



OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF “CASSEROLES” *textes qui bougent au rythme du carré rouge*

a special issue of *wi: journal of mobile media* • 01 june 2012

BOUGE! BOUGE! BOUGE!

name withheld

The night I am arrested is a warm spring night, the 30th night of continuous protests to be exact. It's the day after the May 22nd rally when over 200 000 people walked in protest through the streets of Montreal. My friend Paul and I are marching with our bikes in the demo, grins falling off our faces. We talk about the people around us, all the families, all the children, about how happy we are and how incredible it is to be marching, and how much we love the city. We go on and on about this while we weave through the streets. The crowd moves fast. Unlike previous night marches when tensions and discomfort would often wash over the crowd, tonight is jovial and vibrant.

We get off our bikes when we get to St. Denis. BOOM! We hear a blast, and then a cloud of smoke hovers over the intersection. I am unsure where we are. People start running towards me.

“Get your fucking bike out of the way!”

I try to run north on St. Denis in the direction of the crowd, but they turn to head in my direction and are pushing me back. I yell for Paul, “Please don't leave,” as we both try to maneuver our bikes northwest, but there's no getting them above the high curb and through the throng of bodies. North of us are two rows of police. We are turning around to avoid them when the tear gas grabs hold of the back of my throat. I wrap my shawl around my nose and mouth, scrambling and anxious, wondering “what the fuck is going on?!” I feel like I'm going around and around in a circle. Suddenly the police charge us, and I try to run the other way, but the bike is unwieldy and I'm nervous that I will lose Paul. The cops start shoving from the other side, and every time I turn my head there are more cops with masks and shields lunging toward us, smoke hanging overhead, until there's no way out. Then it starts again: “MOVE, MOVE, MOVE, MARCHE, MARCHE.” So we move, but in the other direction, the cops are shouting the same thing. I hold onto Paul's arm, unable to think, dizzy from the teargas and anxiety, my heart pounding through my rib cage. Every time I move one way, I am pushed back the other way. I tighten my shawl for fear of more teargas; I can hardly stand. We ask the cops if we can lock up our bikes; we beg until they concede. Then they promptly shove us back into the streets. I imagine this might be my last time with my beloved bicycle.

“What's happening?” I ask.

“I think we were just kettled.”

“What? No, after the G20, they’re not allowed to do that.”

“Oh, I think they just did.”

I don’t believe him.

We stand around for a while. I tweet uncertainties. Everyone is milling about in the circle. People start shouting chants about freedom and civil liberties. Eventually most of us sit down.

I sit in silence, staring at everyone around me; their faces are at ease, comfortable. “What do you think is going to happen?”

“I don’t know, they’ll probably arrest us.”

“They can’t arrest us all... there’s so many of us.”

“Sure they can,” and he walks off.

I let him go and stay on the curb, my knees hugging my chest, waiting. When Paul comes back, I tell him to sit beside me. We watch a makeshift football game made out of a plastic bottle.

“Are we really going to get arrested?” I inquire.

“Yes.”

Paul notes the several STM buses that have arrived. (The STM, or the Société Transport Montréal, is the city’s public transportation system.)

“Why?” I ask.

“To transport us.”

People start getting up, and I hear a police officer announcing something.

“They’re reading us our rights,” he turns to me.

“No, no....”

“... anything you say may be used against you in a court of law....”

“Oh, we’re getting arrested,” I state matter of factly as I reach for my phone to tweet the same thing.

“THE CATS!” I suddenly remember.

“Yes?”

“I left them without food because I’m trying to diet them, argh!”

“Can you call any friends to feed them?”

“I will call my superintendent, but it’s so late and what will I say? ‘Oh hi, I got arrested, can you go and feed my cats?’ That sounds so sketchy.”

“We should line up,” Paul says to me.

“To get arrested?”

“Imagine how long it’s going to take to process everyone. If we line up now, we’ll get out earlier.”

I grab his shoulder as he leads me up to the front, where some elderly people are lining up to get arrested. I am nervous. There’s an abundance of misinformation about where we are going to go, where we will be held, what we are getting arrested for, and if Bill 78 will be enacted. No one seems to know and the cops say something different every time.

I walk up.

“Do you have ID?”

“Yes, I have my Quebec health card.”

“Is it in your wallet?”

“Yes,” I reply as one of the cops searches my bag.

“What a mess in there,” he mutters in French to his colleague.

They find my ID, search me, grab my shoulders to turn me around, and handcuff my wrists together.

Two policemen walk me to the line by the STM bus. They are holding my purse, and I must wait until it’s my turn to get on the bus. They write down my identification information and give me a wristband with a number to later claim my purse. I sit

down and wait. The bus fills up with people, all of them younger than me. Then we wait. Eventually, the bus starts moving – driving and driving and driving. Once we arrive in northeast Montreal, we wait some more. The buses become holding cells. I feel sick – teargas nausea and my bladder kicking in. Lightheaded, I ask the woman cop if I can go to the bathroom. She rolls her eyes and tells me to sit down. I ask again. I wait. I ask the other cops. Each insists that everyone has to urinate and that I have to wait.

“What if I pee my pants?”

“Then you have to live with it.”

“So then if I pee on the bus I won’t get in trouble?”

“Go away, you won’t do that.”

I return to my seat but the pain is unbearable.

I crouch down in the middle of the bus and a few women stand around me creating a human shield, while I pull down my leggings with my handcuffed hands – I piss, and I piss, and I keep pissing, until the stream of urine rolls around the bus under everyone’s feet.

“You are brave. Be glad you did that. Fuck ‘em.”

I smile sheepishly and appreciate the camaraderie, as the rest of the bus erupts in anger at the police.

“How can you let a woman pee on the bus? How can you treat us like animals?”

“Because you are. Shut up and stay put,” the police shout back, which only causes more yelling.

“A woman peed on the bus! A woman peed on the bus! You should be ashamed!” some of them chant in unison, but the police don’t even turn around to look at us. I watch my piss back and forth. By now, another man is doing the same thing: flooding the bus with urine. Somehow this makes time pass more quickly. An hour later our bus pulls up to the processing table and a smiling policeman hands me a ticket as the morning sun hits my face.

That night over 400 people were arrested at Sherbrooke and St-Denis, most of us with \$634 tickets for breaking the newly revised municipal bylaw P-6, which, among other things, does not allow face coverings, such as the shawl I used, and requires that

protest organizers submit exact march routes to the police. Apparently we now have free speech rights *only* if the police are notified first.