

cabling several dozen major urban centres in France. In November 1986, Videotron acquired 10% of the C.G.E. subsidiary that is doing the cabling.

Through Tele-Metropole, it now intends to participate in the world's first privatization of a national public broadcaster, TF 1, which the Chirac government has put on the trading block. Arrangements for Videotron's participation in the TF 1 privatization were made public in November and were contingent on CRTC approval of the Tele-Metropole takeover.

The internationalization of Videotron/Tele-Metropole is not only an essential element of André Chagnon's grand design in itself, it is also essential to making this unprecedented degree of concentration and vertical integration palatable to the Canadian, and particularly the Québec, public. In his presentation to the CRTC in December, Chagnon spelled it all out:

"...only a major enterprise can hope to carve a choice place for Québec in the world of audiovisual titans taking shape on the horizon...Videotron believes that the present international evolution of broadcasting towards giant corporations like those of Berlusconi, Murdoch, Maxwell, Viacom, Hersant-Hachette-RTL, demand that Québec's principal television station make alliances. Refusal to take our place among these giants will sooner or later mean the domination of their products in our markets." (pp 32-33; free trans.)

By framing its project so astutely, Videotron appeals to the view that we must be prepared to place industrial considerations ahead of sociocultural ones, in this case sacrifice the possibility of pluralism in broadcasting for a piece of the global communications pie.

The acquisition of Tele-Metropole makes Videotron "the most important element of the broadcasting system in Québec", said the CRTC in its announcement of the decision. The eclipse of the public sector by the private is henceforth total--and quintessentially Canadian. If telecommunications are indeed to the 20th century what railroads were to the 19th, *eh bien*, Videotron is after all as Canadian as...the CPR.

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Details for this article were drawn from the Report of the Task Force on Broadcasting Policy, official documents filed with the CRTC, newspaper reports, and a research file prepared by the Institut Canadien d'Education des Adultes.

**C**ontent without form. The invisible foreground of city life. Stinking of months and years of sweat they roam, seeming to be zombies through the marketplace.

Women of deixis. Street people never on holiday because they never work. Mediators of consumption, they choose only from what is already thrown away. And in the winter, they spend a lot of time looking for shelter. They wander from bus depots to libraries, from subways to churches.

They change all the rules. Shopping malls become places to keep warm, sleep, beg coffee money, find discarded cigarette ends or half-eaten sandwiches, or newspapers to keep as blankets for cold bench-sitting days in the parks.

Ida sometimes sleeps in shelters for vagrant women. They let you in around six pm. They give you supper, soap, aspirins. You can watch TV then you go to bed. They make you wash with disinfectant soap before you can have a bed. You have to use it in case you have fleas or lice. Ida sleeps sitting up, with her back against the wall, covers pulled up over her head. Everyone must get up at 7 am, have breakfast and be out by eight. They receive bus tickets if they need to travel to look for jobs and accomodation. Ida has lived on the street for two years.

"We used to live on Broadview. I got pregnant and he moved out on me. After I had the baby, I got welfare plus mother's allowance. I started drinking a lot. Then it gets all fuzzy. I remember the day they came and took my baby away from me. I remember the day they told me to get out of the apartment. Then no welfare. So I had to learn about the street. It all happened like in a flash....But it all seems so long ago now."

Ida leaves the shelter at 8 am and goes to the local church drop-in centre. They have the morning classified ads stapled to the wall. You can write down phone numbers of places to live. Ida never reads any of these ads.

"When I think of it -- I'd have to go and be interviewed by a landlord. I'd have to sign a paper. I'd have to make sure I could give him money every little while. I'd have to buy furniture, and pots. I see those ads and I think all this at once and I get dizzy. So I keep away from the paper."

Angie is a widow from the east coast. She worked for a federal government office for twenty years. Then, suddenly, her husband died. She walked away from her past.

"I had to get away. He was everywhere. He talked to me in the house, but he was dead. He was every man I saw at work. I just left, that's all."

"Il y a du danger à s'imitier soi-même."  
Pierre Reverdy

Angie has lived on the street for ten years. During that time, money has been continually deposited to her bank account from her husband's pension and from her own. (Her former boss registered her for early retirement.) She has enough money to buy a small house. But how to go back to "normal"? Fictions of happiness and satisfaction. How to go back to following the rules, having a telephone, having to stay put in one spot? To get mail. To lose carefully-honed city-jungle instincts. How to go back to cooking, owning a budgie, washing everyday, smiling at strangers, staying out of garbage cans. And why go back? She has not touched any of her money for ten years. She doesn't know how to approach it.

Angie stays out of the shelters as much as possible, even in winter. There is too much hate. "I get enough of that outside. The other women look at you as if they want to kill you. And the staff are terrible. They are so damn self-righteous. You have to feel so grateful to them. If you don't act grateful, then they put you down. Who needs it?"

There are many different kinds of isolation. One can live in the arctic, or one can live in a cardboard box in the heart of a busy city. These women live in but not of the city; they are floating down the middle of water/alleyways, dangerously far from any shoreline, and always in unfriendly territory.

Ida and Angie have learned to be resourceful. They can live on "nothing." Working people hurry by. Afraid of the rags and the stench, we avert our gaze. We say no every time we turn our eyes away, projecting the violence of our negation into suspicious and tired street faces. Yet these faces are profound. A thousand unanswered questions throb in the forehead. Street women address these questions by living a radical present, not beholden to any past, not looking for any sympathy, and yet dependent on every future.

Everyday reactions to male and female vagrants are qualitatively different. Homeless females are constructed discursively as unfortunate waifs, desperately hoping to be saved. One of the assumptions arising from this stereotypic construction is that these waiting orphans will feel forever indebted to their rescuers.

*Loretta Czernis was born in St. Joseph's Hospital on 28 July 1952. At a tender age she left Toronto and travelled the world for 17 years. Loretta now lives at 176 the Esplanade in downtown Toronto. In the future she plans to move northward and live at no fixed address.*

## Ungrateful Voyageurs