely unaffected by their practices. Despite my marginal status, our interactions were not fruitless. We helped each other reflect. Listening to myself on tape was difficult. No one admitted to being hipster, but several (O, Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens, C, MR, V and SH) did admit to

being themselves, and happy to live in a city where they could be proud of the personas they actively created for themselves.

Everyone I interviewed had a regret. Usually, it involved something a participant had chosen not to finish because they felt it did not deserve to realize its completion. O is an example of someone who, although he knows he wants to leave the Plateau, refuses to move or change jobs. He is comfortable, despite the guilt he feels due to the expectations others have placed on him. He chooses to ignore them. He follows the flow of the city. After emigrating from Pakistan at age seven, he has never left Canada, aside from trips to the United States. In contrast to O, Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens are determined to sustain themselves as professional musicians. From what I infer, it seems as long as they believe they are doing all in their power to reach this goal, they have no reason to regret this desire. In general, I wonder if, as human beings, we alienate those who feel guilty intuitively, or do those who feel guilt alienate themselves in acts of altruism? In terms of fashionable dress, do people resent hipsters because we perceive such young people as having no feelings of guilt associated with the choice to perform the self as they do, or do we think hipsters willingly alienate themselves from the mainstream because they cannot stand, not necessarily the products of it, but instead those who consume its products?

Part of arriving at a fashionable existence involves consumer's perceiving distinctions between one another realized in their choices of dress. Our self-image is then affectively united with meanings and imposed on items (Miller 2010), such as red felt squares, yet also appropriated as commercial, despite being homemade. Likewise, in the case of my participants, the desire to seek difference is linked to an awareness of absence. Individuals position themselves outside of the collective when they become aware of what they are not. O,

though part of the same band as Mcgubbens and Mcgibbens, has an array of friends and acquaintances attached to an array of different scenes found within Montreal's West Island (where he grew up), on the Plateau, at Concordia, UQAM and UdeM, and in Mile-end—these scenes span the range of art, fashion and music. He is cosmopolitan in a similar way as Montreal, as both the child of landed immigrants and a well-connected, bohemian sort of socialite. He has fashioned his identity through his experience with others and recognizing his dissimilarity from others by befriending them. Whether such behavior is similar to the logic of branding discussed in Chapter Five is tenuous at best. However, branding does appear to generalize the "other," to a degree given names like American Apparel actively distinguish themselves from other brands. American Apparel does this by promoting, for example, their cotton sweatpants as different from other cotton sweatpants given they have the power, according to the logic of corporate branding to make the wearer of these items into an real-life version of their offensive, unique and provocative advertisements by my perspective as a student. In the case of corporate branding, values, once only specific to a consumer's interpretation of morality, are modified and transformed into values that are contingent to this collective exclusivity. However, in the local, fashion's value is associated with its appropriation as a medium of personal expression that is shared. Sharing, a form of recognition, draws on the importance of the local community, and is valuable to the locals I encountered because it gives depth of meaning to that which was previously significant to only one individual. Radice's conclusions about the Plateau's streets as ethnographic sites of exchange support this claim given "In a word, exchange is not a by-product of the mutual valuation of objects, but its source" (Appadurai 1986). However, as much as we recognize what is shared, understanding value as a way to classify that which we view as good seems

problematic. In support of this declaration I cite Fabian's thoughts on classification. "Classification is one thing, letting what we classify disturb our peace of mind is another. A disturbed mind is a mind alive" (2008: 121).

I have come to understand fashion as an individual's history written in clothing. It is the narrative identity (Ricouer 1991) we carry outside our selves, expressed by clothing style. Ricoeur's model is capable of being applied to fashionable looks as well as dress. As looks, they are not necessarily material, but actively performed within the city's urbanscape, be it through housing, commerce or consumption patterns. We see on the Plateau that there can be negative and positive reactions to the accessibility of certain forms of urban space[35] and clothing. Participants who came to Montreal from elsewhere did come with something to prove, and hence perform, for others. Their goals, like their regrets, vary, but both share a common theme: the acknowledgement of the self (Taylor 1989). Of the sample, many felt the hipster look threatened their individual identity through the commodification of their personal experience. The value of good taste, in relation to fashion's representations of authenticity, evokes not just a quality, but an act of self-reflection. This act is articulated, at times, through one's choices of clothing, as an extension of the on-going project of self-observation.

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[35]For more information regarding the contemporary transformations and consumption habits associated with urban space in Montreal, please visit: http://www.lhpm.uqam.ca/

Fig. 3.3 During Red Square Protests, June 2011 (Photo by Chelsea Woodhouse)

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