

## Beyond Leisure Studies: A Labour History of Male to Female Transsexual and Transvestite Artists in Montréal, 1955-1985

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### ABSTRACT

This paper presents the results of an oral history project on transsexual and transvestite artists in the Canadian city of Montréal, 1955-1985. Through interviews and archival research, I examine the working conditions of these artists in the city's post-war cabarets and nightlife. Theoretically and methodologically, this research parts ways with current studies of transsexuality, as well as lesbian/gay oral history projects. My research illustrates the centrality of work to an adequate historical understanding of the emergence of transsexuality in Québec. As such, I argue for the integration of a labour analysis in both historical and contemporary considerations of transsexual lives.

### RÉSUMÉ

Cet article présente les résultats d'un projet sur la tradition orale d'artistes transsexuels ou travesties à Montréal, au Canada, de 1955 à 1985. Par l'entremise d'entrevues et de recherches dans les archives, j'ai étudié les conditions de travail de ces artistes et la vie dans les cabarets de l'après-guerre, et la vie nocturne de la ville. En théorie, et en méthodologie, cette recherche se distingue des études courantes sur la transsexualité, ainsi que des projets de la tradition orale lesbienne/gaie. Ma recherche illustre la centralité du travail à une compréhension historique de l'émergence de la transsexualité au Québec. Ainsi, je parle en faveur de l'intégration d'une analyse du travail à l'égard et historique et contemporain des vies transsexuelles.

At the time of writing this article, there is a great deal of interest in questions of gender, sexuality and representation in the Anglo-American university. Influenced strongly by queer theory, scholars turn their attention to different representations of transsexual and transgendered people in order to make broader claims about the sex/gender system. Elsewhere I have outlined my objections to the political and intellectual directions of queer theory as it is currently practised in the Anglo-American academy.<sup>1</sup> In this article, I want to present some of the empirical research I have conducted on a history of male to female (MTF) transsexual and transvestite artists in Montréal, covering the period from 1955 to 1985.

For the reader whose mother tongue is English, and who has no familiarity with transsexual/transgendered communities outside of an English-speaking context, it is necessary to outline how my research differs from most scholarly work on transgendered people written in English.

In the first instance, almost all of the literature addresses the issue with respect to identity. Current debates, for instance, examine the fault lines between butch lesbian and female to male transsexual identities.<sup>2</sup> Alternatively, they use transgendered people as a case study to articulate a theory of gendered subjectivity.<sup>3</sup> My work begins from a different place. I am not interested in why transsexuals decide to change sex, nor am I invested in exploring the different possibilities of gendered identities. Rather, I wish to document how the first generation of transsexuals in Québec managed to change sex despite the many obstacles

which they confronted. Furthermore, I believe it is important to question the relevance of an intellectual framework which reduces transsexual/transgendered questions to those of identity. Although this work is clearly produced by allies of transsexuals, and increasingly by transgendered people themselves, it is important to interrogate a fundamental contradiction in the field. If, as so many scholars argue, transsexual women are to be considered women, and transsexual men are to be considered men, then where is the research which begins with this position as a point of departure? Is it possible to conduct some research that is primarily done for transsexuals, as opposed to commentary which has relevance for a non-transsexual academic audience? It is only when we abandon this unhealthy obsession with identity so popular in the Anglo-American academy, I submit, that we can move forward with a critical activist research agenda that will actually have meaning for transsexuals outside the university.

The first aspect of my research that Anglo-American readers need to understand, then, stems from these questions I raise about the profound limitations of a narrow focus on identity. In the second instance, my research differs from most of the current Anglo-American discussions of transgendered issues in that I focus on questions of *work* rather than those of *leisure*. In Judith Halberstam's work on drag kings, for example, she looks at the performances of drag kings in order to advance a particular argument about gender identity, sexuality, and the sex/gender system.<sup>4</sup> Yet Halberstam limits her analysis

to representations that are both created and disseminated within lesbian bar communities. As such, her work tells us something about a current form of lesbian entertainment and offers a contribution to lesbian leisure studies.

My research also examines the world of cabarets and bars, but I do so from the perspective of the work of the artists. I clearly demonstrate the central role of work in the lives of the transsexuals I interviewed. This point of departure is an important shift from most Anglo-American and francophone québécois lesbian/gay history projects, which tend to examine bars and social spaces primarily from the perspective of leisure, inquiring, for example, about the patrons who frequented these establishments as customers.<sup>5</sup> In beginning my inquiry with the notion of work, I am able to offer an historical investigation of sexuality and gender which differs considerably from both Anglo-American and francophone québécois lesbian/gay history. More importantly, my interviewees validated this framework as highly pertinent in making historical sense of their lives.<sup>6</sup>

My focus on work examines many of the different dimensions of the work these artists did in the cabarets of Montréal. In the longer book-length project from which this article is taken, I explore a number of different aspects of their work lives: salaries and working conditions; the more general context of the entertainment industry in Montréal; their work lives as women; police repression of obscene performances; and the work of prostitution in Montréal cabarets. These different elements provide a broad picture of the work that these artists did historically. Such a labour focus is very different than an analysis concerned with leisure, which does not consider night clubs and cabarets as industries and which pays scant attention to the individuals who worked in these environments.

My work is based on interviews with fourteen artists who worked in Montréal's cabarets during the 1960s and 1970s. These women range in age from (at the time of this writing) approximately 40 to 65 years of age. They were all francophones, although some have bilingual and bicultural backgrounds. Almost all interviewees were white; this sample reflects the population of Québec in the period of study (1960s-1970s). This qualitative research has been complemented by extensive archival research, notably in a careful reading of the Québécois artistic press. Readers are encouraged to consult the endnotes carefully for further methodological comments as well as directions for future research. English translations from my interviews are also located in the endnotes.

This research is part of a broader book-length project. The book addresses these issues in more depth, and covers different sections of the lives and work of the people interviewed. It begins with an overview of their work in the cabarets of Montréal, then moves on to examine the work of prostitution by transsexuals. Access to health care, the legal and juridical status of transsexuals in the 1960s and 1970s, and police abuse are also covered. Furthermore, the

book contains extensive reflection on methodological questions. Space constraints prevent in-depth discussion of these issues here. The reader is invited to consult this book for further information.<sup>7</sup>

## CABARETS

I begin with an overview of the history of cabarets in post-war Montréal. Montréal was Canada's metropolis at the time. The city had a good post-war economy, families were reunited, and a general optimism prevailed in everyday life. All of these factors contributed to the thriving realm of leisure. And cabarets figured centrally among the leisure activities of the Montréal public.<sup>8</sup> Some cabarets had a capacity of 100 to 400 people, sometimes more.

The effects of this industry were also felt elsewhere. For example, one restaurant in the heart of the Red Light district sold 1200 sandwiches a day!<sup>9</sup> To give you another idea of how popular things were, the owners of one cabaret refused an offer of \$200,000 for the sale of the club in 1954.<sup>10</sup>

The shows presented were inspired by Broadway and Music Hall. Artists of all sorts were presented: dancers, jugglers, musicians, magicians, unicyclists, hypnotists, ventriloquists, and strip tease artists. The more innovative an act, the more interest. One stripper, for example, did a number in which her dog ripped off her clothes!<sup>11</sup>

The shows were an hour and a half or two hours in length. One of the artists interviewed described it this way:

Aujourd'hui, le spectacle, tu vas t'asseoir, tu vas dans un club, tu ne vois pas de spectacle, tu vois une danseuse qui s'écarte, t'sais. Tu ne vois plus le..., comme avant. Tu t'asseyais, une belle nana ou un beau monsieur bien habillé faisait une introduction en deux ou trois chansons, puis il disait qu'est-ce qui se déroulait durant la soirée, quel artiste était invité. T'avais une danseuse, une effeuilleuse, pas une danseuse, c'était une *effeuilleuse* qui venait te montrer des costumes, puis des bijoux à tout casser. Après ça, t'avais un acte de variétés, t'avais un magicien, t'avais une bonne heure et demie, deux heures, que tu pouvais donner à ton public assis. *C'était le spectacle.*<sup>12</sup>

Acts of female impersonation were an integral part of Montréal's cabaret scene.

The burlesque tradition of Québécois theatre has many examples, notably at the *Théâtre des Variétés* in Montréal.<sup>13</sup> In the 1940s, the influence of burlesque and female impersonation was especially evident in Montréal's black clubs. Dick Montgomery, Malva Bolda, and Billie McAllister, billed as "America's foremost female

impersonator," regularly played Rockhead's Paradise in 1946, 1947, and 1948.<sup>14</sup>

Female impersonation arrived in white clubs (Chez Parez, Casino de Paris) in the 1950s in Montréal. If in the 1940s transvestism was about burlesque and comedy, the 1950s witnessed an important shift: this was a serious art form, in which the transvestites who gave a show were *artists*, singers, dancers. Four people were especially noted at this time: Lana St-Cyr, Lili St-Clair, Bella Belle, and Guilda.

Lana St-Cyr was known as Québec's first transvestite. Born Raymond Dubé, she began her career in the city's cabarets at the end of the 1940s and in the beginning of the 1950s. A pioneer, she had to fight for the right to dance, because religious associations (les Sœurs du Sacré Cœur) tried to prevent her from performing. Marie-Marcelle Godbout, of the Association des Transsexuel(le)s du Québec, sums up her career:

Lana a débuté sa carrière vers 1945 comme strip-teaseuse. À l'époque, la Ligue du Sacré-Cœur et les Filles d'Isabelle, organismes religieux extrêmement puissants, ont tenté de mettre fin à sa carrière, sans toutefois y parvenir. Lana s'est en effet battue jusque devant les tribunaux pour revendiquer le droit d'exercer son métier.<sup>15</sup>

Once Lana St-Cyr had opened the doors in terms of morality, other transvestites were more free to work in cabarets. Bella Belle and Lili St-Clair worked in the clubs towards the end of the 1950s.

In 1955, Guilda presented her first show at the Chez Parez on Stanley Street.<sup>16</sup> Trained by the French Music Hall artist Mistinguett,<sup>17</sup> Guilda promoted the culture of music hall in Québec. Seen by the manager of the Chez Gérard cabaret in Québec, she was invited to give a show there, which launched her career.<sup>18</sup> Aside from performances in Montréal and throughout the province, and numerous television appearances in 1955 and 1956, she recorded several albums.<sup>19</sup>

If the 1950s saw transvestite performances in Montréal's cabarets, towards the end of the decade the public could go see a show with transsexuals. Christine Jorgensen, known as one of the first operated transsexuals (her surgery was performed in 1953), gave a show at the El Morocco in 1957 and at the Chez Gérard in Québec in 1958.<sup>20</sup> Information from the show in Québec reveals that Jorgensen was considered more an object of curiosity than an artist. The Québécois public demanded a high quality show, and Jorgensen was paid for her week's engagement after only 4 nights.<sup>21</sup>

A few years later, the arrival of Coccinelle, a French transsexual artist, made headlines and created a sensation across the city. An ex-soldier, with a beauty unparalleled even amongst non-transsexual women, Coccinelle was highly successful in her career. Coccinelle

played on her celebrity and transsexual status, titillating the audience with every move. The media followed her everywhere, and Coccinelle revelled in the glory of it all. Here's how one participant described her show that she gave at the Casa Loma in 1965:

Puis ensuite, elle allumait toutes les lumières du club, puis, elle laissait tomber son (...) Elle gardait juste ses plumes, puis elle disait, "Cherchez les défauts. Mesdames, cherchez les défauts." C'était une beauté, à ce moment-là, Coccinelle, c'était une beauté...<sup>22</sup>

In the 1960s, more and more transvestite shows were performed in the cabarets of Montréal, from the most glamorous and chic clubs to the most simple and modest taverns.

What was perhaps unique about the 1960s, however, was the emergence of transvestite revues in Québec. In the 1940s and 50s, transvestites generally worked as individual artists. In the 1960s, however, transvestites had the chance to work in a specifically transvestite revue, wherein the troupe was comprised exclusively (or almost exclusively) of transvestites. That was the hook for the audience.

There were several different revues and troupes, that of Guilda being one of the first. There was also Clyde Dubois's show "Cherchez la femme." Dubois also put on "Adam ou Eve." In these shows, there were some genetic women amongst the performers and audience members were encouraged to guess who was a male and who was not. Other troupes at the time included "Travesty's Follies" of Suzy Day, a revue under the direction of the artist Chanelle, and Jean Delmonaco's "Travestirama."

One artist described the show in this way:

On était différents artistes, avec Clyde Dubois, il fallait toujours être à la mode. Il y avait une ouverture, il y avait des mannequins qui posaient sur leur tête de grandes plumes, des grands défilés de mode de tous les pays du monde, tu comprends, de races de toutes sortes, de... Ils nous habillaient en costumes hors de l'ordinaire, ah! des fourrures, des plumes... tout ce qui brillait, des diamants... puis, on escortait des vedettes.<sup>23</sup>

These shows were highly popular, even as audiences tended to go see cabaret shows less often towards the middle and the end of the 1960s. In fact, transvestite reviews were amongst the most popular shows ever presented by the cabarets: when the American troupe The Jewel Box revue performed at the El Morocco in 1962, they beat all previous sales records.<sup>24</sup> And Clyde Dubois's production of "Adam ou Eve" played at the Casino de Paris for more than a year in 1965-1966, almost entirely consecutively.

The revues also toured the province, where they were equally as successful. One woman recounts the following anecdote of going on tour in the Outaouais region:

Ça attirait du monde, dans ce temps-là, t'sais [Oui?] Oh! Mon Dieu! Aie...j'ai travaillé à l'Hôtel Grabert...euh...neuf mois...à Gatineau...neuf mois. Dans ce temps-là, les travestis, le monde était devant la porte pour voir ça...On avait des autobus qui venaient des États-Unis, des voyages organisés pour venir nous voir. Ils chargeaient deux piasses à l'entrée, imagine les années 60, y avait de l'argent!<sup>25</sup>

Transvestites were well integrated in the world of québécois artistic culture. Indeed, transvestites knew and worked with some of the biggest producers, artists, and club managers: participants cited names such as Muriel Millard, Fawzia Amir, Clyde Dubois, La Poune, and Alys Robi as colleagues.

#### VIOLENCE IN MONTRÉAL AND CABARET LIFE

Obviously, the work of transvestite artists needs to be situated within a context larger than that of individual clubs and cabarets. The success of Montréal nightlife necessarily meant there were links to underground culture and crime in the city. Violence was an integral part of the scene: Montréal was Canada's most violent city.<sup>26</sup> Montréal's Red Light was known as a violent area: 19 murders in 30 years.<sup>27</sup> Certain spots were seen to be more dangerous than others. Café Rialto on Blvd St-Laurent was dubbed «Le café de la mort» (The death café) by the media in 1963.<sup>28</sup>

The participants clearly understood this criminal context, and helped to make historical sense of it in a specifically transvestite/transsexual context. So I want to tease out two elements of the interview data in this regard: 1) the role of the mafia, and 2) the sale of phoney drinks in cabarets as a way to make more money. The results presented here only offer some of the evidence and interpretation of the longer, book-length project.

#### THE MAFIA

The election of Mayor Jean Drapeau in 1954 announced the end of corruption in Montréal nightlife. The Caron inquiry demonstrated a strong link between the police, the mafia, underground bars (blind pigs), and gambling establishments.<sup>29</sup> As of this date, the city had a mandate to clean up the city.

My research demonstrates that in the 1960s and 1970s, the mafia continued to control the club scene. One participant explained that in the world of cabarets, there were two kinds of protection, that of the mafia, and that of

the police:

Il y avait deux mafias dans le temps. Il y a deux genres de protection. La protection de police, la police et la moralité, et ça, j'ai vu. Je les ai vus chercher des enveloppes, des policiers, oui...Parce que j'étais assise au bar, ils rentraient derrière, puis, ils donnaient une enveloppe avec de l'argent dedans. Ça, je l'ai vu, que c'était de l'argent dedans...Il [le patron du bar] m'a dit: "Ça me coûte de l'argent pour que tu travailles ici." Il me l'a dit directement. J'ai dit: "Pourquoi tu paies pour que je travaille ici?" Ben, il dit: "T'aurais pas le droit sinon..." Je les voyais à toutes les semaines chercher les deux enveloppes.<sup>30</sup>

Participants confirmed the clear control of the clubs by the mafia:

On a fait des spectacles, nous autres, au Casino de Paris, on a fait des spectacles après les heures, après 3 heures du matin, quand le club était fermé, pour Vic Cotroni, pour toute sa gang. Justement pour sa gang à eux autres. Il y a une personne qui pouvait rentrer à part la gang de la pègre....On était payés. Ah oui! Dans ce temps-là, les clubs étaient contrôlés par la pègre.<sup>31</sup>

Yet if the mafia controlled the clubs of Montréal, we should not presume that these places were, *a priori*, dangerous for transvestites or transsexuals. On the contrary, these women were well received in this milieu. The admiration accorded to these artists can be understood as a function of the work of the milieu. Transvestites and transsexuals were a source of revenue for the clubs, whether as artists or as prostitutes.

Given a strong link between the mafia and the world of show business,<sup>32</sup> transvestites were welcomed with open arms into the clubs. Participants' words help put this in its proper context:

C'était *très* contrôlé. La rue Saint-Laurent était toute contrôlée par les Dubois à l'époque, c'était eux autres qui étaient... [les rois] les rois de la *Main*. Nous autres, les prostituées, on payait pas de cotisation. [Ah non?] Pas les transsexuelles. [Pourquoi?] Parce que ça nous appartenait. On était les *Queens* de la rue Saint-Laurent. [*Queens of the Main!*] Oui, mais c'est vrai! Peut-être à cause du...comme le Saguenay..., puis toute cette gang-là...les travestis, les transsexuelles, je veux dire, on était adorés par la mafia, les gangs. On tait adorés par ces gens-là. Personne nous a touché un doigt. Moi, je sortais avec un gars de la gaffe de la rue Saint-Laurent....On était respectés. Parce qu'on les respectait, et nous

autres, on a toujours marché droit sur la *Main*, puis, on faisait nos clients, puis c'était comme ça, puis ça roulait. Il fallait que ça roule. Pour eux autres, il faut que ça roule, les clubs. Ils savaient que, si on était dans les bars, ils savaient que le bar était pour marcher. Parce que, nous autres, c'est....Ah oui! il faut que ça boive, les clients, il faut que ça dépense. C'est pour ça qu'on était adorés.<sup>33</sup>

### PHONEYS

We can further understand the mafia's appreciation of transvestites and transsexual artists in Montréal's clubs through an examination of the sale of phoney drinks. In the 1950s and 60s, cabarets sold diluted drinks to clients. Costing less than a regular drink, they increased the profits of the club. There were several different recipes: champagne was made from a bit of champagne and cream soda, whereas rye would be made from rye and tea. If the preparation of these drinks would help increase profits, it was also necessary to ensure that they were sold. In this light, workers in the clubs - whether artists, prostitutes, or both - were encouraged to sell drinks. The workers were given a commission on each drink sold. Stir sticks in the drinks served as proof of purchase: a green stick for a single drink, a red one for a double.

Ben, c'est parce que dans le temps, moi, je travaillais là, puis ils nous donnaient, je crois, c'était 10 sous pour un simple, ça faisait 20 sous pour un double. Un double fort, qui coûtait à peu près 2 dollars. Ils donnaient à peu près 10 pour cent...20 cennes pour un double. Je prenais toujours des doubles, ça valait pas la peine, les simples, franchement...Un bâton rouge, là, c'était un double, puis un bâton vert, c'était un simple. C'était rare, un bâton vert dans mon cas! J'aimais pas ça!<sup>34</sup>

The goal of this activity was to sell drinks, not necessarily to drink them. The workers had to somehow get rid of them, which they usually did by throwing them in the toilet or out the back door.

This activity could be profitable indeed. One participant described her earnings on a particularly good night:

Ils appelaient ça des *phoneys*. Dans certains clubs, les drinks se vendaient une piasse et quatre vingt, autant que ça, c'était coûteux. Puis, les charmantes petites filles, elles voulaient toujours un double, à deux piasses et quatre-vingt! Ça nous donnait sur 2, 80\$, ça nous donnait [rires] à peu près 60 cennes. Mais je connais un exemple, j'ai déjà fait dans une journée 360. [360

dollars?] Bingo! Comprends-tu? Toi, t'imagines-tu comment? T'sais! Les *phoneys*, ça se savait partout.<sup>35</sup>

This was a big star in the club, so she could make \$360 in one night, solely from the commission of drinks bought for her. Archival research confirms the importance of this market: in an inquiry on one bar in the 1960s, the hostesses made 50 cents per drink, for a total of \$13,900 for a period of only 8 months!<sup>36</sup> For the year 1961, the sale of phoney drinks made almost \$31,000 for the club.<sup>37</sup> One estimate stated that the purchase of \$370 worth of wine, once diluted by the house, could yield a total sale of \$40,000!<sup>38</sup>

To sell these drinks, one needed not the status of a big star, nor even an outstanding beauty, but the know-how to get someone to buy you a drink. The woman who made \$360 one night recounted how she was actually hired by the club to give lessons to other artists in this art:

La meilleure, c'était une fille de *Chez Patee*, je ne donne pas son nom. Même, ma fille, qu'on est allé donner des cours! [rires] [Ah oui?] Oui, dans certains clubs, on m'appelait et on me payait pour faire semblant, pour leur montrer [comment se faire payer un verre]. Tu pouvais arriver, la fille, c'était une beauté, c'était Miss Univers, elle n'était pas capable de se faire payer un drink. [rires] [Donc, vous avez donné des cours pour apprendre ça...] [Rires.] Ben ben chic...moi, puis elle. [Et vous étiez payées pour ça, oui?] Oh ! Je te crois! Parce qu'on donnait des cours! [rires]<sup>39</sup>

Transvestites and transsexuals were adored by the mafia precisely because they were skilled in getting clients to buy them drinks.

### CONCLUSION

The research presented here clearly indicates that transsexuals and transvestites were well integrated in the cabaret culture of post-war Montréal nightlife. Through interviews with the first generation of transsexuals in Québec, as well as extensive archival research in the Québécois press, my study demonstrates the centrality of work for a complex historical understanding of the emergence of transsexuality as a viable possibility in Québec. It was in and through their work as artists that transsexuals received social and psychological validation of themselves as women. And it was in and through their work that they integrated in Québec society.

This research raises questions for current academic discussions about transsexuality. Influenced heavily by American queer theory, most contemporary English-language scholarly discussions of transsexuality eclipse questions of labour entirely. They limit themselves

to the realm of leisure and performance, without explicitly acknowledging this framework. Furthermore, they are particularly interested in asking questions related to identity, to the exclusion of almost all other fields of inquiry.

If, as the historical evidence I have presented here suggests, work remains a central component of the very emergence of transsexuality, the critical scholar must question the relevance of a theoretical framework on transsexual issues which cannot address one of the central elements of transsexual history, community, and life. By way of conclusion, then, I would like to suggest that critical scholars and activists insist on the integration of a labour perspective in academic work created about transsexuals. Since the history of sex change is one literally embodied and enabled through labour, it seems appropriate that intellectuals devote some attention to this matter.

#### ENDNOTES

1. See Viviane Namaste, *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
2. Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1998).
3. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Richard Ekins, *Male Femaling: A Grounded Theory Approach to Cross-Dressing and Sex-Changing* (London: Routledge, 1997).
4. Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*.
5. Line Chamberland, *Mémoires lesbiennes: le lesbianisme à Montréal entre 1950 et 1972* (Montréal: Remue-Ménage, 1996); Ross Higgins, « Des lieux d'appartenance: les bars gais des années 1950, » dans *Sortir de l'ombre: Histoire des communautés lesbienne et gaie de Montréal*, eds. Irène Demczuk et Frank Remiggi (Montréal: VLB, 1998): 103-128; George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World 1890-1940* (New York: Basic, 1994).
6. Prior to engaging in field research, the participants were consulted as to the development of the questions for the interview guide. Moreover, once the interviews and archival research had been completed, I presented the preliminary results to the women involved for their validation. Validation session, December 16, 2000.
7. Viviane Namaste, « C'était du spectacle! » *L'histoire des artistes travestis et transsexuelles à Montréal, 1955-1985*, Montréal : McGill-Queen's University Press, forthcoming 2005. Some related English-language references include Becki Ross, "Bumping and Grinding on the Line: Making Nudity Pay," *Labour/Le Travail* 46 (Fall 2000): 221-250 and A.W. Stencell, *Girl Show: Into the Canvas World of Bump and Grind*, Toronto, ECW Press, 1999.
8. William Weintraub, *City Unique: Montréal Days and Nights in the 1940s and 50s*, Toronto, McLelland and Stewart, 1996. The book from which this essay is taken presents more information on the history of post-war Montréal and cabarets.
9. *Ici Montréal* 23 juin 1962: 12.
10. *Ici Montréal* 4 décembre 1954: 2.
11. *Ici Montréal* 20 février 1960: 11.
12. "Today, show business, you go to sit down, you go to a club, you don't see a show, you see a dancer who spreads her legs, y'know? You don't see anymore as it was before. You sat down, a beautiful woman or a handsome man really well dressed did an introduction with two or three songs, and he gave you the line-up of the evening, which artists were invited. You had a dancer, an *effeuilleuse*, not a dancer, she was an *effeuilleuse* who came to show you costumes and jewellery to die for. After that you had a variety act, you had a magician, you had a good hour and a half, two hours, that you could give to your public. That was show business!"

13. Juliette Patrie, *Quand on revoit tout ça! Le Burlesque au Québec 1914-1960* (Montréal : Productions Vieux Rêves Ltée, 1977); Chantal Hébert, *Le Burlesque au Québec: Un divertissement populaire* (Montréal: Hurtubise HMH, 1981).

14. *Current Events* 1er mars 1946: 4,9; *Current Events* 30 mai 1947: 7,11; *Current Events* 5 novembre 1948: 3, 8. Also see the photo of an anonymous transvestite at Rockhead's in Fonds John Gilmore, Archives, Concordia University, Number P004/P44.

15. "Lana began her career around 1945 as a strip-tease artist. At the time, La Ligue du Sacré-Cœur and Les Filles d'Isabelle, extremely powerful religious organizations, tried to put an end to her career, but without success. Lana defended herself, in point of fact, before the courts to have the right to work in her profession." Cited in Simon Welman, « Soirée de remises de prix Lana St-Cyr » *Fugues*, juin 1996: 30.

16. Guilda, *Guilda: Elle et moi*. (Montréal: Québecor, 1979): 93-4.

17. Guilda, *Guilda: Elle et moi*: 53-6; Mistinguette, *Toute ma vie (Second Volume)*. (Paris: René Julliard, 1954): 171.

18. Gérard Thibault et Chantal Hébert, *Chez Gérard: La petite scène des grandes vedettes*. (Sainte-Foy: Éditions spectaculaires, 1988): 234-5. This book contains several photos and promotional materials from Guilda's shows at the Chez Gérard.

19. *Guilda: Une femme pas comme les autres...?* (Montréal: Rusticana/London Records of Canada, no date. The record was recorded at the Cabaret Faisan Bleu; *Guilda...* Vol. 2 (Montréal: Rusticana, no date); *Guilda...* Vol. 4 (Montréal: Rusticana, no date); *Guilda*, Elle est bien dans sa peau (Montréal: Disques Trans-Canada); « Rendez-vous avec Michèle » (Television show of Michèle Tisseyre), circa 1955. Voir Guilda, *Guilda: Elle et moi*: 94. Guilda had also been invited (with Robert Goulet) to the Danny Vaughn show in the beginning of 1956. *Ibid.*: 96.

20. William Weintraub, *City Unique: Montréal Days and Nights in the 1940s and 50s* (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1996): 123. Al Palmer, « Cabaret Circuit » *The Montréal Herald* 13 mars 1957: 12; Thibault et Hébert, *Chez Gérard*: 284-5. Thibault and Hébert note that Jorgensen came in 1957, but advertisements for her show in *Le Soleil* are from February 1958. See *Le Soleil* lundi, le 10 février 1958: 6.

21. Thibault et Hébert, *Chez Gerard*: 285.

22. "And then she brought up the house lights of the club, and, she let fall her... She just kept her feathers, and she said, 'Find the faults. Mesdames, find the faults.' She was a beauty, at that time, Coccinelle, she was such a beauty..."

23. "We were different artists, with Clyde Dubois, one always had to be in fashion. There was an opening, there were models who used to pose with huge feathers on their heads, great fashion shows from all the countries of the world, do you understand, all races, all sorts of... They dressed us in costumes out of the ordinary! Furs, feathers... all that glitters, diamonds... and we escorted the grand stars."

24. Al Palmer, « Le Bon Vivant » *Current Events* 8 septembre 1962: 19; Al Palmer, « le Bon Vivant » *Current Events* 15 septembre 1962: 16.

25. "It attracted people at that time, oh yes. (Yes?) Oh! My God! Hey... I worked at the Hôtel Grabert...um...nine months...in Gatineau... nine months. At that time, transvestites, people were lined up at the door to see that!.. We had buses that came from the United States, organized trips to see us. They charged 2 dollars at the door, imagine in the 1960s, that was a lot of money!"

26. « Montréal possède le taux de crime le plus élevé du pays, soit 2 341 par 100 000 habitants, alors que Toronto n'a que 1739 crimes par 100 000 habitants, » *Flirt et potins* 11 avril 1971: 9. Claude Laverge, « Montréal à la pointe du revolver, » *La Patrie* semaine du 12 au 18 septembre 1963: 2-3; « Montréal 1968 comparable au Chicago des années 30, » *La Patrie* semaine du 29 décembre 1968: 5. Also see Daniel Elie, *L'homicide à Montréal* (Montréal: Hurtubise HMH, 1981).

27. Alain Stanké, « Le bilan de la Main est impressionnant: 19 meurtres depuis 30 ans, » *Le petit journal* 15 septembre 1957: 48, 121.

28. Pierre Léger, « Le café de la mort, » *La Patrie* semaine du 7 au 13 mars 1963: 12.

29. Daniel Proulx, *Le Red Light de Montréal* (Montréal: VLB, 1997); Danielle Lacasse, *La prostitution à Montréal 1945-1970* (Montréal: 1995); Weintraub, *City Unique*.

30. "There were two mafias at the time. Two kinds of protection. The protection of the police, the police and the morality, and that I saw. I saw them come pick up their envelopes, the police, yes... Because I was seated at the bar, they came in behind it, and they gave (them) an envelope with money in it. That, I saw, that there was money inside it... He (the bar manager) told me, "It costs me money so that you can work here." He told me directly. I said, "Why do you have to pay so that I can work here?!" Well he said, "You wouldn't have the right otherwise." I saw them come every week to pick up their envelopes."

31. "We did shows, we did, at the Casino de Paris, we did shows after hours, after 3 o'clock in the morning, when the club was closed, for Vic Cotroni, for his whole gang. Just for his gang. Nobody was allowed to go inside aside from the gang of the mafia. We were paid... Oh yes! At that time, clubs were controlled by the mafia."

32. One Montréal artist says that Vic Cotroni is « un grand ami des artistes. » See Michel Fauvel, «Nous n'avons pas honte de dire que nous sommes des Cotroni, » *La Patrie* semaine du 20 au 26 avril 1975: 205. Also see « Les liens intimes de la pègre avec les grandes vedettes du showbiz, » *Allô Police* 2 février 1964: 7.

33. "It was highly regulated. Saint-Laurent boulevard was all controlled by the Dubois at the time, it was they who were...(the kings), the kings of the Main. Us prostitutes, we didn't pay them any cut. (Oh no?) Not transsexuals. (Why?) Because it belonged to us. We were the Queens of Saint-Laurent. (Queens of the Main!) Yes, well it's true! Maybe because of...like at the Saguenay...and all this gang, transvestites, transsexuals, I mean, we were adored by the mafia, the gangs. We were adored by these people. Nobody would lift a finger to hurt us. Me, I went out with a guy from the milieu of Saint-Laurent...We were respected. Because we respected them, and us, we always walked straight on the Main, we did our clients and it was like that, it worked. It had to work. For them, it has to work, the clubs. They knew that, if we were in their bars, they knew that the bar would make money. Because for us, it's, Oh yes! We've got to drink, the clients, they have to spend. That's why we were adored."

34. "Well, it's because at the time, me, I worked there, and they gave us, I think, it was 10 cents for a regular drink, which would be 20 cents for a double. A double hard alcohol, that cost about 2 dollars. They gave about 10 per cent... 20 cents for a double. I always drank doubles, it wasn't worth it, regular drinks, really... A red stick, that was for a double, a green stick, was a regular. It was rare, a green stick in my case! I didn't like that!"

35. "They called them phonies. In certain clubs, the drinks were sold for \$1.80, as much as that, it was expensive. And the charming young ladies, they always wanted a double, at \$2.80! That gave us, of \$2.80, that gave us (laughs) about 60 cents. Well I know one example, I once made 360. (360 dollars?) You know? Phonies, that was known everywhere."

36. « 3\$ la minute pour vous 'amuser' dans un cabaret de Montréal, » *Allô Police* 25 février 1968: 17-18.

37. *Ibid.*: 17.

38. « Le semi-rose spécial à 1,60\$ le verre n'était que de la limonade! » *Allô Police* 3 novembre 1963: 29.

39. "The best, it was a girl from the Chez Paree, I won't give her name. But, girl, we went to give courses! (laughs) (oh yeah?) Yes, in certain clubs, they called me and they paid me to show, to show them (how to get a drink bought for them). You could have, a girl, she was a beauty, Miss Universe, but she wasn't able to get a drink bought for her! (laughs) (So you gave them courses in that?) (laughs) Really really chic... me and her. (And you were paid for this?) Oh, believe you me! Because we gave courses!"