MAKING THE SCENE:

Yorkville and Hip Toronto, 
1960-1970

by

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Abstract

For a short period during the 1960s Toronto’s Yorkville district was found at the centre of Canada’s youthful bohemian scene. Students, artists, hippies, greasers, bikers, and “weekenders” congregated in and around the district, enjoying the live music and theatre in its many coffee houses, its low-rent housing in overcrowded Victorian walk-ups, and its perceived saturation with anti-establishmentarian energy. For a period of roughly ten years, Yorkville served as a crossroads for Torontonian (and even English Canadian) youth, as a venue for experimentation with alternative lifestyles and beliefs, and an apparent refuge from the dominant culture and the stifling expectations it had placed upon them. Indeed, by 1964 every young Torontonian (and many young Canadians) likely knew that social rebellion and Yorkville went together as fingers interlaced. *Making the Scene* unpacks the complicated history of this fraught community, examining the various meanings represented by this alternative scene in an anxious 1960s. Throughout, this dissertation emphasizes the relationship between power, authenticity and identity on the figurative stage for identity performance that was Yorkville.
Acknowledgements

*Making the Scene* is successful by large measure as a result of the collaborative efforts of my supervisors Karen Dubinsky and Ian McKay, whose respective guidance and collective wisdom has saved me from myself on more than one occasion. I have been so lucky to have such helpful, brilliant, and amiable supervisors for these past five years – my thanks and, as always, my great admiration, is theirs to share.

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I offer my gratitude to my interview subjects for their always friendly agreements to work with me toward presenting a fuller picture of the Toronto of their youth. I hope I have done well by their memories. It has been my pleasure to get to know them.

A special thanks to Michael Cross, my undergraduate thesis supervisor at Dalhousie University, and the man who once encouraged a young, unsure hippie kid to write freely, madly, but with purpose.

Finally, thanks to my parents Gordon and Pam, my sisters Kate and Liz, and all of my extended family, who have helped to build in me the kind of insane self-confidence it requires to write a 500-page essay. I love you all.

*Making the Scene* is dedicated, with so much moon, to Lowy.
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PART ONE:

Narratives and Frameworks
Chapter One:

Re-Making the Scene

*And those who are beautiful –
  oh, who can retain them?*

-Rainer Maria Rilke

There was a time when I thought that hippies were the coolest people on earth, and I fully intended to become one when I grew up.

I was, let’s say, eight years old. I had been, ever since I was in the cradle, exposed to the music of my parents’ generation, the 1960s rock’n’roll that had redefined what teenage life could sound like, had opened up new dimensions of sound and fury, had played soundtrack to countless back seat fumblings, had fuelled the dreams and desires of a generation. Bored, even at that age, by the overwhelmingly synthetic music that poured over the airwaves in the mid-1980s, I was entranced by what I heard coming through my old man’s speakers. The Beatles, the Rolling Stones, the Kinks, the Grateful Dead, Neil Young, the Byrds. There are photos of a toddler version of myself, long curls of blonde hair falling across my face, standing on tiptoes trying to turn up the volume on our comically ancient Hi-Fi.

My generation, then, or at least my demographic, was brought up by Baby Boomers. We were raised by the richest cohort in the history of the world, in the most affluent surroundings imaginable and amid the most highly developed technologies of comfort and convenience that had ever been devised. We had nothing to worry about, nothing about which to complain. Our parents loved us, gave us Big Wheels and He-Man toys, let us stay up to watch the *Family Ties* and, if our folks were liberal enough, *Cheers.*

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We went to schools that had been redefined by our parents’ generation – redefined by an influx of so many children into the system that it had seemed that schools were being built faster than homes by the mid-1960s.

In Toronto, where I grew up, and where this story takes place, the Baby Boomers were in control by the mid-1980s. Already homeowners in their early 30s, they were having second and third kids, tinkering with cars and mowing lawns just like their folks did. And they were wealthy too. In curious, distorted ways, my demographic – white, Anglo-Saxon, suburban North Toronto wide-eyed kids – reflects its parents’ demographic as though through the fun house mirror. Maybe that’s why it was so easy for me, and for so many of my friends, to identify with their time, with the concerns of their teenage years, with their music, literature, ideologies, refusals, dreams. Or, perhaps, as Freud suggested, my own “archaic heritage… includes not only dispositions, but also ideational contents, memory traces of the experiences of former generations.”

Either way, by the time we were teenagers, my friends and I were long-haired, tie-dye-wearing neo-hippie kids. We smoked grass and tried LSD, some of us even eschewing liquor for drugs not simply because it was more expensive and harder to get (the usual reasons why teens use drugs instead of alcohol) but because we felt booze to be a downer when compared to the transformative powers of dope. We deeply envied what we heard about “free love,” although we largely failed to implement any aspect of this titillating, but ultimately terrifying, sexual ethic.

If we were lucky, we went to Grateful Dead concerts and saw something of a revival (or persistence) of the 1960s that we were so dejected to have missed. Some of us

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spoke in hushed tones about the transformative power of such music – the Dead, Neil Young, the Band, and the Allman Brothers were perennial favourites – about the way that the right guitar solo heard under the right psychedelic conditions could literally change us, rearrange our mentality, bring us third-eye insight. Sure, most of us didn’t care one way or the other about stuff like this – we just wanted to get lit up, listen to good tunes, hang around with our friends, maybe try to get laid. But isn’t that high school all over? What else do North Americans do at that age if not experiment with drugs, sex, music, identity?

The difference was that some of us, and perhaps me especially, were actively trying to recreate a scene over which we all knew we had no real purchase. This was our parents’ generation, the mythic 1960s, and we, wishing we could have been there, tried to recuperate something of it every weekend when we blasted Credence Clearwater Revival and ate “magic” mushrooms, throwing the Frisbee around in the sun in our Guatemalan skirts and patchouli oil.

And so we grew up, and most of us “grew out of it.” We became doctors, lawyers, accountants and, some of us, perpetual university students. We all, by the old logic, rapidly and effectively “sold out” to the system, to the Man. No matter how much we had talked about refusing money, business suits and consumerism as false idols when we were 17, virtually all of us had immersed ourselves in such waters by the time we reached the age of 25. A combination of cynicism, “sensibleness,” and disillusionment conspired to relieve us of our collective dreams of living in some new and different, better world. Instead, we wound up inheriting the very world we had initially refused as corrupt, immoral, insane. We had become enamored of various aspects of the “real world” (pay
cheques, security, the stuff behind the counter at Future Shop) and fallen into the flow of
“straight society” so easily that it exposed a truth we had been unable, and certainly
unwilling, to recognize only years before: we had always been mainstream.

Our little attempted counterculture was as illusory as every counterculture has always been. That is, put simply, counterculture is best understood not as an alternate system of social interactions and ideologies existing outside the expected, dominant culture, but rather as the shifting sets of responses, refusals and acceptances performed by actors in the cultural process. In other words: a hippie does not, never can, exist wholly outside of his or her cultural context.

In his or her refusals of this dominant culture s/he is in fact operating from within, not without, the same culture – the hippie is, however accidentally, serving a necessary and by no means aberrant purpose in his or her refusals of dominant cultural ideology. Rather, s/he is performing a necessary function in the very process which helps propel liberal-capitalist society along. In this way, s/he is part of the constant call-and-response between dominant powers and ideologies (the Man, etc) and countercultural ideologies (hippies, freaks, bohemians) that characterizes what Antonio Gramsci has termed the hegemonic process, the process by which dominant cultures, leaders and ideologies retain their dominance.3

3 Gramsci’s framework offers a means of viewing society as a complex set of power relations, always in flux, which are affected by the twin forces of coercion and consent. Both coercion and consent are the tools of hegemony, for it is in the broadening of popular consent (often, but not exclusively, through coercive measures) that the dominant classes strengthens their authority. It is in this way that, crucially, we recognize that hegemony is made (or done) by the dominant class and collaborated in by everyone else. It is very difficult (likely impossible) to act outside of the hegemonic framework because the framework relies so much upon the fostering of ideologies which are in turn absorbed into a general commonsense. Antonio Gramsci, Selections From the Prison Notebooks, ed and trans Quintin Hoare et al, (New York: International Publishers, 1971). See especially pages 175-182 for the best discussion of power relations. My readings of Gramsci are much indebted to elaborations on his theories put forward by British cultural theorists Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams. See Stuart Hall, “Culture, the Media, and the Ideological
Understood this way, the hippies and their ilk cannot be said to have “sold out,” or failed, or otherwise shirked their responsibilities by shifting out of the counterculture into the dominant culture by the end of the 1960s. For they had always been a part of something much greater than the simple “us vs. them” relationship that was so commonly articulated by authority figures, parents, politicos and hippies alike.

What we usually refer to as “the system,” or “society,” or even “the way it is,” is by no means pre-determined or inevitable, but it is persistent and all-encompassing. One cannot be said to live outside the system just because one smokes crack or regularly engages in group sex, as “countercultural” as those acts may appear. Rather, such activities must be understood to be, to have been, to always be part of the wider hegemonic process, the process in which we all play a part. No one is outside of this set of relationships, and no activity, no matter how “countercultural” it may appear, can be said to have taken place outside of the wide confines of hegemony.

When I embarked on this thesis, such ideas were rather fresh in my mind. Why is it, I wondered, that the 1960s generation, and its attendant associations with the counterculture which, in so many ways, endeavored to shake up the status quo, had become the parents of the 1980s, a group of people who looked nothing like the hirsute, “beautiful people” they were as teenagers? How did they become this group of concerned citizens against whom my friends and I felt so compelled to rebel?⁴

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⁴Incidentally, my parents are totally cool. But, cool parents still have to suffer rebellious kids.
And so I, a grown-up second generation hippie kid, undertook, at the age of 26, a study of the one great hippie centre in Canada: Toronto’s Yorkville district. A perfect metaphor for all of this stuff, I decided, not only because it was where hippies were, and then suddenly weren’t (a narrative line which indicates to many the ultimate insubstantiality of hippie ideologies and lifestyles), but also because the Yorkville district, for anyone of my generation, is about as far removed from what we understand to be bohemian, Beat, or hip as can be. Since the early 1970s, and ever more so today, Yorkville has been known to all who have visited its thin streets as the Rolls-Royce of Toronto neighbourhoods. Flashy, absurdly wealthy, home to martini bars and overpriced restaurants where people go to toss around their dough, Yorkville is defined by the kinds of joints where conspicuous people wear three-hundred dollar sunglasses inside at midnight, hoping to be mistaken for a movie star. It’s all like some kind of stage, a place where people go to “see and be seen”. How could this place have been Canada’s hippie ghetto?

But, what if Yorkville was never merely a hippie ghetto? What if our memory of this place has become obscured, corrupted, transfigured by years and nostalgia? As I wrote these pages, I tried always to bear in mind something Neil Young wrote in 1974, in a long elegiac song about his years playing folk music in Yorkville coffee houses while looking for a record deal. “Oh Isabella, proud Isabella,” he sang, substituting the name of a nearby street for the name of the district he was lamenting, “They tore you down, and ploughed you under/ But you were only real with your makeup on/ How could I see you, and stay too long?”5 Only real with her makeup on: what if the very reality of Yorkville,

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then, was in its façade, its illusions of authenticity, of difference? And then when it was no longer needed, its unreality, its desperate plasticity was left exposed?

People, in the idiom of the 1960s hip culture, used to use the expression “making the scene” to refer to being someplace, as though it was the people, not the structure, that constituted the scenery in any given location. (We made the scene last night around ten o’clock, she made the scene a few hours later, and so on.) But there is an attractive connotation here, perhaps hidden under layers and decades of under-use, which suggests that the hip folks recognized the power of presence in creating meaning in any particular locus.

The same way that an actor on a sparse, even empty stage can make the scene around her seem to respond to her, and not the other way around, I like to think that the phrase “making the scene” can refer to the way that we, as human actors, do much the same thing to our own surroundings. And so, “making the scene” in Yorkville was what everyone was up to, and all the time, in that confused and confusing decade, as the place was up for grabs, as it became a battleground over identity, meaning and truth. In effect, the politicians, hippies, journalists, bikers, speed freaks, shop owners and teeny boppers alike were all active participants, all performers, in the continuous making and re-making of the Yorkville scene throughout the 1960s, as each tried to imbue the stage with their own meaning.

But, in the end, one particular set of meanings survived where others bled away. And so, Neil Young, re-visiting Yorkville in 1974, would have seen his old stomping grounds utterly remade, as new houses, shopping centres, and a massive, imposing hotel had been hastily constructed following the demise of Yorkville’s hip era in 1970.
Yorkville was a land changed: its hippies seemingly erased, eradicated, obliterated. They tore it down, ploughed it under.

They had remade the scene.

* * * * *

To study the 1960s is to study the emergence of “youth” as a category of great political significance. All over the world in those years, people under the age of 25 stood under the hot soft lights at centre stage. As so many young people came forward, often angry, alienated, spouting varying degrees (versions) of revolutionary rhetoric, media, politicians, and academics swarmed them in recognition of the mighty potential inherent in such a phenomenon. Fears, anxieties, and concerns swirled around budding youth cultures – those articulations of resistance which have retrospectively come to be collected, somewhat arbitrarily, under the umbrella of counterculture.6

In North America and Western Europe, anxiety over a newly-fostered Cold War against the Soviet Bloc was exaggerated by this sudden surge of interest among their children in such subversive ideologies as pacifism, civil disobedience and even (most distressing of all) socialism. In North America, especially, postwar affluence had led to a paradoxical condition of alienation and resistance to materialism among many University-aged youth. Fomented in the Civil Rights and Nuclear Disarmament drives of

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6Indeed, the propensity of scholars to rely on this term to describe the youth movements of the 1960s and early 1970s is by no means restricted to North America. Historians of Mexico, Brazil, Germany, and Great Britain (to name but a few) have employed the term in recent years. See Eric Zolov, Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Christopher Dunn, Brutality Garden: Tropicalia and the Emergence of a Brazilian Counterculture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Sabine Von Dirke, All Power to the Imagination: The West German Counterculture From the Student Movement to the Greens (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997); Ross Birrell and Eric Finlay, Justified Sinners: An Archaeology of the Scottish Counterculture, 1960-2000 (Glasgow: Polygon Books, 2002). In some cases, the term is used with no sense of its lack of established or agreed-upon coherence – Zolov, for example, never defines the term. In the index to his (very good) monograph, under counterculture, it reads: “See hippies”.

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the late 1950s and early 1960s, a New Left was developing on many College campuses, cohering around a politics of authenticity. By 1963, the Students for a Democratic Society (in the States) and the Student Union for Peace Action (in Canada) were emerging as veritable political forces, and (most significantly) as a touchstone for youth searching for a voice.

Meanwhile, alongside this more overtly political phenomenon, there developed a much more accessible culture of refusal among youth of the same (or similar) demographic. Inspired by a romance with Beat abandon, artistry and hedonism, and infused with a belief in the authenticity of bohemian life, a significant minority of white, middle-class teenagers and twentysomethings began to turn away (to widely varying degrees) from the materialism and conformity of the suburban imaginary of their youth. Seeking out an authentic experience after growing up (absurd) in the cookie cutter postwar suburbs, in what was widely acknowledged (even among their parents and authorities) to be a falsified version of reality, the most comfortable generation in the history of the world began to look uncomfortably to the world they would inherit.

But how, indeed where to find authenticity amid all of this phoniness? In major (U.S.) cities such as New York and San Francisco, reasonably well-established bohemian centres were available, offering their curious tourists and neophytes a taste of that genuine experience (whatever that might have meant). Before long, the world would hear of Haight-Ashbury, the intersection of the hip universe by 1965, and the primary destination for what were being referred to (with much concern) as “alienated” or “drop-out” youth.
But what is often forgotten is that there were bohemian centres in just about every major city in North America by the mid-1960s, some big, some small. The phenomenon of what would come to be called the counterculture was by no means an isolated, Haight Street phenomenon. Vancouver, Austin, Milwaukee, Chicago, Montreal, Detroit, Boston – even such notoriously dull towns as Ottawa – had bohemian scenes. But, in Canada, no scene grew to match the proportions (real or mythical) of Toronto’s “hippie haven”. A budding multicultural metropolis, straddling a puritanical past and a progressive, immigration-fueled future, Toronto would play reluctant host to the centre of the Canadian hip world in the Sixties: an unassuming ethnic enclave known as Yorkville.

Yorkville sits in the geographic centre of Metropolitan Toronto. Like a bellybutton, it is a natural point of intersection. And, for a short period during the 1960s it was found at the centre of Canada’s youthful bohemian scene – its students, artists, hippies, greasers, bikers, and wannabes who congregated in and around the district, enjoying the live music and theatre in its many coffee houses, its low-rent housing in overcrowded Victorian walk-ups, and its perceived saturation with anti-establishmentarian energy. For a period of roughly ten years, Yorkville served as a crossroads for Toronto’s youth, as a venue for experimentation with alternative lifestyles and beliefs, and an apparent refuge from the dominant culture and the stifling expectations it had placed upon them. Indeed, by 1964 every young Torontonian (and many young Canadians) likely knew that rebellion and Yorkville went together as fingers interlaced.

These were the 1960s. To some, the fabled decade; to many others, the decade that won’t go away. As the US appeared to descend into frenzied turmoil (a murdered
president, a collapsing Cold War peace, simmering race wars, an escalating intervention in a far-off civil war, and the deepening currents of youth agitation, rebellion, alienation), Canadian youth culture was pulled into the fire along with its American counterpart. “We were getting this real hope,” one of my interviewees observed.

What was facing us in those days – this is not long after the [Second World] War – was an almost militaristic mood, which pervaded Canada and North America in general. Of course the Vietnam War was going on and people were kind of polarized over that. But, there was this real hope that people were going to be transformed in some way, and that society was going to be transformed. It wasn’t going to be this oppressive hunt for status and acquisitions and so on. It was a real sense of meaningful revolution in the air. 7

Sex, drugs, rock’n’roll, religion, and revolutionary politics – the key tenets of the American Sixties – were just as central to the Canadian experience of the period. And Yorkville, the half square kilometre of boutiques, coffee houses, crashpads and go-go bars, was Canada’s psychedelic ground zero.

Making the Scene will explore Toronto’s Sixties-era youth culture using the crossroads of Yorkville as a way in, a means to get at the otherwise sprawling history such an undertaking implies. The lines intersecting in Yorkville represent diverse practices, institutions and ideologies appearing elsewhere in Toronto which, inevitably, collided with the concentrated community therein. This book will emphasize the view of Yorkville as the key space in which such practices, institutions and ideologies came into contact. However, one of its primary concerns is balancing the variety of competing heuristics which defined discourse on Yorkville throughout the period. Such contending

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7 Anonymous LSD Dealer, Interview with Author, October 13th, 2006. Interviews with a range of former Yorkville denizens, hangers-on, and observers comprise a significant source of evidence in this work. See Appendix A for details on oral history, and my approaches to the interview process.
visions of the essential identity and meaning of the Yorkville scene ultimately helped to
shape and develop the characters, narratives and events that converged in the Village.⁸

Any research and reconnaissance work on Yorkville in the 60s will turn up a basic
narrative sequence of events (lingering in the popular memory of the period) which
purports to explain the history of the Toronto counterculture. And yet, as comfortably
straightforward as this narrative is, it fails to transmit the complexity of the relationships
between the counterculture, Yorkville, and the wider contexts of Toronto, Canada and
North America in the 1960s. Moreover, even if this narrative is generally accurate, it fails
to approach the why behind the action.⁹

The early Yorkville scene is often remembered (by both its observers and its
participants) as a largely happy, even idyllic neighbourhood peopled by artists and
musicians, whose calm was shattered by relentless police incursions, teenybopper
infestation, evil amphetamines, and unabated coercive municipal pressure. As the early
1960s became the late Sixties – a paradigm shift frequently characterized as a swing from
innocence to violence, idealism to nihilism – Yorkville moved beyond its role as a mere
nuisance in the public imagination. When City Comptroller (and former Toronto Maple
Leaf) Syl Apps famously decried Yorkville as "a festering sore in the middle of the city"

⁸The ‘Village’ of Yorkville was incorporated in 1853 and annexed to Toronto in 1883- it seems
that it retained its status as ‘Village’ within the wider city (at least in the eyes of journalists and local
historians) up to and through the 1960s. In most of the contemporary sources I have encountered, Yorkville
is referred to as a Village. This, of course, may also have been an attempt to align the Yorkville district
with Greenwich Village in New York City for the purposes of tourism and contextualization.

⁹This book makes a distinction between “group (or popular) memory” and “individual (or
personal) memory”. In the complex interplay between personal and group memory, each informs the other
– “‘personal memory’ belongs to an individual, who mixes images and meanings derived from direct
experience with individualized consumption of mediated information. Personal memories combine with
institutionalized discourse to create ‘group memory’, which circulates within a social group to convey
senses of shared experience and identity.” See Daniel Marcus, Happy Days and Wonder Years: The Fifties
and Sixties in Contemporary Politics (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004) 4. In general, I
have followed Marcus’s interpretation of the work of Maurice Halbwachs on memory, and its use for
in 1967, the new era was beginning in earnest.\textsuperscript{10} By the end of that year, Yorkville was increasingly dominated by violence, drug abuse, addiction, and homelessness. One year hence, most of the early waves of hip youth had turned away from their former haunts – "the true hippies" had left, according to Yorkville Digger David DePoe.\textsuperscript{11}

But who were the \textit{true hippies}? They were white. They were young. They were male. They were middle-class, urban, and heterosexual. That is, according to media constructions of the Yorkville scene (both those projected from without \textit{and} within the Village community). In reality, of course, the scene was far more diverse than this expectation allows – besides, the boundaries surrounding these expected categories (especially "white", "middle-class" and "male") were being renegotiated at precisely this historical moment in significant ways. This book, then, interrogates those boundaries, offering space to consider the roles of women, working-class youth, political activists, homosexuals, rural transplants, and ethnic and racial identities in the Village scene.

Crucially, \textit{Making the Scene} was designed to be faithful to the reality of a neighbourhood and community which was, from even as early as 1960, developing into a commercial centre dominated by pretensions toward \textit{haute couture} and Euro style. Throughout the 1960s, Yorkville was never merely a dilapidated hippie ghetto, the scurrilous hyperbole of Syl Apps aside. This book contends that Yorkville played host to a diverse and ever-changing, vibrant but highly unstable culture of youth cultures – the \textit{scene} – and that it was an intersection point for a wider swath of young people than is generally remembered.\textsuperscript{12} But it also maintains the reality that Yorkville was never in any

\begin{footnotes}
\item[12]Culture is, admittedly, a difficult and complex word offering a variety of sometimes contradictory definitions. For our purposes, \textit{culture} is the totality of learned behaviours of a people. But, we
\end{footnotes}
real danger of degenerating into a slum. Quite the contrary: it was involved in a deliberate, constant process of re-generation throughout this period.

For the sake of clarity, this chapter will summarize the cultural memory of Yorkville, raising flags of concern as they come up. This construction (which one may see reproduced time and again in newspaper and other print coverage, documentary films, sociological and anthropological studies of the “culture” of Yorkville, and capsule histories of the community in recent monographs on Canada in the 1960s) is composed of the many key thematic narrative lines with which this book will engage. However, all subsequent chapters will be largely concerned with taking this central narrative and overhauling it, expanding its boundaries, filling its gaps, and interrogating its apparent meanings.

As Michel Foucault has taught us (following Nietzsche, favourite fount of inspiration for many budding Dionysians in the Sixties), power and truth must be understood to be intertwined, perhaps even inseparable. Indeed, truth is, in any context, a function of power. The task, as Foucault laid it down before us, is to detach “the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time.”¹³ In testing the presumed reality of the rise and fall of Yorkville as a (white, middle-class, male-dominated, heterosexual, anti-intellectual, peace-loving, drug-infused) youth centre, this book provides a deeper consideration of the ways in which power was distributed and negotiated within and without the Toronto counterculture.

How was it understood, misunderstood, embraced, feared, loved and lived by both its participants and its observers? Because Yorkville took on a variety of social and cultural meanings (truths, interpretations) in its day – and because these were contingent upon the hegemonic constructions of reality (or commonsense) which set the place apart as different, special, and dangerous – it has remained to us an elusive and obscured subject.

Making the Scene has three overt concerns: (i) to de-stabilize assumptions and myths surrounding the Yorkville scene by interrogating the sticking points in the central narrative and filling in these obvious holes; (ii) to widen the expected canvas of the Toronto counterculture so as to explore the relationships between the largely middle-class hippies and the gay and lesbian underground, the working-class “greasers” and bikers, as well as the New Left and feminist politicos, all of whom had considerable influences on the various trajectories of the Village scene; and (iii) to explore the crucial role of the media in the construction of meaning and the dissemination of ideas, and the ways in which its role as such was instrumental to the perceived making and unmaking of Yorkville’s hip scene.

The story of Yorkville – that is, the expected story of Yorkville – follows below. This is the book I could have written, the basic narrative I could have relayed. It is a fascinating story, a glimpse into a hip utopia, a countercultural Zion in the middle of the city of my youth. But, it is also significantly under-realized, under-theorized, and, most importantly, it makes no room for many of Yorkville's most compelling characters. Still, armed with this narrative arc, informed of the narrow story of (white, middle-class, male) hip Yorkville, we may proceed to expand, enliven, and enrich this history in the following chapters.
Yorkville and Toronto in the Sixties

By the end of the 1950s, a collection of artists, actors, writers and musicians had begun to descend upon the Yorkville district, a low-rent immigrant community in the heart of Toronto. Since many of the hangouts and cafés in Toronto’s bohemian quarter (since the late 1920s centred on Gerrard Street, about one kilometre south of Yorkville) were being razed to make way for the expanded Toronto General Hospital, Yorkville offered an inexpensive and attractively central spot in which to re-establish shop. At the time, Yorkville played host to a few clothing stores and restaurants, but was still largely an ethnic enclave, peopled by European immigrants. The flats above the few establishments were often rented to immigrant families, many of whom began to run businesses out of their homes. But, by the late 50s, artists, folk singers, and especially university students began to move in alongside such families, attracted by Yorkville’s promise of reasonable rents and prime location, a mere two blocks from the University of Toronto [U of T], among Canada's largest post-secondary institutions.

As the Fifties became the Sixties, coffee houses – all the rage in bohemian Greenwich Village in New York City – sprang up in Yorkville, some offering patios and, eventually, stages for the fledgling folk musicians that began to gravitate toward the neighbourhood. By 1963 so many coffee houses had been crammed into the tiny Village

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14 The small bohemian community had previously flourished on Gerrard Street. The bulldozers came through in the late 1950s as the expansion of Toronto’s General Hospital (among other endeavours) redefined the character of the area. See Charles Johnson, The Preservation of Yorkville Village Discussion Paper No. 28, York University Department of Geography, April 1984; Reginald G. Smart and David Jackson, The Yorkville Subculture: A Study of the Life Styles and Interactions of Hippies and Non-Hippies, prepared from the field notes of Gopala Alampur (Toronto: Addiction Research Foundation, 1969).

15 Smart and Jackson, 5.
that virtually all Canadian (and many American) folksingers of any note had either
passed through or relocated to Yorkville. Artists of diverse backgrounds such as Phil
Ochs (Cleveland), Gordon Lightfoot (Orillia), Buffy Sainte Marie (Qu’Appelle Valley),
Bob Dylan (New York) and Ian Tyson (Calgary) all made the scene.16

A developing neighbourhood in the rapidly expanding and modernizing city,
Yorkville became, for a time, a sort of island of non-conformity and creativity in the
wider urban sea. As the hip youth poured in, many landlords and shop owners worked to
gentrify the Village, raising rents and petitioning the City to help drive the raucous youth
out of their streets. To their dismay, Yorkville’s quaint, stuffy Victorian walk-ups, its
mushrooming music scene in über-cool coffee houses, and its close proximity to both the
University and the action on busy Yonge Street, were just what many restless young
people with modest means were looking for. By 1962 and for roughly eight years, this
young and experimental Village expanded with every spring thaw as young people from
across the country became drawn to the notion of a Canadian bohemian and, later, hippie
scene like the ones gaining ground in San Francisco and New York.17

16 For a lively, journalistic account of this early period in Yorkville’s folk music scene, see
Nicholas Jennings, Before the Gold Rush: Flashbacks to the Dawn of the Canadian Sound (Toronto:
Penguin Books, 1997) 7-53. See also Ritchie Yorke’s view of the Toronto music scene, written as a
reconnaissance-style journalistic exercise at the time, Axes, Chops and Hot Licks (Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig,
1971); Also, Dave Bidini’s oral history of the Canadian music industry contains a few valuable insights
into the artistic scene in Toronto in the late 1960s: On a Cold Road: Tales of Adventure in Canadian Rock
(Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1998).

17 Throughout the period, a thriving and heated discourse over the plight of the youth of Canada
(and America and Britain and elsewhere) raged not only in the academy and the halls of parliament, but
throughout the wider civil society as well. Many academic studies of Canadian (especially Torontonian)
youth rebelliousness and practices were conducted in the 60s, including: Smart and Jackson, 1969; John A.
Byles, Alienation, Deviance and Social Control: A Study of Adolescents in Metropolitan Toronto
(Toronto: Interim Research Project on Unreached Youth, 1969); Transient Youth (Three Part Study) (Ste. Adèle:
Transient Youth Inquiry, Canadian Welfare Council, 1969-71); W.E. Mann, Canadian Trends in Premarital
Behaviour (Toronto: Anglican Church of Canada, 1967); John W.C. Johnstone, Young People's Images of
Canadian Society : An Opinion Survey of Canadian Youth, 13 to 20 (Chicago: National Opinion Research
Center, University of Chicago, 1966); Commission of Inquiry into the Non-medical Use of Drugs, The
Non-Medical Use of Drugs: Interim Report of the Canadian Government's Commission of Inquiry
(Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1971). This list is by no means exhaustive.
But as the youth population expanded, municipal authorities and local business owners tried a variety of means in their effort to gain control of the district. Various draconian by-laws were put forward in the years before 1966, all designed to protect business interests in Yorkville and curb what was often termed the “rowdyism” of the local youth scene. When a near-riot disrupted a Village Festival in May of 1965, both the local shop-owners and City Hall moved to install a ban on permits for any more coffee houses in the Village. However, the ban was quashed after being received by a loud, frustrated and resentful local press over the suppression of what it was beginning to celebrate as a viable subculture.

By the mid-1960s, such fabled American ‘hip’ centres as the Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco and Greenwich Village in New York (which was always the primary comparison for Yorkville in the local media until 1967) had begun to command serious national attention both north and south of the border as havens for drug use, promiscuity and alternative (even deviant) lifestyles. To the immense dismay of many Torontonians, Yorkville was rapidly gaining such a reputation. And, as rock’n’roll superstars such as Neil Young, Joni Mitchell and the Paupers emerged from this Canadian version of the

18The stories of these two major centres of countercultural activity have been told many more times over than has Yorkville’s. During the mid-60s, a number of book-length examinations of the emerging hippie culture were published, and there has been a steady stream of studies, memoirs and narrated accounts ever since the early 1970s. The contemporaneous studies of the San Francisco scene include: Tom Wolfe, The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969); Nicholas von Hoffman, We Are the People Our Parents Warned Us Against (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968); Ruth Bronstein, The Hippie’s Handbook (New York: Canyon Book Co., 1967); Joan Didion, Slouching Towards Bethlehem (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990); and Sherri Cavan, Hippies of the Haight (St-Louis: New Critics Press, 1972). The Greenwich Village studies include: Lewis Yablonsky, The Hippie Trip (New York: Pegasus, 1968); Don McNeill, Moving Through Here (New York: Citadel, 1990); Jesse Kornbluth, Notes From the New Underground (New York, 1968).
hippie ghetto, ever greater numbers of curious hippies made pilgrimages, crossing the province, the country and even the border to make the vibrant scene.¹⁹

And so, by 1966, Yorkville had become synonymous with the bohemian youth movement in Canada. Somewhere along the line (and any claim as to precisely when this happened would be meaningless) what were commonly known as Yorkville’s bohemians and beatniks would become replaced by the younger and more volatile drug culture of the hippies.²⁰

The first *hippies* began to appear sometime in 1965, as longer hair and a flamboyant style of dress began to take over on Cumberland Street and Yorkville Avenue.²¹ (Since the first rock'n'roll clubs began to operate in the Village in 1965, one is tempted to force this connection.) Whatever the cause, by the end of 1966, many of this first wave of bohemia had fled Yorkville making way for an influx of younger hippies.

Throughout the Sixties, this hip community, such as it was, was in a state of constant transition as the successive ranks of the 'old guard' became fed up with the new hippies and made their escapes, some deeper into the adjacent Annex neighbourhood, some to

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²⁰It seems prudent to problematize the way in which so many of the contemporary sociological treatments of Yorkville (and the American hippie ghettos) establish firm guidelines, criteria really, in order to classify people as either ‘hippie’ or ‘greaser’ or ‘straight’ or ‘beatnik’. Making the Scene will use the terms carefully, emphasising their interchangeability and contradictory value as categories. See the discussion of identity performance in chapter two.

²¹“There is no uniform but there is a costume- a style characterized by comfort, freedom, and eccentricity. Hippies are set apart by their shabbiness; torn and dirty clothes with worn shoes,… One hippie wore a headband, rose beads, high boots and a coat with a hood…. There are no limits to the number of necklaces and beads that are worn…” (Smart and Jackson, 10-11). Such descriptions also accompany sections on *bikers*, *greasers* and *weekenders*, the other ‘cultural groups’ identified by the study.
low-rent Cabbagetown, and many to farms and communes north, east and west of the city.  

Under the increasing scrutiny of the media, which did just as much to advertise Yorkville as a den of sin as it did to condemn it as such – it seems that this “den of sin” sounded pretty attractive to many bored suburban 16-year olds – by the summer of 1967 a new and very different situation had begun to develop in the Village. Now that Yorkville was under the microscope, so to speak, of a variety of media which had taken on the task of interpreting the neighbourhood, the City of Toronto found itself facing a mounting public fear and resentment of Yorkville and its inhabitants. This antipathy was no doubt reinforced as it became clear that hundreds of the nation’s runaways (generally perceived, often incorrectly, to be comprised of its middle-class adolescents) were making out for this fabled haven for bohemians. What was worse, a great many of these disaffected runaways were young girls, often prone to sexual exploitation, drug addiction, and biker violence. Police predictions at the end of 1966 expected another thousand teens were headed for Yorkville’s already overcrowded flophouses by mid-summer of ‘67.

The City’s initial response was the knee-jerk reaction of increasing police presence in the neighbourhood in an effort to both track down the underage runaways, and to regulate the drug use, the sex, and other nefarious activities of the hippie youth. "We were told to 'keep a lid on it', don't let it spread," admitted one former Yorkville cop.

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22 For a personal memoir, in the form of a diary, of a group of hippies and their flight from the city into the relative tranquility of Hastings County, Ontario see: Nathaniel Cowl, Sex, Drugs and Henry Thoreau: A Diary from the Canadian Woods (Maynouth: Snow Flea, 1994).

23 When considering the role of the media, this book employs the mode of analysis put forward by Todd Gitlin in The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979, 2003). See Appendix A.

in an anonymous interview. Yet this amplified police presence simply resulted in
dramatic increases in drug busts and other arrests, tending to embellish already strained
relationships between the drop-out youth culture and the established municipal order. It
didn’t help matters much that local MPs and City Councillors emerged shaken after well-
publicized walking tours of the neighbourhood in late spring 1967, horrified and
determined to cleanse the city of its “festering sore”, its “cancer spreading through
metro.” The stage was set for confrontation.

Enter David DePoe. The son of famed CBC reporter and television host Norman
DePoe, David DePoe knew all about the power of media. He was a young, attractive,
shaggy hippie, nearly always pictured in a gaucho hat, with other accoutrements such as
beads and sandals on display, a veritable personification of hip aesthetics. But he was
also, crucially, a New Left politico and a paid representative of the Company of Young
Canadians (CYC), the somewhat bizarre and certainly unprecedented Canadian political
youth organization Prime Minister Pearson had enabled the previous year.

DePoe’s mandate through the CYC was to enter Yorkville and work with the
inhabitants toward community development and empowerment schemes. One of DePoe’s
main contributions (and one which the CYC had approved) was to organize a set of the

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25 Former Yorkville Beat Cop, Anonymity Requested, Interview with Author, Fall 2003.
26 Drug charges in Canada (many of which were laid in Yorkville) rose from 516 in 1960 to 8,596
27 Berton, 173.
28 His ‘look’ rather perfectly encapsulated the commonsense hippie aesthetic – the Hippie
Archetype – we shall revisit in chapters seven and eight.
29 See Margaret Daly, The Revolution Game: The Short, Unhappy Life of the Company of Young Canadians (Toronto: New Press, 1970); also Ian Hamilton, The Children’s Crusade: The Story of the Company of Young Canadians (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1970). DePoe and his CYC were often shunned by SUPA and other New Leftists who were suspicious of a government-sponsored socialist organization that, it was believed, could never effect serious change. The reason that I am drawn to DePoe’s story is that he was latched onto by the media in such an unavoidable way. This book will interrogate the relationship between the CYC, DePoe’s fame, and other local New Left groups.
hippie old guard into a humanitarian group called the Diggers, whose aim was to provide food, medical services and shelter for Villagers found wanting.\textsuperscript{30} His efforts blossomed into the establishment of a community kitchen in the basement of St. Paul’s-Avenue Road United Church (in which a Drop-in Centre for local youth had been operating for years under the guidance of Rev. James Smith), and an eventual shelter called Digger House (sponsored by prominent journalist June Callwood, on nearby Spadina Ave), both of which would provide much-needed services to an increasingly impoverished community.

The summer of 1967 saw a series of key events, many organized in some way by DePoe’s Diggers. The first, a Love-In held at Queen’s Park on Victoria Day became a touchstone for hip youth across the country, proof (for some) that crowds of young people could be peaceful, beautiful, and harmless. On May 22, some 5000 young hippies and curious onlookers filled the nearby park behind the Provincial Legislature as internationally-famous musicians (including Leonard Cohen and Buffy Sainte-Marie) entertained the crowd. The police hung back, allowing the scene to develop and fade on its own, and everyone (including the Villagers, the City, and the media) was able to report that the event was a success. Such events (on smaller scales) became irregular but numerous occurrences, and served as important instances when Villagers would escape the boundaries of Yorkville \textit{en masse} and interact in a more public, external space.

\textsuperscript{30}The Yorkville ‘Diggers’ were based upon the American Digger groups operating in the Haight and Greenwich Village (among other centres). A key facet of the Diggers’ \textit{raison d’être} is their refusal of ‘materialist culture’- they were known to steal (or ‘liberate’) wares from local stores and hand them out to needy Yorkville youth. See \url{www.diggers.org} for a solid overview of the American Digger movement. Also Peter Coyote’s excellent memoir, \textit{Sleeping Where I Fall} (New York: Basic Books, 1998). June Callwood’s article “Digger House”, in \textit{The Underside of Toronto} ed. W.E. Mann (1970) provides some history of the Toronto chapter (version) of the organization. See chapters seven and eight.
As spring bowed into summer, tensions were renewed as city councilor (and ex-mayor) Alan Lamport led a very public charge against Yorkville’s young people. His bombastic declarations of the evils of hippie society (its apparent laziness, gormless hedonism, poverty, sexual deviance) became daily fodder for reportage on the district. Soon enough, his voice was pitted against DePoe’s, who, following the success of the Queen’s Park Love-In and the Diggers’ early enterprises, would soon be dubbed (in what he has referred to as a “betrayal” by the media) a “Super Hippie.”

Ever since the nation (and especially Toronto) had been treated to footage of the weird, peaceful hippies of the Victoria Day Love-In, “tourists” had begun to pour into Yorkville in impressive numbers, especially on weekends. Come to gawk at the hippies, to perhaps ‘witness’ an act of free love, and/or to buy drugs, such “weekenders” were highly resented by local Villagers as freeloaders, “plastic hippies” and the like. Meanwhile traffic, always an issue on skinny one-way Cumberland Street and Yorkville Avenue, swelled to the point of gridlock with cars full of suburbanites armed with cameras, hormonal curiosity, and a few bucks for marijuana joints, successfully clogging the arteries of the tiny ghetto.

In late August, the Diggers organized a protest to shut down traffic on Yorkville Avenue, lobbying that it be turned into a pedestrian mall. On the night of August 22, 1967, some 300 Villagers (their ranks filled out by who knows how many sympathizers and ‘tourists’) staged a “Sit-In” in the middle of the street. Blocking all traffic, singing songs and chanting, the group was quickly descended upon by 30 police officers who, batons raised, scared up a riot and proceeded to arrest 50 people, including DePoe.

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31The Star Weekly Magazine, 23 September, 1967, found him on the cover under this curious title.
32By 1968 the ‘weekender’ population was large enough to be treated by Alampur as a significant social force in the Village.
himself. Soon after, the two principals would square off in a farcical debate in front of a throng of reporters and a phalanx of TV lights. Invited by Lamport to a “Talk-In” at City Hall in August – note the lame attempt to ape the language of the hip scene – DePoe and a delegation of Yorkville Diggers were engaged on issues of cleanliness, of health and hygiene, of lifestyle and of dress. The episode, fraught with resentment and umbrage, resolved nothing.

Although DePoe and the Diggers claimed to represent a coherent Villager identity, the story of the Yorkville scene is characterized by continuous turnover and reconstruction. Moreover, throughout this period it was hardly only hippies who lived and congregated in the Village. Biker gangs (especially the Vagabonds, and to a limited extent Satan’s Choice and the Paradise Riders), attracted to the area by the burgeoning drug trade, young bohemian girls, and the prospect of a kind of liberated district in which to conduct their business, had been consolidating their presence in the neighbourhood since before 1965. Other Yorkville denizens, including small-time prostitutes, drug addicts (especially methamphetamine users, or “speed freaks”), working-class “greasers”, and all those who would not have been described as hippies for one reason or another, made up an integral (if just as transient) portion of the population of the Village.

33His arrest was front page news, and has been cited as the death knell for the CYC. See Hamilton, 46-58.
34A section of this meeting is transcribed in Berton, 175-6. Also see Owram, 212-215, for a discussion of this event.
35Addiction Research Foundation fieldworker Gopala Alampur complained in 1968 that “so few people stay in Yorkville more than a few years that almost no one has a historical perspective to record.” (Smart and Jackson, 7).
36Most representations of Yorkville in the 1960s (then as now) focused their attention on the hippies while avoiding the other ‘categories’ of youth culture present in the district. Alampur was surprised to find that the hippies were not the most numerous group on the streets of the Village. Rather, it was the group he dubbed the ‘greasers’ (lower-class and immigrant youth who “put grease in their hair and grease in their food”) that he found to be the most numerous most of the time. Smart and Jackson, 22 and 27.
37See Smart and Jackson, 25-35.
The disintegration of the Village scene can be dated to the inception of Rochdale College, a Free School housed in a nearby high-rise. The advent of a new space for the congregation of hip Toronto youth undermined Yorkville’s reputation as the only expected space for such happenings. What's more, concurrent with the opening of Rochdale’s doors in September, 1968, a specious, media-exaggerated hepatitis epidemic marked the apogee of panic over Yorkville’s association with hip youth. Yorkville was evacuated, its Villagers castigated for their lousy, disease-courting hygiene, and refused services outside of their expected territory. Over the next few months, and into the following summer, Yorkville’s youth culture became increasingly dominated by hard drugs, police incursions, and disrepair. The “true hippies” were gone, and humanitarian groups struggled to make sense of the new breed of Villagers that seemed to have taken hold of the district. The hip community that had been so vibrant back in the mid-1960s was disintegrating, scattering, bleeding into the fabric of the Toronto cultural tapestry. In effect, the scene had been felled by a malicious, malignant, but ultimately figurative hippie disease. Even before 1970 rolled around, the scene was no more.

What’s Missing, What Follows

The insistence on viewing Yorkville through a two-dimensional ‘us v. them’ arrangement (defined by a polarization of the established order and hippie youth) obfuscates the complexity of hip Village identities. For example, the roles of bikers, shopkeepers, working-class youth, virtually all women, and any other “non-hippies” in the district are generally reduced to perfunctory, elliptical roles. Following theorists of gender and identity politics such as Joan Scott, Making the Scene is organized around an
aim to develop both the categories of identity and performance on display in the Village scene, and to interrogate the discursive contexts through which they arise. In other words, it will not “take as self-evident the identities of those whose experience is being documented and thus naturalize their difference.”

While women appear in the above capsule history of Yorkville as (variously) liberated sexual beings, victims of biker violence, or as aloof neo-feminists, these caricatures are hardly sufficient. In the age-old tradition of paternalist concern for the essential weakness and purity of femininity, narratives of sexual violence, exploitation and defilement dominated media and municipal accounts of hip female identity in the Village in the Sixties. We shall not be so quick to assume that this role was the only one available to the thousands of young women who made the scene. And while the reality of sexual exploitation and violence cannot be discounted, it must not be accepted as the defining feature of female identity in Yorkville. In short, this book interrogates the expectation that the middle-class male lies at the centre of the Yorkville scene, the pin around which the hip world revolved. Part of what this project is about below is the pulling of that pin. If he remains at the centre of the narrative, so be it; but we will not begin from the assumption that that’s where he belongs.

Bikers, about whom it remains difficult to gather information due to a combination of their own relentless secrecy and the paucity of academic attention directed at them, will not be footnoted as simply an “ever-present threat” as they have tended to be in other histories of Yorkville. Biker culture has too often been relegated to the realm of (male) violence, danger, and gruff malevolence, and yet an often free and

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easy alliance was enjoyed between the hip men and their biker contemporaries; the ways
gender and class informs and defines these relationships merits attention below.

Finally, although much American scholarship has reminded us that we must
recognize the lines which separated politicos from hippies, we will still refuse to fall into
the trap of imagining the hippies as entirely separate and distinct from New Left and
feminist pursuits.39 These were all, in their various ways, political movements and
politiciized identities in the context of the 1960s. And they fed off of each other, reveled
in each others’ successes, lamented each others’ shortcomings. Their histories are
connected, if often through their shared distrust and antipathy.

When considering a diffuse, volatile and shifting community of communities, one
is left with a few central questions: Who got to be a “Villager”? And, who was cast out,
adrift, slapped with the unhappy label of "alienated"? Or the racial epithet-cum-identity
category "greaser"? What is most striking about Yorkville's youth culture is how diverse
it really was – and yet the non-hippie population of Yorkville (including its suburban
“weekenders”, its “greasers”, and of course its merchants and non-hip residents) were
always treated in the standard narrative as outsiders without any real stake in the goings-
on of the district, an assumption both telling and plainly incorrect, based as it is upon the
construction of Yorkville as some circumscribed and exclusive hippie ghetto rather than
an organic component of a wider cityscape. That Yorkville was repeatedly dubbed a

_Village_ was by no means an inconsequential custom.

Indeed, in its detailed study of the Village in 1967-68, the Addiction Research
Foundation (ARF) appeared genuinely surprised to find that the identity category

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“hippie” did not constitute the largest group in Yorkville. Rather, its effort to uncover the ethnic and cultural makeup of the Village tended to expose the multiplicity of identities in the neighbourhood. Its great cache of reports (gathered at the moment when the hip Village scene was entering its final incarnation) contains interviews with gay men, sex workers and go-go dancers, examining these subjects right alongside interviews with confessed thieves, drug addicts and professional gamblers. And yet the *raison d’être* for the study was to get at the phenomenon of *white middle-class* youth’s adoption into bohemianism. These other folks were a surprise find, and proved problematical as the ARF’s fieldworker tried to develop theories of the role of drugs in what he had assumed to be a monolithic subculture.40

The spate of sociological studies which emerged following the summer of 1967 (notably those conducted by the ARF, the University of Toronto, York University, the Canadian Welfare Council, and the Project on Un-reached Youth) repeatedly concluded that Yorkville had ceased to be a vibrant, beautiful neighbourhood (if, in fact, it ever had been such a place).41 In the three years following the Yorkville Ave sit-in, hard drugs (heroin and cocaine, but most significantly, amphetamines), violence and disease took up residence in the Village.

Disturbingly, the studies generally agreed, this was an anti-intellectual, largely apolitical, drug-ravaged, disorganized and in many cases disease-ridden collection of young people at risk. Sexual and ethnic divisions fractured relations among Villagers; the pervasive threats of poverty and prison provoked fear, paranoia, and violence (sexual, mental, physical) among the often junk-sick “heads” come to the Village to escape their

40 Smart and Jackson, 81.
41 See, for example, Smart and Jackson, 1969; Byles, 1969; *Transient Youth*, 1968-71; Mann, 1967; Johnstone, 1966; Commission of Inquiry into the Non-medical Use of Drugs, 1971.
unhappy homelives. Ultimately, none of these studies was able to present a vision of hip
Yorkville as anything other than a disaster, a chaotic failure, its crusade against
conventionality and normalcy undermined by a relentless influx of “damaged” (read:
working-class) youth, diluting the ranks of so-called “beautiful (read: middle-class)
people.”

According to these studies, liberated sexuality (the much ballyhooed free love
ethic) had disseminated hepatitis and other STDs with immense success while so-called
soft drugs such as marijuana and hallucinogens like psilocybin and LSD had been
uprooted by demands for injectable amphetamines. The old guard of the hip community
that had flourished in the early-to-mid-60s had been replaced so many times over by
transient youth seeking friendship, identity, a sense of belonging, or simply a good party,
that much of what had been represented by the earlier Yorkville had vanished, replaced
by a deeply disaffected youth culture.

Such conclusions about the apparent fate of the counterculture tended to be
buoyed by the argument that hippie culture had become commodified, and that Yorkville
itself was becoming a product.42 In their refusal of material possessions, the Diggers took
this preoccupation with authenticity and commodification to the extreme, but in
interviews with Villagers after 1966 there is a persistent emphasis on the co-optation of
the Yorkville scene into the wider culture of consumption.43

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42 *Satyrday*, the Village-focused newspaper, repeatedly emphasized this concern. In fact, the
process of commercialization tends to get the blame for the destruction of a variety of events, ideas, and
themes associated with childhood (innocence, romanticized youth). For example, in an issue from late
1966, the opening page declares that “SANTA CLAUS IS DEAD – He got so fed up with commercialized
Christmas [sic] that he hanged himself on the Christmas tree with a noose made out of the Christmas
stocking.” *Satyrday*, Fifth Issue, December, 1966.

43 For extensive treatments of the authenticity vs. commodification dilemma (in the American
context), see especially: Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1987);
After 1967, David DePoe began to slip away, but the Diggers carried on as best they could until 1970; some artists and musicians lingered, but one-by-one the fabled coffee houses and bars that were their *raison d’être* in Yorkville were driven out of business. By late-1968, scores of Villagers had moved to nearby Rochdale College in search of fresher fields and fewer hassles. Before long, it too would descend into a destructive association with hard drugs, violence and disorder.

As the 1960s became the 1970s, the City responded to this diffusion of the Yorkville community through a concerted renewal of its scheme of urban reform and revitalization. In the mid-60s, property was still relatively inexpensive in Yorkville, largely due to the perceived detrimental influence of the hippies on the neighbourhood. However, as enterprising businessmen (especially Richard Wookey) recognized the potential of the district and began to buy up the properties, prices soared. By 1968, the average price of a property in Yorkville had risen by $20,000. As the prices climbed, rents increased. Under such conditions, most transient, unemployed inhabitants were hard pressed to keep up with the inflating costs of living in the Village. Within three years of the famous “Sit-In” in August 1967, Yorkville Ave. had shifted back from the centre of hip youth culture in Canada to the main axis running through a chic fashion and restaurant district. This process, culminating in the 1972 construction of Cumberland

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Hoffman, 1968; Bronstein, 1967; Didion, 1990; Cavan, 1972; Yablonsky, 1968. See also James B. Twitchell, *Carnival Culture: The Trashing of Taste in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992) for a study of the way the present ‘culture of consumption’ is perceived to have been born of the commodification of the counterculture.

44See the 1968 Draft Proposals for Yorkville. This process had begun as early as 1966. Toronto, *Plan for Yorkville* (Unpublished, 1968). (These are held at the University of Toronto.)

45Wookey is best understood as a “Folk Hero to the Chic Set”, according to the *Toronto Star*, 1974. He went on to create Cumberland Court, and later Hazelton Lanes, perhaps the most significant of the shifts in the Yorkville character prior to the condo revolution of the 1990s and beyond.

Court (linking Cumberland Street to Yorkville Avenue), may have saved the
neighbourhood from degenerating into a neglected slum – an outcome which seems
highly unlikely, given its location, fame, and the Village business community's already-
established pretensions toward the *haute couture* – but it also succeeded in eradicating
what many believed had been the charm and draw of the former neighbourhood. At any
rate, by 1972 the history of the Yorkville counterculture was already fading into myth
and selective memory.

**The Limitations of Counterculture Literature**

Very little history has been written of the Canadian counterculture in the 1960s. In
fact, one might count on one’s fingers the number of secondary sources available which
even mention (let alone examine) Yorkville. However, it should be noted, Yorkville
looms large in those studies that do consider the counterculture – whether the theme is
youth unrest, hippies, drugs, or rock’n’roll, Yorkville is generally treated as ground zero
for the Canadian hippie scene. And, even a casual glance at journalistic retrospectives of
the period establishes the primacy of Yorkville as a significant centre for hip youth.
However, it is probably best remembered for its most famous expatriates, musicians such
as Ian and Sylvia Tyson, Neil Young and Joni Mitchell who forged their craft in
Yorkville before going on to become international superstars. Few (if any) names of other
Yorkville players (apart from DePoe, Clayton Ruby, Bernie Finkelstein, and June
Callwood) appear in the popular litany of Villagers. Because it is more likely
remembered as a fused community of hippies, peppered by a few top notch musicians,
which was eventually torn apart by the establishment, this project is an exercise in unearthing narratives and events which have slipped into obscurity.

Doug Owram’s *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation* is currently the best examination of the English Canadian youth culture historians have to work with. It is a lively, wide-ranging account of the fallout from the baby boom leading up to about 1975. Owram makes considerable mention of Yorkville as a touchstone for an English Canadian counterculture, and describes in some detail the events which led to the riots of the summer of 1967 over traffic on Yorkville Avenue. However, Yorkville remains to Owram’s readers an under-developed space. One gets the impression from his version that Yorkville was inhabited nearly exclusively by white, middle-class hippie youth, and that it was the heavy hand of the law that is to blame for its disintegration. His view, while reflective of a certain popular narrative version of the Yorkville scene, is an oversimplified construction of the district, and of the multifaceted counterculture in general. Still, Owram has paved the way for my work, and this book is deeply indebted to his efforts.

Nicholas Jennings’ journalistic account of the Yorkville music scene in the 1960s (*Before the Goldrush*) is an excellent resource for information on the comings and goings of various local musicians, and the coffee houses and other venues in which they played. It is by no means an intellectual treatment of Yorkville (or of the music for that matter) but it is encyclopedic in its inclusiveness of virtually all musicians who spent any significant amount of time in the neighbourhood. His view, that Yorkville was a Mecca for alternative artistry and identity before being squeezed for profit by a combination of

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47 Owram, 1996.
municipal disdain and a feeble Canadian music industry, is in line with Owram’s view – it follows the theme of Yorkville as a vibrant, but ultimately definable, space. I have made great use of his anecdotal material – his book is, sadly, already out of print.

Myrna Kostash’s history/memoir of the 1960s radical and New Left movements (Long Way From Home: The Story of the Sixties Generation) finds room to discuss Yorkville as a centre for countercultural activity, but (much unlike Owram and Jennings) allows it to appear somewhat inconsequential, on the periphery of the serious business of political activism on which her project is focused.49 Pierre Berton’s bestselling 1967: Canada’s Turning Point provides a chapter on Yorkville and focuses on David DePoe’s role as leader of the hippies. His account provides no genuine insight, but rather provides a narrative of events leading from the Victoria Day Love-In to the events of late August. Berton, in his inimitable, lovingly-researched but under-theorized form, provides another example of the propagation of the narrow history related above – his construction of the hippies finds them as fundamentally harmless curiosities who had their cultural moment and were casually dispersed and assimilated into the mainstream. His vision of Yorkville is very nearly paternal in tone – Berton, father to Baby Boomers himself – his daughter was a prominent Rochdalian – and a cultural columnist for the Toronto Star newspaper throughout the 60s, was literally able to watch the scene grow up. Yet his version of Yorkville’s contributions to Canadian history belie the complexities of the scene, and rely on the same events and moments underlined by Owram.

On the other hand, the story of the counterculture occupies a key place in many histories of the American 1960s.\(^{50}\) The American experience of the 60s was, of course, much different from the Canadian one, as the anxieties and alienation felt by many Canadian youth tended to be much less acute than for their American counterparts. A combination of the twin stresses of the injustices of the Vietnam war and (for most young men) the very real possibility of being drafted to fight in its unknown jungles, the highly visible and often explosive race conflicts and civil rights battles raging across the nation, and a string of high profile political killings and assassinations, led to the emergence (by the mid-60s) of an assemblage of youth movements geared toward the refiguring of the American political, economic and ideological superstructures.\(^{51}\) From liberal feminists to women’s liberationists to consciousness-raising groups, from the Student Non-Violent (later National) Coordinating Committee(s) to Students for a Democratic Society to the Yippies to the Weathermen, from the Diggers to the Black Panthers to the White Panthers, such (often revolutionary) movements and organizations were in proliferation,

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suggesting an impending insurgency of which Canada was much less obviously in danger prior to the events of October, 1970.52

Similarities between Yorkville and the key American hippie ghettos of Greenwich Village and the Haight-Ashbury are many and varied.53 In their geographical organization they are both similar and dissimilar: while all three radiate out from a symbolic centre (Yorkville Ave., Washington Square Park, the intersection at Haight St. and Ashbury Ave.), these centres all grew out of rather different circumstances.54 For instance, while Yorkville is very close to Rosedale, one of Toronto’s wealthiest neighbourhoods, the Haight grew up on the edge of the Fillmore, a poor, largely black ghetto.55 And the surfacing of Greenwich Village, since it had been a centre for alternative lifestyles and

52There was, of course, a thriving New Left in Canada. This book, focused as it is on Yorkville and its role as a stage for performances of rebellion, identity, and “youth”, does not pretend to offer any detailed history of the New Left student groups in Toronto. In fact, as will be demonstrated below, Yorkville was not associated with the New Left so much as with the politicized category “youth”. The historiography of the Canadian New Left is a great undiscovered country at this moment, but a variety of students and scholars are presently developing papers and monographs in this area. In general, the texts most useful to those considering the 1960s and student politics are Cyril Levitt, Children of Privilege (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984); Kostash, 1980; Owram, 1996. For contemporaneous studies and collections, see: Dimitrios Roussopoulos ed., The New Left in Canada (Montréal: Black Rose Press, 1970); On the Company of Young Canadians, see: Daly, 1970; Hamilton, 1970.

53In contemporaneous reportage on Yorkville, such comparisons were ubiquitous.


55This point is made very clear in many treatments of the Haight. See the lengthy discussions of racial politics in the Haight in von Hoffman (1968), and Echols (2000).
bohemianism for decades prior to the 1960s, bears little functional resemblance to the sudden emergence of these other scenes.  

Culturally, the hippie ghettos tended to share some common characteristics: drug use, especially the use of marijuana, psychedelics and amphetamines, a general loosening of restrictions on sexual relationships, a high concentration of artists and writers, and a general aesthetic of colourful, antiquated dress, beards and long hair are all shared characteristics of the hippie ghettos of the mid-to-late 1960s. Also, Greenwich Village, the Haight and Yorkville each produced some of the best known and most enduring musicians of the period: Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Richie Havens, the Lovin’ Spoonful (Greenwich Village), the Grateful Dead, Janis Joplin, Sly and the Family Stone, Jefferson Airplane (the Haight), Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, Gordon Lightfoot, Steppenwolf, Bruce Cockburn (Yorkville).

Moreover, all three districts were subject to scores of contemporary sociological studies and journalistic investigations. Only the Haight and Yorkville slipped into turbulent declines after 1966 as a combination of hard drugs, biker violence, media scrutiny, an influx of transient youth, and coercive municipal pressures took its toll. Thus, the key comparisons that this project will draw after 1967 are between the Haight

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56 See Perry, 1984.
58 Excellent biographies (and, in some cases, autobiographies) of these Canadian musicians are available. All of these contain at least some good information on Yorkville: Scott Young, Neil and Me (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 2nd Edition, 1997); Jimmy McDonough, Shakey: Neil Young’s Biography (New York: Random House, 2002); Karen O’Brien, Joni Mitchell: Shadows and Light (London: Virgin, 2002); Ian Tyson, I Never Sold My Saddle (Calgary: Douglas and McIntyre, 1997); Murray McLaughlin, Getting Out Of Here Alive (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 1998).
59 The immediate explanation for this is that Greenwich Village simply had more history as a centre for alternative culture; it was treated as somehow always already a centre for counterculture. It remains today a neighbourhood geared toward people seeking urban alternative lifestyles. See Beard et al, 1997.
and Yorkville. But, these similarities aside, each neighbourhood must be studied in its own particular context – Yorkville’s destiny was as much shaped by Toronto and Canada as the Haight was by San Francisco and America. They were both hubs of their own contexts, and neither carbon copies of each other nor utterly different.

At the root of so many retrospective analyses of the 1960s, especially those concerning the counterculture (whether in its American or Canadian incarnations), is the assumption that one can divide the 1960s into good and bad periods. Todd Gitlin, to cite a famous example, reduced “The Sixties” to the “Years of Hope” and the “Days of Rage” in the title of his memoir-cum-history of the decade. This persistent framework sets up two main, and not unrelated, stumbling blocks which cannot but affect our interrogation: on the one hand, if we accept this position, then we are left with the demonizing of the late 60s, the period about which we have the richest and deepest cultural memory, not to mention the widest breadth of surviving visual/audio/textural materials. We risk turning this period against itself, becoming party to the alarming scheme – which has been gaining cultural currency in the past two decades under the ever-increasing neo- and social conservative stranglehold on American spin politics and most newsmedia – to cast this era as evil, as shameful, blaming it for every socially progressive (if controversial) development in the Western world since 1970.

60 There are a number of memoirs of life in the Haight which bear some scrutiny. Especially Stephen Gaskin’s Haight-Ashbury Flashbacks: Amazing Dope Tales of the Sixties (Berkeley: Ronin, 1998); also Peter Coyote, 1998.
61 Gitlin, 1987. His allusion to the Weatherman action of 1969, while poetically effective, is a perfect example of this type of division between the good and bad Sixties. What began with hope ended with rage.
62 See Daniel Marcus for a fascinating examination of the ways the imagined Fifties and Sixties have functioned as devices in all presidential elections since 1972. While the conservative-led Fifties have been whitewashed as a period of comfort, security and success, the liberal-led Sixties have been exaggerated into a period of darkness, confusion and failure. Republican candidates have consistently used
The impetus behind spiraling divorce rates, the legalization of abortion, the liberalization of pornography, and the ascendency of Affirmative Action and Political Correctness has been variously determined to have been born alongside that baby at muddy Woodstock, in the fading months of 1969. As Kobena Mercer notes, this “ideological onslaught against the myth of the 'swinging sixties' has been a key theme of neo-liberal hegemony both in Britain and the United States: neo-conservatism hegemonizes our ability to imagine the future by identifying its adversaries with the past.”63 In other words, this persistence in viewing the late-60s as a period of unremitting darkness, of failure, of the waning of whatever was beautiful and dynamic about the preceding years, helps to further reactionary and repressive neo- and social conservative agendas.64

Of course, at the same time, what this framework does for the “good” period is just as unfortunate. Because it has become commonplace to treat the late Sixties as a convoluted, swirling, dissonant period, the complexities of the early Sixties are often left underdeveloped. What’s worse, the period is often romanticized, over-hyped as some prelapsarian period of innocence and idealism – a time when real social change seemed possible before the crushing disillusionment swept through, washing away the virtue, the beauty, the value of what had come before. And so, while it would be patently ahistorical to refuse this framework entirely – the influx of drugs, violence, anti-intellectualism and commercialism really did change the nature of North American youth cultures in the late

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64For the conservative angle, see Peter Collier and David Horowitz Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts About the Sixties (New York: Summit Books, 1989). For a worthy counterpoint to this treatment, see Philip Jenkins, Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
1960s – it is also plainly dangerous to infer too much from it, or to fail to notice the subtle ways it serves to oversimplify key issues.

Sources and Methods

Making the Scene relies on a range of materials, from films to monographs, from interviews with ex-Villagers to unpublished papers and letters, from official reports to unofficial documents, and from underground newspapers to a variety of mass media sources. Most of these paper documents were available at libraries throughout Toronto (especially at the University of Toronto’s Thomas Fisher Rare Books Library) and at the City of Toronto Archives. Thanks to the Harshman Foundation for their generous gift of some 200 pages of correspondence and inter-office memoranda pertaining to the summer of 1966 in the Village – this material would have been otherwise unavailable. The two National Film Board of Canada films were acquired through the NFB directly (for absurdly inflated prices).

The main source that I have mined is the rich catalogue of weekly (at times near-daily) coverage of Yorkville found in the three local newspapers, the Toronto Telegram, the Globe and Mail, and the Toronto Star. In the case of the former, I have sought out and read articles rather at random, considering the major statements made by the outlet but not engaging in any sustained, daily reading of its offerings. However, in the case of the latter two papers, I have read virtually every single entry on Yorkville in the period 1958-1972, a reading list of well over 6000 articles, reports, and mentions.65 I have been

65 The Toronto Star yielded 3417 pages with a “hit” for Yorkville; the Globe and Mail had 2797. This total (6214) included at least 1000 advertisements or otherwise incidental information. Still, roughly 5000 of these pages contained articles of some length on the district – needless to say, this resource proved indispensable to this project.
able to do this because both of these newspapers have been catalogued online in searchable formats – in both cases I typed in the word “Yorkville”, set the date range of this study, and off I went.

Throughout, *Making the Scene* explores the idea that Yorkville was, prior to the transfiguring influence of sustained media exposure (so, before 1965), a markedly different animal from the one that would become infamous by the late 1960s. Therefore, it treats the influence of the media as a key factor in both the construction of Yorkville as a spectacle (a construction which invited and supported the massive influx of transient youth in the mid-to-late 1960s) and in the mobilization of the forces of municipal authority against it.

To be clear, the intention is not to *indict* the mass media for their role as catalyst in the destruction of Yorkville’s counterculture. Rather, *Making the Scene* investigates the function of the media in the debates over the meanings and value of the district and its habitués. Because media construct events and frame them (i.e. situate them, impose order upon them) not from scratch, but out of ideologies interconnected with the general commonsense of the society in which they are based, *Making the Scene* is interested in the ways the media operated within this framework. Media had power, sure. But they were not alone in this regard. And, they were never monolithic in their responses. Indeed, some of Yorkville’s best defenders were full time and frequent writers at the *Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star*, and the *Toronto Telegram*. The net effect of all of this reportage – and the oversimplified oppositional frame into which it was so often squeezed – was that Yorkville was then known, and his since been misremembered, as an uncomplicated
space in which young people were hippies and everyone else comprised their collective adversary, the establishment.

Mass media are expected to reflect the commonsense in general society – for this is why historians turn to media representations of past events for evidence of the *zeitgeist* of the period. The media mediates the relationship between the state and civil society; their role (under conditions of free speech and freedom of the press) as witness and interpreter of events ties them both to dominant ideology (because they must reflect reality) and, frequently, to the subaltern voices of dissent. Through their treatment of such voices an historian can measure the degree of penetration into dominant discourses such dissent has achieved.

In the case of Yorkville, we can follow this penetration as Yorkville moves from its media frame as a weird, but insignificant enclave of dissent (early 1960s) through one which depicted it as a hotbed for subversive behaviors (mid-decade), to a brief, volatile respect and admiration for the weird hippie lifestyle in and around the summer of 1967, to the final, conflicted frame which deliberated over the societal value of the counterculture (post-’67). As the influence of the counterculture penetrated the general commonsense, dominant ideology shifted towards a grudging (halting) acceptance of its value, perhaps even its necessity. And this, even as the Village scene was disintegrating, its power diminishing.

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The counter-narrative to this story demonstrates that the influence of Yorkville’s Villagers was enormous, reaching far beyond the boundaries of the tiny neighbourhood. The media concentration which turned the nation’s attention to Yorkville (simultaneously driving out the first wave of hip youth while advertising it to younger, more transient populations) went a long way toward introducing the alternative versions of reality celebrated and lived by the Villagers to the wider public. In exposing the Yorkville scene to the mainstream, the media allowed the voices, practices and modes of dissent therein a forum in which to propagate their spectacular performances of reality.

While the study of contemporaneous media debates and reportage offers one set of pratfalls and interpretive dilemmas, oral history, the other major base of sources employed in this book, offers another. A challenging but highly rewarding affair, oral history has guided this project through its darkest woods. The guiding rule in my decision-making process over which people could be included in this book (and who would be left out) was that I was not going to seek out the sensational where I might be better served recognizing the ordinary. A great many people – thousands, surely – passed through Yorkville in the 1960s. All have stories, many of them no doubt fascinating, funny, frightening, sincere. But one could never hear even a fifth of them – nor could one ever hope to reproduce them to meaningful effect were one to track down even one tenth that many. So, I have sought out the major figures detailed in this book – David DePoe, Clayton Ruby, Gopala Alampur, Mike Waage, Bill Clement, June Callwood, Michael Valpy, Marilyn Brooks – and some of the supporting cast of Villagers whom I know, and who have come to me upon learning of my project. In total, I have interviewed twenty-eight subjects. I have avoided tracking down famous musicians (partly because their
stories have been amply told elsewhere, and partly because the music scene and the street scene were not necessarily always connected). I have also attempted to leave out or downplay any self-aggrandizing, and any unhelpful invective (especially that which was directed at people unable to defend themselves). I told each of my interview subjects at the outset that I had no interest in “scooping” – instead, the intention was to develop a fuller, clearer picture of the Village scene. I hope that I have succeeded.

(One bizarre bit of kismet: while I was interviewing June Callwood in a coffee shop, a rather grizzled man overheard our conversation and introduced himself. He had known Callwood back in her days at Digger House, and she recalled that he had been part of the biker scene in the Village. After she assured him that I was on the level, he asked me if he could tell his side of the Village experience when I had finished talking to Mrs. Callwood. His only stipulation? “You have to call me Wild Bill, OK?”)

The more conventional way that people learned of my project and began to approach me was through reading a lengthy article on the hepatitis scare of 1968. The article (culled from this work-in-progress) was published in the Toronto Star in the Spring of 2006, and I was overwhelmed by e-mails and phone calls in the ensuing weeks. I have interviewed many of these former Villagers with varying degrees of success. Some of their stories made it into the body of this work; many did not. However, all of their words informed me, and most confirmed my theories about the multifarious nature of the Yorkville scene.

The practice of oral history has faced considerable (and persistent) attacks from critics uncomfortable with the subjective nature of individual memory.67 Australian

67Kristin Ross, in an otherwise well-reasoned and deeply-researched account of the politics of competing memories of France’s period of profound unrest in May, 1968, refused to conduct her own
historian Patrick O’Farrell spoke for many when he penned a damning (and much referenced) attack in the late 1970s, complaining that oral history was liable to push the serious business of history into “the world of images, selective memory, later overlays and utter subjectivity.” His concern that this approach to the past will lead us “not into history, but into myth” remains a legitimate fear. Nevertheless, while we must acknowledge that memory is a difficult animal – hard to corral and harder still to tame – we must also see that it would be foolhardy to refuse to speak to those people who directly experienced the events at issue. Consequently, I have tried to accommodate both sides of this argument, recognizing the legitimacy of both positions. Throughout this book, for example, I have tended to privilege contemporaneous, eye witness media reports of particular details of events over recollections of such events by my interview subjects. Making the Scene has followed the general line that memory is by no means trustworthy in any absolute sense but, rather, that it constitutes a text, another source which we must read and interpret just as we would any piece of written or recorded evidence.

My approach to the interviews themselves – an oft-neglected aspect of the oral history process and the theorization of the gathering of such information – was much enriched by Victor Turner’s and, especially, Valerie Yow’s work on the role of the interviews. “Whom would I have interviewed,” she asked of her readers? “What possible controls could govern my selection of the testimony of participants in a mass movement that extended throughout France, reaching virtually every town, professional sector, region, and age group?” Such a reluctance to engage with oral history – based, as it is, on the supposedly un-scientific character (“what possible controls”) of the pursuit – left a significant gap in her otherwise exemplary scholarship. Kristin Ross, May ’68 and its Afterlives (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

69 I have followed in the footsteps of a variety of extraordinary historians in this field, notably Franca Iacovetta, Ian McKay, Alice Echols, Karen Dubinsky, and Doug Rossinow. Each of these historians has, in their own way, employed oral history techniques to great effect. I have learned from them all, and have cherry-picked their most successful methods.
interviewer in the interview setting. Such theorists have argued for “an objective relation to our own subjectivity” as interviewers; we must, they advise, be cognizant of the ways the interview itself can affect our results. I have endeavored to bear this in mind – no easy task! – every time I sat down to speak with yet another fascinating person for this project. Everything was recorded and transcribed by my own hand. In the interest of protecting my sources and their privacy, the digital recordings of these interviews will reside, for the foreseeable future, in my private collection, but will be available to students and scholars should they present appropriate justification for their use.

Chapter Layout and Organization

Making the Scene is presented in a chronological format, divided into five sections defined by temporal boundaries. Because Yorkville wasn’t, then was, then again wasn’t, a hotly contested site for youth cultural rebellion and congregation, there is indeed a rise-and-fall framework within which we must operate. However, in an effort to avoid a too-episodic structure below, each chapter (following one that discusses theory and approaches) will reach backwards and forwards when necessary to illuminate the events described.

Each section is comprised of two chapters. Section One (of which this chapter is a part) is designed to establish and explore the expansive dark territories faced by this particular history. In chapter two, the central themes of performance and spectacle will be

laid out through an examination of key Village preoccupations, behaviors, and identity markers.

Section Two (chapters three and four) covers the years between 1960 and 1963 in the Village. Chapter three begins our chronology of the Yorkville scene, detailing the ascension of the Village onto the cultural radar as it moved from a mostly quiet and unassuming ethnic enclave to a lively bohemian haunt. Chapter four continues this discussion, offering examinations of the folk music clubs, gay dance parties, working-class youth hangouts, and artsy Beat Happenings all intertwined with the local immigrant community in these years, promoting a multihued and stimulating centre in an otherwise grey Toronto.

Section Three looks into what many consider the peak years of the Village scene, 1964-1966. Chapters five and six detail the nearly simultaneous discovery of the Village by the mass media, by local teenagers, and by the wider university community. Expanding every weekend between 1964 and 1966, Yorkville went from being a mere cultural curiosity, an enclave defined by Euro-chic shopping by day and bohemians by night, to a thronging, insanely crowded party zone. Drugs, especially marijuana (and, to a limited extent, LSD), were ubiquitous; so was rock’n’roll, its electric energy now defining the Yorkville music scene. And talk about energy – permissive attitudes toward sex and sexuality were a defining feature of the Yorkville scene after 1965. As the hippie phenomenon expanded toward its apogee in 1967-8 (carrying with it new trends in fashion, art, language and philosophy), Yorkville was its undisputed Canadian home.

Section Four (chapters seven and eight) is focused on 1967, certainly the noisiest, and arguably the watershed, year in Yorkville’s 1960s. Defined by an ever-expanding
population of runaways, drop-outs, Diggers, drug fiends, emerging rock’n’roll superstars, bikers, and 
bona fide peace-and-lovers, Yorkville’s Summer of Love was fractious, exciting, and often dramatic. This was the year Yorkville became overtly politicized, a self-conscious cultural battleground over which the arch-conservatives and the Super Hippies clamored for control. As the Diggers aimed to turn hip identity into a pseudo-political organization, municipal authorities inflated their already hyperbolic rhetoric in efforts to eradicate what they now knew to be Toronto’s hippie menace. As national media outlets provided saturation coverage; as firebrand David DePoe and his Diggers were famously maligned and even arrested; as the National Film Board of Canada and the Company of Young Canadians (both publicly funded and federally regulated) became involved in scandals related to the district; as biker gangs tightened their hold on drugs and sex among the hippies; and as crime, addiction and disease began to creep around the darker corners of the Village, thousands upon thousands of curious teens and twentysomethings crossed the country to make the scene, to play at hippie, and to join the party.

Section Five (chapters nine, ten and the brief conclusion) explores hip Yorkville’s unhurried, but by now inexorable, sunset. As undercover police officers, drug merchants, sexual predators, and paranoid junkies pervaded the scene, the generally peaceful hippies of 1966 had all but disappeared. In their wake remained younger pretenders to their style, a few latecomers who had finally decided to join the party, and a general belief that the whole Yorkville thing was played out. The hippie scene was slipping into the middle distance, still in view, but for how long? Rochdale College had opened its doors (and windows, as it happened) in September of ‘68, immediately following the disastrous
hepatitis scare which had seen the Village turn into a virtual quarantine.\textsuperscript{71} The Yorkville community was in disarray, its hippies looking for fairer fields, a less conspicuous space to freak, another place to make a stand. By the end of 1969, as the humanitarian crisis in Yorkville (characterized by violence, addiction, and diseases of the mind and body) took hold in earnest, the curtains began to close on the Village stage. Developers moved in, buying up the cheap properties and vowing to eradicate the remaining hippies. As Rochdale became Toronto’s new hip centre, Yorkville turned its back on the community that had made it famous, embracing money, class, and sophistication. By the mid-1970s it was Toronto’s premiere boutique district, a haven for the upper crust, the disco-chic, permed hair and polyester flash.

\textsuperscript{71}Many of the windows had yet to be fitted to the building when Rochdale was rushed to open in September, 1968.
Chapter Two: Performing the Village Spectacular

“In societies dominated by modern conditions of production,” argued Guy Debord in a landmark 1967 text, “life is presented as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into representation.” Debord’s famous criticism of the insubstantiality of modern life, of its repetitious, practiced expressions, offers something of a frame through which we can view the spectacle that was Yorkville in the 1960s. Yorkville was the stage on which the Canadian counterculture gave its most celebrated, studied, and complex performance; and, it was also a performance (often visually) consumed by millions as it was repeatedly represented in near-daily media coverage in newspapers and magazines, on television, and, eventually, in films. Indeed, Yorkville was a theatre of sorts, its Villagers the performers in a spectacular expression of cultural rebellion and experimentation with alternative modes of dress, behaviour, belief and practice.


73 Martin Jay, in his discussion of the Society of the Spectacle (which he called the “deathgrip of desiccated images”), emphasized the relationship between the spectacle and a certain desert (even death) of the spirit. Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) 425. His discussions of the primacy of visuality in modern society informed my treatments of tourism (see Chapter Six).

74 There was a real self-consciousness to the performances on display in all the major hip centres, led, in part, by actual theatre groups such as the San Francisco Mime Troupe and the Living Theatre (in New York) which took their theatre “to the streets”. Tellingly, the Diggers in San Francisco referred to the experience of living as “life acting”; alternatively, it was said that “the Living Theatre actor merely plays himself on stage.” See Michael William Doyle, “Staging the Revolution” in Imagine Nation (New York: Routledge, 2002) 71-98; “The Living Theatre” by Pierre Biner in Takin’ it to the Streets ed. Bloom and Breines (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003) 234-237; Also see Bradford D. Martin, The Theater is in the Street (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004).
Outside of the confines of the district by the mid-1960s such unconventional activities as drug use and liberated sexuality, or oddball aesthetics such as long hair and thrift shop fashions, were being read by Torontonians as performances of Yorkville. As the decade wore on, the space had become the script, the character, and the stage. As such, Yorkville played out for many Canadians (as thousands of young people crossed the country to take part in the scene) and for most Torontonian baby boomers curious enough to check it out, as a means to approach social rebellion merely by being someplace. This book contends that Yorkville constituted a hip theatre in and through which a disparate, diverse, and diffuse collection of people performed a protracted spectacle of social and cultural rebellion. But that, for a vast majority of them, this was never more than a transitory, fleeting performance of Village identity.

The political relevance of this space must not be dismissed – although the spectacle of Yorkville was in some sense itself “moving away into representation” even as early as 1964, and although the argument might be made that such spectacles tend to obscure more pressing, more politically significant issues, throughout the 1960s the Yorkville spectacular did constitute a meaningful site of social and cultural rebellion. For many, it was a site of amusement, a stage on which to act out fleeting adolescent desires for community and identity, for fun and sex; but for many more it constituted a site of politicized community, identity formation and experimentation with living otherwise. Indeed, as Canada’s premiere bohemian centre, visited by thousands of people over a period of roughly ten years, the spectacle of Yorkville offered an incalculably influential example to a generation of Canadians.
That said, Yorkville stands as a significant instance of the limitations of cultural experimentation in the “Society of the Spectacle.” One hesitates to view the hip Village in terms of a winners and losers framework, but there is no question that it was the hip embrace of spectacle and performance which allowed masses of people to engage with the scene, consequently setting up the Village as a site of limited political potential. In general, the New Left distanced itself from the scene; so, generally, did feminists. Both groups were critical of the ethereality of the hip performance, and the sense that whatever these performances represented, they held no meaningful potential for positive political change. In short, they recognized, and disdained, the spectacular nature of the Village scene.75

Throughout the 1960s, Yorkville was a contested territory. For many, it was a kind of sanctuary from the general commonsense, a place in which you could “do your own thing”. The Villagers shared a common uneasiness, even disdain for the wider public, and (although they acted in different ways) all aimed to create in Yorkville a space in which hegemonic constructions of reality were made inconsistent and redundant. However, this sort of idealism failed to incorporate an appreciation of the political potential of their spectacle: in refusing these established norms of belief and propriety, and by reveling in deviance and “freak” identity, many Villagers were simultaneously legitimating the very social norms they aimed to refuse. Their behaviours, their adopted

75Much will be made of this below. It is often maintained that, while they were not necessarily unrelated, the New Left and the “counterculture” were different animals, and needn’t be discussed in tandem. To take a recent example, sociologist John Cleveland performed a survey of some 471 “leading 1960s activists in Quebec and English Canada” to discover the answer to a series of questions regarding political beliefs and affiliations during the period. No members of the counterculture (leaders or otherwise) were consulted, even though Cleveland points out that a defining feature of all New Left organizations was the presence of “a large and influential counterculture [which] developed in the periphery of the movements.” John W. Cleveland, “New Left, Not New Liberal: 1960s Movements in English Canada and Quebec” Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology/Review canadienne de sociologie et anthropologie, 41.1 (2004) 67-84.
identities, were not normal, and they knew it – the very spectacle of their self-conscious performance of Otherness helped to define the Village against the “normal” world. It was an unreal space – as a representation, as another version of the real world.76

The Yorkville of the 1960s should be regarded as a case study in the development and eventual decay of countercultural movements in a liberal-Capitalist society. As Yorkville became widely recognized as the centre for Toronto’s hip youth culture (by the mid-1960s), it also became acknowledged as an undesirable Other. Yorkville became, for many, an aberration running contrary to the commonsense of postwar Canadian society. As the counterculture began to come apart under the glare of media attention and scrutiny after 1966, municipal authorities strove to redesign the neighbourhood, pursuing an active policy of police intervention combined with media campaigns designed to generate popular support for their efforts.

This chapter deals with the major preoccupations of the Yorkville’s Villagers in the 1960s. Youth, sex, drugs, politics, and the oft-forgotten fascination with religion and spirituality were all key components of hip identity performance. Yorkville was a crucible for new ideas, new behaviors, and up-to-the-minute modes of expression, and each of these approaches was assimilated into the fluid construct that was hip. The counter-hegemonic potential of the Yorkville scene was all bound up with the viability of its hip community, and the strength of its internal connections, alliances, agreements and beliefs. To be hip was to be it; so, what was it? How was it performed? Who were its expected performers, avatars and embodiments?

76 Or, as Jean Baudrillard argued, following Debord, a simulacrum is not a replica of the real, but becomes real (or truth) in its own right. “The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory—precession of simulacra—that engenders the territory.” Simulacra and Simulation trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994) 1.
The first section below will explore the connections between culture, counterculture, and identity which underwrite this book, and which provide the framework for our discussion of the performance of the Village spectacular. The second section of this chapter outlines the various practices, behaviours and preoccupations which characterized collusion with the Village scene – the primary modes through which Villagers performed Yorkville. The third section will sketch the five principal identity categories explored throughout *Making the Scene*. These categories – Hippies, Greasers, Weekenders, Bikers and Politicos – appear throughout this book, and are employed in an array of ways, from meaningful sites of identity formation to unfulfilled categories of expected identity performance. The ways each identity category was reified, performed and interpreted by Villagers and their observers constitutes the great thrust of this book; this section will outline the general characteristics of each group, and raise the alarm bells over the ways they were used and misused in the period.

**Performance, Identity, and Counterculture**

Culture, as Raymond Williams reminds us, is “one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language.” Indeed, in his seminal work *Keywords*, which provides genealogical and etymological information on a wealth of terms with political significance, Williams never offers any one overarching definition of this knotty word. For our purposes here, I have adopted a broad sociological view of culture, defining it as the combined set of behaviours, attitudes and beliefs which are generally agreed upon at a particular moment (usually in a particular location) by an organization.

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or group. Such a definition allows us to speak of culture in the most general sense (i.e. a North American culture) and the most specific (a Yorkville youth culture). Cultures, then, overlap, intertwine, and compete. If, as Stephen Yarbrough has argued, “cultures exist by virtue of their being believed to exist,” then identification and performance are their two most significant components. If someone identifies herself as part of a culture – that is, she identifies herself through what she and others believe to be the behaviours, appearance and beliefs of a particular group – she must be in some way conscious of the performative reality of that culture. Although no individual is enslaved to a pre-determined identity which s/he cannot avoid, we must remember that each individual is raised up in (and will begin to identify themselves through) their culture. But, this culture is a learned, not an essential, condition, and is thus prone to competing performances, celebrations, and refusals.

Such fundamental signifiers of culture as gender, race and class are all, at the root, performatively constituted. In making this claim, I am following gender theorist Judith Butler and in particular her assertion that “identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results.” In her view, gender is not a stable, foundational feature of a subject’s identity, but rather the expected manner in which a

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78 Stephen Yarbrough, After Rhetoric (Southern University of Illinois Press, 1999) 108. This view is closely related to Benedict Anderson’s famous declaration that a nation “is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” Their identification with others is tied to their belief that they share commonality. Culture operates much the same way as nationalism, although it tends toward a vastly more complicated politics in our increasingly multicultural nation states. Imagined Communities (London: Verso, 1983) 6. See also Edward Said’s equally seminal Orientalism (New York: Penguin Books, 1978; 1995) for a discussion of the parallel concept of “imagined geography.”

79 Reality is, therefore, experienced through people’s interpretations of language and experience within systems of power (hegemony). This theory has been developed by diverse hands, but see especially Derrida, 1998; Michel Foucault The History of Sexuality, Vol. I: an Introduction trans Robert Hurley (Pantheon: New York, 1978). See also Anthony Giddens, Modernity and Self Identity (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1991).

80 Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (London: Routledge, 1990) 25. See also her elaboration on these themes in Bodies That Matter (New York: Routledge, 1993).
subject might act. Gender (like other apparently immutable aspects of identity), in this view, is a role to be performed, not an essential feature of one’s being. 81 Moreover, many historians and theorists of race and class identity have come to see both of these categories as mutable, as prone to competing discourses, and ultimately as performative categories themselves. 82 The commonsense performances of gender, race and class correspond to hegemonic beliefs which suggest (or, in some cases, decree) the manner in which to act within the boundaries of normalcy in a particular culture. 83 Therefore, although neither culture nor identity is essential – both are learned and performed by individuals – all cultural and identity performances are dialogically developed through a process of social construction. 84

Cultures are shaped by the common behaviours (performances) of their adherents, and so a certain collective identity develops around them. These collective identities do not determine how everyone will behave their individual identities; instead, they offer guidelines for normal performances of their individual identities. 85 Under conditions such

81 See also Diana Fuss, Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference (New York: Routledge, 1990); Denise Riley, Am I That Name?: Feminism and the Category of ‘Women’ in History (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). Both of these seminal works approach categories of identity from a deconstructive stance, establishing (respectively) the shiftiness of such apparently unquestionable categories as “woman”.
82 See, for two ideal examples of such scholarship, both of which have greatly informed my understandings of class and race as performative categories, Matthew Frye Jacobson, Whiteness of a Different Color (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998) and Nan Enstad, Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
83 Thus, as Joan Scott concludes: “It is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience.” Joan W. Scott, ‘Experience’ in Critical Inquiry, 17 (Summer, 1991) 773-97.
84 Enstad, 205. I appreciate that Butler and Riley (among others) suggest moving beyond the social construction theory in their approaches to identity – my view of performance does not allow for the radical notion that a subject might create him or herself from scratch. Instead, the performance of one’s identity (although entirely prone to mutability and even whimsy in certain respects) is dialogically tied to hegemonic formulations of identity and behaviour.
85 Or, as K. Anthony Appiah has put it, “these notions provide loose norms or models, which play a role in shaping the life plans of those who make these collective identities central to their individual identities.” See “Identity, Authenticity, Survival: Multicultural Societies and Social Reproduction” in Multiculturalism ed Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) 159.
as these, it becomes difficult to recognize the individual within the group. Once we associate an individual with a particular culture (he is a “gay man”, for example) we slip him into the melting pot of culture, surrounding his individuality with what we believe to comprise the basic characteristics of his culture. Identity theorists have been wrestling with these primary issues for some decades now, circling around the complex relationship between authenticity, performance and recognition.

K. Anthony Appiah, in a sharply cogent response to Charles Taylor’s now-classic examination of multiculturalism in contemporary society, made special mention of what he called “the Bohemian ideal” of authenticity in his effort to examine “the politics of recognition”. This ideal – this “notion of authenticity” – is, he asserts, off beam because “it has built into it a series of errors of philosophical anthropology.” Although not speaking directly of the 1960s manifestation of bohemianism, Appiah’s argument fits neatly into our own discussion: “The rhetoric of authenticity proposes not only that I have a way of being that is all my own,” he claims, “but that in developing it I must fight against the family, organized religion, society, the school, the state – all the forces of convention.” However, since Appiah sees identity to be constituted through dialogue with “other people’s understandings of who I am”, and also because it is precisely those “forces of convention” against which I am in revolt (which presumes that they are already in some ways a part of my cultural understanding), authenticity is not realistically graspable.86 The Beats, the hippies, the New Left politicos, the bikers, radical feminists, black nationalists, indeed, all those who have variously been invited under the umbrella

of “counterculture”, were caught up in competing versions of a politics of authenticity which, by its very nature, was bedeviled by an untenable idealism.87

Oversimplifying the complexities of a variety of youth cultures which were by no means unified in their responses, their ideological positioning, or their identity performances (to name but a few points of comparison), many commentators have used the incoherent term “counterculture” to refer to a vast array of events, behaviours and identities as though they were simply the No to the establishment’s Yes. And while Yorkville might be examined through such a lens, reducing the conflicts in and over the Village to an ideological war of position between a young, hip bloc and an old, stodgy monolith, to re-construct the scene in that way would be to bury much of the colourful complexity of the historical moment. The Village scene did not constitute a unified whole. Neither did the establishment, the municipal authorities, parents, the police, or any of those comprised of the system which the Villagers appeared to repudiate. Before we continue, what is needed is to work up an apposite way of articulating “counterculture” in relation to the Yorkville scene.

Hunter S. Thompson, writing in 1971, already considered the “counterculture” – and especially his experiences in the San Francisco scene – as historic. For Thompson, the “counterculture” was historic in at least two senses of the word: on the one hand, it was historic because it had already slipped into the past (a telling point considering the period on discussion had ended no more than a couple years ago). On the other hand, it was historic because, to so many people who lived it directly, those years seemed to

87 Doug Rossinow neatly summarized this emerging politics of authenticity: “Amid the conditions of broad affluence, mass consumption, the bureaucratization of many areas of social life, and increasing disengagement from formal political participation, feelings of weightlessness migrated down the social scale, appearing among much broader strata of American society and leading to a widespread yearning for authenticity.” The Politics of Authenticity (New York: Columbia, 1998) 5.
mean something. The problem was, he concluded, no one will ever know what they meant. “Even without being sure of ‘history’”, Thomson mused, “it seems entirely reasonable to think that every now and then the energy of a whole generation comes to a head in a long fine flash, for reasons that nobody really understands at the time – and which never explain, in retrospect, what actually happened.”

For Thompson, as for many others who came of age in hip scenes around North America in the mid-to-late 1960s, that “long fine flash” looked increasingly blurry, unformed, and incoherent in hindsight. In his incisive, sardonic way, no less a central player than Jerry Garcia defined the Haight-Ashbury scene through its ethereality: “It’s pretty clear now,” he told an interviewer, “that what looked like it might have been some kind of counterculture was, in reality, just the plain old chaos of undifferentiated weirdness.” Such romantic retellings of the value of the historical moment both underline the significance and the incoherence of the “counterculture”. One detailed history of the Haight-Ashbury concludes with a discussion of precisely this interpretive problem entitled, tellingly, “What Was That?”

Theodore Roszak, an American academic and follower of Herbert Marcuse (then a strong influence on many New Left intellectuals), is generally credited with coining the term “counterculture” in 1967-8, although he avoided offering a concise definition of his new category. What he did, however, was to demonstrate the theoretical connection

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89This is a widely repeated quotation – oddly enough, however, I have yet to find its primary source. However, I have never seen its legitimacy denied, nor even debated. See, for example: http://www.celticguitarmusic.com/grateful_dead_links.htm
91Ten years prior to Roszak’s hugely influential book, J. Milton Yinger’s term ‘contraculture’ had been adopted by some sociologists to differentiate groups with political (i.e. transformative counter-
between hippies and politicos: they were both responding to the same thing, he argued, albeit in different ways. The counterculture, ran his argument, was a wide category comprised of rebellious youth cultures united in their mutual revulsion for the technocracy. This technocracy (loosely defined as the hegemony of “experts” and “specialists” over liberal-capitalist society) had stifled creativity, had promoted malaise and existential dread, and had, in the most radical sense, actually inspired the counterculture. At times prescient, at others obtuse, his book was devoured by university students and members of the New Left eager to have found their own Marcuse; a Marcuse who spoke specifically about them.

Roszak’s obvious disdain for corporate America, and his equally apparent delight over the ascension of what he saw as a revolutionary class (the counterculture) which he outright hoped would tear down the technocracy, caused more than a minor stir in the academy. Among the more incendiary passages:

If the resistance of the counter culture fails, I think there will be nothing in store for us but what anti-utopians like Huxley and Orwell have forecast – though I have no doubt that these dismal despotisms will be far more stable and effective than their prophets have foreseen. For they will be equipped with techniques of inner-manipulation as unobtrusively fine as gossamer. Above all, the capacity of our emerging technocratic paradise to denature the imagination by appropriating to itself the whole meaning of Reason, Reality, Progress, and Knowledge will render it impossible for men to give any name to their bothersomely unfulfilled potentialities but that of madness. And for such madness, humanitarian therapies will be generously provided.

hegemonic) aspirations from deviant subcultures. “A contraculture represents a full-fledged oppositional movement with a distinctively different set of norms and values that are produced dialectically out of a sharply delineated conflict with the dominant society.” Peter Braunstein et al ‘Introduction’ to Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and 70s (New York: Routledge, 2002), 7. See also Yinger, Countercultures: The Promise and Peril of a World Turned Upside Down (New York: The Free Press, 1982).


93 Roszak, xiii.
But, of course, since his book was published at the tail end of the 1960s, amid the end
days of the Haight-Ashbury and East Village (and Yorkville) scenes, not to mention the
catastrophic implosion of student political organizations the SDS and SUPA, his
influence didn’t have very long legs.

In the immediate, however, his view was widely taken up by the sociologists and
cultural theorists across North America who followed in his wake, developing the idea of
counterculture in mainstream society. Virtually this entire wave of studies of the
counterculture (from the period 1968-74) adopted the term at face value, assuming that it
had some stable meaning, often treating it as a monolith. Counterculture, then, was
generally understood to be any rejection of white, middle-class, corporatist society by
drug-using, rock’n’roll-listening, white, middle-class youth. This framework persists
today. Historian Timothy Miller recently defined counterculture in just such a fashion,
using appropriately vague terminology: “the counterculture was a romantic social
movement of the late 1960s and very early 1970s,” he wrote, “mainly composed of
teenagers and persons in their early twenties, who through their flamboyant lifestyle
expressed their alienation from mainstream American life.”

In one of the more interesting versions of counterculture scholarship from the
early 1970s, and one of the few which generally refuses Roszak’s line, Canadian
sociologist Kenneth Westhues theorized the (Canadian) counterculture as an historical
phenomenon by no means particular to late-1960s technocratic society. His view, that

94See Joseph Berke’s truly weird Counter Culture (London: Peter Owen Ltd, 1969) which includes
interviews, pictures, photographs and what appear to be stoned rants on politics and sex. It also,
wonderfully, includes a letter written by the editor of Harper’s Magazine to his colleague at Brandt and
Brandt, complaining about the indecipherability of Burke’s manuscript. Also see Partridge, 1973.
95Timothy Miller, The Hippies and American Values (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee
degrees of counterculture can be measured by weighing the amount of dissent and refusal of dominant ideologies present in a particular community, allows for the widest possible understanding of counterculture; for, in any society one is bound to find pockets of dissent, of social deviance. His useful working definition relies on both ideological and behavioural dimensions:

On the ideological level, a counterculture is a set of beliefs and values which radically reject the dominant culture of a society and prescribe a sectarian alternative. On the behavioural level, a counterculture is a group of people who, because they accept such beliefs and values, behave in such radically nonconformist ways that they tend to drop out of the society.96

His study (and he is not alone in this pursuit)97 attempts to draw comparisons between other countercultures such as the Red River Métis or the Doukhobors and the counterculture of the late 60s. Tenuous as this argument is – the Métis of the Red River Rebellions comprised an organized bloc, something to which the often lackadaisical counterculture barely even aspired – Westhues’s most flawed assumption is that communities (and especially ones so diffusive and disorganized as constituted by late 1960s youth culture) can be discussed as a whole. (In this, he and Roszak are in agreement.) Westhues’s version of the counterculture is pared down to its essential characteristics, but in the process it loses any resemblance to the shifting ground of the lived experience. In general, Making the Scene will avoid the term “counterculture”, and

96Kenneth Westhues, Society’s Shadow: Studies in the Sociology of Countercultures (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972) 9-10. This is not out of synch with Yinger’s revised definition of the counterculture as “a set of norms and values of a group that sharply contradict the dominant norms and values of the society of which that group is a part.” J. Milton Yinger, Countercultures: The Promise and Peril of a World Turned Upside Down (New York: The Free Press, 1982) 6.

will attempt to rely on more specific terms when discussing Villagers and their various performances.

Making the Scene will also frequently use the words “Beat” (or its disparaging counterpart, “Beatnik”) and “hippie” to refer to certain permutations of Yorkville youth. But, because the Beats were not an isolated hill tribe in northern Laos, because the hippies were hardly a localized, coherent phenomenon, Making the Scene refuses the notion that one may define such identity categories in any but the broadest frameworks. Still, these terms were widely used in the day with particular understandings of their meanings, and we cannot avoid them entirely. In general, I shall employ the familiar term “bohemian” (and its short form “bohemian”) to describe the general (historical) tendency toward cultural dissent as embodied by many Villagers in the late 1950s and 1960s. This term, although it has roots in describing a particular portion of society in fin-de-siècle Paris, has come to refer to the wider phenomenon of “living otherwise”. Most every Villager we shall visit over the course of Making the Scene was expressing a bohemianism, in that the basic performance of Yorkville was to engage with an unconventionality, a refusal of hegemonic culture, and a certain interest (however slight) in the avant garde of psychedelia in art, fashion and music.98

98 Of course, the word bohemian was little more than a code for a very small fraction of youth behaviour, identity, and image. It was used by the media and other observers in this period to refer to the (mostly) young, artistic and urbane people who tended to move in similar circles, eschewing taverns and pubs, preferring jazz and folk music to the stuff on the pop charts, and with at least some associative connection (however imitative) with Beat movements in the United States. The term was used rather brazenly, to define a group of people whose weird, unexpected lifestyles and identities didn’t fit in well with normative behavior patterns. In effect, bohemian, as it was here employed, served as the groundwork for the equally unreal categories of Beatnik (which followed soon after) and, by 1966, hippie. My use of bohemian follows a variety of sources, all of which refuse to tie the term solely to the historical moment of the French 1880s. See especially Christine Stansell, American Moderns (New York: Owl Books, 2001) and Virginia Nicholson, Among the Bohemians (New York: Harper Perennials, 2004).
All of the groups on which this book places its focus are to be understood as minorities in some way, and are, as such, apparently incidental to the mainstream of society. The hippies, greasers, feminists, leftist activists and bikers were all countercultural insomuch as they refused to engage with aspects of the commonsense of their society. Their performances of identity undermined, stretched and (in most cases) subverted the ideologies which informed the general commonsense. And yet, as sustained media exposure constructed them as “others,” their numbers swelled as so many from the mainstream began to identify with their ideologies and behaviors. Simultaneously, through repetitive (and oversimplified) media frames, the mainstream against which they were set apart began to reincorporate a basic, homogenized version of the counterculture, effectively limiting its counter-hegemonic capacity (and reinforcing its spectacular value). As the counterculture expanded it was simultaneously diffused – while the mainstream was enriched by the incorporation of so much countercultural ideology, the counterculture itself (in the popular forms that it took in the mid-to-late 1960s) simply ceased to be. But it never went away.

At any given moment, hegemonic culture comprises views on normalcy and deviation, order and havoc, propriety and indecency, sexuality, gender, race, and all of the major categories of activity and identity which concern the general public.99 Indeed, as Raymond Williams has claimed, this is what constitutes “a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives.”100 But

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99We can refer to this as commonsense. “Ideology frequently takes the form of ‘commonsense’-ideas that are sufficiently ‘taken for granted’ as to be beyond the realm of rational debate.” Peter Jackson, Maps of Meaning (New York: Routledge, 1989, 1993) 51.
100Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) 100.
because Yorkville offered precisely an “area of life” in which people might explore another “sense of reality”, Yorkville was perceived as a danger by those in authority. In short, Yorkville was widely understood to constitute a threat to the established order, and to the commonsense of an affluent postwar society, through its inhabitants’ apparent rejection of many of the basic tenets of the real. The “free love”, drug use, asceticism, poverty, and outlandish aesthetics associated with most Villagers were all factors in a central refusal of a hegemonic version of reality. Moreover, the preoccupation of many Villagers’ with psychedelic drugs geared more toward introspection than social lubrication (LSD, certainly, but perhaps marijuana as well) stands as a key reflection of this willful rejection of external reality.101

We can account for the rise of dissent embodied in Yorkville’s counterculture if we accept that while hegemonic ideology constitutes a part of what (most) everyone does and thinks of as normal behaviour, “people only partially and unevenly accept the hegemonic terms; they stretch, dispute, and sometimes struggle to transform the hegemonic ideology.”102 Indeed, the contents of hegemony are always in flux, always prone to modification, mutation, transformation. This is not at all to say that dissent cannot or does not exist – let me be clear that I am arguing quite the contrary position – but rather that its manifestation is in proportion (and always interconnected with) the success of current hegemonic ideology.103 The Villagers explored in the following

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101 The very word psychedelic – coined by Saskatchewan-based scientist Humphry Osmond in 1956, in a letter to his friend, celebrated author and LSD guru Aldous Huxley – breaks down to mind made visible.

102 Gitlin, 1979, 10-11.

103 My understanding of cultural politics has been informed by the theory of hegemony elaborated by Antonio Gramsci and developed by Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall and other theorists.
chapters were all responding to certain key deficiencies in dominant ideologies as they saw, lived and experienced them.

**Performing Hip: Ethics and Ideologies**

*Making the Scene* will make frequent use of the oft-overlooked term “hip” to describe permutations of the Yorkville identity performance. This term, although not a little amorphous itself, at least transcends too-narrow identity categories to become a more general, umbrella term for the particular forms of dissent practiced in Yorkville. As a term, it is *politicized*, without being overtly *political*; and, as an expression contemporary to the scene, it is both historically appropriate and theoretically useful. Indeed *hip*, unlike the fraught and, finally, ill-defined *counterculture*, is open to the vicissitudes of youth cultural rebellion in the 1960s without forcing too-strict a set of defining characteristics around them. Emphasis on this term will, it is hoped, move us away from a strict one-versus-other interpretation of the Yorkville scene.

From the outset, the term ‘hip’ (as it appears below) was ripped off, and at least partly misunderstood. Calling something, someone, ‘hip’ is somewhat like employing the word ‘cool’; it is black American argot co-opted by a white youth culture seeking to establish an alternative lingo. In fact, the word ‘hip’ has enjoyed a lengthy history in the Americas, and should be counted among the world's most exquisite and multifarious terms. Far from a nonsense word – which, along with other key black slang words ‘jive’ and ‘dig’, it tends to be erroneously counted – 'hip' has a clear and defined historical meaning, a rich etymological history, and can be traced to a root word in a pre-contact language. But, unlike related words like 'interesting' (from the Latin *inter* “it concerns” +
esse “to be”) or the slang term 'awesome' (from Old Norse agi “to be feared”), 'hip' is not born of a connection to European ancestry. Rather, like 'jive' and 'dig', 'hip' has its origins in the Wolof language and culture of Western Africa.

The Wolof hepi means to see, while its corollary hipi means to open one's eyes – thus, hipness refers, in its original and purest definition, to an ability to understand, to be aware, to be enlightened.104 The closely related words dega (to understand) and jevi (to lie or disparage) survived as the slang 'dig' and 'jive', with rather precisely the same meanings in American slang.105 Senegalese and Gambian slaves introduced these words perhaps as far back as the 18th century, and amazingly these terms survived, while most of the Wolof words have failed to navigate history's twisted pathway. Why did these three terms survive? Perhaps because each word refers to an aspect of speech, of understanding, of enlightenment, three fundamentally necessary skills a bewildered and soul-smashed human slave would have needed to survive the cataclysm of chains, the lash, and life in a foreign land under the tyranny of an alien hand. Keeping one's eyes open, hipness, could keep one free from punishment; the skill to dig what was going on perhaps could yield similar results. Finally, the ability to recognize jive is the ability to protect oneself from rumour, from lies, from false blame, and from further violence along these lines. These words, then, may have become part of the American English language because of their associations with the social, mental, and physical survival of a minority culture.

Emerging in the 20th century alongside the post-Reconstruction ascendancy of black American culture, terms such as these gained wider comprehensibility and enjoyed

105 ibid.
more exposure until they, like other varied aspects of African American culture, entered the mainstream. By the 1950s, such terms were simply accepted slang for that elusive identity category embodied by black jazz musicians, white Beats, and those few young people Norman Mailer would eventually refer to as “White Negroes” in a much-maligned, but prescient 1957 article on what he called the “Hipster.” Into the 1960s, then, the term 'hip' had developed from an African word to a form of black slang, to a code for white youth enamored of black culture, to one of the few words which came close to accurately describing the various social rebellions undertaken by young people in the 1960s. To be hip, to be aware and open-eyed, in the authenticity-starved world of postwar suburban alienation, was to be alive. It was life through refusal, life born of rebellion against conformity and Organization Man system.

But, vitally, unlike the term “hippie” which carries (and carried) clear connotations of aesthetic, attitude, and identity, hipness was conferred in wildly different ways, and was accessible to most anyone, and through a variety of identity performances. In this way, bikers, greasers, hippies, beats, but also other Villagers, writers, social workers, and people with no other clear connections to the Village were still possible candidates for hipness. It must be said, however, that the difference between being a possible candidate and being “the real deal” was significant (if only spectrally defined), and the mutable dialectic between supposedly authentic hipsters and their inauthentic pretenders seems part of the game. As jazz great Julian “Cannonball” Adderley once explained: “You get a lot of people who are supposed to be hip, you know, and they act

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like they’re supposed to be hip, which makes a big difference… Hipness is not a state of mind; it’s a fact of life. You see what I mean? You don’t decide you’re hip, it just happens that way.”

Whether one’s hipness appeared to be innate or not, its outward expression was always a performance of some kind – it may have been learned, experimental, practiced and/or spontaneous, but it was a performance of hip. As a result, identity categories in the Village were ill-defined, often contradictory, and, when reduced, usually illusory. Just like the scene, identity was there to be made, unmade, remade.

a) Hip Ghettos and the Politics of Youth

The mid-1960s saw a re-evaluation of the very conception of youth. As the much-reported chimeras of the 1950s like juvenile delinquency were replaced by more sophisticated, and somewhat less condescending attempts to engage with young people, people in the mid-60s began to look to youth as more than simply a time in one's life. As Peter Braunstein has argued, "no longer simply an age category, youth became a metaphor, an attitude toward life, a state of mind that even adults could access." Of course, this argument that sympathetic adults could be hip too only went so far – the don't-trust-anyone-over-thirty ideology was developed alongside this new valuation of youth culture. Most often, the distrust of the over-30s was more than a straightforward

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109 There is an interesting parallel here with the similar (ideological) re-evaluation of youth performed in the turn of the century amongst bohemians in Greenwich Village. As Christine Stansell has distilled their view of generational politics, “the idea of young/old as the axis of political struggle [...] also undercut the centrality of the class struggle to revolution and allowed an emerging intelligentsia to grant itself a greater imaginative role.” (Stansell, 94.) The obvious difference here relies, of course, on the question of scale – while the bohemians of the 1910s may have explored the connection between youth and radicalism, theirs was but a limited influence. In 1966 the “Young Generation”, on the other hand, was named “Person of the Year” by Time Magazine. Time, January 7th, 1967.
110 Peter Braunstein, “Forever Young” in Imagine Nation, 243.
Baby Boomer camaraderie. Rather, it was a politicization of "youth" as the force for good in society. Or, as Roszak put it, “throughout the west it is the young who find themselves cast as the only effective radical opposition within their societies.”¹¹¹ The old, went this line of argument, were corrupt, conformist, racist, sexist, violent, boring, lonely, unhappy.¹¹² They were the perpetuators of every problem from civil rights to militarism to imperialism; if they were the reason social progress had stalled, then an embrace of youthfulness as a political framework would push the boat back on course. And since, in the period, “marginality was the key to radical agency,” the project was to re-articulate youth as a site of oppression.¹¹³

By 1968, even notoriously behind-the-curve Hollywood had taken notice of the public anxiety over (and giddy anticipation of) a gathering youth insurgency.¹¹⁴ In one fascinating film, the madly sensationalist *Wild in the Streets* (1968), the suffrage age is reduced so that young people (identified as a strategic voting bloc by a wily politician), can vote in the United States.¹¹⁵ However, they elect a demagogic, megalomaniacal rock star as President, largely on the strength of his arguments that a culture of oldness had virtually destroyed the world. His view, that only old people have started wars, have been racists, have curtailed sexuality, inspires his young compatriots (whom he calls his

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¹¹¹Roszak, 1. Roszak was concerned, however, that young people might not be prepared to accept the weighty responsibility this entailed. “It is indeed tragic that in a crisis that demands the tact and wisdom of maturity, everything that looks hopeful in our culture should be building from scratch – as must be the case with absolute beginners.” Roszak, 26.

¹¹²Van Gosse, in his recent call for a more integrated study of the New Left (i.e. for an longer view of the Movement, and a recognition of its diversity), has emphasized that a vision of the New Left of the 1960s as explicitly a movement of the young is inaccurate. But, it was the *symbolic* youthfulness of the movement that mattered – not the actual age of its supporters. Gosse, 24.

¹¹³Rossinow, 2.


¹¹⁵See Hoberman’s discussion of this film, and its significance to the climate of 1968. Hoberman, 192-203.
"troops") to grant him extraordinary powers. And so, he promptly has all people aged 35 and older placed in concentration camps, "Freedom Camps", where they are forced to remain on perpetual LSD trips. "They won't draft us anymore," explains the wild-eyed President. "We'll draft them!"\(^{116}\)

The broad-spectrum weirdness of this plotline is pure camp, an unsophisticated exploitation of hip movements and ideologies (as Phil Ochs, while turning down the lead role, complained to American International Productions), but there is something prescient underlining the goofiness. Forced to take LSD (\textit{all the time!}), the adult inmates of the camps are shown to have become profoundly disturbed, even suicidal, especially the mother of the new President (played by Shelly Winters) who had spent much of the movie up to now in desperate, doomed attempts to appear "young". Among the most stirring scenes in the film depicts her final, pathetic ravings as, stoned on the drug believed to inspire artificial youthfulness, she appears insane, ranting, terrified. The notion of youth as both politically dangerous and fundamentally misguided was very much in the air in these years, and no streets in Canada were wilder than Cumberland and Yorkville. Is this where the youth revolution would fire its first shot?

But four years earlier, the idea of youth as a metaphor for living otherwise carried little of the darkness explored in \textit{Wild in the Streets}. Rather, youth was attendant in the (newly-developed) mini-skirt, Beatlemania, the fashions of swinging London, the chrome-bright memory of JFK and the excitement of the latest dance craze. As word spread, painting Yorkville as a midtown district seemingly geared for such emerging trends, the first whisper of curious youth began to drift down toward the village. And, of

\(^{116}\)\textit{Wild in the Streets"}, Director: Barry Shear, American International Pictures, 1968. The part of Max Frost was initially offered to Yorkville habitué Phil Ochs, who declined after reading the script.
course, as more teens arrived to see what there was to be seen, the description of Yorkville as a youth centre became ever more apt. By 1965, an article in *The Women’s Globe and Mail* insert cautioned its readers that “if you were born before 1935, the sea of mohair sweaters, swinging hair and tennis sneakers may make you feel chillingly old.”

A wide variety of Canadian young people, their numbers inevitably swollen by the Baby Boom of the late-40s and 50s, comprised the ranks of the curious visitors in this period. Especially for those born during the first boom period (between 1946 and 1950), Yorkville and the idea of a new and unprecedented youth culture therein suited their early-to-mid adolescence just fine. If we must invent a demographic here, we could say that people between the ages of 15-25 in the years 1964-1969 comprised the main thrust of the Yorkville generation. These Yorkville Villagers were the Baby Boomers whose interest (fueled by all manner of controversy and intrigue surrounding Toronto’s supposed Hippie Haven) brought them to the district they had been told was their own.

The Baby Boom, the effects of which are sundry and pervasive, must be understood both as the catalyst for, and the exaggeration of, youth cultural dissent in the 1960s. The basic impact of the Baby Boom was the massive, full-scale societal, cultural and political shift toward accommodating young people. One rather obvious reason for the disproportionate amount of attention placed on the children of the 1960s is that there were simply *so many* of them: in any given year through the late 40s and early 1950s, one in five Canadian women between the ages of 20 and 25 gave birth. From

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118 Of course, affluence is another keyword one must relate to the Baby Boom generation in Canada. Widespread economic stability and something approaching full employment was available to most Canadians while their baby boomer offspring came of age. As Francois Ricard has put it, the baby boom generation was the first in history to “experience, from early on, what we might call the normalization of riches.” Ricard, *The Lyric Generation: The Life and Times of the Baby Boomers* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1994) 55.
300,000 babies born in 1945, the figure jumped to 400,000 by 1952, and the rate remained above 400,000 babies born per year for 14 years.\textsuperscript{119} This demographic shift – often illustrated by the colourful “pig in a python” image – precipitated an institutional crisis. There were so many babies in the same or similar demographic, that as they grow up, huge new facilities had to be established in order to accommodate them, such as primary, junior and high schools and, of course, universities. As the first Baby Boom-era youth came of age in the early 1960s, there was a shockwave rippling through Canadian institutions forcing them to adapt or be crushed.

The blinding fear developing among Dr. Spock-reading parents, schoolteachers, City Controllers and the like, was that without the proper institutions in place, Canadian society could degenerate, and rapidly at that. The stakes were clearly high – in the five years between 1963 and 1968, Canadian university enrollment would increase as much as it had in the previous fifty. Across the country, governments scrambled to open up new universities: Trent, Brock, York, Lethbridge, Simon Fraser, Calgary, Regina, Sir George Williams and Waterloo Universities all date from this period.

Perhaps this is why, in many ways, Yorkville was itself cast as a kind of youth institution. As was the case with San Francisco and New York, the two other major North American countercultural centres, a trickle of curious youth in the early 1960s turned into a torrent. And it was in this surge, inevitably comprised of a wide swath of youth from all over Toronto, Canada and the US, that Yorkville was caught. Its very existence as a district became the subject of frenzied debate, its essential character as an appendage of greater Toronto evaluated, explored, decried. “The City didn’t like Yorkville because the City was full of old white men,” explains Martin Barber, a Villager and former \textit{Telegram}

\textsuperscript{119} Owram, 5 and 31.
reporter. “But not liberal white men either: the kind of boring provincial farts who in those days ran small cities and small towns. [...] They were absolutely against youth! And especially this kind of youth who stood up to them and said, hey, we want to do… They were terrified that things would happen that they would have no control over.”

However abstract, the idea of Yorkville as the place in which to perform youth tended to underwrite the script, and reified the boundaries surrounding the Village.

As a geographic location, Yorkville was thus metaphorically cut off, re-cast as a strange land, an unstable and increasingly immoral zone of decadent self-absorption and vice. As a business district it was teetering on the precipice, apparently about to fall: its impending economic doom blamed on the bohemian Villagers. As a metaphor for a Canadian failure to control an increasingly inscrutable and volatile youth culture it was potent, vivid and fearsome. Here was an impromptu institution: a pseudo-college for the disenchanted, the thrill-seeking, the alienated, the stoned.

It became, in its own eccentric way, a Toronto version of nineteenth century London’s Whitechapel, that infamous incarnation of middle-class Victorian England’s moral degradation. Although somewhat sensationalist, this parallel is at least acceptable when we consider the analogous ways in which both Whitechapel’s and Yorkville’s apparent immorality were characterized by media and municipal authorities. As Judith Walkowitz has so persuasively argued, the London of the late-nineteenth century was, at least figuratively, a “bifurcated cityscape” which seemed to protect class identity by

120 Martin Barber, Interview with Author, March 29th, 2007.
121 One is also tempted to read both Whitechapel and Yorkville in terms of the phenomenon of “moral panic.” This framework was first outlined by British sociologist Stanley Cohen in 1972 in his effort to detail media coverage of alternative 1960s youth culture in England. Basically, Cohen explored the ways in which Mods and Rockers (or any alternative group) constituted an “episode, condition, person or group of persons [that is] defined as a threat to societal values and interests,” and thus incites a kind of panic amongst the citizenry. See Cohen, Folk Devils and Moral Panics (London: Mac Gibbon and Kee, 1972) 9.
This separation between the middle (and upper) classes and the Other side of the city promoted the idea of tourism within the wider cityscape. The frequent middle-class expeditions into lower class districts (such as Whitechapel, with its wide variety of illicit and vice-indulging activities) emphasized a subject/object relationship between the voyeur and the subject of study. In other words, this bifurcation “reinforced an imaginative distance between investigators and their subjects, a distance that many urban explorers felt nonetheless compelled to transgress.”

They were compelled for very similar reasons as were many of their Toronto counterparts some 80 years later: curiosity, moral outrage, and pursuit of wicked, enthralling vice.

In both cases, then, space, class and what I shall refer to as the phenomenon of local-foreignness operate in interwoven, inseparable ways. Widespread sexual deviance (including promiscuity, prostitution and homosexuality) and pervasive drug use were generally cited as the two worst results of allowing the character of both Whitechapel and Yorkville to be shaped by the hands of an unchecked and morally bankrupt culture. And, while there was no one “Jack the Ripper” to terrorize the Yorkville denizens, the ever-present threats of hippie sex fiends and biker gangs preying on poor, out-of-pocket girls emphasized an atmosphere of pervasive, or at least potential,

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123 Ibid.
125 Walkowitz refers to this as “urban spectatorship”; I have chosen to redefine this category in order to emphasize the significance of foreignness in the case of Yorkville.
126 The role of young women in Yorkville as victims of hip sexual depravity was assumed, expected, and underlined in most every study of the district after 1965. The truth behind this position is debatable, largely because it relies on a simplistic view of sexual power, and the conservative assumption that a young woman’s sexual innocence is to be protected at all costs.
sexual violence and moral depravity which did not go unnoticed by either the media or City Councilors.127

But it was the very foreignness of Yorkville’s culture that truly set it apart and, as it had with the subversive underprivileged half of the bifurcated cityscape that was late-nineteenth century London, established the district as a zone of difference. For, from the moment a place is set apart as separate, as somehow distinct, it becomes a de facto foreign territory. At the most basic level, the casting of Yorkville as a village, while tied to an historical reality (Yorkville was a village until it was annexed by the city in 1883), served to establish the district as a zone of local-foreignness, at once present and removed from the local and the foreign contexts.

As semiologists have argued for decades, and as Jacques Derrida has persuasively demonstrated, once a thing is named, is bounded through language and commonsense, it is only then rendered comprehensible.128 This thing can now be characterized (as ‘thing’), its meaning(s) debated, evaluated, (mis)understood.129 In terms of geography, such a process is doubly important, because oftentimes we are speaking in the abstract when we discuss place – we may have never been there, and are never going to go, but because it is named, we are able to develop the sense that it is. And so we develop mental maps, onto which we can project our understandings of these places. As geographer Peter Jackson

127 “‘They come to the village as good kids, mixed up perhaps, many from fine homes, and these beatniks grab them and within two days they are ruined,’ said Deputy Chief Bernard Simmonds.” For a concise summary of the association between Yorkville and sexual violence/depravity, see Globe and Mail, November 2nd, 1967.


129 Crucially, as Judith Butler has argued, “[The] name, as a convention, has a generality and a historicity that is in no sense radically singular, even though it is understood to exercise the power of conferring singularity.” In this way, appellation is a profoundly powerful act – it is both to endow a thing with a recognizable individuality and to establish its social and political (not to mention historical) context/meaning. It must be understood to have one and many meanings simultaneously, each politically and socially constructed, each bound to interpretations of commonsense in a particular context. Excitable Speech, 29.
has argued, such ‘maps of meaning’ “are ideological instruments in the sense that they project a preferred reading of the material world, with prevailing social relations mirrored in the depiction of physical space.”

Because Yorkville was understood as a place in which flourished both subversion and dissent, then the map of meaning through which the area was read by most observers was reflective of this commonsense. In other words, hegemonic distrust and fear of cultural and social dissent fostered a commonsense treatment of Yorkville as a distinct, local-foreign land – a view which served both as a warning to some to stay away, and, crucially, as an invitation to the curious to come and partake. This process, in turn, helped to inculcate the characterization of the Yorkville youth cultures as somehow inscrutable, alien, dangerous: hence the need for a framework which allowed Yorkville to be foreign, even while it was situated in the local context.

But, as this metaphorical community was established in the public imagination, it was simultaneously reinforced by the imaginative marginality performed by Villagers. This process, whereby a group in the centre (white, middle-class youth) aims to re-figure themselves as marginal (black, third-world, colonized) reverses expected (and well-established) trends in cultural appropriation and performance. In short, usually people played up, not down. Nan Enstad, in her excellent study of working women in turn-of-the-century New York, demonstrated that “by appropriating and exaggerating the accoutrements of ladyhood, working women invested the category of lady with great imaginative value, implicitly challenging dominant meanings and filling the category with their own flamboyant practices. […] Like gay men in drag, working-class ladies

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130 Peter Jackson, 186.
seemed more absorbed in the element of display than in verisimilitude.”131 What we are seeing in Yorkville (and throughout the “counterculture”) is precisely the same process, in reverse. Young people, invited to engage with what they had been taught was their place, their community, couldn't but pick up on the politicization of youth linked to this process. If young people (as with any subjects who might be identified as a group) are localized, and their activities categorized, their identity is then politicized as different, foreign, deviant. As Frank Musgrove concluded in 1974, “the Counterculture is a revolt of the unoppressed.”132

As Michael Valpy puts it: “There was that sense that young people weren’t just young people, but were the enemy of established society. And vice versa… There was just simply this feeling, and it was quite pervasive among the editors at the Globe, that you know, that young people were a mistake somehow.”133 If, by the mid-1960s, “youth” was widely appreciated to be an ethic, an act, not so much about age as it was about spirit, then youth, like Yorkville, was accessible to all – that is, if you were up to the performance.134 Considered in this way, the battle for Yorkville was as much about a battle for the physical space Yorkville as it was about the meaning of that space. Could Yorkville be liberated from its overlords?

By the mid-1960s the political dimensions of youth were – following black writers such as Eldridge Cleaver and Frantz Fanon – often being expressed in terms of a Third World-ism, as if youth were an identity (even a race) in need of liberation from the

133 Michael Valpy, Interview with Author, October 5th, 2006.
134 “No longer simply an age category, youth became a metaphor, an attitude toward life, a state of mind that even adults could access.” Peter Braunstein, “Forever Young: Insurgent Youth and the Sixties Culture of Rejuvenation” in Imagine Nation, ed Braunstein, (New York: Routledge, 2002) 243.
repressive colonizing establishment. David DePoe, for example, referred to plans to evict hippies from Yorkville in 1967 as a “final solution”; and, a 1968 front page for *Satyrday* (a Village newspaper) proclaimed the “New Anti-Semitism… Destroy the Hippies!”\(^{135}\)

For his part, Cleaver, future Minister of Information for the Black Panthers, read this developing current of imagined marginality among white middle-class youth as a potential boon to the liberation of the human spirit. “The characteristics of the white rebels which most alarm their elders – the long hair, the new dances, their love for Negro music, their use of marijuana, their mystical attitude toward sex – are all tools of their rebellion,” he observed. Citing hippie forebear Jack Kerouac and his infamous romanticization of the authenticity of black culture – “At lilac evening I walked with every muscle aching among the lights of 27\(^{th}\) and Welton in the Denver colored section, wishing I were a Negro, feeling that the best the white world had offered was not enough ecstasy for me, not enough life, joy, kicks, darkness, music, not enough night” – Cleaver was encouraged by the desire, however misinformed, on the part of white youth to emulate blackness.\(^{136}\) “They have turned these tools against the totalitarian fabric of American society – and they mean to change it.”\(^{137}\)

Significantly, Toronto’s growing black community (fed by increased immigration from the West Indies, Africa, and the United States) cannot claim to have had much beyond a figurative influence on the development of the Yorkville scene. While a scattering of black people certainly visited and took part in Yorkville – famously, as in the cases of bluesman Lonnie Johnson and Ricky Mathews, as Village-based musicians –

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\(^{135}\) *Toronto Star*, September 12\(^{th}\), 1967; *Satyrday* Volume 3, Number 5, August 1968.


\(^{137}\) Cleaver, later a Black Panther, recognized this particular trend very early on, while still in prison. Cleaver, 75.
no one recalls the scene as incorporating a black presence. In fact, as the movement toward black self-empowerment and social justice burgeoned in the mid-to-late 1960s in Toronto, so did a general disinterest in the Yorkville scene among its activists. “They were privileged white youth in Yorkville,” recalls Dudley Laws, a key black power activist after 1965. “There was not much reason for us to go down [there]… There was no connection between the black community as such and Yorkville.” In the absence of a people of colour to confuse the issue, white, middle class youth in the Village were able to construct their own subjectivity in the vein of a solidarity with a black community about which, in reality, they were generally unacquainted.

Consider this exchange, the centerpiece of one of the National Film Board’s two documentaries on the Yorkville scene in 1967. Taking place on a moving bus, a young man, bearded, but by no means clearly a “hippie” by any conventional definition (he is wearing a tie), interviews an older man, the picture of establishment in his dark suit. The young man complains to his interviewee that Alan Lamport, with whom a number of Villagers have just met, has refused to really listen to the demands and needs of youth. And so, he wonders aloud, to the obvious shock of his interviewee,

**Young:** What would any minority, what would the Negroes in the States do, when people refuse to take their ills seriously?

**Old:** You wanna talk about the Negroes in the States, or about the boys up here?

**Young:** They’re both the same thing!

By the late 1960s the youth movement, articulated as such, was no longer so sure that it did not constitute some kind of embattled minority, akin to revolutionary blocs around

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139a “Christopher’s Movie Matinée”, Dir: Mort Ransen, National Film Board of Canada, 1968
the world.\textsuperscript{140} Allowing these young people from the centre to “grant themselves a greater imaginative role” as marginalized subjects, the appropriation of a certain Third World status promoted the notion of Yorkville as a politicized space.\textsuperscript{141}

Perhaps the foremost result of this burgeoning sensibility was the development of a terrifically powerful discourse employed by many observers of the scene that saw hip, foreign Yorkville as a community at risk, overwhelmed by a symbolically sick population. This apparent sickness was manifest in what appeared to be the Villagers’ insane pride: a pride taken in their lack of interest in work, their austere lifestyles, their general disdain for social conventions, their propensity toward beards and other conspicuous body hair, and their embracing of psychedelic drug use as a radical avoidance of reality.\textsuperscript{142} If, throughout the first eight years of hip Yorkville was repeatedly constructed as an activity, as a lifestyle and an identity in itself taking place in a local-foreign space, after the events of August, 1968 there appeared to be ample reason to recast this activity as \textit{physically}, not just morally, toxic. Suddenly, the foreign land of Yorkville was understood to be a contagion, a virus – the city needed to rush to contain it before it spread.

\textsuperscript{140}A variety of other trends in art, music, literature, and (as we shall see below) religion came together in this \textit{orientalist} pursuit of marginality. (This term was made popular by Edward W. Said in his landmark text \textit{Orientalism} (New York: Penguin Books, 1978; 2003).) From post-Beat preoccupations with Hinduism to Timothy Leary’s obsessions with the \textit{Tibetan Book of the Dead}, to the Rolling Stones’ use of the sitar to the popularization of Native American beadwork, it wasn’t just the politicos who embraced and appropriated a romanticized version of the Third World. For a demonstration of the kinds of extremes taken by many young people in the period, and of the various ways such window dressings of orientalism tended to fail as tools of empowerment or solidarity, see Gita Mehta’s classic \textit{Karma Cola: Marketing the Mystic East} (New York: Vintage Books, 1979; 1994).

\textsuperscript{141}Stansell, 94.

\textsuperscript{142}One recalls Michel Foucault’s argument that madness was traditionally understood to be, basically, the inability (or lack of desire) to be productive. Michel Foucault, “The Birth of the Asylum” in \textit{The Foucault Reader}, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984) 141-167.
b) Authenticity, Alienation, and Existentialism

Charles Reich, in a much-discussed 1970 book on the counterculture, emphasized the emancipatory politics of Sixties youth. “[The counterculture] promises a higher reason,” he proclaimed, “a more human community, and a new and liberated individual. Its ultimate creation will be a new and enduring wholeness and beauty – a renewed relationship of man to himself, to other men, to society, to nature, and to the land.” For Reich, the counterculture represented a struggle for an authentic identity, an ideal of true humanity. As we shall see below, such a sentiment was often repeated in these years, rooted in the hyper-individualism of Beat novels and poetry, and finding its present articulations in the lyrics of folk songs and psychedelic rock, and in the various proclamations and editorials in underground newspapers.

The key to understanding the development of the counterculture – and for a start at answering the big questions of what was it? and why did it arise? – can be found in the linked themes of alienation, authenticity, and existentialism. Alienation, in a Marxist sense, refers to the feeling of disconnection between a subject and her “true” self, or her human nature [Gattungswesen]. A central term – Doug Rossinow notes that “possibly no word was used more frequently in discussions of political discontent in the United States during the [1960s]” – alienation is balanced against its implied binary opposite, authenticity. In short, a subject’s struggle to overcome alienation from his human nature constitutes his search for authenticity, for a truer experience of the self. The

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145 Rossinow, 2.
146 Raymond Williams, Keywords (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976; 1983) 36.
147 Without using the term, Raymond Williams explains the centrality of authenticity to existentialism: “The condition of freedom to choose and to act in unique and unpredictable ways was
existentialist approach to such a theory, repeatedly explored by Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre in the decades prior to the 1960s, applies these terms to a belief that the universe is meaningless. In such a context, one’s alienation stems as much from one’s inability to know himself as it does from one’s incapability of understanding one’s place in the universe. To escape this alienation – which is to be understood as the ultimate goal of life in the absence of external meaning – is to approach authenticity. In a basic sense, to live by convention (that is, to conform, or to “go with the flow”, especially if you do so out of fear or anxiety) is inauthentic insomuch as it melts individuality into community, linking the self to a hegemonic cultural process. To live authentically is to find a way in which to live life on one’s own terms, but only so long as you are doing it for yourself, and not for others.

Most Villagers, in all of their various incarnations, grappled with these themes in some way. The Beat-influenced bohemians who spent their evenings at the Embassy spoke of “false values and phony ideals” when asked what it was they meant to escape; the hippies of the mid-60s concurred, railing against “fake” or “plastic” Villagers who were merely following, rather than being; by the late-60s bikers were venerated by many hippies for their supposed authenticity, their radical commitment to wish-fulfillment; and both women and men who refused to engage with the supposedly liberating ethic of free accompanied by a sense of urgency and anxiety; in one common form, conventional or predictable or ‘programmed’ choices and acts are failures of existence, which implies taking responsibility for one’s own life, with no possible certainty of any known outcome in the terms of some known scheme.” Keywords, 124.

148 Or, for a more artistic version of this sentiment: “I am. I am. I exist, I think, therefore I am; I am because I think that I don’t want to be, I think that I … because … ugh! I flee. They will have to find something else to veil the enormous absurdity of their existence.” Jean-Paul Sartre Nausea trans. Lloyd Alexander (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1964) 150.


love were criticized for their alienation form their bodies. As Doug Rossinow has argued, “like the new left, freaks believed in the power of transgression, of crossing boundaries. Like the new left, they felt they lived in a society of alienation, and they searched, above all, for authenticity.”

There are a variety of competing theories as to what promoted such a widespread phenomenon of alienated (especially middle-class) youth in postwar North America. In Leerom Medovoi’s impressive analysis, postwar suburbanization is explored as “a primary Cold War ideological apparatus” which promoted the rise of rebellious teens. In his formulation, because “the suburbs were widely seen as a space of assimilation into a white, middle-class consumer ethos that would alleviate social conflict”, in other words, which would promote a kind of anesthetizing effect on its inhabitants, a certain anxiety took hold over the effect this might have on young people born into such a structure. In the suburbs – spaces closely associated with women and children in public discourse – would people become soft, feminized, incapable of individual thought? In the mid-1960s, Canadian sociologist S.D. Clark looked back to the suburbs in the 1950s as places where “families turned in towards themselves… [this was] not a society in which people were alert to the important issues of the world.”

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151 Rossinow, 249.
152 Medovoi, 19.
153 Medovoi, 29.
154 For an overview of the ways the suburbs were affected by (and affected) gender roles and expectations, see Suzanne Morton, *Ideal Surroundings* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995) 67-87. For examinations of the postwar family and the ways heterosexuality, conformity and domesticity became normalized in the period, see Mona Gleason *Normalizing the Ideal: Psychology, Schooling and the Family in Postwar Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Mary-Louise Adams *The Trouble with Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Magda Fahrni *Household Politics: Montreal Families and Postwar Reconstruction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).
155 S.D. Clark, quoted in Harris, *Creeping Conformity*, 7.
In a Cold War climate of concern over totalitarianism and social control, the conformism promoted by cookie-cutter suburbs was cause for alarm. As a result, the figure of the rebel teenager – the subject of much debate and consideration in the 1950s – became a terribly complex site of competing political concerns. “Lurking as a continual risk for the teenager,” Medovoi explains, “was the lure of juvenile delinquency, the Scylla which adults needed to weigh against the Charybdis of incipient authoritarianism resulting from excessive adult control.”156 Into the 1960s, then, the idea of youth rebellion was tied (at least in part) to a refusal of the de-humanizing effects of the suburbs on white, middle-class North Americans. And since Toronto was immersed in its own period of protracted suburbanization, and continuing debates over the conformity this implied, Medovoi’s analysis fits our purposes nicely.157

Emerging out of a period of affluence and relative safety – the 1950s led to the shadow of the Bomb, but did not live directly under it – young people of diverse backgrounds and demographics came to similar conclusions about the state of the world and of their place relative to it. “We are people of this generation,” began a famous 1962 student position paper, “bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to the world we inherit.”158 For many students both in the United States and Canada, this sentiment seemed on target – in most retrospective views of the formation of New Left movements on campuses around North America, this Port Huron

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156 Medovoi, 30.
157 As Richard Harris has pointed out, many Canadian suburbs were not immediately so homogeneous as one might expect. Still, he found that during the same period they were written about as though they were sites of little diversity, interest, or value. Harris, Creeping Conformity, 6-15.
The Port Huron Statement (named for the town at which the paper was first presented) is treated as a significant moment.\textsuperscript{159}

What theorist Herbert Marcuse would come to refer to as the “Great Refusal” – the aim toward liberation from the conformism and alienation fostered by the affluent society – was taken up by many young people in the early 1960s as a political project.\textsuperscript{160} While the New Left groups more actively pursued this goal through political agitation, writing, and demonstration, some chose to act out their versions of this rebellion against affluence through a great cultural refusal. Following the Beats, a growing number of teenagers and university students by the early 1960s were engaging with a politics of authenticity through the adoption of unconventional aesthetics, practices, and behaviours. Performances of bohemia, widely believed to have been precursors to this contemporary pursuit of the authentic, became visible and even pronounced in some urban centres across North America. Yorkville, by 1960, can be counted among these.

Throughout this history of Yorkville and its Villagers, we will repeatedly come across young people whose articulations of rebellion against contemporary society correspond with these interrelated themes of alienation and authenticity and an existential approach to both. However, it is only in the rarest case in which a Villager employed these specific terms, or couched their feelings in such rhetoric. Rather, words like “phony,” “plastic,” and “commercialized” abound – with each of these terms related to a central anxiety over the phenomenon of tourism which took hold in the Village after 1964. The pursuit of living otherwise, as it was variously explored in the Village, often

\textsuperscript{159} In Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin’s history of social unrest in the 1960s, for example, the Port Huron Statement is referenced four times. Isserman and Kazin, \textit{America Divided} 2\textsuperscript{nd} Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004)

stemmed from a desire for authentic life and experience – but it was often frustrated by the persistent feeling that whatever Yorkville meant to represent was being co-opted, faked, performed by poseurs and pretenders.161

c) God(s) and the Emancipatory Possibilities of Spirituality

The postwar period was disastrous for Canada’s reputation as a strongly Christian country.162 Canada’s weekly (Christian) church-going attendance at war’s end was around 60%, an impressive figure. But, by the mid-1970s, following a laundry list of upheavals and a series of dramatic culture wars, that weekly attendance had dropped by half, to just over 30%.163 And yet, interest in religion (or, more correctly, spirituality) was one of the key characteristics of the counterculture, both inside and outside of Yorkville, the Haight, the East Village, and beyond. While criticized by some observers as vapid flirtations with Eastern mysticism, and dismissed by others as mere window dressing, spiritualism did help shape countercultural ideology and discourse in the Yorkville scene throughout the 1960s.164 As much a subversive activity as going barefoot or taking LSD, hip flirtation with non-Christian religious practices and beliefs helped to distinguish the Yorkville scene as inscrutable, foreign, and separate from the wider cityscape. Adding to

161 As one Villager would write in 1968 in a Village paper, “there are two kinds of people who frequent the Village; those who belong there; and those who don’t, but think they do.” Satyrday, Volume 3 Number 5, August 1968.


164 The 1961 Canadian Census demonstrates an overwhelmingly Christian population. For example, In 1961 Christians (including Roman Catholics and United Church members, the two largest denominations) comprised 95.1% of the population. Jews were listed at 1.5%, and “Other” at 3.4%. The interest in Eastern religions among Villagers were more than likely explored without the benefit of much personal contact with believers and adherents. Minister of Trade and Commerce, Canada 1963: The Official Handbook of Present Conditions and Recent Progress (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1963) 14.
the moral panic which accompanied tales of drug orgies, indigence and random violence, the distinct possibility that Yorkville was breeding a godless youth movement helped to fuel a Christian Toronto’s outraged response to the counterculture.

The Yorkville scene (like the North American ‘60s counterculture in general) had an ambiguous, even paradoxical, relationship with God. Counterculture visions of the Almighty, whether glimpsed through the immaculate windowpane of an acid trip, elucidated through the searching jams of the Grateful Dead, or stolen from the eyes of a lover in a moment of ecstatic communion, did not typically come to their recipients while they knelt between church pews.

Instead of searching for God in the words of the Bible, the infinite was to be sought out in the undiscovered country of hedonism, of psilocybin-fueled vision quests, of stoned group sex, of pseudo-Hindu meditation and generalized, unfocused mysticism. And Jesus, although much admired as a revolutionary, as a pacifist and non-conformist par excellence, was still more closely associated with the stuffy air of Sunday Morning family services than with his splendidly counter-hegemonic activities and teachings. Timothy Leary’s much-vaunted ethic of “dropping out” which drove many middle-class young people to attempt rejections of the materialism, capitalism and sobriety of their parents also implied a rejection of the Judeo-Christian tradition and moral frameworks into which they had been initiated.

And so, experimental and unconventional spirituality was central to the counter-hegemony performed by countercultural youth. Indeed, Addiction Research Foundation (ARF) fieldworker Gopala Alampur noted that the “search for God” constituted “an important aspect of the life of each hippie.” In Alampur’s perceptive view, a hippie “will
tend to borrow the theologies while rejecting dogmas, the enforced rituals, the established churches” of all religions, including Christianity, since all “have something to offer to the hippie as all contain some aspect of an infinite God concept.” Rejection of the blind faith, the unquestioned dogmatism demanded by their parents’ churches, fit in with the more general refusals of expected systems of belief. Just as interest in socialism, left-liberalism, even communism began to characterize hip politics, the allure of shifting one’s religious association from tired old Protestantism to exotic Buddhism proved highly effective. Many hip youth simply chose none and all points of view simultaneously; like The Chink in Tom Robbins’ countercultural masterpiece *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, the trick was to adopt paradox as the centre of all faith: “I believe in nothing, everything is sacred. I believe in everything, nothing is sacred.” The frustrating tendency of hip youth to flirt with virtually all religious positions at once without delving into them beyond superficialities led Rev. James Smith to despair that “it seemed like the Hippy’s desire was to be an honourary member of every religion except Christianity.” Honourary members, all (perhaps). But followers? Believers? Few indeed.

Generally, this experimentation extended no further than flirtation with eastern religions (especially Hinduism and Buddhism), but in some cases Yorkville youth were drawn to more formal expressions of religious non-conformity. “Among hippies,” reported one observer in early 1968, “knowledge of philosophy, religion and psychology carry prestige.”

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They are particularly attracted to Oriental and Indian religions as well as to mysticism and spiritualism… Yet, their knowledge of these subjects is superficial. Religious and philosophic terms are used more to make a good impression than to communicate substantial meaning. As might be expected, there is little attempt to struggle with or study these philosophic issues. Philosophical books are carried but infrequently read; religions such as Zen Buddhism are often talked of but rarely understood.  

Such bastardized versions of established dogma reflect the individualistic (selfish), and rebellious spirit of the period. However, not everyone in the counterculture was so inclined. The advent of so-called Jesus Freaks (the hippie forerunners of the mainstream Born-Again movements of the late-70s and early 1980s), the Hare Krishna movement, and the proliferation of religio-anarchic communes in- and outside of Toronto by the early 1970s all reflect the continued relationship between counterculture, community, experimentation, and spirituality throughout the period.  

The most significant factor in all of this experimentation after the central act of refusal and rebellion which underwrote all such countercultural activity, was sacramental drug use. As historian Timothy Miller has demonstrated, “in such religious esteem was dope held that many… contended that it should be used ritually.” Of course, such newly-discovered psychedelic drugs as LSD were famously capable of exposing the mind to highly transcendental vision and experience. When Aldous Huxley, author and early proponent of the religious qualities of an LSD experience, published his book on the

168 Smart and Jackson, 13.
170 One of my Interview subjects actually put it thusly: “We always held the hope that a significant number of people were having the real trip. I was involved in a community of people who, really we regarded it as a sacrament. And for me, having been raised as a Roman Catholic, it was the closest thing to a religious experience I had ever had.” Anonymous LSD Dealer, Interview with Author, October 13th, 2006.
171 Miller, Hippies and American Values, 36.
subject, he made an explicit connection between reality, perception and God.\textsuperscript{172} Agreeing with William Blake’s lovely suggestion that “If the doors of perception were cleansed/everything would appear to man as it is, infinite,” Huxley explained that the effect of LSD was precisely such a cleansing.\textsuperscript{173} Through LSD, it was said, the infinite God was revealed, not just as some bearded abstraction in the sky, but in the Heaven-in-a-wildflower sense that Transcendentalists had been dreaming of for hundreds of years.\textsuperscript{174}

To be high on acid, to achieve the “peak” of one’s trip into pseudo-schizophrenic weirdness, was to realize a moment of spiritual transcendence – to be suddenly and profoundly able to commune with the infinite, the eternal, the holy. One of the three “goals” of an acid trip, Harvard-psychologist-cum-psychedelic-pioneer Timothy Leary famously remarked, is “to discover and make love with God.”\textsuperscript{175} Although there were many who refused such a view of psychedelics – musician Paul Krassner quipped that acid simply showed him “a different God that I didn’t believe in”\textsuperscript{176} – few could deny the widespread assumption that God was more likely to be found on an acid trip than at the bottom of a bottle.

One former Villager described his first LSD experience in archetypal, but highly personal terms:

It placed me in the universe in a profoundly meaningful way. It relieved me of all of that nonsense, the way we compare ourselves, put ourselves down, pick ourselves up. It just put me in the \textit{continuum}. Actually, I have

\textsuperscript{173}See Martin A. Lee and Bruce Shlain, \textit{Acid Dreams: The Complete Social History of LSD} (New York: Grove Press, 1992) 44-49.
\textsuperscript{175}\textit{Playboy}, September, 1966.
\textsuperscript{176}See Miller (1991), 36-37. Continued associations between God, love, sex and dope will be discussed in subsequent chapters.
gone on from this experience to a deeper interest in Eastern philosophy, and in particular Buddhism and Zen Buddhism. I feel that that psychedelic whop to my head at that time really cracked – what I think the Buddha was really talking about – the illusion of ego, and the illusion of separateness. The perennial problem for human beings is the way we objectify the world – consequently, from that process, we are constantly the subject relative to an objective world. That’s the dualistic conundrum that bedevils us. It probably does any sentient being. It would have to. But LSD really penetrated all of that! I had a direct and immediate experience of myself as an expression of the universe.177

For him, the experience was so profound as to light a fire of obligation in him. After experiencing the profundity of the LSD trip, this man (he has chosen to remain anonymous) was convinced that this experience needed to be shared.

Really, I agreed with Aldous Huxley. He had said that acid should not be generally spread around, because it will be abused… But, unfortunately, because of the prohibition, because of the repression, because of the hysteria, a lot of us came to the conclusion that there really wasn’t an alternative. It was either going to be killed completely, or it had to be distributed. So, I got into the distribution of acid. I don’t know how else to say it, but I really thought it was a duty.178

But, while for this man the LSD experience was akin to an ecstatic, deeply religious clarity, for so many others it was (just as was their lip-service attention to Eastern religions) part of the performance. Another way to make the scene.

Sacramental drug eating and spiritual window dressing notwithstanding, the clear reality is that for most Yorkville youth formal religion was simply a non-issue.

Inevitably, in an era characterized by refusal of and rebellion against hegemonic ideologies, countercultural associations with religious institutions and moral structures were generally tenuous, and often fractious. And so, as we consider the efforts of various religious institutions to minister to the Yorkville scene, we must bear in mind that theirs

177Anonymous LSD Dealer, Interview with Author, October 13th, 2006.
178Ibid.
was a difficult, perhaps even peripheral task. Yorkville youth didn’t much care for the religious dimensions of these ministrations.

d) Sex and Gender in Yorkville

The mass media constructions of the counterculture which tended toward visions of shaggy, deeply stoned men and their skinny, pretty, sexy (and always apparently younger) companion of the moment, were not too far removed from those put forward by such underground (counterculture) papers as Satyrday, Harbinger, the Rochdale Daily Planet and the Yorkville Yawn. Why was hippiedom associated with maleness? Or, to put it in a more complicated way, how did social rebellion and counter-hegemonic ideology become gendered as a male pursuit into which women could become drawn but in which they could only perform mechanical roles?

More to the point, this construction reinforces claims of white, middle-class, and male privilege in Canadian society. It will perhaps help to appreciate just how much the fate of this white, middle-class (Christian, urban) male is at issue here. While it is too-often joked that masculinity is always in crisis, there can be no doubt that the postwar period offered up new challenges to male identity. As Leerom Medovoi has pointed out, the advent of suburbia, the rise of the conformist Organization Man ethic, and the repetition of the theme of male domestication in media, film, literature and television in the 1950s is often misread by historians as constituting a “new normative model of American manhood.” Rather, he stresses, “what they in fact connoted was at best a

180 Christine Stansell asks precisely the same question with regard to the Greenwich Village bohemians of the 1910s. “Bohemian sex talk can be seen as an early contribution to the annals of ‘men talk, women listen,’ a chronicle that has played a large part in our understanding and experience of sexual modernism.” Stansell, 307.
distressed form of masculinity, and at worst a degenerate one.” Medovoi argues persuasively that the development of the trope of the male rebel, the obsession with juvenile delinquency (also typically male), and the sudden vogue of the Beatnik individualist (always male), are each indicative of the persistent need for archetypal characters who offer resistance to the male domesticity model. Into the 1960s, the complicated relationship between the rebellious male and the conformist man became further convoluted by the shifting aesthetics of hip.

In the 1950s, rebel boys wore rebel boy outfits (leather jackets, jeans, oiled hair, etc) which, above all, could be removed. There was something comforting in this: underneath the clothing, they were merely boys, at least superficially. With the 1960s rebel aesthetics of long hair and beards, “cleaning up” required a more deliberate effort. One couldn’t simply remove Jerry Garcia’s hip garb and replace it with a suit – his cherubic face ringed by wild hair would frustrate a simple clothing swap. The illusion of permanence connoted by long hair and beard in the 60s constituted a more serious threat to the normative male model than could be stomached. Long hair was for girls, beards were for bums. And yet the new man was adopting both of these features into its expression.

The fact that a boy with long hair, whose beard was patchy and unkempt, who may have smelled of patchouli oil or worse, and whose bare feet were caked with city-summer grime could pull seemingly any woman he desired was not mistaken by straight observers in the 1960s. In an early scene in Mort Ransom’s 1967 documentary on

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182 Medovoi also demonstrates that the figure of the rebel can be read as a celebration of American individualism and agency in a Cold War era of pervasive vilification of Soviet conformism.
Yorkville we hear, over shots of hirsute hippies milling about, a disembodied male voice who, with palpable vexation, spoke for many: “I wonder sometimes, what happened to the girls who used to like the boys who got their hair cut, wore after shave lotion and stuff like this?” Such outbursts were not uncommon.

What is frequently referred to as the "sexual revolution" is also generally remembered as a sixties phenomenon, a corollary to the decade of youth unrest, social experimentation and accelerated secularization. Sexuality is understood to have been "liberated" in this period from its various constraints through diverse means. From the new availability of birth control pills to a not-misplaced confidence in speedy medical cures for sexually transmitted diseases, from emerging fashion trends which emphasized the female form to the sudden permissiveness of censorship laws as case after case was won before the courts in both the United States and Canada, sex was rather suddenly available to young people in ways their older siblings could not have imagined.

To be sure, the first years of this developing trend toward freer sexuality among middle-class youth saw but few changes in overall patterns of behaviour. Teens still snuck off in their parents' cars to neck in parking lots, at drive-in movies, at “look-out point”; limited-contact dancing was still enforced (at many school dances, a space of a few inches was to be maintained between bodies at all times, even (especially) during the slow numbers); and pre-marital sex was only slightly more common than it had always been. But as the 60s wore on, as the Pill became more readily available, and the subversive ethic of free love began its strange journey from the extreme edge of the

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183 Christopher’s Movie Matinée, National Film Board of Canada, 1968.
184 See David Allyn, Make Love Not War (Boston: Little, Brown, 2000) 3-5.

In Yorkville, sex and gender played interweaving, intriguing roles in the performance of Village life. The widespread obsession with Yorkville as a zone of hedonistic, easy and liberated sexuality overcame many observers and participants alike as they tended to equate the Village with such activity nearly as readily as with drug use. If the most authentic performance of Yorkville was to be high on drugs, then this "free love" was certainly the second best. For many 60s-era youth, adopting the ethic of liberated sexuality constituted a certain refusal of middle-class values and hegemonic ideology, a rejection of the staid sexual politics of their parents' generation. Since many young people grew up with the famous "wholesomeness" of television programming in the 1950s – on \textit{I Love Lucy}, married couple Lucy and Desi Arnaz slept in different beds, for example – simply enjoying a furtive grope before marriage may have seemed revolutionary to some.\footnote{See Daniel Marcus, \textit{Happy Days and Wonder Years}, 9-35, for a discussion of the ways this imagined wholesomeness was used in the 1970s and beyond as a tool of conservative memory.}

The unevenness of the distribution of sexual freedom and the negative consequences and connotations attendant to freer sexuality (especially as played out within the tiny community of Yorkville) demonstrate the serious limitations of the free love ethic in the period. While more young people were having more (and perhaps even improved) sex than did their parents, and with comparably fewer social, physical and mental repercussions than before, as we shall see the downside of the sexual performance
of the Yorkville scene was both steep and slippery.\textsuperscript{187} Many young people, and most of them young women, found that too often what masqueraded as a liberated sexuality was something rather less beautiful – it was sex for money, for drugs, for food, for a place to crash; it was a pernicious, quietly effective STD, stealing your fertility before you discovered its presence; it was a smooth talking stranger who brought you home to his gang of friends for a lopsided orgy; it was yet another "village pregnancy", a highly unwanted, terminally uncool, and tremendously unwelcome situation. While it was by no means always like this – indeed, many women found sex in the Village to be a healthy, attractive, and ultimately safe experience – some, it must be said, did not.

e) Dope, Drugs and the Politics of Inclusion

Out of the torrent of post-Baby Boom adolescent energy there flowed a surprising phenomenon: a sharp rise in the consumption, even obsession, with illicit drugs heretofore unseen in the history of middle-class youth culture.\textsuperscript{188} As has been ably documented elsewhere (and hardly bears repeating here), illicit drug use within the burgeoning youth culture in Toronto (and throughout urban North America) dramatically increased through the mid-to-late 1960s.\textsuperscript{189} In fact, we can safely conclude that the 1960s witnessed the surfacing of white middle-class criminal drug use onto the Canadian

\textsuperscript{187} The emergence of female sexual gratification as a political issue (catalyzed by Anne Koedt’s 1968 missive “The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm”) began the slow process for many women of turning the focus of their sexual energy toward their own pleasure. As the myth of frigidity was ground down in the wake of such feminist articulations, sex became more pleasurable for women (and men) who turned their minds to this line of thinking. Koedt, “The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm”, reprinted in Taking it to the Streets, ed. Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003) 422-428.


\textsuperscript{189} See Marcel Martel, Not This Time: Canadians, Public Policy and the Marijuana Question, 1961-1975 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006) for an in-depth discussion of the meteoric rise of drug consumption among teens and young adults.
cultural radar screen. Certainly this is reckonable when we consider the infrequency and insignificance of middle-class drugs arrests and convictions prior to 1966.\textsuperscript{190}

As Doug Owram reported, “as late as 1963 the Annual Report of the RCMP was confident that there was no real drug problem in Canada. The new Narcotic Act of 1960, the excellent work of the police, and severe court sentences had, the report concluded, actually reduced the low level of drug usage in the country. As for cannabis, a grand total of fifteen ounces were [sic] seized during the year.”\textsuperscript{191} In fact, 1963 saw a mere 394 drugs charges laid in all of Canada – when we compare this to 1970, which saw that number increase to 8,596, we see that something has clearly changed over these seven years. Throughout the 60s, drug use in Toronto was becoming more visible for a number of reasons, not the least significant of which was the advent of tighter police controls on marijuana sales and consumption.\textsuperscript{192} Whereas by mid-July of 1964 Metro Toronto Police had nabbed five people on marijuana offences, they had charged about 20 by the same time a year later. And marijuana had clearly overtaken all other narcotics as the most popular street drug – by mid-1965, charges for marijuana possession had swollen to outnumber all other drugs arrests in Metro. By decade's end, it was estimated that 30-50 percent of university students had used drugs – and with the majority of university

\textsuperscript{190}Martel’s Chapter on “Measuring the Use of Illegal Drugs” establishes a variety of class, race, language and gender gaps in the distribution of drug consumption. Throughout the 1960s, the chief grouping (at least with respect to the concerns of the general public, the mass media and various governments) were white, middle-class men and women between the ages of 13-25. Martel, 10-35.

\textsuperscript{191}Owram, 198.

\textsuperscript{192}Catherine Carstairs’ study of narcotics laws in Canada prior to the 1960s establishes, quite convincingly, that marijuana was rather a non-issue in the decades leading up to Beatlemania. Of more concern were the addictive narcotics cocaine, heroin and morphine – marijuana was a minor player in the drug wars between the 1923 legislation (when pot was made illegal in Canada) and the early 1960s. Carstairs, Jailed for Possession: Illegal Drug Use, Regulation, and Power in Canada, 1920-1961 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).
students being of white, middle-class backgrounds, it is not difficult to do the math here.\textsuperscript{193}

The first significant public association of Yorkville with drugs was the widely-reported police raid on Werner Graeber’s coffee house “drinking party” in late July, 1961. However, it was not until four months after the July raid, on November 1\textsuperscript{st}, that the \textit{Star} printed the connection between the “drinking party” and marijuana, making reference to four joints found hidden around the establishment. Following this revelation – that a Yorkville drinking party might (perhaps would) engage in illicit drug use – media coverage of, youth interest in, and municipal and police attention to the village expanded steadily. Still, it was only after 1964 that the sustained media repetition of the combination of Yorkville, drugs and middle-class white youth rebellion became mantric.

In fact, drug use as an issue hardly surfaces in media reports on Yorkville in the years prior to 1965. If one were to judge by the newspaper articles on the developments in the Yorkville scene in this period, drug use was an acknowledged, but rarely central focus of the reportage. Then, rather suddenly, in mid-1965 the newspapers began to emphasize drugs – as if overnight, virtually all articles on the Yorkville scene took on the issue of drug use as a primary, unquestioned aspect of village life.

Prior to this sustained media spotlight, the Yorkville drug culture was a markedly different animal from the one that would become infamous in the late 60s. It is of course difficult to characterize the Yorkville scene in any of its incarnations, but it can be said with some authority that prior to 1965 drug use in the Village (apart from alcohol) was

\textsuperscript{193}Owram, 203.
largely confined to marijuana and (much less commonly) to LSD. Even alcohol was not much of an issue in the Village, considering the paucity of liquor licenses in the area. British transplant Martin Barber dryly recalls that “it was a lot easier to get a joint back then than it was to get a drink. In Toronto, you couldn’t even find a place worth drinking in! And, coming from Europe, there wasn’t.” His friend Miguel Maropakis concurs: “On Saturday night,” he reminds us, “you couldn’t get a drink after 11:30!” Suffice it to say, this recreational drug use, while as much about the cultivation of a certain countercultural identity as it was with later Yorkville youth cultures, had little else in common with the rapacious appetites for narcotics amongst Villagers by the late 1960s.

In around the summer of 1965, the floodgates were opened wide as a psilocybin yawn. Yorkville drug use, heretofore an allegation, perhaps at best an assumption, had suddenly became a full-blown reality. Reflected in an alarmist front page article in the Toronto Star – in which drugs (namely pot and LSD) were treated as a largely unknown and misunderstood proposition – fears of Yorkville youth degenerating into a ghettoized culture of addicts and criminals were growing. But, fears were not the only things that the article suggested were growing in Toronto: the ostensible point of the report concerned the allegation that Villagers were harvesting marijuana themselves in “Yorkville patches.” Although immediately dismissed as unlikely by police officers in the ensuing article, this baseless contention figured into the prominent front page headline anyway. And so, one more reason to see Yorkville as different, strange, foreign:

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194 For example, the first LSD arrest in Yorkville was not until very late 1966, and this came only following a three-month undercover operation. Although the drug was certainly more readily available by then than this arrest suggests, it was still clearly operating in the background. Early January and February coverage tended to introduce LSD as a proposition to readers, presuming ignorance. Globe and Mail, December 16th, 1966.
195 Martin Barber, Interview with Author, 2007.
196 Miguel Maropakis, Interview with Author, 2007.
197 Toronto Star, July 2nd, 1965.
not only was it a place where people took drugs, but it was a place where they grew unchecked! (Of course, this notion is laughable, if only for the simple reason that if one were to grow marijuana in Toronto in 1965, one would (hopefully) not be stupid enough to grow it precisely in the location where people were expecting to find it.)

As a result, any discussion of Yorkville, the counterculture, or 1960s popular culture in general needs to consider the centrality of drugs to the constructions and performances of these phenomena in the popular imagination. In the Yorkville scene, as it was in other key countercultural zones such as Haight-Ashbury and Greenwich Village, the principal drugs in circulation were marijuana, amphetamines and LSD, especially in the first five or six years of the development of the neighbourhoods as countercultural centres.

However, in the winter of 1967-8 the Addiction Research Foundation (ARF) reported that, besides these omnipresent drugs, “the substances in regular use [in Yorkville] for kicks or mood changes include… frost [a substance used to cool drinking glasses], cough syrups, asthma preparations, codeine pills, morning glory seeds, STP, airplane glue, nose drops, strammonium [sic], opium, DMT, nail polish remover, cigarettes, depressants of all sorts, and, of course, alcohol.”¹¹⁹⁸ Further, their report complained that “there appear to be almost no norms of moderation established for the control of drug experiences… there is no concept of excess, abuse, or over-indulgence with regard to the non-narcotic drugs.” As their undercover fieldworker discovered after his identity was nearly exposed, “one could not maintain status as a villager without

¹¹⁹⁸Smart and Jackson, 61.
frequently using drugs.” In the space of a very few years, drug use had mushroomed into the primary activity in the area. How did this happen?

After 1965, as media constructions of the village began to conflate recreational drug use with the very identity of cultural dissent, of youthful rebellion, more and more of Toronto (and Canada’s) young people visited the village looking to engage with the counterculture through drugs. Whereas drug use in pre-1965 Yorkville was more of a possible aspect of the performance of a pseudo-bohemia, later manifestations of Yorkville youth culture began to take on drug use as the central, obligatory articulation of countercultural identity.

One chief research question behind this thesis - how and why did Yorkville become understood as an activity? – is inevitably tied to the issue of drugs. For, by 1967, drug use, Yorkville, and the hippies were all intertwined in the popular imagination. Just as the Yorkville youth culture had come to recognize the badge of countercultural identity as experience with marijuana and LSD, it was well understood by observers of the village that a key facet of participation in the Yorkville scene was to be high on drugs. In short, it was widely held that you could not do Yorkville without being high. It was as if the location, the activity, and the actor were fused together through performance, expression, identity. In short, if Yorkville was a stage, drug use was its most authentic performance.

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199Ibid.
Throughout the 1960s, the Yorkville youth scene was divided along performative lines. These identity categories – including Hippies, Greasers, Bikers, Tourists, Teenyboppers, Weekenders, Politicos, Toughs – were repeatedly reified in attempts to explore the ways young people were expressing Village identity. Part of this was a result of persistent media frames which emphasized inter-youth conflict in the Village, but the reality of the Village scene (and in large measure what made it so appealing to many young people at the time) was its offer of a stage on which to perform a variety of identities. While these categories were externally reified (and frequently codified in media reportage and academic studies of the Village scene), they were internally meaningful. A Villager tended to know just where she fit into the scheme of things – even if she wouldn’t admit to being a hippie, she likely knew that she wasn’t a greaser, and vice versa.

In 1969, the Addiction Research Foundation published the findings of their undercover operative following his six-month stay in Yorkville. His Report (as reworded and organized by his supervisors David Jackson and Reginald Smart) offered an ethnographic approach to the “cultures” in the Village, an approach which explicitly codified the various expressions of Village identity into four apparently discrete identity categories. To their ethnographer (as it had been for many participants and observes alike for years) Yorkville’s scene was comprised of four distinct identity categories: Hippies (also known as Beatniks, Bohemians, Bohemians); Weekenders (or Weekend Hippies, Teenyboppers, even Tourists); Greasers (also Toughs, Rowdies); and Bikers. At every turn, his field notes (and the subsequent 90-page Report) relied on this reification of
abstract, contingent identity performance in an effort to “explain” and “understand” the
drug culture that had taken hold in the district.200

*Making the Scene* approaches these identity categories with caution – in general,
one must approach *all* identity categories with skepticism – but does not refuse them. In
the weird cosmos that was the Village scene, figuratively cut off from the wider cityscape
as it was, these identity categories *did* form their own distinct constellations. Indeed, in
the years before Alampur and the ARF laid down the four-identity framework in such
explicit terms, the press, the City, and the Villagers themselves had generally relied upon
these same categories to make sense of the youth politics in their district. And, while
many Villagers may have made no conscious effort to align themselves with any
particular identity performance when they approached the Village scene, the availability
of these categories in the public imagination allowed for their easy assimilation into the
framework. Performance, identification and conformity all intermingle in this process;
because Villagers were aware that these categories existed (and they did exist, in various
forms, from as early as 1963), they were inescapable. Presence in Yorkville might have
made you a Villager, but your identity performance as a Villager was inevitably
interpreted through the prism of these four categories of Village identity.

*Making the Scene*, recognizing the significance of such identity categories as sites
of identity formation and political resistance, interrogates the ways in which these
categories operated in the Village scene. How was identity status (i.e. inclusion and
exclusion from one or more groups) conferred, and to what extent did race, class and
gender play roles in the nuclear development of these groups? Even a cursory
examination of the main categories (Bikers, Hippies, Greasers and Weekenders)

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200 Smart and Jackson, 1969. Also, see Longstaff.
demonstrates that, in general, women were viewed as unequal partners in the
development and organization of Village identity. Indeed, the archetypal representative of
each category is always male (except, tellingly, in the case of the Weekender sub-
category of Teenybopper, which is never depicted as representing more than a subplot to
the main show). Throughout this book, women’s roles in the Village scene have had to be
re-fitted into the story, since so often in the historical record of the district they have been
summarized as victims, dependants, and sex objects. As feminism, birth control, and a
growing distaste for puritanical sexuality entered public discourse – events usually
grouped together under the heading of the “sexual revolution” – concern over the fate of
young women who ventured into the Village scene abounded. The identity categories
merely reinforced such anxieties over the sexual and social degradation of femininity as
they set up men as the subjects and women as the objects of narcotic and sexual
hedonism.

A further examination of these four principal categories also demonstrates the
unambiguous class and ethnic components to the labeling. While Hippies and
Weekenders were, in the main, comprised of white, middle-class, educated, suburban
youth (the main distinction between them being about their degree of authenticity, or
commitment to the Village scene), Greasers and Bikers generally came from lower-
income, urban, and immigrant backgrounds. While Hippies and Weekenders were
commonly framed as young people who had “dropped out” and were in danger of being
“lost”, Greasers and Bikers were rarely humanized in such ways – it was as if they were
merely behaving as was expected of them as working-class, immigrant-reared street
youth. And while apologists and even halting supporters for the middle class
performances of hip abounded in the period (from editorialists at the major newspapers to politicians to prominent Canadians) virtually no one stood up for the hip street youth from working-class backgrounds.

As Canada, but especially Toronto, became home to vast numbers of heretofore unwelcome immigrants in the immediate postwar years, anxieties over cultural degeneration flared up among established, privileged Canadians. As Franca Iacovetta has demonstrated, the inclusion of Southern and Eastern Europeans (not to mention African, Asian and Caribbean peoples) in the postwar years was hardly a smooth and casual process. As Toronto experienced the twinned demographic shifts of postwar suburbanization (the process which saw large numbers of white, Anglo-Torontonians moving out of the downtown core) and postwar immigration (the process which saw the downtown core repopulated by non-Anglos), anxiety over the rapidly changing face of the city was widespread. As I will demonstrate below, such anxieties found a public forum in the debates over emerging youth cultures as they played out on the stage that was Yorkville. On the one hand, these debates explored public concern over the newfound presence of immigrant-reared (read: un-Canadian) youth in Toronto; on the other hand, these debates reflected fear and confusion surrounding what was perceived to be a degeneration of suburban, middle-class youth identity (as expressed through drug use, alternative sex practices, and asceticism, among other performances). Consequently, *Making the Scene* recognizes that strong undercurrents of gender, race and class anxiety flow through these stories, and through both the expressions and the recognitions of Village identity performances.
PART TWO:

Yorkville – It’s Happening!

*1960-63*
Chapter Three:

From Gerrard Street to Yorkville Avenue

As is often observed, “The Sixties” does not actually refer to the decade 1960-1970, but rather to a ten-or-so-year period which followed the baby boom and preceded the economic crises of the mid-1970s. It has become common practice for many historians to make a page-three-claim that ‘for the purposes of clarity and continuity we shall say that the Sixties began in 1963 and ended roughly ten years later.’\(^{201}\) For American historians these demarcations often refer to the assassination of JFK and either the Watergate scandal or the end of direct U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.\(^{202}\)

In Canada the framing events are somewhat vaguer. Canadian historians do not have the defining dramatic moment of political murder to set up the story – nor do they have the tidy conclusion of masses of young people finally returning from a hugely unpopular war: two historical moments, both defined by their deep-toothed bite out of a nation’s innocence.\(^{203}\) What Canadians have instead is a messier, more haphazard series of signposts, cultural events, political shifts, and social movements which demonstrate, if

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\(^{201}\) Daniel Marcus, for example, has demonstrated the ways the “Sixties” have functioned in contrast to the “Fifties” in many histories of the postwar era. “I use ‘the Fifties,’ ‘the Sixties’ and so on to denote the agglomerations of cultural elements, political meanings, and other associations that have come to be attached to the temporal periods.” Marcus, 207.

\(^{202}\) As hip-hop historian Jeff Chang has put it: “Generations are fictions. The act of determining a group of people by placing a beginning and ending date around them is a way to impose a narrative. They are interesting and necessary fictions because they allow claims to be staked around ideas. But generations are fictions nonetheless, often created simply to suit the needs of demographers, journalists, futurists, and marketers.” Can’t Stop Won’t Stop (New York: Picador Press, 2005) 1.

\(^{203}\) Other, equally plausible formations include the Cuban Missile Crisis (late 1962) to Nixon’s resignation, 1973; or King’s “I Have a Dream” speech to bussing in Boston, 1974; or the Beatles on Ed Sullivan (early 1964) to the oil embargo, late 1973. Note that all of these events suggest (or plainly are about) the shattering of illusions, the loss of innocence, and Americans coming face to face with themselves, their world, and their role therein.
anything, that the Canadian Sixties can only be forced into temporal constraints under duress, if at all.\textsuperscript{204}

One significant result of these repeated attempts to shift studies of “the Sixties” away from the events of the early decade is that scholarship on the cultural climate in those first few years has hardly piled up, while the late-1960s have been re-treaded countless times. The latter half of the 1960s offers us virtually all of the archetypal Sixties events, personages, movements, scenes, and activities (the hippies, “prairie power” student activists, Radical and Women’s Liberation Feminism, widespread drug use, Black Power, Psychedelic Rock’n’roll, \textit{Bonne and Clyde}, Chicago ’68, Woodstock/Altamont, Hoffman, Garcia, Cleaver, Joplin, etc, etc), while the early 1960s appear to offer little beyond the lazy denouement from the 1950s. Indeed, what do we associate with the years between the fireworks on December 31\textsuperscript{st}, 1959 and the Beatles playing Ed Sullivan in February, 1964? The years before Dylan went electric, hallucinogenic drugs, the mini skirt, free love, the sitar? Before tie-dye, beads, bralessness and sandals?

This Section is designed with a twofold purpose. Throughout, it will establish Yorkville’s role as a Toronto hip centre even as early as the late 1950s in the hopes of dismantling the memory of Yorkville as defined by the events and actors of second half of the 1960s. However, its coincident function will be to explore the dialectical relationship between youth and state as it was negotiated in this nascent centre of hip rebelliousness. As Toronto’s hip youth began to see Yorkville as a centre in which they could explore their shared dislike and distrust of conformist postwar society, Toronto’s

civic authorities were simultaneously working to develop Yorkville into the *prima facie* proof of Toronto’s developing cultural sophistication. Put plainly, the problem was that while both groups saw in Yorkville a burgeoning cultural nova, their views of what constituted sophistication were wildly incompatible.

Above all else, the first few years of the 1960s demonstrate that Yorkville’s status as hippie centre was by no means determined prior to the advent of hippiedom in later years. Rather, it was very much a form without a face, a map inviting a multitude of readings, a centre understood to be *important*, but otherwise widely misapprehended. For it was not that observers and participants alike failed to appreciate the significance of this exciting and fresh new site of cultural interest, it was that no single interpretation of the district had yet achieved hegemony. Its identity was very much up for grabs. As such, alongside the merchants and their well-heeled customers, such curious undesirables as the Ramsden Park greasers, downtown gays and lesbians, embryonic politicos, folksingers, Beats, poets and artists all found reasons to make the scene.

Still, in these years, following an extended period of reclamation and redevelopment of the formerly dilapidated neighbourhood, Yorkville was widely seen as an ongoing municipal success story, proof of the effectiveness of gentrification projects in central Toronto. It was developing into a bastion of sophisticated, carriage trade capitalism, a centre for the wealthy urbanites whose tastes ran to the exotic and conspicuous in both clothing and art. And yet, there was no denying that alongside this trend toward sophistication there arose a younger, and decidedly less desirable trend toward bohemian aesthetics and identity. At first a mere curiosity, bohemian youth’s association with Yorkville was becoming less an appendage to the sophisticated
Yorkville identity apparatus than a core principle of that very identity. What had been a quiet, unassuming series of corners where students debated foreign policy, where gay and lesbian connections might be made, and where suburban Ginsberg-aficionados could sip their first black-turtlenecked espresso, was slipping onto the radar screens of young, bored Torontonians. And this attention could only beget more attention. Yorkville was, to the disdain and consternation of merchants, civic authorities and some unsympathetic media outlets, getting younger.

Chapters Three and Four both consider a series of events crucial to the development of the Yorkville scene from the perspective of identity and representation. The overarching question – whose Yorkville is this? – was as much theirs as it is mine. Since much of the language of the hip pundits and politicos of the postwar period tended toward existentialist concerns with fidelity and authenticity, such questions often framed identity categories within the Yorkville context throughout the 1960s. By 1965, “fake” or “plastic Villagers” were castigated for their inauthentic performances of the scene, alongside the soon-to-be-labeled “true hippies” whose articulations of hipness were somehow more genuine. This language of ownership and privilege dominated discourse on Yorkville in ensuing years. In the early 1960s we see the formulation of such a dialectic between the middle class rebellious youth culture and the Other, whomever that might be, in the context of the archetypal Yorkville Villagers.

One of the key issues these chapters will consider is the uprooting (one might go so far as to say colonization) of the Ramsden Park gang of working-class street youth as the dominant youth culture in the immediate Yorkville area. The early 60s saw the Ramsden Park Gang (commonly, and derisively, dubbed Greasers), especially under the
guidance of Rev Stewart Crysdale at his Drop-In Centre at Avenue Road St-Paul’s United Church, begin to overcome some of their most pressing social problems to develop into a much more stable association of young people. However, their claim on the district was simply incompatible with the dialectic of sophisticated and bohemian which came to characterize the Yorkville scene. As this new youth culture worked to establish itself as a significant presence in the district, Crysdale’s Drop-In Centre shifted its focus to this latest cohort of young people, forcing out the Greasers and underlining their basic (and class-borne) insignificance to Toronto’s social interests.

Of course, the Greasers would never really leave. By 1968 they were still the most populous identity category in the Village scene (according to one observer). But their presence was considered peripheral, unworthy of serious consideration by media, municipal authorities, or humanitarian groups. Since the battle for Yorkville was borne out in the conflict between a gentrification project frustrated by adventurous middle-class youth, Greasers just didn’t fit.

Where is Here?: Yorkville, Toronto, and Cold War Canadians

The story of how Yorkville came to be a youth centre is bound up with the story of an emerging cosmopolitan city. Toronto, even as late as 1965, had rarely been accused of being an exciting place. In fact, “Toronto the Good” was much more often criticized for its sober, sleepy character than for any dangerous, subversive underbelly. Big city issues (and hip crossroads) such as crime, unemployment, homelessness, narcotic dealing, addiction, and prostitution all played roles in the Toronto of the day, but held
nowhere near the same mythic associations with Toronto’s reputation as they did in Chicago, New York, or even Montréal.

More importantly, Toronto was popularly believed to be a dreary, puritanical place. Budd Sugarman, a vivacious young entrepreneur who opened a pioneering interior decorating business on Cumberland Street in a rundown house in 1948, puts it succinctly: “When I arrived in Toronto, I asked people ‘Where is the cultural centre of Toronto. People said: ‘There isn’t any.’” To many Canadians (and Montrealers especially), Toronto’s reputation for culture was summed up in an old saw, much repeated in the postwar years, that told of a lottery offering as its first prize a week’s vacation in Toronto. Second prize? Two weeks.

A combination of cultural segregation due to widespread suburbanization and a famously dogged determination to adhere to the Organization Man ethic helped Toronto to slip into a bit of a cultural slumber during the middle 1950s. Moreover, although it was a huge city (by Canadian standards, at least), Toronto had remained remarkably homogeneous right into the 50s. In 1951, the majority of people who lived in Toronto were still ethnically British (73 per cent), religiously Protestant (72 per cent), and Canadian-born (69 per cent). Part of the reason for this was the persistence of federal immigration restrictions, some of which would be liberalized in the coming years.

If, as John LeLand has so persuasively argued, there can be no “hip” without the abrasive friction caused by racial and ethnic intermingling in the urban environment,
Toronto didn’t seem like a likely candidate for a hip future. Unlike such ur-hip centres as New York or San Francisco (or even St. Louis), Toronto’s ethnic mix was hardly sufficient to provide the proper environment for the process of cultural sharing, appropriation and bastardization that constructs hipness. Indeed, people from recent enemy countries such as Germany and Italy were only permitted to immigrate to Canada again after 1950; and the policy which forbade visible minorities and the impoverished from Africa, Asia and other predominately “Third World” regions was not re-evaluated until the 1960s.

In the 1950s, then, most of the immigrants who did help to enliven the city tended to be European. Following the war in Europe, many displaced and impoverished Europeans (many of them doubly displaced following Soviet revolutions in their Eastern European homelands) turned to Canada for a new start. Following years of postwar suburbanization projects which drew many Torontonians from the core of the city further North, East and West, Toronto’s relatively empty inner-city Victorian and Edwardian houses became home to many European transplants. With their arrival came a new era in Toronto’s history, and the beginning of its flirtation with hip culture.

The area from Gerrard Street north to Yorkville, an inexpensive, largely forgotten series of streets full of nineteenth century row houses, was an ideal spot for new Torontonians to set up their first Canadian digs. And, alongside their colonization of the

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209 See especially Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006); Knowles, 2007; Richard Harris, *Creeping Conformity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Statistics and other info here from the very good website maintained by the City of Toronto. [http://www.toronto.ca/culture/history/history-1951-onward.htm](http://www.toronto.ca/culture/history/history-1951-onward.htm).

area in the late 40s and throughout the 1950s, came the establishment of distinctly
European enterprises. Among these, the European coffee house was perhaps the most
surprising to Torontonians. For many cynical Toronto students and artists, perhaps
equally enamored of Fitzgerald, Sartre and Corso, the coffee house suggested a Euro-
bohemian hangout unlike any previously known to the city.

According to ballet dancer Clifford Collier, such tastes of Euro flavour were a
revelation. “I mean there were never coffee houses in Toronto! The closest thing we had
to anything fancy was Diana Sweets. There were two of them, really tea shoppes, where
ladies went and had sandwiches and sweets. That was the closest Toronto had to a coffee
house! And… because of the Europeans coming into Toronto after the war, here were
coffee houses.”211 The Gerrard Village was often referred to as “Greenwich Village” by
Torontonians in these years, a tribute to the great bohemian centre to the South. In fact,
much like its American forebear, the Gerrard Village “was a place of small galleries,
framing shops, and coffee houses,” writes David Burnett, “which began to attract
devotees of avant-garde jazz, art, poetry, and drama.”212 (Avrom Isaacs even opened a
Greenwich Gallery in 1955.) In such a scene, European owners and small clientele would
mix with curious teens and twentysomethings from around the city – it was through this
alchemy, a fruitful combination of Euro émigrés, Beat youth, aspiring poets, musicians,
artists, students, all breathing the air of difference, that the Yorkville scene began its
development into hip youth centre extraordinaire.

Throughout the 1960s, and containing as it did any number of supposedly distinct
categories of identity (“hippies”, “bikers”, etc), many of which were subsumed (if in

211 Clifford Collier, Interview with Author, June 15th, 2006.
212 Burnett, 10-11.
uneven proportions) under the meta-category of “Villager”, Yorkville should be read as a social construction. The neighbourhood took on so many meanings, each one relationally tied to contemporary hegemonic ideologies, and several of these fundamentally at odds (i.e. hippie wonderland vs. drug-riddled slum), that *Making the Scene* problematizes the very space known as Yorkville. Yorkville was no stable category, but rather a contested territory. It was a space filled by various people, places and things, all of which embodied a variety of meanings and, in turn, were taken to mean an array of things to others.

A wide literature exists on urban geography and the theorizing of urban place and space, but no dominant theoretical framework exists at present. Rather, there seems to be a wariness to treat urban geography with any one totalizing theory.\(^{213}\) However, certain geographers, historians and anthropologists have employed a poststructuralist mode of analysis in discussions of place and space.\(^{214}\) This ‘new cultural geography’ relies on the notion that *meaning* is contested, unstable and, ultimately, unreliable. Geographer Tim Hall’s summation of this school of thought is worth quoting at length:

> Cities are not just collections of material artifacts; rather, they are also sites through which ideologies are projected, cultural values are expressed and power is exercised. The meanings of cities, landscapes and buildings can be inscribed into them by their producers, architects, builders, planners and proprietors. These producers are situated within cultural and class contexts. Consequently these meanings are not simply idiosyncratic and important sources, rather they are reflective of wider positions derived from class, capital, nation, religion, or some other cultural context. Alternatively, meaning can be projected upon cities, landscapes or buildings through their representation in a variety of media… *We can think of the city and its components as both the visible manifestation of*

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less visible or invisible processes and cultural positions, and as symbolic representations of these cultural positions.\textsuperscript{215}

In other words, a neighbourhood such as Yorkville is loaded with an assortment of meanings, and these meanings are all socially constituted through a variety of forces and contexts, which are themselves tied to hegemonic ideologies.

Geographer Amos Rappaport has argued that there are three distinct levels of meaning in a built environment.\textsuperscript{216} However, he too minimizes the role of the ‘consumers’ of the environment in his framework. He argues that the first level of meaning (to which he ascribes the most importance) reflects the cosmological views (or moral, religious, universal ideology) of producers. The second level (medium-important) reflects the class or cultural ideologies and positioning of the producers. The third (low) level of meaning reflects the everyday use of the environment – for it is acknowledged that everyday use might not reflect the intended meanings of the environment.

While I am intrigued by Rappaport’s mode of analysis, it seems more valuable if re-designed to account for a much greater degree of power coming from the everyday use of the environment. The various meanings taken on by Yorkville in the 1960s were greatly affected by those meanings associated with the hippie archetype and, eventually, the wider counterculture in general. The people in the neighbourhood became the primary

\textsuperscript{215} Tim Hall, 28, my emphasis. Significantly, Hall (as with others in this school) leaves out the ‘consumers’ here – that is, the human population which lives in and interacts with the environment in question. It is clear to me that this group is also actively involved in the production of meaning. I have been frustrated to find that human activity (apart from its role in construction and building the physical aspect of the space) is largely avoided by some of the ‘new cultural geographers’ I have encountered. But this ‘productionist bias’ has been recognized by others in the field of cultural geography and is currently being dismantled. Hall cites Daniel Miller \textit{et al}, \textit{Shopping, Place and Identity} (London: Routledge, 1998) as among the best of the new geographies of space, production and consumption.

concern – the human population (and the various interpretations of these groups from both in- and outside) was the most significant producer of the meanings of the Village.

Peter Jackson’s emphasis on mutable readings of physical landscapes helps us to understand Yorkville’s various meanings. His theory of landscape and hegemony relies on the useful notion that groups and individuals make sense of their social world through “maps of meaning”:

Like any cartographic image, ‘maps of meaning’ codify knowledge and represent it symbolically. But, like other maps, they are ideological instruments in the sense that they project a preferred reading of the material world, with prevailing social relations mirrored in the depiction of physical space. Some meanings are dominant; others result from struggle against the dominant order. As with every map, however, a certain ambiguity always remains. Cultural maps are capable of multiple readings.217

Yorkville in the Sixties, the contested terrain, was a map of meaning reflecting both dominant and countercultural ideologies. Making the Scene seeks to provide the multiple readings this map deserves.218

Yorkville Village, as I write this in 2007, looks nothing like the place discussed below. If, 20 years ago, geographer Charles Johnson could happily report that “many of the original houses in the Village have retained their house form,” one certainly cannot do the same today. An Australian scholar working as a visiting professor at the University of Toronto, Johnson praised Toronto and its city planners for their successful "preservation of Yorkville"; but that was 1984. Today, another twenty years down the road, one can scarcely imagine Yorkville's former (that is, pre-1985) architecture, style,

217 Peter Jackson, 186, my emphasis.
218 See, for example, two excellent examples of such scholarship in: George Chauncey, Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940 (New York: Basic Books, 1995) and Karen Dubinsky, The Second Greatest Disappointment: Honeymooners, Heterosexuality and the Tourist Industry at Niagara Falls (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999);
even size. What would Prof. Johnson think of the hulking luxury hotels which have colonized the both corners at Avenue Rd, Cumberland and Yorkville Aves, the American mega-chain fast food and coffee outlets dotting the landscape, the exaggerated Hollywoodism associated with such local restaurants as Sassafraz (one of those places "to see and be seen" during the world-famous Toronto International Film Festival), or the recent razing of much of Yorkville Ave to make way for yet another elegant condominium complex? Yorkville, some 35 years after the hip sunset fell upon its narrow lanes, shares very little with its former incarnation, apart from a somewhat overblown reputation and a disproportionate popularity among young, wealthy white people.

Perhaps this transformation is a foreseeable process; this renovation, this redesignation of municipal land, this enfolding of the quaintly historical by the inexorable future push. Nevertheless, this process has always been met by its detractors. For many, the often casual destruction of such intangible aesthetics as “character” and “charm” is the most evident result of such building projects. More than a few writers in 1970 lamented the broad refiguring of the simple Yorkville Village that they remembered from the 1940s. In fact, complaints about the frequent (near constant) development of Yorkville have been raised since just before the beginning of the 1960s – since the outset of Yorkville's ascension from mid-town obscurity to become perhaps the most famous pair of blocks in Canada by 1970.

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219 Richard Harris meditates at length on this theme in his recent work on suburbanization in Canada. Creeping Conformity (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).
220 There is a wide literature on gentrification, but this book is primarily influenced by the work of Richard Lloyd and in particular his study of Wicker Park Chicago’s hip scene. Neo-Bohemia: Art and Commerce in the Post-Industrial City (New York: Routledge, 2005). Lloyd’s argument centres on the paradoxical belief held by many bohemians that their mere presence within a particular enclave of bohemia sets them somehow apart from mainstream culture, economy, and politics. The gentrification process, he argues, is tied to the unconsciousness (or obfuscation) of the realities of class identity and politics frequently at work in the bohemian centre. For other (Marxist) readings of the gentrification process, see...
From the turn of the century until the 1950s, Yorkville had remained almost entirely residential.\textsuperscript{221} In 1945, for example, only seven small businesses operated out of the neighbourhood, including two groceries (one on Scollard and one on Yorkville) and a Chinese-owned laundry.\textsuperscript{222} Until the mid-1950s, "for the most part the houses were not subdivided into apartments or rooms for rent." According to a 1967 York University honours thesis detailing the "Growth of Yorkville" before 1950, "only two buildings on Yorkville Avenue had been converted into boarding houses for girls," while "the rest were occupied by families, two-thirds as tenants and the rest as owners."\textsuperscript{223} However, the number of young children declined throughout this period, and the residential population became predominantly elderly. At the same time, the quality of housing declined until, in the words of one longtime resident, it was merely a "slum."\textsuperscript{224} "It was skuzzy," recalls Judy Pocock, who grew up on Hazelton in the late 50s. "Toronto is a changed city. It was much poorer. [Due to suburbanization,] middle-class people kind of left, and then it was mostly working-class and immigrants, and the artistic community."\textsuperscript{225}

In fact, in 1944 the City of Toronto had designated Yorkville (which then included the as-yet underdeveloped stretch of Bloor St to the south) as one of the three residential areas most in need of municipal attention. By 1954, as Bloor St. was being developed into a commercial strip in anticipation of the coming Subway line, adjacent Cumberland St became home to an overflow of boutiques and other endeavors. In the late


\textsuperscript{223}Key, 32.


\textsuperscript{225}Judy Pocock, Interview with Author, June 24\textsuperscript{th}, 2006.
1950s, Yorkville may have still been in a state of disrepair, full of crumbling Victorian houses, but, of course, it was also situated in an undeniably desirable location: not quite downtown, adjacent to the largest student body in Canada, steps away from the busy Yonge Street bars and theatres, and on the doorstep of a developing middle-class North Toronto.

Perhaps the very first entrepreneur to take full advantage of this developing locale was Mary Millichamp. In late 1947, Millichamp (of a wealthy family, owners of Canada’s largest manufacturers of glass display cases) took over one of the dilapidated houses on Yorkville Ave and began to refashion it into a "charming and expensive restaurant with city-wide appeal."226 Widely credited with being, along with Budd Sugarman, the pioneer entrepreneur in the district, Millichamp’s gutsy efforts – her friends strongly discouraged her plan, assuring her that the moneyed classes would “never patronize anything ‘on that street’” – were well noted by others who saw the potentials for growth in the district.227 As one early Village resident put it, “When we moved onto Hazelton [Avenue, in 1956], it was still very working-class. There basically wasn’t anything going on. I mean, there was Mary Millichamp's on Yorkville, but [otherwise] it was a very ordinary working-class street.”228

Millichamp, an upper class lesbian in an era in which same sex activity and identity were pilloried, may have been drawn to Yorkville in those early days by its déclassé associations. Since Yorkville was very much a non-issue in the late 40s and into the 1950s, Millichamp may have felt that she could hide her sexual identity to a certain extent by moving into an unexpected milieu. Upon her death in 1962, one obituary stated

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226Key, 32.
227ibid.
228Judy Pocock, Interview with Author, June 24th, 2006.
that "When a resident [in Richmond Hill] she lived with her close friend and business associate [her lover, Pansy Reamsbottom] on Centre Street West." According to Harold Averill, archivist at the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, such vague information was regularly used in the early 1960s to describe the passing of middle and upper class Torontonians known to be involved in same-sex partnerships.229

Although the re-birth of Yorkville is more often traced back to 1957 and the inception of Cezanne’s hat shop on Cumberland St., Millichamp’s restaurant on Yorkville Ave was unquestionably a ground-breaking venture.230 Millichamp, who had died before the conflicts began in earnest in the early 1960s, likely would never have suspected that the slow blaze in real estate growth that she had helped to set alight would ever reach such proportions.231

By the mid-1950s a pair of antique shops, two interior decorating establishments and "several professional offices of the architectural and engineering type" had opened in the neighbourhood, furthering the trend away from residential land use in the district.232 1957 saw the opening of Old York Lane, a pedestrian walkway containing around 10 storefronts, linking Yorkville Ave with Cumberland. Three years later, Lothian Mews was opened on the south side of Cumberland, at Belair, an innovative shopping complex and garden court boasting a pedestrian path from Bloor St through to Cumberland. In 1961, "forty-five new businesses had located in Yorkville [since 1945] ...bringing the

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229 This obituary ran in the Richmond Hill Liberal, November 8th, 1962. Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives [CLGA], Toronto.
230 Millichamp’s building came to be home to the Gaslight, one of the most successful of the early 1960s cafe/restaurant ventures. The Gaslight made $450,000 on food and drink alone in 1961. Toronto Star, January 8th, 1962.
232 Key, 33.
total of non-residential uses in the area to fifty-three. But the real shift was in the types of businesses taking up in the district – in 1961 these included "six interior decorators, three dress designers and several millineries, photography studios, art galleries, antique shops [and] hair stylists."234

While Yorkville developed into a commercial centre, its population continued to age, to move away, and generally to decrease in number. Those that remained tended to be more transient, and the number of local home owners continued to diminish. Less than 35% of the people living on Cumberland in 1956 were still there in 1961; that same year saw only 26% of the Yorkville Ave residents and a mere 13% of those on Cumberland owning their own homes.235 Their empty apartments were increasingly being rented to frugal students, young married couples, and others looking to take advantage of this inexpensive, but central, location. However, the conditions inside many of the apartments was, even in 1960, pretty grim. Myrna Wood, who moved to Yorkville with her husband in 1960, describes a typical apartment on Cumberland.

In the very early beginnings of the counterculture, when it was sort of an embryo in Toronto, perhaps, I lived on Cumberland Street, before there was a Yorkville… This was literally a garret, you know? In one of these big narrow old houses that were all connected on Cumberland Street. My husband and I rented the top room – it was really just a room, with a little small room off the back, which had a hotplate – that was our stove! It was really… and there we lived. And you looked out the front window and the whole backside of Bloor Street was a construction site for the Bloor subway.236

Below Lothian Mews, work on the construction of the Bloor subway line would see all of the houses on the south side of Cumberland demolished. Bay St subway station (which

233Key, 33.
234Key, 33.
235Key, 34.
236Myrna Wood, Interview with Author, April 19th, 2006.
the Toronto Transit Commission oddly refused to call Yorkville Station (to the consternation of many observers)) would be opened in 1966, although the building of the station was largely completed by 1963.

For the better part of the next ten years, this small section of Cumberland would be the subject of significant debate as a proposal to build a seven-level parking garage made its way through the approval process. It was finally quashed in 1968, due to hefty agitation from hip youth and supporters of Yorkville’s quaint atmosphere. An innovative concrete park was decided upon as the best way to use the space.

The rapid development of Yorkville from a low-rent residential zone into a shopping, restaurant and boutique centre was helped along by wider trends in development taking place throughout the City’s core. Toronto was in one of its most active development periods, as a new City Hall, a two-line subway system, and various suburban initiatives were undertaken to modernize the city.\(^{237}\) With the establishment of increasingly large and vast banks, department stores and malls on downtown streets, valuable real estate was gobbled up and many small storefronts closed down. Re-establishing on smaller but still nearby streets, such as Cumberland and Yorkville, made eminent sense. In turn, as luxury shops migrated to the area, so did their clientele. Often flanking such stores, restaurants and specialty coffee houses were established in old homes by clever businessfolk who planned to take advantage of hungry, thirsty, and enervated shoppers.

Alongside this development, a younger cohort of Torontonians began to descend upon Yorkville looking to take advantage of cheap rents in this central location. Counted among their ranks were Toronto’s Beats, artists, and bohemian aesthetes whose previous

\(^{237}\)John Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).
haunts, scattered throughout the area around the “Gerrard Street Village,” had been recently torn down to make way for Toronto General Hospital. Handmade jewelers John and Nancy Pocock, who would go on to become fixtures in the Toronto activist scene, moved from Gerrard to Yorkville in 1956. Their daughter, Judy, recalls that the decision to move to Yorkville was taken by many artists from the Gerrard Street scene: “Their next door neighbour Albert Frank (who was an artist) moved to Hazelton. There were always rumours that they were going to tear down the old Village, so my parents decided they would move to Hazelton [too].”

Now that Yorkville had begun to play host to some fashionable clothing stores and restaurants, the still inexpensive flats above these establishments became more attractive to artists, folk singers, university students, and young people in a variety of other occupations. Clifford Collier, as a young gay ballet dancer, recalled that moving in this crowd made eminent sense.

There was this whole quote artistic crowd that came out of the art college and the art gallery, and all this kind of thing. And they started out in the Gerrard Street area. There were coffee houses there, Mary John’s restaurant and places like that. It was almost as if you could see that move up, as the Hospital started to take over the property. That was what was moving people out. It was primarily the hospitals, not some gentrification project.

By late 1960, trendy new coffee houses (like the Purple Onion, the Half Beat, and the 71 Coffee House) had begun to open in Yorkville, following the flow of youth up from Gerrard. This still small and discrete group of bohemian writers, musicians, actors and hangers-on found in the burgeoning coffee house trend in Yorkville a kind of community

238 Johnson, 7.
239 Judy Pocock, Interview with Author, June 24th, 2006.
240 Clifford Collier, Interview with Author, June 15th, 2006.
of clubhouses, some offering outdoor patios and, eventually, stages for the fledgling folk musicians among their ranks.\textsuperscript{241} And so, this growing group of disconnected and diffuse hip youth comprised the first wave of 1960s Yorkville youth culture. “We started the whole thing,” boasts coffee house entrepreneur Miguel Maropakis.\textsuperscript{242}

In the early 1960s, the relationships between young residents with diverse social lives and schedules were rarely friction-free. Myrna Wood, an early resident of the Village, although a young woman, did not count herself among the Beat youth who were filling the neighbouring flats.

The house next to us, I mean there was just this one wall between our bed and the other place. So, weekend nights it filled up totally with some kind of band, and we couldn’t sleep at all. God knows what kind of band it was, but it was LOUD! There were I-don’t-know-how-many-people packed in there. And this was up on the third floor, or whatever. Anyway, I complained, but the super said well, 	extit{I don’t even know who owns the building!} So, I immediately went out and phoned another apartment. That was the last I had to do with that street until later.\textsuperscript{243}

This process, which saw Wood move from the Village to make way for perhaps another bohemian contingent to move into her apartment, was well underway by the early 1960s. Music was getting louder, parties getting rowdier, and the stamp of youth culture on Yorkville ever more pronounced.

More open to gays (and, to a lesser degree, lesbians) among their ranks – the centrality of homosexuality to much Beat artistry being difficult to misconstrue – the Village Beat community offered something of a haven for young people whose sexual

\textsuperscript{241}By 1963, so many coffee houses had been crammed into the tiny “Village” that Toronto’s municipal authorities looked to legislate a moratorium on the awarding of coffee house licenses in the district. The rumblings of discontent over such a move were more than even the city fathers could bear, and the first major test for Yorkville’s youth was passed. By summer of 1964 it was no longer debatable: the Village had been transformed into a vibrant, if raucous outlet for youth energy.\textsuperscript{242}Miguel Maropakis, Interview with Author, March 29\textsuperscript{st}, 2007.\textsuperscript{243}Myrna Wood, Interview with Author, April 19\textsuperscript{th}, 2006.
identities set them apart in other public contexts. In this context, among Beats dressed all in black, some even affecting berets, beards or close-cropped Sebergian hairstyles, some practicing libertine sexuality, some taking drugs, and some even reading Marx, Marcuse and Lenin, queer youth might have been comforted to realize that they were not the only “deviant” identity subgroup in the scene. These were the older brothers and sisters to the hippies of the late sixties; helping to set the stage, to establish the district as home to the hip elsewhere, a refuge from the boredom of everywhere, and an escape from the existential nowhere.

Here it was, perhaps: cafés, romantic poverty, artists and musicians mingling together, looking for sex and inspiration in the blue-smoke closeness of a cavernous coffee house. In the tradition of Byron, Shelley, Baudelaire, Reed, Goldman, Stein, Hemmingway, Miller, and more recent heroes William Burroughs, Jack Kerouac, and Allen Ginsberg, Toronto's young bohemian crowd disassociated themselves from wider society, re-inventing (re-discovering) their own identities, artistic and otherwise, as around them the world carried on obsessing over such "necessities" as tailfins and salad cream. Here, it was somehow decided (if only telepathically), this counterculture would take its stand: the existential alienation and all-consuming false consciousness of the suburban imaginary here found their salve, even their escape hatch. By 1961, according to early Village folksinger Ian Tyson, coffee houses were “sprouting like mushrooms” in

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244 The Beat literary canon brims with homosocial (if not outright homo-erotic) situations, obsessions and relationships. As Medovoi has shown, while there remained a certain ambivalence about the nature of homosexuality as an identity, Beat art was positively awash in homosexual imagery and desire. Medovoi, 225-228.
Yorkville, and were filled with his new audience: hip, chain-smoking, refuse-nik youth, dressed all in black. Yorkville was suddenly, vibrantly, happening.

All around them, in some ways even mirroring the vicissitudes of their identity transformations, Yorkville's identity as a shopping centre underwent a series of startling changes. Throughout the 1960s, the turnover rate among businesses in the Village was extraordinary. A 1967 survey of commerce in the district found that none of the coffee houses begun in the early 1960s remained in existence, while the longest running (the Penny Farthing) was merely three years old. "The life span of most" the survey concluded, "has been two years or less." But this high turnover did little to stem the influx of prospective coffee house owners who felt their business plan to be stronger than their contemporaries – between 1960 and 1965, when the number of Yorkville coffee houses peaked at 22, businesses were constantly changing hands as too many cafés fought for too few customers, especially during the slow winter months. The 1965 peak of 22 coffee houses shrank to 14 by the end of 1966 – a perhaps more manageable number of cafés for such a small district.

The first coffee houses to open had been the Purple Onion, the 71, and the Half Beat, back in 1960 and 1961. Such places would serve expensive, exotic coffees (espressos, cappuccinos and lattés were new to the scene), and light food such as sandwiches and cakes. They were sparsely decorated, often to the point of it being an artistic conceit. One café-goer recalls that “[places] would get travel posters and make

245 Jennings, 21.
246 Key, 34.
247 But, it must be noted, famous Beat joints predated these Yorkville spots, and weren’t too far away. The Bohemian Embassy is certainly among the most significant of these, but the First Floor Club (on Asquith, at Yonge) was barely outside of the Yorkville zone, and has been cited by at least one Villager as a key site for bohemian connections. See Jennings, 16-17.
wallpaper out of them, so to speak. Just to give some colour, but with no expense. Once you went inside, it was used furniture. In fact, what I remember about the Penny Farthing was that probably its most expensive thing was the bloody penny farthing that they had sitting on the roof! In the early days, little in the way of entertainment was provided at such establishments; generally, people would come to them following the hockey game, the late movie, or last call at the bars on Yonge Street. Generally quiet, subdued environments, coffee houses tended to be full of people in their early-to-mid-twenties playing chess, reading, and talking into the wee hours. Some hosted poetry readings, some local musicians, but most steered clear of paid entertainers for financial reasons.

According to Village observer Barbara Key, "the Purple Onion was the first to let folk singers, poets and satirists perform [for] free, but gradually in the following years more coffee houses opened and all began hiring entertainers, either local folk singers and jazz musicians or in some cases well known American performers." By 1964 the shift was complete, and "almost all the coffee houses depended for their existence on their folk singing entertainers rather than on simply serving refreshments." It was not until the spring of 1965 – when the popular coffee house Jacques's Place re-vamped its format to become a rock'n'roll club – that folk music was supplanted as Yorkville's dominant entertainment draw for young people.

Now, as more rock'n'roll bands moved from the raucous bars on Yonge St (such as the Le Coq D'Or, the Upstairs, the Zanzibar and the Famous Door) into Yorkville, more and more teenagers came to hear the kind of music that had only recently become radio-friendly. Key explains that "this [music] appealed more to the teenagers than to the

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248 Clifford Collier, Interview with Author, June 15th 2006.
249 Key, 35.
people in their twenties and thirties who up until this time had formed the largest
proportion of the clientele." Folk Music expert and former Village regular Judy Perly
tried recently to pin down that appeal. “Folk music. That was a culture of people writing
songs that had some meaning. It was coming out of black music, so it was authentic.
People started writing songs; well, Dylan started writing songs about social protest. Ian
and Sylvia too. But, there was far far less music then than there is now! Some people of
my generation have sat across from me and said: there’s been no good music made since
the Sixties. But, it was so relevant then, and it was so focused, so the [folk musicians]
who were there were getting so much attention.” The allure of folk music was so often
found in its apparent working and black underclass-borne authenticity. In a world of pop
superficiality and a widely articulated existential yearning for the real, genuine human
experience, folk music offered a white entrée into that elusive space beyond false
consciousness and alienated identity performance. The advent of rock’n’roll, then, does
not just denote a shift in musical tastes and trend patterns, it also bespeaks a shift in the
appreciation of the authentic potential of white, middle-class youth. If early 1960s
authenticity was to be found in the radical refusal of middle-class whiteness, by the mid-
60s white, middle-class youth had found their own version of authentic experience and
performance in the burgeoning psychedelic scene. And so, Yorkville was re-imagined as
its participants responded to these seismic shifts.

As this entertainment transformation was taking place, Yorkville was
simultaneously emerging as a shopping destination, as expensive clothing stores, gift
boutiques, hair salons, a hat shop, and a variety of galleries specializing in imported art

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250 Key, 35.
251 Judy Perly, Interview with Author, June 27th, 2006.
and jewelry opened alongside these coffee houses and discos. In less than a decade, Yorkville had been transformed from a working-class enclave to an increasingly sophisticated centre for the so-called “carriage trade.” By 1967, very few of the houses left on Yorkville and Cumberland were being used exclusively as residences; most Yorkville residents lived in apartments above or below such establishments, or on Hazelton and Scollard Streets, which had seen considerably less commercial development. Since these boutiques and galleries operated out of the main floor of what had been, until recently, Victorian houses, they tended to be quite small – most occupying only one or two rooms – and somewhat informal. Such shops were designed for browsing as much as buying.

What was referred to as the "carriage trade" was really a euphemism for upper-class female shopping. The predominance of expensive gown shops and artisans' boutiques in the Village throughout the 1960s suggests that many of the people frequenting the district would have been counted among the more wealthy women in the city and beyond. For example, Yorkville, by 1967, was home to Helmar of London (a dress designing salon boasting a selection of imported fabrics and nine in-house seamstresses, offering gowns for between $100 and $1000); Pot Pourri (a similar, but somewhat less dear, dress designing salon); the Recamier Boutique (the owner of which traveled to Europe twice each year to buy new gowns); along with a number of "sportswear, hats, furs, and wig boutiques as well as several haute couture salons for

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252 The Toronto Star referred to this process as an experiment in “how a declining old residential street can be reclaimed by sophisticated commercialism...” on March 18th 1961.

253 See Key, 1967, Appendix, pp 76-81. Key lists the principal occupants of each address on Yorkville, Cumberland, Hazelton, Scollard and Avenue Road in 1967.

254 Barbara Key's survey suggests that, since most of these shops and boutiques were operated by their owner and only a very small staff, a "casual friendly atmosphere" predominated. Key, 40.
styling hair, [all of which] cater[ed] to the female customer."\textsuperscript{255} Moreover, bath boutiques, candle shoppes, and stores devoted to imported merchandise and curios from India, Persia, and Japan helped fill out the short blocks.\textsuperscript{256}

Throughout the 60s, Yorkville housed a series of art galleries and showrooms that often exhibited the cutting edge in Canadian, American, and European art. Although not strictly-speaking a part of Yorkville, the nearby Isaacs' Gallery was certainly the most famous of the local spots. However, Avrom Isaacs was hardly alone in his efforts to further the development of a modern art scene in Yorkville and Toronto. In 1966, the Sobot Gallery at 128 Cumberland held a successful exhibition of graphics by Picasso, Matisse, Braque, Chagall and Miro, the largest showing of international artists ever held in a Canadian commercial gallery, at which – \textit{maddeningly} – none of the pieces sold for more than $800!\textsuperscript{257} Others, including Tysegen Gallery (on Scollard), Gallery Moos (138 Yorkville), Gallery Pascal (104 Yorkville) and the Monyo Art Gallery (84 Yorkville) offered a wide range of modern and local painting, pottery, sculpture and simple drawings. According to Stephan Sobot, proprietor of the Sobot Gallery, Yorkville played an important role in the development of Toronto into a global (which is to say, a less old-Canadian) city. "We have here a unique area which has contributed to the beauty – in term [sic] of character – of this country. [...] As a growing metropolis, Toronto is developing certain eccentricities: we are in the wonderfully eccentric area. You can enjoy a range of pleasantly different characteristics in the variety of shops and restaurants."

\textsuperscript{255}Key, 41.
\textsuperscript{256} Marilyn Brooks’ "The Unicorn [114 Cumberland St] is noted for its bizarre gifts which include such things as \textit{papier maché} jewellery, decorative matches, unusually shaped soaps, party decorations and a large collection of patterned mugs." Key, 42.
\textsuperscript{257}Key, 42.
new-Canadianness of the district was, to Sobot (and presumably to others as well), its very charm. "This is truly," Sobot proclaimed, "a little bit of Europe."258

In other words, throughout the 60s, the Village of Yorkville was virtually at all times home to decidedly upper crust shops and boutiques, galleries and salons. It was, in fact, among the most expensive places in the country in which to shop for clothing. While noise and indecorous young people did pour out of coffee houses and, later, discothèques, much of this took place at night, long after these upscale shops had shut down for the evening. In recent interviews, former Village residents tended to bristle at the suggestion that Yorkville was a slum in the early 1960s (“Oh No! Oh Gosh no! I was there, and it wasn’t like that at all!”)259. Rather, it was a symbiotic combination of cheap housing and ambitious, upscale boutiques, an intermingling of bohemian poverty and Euro-chic. Indeed, throughout the 60s, while Yorkville Avenue developed into the famous hippie scene (most of the coffee houses were found on this street), Cumberland remained tied to the fashion industry and the shopping scene in a more overt way. “Yorkville the street is a lot different from Cumberland the street,” stresses fashion maven Marilyn Brooks. “The drugs and the music and the coffee houses were on Yorkville. And I was on Cumberland, which was more of a watered down Bloor Street… I think you’d have to say that Cumberland was a little more elegant than get-down-and-get-dirty, which was more Yorkville.”260

In the early 1960s, the European flavour was unmistakably leading the charge; at first, a former resident explained, the Beat youth filling the coffee houses hardly mattered to most observers of the scene.

You see, even the opening of the early coffee houses didn’t mean anything. Yorkville was [filled with] cheap, old houses, kind of run down, and what have you. But, the first floor of my house, and of most of them, was an attempt towards high-end fashion. Downstairs, there was a couple of women who made women’s clothing and, as I remember, there were various places like that. A couple more on Cumberland, and several on Yorkville. The building I lived in was owned by a Hungarian. There was this community of European people like him. He was a landowner that ran from the Hungarian Revolution! He had a lot of paintings and big old guild frames and stuff like that. Velvet smoking jackets! And the women who did the sewing of these dresses were from the same European background. To the extent that Yorkville meant anything at all, that was the future that they wanted it to become.\textsuperscript{261}

The future was to be built with the kind of money carried on the back of European style, flavour, and accents. But, attracted to the district by that very same Euro-style, those young residents would complicate this trajectory, at least for a time.

Ultimately, the picture of Yorkville that one gets from studying its commercial makeup is of a district in which canny immigrants, high-minded artists and moneyed-class propriety ruled the scene. By 1964 it had ceased to be residential in any meaningful way – for it was now the domain of landlords and their increasingly overcrowded (and decrepit) rooms – and had become home to a growing number of expensive, classy businesses and galleries. Property values had risen nearly exponentially since 1957; the same house on Yorkville that was listed at $48,000 in January, 1965, had been listed at $23,000 eight years previously. Ginger Eisen, owner of a bathroom fixture "salon," commented in early 1965 that, "sitting at my window on a good day you can probably see

\textsuperscript{261}Myrna Wood, Interview with Author, April 19th, 2006. .
every Rolls-Royce in Toronto stopping somewhere on [Yorkville Ave.].” The memory of Yorkville as an exclusively hip centre is manifestly inaccurate.

It's Happening!: Beats, Art and the Allure of Mourning

In early March, 1959, Toronto Star reporter Lotta Dempsey published a two-part column on “Toronto’s Beatnik Cult.” Her exposé, as it were, stands as one of the only firsthand examinations of Toronto’s pre-Yorkville hip scene, and as such demands some close attention. Clearly overwhelmed by what she found in the unnamed hangouts in which she gathered her information, Dempsey’s prose is both purple and theatrical. But, her ear for dialogue is what pushes her work beyond mere exploitation and sensationalization.

Legs melted under, soundless and boneless. Long sweatered arms knitted into the body. He was a charcoal shadow, caught against the glare of the studio lights. “What are Beatniks about?” he repeated… Let’s say it’s more like we’ve resigned. Resigned from the race… We’ve withdrawn, that’s all. Withdrawn from a contemporary world of false values and phony ideals.”

Dempsey, who within a year would found the Voice of Women, an upper-middle-class second-wave feminist and peace organization, was intrigued by such a refusal of hegemonic expectation, principles, and commonsense. Her examination of Toronto’s

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264 The Voice of Women for Peace (VOW) was a significant feminist organization, a middle-class precursor to the more heterogeneous cultural feminists of the late 1970s, and spur to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada’s work in the mid-1960s. Lotta Dempsey (with Jo Davis, Dorothy Henderson, Helen Tucker, Beth Touzel and Maryon Pearson, wife of the soon-to-be Prime Minister) worked alongside activists such as Nancy Pocock (at whose home on Hazelton the women sometimes met) to propagate their anti-war message. According to a recent history, “VOW’s members had much in common politically with first-wave feminists, who had fought for women’s suffrage and believed that having more women in public life would create a more just and more peaceful society. But Voice of Women was also, as pioneer feminist and scientist Ursula Franklin points out, ‘the seedbed for the second wave of feminism.’” Judy Rebick, Ten Thousand Roses (New York: Penguin Books, 2005) 3-13.
Beat scene was, she admitted, motivated by her fascination with the famous American Beat Generation, to whom she had been paying attention for some time. “I had listened attentively to Beat generation telecasts, plays, movies, and broadcasts” she explained, exposing her mediated version of the Beats. “But had the cult really reached [Toronto]?”

The young people she interviewed seemed proof that yes, indeed, the Beat “cult” existed in urban Canada too. But, were the Canadian Beats mere copies of the North Beach characters they had seen on television? Was this an authentic Beat culture? Dempsey’s subjects seemed to her to be too automatic in their responses, their phrases too pat, their sentiments somehow familiar. After one young man told her that Beats dressed in black because “we are in mourning for our lives,” Dempsey’s skepticism overflowed. “This sounded suspiciously like a quote – and they use many, with or without credit. For instance, asked for the nub of Beat philosophy, one said glibly, ‘it’s being at the bottom of your personality and looking up.’ ‘Yes,’ I said. ‘I heard that broadcast, too.’”

Toronto’s Beats, like Yorkville’s hippies a half decade later, were profoundly influenced by hip fashion, aesthetic, and ideology from south of the border. The mere fact that Dempsey’s article seems an introduction to Toronto’s Beat scene is enough to suggest a time lag here – the United States had been wrestling with Beat youth for at least five years by 1959, and had certainly moved beyond such “do-we-have-Beatniks-too?” journalistic efforts. But the volatility of hip lies in the paradox that it is as much about following as it is about leading. The call-and-response between hip and square is the

dialectic which maintains the trajectory of hip through history. There would be no hip without co-optation, no cool without imitators.  

By June 11, 1960, at least some Torontonians knew they were being had when Susan Kastner, a 20-year old from toney Forest Hill, rented herself out as a Beatnik for hire. Such schemes (as much about exploiting the public fascination with Beats as a pseudo anthropological identity category as they were about co-optation) were not uncommon in the United States in the late-1950s, offered a complicated set of interpretive possibilities. Their apparent sundering of the counter-hegemonic qualities of Beat authenticity in an embrace of capitalism and material gain leaves them open to heavy criticism, yet their acknowledgement of the performative aspects of the “Beatnik” reminds us of the difficulty inherent in any discussion of authenticity and essentialism when it comes to identity.

Beat identity, knotty and defiant of simple definition, must be understood as the dominant influence on what would come to be known as the hippie identity. However, any overemphasis on the sway Beat Toronto enjoyed in its immediate time period (say, 1957-62) would be foolish. At their height, Toronto Beats were but a tiny manifestation of a multitude of emerging youth identities; they were among the most fascinating to the established order, perhaps, but were by no means the vanguard of some new cultural

266 See (for a rather more cynical view of this process) Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter, The Rebel Sell: How the Counter Culture Became Consumer Culture (West Sussex: Capstone Publishing, 2005).
268 American photographer Fred McDarrah had, back in 1957, famously criticised (or was it endorsed?) the co-optation of Beat culture by running ads offering to rent out Beatnik poets. “Rent a Genuine Beatnik. Fully Equipped. Eye-Shades, Beard, Dirty Shirt. With or Without Sandals. Special Discounts for No Beard or No Bath.” These ads were, contrary to all expectation, genuine. Ted Joans was among those honest-to-goodness poets who took part in the scheme, which brought in some much-needed money. Leland, Hip: A History, 296.
groundswell. Their greatest immediate contribution, and the contribution with which this book is most concerned, was the Beat propensity for new, exciting, and otherwise under-appreciated innovations in the world of art, film, music and literature. Their experimentalism contributed to an atmosphere, in those few establishments which catered to their ilk, of spontaneity and cacophonous energy.

Ian Tyson, among the very earliest (and soon to be the most famous) folk singers in the Yorkville coffee house scene, was heavily influenced by the American Beats, and tended to run with other such aficionados once he arrived in Toronto in 1958. He had made the trip from Vancouver alone, thumbing rides and hopping buses across the country, dreamy visions of Sal Paradise, Carl Solomon, Hart Kennedy and all of those “angel-headed hipsters” of Beat fame.\textsuperscript{270} Toronto’s scene, bolstered by the arrival of such excited, talented, and Beat-influenced artists, developed slowly, at first, but surely. By the early 1960s, the kinds of scenes Kerouac and Ginsberg had envisioned, depicted and detailed in their work were being recreated, lovingly and with great respect, by their Canadian cousins. The early draw to Yorkville was, fittingly given the artistic and poetic tendencies of the Beats, felt most keenly by aspiring artists, musicians and writers. David DePoe recalls that it was a poet who first alerted him to the scene. “When I first started to go there in ‘63 it was very Beat, basically. Sort of like: you go there and you listen to poetry, music, and y’know. That year I had a friend who was a poet in residence at University of Toronto and together we started going to Yorkville, to this coffee house

where a poet could just get up and read something and then somebody would sing a couple of songs.”271

The early Village coffee house scene, exemplified by such key establishments as the Village Corner (an L-shaped folk club on Avenue Road), the First Floor Club (a jazz and sometimes folk joint on nearby Asquith Avenue), the Half Beat, the 71 Club, and the Clef Club (an underground Yorkville Ave haunt boasting the stage on which a young Sylvia Fricker (later Tyson) played her first Toronto gig), was comprised of just the kinds of artsy young people that had blown open the Californian North Beach Beat scene five years earlier. As venerable jazz joints like the House of Hamburg (which had played host to luminaries like Miles Davis and Cannonball Adderley in the 50s) looked to local acts like Ed Bickert and Moe Kauffman, Village clubs began to book folk musicians as their hip entertainment. Typical of these establishments was the Village Corner, in journalist Nicholas Jennings’ words, a “Hipster’s Heaven: a smoky room with dark blue walls and a large mural of black slaves being unshackled.”272 Amid the stirring of support for a swelling Civil Rights movement in the United States, such a gesture of solidarity was both overtly symbolic and implicitly performative; a white-owned club which (almost always) featured white performers and catered to a nearly exclusively white clientele suggesting a common need for freedom from bondage. The literal freeing of the black slaves is invoked in an atmosphere in which the freeing of the figurative enslavement of white, middle-class youth is a persistent concern and theme. Indeed, the dominating image of the slave losing his chains, the definitive model of authenticity achieved, is there not so much for admiration, but for identification.

272Jennings, 21.
The Bohemian Embassy, a bridge between the Gerrard Street scene and embryonic Yorkville, sat about halfway between the two locations. Famous for its wildly eclectic entertainment, the Embassy promoted local talent of all kinds, from folksingers to comedians, and writers to painters. For lovers of poetry, Toronto’s strong stable of Beat-influenced poets were encouraged to use the Embassy’s stage to try out new material. Margaret Atwood, Milton Acorn, Earle Birney and Gwendolyn MacEwen all made that scene. Sylvia Fricker laughingly related to Nicholas Jennings her feeling of being “comic relief for all those terribly serious poets.”

But it was in that diversity, the shifting sands of artistry and performance, that lay the charm and function of a smoky room such as the Embassy. The sublime cacophony of contrasting, even clashing voices was absolutely central to the bohemian aesthetic by the early 1960s. Immediacy, authenticity and trickster ingenuity were all rolled together in such a haphazard flow. It was all about the NOW. “We had the Bohemian Embassy,” recalls Marilyn Brooks, whose Gerrard Street fashion outlet moved up to Cumberland Street in the early 1960s, becoming the ever-popular Unicorn. “The first time I went there – I’m from Detroit, Michigan – it was like woooooah, this is hot! You walked up the steps and you got stamped and then you sat there and you got your coffee – I mean, it wasn’t a bottle of white wine, it was coffee after coffee. And somebody would read poetry against St Nicholas Street… and I though, wow, this is it, you know?”

If the 1960s was, as a recent survey of postwar Canadian art has declared, "a decade unabashedly focused on the present," the influence of the American Beats had as

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273Jennings, 22.
much to do with this obsession with the Now as did the atom bomb.\textsuperscript{275} The self-centeredness usually ascribed to the Baby Boom generation, the dawning of philosophical and artistic movements in structuralism and post-modernism (which both, to varying degrees, destabilized historical perspective in their pursuits), and the sudden, rapid-fire shifts in cultural perspectives and commonsense ideological positions all fit hand in glove with such a view of the period. Here were a few years under the influence of the immediate, and a brief period in which conservatism and classicism were largely pushed aside by cultural industries in pursuit of the ever elusive \textit{zeitgeist}: the impulsive, the instantaneous, the unanticipated.

As the international art world was rocked by what appeared to be radical refusals of convention, of modernism, and, most overtly, of idealism, and the resurgence and/or development of such deconstructionist enterprises as neo-Dadaism, Pop and Abstract Art, critics and artists alike struggled to express the acceleration and contradiction of the decade through increasingly unpredictable messages. As the boundaries of the category "youth" broadened under the conditions of social experimentation and counter-hegemonic ideologies in the '60s, so did the boundaries of the category "art"; for the expression of the dissonance and volatility of youth culture (and its postwar corollary, counterculture) could only be served through new and radical aesthetics. The Toronto Beat scene, enticed by the prospect of engaging with something novel, something indefinite, something which celebrated the existential unknown, latched onto this movement, peopling its shows, galleries and happenings.\textsuperscript{276}

\textsuperscript{275} Denise Leclerc et Pierre Dessurealt, \textit{The Sixties in Canada} (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2005) 15.
\textsuperscript{276} The artistic community of Toronto in the 1950s and early 1960s has yet to receive the thoroughgoing treatment it deserves. In point of fact, one recent scholarly examination of Canadian art in
Such expected late-60s countercultural activities as drug use, free sex, and social protest and dissent were already active pursuits in Toronto by the late 1950s. Moreover, new methods and ideas about representation helped to engender a sense of renaissance in the scene, another factor which helped to invite Beat interest and participation. The key factors which can be associated with the change of course taken by many artists in the period include: a widespread refusal of artistic convention, formalism, and the influence of the Western aesthetic canon; a tendency toward fusion and eclecticism; the integration of new media into the process; and overtly political, even activist, messages and meanings.277

In Toronto, as it was in artistic centres all over the Western world, the neo-Dada movement (heavily influenced by New York-based Marcel Duchamp’s formidable body of work) rocked the art scene in the very early 60s.278 A couple of years prior to the psychedelic revolution that would forever change rock’n’roll music, a similar sort of revolution was transforming the landscape of aesthetics and design. New techniques, especially assemblage and collage and the use of weird, counter-intuitive materials, were suddenly taken up by a wave of artists increasingly ready to shuffle off what many saw as the bankrupt framework of formalism. With great gusto, Toronto artist Graham Coughtry voiced the frustration shared by many of his colleagues with the Group of Seven-dominated Canadian art scene: “Every damn tree in the country has been painted,” he

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277Leclerc and Dessureault establish these connections early and often in their study.
declared.\textsuperscript{279} Even as conservatives loudly failed to understand such developments – even Toronto mayor Nathan Phillips had publicly denounced a Painters Eleven exhibition in 1956, complaining that “these pictures are something I wouldn’t want my children to see”\textsuperscript{280} – the undeniable draw of the \textit{avant garde} was electrifying Toronto’s expanding ranks of aspiring, rebellious artists.\textsuperscript{281}

While there was no real art hub in Canada in the 60s, Toronto (in semi-partnership with London, Ont.) represented a key site for the exhibition and production of cutting edge work. At the centre of this promising neo-Dada scene, Toronto's Isaacs Gallery (which moved to the edge of Yorkville, at 832 Yonge St, in 1961) played host to work by virtually every experimental Canadian artist in the 1960s, including such luminaries as Michael Snow, Greg Curnoe and Joyce Wieland.\textsuperscript{282} However, in the spirit of expanded visions of the boundaries of "art", Avrom Isaacs' groundbreaking Gallery wasn't solely confined to painting and sculpture, but included exhibitions of experimental film, free jazz music, modern dance, and poetry.\textsuperscript{283} Judy Pocock recalls that the poetry readings at the Isaacs were “quite the going concern. My dad got involved in organizing those poetry meetings. And, I remember Gwendolyn McEwen, I remember Milton Acorn [reading]. So, those would be your bohemians. They brought all kinds of these well-known Beat poets up. I remember LeRoi Jones (who is now Amiri Baraka) came, and

\textsuperscript{280} Burnett, 7.
\textsuperscript{281} \textit{Globe and Mail}, Nov 10\textsuperscript{th}, 1962. There is a photo of the Bohemian Embassy, a coffee house that doubled as an art gallery for local talent. The article that accompanies the photo takes a rather negative view of the art on the walls.
\textsuperscript{282} For brief mentions of the Village art scene, see Jane Lind, \textit{Joyce Wieland: Artist on Fire} (Toronto: Lorimer, 2001). Kristy Holmes-Moss, presently a PhD candidate at Queen’s University in Art History, is preparing a dissertation on Joyce Wieland which we anticipate. Kristy Holmes-Moss, “Negotiating the Nation: ‘Expanding’ the Work of Joyce Wieland”, \textit{Canadian Journal of Film Studies}, Vol.15, (2), \textit{Fall 2006}.
\textsuperscript{283} “Between 1961 and 1964, the Isaacs Gallery was also the venue for Dada-derived mixed media concerts, lectures and film series.” Burnett, 15.
Greg Corso, I think. There were a number of people.”\footnote{Judy Pocock, Interview with Author, June 24th, 2006.} For a time, the Isaacs gallery even doubled as a publishing house for such underground poets; in an innovative endeavor, their verses would be paired with the work of local painters in illustrated volumes.\footnote{Leclerc, The Sixties in Canada, 21-23.}

The marriage between folk music and art in the early 60s Yorkville scene was a significant factor in the development of coffee houses as sites for bohemian community-building. While some curious youth may have come for the music, perhaps some would have stayed for the art (or, more likely, vice versa). Ian Tyson or Malka Marom may have been onstage at the Cellar, while the walls were hung with the latest from local artists, just as young and hip. Still, some artists refused to hang their work in the coffee houses, complaining that they rarely sold.\footnote{Globe and Mail, November 10, 1962.}

Of course, there were always exceptions to this rule. The venerable Bohemian Embassy and the less-venerable Chenel coffee house both planned regular shows in the early 60s, attracting buyers as well as hangers-on. Such shows could make for fairly lucrative business for the right artist, at the right time. For example, a 19-year old Ontario College of Art student named Zigy Blazejy sold 7 avant garde paintings at his November 1962 opening at the Bohemian Embassy.\footnote{The Bohemian Embassy was a carryover from the pre-Yorkville-as-youth-centre days. A beat haunt since the late 1950s (immortalized in the CBC news television spot now available in their online archives), the Embassy was situated at 7 St Nicholas Street, one block north of Wellesley, roughly ten minute’s walk south of the Village.} But, in keeping with the eclecticism of the early 60s Beat and art scene, coffee houses celebrated and sold whatever they so chose, regardless of aesthetic or other value. Confounding expectations was part of the fun, part of the excitement behind the scene – agreement was a kind of stultification of thought.
And so, the modes ranged from the surreal (favoured by the Bohemian Embassy) all the way to the realist (often hung on the brick walls of the 71 Club and the Cellar). But, more often than not, contrasting modes would hang together, side by side, taunting the purists.

A cousin to Beat experiments in uniting disparate forms of art into messy harmony, Dada-inspired mixed-media spectacles called "Happenings" were becoming increasingly popular with artists and consumers alike. Often held in galleries such as Isaacs', but just as often held in apartments, lofts, and coffee houses in and around the budding Yorkville scene, Happenings were designed around neo-Dadaist preoccupations with juxtaposition, theatre/reality and disorder. As a contemporary art critic explained, "the vital aspect at least in the happenings was that there were few guidelines, no style, no measure beyond the act and the spirit of the act." A transparent attempt to refigure the expected manner (grave and conventional as it is) of viewing art in silent, empty, cold galleries and museums, Happenings were designed to err on the side of chaos.

Toronto’s first Happening, or at least its first documented Happening, took place in 1959 in local artist Dennis Burton’s studio on Huntley Street. From this first event, interest in the Happening blossomed, and became a popular activity for many hip to the art scene. Participants (for this is what they were called – they were not consumers, but collaborators in the very art which they had come to experience) crowded together in cramped rooms, overwhelmed by noise, by visual stimuli. Susan Sontag’s vivid description of a 1962 New York Happening helps to get at the kind of experience one

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289 Burnett, 15.
290 Burnett, 15. This is in stark contrast to the patently absurd claim made by CBC television in February 1963 that they were filming Canada’s “first Happening!” See: http://archives.cbc.ca/IDCC-1-69-1587-3080/life_society/60s/
291 That these spontaneous, disorienting Happenings were the antecedents to Ken Kesey and the Pranksters’ Acid Tests is plain, and remains an exciting area of comparison for future studies.
might undergo at one of these events. "To describe a Happening for those who have not
seen one means dwelling on what happenings are not," she begins, in her famously
counter-intuitive manner.

They don't take place on a stage conventionally understood, but in a dense
object-clogged setting which may be made, assembled, or found, or all
three. In this setting a number of participants, not actors, perform
movements and handle objects antiphonally and in concert to the
accompaniment (sometimes) of words, wordless sounds, music, flashing
lights, and odors. The Happening has no plot, though it is an action, or
rather a series of actions and events. It also shuns continuous rational
discourse...²⁹²

Toronto author Michael Kirby concurs. A Happening, in his view, was “a piece of art that
does not focus on an object, but on an event. The artist begins with a plan of action in
which the public is brought into an active relationship with the art event. The action does
not take place in the closed environment of a gallery but rather in various public places of
a city, where the artist breaks in suddenly with his performance.”²⁹³

At the root of all of this, of course, is performance. Happenings – designed as they
were around a recognition and celebration of the performative aspects of identity – relied
on the participation of their audience. The collaboration involved a kind of agreement, an
unspoken desire to play at weird, to engage with others in a highly theatrical manner, to
accept that within the parameters of the Happening, one’s identity was always in flux, at
risk, contested ground. Gender, race, sexual orientation, age, sanity, all of these and more
could be treated as mutable in the Happening environment. The attraction to Beat youth,
a group who, if anything, can be said to have agreed upon their shared disillusionment

²⁹²Susan Sontag, “Happenings: An Art of Radical Juxtaposition” (1962), Against Interpretation
with the rigidity of liberal capitalist identity expectations, lay precisely in the wholeness of the refusal of normalcy. In a Happening, one can lose oneself, at least in theory, and explore that loss for what it is: a fleeting, but no-less ecstatic freedom.
Chapter Four:

Sophistication, Bohemia, and the
Coffee House Days

Yorkville, west of Bay, should be seen in daylight for complete appreciation of how a declining old residential street can be reclaimed by sophisticated commercialism.
_Toronto Star, March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1961._

_Let’s say it’s more like we’ve resigned. Resigned from the race... We’ve withdrawn, that’s all. Withdrawn from a contemporary world of false values and phony ideals._
_Toronto Star, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1959_

In mid-summer 1961, before much of Toronto had even heard of Yorkville, its budding bohemian culture was abruptly thrust into a media spotlight. Caught holding a “drinking party” at their private house at 71 Yorkville Avenue (at which they had allegedly sold liquor and “permitted drunkenness”), 30-year-old Werner Graeber and wife Eva were brought up on charges.<sup>294</sup> The 22 other (mostly younger) people busted at his party by the Morality Squad were charged as “found-ins,” and brought down to the Don Jail for a night of interrogation, physical abuse and a cold jail cell.<sup>295</sup> In Pierre Berton’s succinct words (written a year later, once the ensuing court proceedings had finally been borne out): “they bundled the lot up and sent them to the Don Jail... where each was stripped, showered, deloused and given an intimate physical examination.

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<sup>294</sup>The drinking age in Ontario was 21 before 1971 when it was lowered to 18.<br><sup>295</sup>The women, “naked on a table”, were given an internal examination by a female nurse, while the fifteen men were stripped, sprayed for fleas, “searched and bathed.” There is some indication that the women were also subjected to impertinent (not to mention illegal) questioning about their sexual histories and preferences. _Globe and Mail_, August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1961.
Later, in court, all the charges, which were based on scanty evidence, were thrown out.”

This apparent police brutality was both roundly and directly condemned by many media sources and municipal authorities. In fact, the fallout from the “Yorkville Row” included a systematic review and change of police arrest procedure, not to mention a formal investigation of the *modus operandi* at the Don Jail. Moreover, the public outrage over a group of young people being physically assaulted by a boorish police squad was compelling enough to force the mayor to speak out against his own police force in severe tones. “[Such raids] bring disrepute to the police force”, complained Phillips. “There’s something wrong with this system.” In a move that seems utterly impossible today, Phillips went so far as to adopt the position that this was not an isolated incident, and that in fact the problem was likely institutional.: “I don’t think the men have been properly instructed”, he concluded. “Somebody fell down on the job; there’s got to be a change.”

And yet, barely two months later, much of this anti-police sentiment – or, at least, this benefit of the doubt offered to the young found-ins – was turned on its ear. In a subsequent raid on the Graebers’ house (now a legitimate place of business following a successful application to turn 71 Yorkville Ave into one of the original local coffee

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297 The “Metro Police Commission [made up of senior municipal authorities including Mayor Nathan Phillips and Metro Chairman Fred Gardner] suggested police use more restraint in handling house party raids… [concluding] that police should have handled the [Yorkville] case with summonses rather than arrests.” *Toronto Star*, Friday August 18th, 1961.  
299 *Toronto Star*, August 18th, 1961. (Such an open admission of institutional corruption is revelatory given today’s Abu Ghraib climate of blaming bad apples and poor judgement rather than addressing real, fundamental problems.)
houses, the 71 Club300), the Morality Squad came up with “four marijuana cigarets [sic].” Public sentiment, which had largely been behind Graeber and his unfortunate friends in the two months between the first and second raids, shifted dramatically in the wake of this new charge.

Marijuana, in 1961 Toronto, was a largely unknown proposition – pot was a forbidden whisper, a spectre haunting backalleys and ethnic ghettos, a fog hanging in the stifling air of some beatnik jazz club like George's Spaghetti House.301 In fact, Canada had good reason to consider itself marijuana-free in 1961: the number of convictions (national) for marijuana possession had dropped from an all-time high of 22 cases in 1959 to a mere 17 by the end of the year.302 That Yorkville could contain such a rare and menacing substance, and that Graeber’s coffee house could have been operating as a sort of speakeasy for hop heads… the implications were disquieting.303

Disquieting, but also humiliating. For many (such as Berton) who had supported Graeber and his ilk in the face of the initial raid, this revelation came as a slap in the face. Public sentiment pulled a wild, immediate 180-degree turn. As Berton complained later: “the reaction of some of my readers to this startling criminal [narcotic] charge was

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300Graeber’s 71 Club was a prototypical coffee house in Yorkville. When asked how he got started, The Riverboat’s proprietor Bernie Fiedler explained in 1972 that while working as a coffee salesman in the early 60s, one of his stops was the 71 Club. Graeber talked the young Fiedler into opening his own club. A short time later, Fiedler opened the Mousehole, and, in 1965, the Riverboat. See Chapter Seven.

301The odds of pot smoke actually filling the air of George’s are exceedingly slim. For his part, Clifford Collier describes the drug scene in the Yorkville coffee houses as fairly strictly monitored. “There were no drugs in the Mousetrap,” he declared. “Never.” Interview with Author, June 15th, 2006.

302Moreover, 1959 saw the all-time high for heroin convictions (470) as well. Interestingly, if only incidentally, the story of the rapid, near exponential rise in marijuana convictions parallels a significant drop-off in heroin convictions. By 1972, there were 10,695 marijuana convictions in Canada, compared to merely 201 for heroin. [http://www.cfdp.ca/giffen.htm]

303A Constable involved in the raid described the scene at 71 Club thusly: “[I] found nine young men sitting around in the poorly lighted basement strumming guitars at the time of the raid.” A mellow scene, perhaps, but one apparently fraught with mystery and undertones of weirdness. Why else report it in the newspaper? Globe and Mail, Friday November 10th, 1961.
predictable, though a little saddening. I received many letters and phone calls, which said, in effect: You see, the police were right all the time and you were wrong... They should have jailed the lot and thrown the key away.304 But Berton, unable to comment on a case as it was before the courts, had been forced to hold his tongue.

There can be little doubt that Graeber was the victim of a corrupt police action. Faced with the embarrassment stemming from the overzealous (and illegal) raid of mid-summer, and continued rebuke and public outcry over the subsequent cavity searches of people against whom all charges were later dropped, it seems likely that some officers of the Toronto Police Force were looking to mend their reputations. And so it seems that, in a gambit still regularly performed by those very few crooked cops unable (or unwilling) to do the work necessary to make the case against their suspects, they planted evidence.

The circumstances surrounding the detection of the four joints in the Graebers’ coffee house were (and remain) sketchy – when Graeber was acquitted in April of 1962, it was largely due to the lack of an unambiguous police narrative. It was never made clear just how the joints (which were hidden in odd, unlikely places) were discovered. One joint – the one around which much of the trial revolved – seemed to simply fall out of nowhere as a policeman opened a locked door (with Graeber’s consent). In fact, Graeber’s largely conciliatory efforts throughout the raid never appeared to have been those of a guilty man.305

Because Graeber had, ever since opening his house to the public as a business, suspected at least one of his patrons to be an undercover policeman, the raid was entirely

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305 His wife Eva, however, had responded somewhat erratically. She had refused to provide her name to the police, and then escaped through a window after claiming to need a drink. She was caught nearby and brought back. Very little is known to me of his wife – she rarely appears in the coverage, apart from in this article. Globe and Mail, Nov 10th, 1961.
expected. Not only that, but Graeber (and others) testified that for some two-and-a-half hours prior to the raid, they watched a dozen police officers gather in an adjacent parking lot to survey the 71 Club in preparation for the action. If they had wanted to dispose of the evidence, certainly they had ample time to do so. Moreover, once the raid had begun, Graeber was quoted as offering to let the policemen “tear the place apart” if they wished. He even helped them to open unlocked doors (which they were preparing to knock down). Once the marijuana was found, and Graeber was incarcerated, he disregarded the advice of his counsel, and underwent both a voluntary lie-detector test and a psychiatric interview while under the influence of sodium amytal, a kind of ‘truth serum.’ He passed both examinations.

In the end, it was not Graeber’s conciliatory efforts that saved him, but rather a bit of evidence which demonstrated that none of the joints were uncovered in private sections of his house. All of the marijuana was found in public areas, where it could not be definitively established to whom it belonged. The solitary joint which was thought to have been found inside a locked room (the one which had fallen as if from thin air) looked to be the only one that could put Graeber away. But, a last-minute argument that the doorframe leading into this room was wide enough on top to stash a cigarette

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307There is a bizarre, if otherwise unrelated, conclusion to this story. On Feb 20th, 1965, Graeber was arrested after he broke into a Willowdale home, armed with a 9-mm semi-automatic pistol. The family living there managed to escape, and police were called to the scene. After an undisclosed period of time, in which one police officer who got inside and confronted Graeber found a gun aimed at his chest, the police opened fire with tear gas. They eventually subdued Graeber, whom they found standing in a shower, in his underwear, with a wet towel wrapped around his face to protect him from the gas. In the Globe and Mail report of March 4th, the 35-year-old Graeber is referred to as a “Yorkville Avenue resident.” Globe and Mail, Thursday, March 4, 1965, (Front Page).
demonstrated that the joint might have been on the public side of the door to begin with.\textsuperscript{308}

Consequently, Pierre Berton pushed his readers to demand: “how \textit{did} those reefers get in that Yorkville coffee house?” And, more to the point, “how did the Toronto police learn of the presence of these cigarets [sic]?\textsuperscript{309}” Neither question was ever answered. But, the stage was set for a conflict which would persist – like a tear across worn fabric, expanding, ever widening – throughout the decade. Still a few years before Yorkville would become a centre for widespread youth activity, here was an episode which appeared to establish all of the elements of the subsequent narrative. The major players, fractions, now seemed to be in place: a hip culture which saw itself as persecuted, misunderstood by the wider society, and subject to violent, degrading coercion by the police; a municipal authority aghast at the presence of a deviant subculture so near the heart of Toronto; a police force which found itself torn between both sides, with the twin ghouls of drugs and vice their chief concerns; a public prone to a certain degree of hysteria over its young people; and a media whose reportage, varied and complicated, would play a most significant, if perplexing, role.

\textbf{Sophistication Vs Bohemia: Towards a Village of Yorkville Association}

Perhaps as a result of the liberal dose of embarrassment which followed the Graeber incident, for the two years following his bust Yorkville was allowed to develop and grow without much in the way of media or municipal attention. Few articles on the Village found their way into the major newspapers, and those that did invariably detailed

\textsuperscript{308} \textit{Toronto Star}, May 1\textsuperscript{st}, 1962
\textsuperscript{309} \textit{Toronto Star}, May 1\textsuperscript{st}, 1962. My emphasis.
the art, fashion or coiffure one might discover in the upscale shopping district. There was little indication (beyond the rare mention of the coffee house scene) that the Village was anything but the jewel in Toronto’s crown.

This was a period of intense growth for Yorkville’s carriage trade, and the moment when its reputation for upscale couture was solidified in the popular perception. An exotic cheese shop, a series of abstract art galleries, and a variety of fashion outlets and hair salons moved in before the end of 1963, all with a share in the perception of Yorkville as a zone of difference, a kind of chic centre, a “little bit of Europe.”

A scan of the reportage and advertising of the new shops and storefronts suggests that Yorkville was to be understood as an exciting cultural experience for the upmarket. Of the brand new hair salon Club Coiffure, the Globe’s Mary Walpole wrote (in her annoying, ellipsated prose): “you only need to stroll up Old York Lane a bit… that fascinating brick paved walk between Cumberland and Yorkville… to discover Club Coiffure.”

Her language is instructive: she is at once advertising a new venue for haute couture while reminding her readers that the goal of a visit to Yorkville is exploration and discovery. Can a brick walkway (uncovered by mural, design or other artifice) be “fascinating”? Sure it can: if it’s the only one in the city. In a Toronto devoid of otherwise classy urbane enclaves, exploring Yorkville’s faux-European cobblestone

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310 Recamier, a leisure wear shop, opened on Old York Lane in November 1962; the One One Nine Shoppe featuring marked-down runway fashions opened at (you guessed it) 119 Yorkville Avenue; 311 Globe and Mail, September 7th, 1962. Decidedly upscale, Club Coiffure’s hairdresser, Martina Eybe, “likes her clients to think of her as a personal Fashion Consultant.”
footpaths and discovering a chic boutique or hair salon is a distinctly exciting, attractive experience.

Alongside such attempts to establish Yorkville as an exotic local getaway, a quiet but concerted effort was put forward by local businesses and residents to keep their village free and clear of negative (read: youth) connotation. What was at stake for them was the fear that if Yorkville were to become a bona fide bohemian centre, their interests would suffer. This conflict, frequently reduced by observers, participants and commentators to the uneasy either/or of sophistication/bohemia – as if the two categories were mutually exclusive! – played out between 1961 and 1965 in a variety of ways. This struggle over the identity of the village, especially in the Toronto Star and the Globe and Mail, became the central frame through which Yorkville was presented by media sources. In these early years, before the youth culture had really taken hold in the district, the media representations of the Village already tended towards this divisive notion that there were two factions at play, each vying for the right to call Yorkville theirs.

On the one hand, the Village was claimed by the sophisticated “carriage-trade” merchants and (to a lesser extent) the long-time residents, and on the other hand it was becoming home to a new, amorphous, and indistinct bohemian youth contingent. Such media frames emphasized the suspense created by such unlikely factions facing off: who will win? Who will come out on top? What, indeed who, will the Village look like when the smoke clears?312

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312An early (1961) note in the entertainment section of the Toronto Star suggested that “Yorkville, west of Bay, should be seen in daylight for complete appreciation of how a declining old residential street can be reclaimed by sophisticated commercialism”. The very brief article moves on to set up the dichotomous association between “smart antique shops, interior decorators’ salons, architect’s offices” and 24-hour places offering “Teacup Reading”. Toronto Star, March 18th, 1961. Note the emphasis on introduction here – Yorkville was a new idea to many readers in 1961.
In the early days of the Yorkville coffee house scene, such spots as 71 Yorkville (Werner Graeber’s operation), the Half Beat, the Cellar, and the Purple Onion were the best known and most widely successful of the “bohemian” ventures. They tended to look rather similar in terms of décor, offering small, dark rooms full of jazz or folk music, their walls pasted with the work of local artists, their tables decorated with brown coffee stains and dry tobacco crumbs. As discussed in the previous Chapter, many local artists relied upon such coffee houses to display their work, and some Yorkville art galleries formed associations with coffee houses in order to doubly promote their creations. The Half Beat coffee house formed just such an arrangement with its neighbour, the Here and Now Gallery, in the early 1960s, and developed a successful formula for others to follow.313

And follow they did. Yet, while the early 1960s saw Yorkville become a trendy destination for hip Torontonians, it remained unknown to most everyone else. It is striking that, surveying media coverage of the area from the early 1960s, and 1961 in particular, Yorkville was always introduced geographically at the outset of each article on the developing cultural scene. Even as late as 1962, merchants were still describing their Yorkville Avenue locations as “just two short blocks above Bloor Street.”314 It had not yet achieved a stand-alone Yorkville-refers-to-this distinction and definition. It was still an unknown proposition: to some, just another series of streets; to others, a Village in the heart of the city.315

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313 This arrangement broke down in 1962 when the Here and Now moved to Yonge St. Globe and Mail, Nov 10th, 1962.  
314 Globe and Mail, May 10th 1962. This line comes from an announcement for the opening of “The Fashion Mine” at 105 Yorkville Ave.  
315 In a year-end roundup of the best clubs for music, dancing and night time carousing in the city, Toronto Star columnist Morris Duff referred to the Yorkville area a number of times without ever calling it
This vision of Yorkville as the Village (while tied to the historical reality that Yorkville really had been a village back before it was annexed in 1883) was crucial to its growth as an idea, a destination, and a scene. In most cases, Yorkville Avenue was its synechdochal conduit; if it happened on Yorkville Avenue, it was a Village event. But this was not always so, especially when a hip observer looked into the scene. For instance, a 1961 article by Pierre Berton (who clearly had his eye on the Village, and was always, in his way, hip) made the case that, after three years of development, Cumberland Street had become “slightly gayer and wackier than Yorkville St. [sic]”. It was colour and design that Berton emphasized most strenuously – “lilac hues” were everywhere, and the exotic seemed to furnish the otherwise staid scenery. “The area lends itself to the decorative,” he wrote, referring now to the Village scene more generally. “Modern art, baroque statuary Chinese jade, espresso coffee, spring hats, black lampposts, boutiques, antiques and Yoga” characterized what was, to Berton, a neighbourhood with more of Paris in it than Hogtown. Already, however, shades of the ensuing crises over ownership of the Village were falling on the discussion. One of Berton’s interviewees complained of “very expensive” real estate; a young Budd Sugarman (who upon his recent death would be remembered as the unofficial Mayor of Yorkville for his myriad contributions to the scene) complained that the street might already be “doomed by soaring taxes and astronomical rents.”

But it wasn’t just taxes and rents that concerned Yorkville’s homeowners and merchants. In the glowing TV light of the postwar era, as University of Toronto professor and cultural-landmark-to-be Marshall McLuhan was busily pointing out, cultural

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_Yorkville_. Rather, he seemed to know it only as the “Avenue Rd-Davenport area which is also the home of the folk song clubs.” _Toronto Star_, Dec 30th, 1961.

acceleration was the order of the day, and many were finding the changes too abrupt, too total, too severe. Character and identity were at stake here; if Toronto continued on its path toward total revolution (in areas both cultural and physical), who would recognize it in a few short years? Or, more to the point, was the old Toronto so bad anyway? Why kill it off?

In what was dubbed “The Battle to Save Toronto’s Past” by the Toronto Star, the first “Front” was Yorkville. A year and a half on from the Graebers’ initial bust, after almost five years of sustained development on the part of merchants and gallery owners, and with new after hours clubs and coffee houses opening in every vacant storefront, basement and rentable space, Yorkville appeared to have reached a look-or-leap moment. Homeowners (especially those on the older end of the age spectrum) were concerned by the sudden shift in the character of their neighbourhood; merchants were frustrated by an influx of youth energy and nightly noise; and venture capitalists were standing on the sidelines, waiting for the area to be completely re-zoned in their favour, opening up the district to bulldozers, “wide-open” commercialization, and the wrecking ball of progress.

In the first official showdown of this “battle,” a meeting of Village property owners in February, 1963, exposed a rift between the residents and the merchants, categories which also divided the old from the new. Called by longtime resident Mary Cassidy (whose anti-carriage trade vision of Yorkville set the tone), the meeting brought together some 180 people, including observers from the Toronto Planning Board. Opinions were divided, but the key issue was character. Whose Yorkville was this? “Working widows and old-age pensioners,” whose numbers were dwindling but still remained a fraction of local residents, were singled out as the victims of Yorkville’s rapid
development, as shop-owners’ catering to the wealthy customers alienated the aged locals who were unable to afford their wares. “Let’s look after the people in our own district – not after those people on Bloor St.,” complained a Hazelton Avenue resident. But this argument failed to move the younger, capital-minded merchants who saw in Yorkville a venue for excitement, growth and prosperity. “This business about lavender and old lace is all right,” offered one such merchant, summarizing the feelings of many, “but you can’t have an old village in the centre of the city.” For his part, Alistair Crerar, director of the long-term division of the Planning Board, fell clearly on the side of the boutique merchants, declaring “we think [the Village carriage trade] is desirable, pleasant and unique in Toronto, possibly in Canada.”

Following the restless meeting, a loose association of Yorkville businesses and residents came together under the umbrella concern of “protection” for the Yorkville that they knew and loved. Comprised of interested parties from the immediate Yorkville area (including Budd Sugarman, John and Nancy Pocock, and John and Marilyn McHugh), the Village of Yorkville Association (as it came to be called) was designed as a political bulwark against any possible rezoning and development of their territory. As the *Globe and Mail* reported of their first official meeting, the Village of Yorkville Association was most concerned with the “preservation and development” of this “colourful district.” Their main efforts at these initial meetings were toward keeping parking lots and wrecking balls out of the area, arresting the influx of automobiles as much as possible, and preserving the Victorian-cum-Edwardian character of the buildings themselves. In fact, their main foes in this endeavor were pro-business factions from the surrounding

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*317* *Toronto Star*, February 21st, 1963.
area such as the Yonge-Bay-Bloor Businessmen’s Association, which aimed to have Yorkville largely razed to make room for high rises.

This conflict had mainly played itself out by early June, 1963, a few short months after the VYA was formed. In front of one of the largest crowds ever gathered for such an event, the Toronto Buildings and Development Committee came down on the side of the interests of the VYA over the pro-business fractions. “Acting on the recommendations of the Toronto Planning Board,” reported the Globe the next morning, “the committee resisted pressures for zoning changes to permit a substantially greater commercial development than is now allowed.” However, soon after this first series of meetings, the Association would find itself much more concerned with internal battles than these external encroachments. After some initial victories against big business and parking lot schemes in the spring of 1963, the VYA’s stated mandate began to shift. No longer simply designed to protect the interests of Yorkville residents and businesses from corporate intrusion, the VYA now emphasized its goal to underline sophistication and diminish bohemian influences in the Village. It was believed that the very character of Yorkville was at stake.

**The Mousetrap: Gay and Lesbian Yorkville, 1957-1961**

Crucial to Yorkville’s attractiveness to gay and lesbian youth in the late 50s and early 60s was the relative quietude of the scene in those years, which meant that a degree of anonymity could be maintained. In an era when Toronto was only barely moving along the road toward respect and acceptance of gay and lesbian identities, and when media-
driven sensationalism was by no means an unlikely prospect should a subversive enclave be uncovered, the prospect of being able to perform gay and lesbian identities within a multifaceted public context was surely attractive.

Intermingling with a relatively safe alternative community, gays and lesbians found in the early Yorkville scene a kind of security in numbers, and a degree of non-gay acceptance and respect (even admiration and veneration) unlikely elsewhere in Toronto. According to Clifford Collier, a fixture in the Village in the late 50s and early 1960s, being “out” within the coffee house scene “was never a problem – you went in and they had flamboyant people and all the rest of it, and no one seemed to have any problem with it.” Curiously, Collier explains this exceptional scenario in terms of capital and pragmatism. “I think the coffee houses at that time were trying to make a go,” he explained, “so they weren’t going to turn away anybody who was a paying customer.”

For a period of roughly three years, the centre of gay Yorkville was a tiny unheated room off the back of the Greek-owned Avenue Road coffee house La Coterie. Owned by a recent immigrant named Bob Stavros, La Coterie was quintessential Yorkville Euro-chic. More into jazz than he was into folk music, Stavros endeavored to attract the crowds by booking jazz acts into the small back room behind the somewhat elaborately decorated (by Village standards) main space. However, the room proved too small for full jazz outfits, and Stavros was left with a record player, and an empty, but charmingly antiquated, space in the back. As described by a former employee, “this little back room was very, very rustic: barn board, covered walls, little

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320 Clifford Collier, Interview with Author, June 15th, 2006.
321 Not precisely in Yorkville proper, La Coterie Café was situated at 32 Avenue Road, just two or three buildings up from Prince Arthur, on the West side. In other words, it was less than a 30 second walk from Yorkville’s boundaries – boundaries which were only vaguely formalized prior to about 1965.
tables *gay* big so you could just hold a coffee cup, and benches all around the walls, with some little stools.” The space also had its own entrance around back, and its own porch overlooking a miniature parking lot.

Stavros decided that, since the back room boasted a *décor* so radically different from the posh front space, it verily demanded a re-designation as its own, separate café from La Coterie. Stavros approached Clifford Collier, who had been working at La Coterie for a few months, and complained about his lack of success at filling the small space. “And I said, well, I knew it could work if he was willing to accept the [gay] crowd. And, I don’t know whether it was because he was young, or whether it was because he was Greek, but he said ok, let’s give it a try.” Collier’s view was that, given the scarcity of hip gay spaces in the city, filling the room with the gay community would never be a problem. Stavros agreed, and The Mousetrap coffee house was born.

Collier, who went on to manage the Mousetrap for about three years, recently explained the significance of this space to Toronto’s young gays and lesbians.

Other than our club, I can’t think of any [gay coffee houses]. No one would have been turned away from any of the [Yorkville] clubs because you were obviously gay or lesbian. I mean, there was that kind of fluidity. But none of these coffee houses would have said they were *gay* coffee houses. I can tell you that right now. Even La Coterie. Although [Stavros] obviously got gay people going. When we opened up the Mousetrap, which was *aimed* at the gay crowd, that was to my knowledge the first activity. Otherwise, you were dealing with the bars downtown.

322 Collier’s description of the space continues: “The house had been converted – it was a *house*, a big old Edwardian house. It had been converted so that the whole main floor just went right back. Because it was a coffee house and he specialized pretty well in pastries and light things, he didn’t have a heavy kitchen. He just had storage refrigerators and so on. And, as for the coffee house part, all the machines were (like all coffee houses) in the front.” Interview with Author, June 15th, 2006.
323 Clifford Collier, Interview with Author, June 15th, 2006.
324 Clifford Collier, Interview with Author, June 15th, 2006.
The downtown bars, while vibrant and exciting places for the same-sex communities, were inaccessible to younger lesbians and gays. The drinking age was still 21, and especially for a bar and community prone to illegal police shenanigans, this law was often very strictly followed. A gay bar was one thing, but a gay bar that served underage youth? Not for long.\textsuperscript{325}

The Mousetrap was surprisingly accessible, and refused to allow issues of gender separation or other political questions to corrupt the scene. Collier describes the coffee house as a truly pioneering venture; as he demonstrates, the key draw of the Mousetrap was its offer of a space in which younger and older gays and lesbians (and straights as well) could connect, share conversations, and dance to jazz music.

And so the guys came up, well, kids, they were every age […] which was good in that respect. There were males and females – we never had a problem with it being segregated. The bars were segregated, you see. And the beer houses. The women all hung around a place down around Dundas and Elizabeth Street called the Continental, where the drag queens might go, but you only rarely got other gay guys going there.\textsuperscript{326}

The Mousetrap, unable to serve liquor, was thus saved from a variety of otherwise persistent barriers between men and women, not to mention younger lesbians and gay


\textsuperscript{326}Clifford Collier, Interview with Author, June 15\textsuperscript{th}, 2006.
teens and their older friends and lovers. “So, it took off. We started when the weather got reasonable – it had to be reasonable because there was no heat!”327

Perhaps the greatest legacy of the Mousetrap was its introduction to Toronto of all-ages queer-friendly afternoon and evening dances in 1959. Such Tea Dances (as they were known)328 became enormously popular, with lineups stretching down the alleyway behind Avenue Road.329 Collier’s brainchild, the Tea Dances were an innovation to pick up slack business on Sundays. Tickets were sold during the week, insuring that, if nobody showed, money would still be pocketed. But, people did indeed come. Collier remembers the crowds fondly. “I liked that we had some real regulars, I mean they came early and reserved their place, and a great percentage of people just [showed up]. And the more people heard about it, the more crowded it got.”330 While Happenings and civil rights-infused folk performances dominated most Village coffee houses, the Tea Dances became a parallel celebration of difference, identity, and community.

A gay coffee house was, it seems, not the source of much consternation from the police, the neighbours, or the straight crowd. Collier describes Toronto’s bohemian scene in the late 1950s and early 1960s as being an especially safe one, and that gays and lesbians who mixed with it were usually left alone by would-be adversaries.

327 Clifford Collier, Interview with Author, June 15th, 2006.
328 Gay ‘tea dances’ are a somewhat campy carryover from British tea-time dances (the original sense of the phrase). Since the 1950s, “tea dances” have come to refer to any late afternoon or evening dance, especially at gay resorts. The “tea trade” is also a euphemism in gay parlance for casual sex in washrooms.
329 “We never had any problems from the neighbours [because we were gay]. The only problem we ever had was noise! Not the noise from the coffee house, mind you, but the noise from all the people in line, waiting to get into the coffee house!” Clifford Collier, Interview with Author, June 15th, 2006.
330 Clifford Collier, Interview with Author, June 15th, 2006. One crowd that the Mousetrap didn’t attract was the prostitutes. Collier stresses this point. “These kids weren’t hustlers. I mean you weren’t getting hustlers coming in, or anything like that. They hung around certain locations, everyone knew where they were, so if you were interested in the hustle trade you went to those locations. They didn’t come out to your areas. I would have been very much aware of it [if they had come to La Coterie].”
You were circumspect, and you didn’t sort of hit people in the face with it the way a lot of these kids do now. But at the same time, I never found the problems. We don’t remember a lot of gay bashing in those days. There was that fluidity, you went in and out. Maybe it was because we stuck with the music crowd, a crowd that was already a subculture. They were more interested in your being interested in what they were interested in, than your differences.

One positive result of the heavy influence of the American Beats on the Toronto bohemian scene was that “hip” and gay were not necessarily thought to be irreconcilable categories. Leading American Beats (most notably Allen Ginsberg) were famously out, and homosexual imagery figured heavily in virtually all key Beat texts – indeed, Jack Kerouak’s celebrated *On the Road* can be read as an epic of closeted longing.331

While many readers of such texts no doubt missed (or simply blocked out) the homosexual undercurrents – although can one imagine reading Ginsberg’s epic *Howl*, with its imagery of men who had “let themselves be fucked in the ass by saintly motorcyclists, and screamed with joy” with a blind eye? – it was hardly unknown that among the Beats, a certain measure of gayness was part of the package.332 As such, the hip coffee house crowd was much more readily accepting of gays (and to a lesser extent, lesbians, who were not much glorified in Beat texts) than was the wider society, and gay and lesbian youth were often among the crowds at the Bohemian Embassy, the Gaslight, or the Penny Farthing, right into the mid-1960s. In an illuminating recollection, Marilyn Brooks paints her first visit to the Mousetrap as a kind of entrée into the hip scene. “In

331 In a 1945 letter to Allen Ginsberg, Kerouac (who was known to be physical with both men and women), in some ways exemplified the deeply ambivalent attitude many Beats carried with respect to their various homosexual desires. He declared to his openly gay friend that “the physical aspects of gay sex were disgusting; and though the desire for it might exist in his subconscious, there was no way of determining that for sure.” Gerald Nicosia, *Memory Babe: A Critical Biography of Jack Kerouac* (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1983) 142.

332 See Medovoi, 215-235 for a stirring reading of *On the Road* from the perspective of homosocial (not to say homosexual) rebellion against conformity and alienation.
1961 when I arrived [from Detroit] a person took me to this coffee house on Avenue Road. I think gay people were, they might have been gay but they didn’t say they were gay. It was more hidden.[…] I thought it was so incredible! I thought I was such a hippie [sic]! Marty took me there, my first assistant, and I thought: this is it! And it was.”

However, with the advent of the hippies, a scene in which gayness lost its cachet of cool (despite lingering respect and admiration for the Beats), Yorkville would lose much of its former appeal to the community.

Besides, La Coterie (and the Mousetrap) had closed by 1963, and a variety of new gay dance clubs had opened down the Strip, on Yonge Street, making Yorkville unnecessary for the gay and lesbian community. Such new clubs took up the same tack as had Collier and Stavros a few years previously: they offered dancing, community and a safer gay spaces, but no alcohol. Collier is quick to reject the notion that hip youth had begun to make things uncomfortable in Yorkville for the gay and lesbian crowd: “More [gay] spaces drew them away. We weren’t driven out, shall we say. Let’s put it this way: I think it was just a change in circumstances.”

A change in circumstances, at least at first. But, within a couple years it wouldn’t be a question of gay Toronto intermingling with the Yorkville hip scene. When asked if he recalled there being much of a gay hippie presence in either Yorkville or the dance

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334 “I think it was when the dance clubs opened up on Yonge Street. There was the Maison de Lis, there was the Melody Room, the 5-11… When those dance clubs opened – and again, they were small clubs, they opened up early enough that you got the kids that couldn’t go drinking, as long as they were over 16 we didn’t have a problem, and you got people that didn’t want to drink that much, so they’d go dancing. There was no liquor at these clubs.” Clifford Collier, Interview with Author, June 15th, 2006.
335 Clifford Collier, Interview with Author, June 15th, 2006.
clubs, Collier laughed. “I don’t remember anybody crossing over. It [hippiedom] was seen as a straight phenomenon.”

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**The Ramsden Park Gang and the Church Drop-In Centre**

Just up the street from La Coterie and the Mousetrap, at the corner of Webster and Avenue Road, just south of Davenport (and, so, just within the confines of the Yorkville district), sat St-Paul’s Avenue Road United Church. And, in its basement, lay a room which, for the next eight years would be known as the hip safe house: a place of refuge, a warm and friendly space in which one could duck the rain, meet up with friends, or perhaps even shake a tail. Overseen by Rev. James E. Smith, known as Smitty to the youths he worked tirelessly to protect, the church basement became, in the words of David DePoe (and echoed by many of his contemporaries), “like our community centre.”

But, it only became a hip centre through a kind of colonization process, a process which saw its original population displaced, jilted by the minister who had done so much to help them. The Church Drop-In Centre, among the most significant (and certainly the one of the safest) haunts for local working-class and street youth became, almost overnight, a scene remade. As one of the clearest indications of the ways class underwrote the privileging of white middle-class youth culture in the Yorkville scene, this is a process worth some focus and sustained consideration.

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336ibid.
337Formed in 1930 from former Methodist and Presbyterian congregations, St-Paul’s Avenue Road United was situated at 121 Avenue Road, and drew its congregation from the Annex, primarily. According to DePoe: “[the Church] was torched by I believe a developer who wanted to build.” David DePoe, Interview With Author, December 20th, 2004.
Rev. James Smith moved to Toronto in 1957 to work for the Ecumenical Council as Director of Christian Education for Metropolitan Toronto. Early upon arriving, he and his colleagues, working as they were on problems of youth deviance and delinquency, were approached by Rev. Stewart Crysdale. As Smith recalled in 1972, “it seems fortunate and providential now that our office was moved to St-Paul’s Avenue Road United Church... It also seems providential that Stewart should have introduced us to the gang members who came to his church for sanctuary.”339 For it was Rev. Crysdale who had, since the late-1950s, worked to provide relief and shelter for the Ramsden Park gang, a group of street-smart working-class youth (referred to as greasers by nearly everyone) from the neighbourhoods surrounding his Yorkville district church. And, by the early Sixties, he was getting ready to pass along the reins.

The early sixties incarnation of the identity category “greaser” is unstable and, accordingly, difficult to pin down. However, its key characteristics were a working-class background, a taste for booze, reasonably uniform clothing, and (for boys) short, greased hair. Jim Felstiner, a detached youth worker whose area of concern was centred on a contemporary downtown Toronto Settlement House, recently took a stab at defining the greaser “look.”

Their hair was greased, and they tried to look tough. They had their collars up and they walked with a swagger [...] We used the word culture, street culture. America had street gangs, Toronto did not at that point. My kids used a lot of grease on their hair, and their hair was terribly important. Their hair and their trousers. They all wore bell bottoms that were this wide [15 inches, approximately] and they were split here with some silver chains dangling. That was the best.340

James Smith, recalling his Ramsden Park greasers, offered a very similar impression:

The boys wore expensive tailor-made trousers, always black, tapered legs and a knife-edge press. One wrinkle in the straight drop to the shoe could bring a chorus of criticism and another trip to the tailor. Banker’s shoes went with the trousers and they were always shined to perfection. They wore a crispy conservative shirt with cuffs folded just above the wrists and they never wore a tie. […] It was customary to wear a light raincoat, always black, rarely buttoned, and never removed for fear of a rip-off.

To this detailed description, Smith adds one more telling piece of colourful evidence. The other reason the greasers never removed their raincoats was also practical, if slightly more ominous. “If a member never had to look for his coat,” Smith explained, “he could always make for another exit if the boys in blue appeared with a warrant.”

What is merely implicit in these descriptions is that race and ethnicity were just as central to greaser identity as were their working-class backgrounds. The very idea of the term greaser as a marker of identity carries associations with rampant anxieties in postwar Toronto over expanding ranks of immigrant families and their progeny. Indeed, the term greaser was initially coined (and gained wide use) in the mid-nineteenth century amid concerns over expanding Mexican labour populations in the American southwest. From there, the term migrated through North America, eventually becoming a generalized name for Latinos, southern Europeans and, eventually, Eastern Europeans (that is, for everyone not explicitly associated with Northern European ancestry).

In Toronto, by the mid-1950s, the term was being used more specifically to denote recent immigrant (male) youth of a certain deportment. As Franca Iacovetta has

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341 Smith, 3.
342 See Ronald Takaki, A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America (London: Back Bay Books, 1994) 166-190. In California, the 1855 Greaser Act was explicitly designed to criminalize vagrancy, but defined vagrancy along racial lines as “all persons who are commonly known as Greasers or the issue of Spanish and Indian blood.” Takaki, 178.
343 For a more thorough discussion of the cultural legacy of the Greaser identity and performance, see Daniel Marcus, 2004.
recently demonstrated, Toronto’s expanding postwar immigrant population constituted a site for a series of complicated, competing debates over urban identity, politics, normalcy, and even child-rearing. The designation of greaser youth as Other is tied up with the more general, and pervasive, concerns articulated throughout the 1950s over the un-Canadian ways recent immigrants took to raising their (now Canadian) children. Anxiety over this new, large cohort of young people emerging from a foreign upbringing into Canadian society was rampant: what would this group do to “traditional” Canadian society? Complicating such concerns were concurrent preoccupations with the juvenile delinquent (JD) during the 1950s, a legal category masquerading as a psychological condition. The expected JD was the child of more grievously delinquent parents – as Iacovetta puts it so succinctly, “the main problem, it was said, was the [immigrant] parents, who had particularly ‘backward’ marriages and parenting methods.”

This appropriation of the derogatory term greaser by working-class immigrant youth suggests an exercise in reclaiming – greaser youth were called greasers by “everybody”, including themselves. For a community of young people coalescing around their shared status (and angst) as working-class, immigrant youth in a city and country shaken by the birth pangs of a nascent multiculturalism, greaser identity afforded a means to express frustration with the dominant order. In their way, greasers (especially into the early 1960s) were expressing their twinned desires to “fit into” and to “tear down” the society and structures around them. As Felstiner and Smith’s reflective descriptions of their clothing and gait suggest, the apparent paradox of a community of “rowdies” and car thieves who were deathly afraid of not looking “sharp” and “clean” is tied to this equally paradoxical identity puzzle. As Gopala Alampur would later conclude (based on

344Iacovetta, 2007, 199.
his studies of greasers on the Village scene in 1967-8), Greasers desperately wanted to transcend their class status, but they repeatedly followed illicit paths in their efforts to do it. “Their economic aspirations are middle-class,” wrote Alampur, “but their methods come from the underworld.”

Young women don’t fit the mould for the archetypal greaser aesthetic – in most discussions of Toronto street youth in the early 60s, women are rarely described, seeming to achieve their greaser status by virtue of their association with greaser men. But this does not mean that girls were left out of discussions over the “clash of cultures” associated with immigrant youth; it was just that while the concerns over boys tended toward their flirtations with anti-social behaviours and crime, with young women the potential transgressions were always sexual. Prostitution was the elephant in the room whenever such issues arose – and social expectations that immigrant girls were more sexually aggressive than “Canadian” girls underwrote much of the thinking on the subject. Greaser women, then, were in not just social, but persistent moral danger. Moreover, while the greaser boys were playing at rebellious toughness and pulling petty crimes, both the kinds of performances of rebel identity which could be shrugged off later in life, teenage women who were hanging with these boys were faced with the possibility of life-long consequences like pregnancy. According to Felstiner:

Greaser girls: their crimes were drinking, getting pregnant, and getting married. Or, sleeping around, getting laid. There were no girls in that neighbourhood [Queen and Spadina] of real aggression as you have today. Girls always hung out in groups, they were always in groups, you know, clusters. That was the word we used, clusters. But there were none that lasted. Times were very different. Their trouble was they got… too much was revolving around sex. And getting married too early. […] 5 of my 16

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345 Smart and Jackson, 1969.
[male] kids got married during the last two years of my project. The eldest being 18, the youngest being 16. And they married girls their own age.\footnote{Judge James Felstiner, Interview with Author, April 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 2006.}

Single parenthood, hasty and unclean abortions, and emotional turmoil often overcame young women playing at greaser identity in the early 1960s, underlining the centrality of sexual transgression in female performances of rebel identity in these years.

Felstiner, who would go on to become a juvenile court judge by the late 1960s (a bench from which he would meet many Villagers as they were paraded in front of him on vagrancy and drugs charges), maintains that the greaser aesthetic and behaviour was all about imitation of a rebel archetype that was born of the 1950s, and was, essentially, harmless to anyone but themselves.

They were imitating the 18-year-olds who were imitating the 22-year-olds, the guys who may have been into some sidelines. They [the 22-year-olds] were in and out of jail, but... Look, this was the time when people stole cars. They didn’t rob people, they didn’t shoot people; they stole cars. They broke and entered a lot of places; they stole and they fenced cigarettes – 20 cartons, mind you, not 2000 or 20,000 from a truck! They’d fence 20 cartons of cigarettes, and so forth. I mean, it didn’t seem [like petty crime]. It seemed serious in those days, but it was petty, compared to today.\footnote{ibid.}

In the years before drugs took hold, before middle-class youth began to gravitate toward their own version of the rebel archetype, these working-class youth, derisively but also proudly called greasers, commanded their little corners of the City. And one of these corners was right there amid the Beat-fused jazz-high hipsters hanging around the Yorkville coffee house scene.

The Ramsden Park gang – a vaguely hierarchical organization of working-class youth including small-time hoods, prostitutes, con men and otherwise minor offenders –
was given a sketchy, but telling retrospective in the early 1970s by their sometime champion, Rev. Smith. His view, warmly paternalist as it is, remains among the only sources at our disposal for discussing these young people. Smith’s approach to the gang (from the distance of some 10 years) emphasizes their ornery nature, and his own role as missionary among them. He tended to characterize the gang through its practices, its likes and dislikes, and its relationship to the law, referring to a group of individuals as though they thought, acted and lived as one.

Smith details the exclusivity of the gang (underscoring its territoriality and distrust of outsiders), and provides a vague, but effective outline of gender dynamics within the group. “The girls played their role in a subtle way. They were subjugated and slapped around by their current swain, but in an underhanded way they could put the men at each other’s throats.” Smith’s sense that the greaser women had a kind of mystifying, but muscular, power over their men is interesting in the context of the casual remark that the men very likely would beat and abuse them. But, violence and power were clearly the best ways Smith knew to approach the dynamic. “The [women] were influence peddlers who could watch cruelty with delight if things were going their way. When the occasion arose they could dress like queens and usually got what they wanted.”

This was, then, a dangerous but sensible community in Smith’s view – the rules were clear (once one became accustomed to them), and although all were touched by the creeping threat of violence, it was unlikely for the cruelty to arise randomly. There were rules, and if broken, there were consequences. However, Smith was sure to add a brief footnote to this discussion of gender relations, elucidating the traditional formula for sexual behaviour espoused by the Ramsden Park gang: “homosexuals and lesbians who

349Smith, “I Wish I Was a Fish”, 4.
tried to crash the club did so with great peril to themselves."

Unlike their hipster neighbours around the corner, the greasers hewed close to the dominant line with regard to normalized sexual behaviour and performance.

Curiously, the ministerial efforts of Rev. Crysdale (a traditional labour-oriented Social Gospeller \(^{351}\)) in the late 1950s to work with these street youth were widely disparaged in the wider community:

> Stewart [Crysdale] befriended them when they were *persona non grata* everywhere and the victims of police harassment… In those days the Social Planning Council’s pundits were listening to… the restaurant owners who wanted teenagers’ allowances ringing their cash registers, but none of their nonsense. When churchmen and social workers talked of Drop-in Centres there was always a hue and cry from this heap of Urias [sic]. Even the churches were too scared to offer the use of their premises. Nevertheless, the Greaser Gang came to the church and Crysdale took them in. \(^{352}\)

Crysdale, ministering to what he saw as a troubled youth group in need of some spiritual guidance, tried a variety of methods to demonstrate to his charges that the world was bigger than just the streets of Toronto. He would take the gang up north to his summer cottage and help as, when removed from their element, once street-savvy toughs were reduced to terrified and needy campers. \(^{353}\) (Later, after Smith had taken the reins, the gang was organized into a series of sporting teams and enrolled in the Protestant Youth Council’s leagues around the city – in hockey and softball, the St-Paul’s teams dominated

\(^{350}\) ibid.

\(^{351}\) Crysdale went on to complete a PhD in sociology at the University of Toronto and then to become one of the central figures in the development of Atkinson College at York University, along with W.E. Mann, another sociologist interested in the plight of youth in the 1960s.

\(^{352}\) Smith, 2.

\(^{353}\) Smith, 3. This type of approach to troubled urban youth remains a popular alternative to traditional methods. The Pine River Institute, for example, runs a program in Creemore, Ontario, based on the principle of outdoor education and “wilderness therapy”. http://www.pineriverinstitute.com/
even the well-established (and better-funded) middle-class North Toronto clubs like Fairlawn and St-Clements.\textsuperscript{354}

The Ramsden Park gang had, by the early 1960s, become more than a mere headache to local police and residents. Crysdale, recognizing that poor leadership was at the root of the criminal activities the gang continued to involve themselves in, called for an election to reorganize its structure. The unfortunate result saw the gang descend into factionalized camps, splitting over who would become their next leader. Smith claims that Crysdale “never knew how close the factions came to violence but he sensed enough danger to disband the club”.\textsuperscript{355}

So, when Smith came on the scene in the early 1960s, it was in the context of the reorganization of these Ramsden Park greasers, and the early days of the Community Services Organization’s (CSO) oversight of the Drop-In Centre.\textsuperscript{356} Certain of the gang leaders had recently been banned, and as a result the gang had been shrunk down to a more manageable size. Still, Smith reports that even under this new leadership, the gang “preyed on [local school] Jesse Ketchum’s drop-outs who were leaving school at fifteen” and involving them in substantial crimes such as “thefts, rollings, muggings, and joy riding (car theft).”\textsuperscript{357}

\textsuperscript{354} The other competitors were not happy with the inclusion of such a team into their league, and in the first year of their inclusion the greasers were banned from the league for misconduct. However, “an inquiry was conducted in which it became apparent that all of the favoured clubs were baiting the St-Paul’s team. They had started something which the gang members were quite prepared to finish.” They were reinstated to the league, with illustrious results. This episode underscores the kind of public distrust and animosity held toward the Ramsden Park gang, and, by association, Smith and Crysdale’s respective efforts to nurture them. Smith, 8.

\textsuperscript{355} Smith, 4.

\textsuperscript{356} Smith is vague about the date of his arrival on the scene. He mentions at one point that his first year as part time director of the Church program was 1962, but it appears that he actually came on the scene a few years prior to taking this job.

\textsuperscript{357} Smith, 6.
Although redesigned and somewhat more manageable for the Church’s ministers, the gang kept up with persistent criminal activities. But, as David DePoe explains, Smith set himself up as a great and sympathetic friend to the greasers: “He had compassion for those… kids who were maybe getting themselves into a bit of trouble. Greasers, as everybody called them. They would be working-class kids who wore black leather jackets or Elvis Presley haircuts or whatever. Some even had a tattoo or two. It was a class thing – even in high school it was a class thing; not that I understood that when I was there…” Smith’s background as a Prairie Baptist – a position which had taken him to some fairly rough areas of urban Canada in the early years of his ministry – prepared him in some ways for the ‘toughs’ he was to encounter at the Church. As Drop-In Centre volunteer Mike Waage explained of his old boss: “He started working for the United Church maybe at 1st United at Hastings and Main here [in Vancouver] before he went to Toronto. So, he was used to some pretty rough stuff. He wasn’t as unrealistic or silly as one might suppose sometimes.”

The church basement may have operated for the Ramsden Park gang as an unlikely refuge from the pressures of street life, but Smith recalls that on any given night as many as 150 kids could be found “rocking and rolling in the basement.” Weekend dances were part of the schedule, as 1050 CHUM (Toronto’s only rock radio station) would keep the room buzzing. In yet another significant divergence between this working-class youth identity and the adjacent bohemian Village scene, while the artsy

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358 Curious that DePoe’s visual description of the greasers is out of synch with those of Smith and Felstiner. His view is more of the Fonze than of the Greasers described above.
360 Mike Waage, Interview with Author, March 3rd, 2005.
361 The Church basement was a kind of ‘home’ for the Gang during the day as well: “They often came at noon to eat their lunch and jive to the old record player and their favourite 45s”. Smith, 7.
Villagers were enamored of folk music and the sonic experimentation of free jazz, the greasers were among those holding to the rock’n’roll line in the years prior to Beatlemania.

One part free space, one part meeting room, one part dancehall, one part safehouse, the Drop-in Centre constituted an outpost for a fraction of Toronto’s youth culture that was, especially following a decade of concern over juvenile delinquency and its attendant associations with working-class influence over middle-class identity, viewed as a menace outside of its ranks. But, as a gang which, at least in the view of the Ministers who worked with them, was prone to violence and a marked disrespect for authority, the Ramsden Park greasers did much to damage their own reputations through their behaviour.

Rev Phil Karpetz, a CSO staffer and former trainer for the McMaster football team, used his strength and size to his advantage, frequently being forced to restrain rowdy underage drinkers or break up brawls in the basement of his church. He must have made quite an impression – it is said that “underage drunks who were violent the night before often came back to repair the damage. The slogan became ‘equal work for equal damage.’ Often as many as ten boys were busy at carpentry at any one time and the girls painted the walls over and over again.” Although the Church, as a public space, signified a conformity and moral hierarchy perhaps out of synch with the gang’s particular style of rebellion, it had become a necessary space for gang activity and identity. Messes were cleaned up, respect was paid.

363 Smith, 7.
By 1964, this first great wave of greaser culture had begun to disappear from the Centre. In Smith’s words, “almost all of the gang members had settled down, many of them were married and raising their own children.” In a show of thanks and respect for all that had been offered them through the efforts of the Centre, many of these couples chose to be wed at St-Paul’s, and were more than likely to bring their children back to be baptized as well. However, in their stead was left a new sort of greaser. Younger, bolder, but not entirely unlike their older siblings, these so-called “young fry” were “a new breed who did not fall into the depths of juvenile delinquency and also resisted for the most part, the temptation to take drugs [sic].” This characterization, based as it is on Smith’s belief that his staff had “cultivate[d]” them at an earlier age, and thus had had a more lasting effect on them, sets up a significant distinction to which he seems compelled to adhere throughout his short history.

The greasers, in his view, were distinct and definable, and, as we have seen above, some of this categorization can be made through as assessment of their pastimes. There is, on the one hand, a 1950s hangover of juvenile delinquency (presumably associated with the greaser practices of underage drinking, petty theft and violence); and, on the other hand, we have the very 1960s activity of drugs. Throughout the 1960s drug use was, hardly for Smith alone, a key indicator of hippie identity. And so, as far as appearance went, it could be said that these new, younger greasers “grew long hair but they did not join the hippies” because they abstained from a key hip practice.

Still, their identities appeared to be conflated, confused; the primary indicator of greaser identity, at least in the superficial, was the slick greased hair and severe clothes.

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364 Smith, 9.
365 Smith, 8-9.
366 Smith, 9.
These new greasers had shifted their aesthetic toward longer hair, territory that appeared unquestionably to belong to the growing Village counterculture. But, Smith is quick to emphasize, they didn’t break ranks; they did not join the other side. Although “they were a strange combination of Greaser and Hippy [sic],” as he somewhat awkwardly concludes, they were far more of the former camp than the latter.367

This sense of distinct categories is as much about class as it is about the politicized superficial. While Smith may have been pleased to report that the new greasers didn’t do drugs, he was also quite prepared to push them aside in favour of the middle-class youth culture he saw developing down around the corner. As he put it, the presence of “the Mecca of the Hippies” right around the corner from his Centre had inspired him to bring in a new kind of troubled youth. By 1965, following a year of scant participation and interest in his Centre from the younger greasers, he began to court the hip youth he saw as the more significant cohort in the area. After 1965, his Drop-In Centre was distinctly hip, but, as will be discussed in the next chapter, this changing of the guard was anything but smooth.

Although this new generation, according to Smith, proved much less adaptable to the Church than did their older siblings, friends and cousins, they still wanted to be a part of a viable scene. They too noticed Yorkville in around 1964, moving into the district and promoting the first real disturbances in the Village. Municipal authorities, until now generally accepting of Yorkville’s draw to young people, awoke to the possibility of “toughs” and “rowdies” colonizing the district. Media sources, alerted to the suspicion of conflict, probably violent, between the hip youth and their working-class, leather jacket-wearing counterparts, began to pay attention. The battle for Yorkville was no longer

367 ibid.
simply about merchants versus bohemians, old versus young. The quarrel was now more complicated, confused by the apparent presence of a Canadian version of the famous British Mods versus Rockers panic which, by 1964, was at its peak.\textsuperscript{368} Having been prepared for the prospect of irrational, but very real, physical conflict between Mods (who generally affected a Euro-influenced, scooter-driving, smooth appearance) and Rockers (who generally went for a rough-hewn, leather-jacketed, coarse appearance) in England, Toronto’s media and public was predisposed to the sudden appearance of Rocker-types amid the Mod-types they conflated with hip Village youth. Even though neither Mods nor Rockers made the Village scene in any meaningful way – the greasers were no Rockers in those perfect trousers and unflappable hair, while the post-Beat hipsters didn’t have much in common with the effete Mod scene – violent class conflict began to characterize coverage of the Yorkville scene, almost overnight. While these “young fry” greasers may have initially refused the drugs, folk music, and worldviews of their hip counterparts, they did agree with them that what was needed was a space to explore the new currents of youth identity and activity. By the end of 1963, there appeared only one place to hang out for such youth in Toronto: for the bohemian and greaser alike, that place was Yorkville.

\textsuperscript{368} See especially the famous first shot in the academic discussion of moral panics with regard to aberrant youth culture, Stanley Cohen, \textit{Folk Devils and Moral Panics} (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1972.) Somewhat outdated now, this book still serves as a useful discussion of the very recent battles between Mods and Rockers from a virtual observer’s perspective.
PART THREE:
Performing Yorkville, 1964-66
Chapter Five:

Riots, Rowdies and Rock’n’Roll

“I wish to denounce my Canadian citizenship,” bellowed a red-faced Andrew Mikolasch at an unmoved, “unperturbed” magistrate upon being found guilty of disturbing the peace. Mikolasch, a 31-year old Hungarian-born artist – and editor of the Yorkville Yawn underground paper – who had been living in Canada for nearly 16 years, then pulled out his citizenship card and tore it up, letting the pieces fall to the floor of the courtroom. Storming out of the building, Mikolasch was heard to holler “God save the Queen from her representatives!”

Histrionics notwithstanding, it is not difficult to sympathize with Mikolasch’s position. He had just been handed a guilty verdict, and the attendant $50.00 fine or ten days in prison, for causing a disturbance by sitting on a patio and sketching “Yorkville scenes” for passers-by. It seems that while he perched at his easel on an early July evening in 1965, he attracted a number of onlookers hoping to see him at work. At one point, a constable of the Toronto Police Force – whose Yorkville detail had been expanding in recent weeks – asked Mikolasch to “move along” because he was attracting a crowd and “blocking the flow of traffic.” Or was it because he had an unruly beard and affected a hip attitude?369

Because Mikolasch had both the permission of the owner of the café on whose patio he had set up his gear, and a permit allowing him to sell his sketches in public, he resisted this request to move along because, basically, he was trying to make some money, and these onlookers were potential customers. When he was further pressed by

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the police officer to leave the scene, he responded by calling Constable Archibald King a “useless bastard.” Mikolasch was quickly handcuffed, arrested, and taken into custody.\textsuperscript{370}

Mikolasch’s case speaks volumes about the climate of Yorkville in the summer of 1965, following months of protracted conflict over the “ownership” of the district.\textsuperscript{371} The patchily-bearded Mikolasch was a representative – albeit an older-than-average, foreign-born representative – of the fraction of Yorkville which had increasingly come to see the Village as its own: the post-Beat, hip youth culture. But, as we have seen, there was considerable ambivalence on the part of the municipal authorities, the local shop-owners and residents, the media, and the other youth cultures that frequented the district, over allowing the youthful bohemian contingent the rights to this claim.

As Toronto’s press became aware of the significance of Yorkville as a disputed territory in the first half of the 1960s, they emphasized the conflicts between fractions with claims to the area, frequently couching descriptions in the language of ownership: \textit{Whose Yorkville is this, anyway?}, seems to have been the underlying question. As this story demonstrates, Mikolasch thought it was his.\textsuperscript{372} So, possibly, did the folks out on the sidewalk watching him at work. So did the municipal authorities, whose police representative was acting on their express wishes to keep Yorkville “sophisticated” and to curb “bohemianism.” So did the working-class Greasers, often dubbed “rowdies” or “toughs” by municipal authorities and in media reports, whose numbers in the Village were expanding in these years. And, finally, so did the shop owners and residents, whose

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{370}In retrospect, the whole “useless bastard” thing was probably a bad move.
  \item \textsuperscript{371}Special, if only because Mikolasch was so much older than the curve. Most such situations, both prior to and post 1965, involved younger and younger people.
  \item \textsuperscript{372}\textit{Globe and Mail}, August 13\textsuperscript{th}, 1965.
\end{itemize}
new lobby group the Village of Yorkville Association was explicitly designed to keep out the rowdies and keep in the “charm.”

This was still Yorkville as anybody’s land, still up for grabs. The stakes were clearly defined: someone was going to own this place when the smoke cleared. Who would come out on top? These chapters, then, are designed around the competing heuristics at work throughout this period, heuristics which reduced Yorkville variously to a hip haven, a troubled but ascendant boutique district, the site of a violent turf war, a drug-fueled Sodom, and, most remarkably, a foreign land right in the centre of English Canada’s most populous city.

This section will begin by discussing a series of attempts put forward by the municipal authorities to curb the development of a *de facto* youth centre in the Yorkville district. It will explore the case of an apparent riot at a Village Festival in 1964, and its more expansive re-enactment the following year, as key media-driven events which helped to establish Yorkville as a contested territory in the minds of Torontonians (and Canadians alike). It will also recount municipal and other public debates following that second Village riot as the City Council took definitive steps against the coffee house set, actively attempting to legislate the young people out of the Village.

What was at stake for all involved in such conflicts was identity, and, increasingly, *performance*. Throughout these years, Yorkville was a contested site, occupied by shifting populations comprised of diverse, fluctuating identities. As so many people came to explore the district, having been enticed through the recently amped-up reportage, they increasingly came to the Village prepared to play a role in the media-defined identity politics of the scene. Their mere presence may have identified them as
Villagers, but their *performance* within the context of the Village designated their connection to one of the reductive identity categories which had come to define popular understanding of Yorkville youth culture: greasers, hippies, bikers and, now, tourists.

And so, this and the following chapter will consider the various activities which came to be associated with the widest Village performances: specifically, rock'n'roll music, drug use, and liberated sexuality. The performance of Village identity – subdivided although it was between greaser, hippie, and other identities – in the period became paramount, and inescapably part of the development of the scene thereafter. These chapters will examine the emergence of hip aesthetics (long hair, beards, found fashion, and asceticism), and chart the ways they became the most significant outward expressions of Village status.

As this construction of Village identity as a form of experiential entertainment fueled a mad rush of performers to Yorkville, their audience grew up, come to witness these fledgling hippies doing their thing. Indeed, Yorkville was explicitly constructed in the press and elsewhere as a tourist “destination” in this period, in no small part because of its exciting associations with bohemian aesthetics and performance. The mid-60s saw Yorkville's streets literally packed with cars, teenagers, tourists, and cops; some came to see hippie kids, some the motorcyclists, some the greasers. Undoubtedly some came to witness the heavily advertised turf war said to be developing between these three apparently distinct cultural groups. Throughout 1965 and 1966, reports of tension, violence and even outright brawls between working-class (and often immigrant-reared) greasers and the largely white, middle-class hippies piled up in local press. Indeed, as was discussed in the previous chapters, the sense of discord between what were
understood to be the peaceable (if precariously anti-conformist) hip youth and the
aggressive, undereducated, criminalized greasers and bikers must be examined through
the lens of race and class anxiety in a Toronto amid a massive postwar surge of
multicultural expansion.

Finally, some tourists came to the Village to catch a glimpse of Toronto’s newest
pariah group, the elusive “draft dodgers.” As war resistors – the fallout from America's
unpopular war in Vietnam – began to stream into Canada after 1965, Yorkville was
among the first places many would visit, partly due to its fame as a hip centre, and partly
due to the presence of the Pocock family, whose home on Hazelton was a well-known
shelter for newly-arrived resistors.

As the Yorkville scene expanded, so did the number of concerned Torontonians
who felt that social alienation needed to be dealt with, and quickly, before these hippies
carried their disillusionment, indolence, and ignorance into their adult lives. One such
attempt was undertaken by a group of concerned (and decidedly middle-class) Toronto
businessmen under the name of the “Project Committee,” in the summer of 1966. Part of
a wider study on alienated youth headed by John A. Byles, their Interim Research Project
on Unreached Youth chose Yorkville as a site of contention and confusion – something
needed to be done about this community of middle-class drop outs, but what? Indeed,
where to begin?

The Project Committee, on the suggestion of Jim Felstiner, still a young lawyer
and social worker, hired a sociology masters student to undertake a study of the Village
scene.³⁷³ The student, Frank Longstaff, would live in the Village for the better part of

³⁷³Letter from James Felstiner to Dr. J. P. Harshman. March 19th, 1966. Harshman Foundation
Archives, Toronto.
three months and, it was decided, would collect his findings in an “Observational Report.” Since it was well understood that an effective performance was key in order to achieve any kind of status or respect in the Village, Langstaff was asked to go into the field undercover, so to speak. And so, throughout the summer of 1966, the twenty-two year old Longstaff tried to pass himself off as a local, asking questions, hanging around, taking notes. Somewhat predictably, his report concluded that, although he had indeed observed a lot, in the final analysis he hadn’t truly cracked the Village nut. “The covert approach was something of an obstacle,” he admitted. “Because I didn’t exactly fit in, there was some suspicion as to what I was doing there. Villagers knew there were undercover police in the area, and I’m sure that some suspected that I was one of these. As a result, my acceptance was limited; as someone told me later, I ‘wasn’t completely bought.’”374

Another, less surreptitious attempt to save Village youth “from themselves” was carried out by Reverend James Smith at his Church. The following chapter will re-visit his Drop-In Centre, and detail the transition period as it moved away from greaser youth toward the developing hippie scene, having chosen them as the group most in need of direction and protection. Alongside this continuing narrative, we will discuss the Fish Net, another Church-sponsored attempt to "save" the hip youth from their social alienation – however, this time it would be through an explicitly Evangelical agenda.

As always, these chapters will interrogate the role of mass media in the discovery, distortion, exaggeration, celebration, marketing and fundamental invention of the Yorkville scene. However, it will also outline the first wave of homegrown, underground

papers in Yorkville, and their role (however limited) in the development of an imagined community which saw itself as separate, distinct, and in need of its own, sympathetic reportage.

The Village is a Riot!: The Yorkville Festival and its Aftermath

By early 1964, the Village of Yorkville Association (VYA) was growing adept at petitioning the City of Toronto. Protect Yorkville from unnecessary development, they argued, and a little bit of colour will be preserved in an otherwise monochromatic Toronto landscape. Their initial successes had prevented any zoning changes in the district which would affect the “character” of the Village, even though this “character” was never very well defined, just loudly trumpeted.

But, by the end of 1963, it had become clear that the sophisticated spirit of the Village was being threatened by a fascination with coffee houses, bohemian atmosphere and folk music. In other words, young people were becoming interested in coffee house scenes, and since coffee houses were “sprouting like mushrooms” in the district, it was a veritable magnet for teenagers.375 In the words of a former Village resident, “at a certain point, teens started to flock [to Yorkville].

So, you would have all kinds of people on the street, just walking around. Walking around, talking, meeting. There weren’t a whole lot of bars, and young people couldn’t get into bars. So, there were the coffee houses that didn’t have licenses. And it just somehow became: so what do you want to do tonight? I dunno, let’s go down to Yorkville.376

The fear that Yorkville would slip into a kind of teenager's paradise undoubtedly kept many merchants awake at nights, perhaps even in drafty apartments above their

375Ian Tyson’s phrase, quoted in Jennings, 21.
376Judy Pocock, Interview with Author, June 24th, 2006.
storefronts, as they listened to the ominous rumble of convertibles, the hoots and hollers of drunken University of Toronto students, or the off-key warble of some moon-eyed folksinger, wondering bitterly how it had come to this.

And so, the decision was taken to advertise Yorkville to standoffish Toronto consumers as anything but the haven of disaffected teens, A Festival would be held, over three warm days in May of 1964, designed to re-invigorate the failing reputation of the district, and to promote its continued and stated role as a centre for sophisticated boutiques, expensive shoppes, and quirky cafés. But, what if the kids refused to allow the Festival its moment in the sun? A considerable risk, to be sure, but one which, it was agreed, must be weathered. In the battle for Yorkville, the VYA believed that it was imperative that they come out on top.

The first Yorkville Festival opened quietly, with most observers pleased to see little in the way of disturbance in the Village. After a minor scuffle had broken out the previous Saturday night (in which the unfortunate Werner Graeber, by now among the elite coffee house owners, had had his leg broken), tensions were riding high over the possibility of violence at the week long event. Still, the Festival’s opening night, Thursday, May 14th, 1964, was virtually devoid of excitement.

“At nightfall, the joint came alive” allowed the Toronto Star, if only “in a sort of moribund way.” But “business was brisk,” despite a heavy police presence. In his snapshot descriptions of the scene, the Star’s Gerry Barker paints a rather wan landscape, tempered by the occasional splash of red: Werner Graeber (referred to as the “Coffee House Kaiser”) makes the scene, cast and all, holding court at his newly-opened Zee Spot; abstract photographers sell their work on street corners while Flamenco guitarists
perform their music underground in cafés; sketch artists stand on the sidewalk in front of the Penny Farthing letting fly with their curious brand of caricature. In fact, the Festival was going so quietly that the *Globe and Mail*, usually quick to advertise such celebrations of highbrow arts (there were Opera performances, folk dances and other such entertainments also planned as part of the weekend programme), failed to notice it in the paper’s Friday section on things to do for the weekend.377

The *Star* happily reported that, on that first night, the “anticipated crowds [of young people] were elsewhere.” Indeed, descriptions of what crowd there was emphasized the absence of the expected Yorkville scene: its throng of young people. “The narrow sidewalks were packed with police, a few clergymen, more police…” joked the *Star*. Moreover, even though the one-way street had been temporarily converted to a two-way thoroughfare, few traffic issues were noted.378 All in all, it was a great night for the Village of Yorkville Association and their effort to ameliorate Yorkville’s newfound reputation as a haven for beatniks, weirdos, and teenagers.

The following evening would not go quite so well. Young people, many of them high school teens taking advantage of a Friday night (no school tomorrow), filled the street looking for something to do. In anticipation of violence and rioting (word of a planned Friday night “raid” by 1500 crazed kids had been leaked anonymously from the University of Toronto campus, according to media reports) police presence was elevated to the point of absurdity. No fewer than thirteen uniformed police officers, three paddy wagons, and untold numbers of plainclothesmen descended on the tiny stretch of road.

377 *Globe and Mail*, May 15th, 1964. There is, tellingly, no mention of the Festival in the “Things to do and see during the Weekend” section.
The stage was set for confrontation, and confrontation was what they got. Of a sort, anyway.

As Friday evening gave way to Friday night, noise complaints compelled police to shut down guitar-playing and singing in the streets, leaving many revelers unsure of where to go, or what to do. So, they hung around. Before long, hundreds of people were blocking traffic, making noise, creating a confusing situation for the policemen. Unsure of how to respond to the horde, the officers largely allowed them to congregate unmolested, seemingly hopeful that if they waited long enough the kids would get bored and go home. Still, as they held back, tensions mounted – when was this “raid” to begin? What would it look like? Until an unnamed coffee house owner took it upon himself to clear the milling crowds in front of his establishment by opening a hose on them, it appears that, for awhile, the police remained on the periphery of the scene. In the end, however, four young people were taken into custody, pushed into paddy wagons and hauled off to jail, while the rest of the crowd was forcibly removed from the streets by the uniformed officers. By 1:30 am the Village was empty and quiet; with only four arrested, and no injuries reported, a potential disaster had been averted, but it did not matter.

Saturday’s Toronto Star jumped at the chance to report on the near-“riot” that would have broken out had police not been there to haul the young offenders off to jail. Although the Star’s reportage appears to carry an undertone of disgust at the overbearing police response, the main thrust of the coverage is the effectiveness of the “no-nonsense lesson” they had delivered to the kids.379

But, judging by the available evidence, this was no riot. Tellingly, the Globe and Mail neglected to notice the “riot,” just as they had failed to mark the Festival itself. It

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was simply not a big enough deal to report in the national paper. Judy Pocock, who both lived right in the middle of the scene and was herself a teenager at the time, doesn’t even remember anything like that having taken place.380 When we look at the situation – underwritten by a general fear and distrust of the young people in the district on the part of police, compounded by the ambiguous, but compelling rumour of a planned “raid” on the Festival – we see little to suggest that any violent outrage took place. Rather, it would seem that the young people were up to their usual tricks, filling the streets in their numbers, frustrating drivers, annoying unhappy residents trying to sleep, and scaring merchants, until the police decided that enough was enough, and shut them down. In light of the fact that no charges were filed against anyone for anything worse than “creating a disturbance” – no resisting arrest, no assault, no destruction of property – we are left with the conclusion that the famous Yorkville Festival riots (to which many subsequent attacks on the degeneration of the district refer) were about as momentous as a passing subway train, and over just as quickly.

Another seminal instance in the development of the impression of Yorkville as a volatile youth centre was a well-reported incident in October of 1964 which saw a “near-riot” (now apparently the popular term for young people gathered into a crowd) develop out of a massive singsong.381 Loud and disruptive enough that the police were forced to break it up, the 400-person-strong group of singers responded to the sudden police surge by turning into a disordered mob. Suddenly difficult to contain, the singers’ energy exploded through the Village, and the police found themselves forced to make arrests to

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380 “I don’t ever remember being afraid. I remember one, sort of riot, that we watched from home. But I had left home by that time, so it was after 1967! There was a kind of riot, I mean people running around, but I don’t recall any windows broken, any damage.” Judy Pocock, Interview with Author, June 24th, 2006.

381 *Toronto Star*, Oct 19th, 1964. See also *Globe and Mail*, same date.
try to quell the crisis that, in a basic way, they had created by refusing to allow the
singalong to come to an organic conclusion.

Citing this incident, as well as one from the previous week in which a Thornhill
youth removed his shoes and blocked traffic on Yorkville Ave, Toronto police announced
plans to “close in” on the Village in the following weeks.\textsuperscript{382} Emphasizing the potential
for a youth riot as the real impetus behind the action, local media generally praised the
decision. This media frame, establishing Yorkville as a potential site of irrational masses
of young people, is perhaps the most significant of all the advertisements offered to
teenage Torontonians that Yorkville was a cool place to hang out. But, as a metaphor for
a general mainstream misunderstanding and fear of the emerging youth culture, it is
illustrative. The pervasive fear felt by many parents of Baby Boomers, as they looked
uneasily at the teens they had carried into the brave new world of the 60s, must have been
intensified by the oft-repeated fact that there were more of these young people than there
ever had been before, in the \textit{history of the world}. And so, any incident which exaggerated
their power-in-numbers seems to have been sobering. Their potential to be riotous, to
swarm, to mass together in violent, irrational surges of adolescent abandon – while
virtually never realized, even in the more permissive later Sixties – underwrites the
hyperbolic coverage of both of the “riots” discussed above.

\textit{What Will They Ban Next?: Legislating Youth Out of the Village}

It isn’t hard to recognize the twin forces of commercialism and gentrification at
work in Yorkville in the 1960s, and the process of redevelopment continuing on its
trajectory from its beginnings in the late 1940s. But, the extent to which observers even at
\textsuperscript{382}\textit{Toronto Star} “Police say WATCH OUT to Yorkville coffee house Rowdies”, Oct 28\textsuperscript{th}, 1964.
the time were carried away with the impression that this bohemia was merely a window-
dressing, and that fostering a hip Yorkville was never anything less than a losing battle 
for young people, is always under-appreciated. A telling Star article from early 1965 
claimed that Yorkville had already become “Squaresville” as it drifted toward the upscale 
and rejected its bohemian wannabes.383

As early as 1965, Yorkville had already played out its hip period in the eyes of at 
least some observers – it was already too sophisticated, too commercialized, too 
materialistic. Moreover, the hip side of the scene, the coffee house denizens and their 
associations with bohemian artistry, was disappearing from Yorkville, only to be replaced 
by younger, more raucous, volatile, and apparently less artsy youth.384 The rosy-fingered 
dawn of Yorkville's youth crisis was bleeding over the horizon: gangs of “toughs” had 
begun to colonize the area, some of them gunning their motorcycles up and down the 
streets; narcotics were becoming widely associated with the district both in the press and 
with young people looking for a dealer; and while street-fighting and sexual violence was 
up in the district, calm and bohemian style appeared to be on its way down. Worst of all, 
more and more young people were arriving with each passing weekend, while fewer and 
fewer merchants felt safe in their investment in a district which was apparently under 
siege. No group was more active in endeavoring to arrest such an apparent slide into 
associations with violence and danger than the Village of Yorkville Association.

Considering the events of the previous May, the Village of Yorkville Association 
(VYA) was decidedly apprehensive about restaging the action. Only a year later, the 
general memory of the Festival was that it had helped to encourage a youth riot, which 

384I asked Judy Pocock just who these “toughs” and “rowdies” were, and she replied, simply: “Oh, 
I just think they were kids. The place would just be thronging!” Interview with Author, June 24th, 2006.
had in turn invited unwanted attention to the district, and had generally promoted disagreeable effects. Still, it had also helped to engender the impression that Yorkville was an exotic, exciting place in an otherwise pallid Toronto cultural scene. And so, throughout the early spring, there was wide speculation in the media over whether the Yorkville Festival would go on, and, more deliberately, over whether the Festival of the previous year had done more harm than good. A very common, widespread assumption was that the influx of toughs and bikers – not to mention the throng of suburban 'beatniks' – was a direct result of the heavily advertised 1964 Festival (and the excitement of the "riot"). More than ever, the sense that Yorkville was a divided territory, contested by two principal factions of merchant/resident (old) and bohemian/tough (young), highlighted hegemonic discourse over the district.

This frame of violent and riotous youth congregations dominating the Yorkville street scene was repeated throughout the spring of 1965. On April 9th, for example, some 2000 young people spontaneously filled Yorkville Avenue, blocking traffic and effectively transforming the street into a thronging dancehall. Few of these revelers seemed to have come to the district for the coffee – it was the scene they were after. The sense that most youths coming to the district were neither interested nor allowed to go into the various coffee houses lining the streets suggests that a rift had developed between two (or more) swaths of youth culture in the Village. For it was not only the media that were interested in the idea of an aggressive, unruly youth street culture in Yorkville; a growing discordance between the coffee house scene and the young street partiers was in evidence even before the scheduled May Festival of 1965.

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Bryan Walker, employee at the popular Penny Farthing coffee house, complained that, "tonight [April 9] they scared a lot of the public away. [...] The people who listen to our folk music and jazz are not the hoodlums who take part in street riots." So, who were these people who listened to folk music and jazz at the Penny Farthing? And how, apart from taste in entertainment, did they differ from the "throng" of "2,000 young men and women [who] jammed Yorkville Ave between Bay Street and Avenue Road" that April night? Reducing the complicated conflict over the identity of the Village to a streetfight between two opposing sensibilities – bohemian and rock'n'roll youth – this framing device established Yorkville as a fierce, explosive district in need of deliverance from the scourge of youth violence.

One key Globe and Mail item from early 1965 established disparity and discord as the central frame through which Yorkville would be made comprehensible. “Yorkville Village” read Barbara Beckett’s article, “is an area of contrast, of mixture, and even of some conflict.”

The Village of Yorkville Association […] staged a festival last May. Plagued by several days of poor weather, it was nonetheless a success, bringing thousands into the area. Unfortunately, it attracted some leather-jacketed toughs and the resultant publicity was considered so damaging to the prestige image [sic], the area is hoping the festival will not be repeated.

The VYA got its unhappy wish, announcing in early May that the Festival would be cancelled for the year, citing the influx of toughs as the key concern behind the decision.

Stephan Sobot, Gallery owner and president of the Festival committee, explained to the Globe and Mail that “the one we had last year attracted a group of people who created a

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386 Globe and Mail, April 10th, 1965.
great deal of noise and damage. We thought we had better let the memory of that fade before starting again... The hangers-on who came last year gave the festival a bad name. We do not want a repetition.\(^{388}\)

This catch-all group of “toughs”, “rowdies” and “motorcyclists” is counterpoised against the “coffee-house set” throughout this period of street “riots”, yielding interesting results. Such framing devices offered the articulation of Yorkville as a battleground for identity, the site of the eventual ascension of a dominant youth cultural ideology and performance. However, this battleground was clearly divided along class and ethnic lines. That Village bohemianism was the domain of middle-class suburban youth – indeed, much frustration over hip refusals of affluence and commonsense stemmed from anxiety over class degeneration – was a central preoccupation in most reportage, and in municipal debates over the district. Simultaneously, assumptions of greaser identity being born of lower class, ethnic (read: immigrant) privation and alienation allowed for easy associations with tough-guy violence, under-education and wanton degeneracy. As David DePoe, by now a daily participant in the Village scene, defined it, these “leather-jacketed toughs” were easily reduced to class identity: “[Village toughs were] working-class kids who were maybe getting themselves into a bit of trouble. Greasers, as everybody called them.”\(^{389}\) If we recall the working definition of “greaser” offered by a close observer of the Village a few years later – “they put grease in their hair and grease on their food” – we see how this working-class identity is intertwined with a visually and culturally perceived non-whiteness.\(^{390}\) Moreover, this Otherness was a veritable impetus for young people of certain backgrounds to associate with the gangs. One young man (variously

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\(^{388}\) *Globe and Mail*, May 12\(^{th}\), 1965.

\(^{389}\) David DePoe, Interview with Author, December 20\(^{th}\), 2004.

\(^{390}\) Smart and Jackson, 22.
labeled a greaser and a biker) later confessed that his reason for joining the biker scene in the mid-1960s was influenced by his own feelings of alienation from white, middle-class society: “I was antisocial at that time. People made jokes about me, called me a D.P. (displaced person). I had just come to Canada. I couldn’t speak English well and people made fun of me.”391

The press that Yorkville had already received that spring had tended toward the sensationalist, suggesting a dangerous trend. An early May headline in the Globe had reduced Yorkville to "Twanging Guitars, Tepid Cappuccino and Police," hardly the three things the VYA wanted to see defining its district.392 What was worse were the articles and editorials treating Yorkville as a crucible of violence and destruction that were appearing in major publications with mounting frequency. In early May, to take one example, the Globe ran an excerpt from an interview with a "once-a-week shaver" who offhandedly reported that, "they tell me it's really cool in Yorkville. Riots and all. I wish a riot would start."393

Under such conditions, simply avoiding the Festival was not enough for either the VYA or the municipal authorities who had come to see the Village as a potentially important neighbourhood in the Toronto of the 1960s. Moreover, merely canceling the Festival was not enough to arrest the influx of these "toughs." And so, in late May, residents and merchants took a decisive step, petitioning the Buildings and Development Committee with a motion to prohibit any new coffee houses from opening in the Yorkville area.394

391 ibid.
393 ibid.
The motion, put forward in an effort to stop “gangs of teenagers” from turning “the area into a powder keg,” was passed with only two members opposed. Among the evidence presented to the Committee was the testimony given by a Yorkville hairdresser, whose description of biker gang activity surely rankled many: “The other night a gang of nine toughs all dressed alike rode their motorcycles abreast down Yorkville, gunning them and holding up traffic. They seemed to be saying: ‘here we are, what are you going to do about it?’” Alderman David Rotenberg, who presented the motion, explained that his intention was not to put the 20 or so coffee houses already operating in Yorkville out of business, but rather to block the 12 pending applications already before the Metro Toronto Licensing Commission. But, if it was these "toughs" that had caused all of the problems, why were the Beatniks, the people supposedly listening to the jazz and folk music in the Penny Farthing while the riot went down, being driven out of the Village?

John and Marilyn McHugh, whose coffee houses (including the Penny Farthing) had been in operation in Yorkville since the early 1960s, were incredulous to claims that the espresso crowd was to blame for youth rowdyism. “The discos attract the kids because they can’t serve liquor,” McHugh explained. “It’s the people over 20 who actually go into coffee houses and order. The kids wander aimlessly around… The last straw […] was the introduction of rock’n’roll.” On the other hand, according to a local boutique owner, the last straw might have been media exposure of the district. The Globe and Mail reported her pronouncement with an added editorial flourish: “Shirley-Anne

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395 ibid.
Heit … says that every newspaper that recounts trouble on Yorkville ‘is like an ad for every punk in town to come down here.’” 397

Many of my interviewees agree with Judy Perly’s assessment that, since Toronto was so devoid of hip bars and hangouts, Yorkville’s cachet was exaggerated. “Now, drinking was not a big deal [for us]. Toronto, particularly, had hardly any places that were licensed. You didn’t have places to go out to, or a pub culture, or even cafés and licensed restaurants. So, the whole Yorkville scene was not licensed, it was all coffee! Now today, no one could make money doing that – I mean, Starbucks can, but who else?” 398 But the decision to emphasize the role of coffee houses in the development of Yorkville’s youth culture was astute – it was their offer of spaces that invited hip community, cultural interaction, and displayed the latest trends in hip music and art that perpetuated the popular perception of Yorkville as a “foreign country, taken over by teenagers.” 399

James Cooper’s Globe and Mail editorial took the decision to ban coffee houses to task for its inherent short-sightedness and its failure to understand the root of the issue. “If Toronto City Council changes its zoning bylaws to prohibit the opening of more coffee houses in the Yorkville area,” Cooper complained, “it will achieve nothing more useful than a curb on the sale of espresso.” 400 His view – that “delinquency” cannot be curbed by “keep-off-the-grass” bylaws, and that the development of proper youth programs was a better way to impose order on this apparent chaos – echoed an attempt

397ibid.
398Judy Perly, Interview with Author, June 17th, 2006.
400ibid. Cooper cites a recent Central Neighbourhood House report which documented “the forays of gangs of [downtown, low-rent housing project] Regent Park juveniles into Yorkville’s crowded streets seeking – not coffee, but – liquor and ‘fights with the beatniks.’” Again, we see coffee (associated with bohemian, middle-class youth cultures) pitted against liquor (associated with violent, lower class youth activity).
made that weekend by four city councilors to seek out the radical causes of the violence and unrest in Yorkville.

In an attempt to move beyond the coffee-house-as-villain understanding of the district’s problems, Controller William Dennison (not yet mayor), along with Aldermen Charles Caccia, Michael Grayson, and Hugh Bruce, toured Yorkville on a busy Saturday evening on what would undoubtedly today be referred to as a “fact-finding mission.” Although they failed to find any real evidence of violence or vandalism – it was a relatively quiet weekend for arrests and activity – they emerged from their trip with four different opinions on what needed to be done, all orbiting around the central notion that Yorkville must continue to be a “high class store and boutique area.” In fact, this description (offered by Mayor Phillip Givens, who did not go on the tour) appeared to infuse each Councilor’s interpretations of the issues at stake. Whereas two of them took to the idea that the coffee houses were at fault for promoting youth idleness and noisy, unruly crowds late at night on summer weekends, the other two placed this fault squarely on the shoulders of the motorcyclists and motorists in general.

Dennison – in a move that would come back to haunt him less than two years hence – suggested that a traffic ban on the weekends would do the trick. No cars, no cruising, no noise and, most importantly, no motorcycles. Following the current view that "boys in black leather jackets... looking almost ritualistically tough" were "the symbol of worry and uncertainty" in Yorkville, Hugh Bruce agreed with Dennison.401 Using more deliberate language, Bruce argued for an outright ban on motorcycles themselves: “Motorcyclists don’t go where their machines cannot be seen,” he explained.402

Bikers, many of them attached to clubs centred in the west end of the City, had recently taken to cruising the Village streets with the swarm of cars, playing along in the parade of weird that comprised the Yorkville Saturday night. Former biker *Wild Bill* recalls that the Yorkville thing appealed to Bikers in the same way it did suburban youth, at least at first.

“The bikers came into Yorkville just as somewhere to hang out. Because there were discos, coffee houses, and [later] a couple of members of the Vags [Vagabonds biker gang] had a home they owned [nearby].”\(^403\)

Drawn to the Village for fun, identity performance, and the convenience of familiar places to hang out, meet people, find a good party – the scene offered many of the same things to young Bikers that it did to young suburbanites interested in playing at hip. *Wild Bill*, happy to laugh about the period now, likes to think that Bikers invented the Village scene themselves, that they constituted the primary attraction after 1965. “We got into the Village scene because we were moving out of [Gerrard Street] because we were getting too popular. College kids used to follow us *wherever* we went!”\(^404\)

But, what of the conflict, the fighting between hipsters and “toughs” in the mid-60s? Few of my interview subjects recollect violence as ever being a major issue between hip youth and the Greasers and Bikers. Still, *Wild Bill* recalls there being considerable animosity between the groups, and explains this conflict as easily reduced to class.

A lot of the conflicts between the hippies and the bikers were the attitude of… Look, any situation where you get upper middle-class kids, half of them are wannabes. They weren’t even hippies. Hippies were the guys like me! *They* all came from upper middle-class families, and that was the

\(^{403}\) *Wild Bill*, Interview with Author, March 11\(^{th}\), 2005. *Wild Bill* is a pseudonym offered by the subject.

\(^{404}\) *Wild Bill*, Interview with Author, March 11\(^{th}\), 2005. This is, of course, somewhat of an exaggeration. See chapter eight. Bikers were unknown in Yorkville prior to about 1964, and merely a minor concern until the late 1960s.
whole hippie scene. Three quarters of the hippies were rich kids, over-rich kids that were able to afford [it].

In the most likely scenario, such class conflict underwrote much of the contact between the Vagabonds, the greasers, and the suburban teens as they filled the streets in ever greater numbers, but not all. It was but a symptom of a more reflexive identity condition – in their different uniforms, these young people exaggerated their differences, accentuated their dissimilarities, and tried, in their respective ways, to be cool.

Yorkville was their stage, and their performance was to make the scene. And, anyway, they were all in it together – by the end of the month, they were all to be tarred with the same brush. Whatever racial, ethnic, and class-based anxieties were at work in the vicissitudes of concern over the youth cultures inhabiting the Yorkville scene, the key category, and the one which subsumed all others when it came down to the telling of it, was youth. Ultimately, although the Village scene was performed in different ways by these participants, and although these performances were connected to thorny issues of race, class and gender, such concerns melted away in dominant, reductionist accounts of the Village as “foreign territory taken over by teenagers.”

By late June, spurred by an odd, nightmarish story recounted by vociferous Alderman Helen Johnson to the City Council, the decision to run young people out of Yorkville became official public policy. The story of a pool of blood found on a resident’s porch after yet another Village brawl was enough to push the Council to draft a bylaw banning motorcycles from dusk 'till dawn in Yorkville. It also moved the Council to look into forcing businesses to close at 1 a.m. rather than 3 a.m., and to uphold the plan to refuse to license new coffee houses. The following day, in another critical editorial
punchily entitled “What Will They Ban Next?”, James Cooper of the *Globe and Mail* argued that “a dramatic and exceedingly exaggerated tale of the horrors of juvenile lawlessness in Yorkville’s few square blocks of shops and coffee houses” should not have been enough to scare the Council into banning motorcycles. Rather, he suggests that motorcyclists were being singled out as the group responsible for everything – scapegoating in the absence of any real substantiation of this position. “There is no evidence that teen-age violence and vandalism ride only on the seats of motorcycles,” he seethed. “Nor is there one thread of evidence to suggest that the coffee houses that City Hall would restrict are the incubators of any of Yorkville’s trouble.” In his view, the only way to arrest youth conflict in Yorkville was to add more police to the mix (a position forwarded by some coffee house owners and employees as well).405

On June 9th, fifteen coffee house proprietors petitioned City Hall suggesting that the issue of youth rowdiness that was being blamed on their establishments was little more than politically-motivated, propagandistic nonsense. According to the *Globe and Mail*, these coffee house owners

…said complaints of teenage rowdiness are just a cover-up for the real issue. They charged that the boutique owners are losing money and have made the coffee houses their scapegoats – blaming them for scaring away carriage trade patrons. They said civic authorities, in turn, have deliberately tormented them with daily visits from fire department and health inspectors, who used to come once every two months before the complaints were lodged two weeks ago.406

The owners pressed the point that reports of youth rowdiness were “grossly exaggerated,” and that the real issue was over the fact that the City was siding with the boutiques

405 *Globe and Mail*, June 9th, 1965. See also the earlier article in the *Globe and Mail*, April 10th where the Penny Farthing’s Brian Walker suggests that "ineffectual" police are an issue.

without considering how important the coffee houses have become to the tourist-enticing image of the district. “The boutiques,” they argued, “have followed the coffee houses into the district and depend on the atmosphere they have created.”

Moreover, the City’s emphasis on all this phony violence was doomed to backfire, argued some of the owners. Harry Finegold suggested that this had already begun to happen: “With all this publicity […] our image is taking a terrible beating. It is being made to look as if it is a crime to come down here. It’s getting to the point where people are ashamed of being seen here.” Bernie Fiedler, proprietor of the famous Riverboat café, agreed with his colleague, but argued that it was the younger kids that were the problem, suggesting that a curfew on people under the age of 18 might be the best solution.

In the end, the coffee house owners were afforded a victory even as they stood in protest. On June 10th, the Globe reported that the Toronto Licensing Board had essentially disregarded municipal requests to refuse applications for Yorkville coffee houses. Three new licenses were granted, and the Board gave frank notice to the City Council that they were not prepared to refuse such applicants based on their mere recommendation to do so.

This episode, heavily covered by media sources, stood, like the May Festival of the previous year, to inculcate and exaggerate the characterization of Yorkville as a disputed terrain. But, perhaps more importantly, it loudly proclaimed Yorkville as an important place: something worth paying attention to was afoot in this little area,

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409 ibid.
410 ibid.
something even the Mayor himself was interested in checking out for himself. For, the
day after the coffee house fracas had played out, Scott Young, a popular columnist for the
Globe and Mail (and father to local folksinger Neil), admonished Mayor Phillip Givens
for failing to speak up in support of Yorkville at the City Council meetings. Young had
seen the Mayor and his wife “making the scene in style” the previous Friday evening,
even attending a concert by local band The Dirty Shames with friends Pierre Berton and
his wife. “Monday in City Council when his colleagues were seeking ways to prevent
more coffee houses from opening in Yorkville, he said not a word… Why the silence?”
Young demanded. For Givens’ part, his response was simple, if unsatisfying. “Maybe I
should have spoken in Council,” he said. “But with the kind of public atmosphere there
was… well I found it difficult in face of all those massive allegations to do other than sit
back and let the Aldermen, who after all should know their own ward, tell what it was all
about.”

The contradictions creep around, hiding behind every position, every version of
events: if the Mayor and his wife could tour the district on a Friday evening, how
dangerous could it really be? How prone to violence and depravity, how demonstrably in
need of increased municipal pressure and scrutiny, even sanction? It seems clear that the
real issue at stake here, as was well pointed out by the coffee house owners, was the
municipal effort to redirect development (and public expectations and impressions) of
Yorkville toward sophistication, and away from youth and bohemia. The emphasis on
violence, bikers and "toughs", and the association of these phenomena with coffee
houses, are examples of an unrefined brand of scapegoating designed to root out the

411Globe and Mail, June 11th, 1965. Scott Young’s piece is tellingly entitled: "Shh! The Mayor
was There".
burgeoning youth cultures from the district by forcing them into an umbrella category of “unruly youth”. However, each effort toward this end, from the canceling of the May Festival through the coffee house and motorcycle bans, served to advertise to young people that there was a place in Toronto that held some deep, if amorphous, attraction.

There is an irony here, creeping around the corners of this narrative. Although Toronto’s anxiety over Yorkville’s violent youth scene was based upon misinformation and exaggeration by early summer 1965, by the end of that same summer there was mounting evidence that such a condition was developing in the district. Indeed, wishing something won’t happen sometimes brings it to pass. (Just ask Oedipus, Kamsa, or Anakin Skywalker.) As the advertisement for a violent Yorkville (wearing the garments of admonition and warning) filled newspapers and airwaves throughout the spring of ’65, at least some participants in the scene began to perceive a danger in the generally safe, peaceable district.

This tension over the potential for violence led to the first sign of weapons in the scene; people were coming to the district prepared for the violence they had been told to expect. And so, less than a month after the debates over the coffee house ban, a 19-year-old from Etobicoke “accidentally bumped into a group of youths” on Yorkville Avenue who followed him and his friend to the corner of Cumberland and Bel Air, where they got into a brawl. When the fight was over, the young man had been stabbed three times in chest, and once in abdomen. He would survive his wounds, but Yorkville wouldn’t survive their significance. Violence had come to the Village, but only after everyone had been told it was already there.412

**The Shape of Things to Come: The Advent of the “Toronto Sound”**

Murray McLaughlin, then a young man with an acoustic guitar soaking up the scene that would eventually make him a hero, remembers the Village in 1964-5 as “still a pleasant, relaxed place on a sunny afternoon.”413 Judy Perly (today Toronto’s greatest benefactor of indie folk music) recalls that the reason it was so pleasant was that the Yorkville scene was still mainly about acoustic artistry until about 1965. Perhaps because she has spent the past 25 years running Toronto’s best folk music club, The Free Times Café, what stands out in her recollection is the novelty of the Village scene, and its incredible success at getting young people to listen to the pop-chart-unfriendly music.414

“Then, because folk music was big, and people were particularly into folk music, [my older sister] would influence me to go to places like the Riverboat. In those days the cover charge was like 7 dollars. That’s like about 70 dollars today!”415 But, why would people shell out so much money to see folk music? “Don’t forget, there wasn’t that much happening in Toronto [in those days]. Yorkville was where it was happening. [The scene] wasn’t happening in 50 different places like it is now. So, they would have a cover charge for the music, which was high in comparison to today’s prices, but then it was a new thing so people were willing to pay for it.”416

For many, folk music seemed to channel the frustrations and the anger of the Civil Rights struggles in the U.S., even while it connected to the bohemian intellectualism of

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414 Perly’s current venture, a venerable College St club called the Free Times Café, is among the only stages where an unsigned, unknown, bare-bones folk act can be guaranteed a stage to play on. And, she and her colleagues serve some of the best *latkes* in town.
415 Perly’s numbers are likely off by a few dollars. David DePoe, in a 1967 discussion with Allan Lamport, referred to the $2.00 cover charges at coffee houses as being too steep for most Villagers. http://archives.cbc.ca/IDCC-1-69-580-3217/life_society/hippies/
416 Judy Perly, Interview with Author, June 27th, 2006.
the post-Beat scene. Many of my interview subjects recalled their music fandom starting with folk music before sliding into folk-rock and psychedelic rock’n’roll as the decade (and the trends) progressed. But, it always began with folk music. But, as it would for many of their favourite folkies (from Neil Young to Gordon Lightfoot to Phil Ochs), full bands and electric guitars became the preferred format by the end of 1966.

David DePoe’s story about his first exposure to the Village music scene reads like the prototypical Sixties awakening. “It’s funny,” he recalls.

When I got to University of Toronto [in 1963], Bill [Cameron, then an aspiring journalist] brought me to his room and he played me Bob Dylan. I had never heard Bob Dylan, had never even heard of Bob Dylan or anything, and so I started listening to all this music: the Dylan, the Joan Baez, all the folksingers of the times. And I started hanging out in Yorkville where there was this early folk music scene. I heard Gordon Lightfoot, started going to the Riverboat and saw [American Blues legends] Muddy Waters, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGee, and all these black musicians.
And soon I got in with some people who decided they wanted to form an organization called the Student Union for Peace Action.⁴¹⁷

Like some fantasy born of the single-lane-highway mind of Greil Marcus, yet another narrative of Sixties participation is here funneled through the apocalyptic power of Bob Dylan’s music.⁴¹⁸

Still, those same people who were drawn to Yorkville after hearing Dylan’s early records – for he, a Greenwich Village mainstay, merely visited, but never played Yorkville himself – were likely among those who were shocked and dismayed (or elated and thrilled) by Dylan’s dismissal of the folk music idiom in 1965 in favour of the

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⁴¹⁸ Marcus, among the most influential and talented writers on popular culture and music in the post-60s period, is also guilty of obsessive coverage of Bob Dylan in lieu of focusing his energies on myriad other (perhaps not quite equally significant, but surely worthy) narratives. He has, for example, written an entire, full-length book on one single five-minute Bob Dylan song. Greil Marcus, Like a Rolling Stone: Bob Dylan at the Crossroads (New York: Public Affairs, 2005).
strident sublimity of rock’n’roll. Suffice it to say that the movement from folk music to rock’n’roll in the Village can be tied to the more general move between these two genres commonly associated with Dylan’s change of direction. As Perly reminds us, up until about 1965, folk music really was the Village music scene. Yonge Street, with its Ronnie Hawkins-inspired beerhouses, was Toronto’s rock’n’roll scene. However, with the introduction of folk-rock, which was nipping at the heels of Dylan’s sonic shift, hybrid bands seemed to be born overnight, each of them offering a sound which dwarfed even the most tremendous talents in the un-amplified, acoustic scene. It was Yonge Street colliding with Yorkville Avenue, and no one musician better embodies this sound than a recent transplant from Winnipeg, Neil Young.

Young, a scruffy, but insanely diligent aspiring musician, had actually cut his teeth as a rock’n’roller back in his western hometown. However, upon his 1965 arrival in Yorkville, he had taken to writing plaintive acoustic numbers in an effort to score folk gigs at the various clubs. At first, Young recalls, “I didn’t see much folk-rock in Toronto. It was either folk or rock.” The division was clear, and Yorkville seemed only to offer space for the mellow scene. “The Yorkville scene,” muses Young. “I’d never seen anything like it. Music was everywhere. Two years before the Summer of Love. It was like this big deal. Toronto in ’65.”

The Riverboat was an upscale thing – people who played there were really making a living. There was the New Gate of Cleve, which was just down

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419 He visited the Bohemian Embassy in 1962, but wasn’t invited to sing. See Jennings, 47-8.
420 By the end of 1965, many of the folk acts on the Village scene (including neophytes Neil Young and Joni Mitchell) were struggling to get their sound across, as their audiences (which would have been ready-made in previous years) were less and less interested in acoustic music. See Jimmy McDonough, *Shakey* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2003); and Karen O’Brien, *Shadows and Light: Joni Mitchell* (London: Virgin Books, 2001).
the street – that’s where I saw Lonnie Johnson. And I think I saw Pete Seeger there, to, and Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee.”

Living wherever he could (even though his father, Toronto journalist Scott Young, lived in nearby Rosedale), Young fell into the scene, lifting boxes at a Coles bookstore and trying to get started as a musician in the Union-dominated scene.

One of his friends at the time was Village maven Vicky Taylor, the resident folksinger at the Mousehole (Peggy McHugh’s operation). Taylor’s $90-a-month apartment above the Night Owl on Avenue Road was “a communal home to many starving musicians,” according to Young’s biographer Jimmy McDonough.

Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, John Kay of Steppenwolf (known then as the Sparrow), David Rea and Craig Allen all passed through Vicky’s apartment, sleeping on the floor, jamming with other musicians and subsisting on a no-budget concoction Taylor whipped up called ‘guck.’ “I was kinda like the mother hen,” said Taylor.

Taylor was famous in the scene for her magnum opus, a twenty-verse dynamo entitled “The Pill,” a confessional about her battles with depression and pharmaceuticals. As a result, her apartment was known to be a good place to score prescription pills when other supplies got scarce. But pharmies weren’t the only thing that got her and her flatmates going that year. “A friend of ours came back from Israel with a four-dollar Hershey bar of hash in her brassiere,” recalls Taylor’s on-and-off roommate Craig Allen. “And we proceeded to clean it up. We lost three months with that brick of hash.”

By the end of 1965, though, following Dylan’s electric turn, musical walls were being busted down everywhere. Always a rock’n’roll musician at heart, Young watched as other bands like the Paupers, the Sparrow and Luke and the Apostles started bringing

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422 McDonough, 121.
423 ibid, 134.
424 ibid.
rock’n’roll riffs and electric energy into the Village. Young, having never done terribly well as a folkie in the intense Yorkville environment – he once complained that it “was a very humbling experience for me and I just couldn’t get anything going” – liked what he heard, and saw an opportunity. 425 Popping amyl nitrate pills for energy, Young and his friends (many of them also transplants from Winnipeg) practiced at every opportunity, eventually forming a series of bands (the Mynah Birds most significant among them) and rocking the Village for a brief, but legendary period.426

The connections between folk music, Yorkville, and the New Left were much stronger than the later connections between rock’n’roll, the Village and the Movement. Those who were in the Village scene as it developed through 1964 and into 1965 were sometimes part of both the folk music and the political scenes, and many saw them as inextricably connected.427 Typically, Village folksingers proselytized on diverse political issues including the U.S. Civil Rights débâcles and the horrors of nuclear war (Bonnie Dobson’s haunting “Morning Dew” comes to mind), concerning themselves with the same issues as were their political counterparts at the University of Toronto.428

Buffy Sainte-Marie, one of the more successful folksingers of the 1960s, was profoundly influenced by the atmosphere in the Village coffee houses. “It was all talk, talk, talk and listen, listen, listen,” she explained to Nicholas Jennings. “It was really

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426See Einarson, 136-169. Also, see Scott Young, Neil and Me (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1984) 49-58
427Jennings, 35-53.
428Dobson’s mournful song is the stripped-down cousin to Dylan’s ode-to-Armageddon, “A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall”. Imagining the horror of the morning after, Dobson’s stark dialogue takes place between the last two survivors, one innocent and searching, one cold and brazen: Where have all the people gone my honey? / Where have all the people gone today? / There’s no need for you to be worrying about all those people. / You never see those people anyway. Her version is available on The Music Never Stopped: The Roots of the Grateful Dead, a weird but excellent compilation produced by Shanachie Records in 1995.
about exchanging ideas. People participated in what was going on on-stage, not clapping or singalong stuff so much as talking about what an artist’s set was all about. That led to a lot of original thinking.”

Such original thinking led to her scribbling down her most famous song while between sets at the Purple Onion coffee house. Her “Universal Soldier,” with its provocatively general finger-pointing and sincere anti-war message – “…And he's fighting for Canada, he's fighting for France, he's fighting for the USA; And he's fighting for the Russians, and he's fighting for Japan, and he thinks we'll put an end to war this way…” – perfectly encapsulates the relationship between the folk idiom and the political awakening of many young people in the early 60s.

The Village community in 64-66 was designed around the notion that sharing, camaraderie and collaboration were paramount to survival. Indigence was expected, so a certain kind of openness was the rule. If you were demonstrably part of the community and you needed a place to crash, couldn’t afford a meal, or wanted to see a show but didn’t have the scratch, you would be looked after. For those who were part of that inner circle of Villagers, because of their connection to this philosophy of sharing, openness and community, the many visiting musicians, poets and politicos often became their de facto charges. As folk singers, bluesmen and others passed through Toronto to play the Village coffee houses, they also passed through their living rooms, slept on their couches, and shared ideologies, worldviews, and experiences.

This trading partnership led to some fruitful exchanges. According to DePoe:

So, I was singing at the open stage at the Riverboat and stuff, and I was totally into the music scene and everything, and I was supporting myself. I drove a cab for a living, and hung out at Yorkville when my shift was over. That was the summer of ‘65 and through the fall and winter of ’66…

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429 Jennings, 63.
We lived in the basement [of a building on the outskirts of the Village], and we hung out at Yorkville a lot, smoked a lot of dope and, you know, Mississippi John Hurt slept on our couch once! I was totally into it! He showed me how to play “Candyman” on my guitar. And, Bernie Fiedler, who ran the Riverboat, he used to let me in the back door quite a lot. Because once I got well-known in Yorkville, he’d just say: *Come and hear these guys...*  

To be able to circumvent the steep cover at the Riverboat (by then the premiere folk club in the Village) by virtue of his already commanding Villager status must have been a chest-puffer. But, DePoe has an even better story that grew out of his connection to the folk scene, the coffee house owners, and the community of couch surfers.  

[US folk musician] Phil Ochs was writing the song “Changes” when he came to Toronto. There’s stories, like he was over at Peter Gzowski’s place on Toronto island working on it, and then he went over to Gordon Lightfoot’s house and was working on it some more. Anyway, our guest room was upstairs and he came down one night and he said: *Ok David, I think I’ve got this song, let me sing it for you.* And I said to him: *You know, that one line there doesn’t scan. How ‘bout this?* So he scratched it out, wrote it in, what I suggested to him, and then he ran over to the Riverboat and sang it whole, for the first time. Yeah, *Phil.* I kept in touch with him for about two years after that until he went into his depression.  

Apocryphal or not, the story stands, if nothing else, as an example of the kind of close-knit community of Villagers fostered by the concentration of activities in the district in the 60s.

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432Legend has it that another young Village folksinger was present that night. Gordon Lightfoot, soon to hit New York City to record his classic début album, chose Ochs’ aching love song for inclusion on “Lightfoot!” (1966). The record was recorded in 1964, but remained unreleased until January 1966. See the remarkably thorough fan site on Lightfoot, http://www.lightfoot.ca/lightrev.htm.

433David DePoe, Interview with Author, December 20th, 2004. American folk singer Phil Ochs, the tragic Sixties figure *par excellence*, was so disillusioned by the rock’n’roll turn, and the subsequent depoliticization of much of the hip music scene, coupled with the escalation of the Vietnam travesty, the events of Chicago ’68, and the implosion of the SDS, that he seemed to pretty much fall apart. His last few records were commercially unsuccessful, and often subject to attack from critics who saw him as an anachronism. Drugs, depression, and alcoholism decimated his ability to write new material, and he was effectively silenced through the early 1970s. He hanged himself at his sister’s home in 1976. Michael Schumacher, *There But for Fortune: The Life of Phil Ochs* (New York: Hyperion, 1996).
Not only did established musicians, writers and performers gravitate to the Village, but Yorkville also offered stages for novices and pretenders alike. Most other stages in Toronto in the 1960s were bound by union regulations which forbade them from hiring non-union musicians. However, places like the Penny Farthing, John and Marilyn McHugh’s venerable Yorkville address, were able to offer up their basement stage to beginners – for the McHughs (and music fans in general) this was to be a fruitful move. While upstairs audiences thrilled to blues greats like Lonnie Johnson or Brownie and McGhee (the blues being the McHughs’ preferred genre), non-union singer-songwriters such as Neil Young and Joni Mitchell found their legs on the downstairs stage.434 The Penny Farthing, boasting an outdoor patio (offering unparalleled sightseeing opportunities) and the Village’s only semi-public swimming pool, wasn’t just a draw for aspiring folkies. By 1964 its bikini-clad waitresses (their pool-ready attire wasn’t required, but certainly wasn’t discouraged) had helped to inspire an atmosphere of hip decadence under the groovily incongruous Penny Farthing bicycle hanging by the bar.435

The Riverboat, perhaps Yorkville’s most enduring symbol (it remained open until June, 1978), was the premiere folk club in the Village almost immediately after it opened in December, 1964. Bernie Fiedler, a former salesman who had been turned onto the Village coffee house scene by none other than Werner Graeber the previous year, had tried his hand at operating a small Yorkville Ave club called the Mousetrap with his wife, Patti. The Mousetrap (which he opened in October, 1963) was charming and decidedly hip, but seated only 60 people; Fiedler knew he had to expand his operation,

434See Jennings, 70.
435Ibid, 71. “We used to get letters addressed to Miss Penny Farthing,” admits McHugh.
and, judging by the crowds he got virtually every night, this was to be no fool’s errand.436 The Riverboat, seating almost 120, still managed to feel intimate and cozy; by all accounts, it was an ideal folk venue.437 Perhaps that’s how it was able to attract all the right acts. “For me,” recalls Gordon Lightfoot, who enjoyed a lengthy engagement at the newly-opened club, “the Riverboat was my first taste of the big time. It was very dark and had a wonderful ambiance. And, it really did give you the idea that you were on some sort of *boat.*”438 Within months of opening, in a coup of colossal proportions, superstars Simon and Garfunkel would play a legendary show on the Fiedlers’ stage. After that, the training wheels were surely off. As Village folkie Brent Titcomb (whose band Three’s a Crowd often played its stage) put it to Nicholas Jennings, “Yorkville was really the epicenter of the whole music scene in Canada… and the Riverboat was its most prestigious venue.”439

But folk music had been meeting stiff competition for Village audiences since the summer of 1964, when coffee houses like the El Patio and the Mynah Bird had begun to move beyond the acoustic-only bill, experimenting with allowing local garage rockers to tear up the air in the diminutive venues. Bands like the Paupers (who, following the addition of vocalist and songwriter Adam Mitchell were moving beyond their early, Mersey-clone incarnation), A Passing Fancy, Little Caesar and the Consoles, and the Ugly Ducklings were getting their respective acts together, and delighting their crowds of caffeine- and pot-fueled Villagers with blues-based rock’n’roll.

436*ibid*, 82.
437One of the ways Fiedler managed to keep the venue intimate and cozy was to clear the room after every one-hour performance, and then charge fresh cover for the next set. This way, he could maximize sales, maximize space for customers, and maximize overall numbers of performances. Some nights the Riverboat offered five distinct sets of music, serving some 885 people. *ibid*, 86.
438*ibid*, 116.
439*ibid*, 93.
As Jennings so effectively demonstrates, Yorkville’s music scene was, by mid-Spring 1965, fascinatingly diverse and exciting. “There was literally something for everyone,” he recalled.

The traditional jazz of Jim McHarg and his Metro Stompers at the Penny Farthing, the delicate ballads of Joni Mitchell at the New Gate of Cleve, the bluesy folk of John Kay at the Half Beat and the stirring songs of Lightfoot at the Riverboat. Meanwhile, the new pop sound had infiltrated Yorkville, with go-go dancers at the Mynah Bird and British-influenced bands everywhere: The Ugly Ducklings at Charlie Brown’s, Jack London and the Sparrows at Café El Patio and Dee and the Yeomen at the Night Owl. Even the venerable Purple Onion had switched from folk to feature the blues-rock sounds of Luke and the Apostles. The close proximity of all the venues meant that club hoppers could easily catch up to a dozen different acts a night. It also meant that musicians could readily check out what others were playing.\textsuperscript{440}

You could even hear David Clayton-Thomas, the tough-as-sinew blues singer (who would soon lead his Bossmen to a Canadian hit single with “Brainwashed”), holding court all night long on the steps of St-Paul’s Church. Such diversity breeds innovation – just ask New York City. Yorkville, Canada’s answer to the East Village, had become a kaleidoscopic mixture of ideas, sounds, talent and hack artistry, all of which (when combined with the latest in psychedelic drugs) promoted creativity, competition and, occasionally, brilliance.

Among the very first Canadian rock’n’roll bands to take up the hippie mantle was a bunch of proto-psychedelic rockers led by a charismatic wannabe Brit named Dave Marden. So enamored of the British Invasion bands, Marden and his bandmates changed their names to give them a more English lilt; it is said that Toronto-born Marden (who was now going by Jack London) even went so far with this performance as to fake an

\textsuperscript{440} ibid, 99-100.
accent and tell people he hailed from Liverpool.441 One of Judy Pocock’s favourite stories tells of the early days of the Yorkville rock’n’roll scene, just after her return from Europe and her first exposure to long haired boys. “I remember looking out my window, and there was a band practicing at the Avenue Road Club,” she recollects.

They had long hair! And they were the only long haired guys in the neighbourhood. And they were Jack London and the Sparrows, which [became] Steppenwolf! I used to sit in my bedroom window and watch them practice. Wow. And, I thought, I like these guys.442

Yorkville’s rock’n’roll scene was about to explode.

One of the curious things about the history of rock’n’roll music, and among the worst remembered aspect of its development, is that, prior to early 1964, it just wasn’t that cool. That is, the Toronto hip scene was not associated with rock’n’roll music, nor did the rock’n’roll bands and bars seem to care one way or the other whether the hipsters stood in the crowds. In general, they were interested primarily in teenagers, the ever-elusive hit parade, and keeping a steady stream of young women coming through the doors with ticket stubs in their hands.

Rock’n’roll music, played on Toronto’s famous 1050 CHUM AM station since 1958, neither inspired nor moved Toronto’s Beats and bohemians the way that jazz or folk music could. Jazz and folk (both idioms which included blues music under their wide umbrellas) were seen as authentic expressions, heartfelt and sincere. Rock’n’roll was commercial, and thus fallen. No angel-headed hipster was going to try to make it on

441 ibid, 67. From Jack London and the Sparrows (1965) they became simply The Sparrows later that year, before reinventing, and then renaming themselves as John Kay and Sparrow in 1966. Then, finally, they settled on the much snappier (and Zeitgeist-fingering) Steppenwolf, in early 1968.
442 Judy Pocock, Interview with Author, June 24th, 2006.
the pop charts, at least not without taking a lot of sass for her efforts. The series of Yonge Street bars known as the Strip had offered amplified country music and live rock’n’roll bands to the rock’n’roll crowd from the mid-50s on, while the folk and jazz scenes developed mainly in the tiny coffee houses on Gerrard and then in Yorkville. Their destinies were linked, but their trajectories were fairly different. Until about 1964-65 (the period in which the British Invasion sounds began to mingle with Bob Dylan’s shift toward literate, hyper-cool rock’n’roll), the rock and jazz/folk crowds rarely mixed.

The “underground mayor of Yonge Street,” “Romping” Ronnie Hawkins couldn’t have cared less. As head of the staggeringly talented Hawks, by far the most significant band on the Strip in this period, Hawkins led by example. His interest was never in bringing the hipsters up in Yorkville down to him, and he certainly wasn’t prepared to set up shop in some obscure coffee house. He dressed his band in suits, forbade them from touching marijuana, and held them to a strict regimen of rehearsal and more rehearsal; his was hardly a hipster’s outfit. It was about filling the room with screaming girls, teenagers who would spread the word around their high schools.

What Hawkins was looking for was a market: exactly the kind of young people who would, soon enough, be tearing out their hair over the British Invasion bands like the

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443 A telling example: Ian and Sylvia, Yorkville’s biggest draws, went down to New York to get a record deal. However, when they were offered a huge, lucrative, major label deal, they turned it down. Instead, they accepted a deal on the smaller, but infinitely more “authentic” folk label, Vanguard.

444 Ronnie Hawkins and the Hawks, for example, typically played to crowds of teenagers and "rounders", a now dated term for hoods, thieves, and criminals of the like. "They must've idolized Al Capone, or something." Hawkins told Jennings, "because they all had names like Squeaker, Dukie, and Basher." Such characters were fairly unlikely to attend, say, a poetry reading. Jennings, 39.

445 Ibid, 44.
Beatles, the Dave Clark Five, and the Rolling Stones. But, even if he didn’t care one way or the other, his extraordinary band (which would outgrow his leadership and conservatism soon enough) was creating a space for the hipster with a rock’n’roll sensibility. A still astoundingly young Robbie Robertson, The Hawks’ minimalist guitarist prone to sudden, shocking bursts of firecracker brilliance, was attracting an army of devotees, come to worship at his altar every Friday night. “His disciples dressed like him,” John Kay (later the lead vocalist for Sparrow and Steppenwolf) recalled. “[They] played blond Fender Telecasters like him, and emulated his stinging staccato lead-guitar style.” In Robertson’s work, in the sublime three-part harmonies of Rick Danko, Richard Manuel and Levon Helm, and in the spectral excursions of organist Garth Hudson, these young music fans were hearing something that seemed hip in ways that neither the predictable radio programming, nor the darkened coffee houses up the street could approach. “Ronnie Hawkins did a lot for the music scene,” explains Kelly Jay, later the lead singer of Crowbar. “He let everybody know that the clock was running and that nobody would get any better unless they practiced. He made sure we knew that we wouldn’t get anywhere by sitting around drinking and smoking pot.”

But the Yonge Street scene was by no means a Beat or even purely young environment. “They put all the liquor licenses in one area,” explains Hawkins. “It kept everybody downtown. You couldn’t get booze anywhere else. All of the people getting out of work from Eaton’s and Simpson’s would stop by for a drink and sometimes stay

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446 “At first,” Hawkins claims, “we thought the Beatles and the Stones were just doing bad versions of the songs we loved. We didn’t buy them, for a second, because we knew the real thing too well.” Bidini, 258.
447 Jennings, 57.
448 Bidini, 258.
over. […] We had everybody from the rounders to the wise guys to all the élite.\textsuperscript{449} While Ian and Sylvia (now both Tyson), Bonnie Dobson, Joso and Malka, and a variety of other early Village folkies played to modest crowds of bohemians, the Hawks and their ilk sweated it out in front of criminals, suits, prostitutes, and the other kind of hip youth, the ones who could recognize that rock’n’roll \textit{did} have something to offer the angel-headed after all.

In 1965, the first exclusively rock’n’roll clubs began to open in Yorkville, and a new era in Village politics and youth culture would be born out of the innovation. Joining the Strip to the Village in a more formalized way, rock’n’roll clubs offered much the same entertainment as their Yonge Street competitors; however, theirs was available right in the midst of the (supposedly) riot-friendly Yorkville scene. The marriage of rock’n’roll (and its attendant crowds of teenagers) pushed aside the assumption that Yorkville’s youth scene was all about bohemian artistry and folk music. While the Purple Onion and the Penny Farthing still booked major American folk acts like Phil Ochs and John Hammond Jr. alongside popular local jug bands like the Dirty Shames and the Colonials, new rock joints (like the Embassy Club, the Brave New World, and the Mynah Bird) were booking the Hawks, Robbie Lane and the Disciples, David Clayton-Thomas and the Shays, and the Paupers. The variety of sounds must have been staggering.

Staggering, that is, for those who ventured to Yorkville. As hopeful folksingers and aspiring rockers headed across country to try their hand at playing on a real, Yorkville stage – the kind they had been reading about in the \textit{Globe and Mail}, or watching on a CBC TV special like 1965's "Yorkville: It's Happening!" – most of their friends relied on what they heard on the radio when looking for the soundtrack to their

\textsuperscript{449} ibid, 257.
evening's activities. And, for the most part, that meant that they were not listening to the Yorkville scene. Instead, they were listening to US and British bands who were already seen as tired and insignificant in the Village.450

Its status as the spearhead of the Canadian music scene in the 1960s is well-deserved – for no other place in the country attracted such a diverse and impressive amount of talent – but it must be remembered that the Canadian music scene in the 1960s was a mere shadow of its U.S. counterpart. There were few labels, fewer opportunities for radio play, and little-to-no financial security for musicians, even the demonstrably brilliant ones. It was a truism that, if you wanted to make it in the industry – i.e., to record a worthy record and to compete on the charts – you had to go to Yorkville, make a name, and then leave for the US. This general plan was adopted by most everyone associated with the scene that we tend to remember today, from Ian and Sylvia (who were recording in New York City by 1963) to Gordon Lightfoot (who shared a New York-based manager with Bob Dylan) to Neil Young (who arrived in Yorkville in 1965 and left for LA in the spring of ’66) to Joni Mitchell (a Villager from 1964 to ’66) to Zal Yanovsky (by 1965 a member of New York-based Lovin’ Spoonful). Yorkville was, for them, a stage, a stepping stone to the bigger and the better. But the kaleidoscopic Yorkville music scene was comprised of a great many folkies, garage bands, pretenders, bona fide geniuses, and flat-out weirdos who simply never made it out of the Village or, if they did, they didn't make it too very far. Still, there can be no denying the intense appeal of Yorkville as a musical centre par excellence, a veritable Mecca for aspiring rockstars, and a breeding

450 It is also important to note the disconnection between Villagers and Village musicians – a disconnection born of material conditions, not necessarily ideology or behaviour. As Frank Longstaff observed, “while musicians aim to play the Village, in few cases are musicians Villagers. Even if they live in the Yorkville area, rehearsals and performances keep them out of Village circles.” Longstaff, 21.
ground for a few of the most commercially and critically successful songwriters this country has ever produced. Indeed, it was the scene – as Village songwriter, booking agent and manager Colleen Riley puts it (perhaps overzealously): “the heavy concentration of clubs in Yorkville meant one could simply walk down the street and meet, at one time or another, nearly everyone in the music industry, from artists to managers to booking agents to record company executives to promotion people. Deals were done,” she maintains, “from a sighting and a wave.”

Among the elite rock’n’roll groups after 1965 were the bluesy, proto-psychedelic Luke and the Apostles, the exciting Motown-meets-Midtown sound of Neil Young and Rick James’ the Mynah Birds (which, boasting a black American Draft Dodger as a frontman, was among the very few integrated bands in all of rock'n'roll music at the time) and erstwhile Rolling Stones clones The Ugly Ducklings. Each of these bands tends to represent something of the diversity of the Yorkville music scene: its progressive, experimental tendencies (Luke and the Apostles), its mindblowing ability to bring future stars together (the Mynah Birds), and its often derivative spirit giving way to magnificent rock intensity (the Ugly Ducklings). By 1967, such seminal bands would inspire a variety of new groups, who (like the Mandala and Kensington Market) would enjoy more fame than their predecessors. But the music industry, awoken to the potential of Canadian performers after this initial flurry in the Village, was finally getting ready for them. Most nights the stages in the Purple Onion (now offering gigs to rock'n'rollers as well as folk and jugband acts), the El Patio and the Mynah Bird offered glimpses of the future of rock'n'roll, in all of its mongrel glory.

Meanwhile, for the Village art world, just as it was with the folk music scene, 1965 marked a turning point. Rock’n’roll, younger audiences, and a more severe concentration of media and municipal attention on the scene was hurting business, and leading many to suspect that the Village art scene was no longer viable. Still, as the more reputable galleries languished under the weight of all of these new joints catering to the younger crowd, at least some hip youth were still drawn to the Village for its connection to new directions in aesthetics. *Wild Bill*, later a Biker in the Village scene, remembers being attracted to the area by the prospect of hip Village artistry. “So, I went through the Village scene, with my sisters, for something to do. The art Galleries interested us, especially the small ones. We had friends that were in the Gallery world; two ladies I knew then started a Gallery in Yorkville.”[^452] This fascinating mash-up of interests, identities, sounds and aesthetics that comprised the Yorkville scene by the end of 1965 was the perfect breeding ground for the counterculture.

**Ralph Sat in the Car and Prayed: A Christian Mission to Yorkville**

Launched by Rev. Kenn Opperman of the Christian Missionary Alliance (CMA) in late January 1966, the Fish Net provided a new kind of service for Yorkville youth. Set up as a “free” coffee shop on Yorkville Avenue, the Fish Net operated as an otherwise innocuous establishment, a place to sit and sip on warm drinks, ride out a high, meet some other local folks. But, as one of the few spots in the Village where one could find a bit of respite from the move-along prodding of the proliferating beat cops, its popularity among Villagers grew unabated. By mid-summer, it was observed that “the place gets so

[^452]: *Wild Bill*, Interview with Author, March 11th, 2005.
crowded that often the door must be locked to keep more from coming in and so kids sit patiently on the steps and wait their turn.\(^453\)

Providing free cups of coffee and the occasional biscuit, the Fish Net tended to attract the local youth without the resources to sit elsewhere – most coffee houses would force people to move along if they failed to purchase something once an hour. However, the average kid in the district likely knew what would happen if she decided to take the CMA up on their offer of free coffee and shelter from the storm: eventually, inescapably, one of the adult staff would sidle up and inexorably steer the conversation toward Jesus.\(^454\) A hassle for many, a chore for most, such enforced conversations were generally reflective of a wider hip perception of Christianity, and of organized religion in general, as a kind of scam.

“Our primary purpose,” explained Deane Downey, the 26-year old University of Toronto student who helped run the Fish Net during the summer of 1966, “is to provide a place where we as Christians can present our beliefs concerning Christ.”\(^455\) Essentially an evangelical operation,\(^456\) the Fish Net went about its mission in a soft-sell, casual manner, using the coffee shop venue as a kind of front for its chief function. Phyllis McIntyre, who ran the Fish Net six nights a week from 8:30 to midnight, explained her role as she

\(^{453}\) Langstaff, 18.
\(^{454}\) The aim of the program in the Fish Net is to present a fundamentalist, literal religious philosophy to Villagers and to train church workers who will later work in other areas. It also aims to provide a haven of security and warmth. Because it is not very successful with its first two aims, it is very successful with the third.” Longstaff, 17.
\(^{455}\) Globe and Mail, July 4th, 1966. Deane (or Dean, it is unclear) was also a choir leader for Avenue Road Church. Toronto Star, September 29th 1966.
\(^{456}\) The Avenue Road Church, an evangelical mission founded by Charles B. Templeton, was largely behind the CMA and the Fish Net operation. Rev. Opperman and many of his staff came from this congregation.
understood it: “We never forced religion on any of them… we tell them we haven’t come here to give them religion, but to try to help them sort out their problems.”

It must have been pretty good coffee, because even with its overt associations with Christianity, by the time it was shut down by its landlord eight months later, the Fish Net had become a popular spot for Villagers – on any given evening, “scores of them” could be found congregating there, and lining up out front for a chance to come in and hang around. However, its success at disseminating Christian ideology was rather less apparent than its success at giving away a great deal of coffee and biscuits. It seems clear that the majority of young people who frequented the Fish Net in the first half of 1966 took the religious discussions in stride, humouring their hosts while taking advantage of the free warmth, food, and much-loved caffeine. According to one contemporary observer,

The Fish Net is important mainly as a gathering place for Villagers – a place where they can sit and talk. It is also a contact point for new people coming into Yorkville from out of town, and in the Fish Net, newcomers can quickly make friends and find a pace to stay. Here Villagers plan their entertainment for the night, set up parties for after the Fish Net closes at 11:30 or midnight. All of this kind of action is unplanned and informal, and in fact the Church workers have nothing to do with it… Their proselytizing attempts are listened to politely by the Villagers, almost like commercials in a television show – and they seem to have about the same impact.

Judging by this assessment, conversions were very rare indeed.

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458 Longstaff, 18.
459 “The Church claims to have people at each of its tables leading religious discussions, but instead, most of the worker’s time is occupied serving coffee and cookies.” ibid, 18.
460 ibid, 18.
461 *Toronto Star*, September 28th, 1966
The obvious counter-mission for the Fish Net was to familiarize its volunteers (primarily adults from nearby congregations and grad students from the University of Toronto theology and divinity schools) with the Yorkville dropout scene.\textsuperscript{462} Deane Downey referred to this as the CMA’s “secondary consideration” in Yorkville, but did acknowledge the importance of exposing staff to the realities of the world outside the church proper. The “ideas and concepts of the Yorkville hippies” were taken to be worthy of study, at least significant enough to merit the attention of the CMA’s staff.\textsuperscript{463}

The Fish Net experiment proved to be short-lived: by September, Yorkville’s only free coffee house had been given orders to vacate the premises. The owner of the building had become fed up with the frustrations which go along with throngs of young people congregating on her site. Moreover, her other tenants had begun to pressure her to do something about the detrimental effect the hippies were having on their business: “When you have to wade through 20 people on the top step outside your front door, and others on the way down and under the awning on the boulevard, it’s too much,” explained Myrl Saunders, proprietor of the high fashion boutique which sat on the ground floor, above the subterranean Fish Net.\textsuperscript{464}

Like many Yorkville buildings in 1966, the one which housed the Fish Net was owned by local landlord Anna Marie Heit.\textsuperscript{465} However, unlike most other coffee houses in the district, the Fish Net did not operate under the protection of a signed lease. Rather, according to Heit, “it was an agreement. It was a signed agreement, but it was

\textsuperscript{462}Phyllis McIntyre, for example, “took a year off from a good job with the Encyclopaedia Britannica to run the Fish Net”. \textit{Toronto Star}, September 29\textsuperscript{th}, 1966.
\textsuperscript{463}\textit{Globe and Mail}, July 4\textsuperscript{th}, 1966.
\textsuperscript{464}\textit{Toronto Star}, September 28\textsuperscript{th}, 1966.
\textsuperscript{465}Or Heite? He goes back and forth. \textit{Toronto Star}, September 29\textsuperscript{th}, 1966.
conditional.” Heit explained that she was forced to dissolve the agreement after she had seen “two people move out of the building and a third one threat[en] to move out if they [the Fish Net] didn’t move.” This third party, presumably the first floor tenants Myrl-Andrew (the fashion boutique operated by Myrl Saunders), had complained that customers were afraid of having to step past the crowds of Hippies in order to come up the front steps. And yet, the Fish Net never opened its doors prior to 8:30 pm; it would seem that Heit and Saunders’s argument was specious at best.

The Toronto Star article which announced the closing of the Fish Net was uncritical of either Heit and Saunders’s plan or the reasoning behind it. However, intrepid Star columnist Ron Haggart took it upon himself the following day to openly attack the closing of the Fish Net as a kind of deliberate attack on a rare, positive aspect of the Yorkville youth culture. Somewhat unsubtly entitled “How to Throw Kids Back to the Streets,” Haggart’s editorial tried to establish the Fish Net as part of the “other Yorkville, the Yorkville you never hear about”. His tack in presenting the Fish Net as a safe, necessary space for Villagers was none-too subtle itself: drawing a parallel between the Charybdic events of the previous May (when a series of ‘riots’ raged through Yorkville) and yet another relatively placid evening in the smoky basement that was the Fish Net, Haggart attempted to demonstrate a kind of oasis of religious tranquility and sophistication amid the cacophony of a derelict youth culture. It was a vision of civility amid the wilderness.

466 It was a kind of rental agreement. The Avenue Road Church paid out $650 per month to keep the Fish Net going: $265 for rent, a hundred or so for bills, and the rest for the coffee and snacks that they gave away every night. Toronto Star, September 29th, 1966.
“On the night of the riot in late May,” he began, “not all the kids in Yorkville were throwing bottles at the cops. Some were praying.”\(^{467}\) Not only were they praying, but some were busy actively converting a former non-believer (referred to as Dave) into a Christian. Interspersed with violent snapshots from the May riot, Haggart relates this somewhat dubious story of one man’s discovery of light during Yorkville’s darkest hour as if it were a lesson from the pulpit; Haggart’s conceit, that Dave’s conversion happened at precisely the same time as the other Villagers were brawling with Metro’s finest, provides for a fuzzy kind of agit-prop. We are presented with not so much a vision of the Fish Net on a typical evening, but with a version of the Fish Net in an unlikely context, on a particularly momentous (and somewhat anomalous) night:

> A young man named Dean [Downey (sic)]… came out of the Fish Net and said to his friend Ralph: ‘Dave has decided to accept Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour.’ Deeply touched, Ralph went across the street to join his friends in the car. While a block away the kids threw bottles and popcorn bags at the cops, Ralph and his friends sat in the car and prayed.\(^{468}\)

Haggart goes on to admit that “Dave’s conversion was unusual” and that “only three or four people [have] accepted Christ during the eight months the Fish Net has ministered to the kids in Yorkville.” He also concedes that “They didn’t open the Fish Net for that purpose.” However, it is hard to escape the framing device of conversion, even as he later tries to steer us away from it.

The thrust of the article is toward an understanding of the Fish Net as a solitary beacon of middle-class values, morality and education – the conversion of Dave and those few others to Christianity is allegorical, illustrative of the construction of Yorkville

\(^{467}\) Of course, the reality of the situation was hardly so cut and dried, and Haggart’s own writings elsewhere on the sophistication of the Yorkville scene suggest that this was a deliberate exaggeration. Of course not all of them were throwing bottles at the cops!

\(^{468}\) *Toronto Star*, September 29th, 1966.
as a contested, fractious, misguided space. Historically, religions (especially Christianity) convert so-called heathens in what are perceived to be troubled, un-civilized, apparently ‘godless’ lands over which they wish to take control. And, as many post-colonial historians have pointed out, this process of conversion (again, usually to Christianity, at least in the North American context) was as much about a consolidation of colonial power as it was about a desire on the part of the Christians to fulfill any religious or moral obligations.469 In striking ways, Haggart draws uneasy parallels between the traditional narrative of the conversion of natives by Christian missionaries and the conversion of the Yorkville hippies by modern day missionaries. He emphasizes the fractious aspects of Yorkville through recurring mention of the riots; he establishes the beneficence of the Fish Net staff (they freely give up their jobs to come volunteer here, they don’t force religion onto their “customers”); and he makes a clear delineation between the praying, Christian youth and the violent, “heathen” youth.

Haggart’s point, even if I appear to be stretching it, is still, at the root, this: Yorkville was a foreign land. The same heuristic which had been employed by so many observers throughout the early 60s and into this middle period is here taken to a new height, but its core position remains unchanged. Yorkville is a foreign territory, taken over by an inscrutable, potentially dangerous (and unknowable) population. In Haggart’s article, they are likened to natives in need of conversion, of salvation, of deliverance from the attendant evils of the refusal of normative behaviour. But, however extreme this position may have seemed at the time, it was merely the first over-the-top condemnation

\[469\] See Gauri Viswanathan. Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), especially Chapter Seven, for a detailed examination of the (far more complicated than I have suggested) role of conversion in these processes.
of the foreignness (and potential danger) inherent in the scene. Less than four months later, a variety of Toronto’s City Councilors would make repeated references to the Village as a “cancer”, a “festering sore” and a “disease” in need of eradication. In retrospect, Haggart’s trope of converting the ignorant and violent savages sounds somewhat more respectful.
**Chapter Six:**

*Are You Here to Watch Me Perform?*

Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered. Such anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, TV, literature, magazines, records and videos, which construct and reinforce that gaze.

- John Urry 470

In the spring of 1964, the *Globe and Mail* reported on a beard-growing contest which, while emphasizing the weirdness of hairy young men, was designed as a bit of levity, not an overt criticism of bohemia.471 But, the *Globe* was deliberate about locating this contest in Yorkville, as though it would have made no sense elsewhere. The hip aesthetic, variously defined throughout the period as fashion developed and mutated, was most often represented prior to the advent of long hair by a man's beard. In this, as with most things hip in the 60s, the masculine performance was repeatedly taken for the expression of the whole.

In general, however, Yorkville’s hip aesthetics were lagging behind the curve of most stylish urban centres in Europe and North America. Michael Valpy recalls that “there was no uniform, no hippie uniform in the early years. That wasn’t till much later.”472 Judy Pocock, who took an overseas job as a babysitter one summer, puts this point into stark relief. “In 1964,” she explains, “I went to Europe.”

And I remember going and hitting Amsterdam and seeing the boys with bellbottom jeans (which I thought were amazing, you know, this contradiction jeans/cowboys, bellbottoms/sailors), and long hair. And just, you thinking, Wow. I was 20, or 19. You know? This was amazing. And

472 Michael Valpy, Interview with Author, October 5th, 2006.
that was not Toronto at that point. And I lived on Hazelton, at the corner of Yorkville and Hazelton, and I was still blown away.473

While it would not be long before hair and fashion trends crossed the Atlantic (the rushing tide of Beatlemania saw to that by year’s end), it is worth noting that Yorkville’s bohemian aesthetic was well behind the times during the summer in which it was first truly noticed by the municipal authorities, the press, and suburban youth alike.474

Fashion constitutes perhaps the most significant external expression of identity in the liberal capitalist context. Pulled on two sides by the decidedly different impulses of conformity and individualism, of normalcy and originality, fashion offers the means to present oneself most effectively as a member of one, the other, or both camps. The fashions that characterized the Yorkville youth scene, and the hip archetypes which performed them, were thus both mutable and consistent. As Joel Lobenthal has suggested (echoing arguments made by Judith Butler, among other identity theorists), in contrast to the more staid fashions of the 50s, in the 1960s “the individual remade himself daily, trying out new stances of dress and behavior, internalizing some, [while] keeping others at arm’s length as theatrical alter egos.”475

The appreciation of this theatrical aspect of hip fashion, and the attendant belief that one’s external expression of self can be radically shifted on a day-to-day basis, was central to the mid-60s youth aesthetic. If fashion in the 50s was about the apparent contrast between good kids (sweater sets, slacks, crisp shirts and even neckties for such mundane activities as school) and bad (leather jackets, jeans, boots, undershirts), the

473 Judy Pocock, Interview with Author, June 24th, 2006.
474 Judy Pocock: “But, by the time I got home from Europe, the end of the summer, things had started to move across the Atlantic. I went to Britain just after the British Invasion, and it was so vital, so fun, there was so much going on.” Interview with Author, June 24th, 2006.
fashion that ruled the 60s tried to destroy such class-based normativity. Of course, the ‘bad boy’ fashion lingered, constituting the basic look for the biker, 'tough', and (to a lesser extent) greaser identity categories in the Yorkville scene throughout the period.

Still, as Gopala Alampur puts it, in general when speaking of Villagers, “there is no uniform, but there is a costume.” Or, in the words of an unnamed “girl hippie”: “the Villagers wear clothes that are easy and comfortable. Women wear slacks and sweaters. Boys wear jeans.”

Bearded men constituted the first wave of this fashion rebellion in the Yorkville scene. Months after the Beatles first stormed North America with their mop-top haircuts, adolescent boys were still trying to grow out their crew cuts. But their older brothers, at least some of them, could grow their beards out much more quickly than the hair on their heads. Beards became a kind of hip argot in Yorkville and on the University of Toronto campus; as an identifying marker, a badge of inclusion, the beard denoted its wearer as a committed member of the alternative world. By mid-summer, 1964, Yorkville’s hip archetype was developed around the hirsute male. Following a protracted period in which (in North America) beards were uncomonly worn by men, this sudden re-emergence of the fashion constituted such a novelty that it was counted among the various tourist attractions offered by the Village. In late 1964, the Toronto Star ran a piece describing Yorkville as a travel destination, establishing its distinction as a different

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476 Smart and Jackson, 10.
477 Clayton Ruby still equates hippie authenticity with the long hair aesthetic: “I never had long hair, never took part in the culture in the sense that you’re thinking about. I was there for a lot of it, but I was never under the illusion that I was a hippie.” Interview with Author, March 3rd, 2006.
place, even another *planet*, “a world of little shops selling Finnish rugs, gold bathtub faucets, hand-dipped candles, nutmeg-flavored coffee and bearded guitar players…”

Apart from the charming (but probably inadvertent) suggestion that Yorkville was selling bearded guitar players alongside the candles and rugs, this is a lovely snapshot of the popular conception of the Village by late 1964. This is a portrait of a scene verily defined by the odd, curious and quaint items on sale in its shops, a scene as near yet as far away from mid-town Toronto as could be, and of a population of men whose appearances and performances smack of disparity, foreignness, eccentricity. Significantly, this eccentric appearance was taken more and more as the definitive feature of the scene by local media; in early 1966 the *Toronto Star* quipped that there was no point in adding “Village of Yorkville” to the street signs in the district. “With all that long hair and all those beards, who needs ‘em?”

Not inconsiderable is the fact that this male presence is the only one mentioned here – women don’t make the cut, have no real purchase over the scene in this view.

In what will be a persistent trope, Yorkville youth are here defined through their non-conformist (long) hair styles, through their propensity for beards and unkempt locks, both specifically male expressions. Long hair was not a shock if worn by a woman (and women with beards were both highly unlikely and scarcely desired by anyone). Aside from a few daring individuals whose short haircuts mimicked the French *Nouvelle Vague* styles of actress Jean Seberg and, later, British model Twiggy, long hair on women was both the anticipated and received aesthetic in both dominant and alternative cultural expression in the 1960s. Hair, a defining issue, and certainly a politicized facet of youth

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culture in the 60s, is yet another category of hipness to which maleness exercised its ownership.\(^{480}\) A typically long-haired woman's choice of an atypically long-haired man as a sexual partner was as close as she could get to collaboration in *this* particular hip pursuit; yet again, her performance of hipness could be defined through association rather than subjectivity.\(^{481}\)

Masculinity, fashion and hair were intertwined in the 60s in complex ways. As discussed in Chapter Two, the development of the long-haired, bearded hip archetype played against the hyper-masculinized rebel of the 1950s. While the rebel in the 50s defined his refusal of the male domesticity model through his shunning of the gray flannel suit, by emphasizing his muscles (through wearing armless undershirts), by being prone to fighting, by refusing to kowtow to the demands of women, and by a broad desire to kill his father (and thus symbolically destroy the Organization Man), 1960s rebel aesthetics steered away from such macho expressions.\(^{482}\)

By early 1965, archetypal Village beatniks (later hippies) sported long hair (over the ears, the eyebrows, touching the collar), a beard (where hormonally possible), and were ever more taken to wearing such decidedly feminized accoutrements as beads, flowers, and homemade jewelry. For many of my interview subjects, hair and beards

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\(^{480}\) In a classic scene in Alice Echols’s biography of Janis Joplin (a Haight-Ashbury habitué and rock musician), she and her all-male band were pulled over by a highway patrolman. “As the police in town searched the car, they kept taunting Sam, James, and Dave. ‘Are you guys or girls?’ they asked. Janis wasn’t having any of it and simply yelled, ‘Fuck you, man.’” Joplin, never one to accept the gendered limitations placed upon her as a woman in a male world, was the only one to attack this group of bigoted officers. But was it about her anger at their mistreatment of her friends? Or was it because the patrolmen were leaving her out of the taunting, reminding her that the important subject here was the male? Echols (1999) 154.

\(^{481}\) Female expressions of Village identity were most commonly manifested in the donning of accoutrements. Baubles, beads, necklaces, bells, and flowers were worn by both sexes, but most often in exaggerated numbers by Village women. “There are no limits to the number of necklaces and beads that are worn,” wrote Gopala Alampur. “Some are made from animal teeth, bones, various nuts of beans, shells, chains, leather straps, and various talismans.” Smart and Jackson, 11.

were simple ways to express difference: “It was a rigid society,” explains Judy Perly. “Everybody had the same haircut in the early 60s, you know what I mean? Everybody. It was a big scandal when the Beatles had hair to here! A big scandal!” She recalls that, since both beards and long hair were inaccessible expressions for women, the thing was clothing. “Look, when I went to school you had to sit with your hands folded… I had to wear a skirt all the way through school, and I didn’t go to a private school. The year after I left the girls went on strike so that they could wear jeans to school.”⁴⁸³ But the expression of hip through wearing pants wasn’t long-lived. By 1966, the skirt had returned as the primary expression of hip (hyper-) femininity. Perly was shocked by my suggestion that hip women had fewer means of demonstrating their hipness through fashion than men: “There were a lot of hip women [in Yorkville]. Men had the long hair, the beards and stuff. But, women had the long dresses.”⁴⁸⁴ Especially with this relational framing, it seems difficult to see the “long dresses” (often referred to as peasant skirts) as emphasizing the kind of progressive rebelliousness that was expressed by long hair and unruly beards. Didn’t their parents wear skirts and dresses too? It seems that an aesthetic inequality is an element of a more general inequality within hip expression in the 1965-68 period.

As Joan Didion would emphasize in her remarkably unfiltered account of Haight-Ashbury in 1967, gender relations in the wider hip scene were not necessarily progressive. Rather, one of the more perverse elements of the hippie trip (and an element which was just as apparent in Toronto as in San Francisco) was its adoption of a male-centred social system, a system which seemed to Didion no different from the very

⁴⁸³ Judy Perly, Interview with Author, June 27th, 2006.
⁴⁸⁴ ibid.
Feminine Mystique from which women were supposed to have been recently delivered. For Didion, what this represented was evidence that, no matter how they tried, people were “the unconscious instruments of values they would strenuously reject on a conscious level.” Bound as they were to the social process, a process which makes the rejection of commonsense tremendously difficult, hip youth were, however reluctantly, tied to certain ideological touchstones they found it difficult to refuse. Throughout the hip 1960s, this current runs sharp and icily, but fast.

**Gender, Sex and Village Identity**

As generally tends to happen when people converge on a site to bear witness to a tourist attraction, the hawkers and peddlers didn’t take long to set up their stalls. In mid-August, 1966, the Mynah Bird, among the most popular rock’n’roll bars on the circuit, and the namesake for Ricky Matthews’ outfit, made a stab at answering a central question: how to exploit liberated sexuality, the Village hippie scene, and the public fascination with the mystery of Yorkville all at once? After a hard-fought campaign to establish its reputation as Yorkville's premiere hip nightspot, the Mynah Bird’s efforts culminated in its introduction to the Village its first topless dance show.

Having always relied on male voyeurism to sell itself to the general public, frequently boasting in advertisements about the visual quality of its female staff, the Mynah Bird’s use of sexuality as a draw was nothing new. ("Where else can you watch the Mynah Bird Girls?" read one such ad, months before the dawn of strippers at the club.

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486 See the discussion in the following chapter on consumption, identity and politics in the Village and the 1960s hip scene.
setting up the relationship between the young waitresses (who were often told to wear a pseudo-uniform of bikini tops and mini-skirts) and their staring (male) customers.) But now, the draw of semi-nude go-go dancers and wait staff, paid by the club's 29-year old proprietor Colin Kerr to both titillate and entertain, was to be reinforced, at least on some occasions, by fully topless dancers.487

Colin Kerr was well known in the Village as an untamable schemer. ("He was out of his mind," offered sometime Mynah Bird bassist Bruce Palmer.) As band manager to the Rick (James) Matthews fronted Mynah Birds, he had gone to bizarre lengths to create publicity and buzz for his charges, once hiring a throng of young women to chase the band through Eaton’s Department Store. As a coffee house owner, his antics were no less ribald. On any given day in 1965 or ‘66, his coffee house may have offered naked dancers, X-rated film screenings, or decidedly un-chaste day-glo body painting. To top it all off (or, perhaps to offset the gender imbalance he had established with naked women out front) he employed a naked male chef for a time.488

In the weeks prior to the August 12th, Friday night public event, the police were informed of the impending show – indeed, they were even invited to a Thursday night preview – but they refused to attend, claiming that they did not want to play “censor.” Inspector William Pilkington of the morality squad explained that since the Thursday night performance was basically a private demonstration for the police and reporters, it

487Kerr had been thinking of employing topless dancers for years prior to the 1966 performance. When, 15 months previously, he had asked his lawyer if it was a good idea, he had been advised that the time was not right. *Globe and Mail*, August 11th, 1966.
488Jennings, 104. See also Bidini, 260.
was unnecessary for he and his colleagues to attend. However, “If such an exhibition is put before the public,” he warned, “then the necessary investigation will be made.”

Reporters, however, were more than happy to make the scene, to bear witness, as it were, to the migration of topless dancing from established (if furtive, and generally illegal) burlesque and strip joints on nearby Yonge Street to the hip Village. Prepared for what was expected to be a new kind of topless performance – new because it was to be a hip version of burlesque, fueled by the liberated sexuality of the youth culture, carried on the electric waves of über-hip rock'n'roll music – reporters from various media outlets filled the small club, awaiting the arrival of Toronto's first bohemian nude show.

Kerr, for his part, played up the ambiguity surrounding the performance. He refused to say just who would be dancing, except to offer that she was a “local girl” who had been “recommended” by various Villagers. She was “21 years old,” “of Swedish extraction,” and, oddly enough, would wear a mask. The mask, in fact, had as much to do with theatrical intentions (“we’re selling mystery,” Kerr explained) as it did with Kerr’s somewhat paradoxical ambivalence over displaying a semi-naked woman in front of an audience. Whether motivated by a certain respect for the female body, or, far more likely, a fear of being prosecuted for lewdness, Kerr would also use a dry ice smoke machine, iron bars and a black light to “further screen the dancer” from the audience. Moreover, the young proprietor tried to make clear to the press that his intentions were not purely sexist and exploitative: “I can’t even say what her measurements are,” Kerr explained, adding: “I think this whole business of measurements is terribly crude anyway.”

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490 ibid.
The Buñuelian scene which ensued on that Thursday evening is the stuff of legend. After hours of waiting for the show to begin, for the one paid dancer of the night to step onstage and perform, the throng of reporters and onlookers got something rather unexpected instead. It seems that the smoke machine, chugging away to provide the necessary ambiance (and protection) for the gyrations of Yorkville's first stripper, went berserk, spewing thick, noxious smoke throughout the club. Choking, coughing, and gasping for air, the press representatives scrambled to escape the venue, pouring into the street carried on an exhaust of oily smoke from the broken contraption. Apparently, the only non-reporter allowed in the room that night was Miguel Maropakis, who laughs at the memory: “The first show they had there was a woman, an ex-girlfriend of mine. And they had all the Telegram and the Star and everybody [there]! But you couldn’t see! You couldn’t see anything because there was so much [dry] ice! I was the only outsider allowed there because she was my girlfriend. [Kerr] was crazy, just trying to make a buck.”

Such gauche attempts at co-optation were the exception, not the norm in the Village. However, an uncomfortable power dynamic remained at work in the relationship between women and what was repeatedly constructed as a male-centred counterculture. Trina Robbins, a San Francisco-based writer, speaks for many in summarizing her recollections of the expected role for women in the hip scene: “The ideal chick just had a good time. Whatever he did, she went along with it. If he moved in, you took care of him, but you got nothing in return. If he wanted to dump you, it was,

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491 Miguel Maropakis, Interview with Author, March 29th, 2007.
'Well, babe, the road calls.'

Myrna Wood, one of the “founding mothers” (as she referred to herself) of the Toronto (and Canadian) Women’s Liberation Movement, recalled the tenor of those years with some frustration. In her mind, the trajectory of hip in the Yorkville scene was about the saving of white, middle-class masculinity from the pervasive feminization of their identity category. To be hip was to transcend Canadian, white, suburban identity.

Hippie-type people were even more misogynistic than politica... which is saying quite a bit... The more people got into that kind of lifestyle the more they tried to copy what they saw as either American, or black: Hip culture. ...[It’s about] women being denigrated to prove that you’re a hip male.

This avoidance – as a set of possible activities and aesthetics which included (but were not limited to) long hair, beards, drug use, free love, psychedelic rock music – were repeatedly underlined as male-centric. Men were the active drug users, the active rock’n’rollers; women were merely there, present, passive recipients (victims) of the male hip rebellion. Just as the terms “youth,” “tough,” “rowdy,” and “beatnik” were code for teenage boy in the first half of the decade, to have been a “hippie” by 1966 and beyond was to be male – a hip female was merely dubbed a “girl,” and she was usually perceived to be in some genuine danger, sexual or otherwise. Even the term “youth” was male first, female second – in all reportage from the period, we read of “youths” and “girls”, “hippies” and “girl hippies”, “weekenders” and “teenyboppers”.

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494 Myrna Wood, Interview with Author, April 19th, 2006.
495 Trina Robbins, an American writer and illustrator, neatly summarizes the way many women felt about their relationship to the male counterculture. "In the '50s, it was, 'Nice girls don't say no.' If you said no, it meant you were frigid and, if the guy wasn't white, it meant you were prejudiced." Quoted in Susan Kuchinsk... November 17th, 1997. [Last Accessed, May 3rd, 2007]
Throughout the 60s, when it came to sexuality, the Village scene moved between the Geminian poles of liberation and exploitation. In the period between 1964 and 1966, as the ethic of freer sexuality became more acceptable, more pervasive in the scene, the shifting between those two poles became ever more erratic. Paradoxical expressions of the hip sexual ethic were not uncommon; in fact, as Beth Bailey has shown through her study of underground papers and comix, the complicated expression of female sexuality (exacerbated by the persistent presence of males as the prime movers in the scene) came both from without and within the hip movement. Bailey argues that, much as they did with drugs and rock’n’roll music, “members of America’s counterculture used sex to create a countercultural identity.”

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And yet, the uses of sex to this end were often undeniably exploitative, even as they were couched in the rhetoric of liberation. Moreover, as straight and establishment people became aware that sexuality was an aspect of the countercultural arsenal, it (like drugs and rock’n’roll) became part of the attractive (and repellent) hippie trip. Yorkville, after 1964, grew into a kind of tourist activity for many Torontonians, now often dubbed Weekenders, a place to come and witness the hip youth culture. But it also, remarkably, became the place to flirt with hip behaviour and identity for the uninitiated, the bemused, or even the diametrically opposed. Yorkville’s developing status as a hip playground, and as a centre for Toronto’s drug, rock’n’roll and pickup scenes would attract many curious people, young and old, straight and bendy, from all over Toronto and, eventually, beyond.

For suburban youth, Yorkville was beginning to be known as a place to go on a Friday or Saturday evening to meet other likeminded kids, and maybe make a romantic connection. One Villager, said to have “sought identity sexually,” “became compulsive in constant homosexual relationships” until, “unsatisfied with this he became immersed in another search through heterosexual relationships and a kind of ‘free love.’” His search for sexual identity culminated in his residency in the Village scene by 1966 – the Village offered him a space to seek authenticity both sexual and spiritual.\textsuperscript{497} But, former Digger Clayton Ruby cautions against equating this with the development of a free love ethic, as such. “No, these were teenagers, they had hormones, they wanted to have sex, and they were more open about expressing that than people in the suburbs. That’s the principal difference.”\textsuperscript{498} This openness was read by these weekend tourists to the Village as an invitation to partake. And, for sure, many found their first big city partner in one of Yorkville’s clubs or coffee houses. Bob Segarini (of the West Coast band the Wackers) offers this pretty visual: “I ended up in Yorkville at a place called the Penny Farthing. This is what I remember: I paid a dollar for a bowl of chili and a girl took me downstairs and blew me. The buck paid for the chili.”\textsuperscript{499}

Former biker \textit{Wild Bill} maintains a dark view of the hip Free love performance, and especially in the way it played out among Weekenders. “Some of the Hippie guys who were wannabes, they’d get a 16 or 17 year old bimbo lubed up and have fun, because she wouldn’t say no. It was rape. The point of the drugs then was: it was a policy for raping. For date rape. Which wasn’t the way you wanted it.”\textsuperscript{500} In early 1967, the San

\textsuperscript{497}Smart and Jackson, 71.
\textsuperscript{498}Clayton Ruby, Interview with Author, March 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 2006.
\textsuperscript{499}Bidini, 260.
\textsuperscript{500}\textit{Wild Bill}, Interview with Author, March 11\textsuperscript{th}, 2006.
Francisco Diggers (an anarchist collective bent on providing community services and aid to the Haight Ashbury scene) published a deeply cynical account of the kinds of exploitation lurking in their version of the hip ghetto. Sadly, this famous missive harmonizes with Wild Bill’s sentiments about the Village sex scene, replete with its implicit assumption that upon entering the Village scene the “chick” lost all agency:

Pretty little 16-year-old middle-class chick comes to the Haight to see what it’s all about & gets picked up by a 17-year-old street dealer who spends all day shooting her full of speed again & again, then feed her 3000 mikes and raffles off her temporarily unemployed body for the biggest gang bang since the night before last.501

This persistent trope, then, of the wide-eyed young woman who comes to the Village only to be turned into a drug-addled victim of hip sexual exploitation, coloured not just the dire pronouncements of the municipal authorities or the conservative media. Hip sources themselves recognized (or were at least concerned by) the possibility of sexual danger in their Village. And while there was a tentative assumption that “true” Villagers could be trusted, the expanding ranks of Weekenders could not.

Clayton Ruby agrees with Wild Bill’s view that “wannabe” Hippies, or Weekenders, were seen as pretenders to the Free love ethic, even abusers of its unspoken codes. He is very clear that although the Weekenders often came to Yorkville looking to get laid, “if they got lucky they’d meet other Weekenders who felt the same way! For the people who lived in Yorkville it was a status down to pick up a Weekender.”502

Reinforcing the clear delineation – clear, at least to some – that there was an authentic performance of “Villager” to which only a very few had access, Ruby reminds us that status, hierarchy, and standing were at stake in Villagers’ constructions of their own

501Quoted in David Farber, “Intoxicated State/Illegal Nation”, in Imagine Nation, 35.
identity. And, since most “authentic” Villagers tended to be men – my evidence has rarely turned up any women who held power positions, or elevated status among their peers – what we are talking about is power. (Male) Villagers know that they are wanted by (female) “weekenders”, and that power relationship is maintained through the pairing of true vs. false hip identity.

**Hi, Mr. and Mrs. Tourist : Sightseeing and the Hip Performance**

As Michael Valpy put it in December of 1965, Yorkville was now a place where "teen-agers stand about to see and be seen."\(^{503}\) Referring to these Villagers as "Yorkville's entrenched beatnik habitués", Valpy is, notably, among the first to have recognized the performative dimensions of Village identity. His emphasis on "tourism" and "image-making" in Yorkville stands as one of the more perceptive takes on the scene in the mid-60s. Explaining the sudden near-saturation of the popular press with Yorkville stories as part of a process of turning the Village into a première national tourist attraction, the young (pre-CYC) Valpy achieves a commendable balance between residents, hip youth and merchants in his analysis. An interview with Dr Robert James, president of the VYA, revealed that "We [the VYA] have considered Yorkville a national attraction for the last two years or more." His view that "Torontonians [were] starting to pick Yorkville as the first place to show out-of-town guests" perhaps explains the accelerating influx of tourists to the district during the past summer. Valpy claimed that, throughout 1965, "the number of non-Ontario license plates in the nightly bumper-to-bumper parade along Yorkville Avenue's two short blocks [grew] steadily larger."\(^{504}\)

\(^{503}\) *Globe and Mail*, December 15\(^{th}\), 1965.  
\(^{504}\) *ibid.*
The phenomenon of gridlock on the two short parallel streets is both crucial and difficult to comprehend. “And then you got the cars,” explained Judy Pocock when asked to describe the scene in 1966, “and, I mean, that was the weird thing. Because you had chock-a-block from Bay [Street] to Avenue Road. It would be cars! And it would take people, what, two hours, three hours, to drive that far? But, that was their night out. They would sit in their cars and they’d watch people.”

“We sit around and watch the tourists go by in their cars, gawking at us and pointing at us,” complained a "bearded, chubby-faced 19-year-old" to Michael Valpy. Some were feeling uncomfortable about this new form of tourism; one young man told Valpy that he enjoyed antagonizing such voyeurs. "Hi, Mr and Mrs Tourist," he would begin. "I'm a beatnik. Are you here to watch me perform?"

Pocock, now a PhD candidate in English at the University of Toronto, agrees with the suggestion that performance was at the root of the Yorkville hip scene. “God, you know, they were watching you,” she began in a recent interview.

I would walk home and basically have to fight my way home [through the crowd], and you might run into somebody, and you might talk to somebody, and there’s all these people coming to watch... us. It’s a very strange dynamic. There was all kinds of back and forth performativity, I’m sure. The people in the cars are performing for the people outside the cars, who are performing for the people inside the cars, who are also boys looking for girls, girls looking for boys, people looking for dope, whatever.

Performing, of course, can be fun. And, for the adventurous, the curious, and the simply bored, going to Yorkville to perform their version of hipness was an attractive activity. It mustn’t go unmarked that both Pocock’s and Michael Valpy’s recollections of the Village...
in this period are peppered with words relating to performance, acting, and spectacle. “I mean it was just wall-to-wall kids from Avenue Road over to Bay,” Valpy explains. “It was just a constant parade; you walked down one side, turned around, then walked down the other. It was then just… come and be seen, and see others. It was just a great sort of urban parade area.” Presaging his recollection, Ron Thody (writing in the spring of ’67) referred to “the changing Village scene” as “the Yorkville hip parade”, at once making the connection between Yorkville and performativity while also suggesting a link between the Village and pop music (or, commercialized entertainment).

Theorists of “visual culture(s)” emphasize the primacy of “seeing” in the modern era. Arguing that the project of modernity has in fact been predicated upon (or, at least has been so successful because of) a privileging of sight, such scholarship suggests that “the modern world is very much a ‘seen’ phenomenon.” To be sure, Yorkville operated for many as a visual experience – a spectacle scores of people crossed the city (the Province, even the Country) just to witness (or, in the language of visuality, just to gaze upon). The phenomenon of tourism in the Village scene, especially in the years after 1964, exaggerated the spectacular quality of Yorkville both among its resident habitués and among its steady streams of weekend visitors. John Urry, in a seminal study, explained that “what makes a particular tourist gaze depends upon what it is contrasted

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508 Michael Valpy, Interview with Author, October 5th, 2006. Similarly, Charles Perry wrote of the San Francisco scene: “The Haight was the perfect theatre, a large territory full of stoned people making the scene and vaguely waiting for something to happen.” Perry, 243.

509 Saturday, Second Issue, 1967. The “Hip Parade” is likely a reference to the radio-cum-television program Your Hit Parade, a program showcasing popular music, which ran from 1935-1959 on NBC. See the extraordinary database of songs from the program collected at http://info.net/hits/ [Last Accessed, May 1st, 2007.]

with; what the forms of non-tourist experience happen to be." So much being made of the apparent foreignness of the Village, and of the expected “forms” of non-tourist (Villager) experience therein, Yorkville became the subject of an intensive, persistent tourist gaze based upon a shared assumption of Yorkville’s hip authenticity.

As Urry has emphasized, the tourist gaze “is constructed through signs, and tourism is the collection of signs. When tourists see two people kissing in Paris what they capture in the gaze is ‘timeless romantic Paris’. When a small village in England is seen, what they gaze upon is the ‘real olde England’.” In other words, tourists tend to see what they expect to see – “they are taking pictures of taking pictures,” in novelist Don DeLillo’s memorable words – and their interpretation of this spectacle relies on the information they have brought to it. A recent study by some of the leaders in this field, persuasively entitled Performing Tourist Places, speaks to precisely this notion.

“Tourism,” goes the authors’ argument, “is a way of being in the world, encountering, looking at it, and making sense. It incorporates mindsets and performances that transform places of the humdrum and ordinary into the apparently spectacular and exotic.” In Yorkville, tourists came to see Toronto’s Haight-Ashbury, Canada’s hippie ghetto – the district becoming famous as a “foreign land” taken over by teenagers. And although the signs they were looking for – drug use, free love, outlandish clothing, bohemian artistry, long haired boys and barefooted girls – were often being performed by people

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513 Don DeLillo, White Noise (New York: Penguin Books, 1984) 12-13. “We’re not here to capture an image,” one character says to another as they gaze upon a tourist attraction. “We’re here to maintain one.”
who were themselves tourists in the scene, come to the Village on their days off school to
dress up as Villagers and play the part, it did not matter.

To be sure, this tourism was hardly exclusive to inquisitive adults; young people,
derisively called "weekenders" by resident Villagers, were also making the scene in
mounting numbers. Newspapers, magazines, television and radio reportage of a contrary,
exciting and subversive area frequently overrun by teenagers conspired to be a pretty
strong endorsement of the Village for many teens fed up with their suburban high school
scene. But it wasn’t just suburban Torontonians making their way to this ongoing
happening – young people from around the country were appearing, seemingly with each
incoming Greyhound bus.

And so, attracted to the Village from every corner of Canada (and beyond), they
came in their droves, some with more success than others.516 Youth worker and eventual
judge Jim Felstiner recalls the constant flow of young people up on vagrancy charges
after being picked up in Yorkville. One story in particular stands out in his mind: “Two
kids from Winnipeg or Regina decided that they were going to go to Yorkville,” he
began.

And they hitchhiked all across the country to get here. By the time they
got here, they had got it confused. And a guy dropped them off, late at
night, at a [suburban shopping mall] called Yorkdale. And, they got
arrested there for being vagrants. They were 13 or 14, and had gotten all
the way from, let’s say Saskatoon! And they got it wrong, or their driver
got it wrong, and he let them off at Yorkdale which was a brand new
shopping plaza. OK? And they got arrested there for being vagrants, so
they ended up with me… See, the police would escort them to a plane to

516 Clayton Ruby finds the progression of the Village population from zero-to-sixty very easy to
explain: “In the beginning there was a small number of quote-hippie-unquote kids [in Yorkville]. Kids who
were in some way committed, longer than a few weekends, to alternative ways of living, alternative
lifestyles. And a lot more people came down on weekends. I think that remained the same forever, but the
group that actually lived there was tiny in the beginning. As that group got more numerous, the police
started seeing it as a danger and a threat.” Interview with Author, March 3rd, 2006.
fly them home. The Children’s Aid Society, since these were [young] children needing protection, the CAS in each province flew the kids back. I remember calling some “higher up” in the police department and saying: “Look. Would you do me a favour, and these kids a favour? Pick them up two hours early and take them to Yorkville so that when they get home they can say that they’ve seen it?”

Young people looking for a piece of the action, for drugs, sex, perhaps even some of that political violence that was so much the order of the day in the era of US Civil Rights protests and sit-ins – they all came. And while they may not have moved to the Village proper (according to most reports, the ever-increasing rent rates kept many prospective Villagers from living exactly in the district), it didn’t stop them from spending much of their waking lives there.

Mike Waage, himself a young emigré from Greenwich Village, recently explained that, “It seemed a much more casual and relaxed kind of place [than Greenwich], superficially anyway… A bunch of people from all over the city were there. [But] not as residents – [they were] hanging out.”

Wild Bill tries to quantify the phenomenon of the weekender invasion: “The true number of hippies? I would say that at no time there were more than 150 or 200 of them. But, every weekend there was crowds of people. That street was packed from one end to another with wannabe weekend hippies.”

As Waage recalls, living expenses, rooming issues and such were generally remedied by doubling, tripling, and even quadrupling up in squalid garrets with single beds. “People lived wherever they could afford. A lot of the time people weren’t really renting, they were just staying with other people. Or they were renting with a whole bunch of other people. I come from a street kid demographic. The university crowd, or

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517 Judge James Felstiner, Interview with Author, April 3rd, 2006.
518 Mike Waage, Interview with Author, March 3rd, 2005.
519 Wild Bill, Interview with Author, March 11th, 2005.
something like that, might have done things a little differently. Although I expect they were all rooming together as well.”520 Frank Longstaff, a sociologist who lived in the Village through the summer of 1966, found that “often five or six may sleep on the floor of a room designed for two. At other times the halls of a rooming house may provide nighttime shelter for Villagers without a definite place to stay, or, as is more often the case, week-enders who choose not to return home for the night.”521 One former Villager agrees that communal living was the order of the day among her friends because they were unable to cope with high rents. “Communal living was a big deal. They all started adopting the style of communal eating. They started sharing food, so they were always concerned about living as cheaply as possible. Probably because they were spending so much money on drugs!”522

There was a great deal of mobility among young, usually college-aged North Americans by 1966. And so, with this movement came a certain mutability of the meaning of community, even as Yorkville maintained a kind of hierarchical identity structure. Hip youth could arrive in Toronto beginning in about 1966, and be assured of contacts, a place to crash, and, most likely, food, drugs and sex. “There was a real infrastructure in those days,” explains Judy Pocock.

You could arrive in town, and say to someone, Hey, where can I crash? And people would help you. You knew somebody who knew somebody who knew somebody. And so there were always places to crash. There were tons of places where people could stay. If you’re young and if you’re not straight, I mean, you know. There was the straight world, and it was sort of the enemy. And you had the sense of being part of a group… there

520Mike Waage, Interview with Author, March 3rd, 2005.
521Longstaff, 6.
522Perly, a pioneer in the whole food movement in Toronto in the 70s was highly attuned to such developments, learning from them ways to approach wholesome cooking at low prices. Interview with Author, June 27th, 2006.
was the straight world, and us. There was very much this feeling. You kind of felt a responsibility to people.  

Judy Perly agrees that responsibility and community were the glue that held the transient community together after about 1966.

You also had a lot of hitchhiking that was going on. People would hitch across the country to go to Yorkville. I even did some hitchhiking. And there was this thing of, you could just go to someone’s house and who cared? Sleep on the floor, whatever. It was all woven with the drugs, you know: drop in, get stoned, get laid. It was [often] this total sexual, physical thing. No responsibility.

Yorkville’s summer of 1966 was defined by crashers, parties, psychedelic music and dope, and a fluid, irrepressible turnover of people, faces, ideas. Trying to find something of permanence amid all of this mutable energy was like staring into a waterfall.

**Draft Resisters and the Village Scene**

Mike Waage, an American ex-pat, was of draftable age in 1965, as the US Military was busy with the vast expansion of its role in a civil war in Vietnam that, one might say, it had helped to create in the first place. While a slight stream of draft resisters (including some outright deserters) had come to Toronto in the few years before the Gulf of Tonkin incident (August, 1964), the current gathered strength following the advent of open warfare between America and Vietnam. To many, the escalation from mere “advisors” to the Vietnamese Army to full-on grenade-and-M60-wielding commando units was deeply distressing. By December 31st, 1964, some 23,000 U.S. troops were

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523 Judy Pocock, Interview with Author, June 24th, 2006.
524 Judy Perly, Interview with Author, June 27th, 2006.
525 Michael Foley’s recent study makes clear that the popular term “draft dodger” is widely disliked by former draft resisters. “One draft resistance leader has said on several occasions (only partly in jest) that when he dies, his epitaph should read, “I Didn’t Dodge, I Resisted.”” Foley, Confronting the War Machine: Draft Resistance During the Vietnam War (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003) 7.
stationed in the faraway nation; 365 days later that number had swelled to 184,300. New Left groups across the U.S. and Canada took up the cause with gusto, primed by their respective work on Civil Rights campaigns and in University politics. For many U.S. teens who were appalled, disgusted, or simply terrified by the illegal war, the writing was on the wall: north to Canada and safety. In Canada, the New Left umbrella group Student Union for Peace Action (SUPA) began to offer a variety of services to these reluctant immigrants, including housing, legal advice, and even employment. According to historian David Churchill, beginning in 1966 SUPA began to offer counseling, “and [to] give new arrivals a place to hang out, get information and make crucial contacts.”

Churchill’s study demonstrates, among other things, that “as young Americans came to Toronto,” and especially in the first few weeks prior to establishing any foothold in the city, “they gravitated toward the city’s counter-cultural venues, quickly becoming another ambient detail in the expanding youth scene.” By the spring of 1966, a new identity performance was developing in the Village as American draft resisters, deserters, and their wives, girlfriends and, in some cases, boyfriends, began to make the scene in greater numbers.

“A popular pastime in Toronto is visiting Yorkville Village to spot the beatniks, oddballs and bohemians,” began a 1966 CBC television report, “but now the name of the game is to spot the American draft dodgers.” Standing in front of the Penny Farthing coffee house, reporter Larry Bondy openly propagated gossip and conjecture in his opening statements: “Some rumours say there are ninety draft dodgers here, others say

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there’s a whole battalion. Well a day-long search by this reporter has uncovered just one.” But this failure to find “draft dodgers” wasn’t ascribed to the dubious practice of believing in the veracity of rumours; rather, Bondy insinuates that it was simply that Yorkville provided too dense a jungle from which to “flush them out.”

According to two recent studies of Toronto’s draft resisters, Yorkville was indeed a site for entertainment and recreation, but it was never a primary site for ex-pat American community-building. That’s not to say that Yorkville didn’t amuse a variety of US resisters in the 1960s (along with their partners, the oft-forgotten parts of this whole). Rather, both studies emphasize that Toronto’s growing ex-pat community was centred, for the most part, on Baldwin Street, about a kilometre south-west of Yorkville, and that the Village was a much less significant star in their constellation.

Importantly, this piece of journalism, like so many other reports on the Village explored in this book, uses a discourse of foreignness to locate, discuss, and bound Yorkville. In his search for “draft dodgers,” Bondy has transgressed the boundaries of the Village, entered its confused and confusing community, a community which operates on rumour and speculation. His report is fraught with an underlying frustration (or is it fascination?) with the elusiveness of his subject, and, by extension, of the Village community in general. They are inscrutable; in this case literally foreign. In a final fit of poetic reportage, Bondy summarizes all of these themes in one neat pair of phrases:

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529 However, sometimes both studies carry this too far. See John Hagan, Northern Passage (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2001) 82. David Churchill’s study, while more interested in the vicissitudes of identity within the broadly generalized “Draft Dodger and Deserter” category, still neatly avoids engaging with the Yorkville scene in a meaningful way. Rather, Churchill focuses on Rochdale as the more significant counterculture/ex-pat centre. But, since Rochdale opened its doors in September 1968, that leaves a few years off the ledger, so to speak.

530 “Most [draft resisters] remember Yorkville as a much more Toronto-based, Canadian scene than Baldwin Street, with its older, more politicized and American residents.” Hagan, 82.
“Well, there may be two or three recently-arrived American draft dodgers here in the Village, but if they’re here, they’re hard to find. As for that Battalion, well we looked in garrets, communal pads, discotheques, and even a pizzeria. If they’re here, they’re as difficult to flush as those Viet Cong in the Mekong Delta.”531

The inanity of Bondy’s attempt to find draft resisters (whose legal situation was precarious at best in these early years of the war) willing to appear on camera, to admit their status before LBJ and everybody, is fairly obvious. A letter from an anonymous 19-year old “draft-dodger (so-called)” to the underground Village newspaper *Satyrday* from later that year demonstrates the weakness in Bondy’s plan: “I regret that I can’t join in on the action [in Yorkville],” he complains, “since I appear to be an ordinary tourist because I have a job here and I must conform to a certain degree.”532

Not only that, but it seems that Bondy was asking only the wrong people. For, if he had asked anyone in the know, he would surely have been directed to John and Nancy Pocock’s house at 12 Hazelton Ave (just perpendicular to Yorkville Ave). Ever since the early days of the war, the Pococks, who were Quakers (and practicing pacifists), had been operating an informal asylum for resisters at their house. David DePoe bristles at the suggestion that Yorkville wasn’t much of a home to draft resisters, and recalls the significance of the Pocock family to this end: “Where [the Pococks] lived was a hub, a Mecca for all these war resisters who came into town. They housed them. So that was right in Yorkville, happening.”533 “Otis” Richmond, one of Canada’s greatest black power activists and advocates, fled his native United States as a Draft Resistor and was

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532 *Satyrday*, 5th Issue, December 1966.

directed to the Pocock’s house by the Diggers. “When I came to Toronto in ’67, I landed in Yorkville and I was assisted by hippies,” he recalls. “For the first couple of weeks I was assisted by the hippies, and the Quakers.”

Judy Pocock – for she lived with her parents on Hazelton Avenue until she moved a block away in 1968 – remembers her house as a kind of refugee’s haven. Her parents, left-leaning and highly active in the Ban the Bomb resistance movement of the 1950s and into the 1960s, became well-known for their devotion to pacifism, and their unfailing resolve to provide for US War Resistor of all kinds.

They were Quakers. They were both real activists in the anti-war movement, and the anti-draft movement. And, my Mum, who just passed away, was a refugee activist [at the time of her death]. That really had started in [the 60s] because we had a lot of draft dodgers living in the house, especially after I left home. And Vietnamese. We had a number of about 15 who had deserted the South Vietnamese army, ended up in the States, and then heard of my parents and came up.

The Pocock’s house remained at the centre of the Resistor movement throughout the 60s, but as the community of transplanted Americans expanded alongside the increased demand for new recruits into the disastrous war, Yorkville lost ground as a Resistor scene. The establishment of an American ex-pat community on Baldwin Street (about 1 kilometre from the Village) and the promise of open rooms at Rochdale College (after 1968) both pulled people away from the Pococks and Yorkville.

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535 Judy Pocock: “My parents were involved in the Toronto anti-draft program, and the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy [SANE], and the Ban-the-Bomb movement” Interview with Author, June 24th, 2006.
536 Judy Pocock, Interview with Author, June 24th, 2006.
"Marijuana: Exhibit A!" So said San Francisco's Jerry Garcia, smirking to one of the cameras covering the Woodstock Music Festival in 1969, brandishing a piece of the evidence. A minor moment, perhaps, but a memorable one nonetheless. Here was one of the greatest icons of the 1960s, and not least because of his close associations with the drug culture, reminding the audience that as much as pot was about fun, music, enlightenment and frivolity, it was also a potent symbol of the divide between the dominant culture and the counterculture. In the final analysis, the fact of marijuana’s illegality mattered at least as much as its calming, pleasurable effects on its users. Garcia could have looked at the camera and said a hundred things, but instead he knee-jerked marijuana’s symbolic value, its association with the underground, the illicit, and the very real danger of its role in the criminalization of hippies.

Throughout the mid-1960s, narcotics, but most especially among them marijuana, were indeed Exhibit A in the state's case against the hip youth culture. The shift from mere conjecture to the plain expectation of marijuana possession amongst Yorkville youth occurred swiftly in these years, and can be traced through the gathering surge of media reportage on drug use in the district. The notion of Yorkville as being overcome with a new kind of hip activity, but one which was inextricably tied to a subversive criminality creeping among the shadows in alleys off the main conduits, underwrote a shift in the treatment of the sophisticated versus bohemian (or its corollary, beatnik versus tough) paradigm. No longer was the divide merely drawn along the lines of

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539 In the case of LSD, for example, David Farber has made the compelling argument that “Criminalization made LSD both more dangerous […] and more a clear sign of cultural rebellion.” Imagine Nation, 34.
activity, expression, and age: now the cleavage separating Yorkville's sophisticates (or, more to the point, its merchants and older residents) from the hip youth kicking down its sidewalks could be established along legal lines. Drug users were increasingly understood to be hip youth; hip youth tended to congregate in the Village; ipso facto, Yorkville must be drug centre numero uno in Toronto.

Put simply, it was now becoming apparent that if Yorkville was a theatre, its most authentic performance was drug use. As Frank Longstaff discovered while preparing his report on the Village scene, Villager “status” was earned through “turning on”. Through doing drugs, he concluded, “they establish themselves in the Villager subculture, for it sets them aside from outsiders, from ‘squares who don’t know where it’s at’.” But the perils of working toward this status were well-understood: since mid-1965, drug busts and arrests for simple possession in cases related to the Village had soared over the numbers from previous years.

In perhaps the most telling article published on the accelerating normalization of the drug-scene-as-Yorkville paradigm, Michael Valpy reported in late summer that marijuana supplies had dried up in the Village, promoting a palpable uneasiness amongst its habitués. “Finding Marijuana Tougher for Yorkville Pot-Lovers,” his headline declared, simultaneously relating his pseudo human interest story while underlining the natural association between marijuana availability and the viability of Yorkville's hip scene. His main character, a "chunky, net-stockinged redhead" (who we'll have to assume was female), was actively surveying the Stork Club (an all-night café on Avenue Road) for a line on pot. It was two in the morning, a pre-dawn Thursday in September. "The restaurant [...] was crowded and smoky. Customers – young, long-haired, raggedly

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540 Longstaff, 19.
dressed – stared solemnly into their coffee cups. ...They listened to the redhead's whispered question and shrugged." Two major drug busts, both of suppliers from New York who had been feeding the Yorkville market, had ebbed the flow. "'They had good stuff, too!', said a 19-year-old bearded beatnik. 'It was cured with tincture of opium and really turned me on.'"541

Of course, resourceful Villagers could always find their ways around such supply shortages. LSD was available, as was a variety of other pharmaceuticals offering a wide range of psychotropic, depressant, or uplifting effects. In the case of LSD, or psilocybin mushroom pills (both of which were becoming available to the Village community following a surge in their popularity in the hip communities of the United States), this entire range of effects was offered in one small capsule. As one LSD user described his experience, LSD offered a means of total re-evaluation, re-appreciation of the immediate environment. “I remember sitting with my buddy […] on the stoop out in front of this house,” he began. “We were totally mind-blown, both of us. It was toward morning, and they were collecting garbage. And the mounds of garbage were exquisite. The aromas were just pungent, and so interesting. Seeing the garbage truck make its way, and those tender human beings moving through this environment, it was just… phew. It was super duper acid.”542 The magnetic effect of such tales of radical drug experiences was inviting many curious hipsters to partake in so-called mind-expansion drugs – and the Village was the centre of the Canadian psychedelic universe.

"These kids will try anything," lamented an Inspector, demonstrating a fundamental aspect of the budding drug culture in the Village – although typically all that

542 Anonymous LSD Dealer, Interview with Author, October 13th, 2006.
the vast majority of Villagers wanted to do was to smoke marijuana, and occasionally to take trips on LSD or psilocybin, continued shortages in supply and fear of prosecution led them to engage with a range of other, often highly destructive pharmaceuticals in their stead. Cough syrups, amphetamines (usually in the form of "diet pills"), and muscle relaxants were all legal, inexpensive alternatives for the more benign marijuana that they were being denied. Still, the resourceful Villager who wasn't willing to simply "try anything" was prepared for the inevitable shortages of marijuana which go along with black market realities. "We of the elite", one claimed, "always keep a spare ounce of pot around in the event of shortages."\textsuperscript{543}

The previous year, Yorkville was among the safest and best spots in urban North America to be a regular marijuana user. Prices were the lowest in the country (no more than $40.00 per ounce), and virtually no one got into any trouble with the law over their indulgence – less than one person per month was brought up on charges for marijuana possession over the course of the year.\textsuperscript{544} However, 1965 had been a much more difficult year for pot smokers in the city, and as criminal charges mounted, so did the politicization of the act of taking drugs. As David Farber has elucidated, since “society had declared that everyone who dropped acid was a criminal” and since countercultural identity seemed ever more predicated on drug use in general, what was soon to be named the counterculture took on a distinctly criminalized aspect. To enter into the Village scene was to engage with the illegal; to be a Villager meant taking drugs that made you high, but also a criminal. This process, perhaps more than any other, helped to radicalize youth

\textsuperscript{543} \textit{Globe and Mail}, September 29\textsuperscript{th}, 1965.
\textsuperscript{544} Ibid. By way of comparison, an ounce of marijuana today will cost its buyer anywhere from $240 to $300, depending upon quality (both of the product, and of one's relationship with one's dealer!).
in the Yorkville scene to the idea that they constituted an embattled minority within the wider community, and were prone to unfair, violent coercion from the state.

Still, something of the former obliviousness had ingrained itself in the minds and habits of Villagers: even as drug busts continued to increase in frequency and in their effectiveness, most visitors to the district from other hip centres would remark on the offhand nature of drug use in Yorkville. "They're so really uncool in Yorkville," explained a recently arrived "beatnik" to the *Globe's* Valpy in 1965. "They take no precautions at all." According to Valpy:

> he and other users talked of pushers peddling their wares through the Yorkville Avenue throngs, of young Beatniks holding noisy street conferences on their flowering marijuana plants, of pushers openly handing the narcotics out to the customers of restaurants.545

This openness, while shocking to some hip travelers from cities with more vigorous drug squads, was likely even more shocking to the morality unit which had been assigned to Yorkville. "You could walk into at least half a dozen of the coffee houses and be offered the drug!", commented an exasperated RCMP officer.546 The reality was, even though they had been more than a little successful at ferreting out some of the key players in the drug trafficking networks actively supporting the Yorkville scene, somehow the marijuana culture was still growing, spreading, becoming emboldened.

It had become evident to the police that Yorkville was the epicentre of Toronto’s drug culture, and for good reason. By the end of the summer of ‘65, it was disclosed that "every person arrested on a marijuana charge this year was either picked up in Yorkville

or was known to frequent the district."547 By the end of the year, police had charged more than seven times as many people for pot possession than they had in the previous year, and were loudly proclaiming that all of them were connected to Yorkville. In Yorkville, drug use and Village status were ever more linked in the local commonsense. By the mid-1960s, for example, Solveigh Schattman and Jutta Maue, two German au pair girls, had become local celebrities, renowned for their profuse consumption. Giving up on their au pair responsibilities, the two women made their way through the scene, working at a variety of hotspots including the 71 Club, the Half Beat, the Riverboat and the Penny Farthing. Before long, they were “the most popular waitresses in the Village,” famously “using their tips to buy everything from amyl nitrates to acid and heroin.”548 Such a quick entry into full-blown drug consumption was still rare, but the numbers of Villagers willing to experiment were growing. Then again, so was the police presence.

"Yorkville [is] Breeding Crime" read one headline late in the year. This "new breed of criminal", the middle-class "beatnik" youth (the average age of those arrested was estimated at 20), was "of above-average education and intelligence", and most had no prior criminal records.549 This issue of middle-class drug consumption was so galvanizing among members of the criminal justice system that efforts were stepped up to rid the district of this scourge. One lawyer, deliberating over whether the sentences were too harsh, expressed his uneasiness over the blindness of all of this justice: it seemed that

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"the court had warned sharply that such conduct could not be tolerated from young persons, whether they are students or riffraff." 550

For this was the real issue. While the fact that drug use was becoming a dominant feature of a Toronto district was hardly comforting, the prospect that the Village was populated by a new breed of criminal comprised of alienated middle-class Torontonians was incomprehensible. The assumption that working-class, immigrant-reared youth would be attracted to criminal activities (or, even, that they were simply prone to such activities) underwrites such anxieties. Middle-class youth engaging with the underworld was the world turned upside down – would Toronto need to set up Settlement Houses for suburbanites too? Of course, the middle-class youth were being drawn into criminal circles for different reasons (and under vastly different pressures) than were their working-class counterparts; while Greasers and Bikers came into their identity performances through a certain celebration of their class identities, middle-class hip youth came into their identities through the performance of criminality. As drug use became a primary marker for middle-class Village identity, excess and capriciousness haunted the scene. One detective attempted to outline the situation: "Young persons – particularly those who have had many of the luxuries of life – are being attracted to it by the Beatnik philosophy...: if you haven't tried everything, you haven't lived." 551

Arrests and lengthy jail terms loomed as sagging branches over the Village. In late February, 1965, one young man was sent up for six months after pot was found in his apartment; 552 in mid-August, Toronto’s youngest-ever marijuana charges were laid

550 ibid. My emphasis.
against a 16-year-old Villager;\textsuperscript{553} in mid-Autumn, two “under-18s” were arrested trying
to fence stolen morphine ampoules to an undercover police officer – both received 12
month sentences;\textsuperscript{554} months later a young man was hit with two years less-a-day for an
eight ounce bag of pot;\textsuperscript{555} in July 1966 a pregnant 16-year-old who had been in the
Village for 150 days pled guilty to pot charges and was sent home to Stoney Creek,
Ontario;\textsuperscript{556} later that month police found a loaded gun along with a ½ pound of marijuana
in a 23-year-old’s apartment;\textsuperscript{557} by late September, a bust of seven major dealers in the
district resulted in one woman’s sentencing of three years in the penitentiary for
possession of heroin;\textsuperscript{558} by the end of the year, there was little doubt in anyone’s mind:
Yorkville was a criminal territory.

The rise in charges and convictions relating to marijuana and other drugs in Metro
Toronto was indeed staggering. While there were a mere seven drug-related offences in
1964, there were 68 such convictions in 1965. But, really, that was nothing: in the first
10 months of 1966, 130 people had already been arrested on narcotics charges. Speaking
before Judge Harry Weisberg delivered sentences to 10 young, mostly middle-class men
and women who had (all but one) been arrested in the Yorkville area, Department of
Justice prosecutor Arthur Whealy blamed Yorkville’s “subculture” for promoting an
environment in which “drug offences are tied to a way of life.” Citing this litany of drugs
arrests and convictions (so often of middle-class suburbanites), “Yorkville can no longer

\textsuperscript{553} Globe and Mail, August 12\textsuperscript{th}, 1965.
\textsuperscript{554} Globe and Mail, October 30\textsuperscript{th}, November 25\textsuperscript{th}, 1965.
\textsuperscript{555} Globe and Mail, August 4\textsuperscript{th}, 1966.
\textsuperscript{556} Globe and Mail, July 1\textsuperscript{st}, 1966.
\textsuperscript{557} Globe and Mail, July 20\textsuperscript{th}, 1966.
\textsuperscript{558} Globe and Mail, September 28\textsuperscript{th}, 1966.
be called an artistic community,” he declared, since it “has become a hangout for bums and hoodlums.”

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**The Process of Co-Existence: The Changing Face of the Drop-In Centre**

Faced with a dwindling interest in the Church Drop-In Centre and well aware of the maturing bohemian scene around the corner, Rev James Smith turned his attention to what he understood to be his new mission: Yorkville. However, selling the Drop-In Centre to these Villagers proved more difficult than it had been with the Greasers years before; although he tried “every gimmick” he could think of, hip youth weren’t interested in hanging around at his Church. “Then we remembered that alienated kids relate to natural leaders,” Smith recalled, and when “we sought out the natural leaders [we] ran into Mike Waage.” As vague as this explanation might seem, the story of the hippies and the Drop-In Centre at St-Paul’s Avenue Road United Church is, at least in Smith’s version of events, all tied up with Mike Waage’s incarnation of the hippie archetype.

The seventeen-year-old son of a New York subway conductor, Mike Waage had arrived in Yorkville in the summer of 1965 to find that “there was no intellectual rat race like there was in New York… [Yorkville] was pretty easy going, pretty casual, and I made hundreds of friends. They were warm, sincere, and much more beautiful people.” Naturally articulate and charismatic, Waage fit the profile of a “natural leader” sought out by Smith, and by mid-fall he was recruited to help bring Yorkville to the Centre. Waage’s recollection of this recruitment is very matter-of-fact; the view that he was well-cast as a ‘natural leader’ seems to elude him.

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I was sitting in Webster’s restaurant perhaps in September or October ’65, and Rev Smith started bantering with me… And he had a program for Gang kids from the immediate neighbourhood, that area above Davenport or whatever it was, and I think he wanted to reach out to the Yorkville kids too, but this didn’t necessarily go over too well with the people he was already servicing. In fact it didn’t. So he engaged me to start a little Art Group there [at the Centre]. Not that I was necessarily qualified in any formal sense, but he thought it was a good idea. And our relationship started with that.  

However, according to Smith’s version of events, Waage’s enthusiastic support for the idea of a hip Drop-in Centre, combined with his apparent communication skills, set him up as the natural choice as a leader for the fraction of Toronto youth Smith was hoping to attract.

But, getting the working-class Greaser youth to give up what had for years been a de facto community centre wasn’t going to be easy. Smith knew that he needed Waage not only because he was a natural leader, but also because he was tough. Given the media-driven sense that a climate of potential violence surrounded the Village, Smith was hardly being over-cautious in his preparations for a kind of turf war between two rival factions over the use of the Drop-In Centre. Still, he courted the clash, believing it to be a battle worth waging. In short, it seems apparent that Smith saw the hip youth in the Village as the preferable group to fill his basement. According to his version of the key showdown:

One night by prearrangement, Mike [Waage] led 100 Hippies to the youth centre. Knowing that the few Greasers would prevent problems, he came prepared. With a fag hanging from his lower lip he told a Greaser who was mouthing off at him, “Look friend, Smitty says we’re welcome here and we’re going to stay.” Then he explained in his own enigmatic way, “We’re peace-loving co-existors, [sic] we don’t want trouble.” Then putting two fists together he twisted them as if to wring a neck and explained, “If we have to, we can take you man.” […] So began the long process of co-

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561 Mike Waage, Interview with Author, March 3rd, 2005.
existence. The next morning we found the boulevard strewn with fence pickets, rubber hose lengths and other grievous crabtree cudgels that were never used.\footnote{Smith, “I Wish I Was a Fish”, 4.}

This macho performance, replete with clichés of casual cool (cigarette-hanging-from-bottom-lip, kind-words-big-stick attitude), may be no more than a fanciful recollection, but it leaves little doubt as to which side was favoured by Smith and the CSO. The hippies, led by this young, charismatic New Yorker “with a command of English worthy of a professor,” are clearly elevated in this construction of the events, even though it was they (under the ‘Gang’ leadership of Waage) who threatened the greasers with violence in order to usurp their turf.

In the context of an understanding of the greasers and the hippies as two distinct and antithetical youth cultures (a position held by Smith, among many other observers), such an argument over territory is demonstrative of the privilege of one culture over another, of one class over the other. The violence was never (fully) borne out, but, as Smith makes clear, it was not because the kindness of the hippie youth prevailed over the bellicose greaser sensibilities; rather, it was through the overt threat of force (backed up by some 100 followers, all apparently armed) that the hippies were able to usurp the greaser space as their own. What Smith refers to as a “process of co-existence” sounds more like a street kid version of \textit{might makes right}.

Bill Clement recalls this showdown as a demonstration of, if nothing else, the depth of Smith’s betrayal of the working-class youth who for years had built a sense of community in that basement. In his inimitable style, Clement recounted in a recent interview a defining moment for him towards this realization:
It used to be a working-class kids’ Drop-In Centre. So, one of the long-haired-drug-crazed youth is talking to one of the kids from the Drop-In Centre. The long-haired-drug-crazed youths are in the process of forcing the locals out. The greasers. The long-haired-drug-crazed youth says to his newfound friend who he [wants] to encourage to get the fuck out cause we’re taking over this Drop-In Centre, he says: my Mum and Dad told me I could take 18 months off to find myself. And the greaser kid says: Oh, shit! If I dropped out of school, my old man would kick my ass all over the floor and tell me I’d better find a fucking job before I came home in the afternoon. I mean, that kind of social conflict! Basically, the middle-class kids just moved the greaser kids right out of the operation.  

Out of the operation, and back onto the street.

Is it surprising then, given the rejection many of these young people must have felt, that there remained a considerable animosity between the two groups right up to the end of the Yorkville hip scene? The Greasers, whose numbers expanded far more dramatically over the next few years than did those of the hippies (at least in the estimations of one anthropologist who studied the Village) would always be regarded as second-rate Villagers, even when they came to constitute the thrust of the youth population. For while identity performance was the name of the game in the Yorkville scene, working-class youth always had fewer options than did their middle-class counterparts. As Clement’s story demonstrates, the disjuncture between willful poverty and actual need was inescapably real.

However Smith’s gambit paid off, in the sense that it infused the Church Drop-In with new life, new faces, and a fresh new character. The basement, neglected for much of the summer of 1965, boomed into a primary meeting space for Yorkville youth by late fall. Offering showers, food, and shelter from the rain or the cops, and operating at least on one level as a hip pick-up bar for the nascent free love scene, the Church caught on

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563W.R. Clement, Interview with Author, March 5th, 2006.
with the teens who were flocking to Yorkville in ever greater numbers. According to
Smith’s (likely exaggerated) estimates, “attendance at the centre rose steadily from 150 to
300 and even went up to 600 or 700 per night in 1965 and 1966”. However, Waage’s
estimates are not too far afield from those of his former boss when he recalled that by
early 1967 the Church hosted “maybe hundreds, some nights.”

The Church basement, no longer the domain of the relatively small cohort of
working-class youth, underwent a dramatic renovation in order to accommodate the much
larger groups of young people that now used the Centre. “Well, it was already
established,” Waage explained recently when asked to clarify the overnight popularity of
the Drop-in Centre. “[The Centre] just went through considerable alterations,
conceptually. The size of the space over the years increased considerably… Certainly [as
a result of] the number of people that Yorkville brought into it. But, in a small way it was
already fully functional, it just got bigger and bigger.”

Still, Smith’s bourgeois values and the uncomfortable association between the
Church and the middle-class establishment put some Villagers uptight. “[Smith]
maintains certain traditional, middle-class concepts,” observed Frank Longstaff, “which
make some of the kids think he is a sell-out. For instance, he encourages all kids to work,
at least on a part-time basis to make enough money in an accepted manner to keep
themselves going in Yorkville. If this necessitates a haircut, then Smith says they should
see a barber.” His status as mediator between the hip scene and middle-class society
was, to Longstaff, central to both the successes and failures of his Drop-In Centre. “Part

564 Smith, 10.
565 Mike Waage, Interview with Author, March 3rd, 2005.
566 ibid.
567 Longstaff, 18-19.
of the problem is that neither he nor the kids can ever forget that they are in a church, and someone else’s church at that. This seems to place something of a damper on the spontaneity hoped for.”

Local musicians, poets, acidheads, politicos and teenyboppers alike turned to the Church from time to time as a hangout, an escape, or for the free meals the Diggers began to distribute there in 1967. The one guy everyone could count on being there was David Clayton Thomas, the irrepressible rock’n’roller who made Yorkville his home while pursuing that big break which would eventually see him front 70s powerhouse Blood Sweat and Tears. After he was released from prison in the mid-60s (Thomas had a legendarily short fuse, and a real love of the fisticuffs, something which set him apart from many of his contemporaries in the music scene), the front steps of the Church became his haunt, and his impromptu stage. Famously tough to approach, people generally left him alone to play away. David DePoe recalls that he was among the few folks with whom Thomas was at ease in those months following his release. “He wasn’t really a very nice person when he first got out of jail, you know? He was pretty fucked up. But, he was trying to sort of find his better side, y’know?” Night after night, Thomas would park himself on the Church steps and hone his craft, playing away for anyone who’d listen. DePoe, then driving a cab to make ends meet, used to work till the wee hours, often until 4 a.m., and would still be able to find Thomas at his usual spot when he got off work. “I used to park my cab on Avenue Road in front of the Church and take my guitar out of the trunk and we’d sit and jam,” recalls DePoe.

\[568\] ibid, 19.
\[569\] David DePoe, Interview with Author, December 20th, 2004.
Meanwhile, inside, a typical Saturday night. The record player blasting the new Stones record. Multicoloured teens dancing, meeting, grooving, stunning and high. Longhaired politicos leaning intensely over chess or cards, guitar cases by their sides. Long gray doobies in the backlot. Blotters on the tongue, waiting for the rush. *Paint it Black* and *Tomorrow Never Knows* and *Brainwashed*. Teenaged boys and girls clutched in nervous and bold free love. It was a scene, a happening and a gong show rolled into one. The Centre had lost its original mission, to be sure. But, in the process, it had gained a new, significant status within the ever growing hip Village scene, and with it, a new mission altogether. For the next three years the Church Drop-In Centre would be known to many as a central, and among the most significant, sites for hip activity. It became, in the words of David DePoe, “like our community centre.”

**The Martyring of Hans Wetzel: Ron Haggart, Satyrday and the Yawn**

Following the winter of 1964-5, Yorkville fell under the media microscope in earnest, as articles and reports on the goings-on, the highs, lows, trials and tribulations of the district piled up, week after week, even day after day in local and national newspapers. Throughout the year, the energy spent on reporting even the most insignificant arrest or disturbance was striking. But, most remarkable of all was the uninterrupted emphasis on the dangerous, subversive and violent aspects of Yorkville’s youth scene considering the rosy way this period (and this year in particular) is remembered by many observers of the post-1967 Yorkville scene. For this is when the supposed “real” or “true” hippies were afoot in Yorkville. However, it is also the period in which Villagers were fighting in Yorkville over things as insignificant as wearing

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570 ibid.
sunglasses at night.\textsuperscript{571} Perhaps as a symptom of the ousting of working-class youth from the Church Drop-In Centre, animosity between Greasers and Beatniks bubbled over from time to time, never failing to make its way into reportage over the conflicts afoot in the Village.

The underground newspapers \textit{Yorkville Yawn} and \textit{Satyrday} (the one became the other in late 1966) were born out of what was decided was a gap between the reality of Village life and the stuff being printed in the mainstream press. Their mandate, summarized in late 1966 editorial, was to “knock and satirize the Establishment, attempt to promote new Canadian sounds and culture on all levels and carry on the fight for personal freedoms.” This emphasis on libertarian politics was, perhaps, their most coherent theme – in general, their concern for the sanctity of individual rights and freedoms lies at the fore in their view of the political relevance of the Village scene. “We seek to unfetter the individual from all restrictions imposed on him and his freedom,” as they put it, “whether by government, police, or corporation. However, we draw the line at the point where personal liberty would create harm or injustice to a fellow human being.” Their argument, written here in an overture to the non-Village population – “[this issue] is not necessarily aimed at Yorkville villagers and tourists. It’s aimed at everyone” – tends to take for granted that the Village represents precisely such an unfettered politics of individual liberation.\textsuperscript{572}

“They were good,” recalls DePoe, “because they got the news out, you know? And from people who weren’t the big media. You know, the big papers always got

\textsuperscript{571}\textit{Toronto Star}, March 26\textsuperscript{th} 1965.  
\textsuperscript{572}\textit{Satyrday}, Fifth Issue, December, 1966.
everything wrong.” But, were they read? Michael Valpy, who, admittedly, was of the other camp as a writer at the *Globe*, disagrees with DePoe’s assessment. “I don’t recall [the underground papers] as being significant,” he told me. “I don’t recall anyone talking about them or thinking about them as significant. They were very small scale operations. They were an attempt to tell the other side, and things like that. But, my recollection is that nobody paid too much attention to them.” However, we must take into account what contemporaneous responses were recorded by the newspaper – most issues included a “Letters” page, which promoted a dialogic relationship with its audience. (Indeed, *Satyrday* claimed to constitute a “forum for hip people.”) A sampling of such letters (the selection process behind which got printed and which got binned, it must be said, we know nothing) demonstrates a sense of community shared both among readers and between this readership and the newspaper. Some letters offer encouragement (“keep firing the spark of rebellion,” wrote Trevor Goodger-Hill, an aspiring poet), some offered personal views of the Village (“I can’t see a comparison between yours and ours in N.Y. [but] I still dig it,” wrote a “19-year old New Jersey draft dodger (so called)” and some with terrible stories of run-ins with police, judges, and Village phonies (“the true villain is the establishment,” summarized “Anonymous,” “infringing on the personal freedoms of each of us.”

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574 Michael Valpy, Interview with Author, October 5th, 2006.
575 Valerie Korinek’s work on *Chatelaine* magazine in the 1950s and 1960s has greatly informed my understanding of the ways letters to the editor can constitute a site of dialogue. *Roughing it in the Suburbs* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) 71-87.
576 *Satyrday*, Volume 3 Number 5, August 1968.
577 *Satyrday*, Fifth Issue, December, 1966.
Valpy reminds us that although there were conservatives and reactionaries at all of the media outlets, including at the *Globe and Mail*, there were also young sympathetic reporters like him.

I was covering it, reporting on it, until I got banned for awhile by the *Globe*. It didn’t last long. They felt that I was, I guess with some justification, getting too close to what was going on there. There were huge debates that went on nightly within the *Globe’s* newsroom as to what our coverage was like, and how [the *Globe*] was inclined to be beating these kids up, and denigrating them, really treating them as a classic Other. And it just enraged me. There was one particular news editor: he was the senior guy on the newsroom floor, and it was he who banned me from going to Yorkville. He just loathed the hippie kids, and he, you know, felt that the cops should clean them out. He sort of rejoiced whenever there were arrests. It was just so irrational.579

This may have seemed irrational behaviour to Valpy, and perhaps to some of his cohorts, but the reality of the period was that the divisiveness of Yorkville made for a certain absurdity; at the very least a sustained incapacity to comprehend the other guy, on both sides.

Martin Barber, staff writer at the *Toronto Telegram* after 1967, recalls that the story of Yorkville, as it was presented to the public by the mass media, tended towards sensationalization. Emphasizing the most spectacular aspects of the scene, media framed the Village as a drug-infested youth centre, and tended to refuse any more complicated assessments of the scene.

We had three pages in *Time* magazine – that was the Canadian edition, three pages stuck inside *Time*. So, I remember writing this long flowing piece – because I got paid by the page – about things that were going on [in Yorkville]. Not one line of which survived the edit. When the piece came out… it said: “Hippie Revolution” and “Drugs in Park”! It emphasized all of the things that I had given a paragraph or two to, but missed out on all the music, on what I called the new entrepreneurs, the business people who understood youth. The people who were making stuff

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579Michael Valpy, Interview with Author, October 5th, 2006.
for your pad, lava lamps and all those things… But all this stuff, all kinds of things, was cut out! Basically, they were saying Yorkville was copying Haight Ashbury; that it was Haight Ashbury north.580

In sum, DePoe’s opinion that “the big papers always got everything wrong” harmonizes with some, but not all, of the other perspectives I have come across.

Nevertheless, such distrust of the mainstream media seems to have been the very spur that propelled *Saturday* and the *Yawn*’s editors (Andrew Mikolasch and Ron Thody (a.k.a. the Thud)) along.581 Reporting on local Coffee Houses, underground (or independent) bands, printing locally-produced artwork and poetry, and featuring often furious attacks on what was invariably decried as the police state of Toronto and its insistence on destroying the Village scene, the *Yawn* and *Saturday* both aimed to provide a local outlook on local personages, events and ideologies.582 The two papers were roughly 25 pages long, and were published somewhat unpredictably, with lapses lasting as long as a few months.583 However, in reviewing the treatment of one case in particular by both *Saturday* and *The Toronto Star*, one tends to find fault with this construction. As we shall see below, the mainstream press, at least some facets of it, was coming around on the Yorkville issue. At the very least, the mainstream-underground divide was a lot more complicated and nuanced than many people recall.

Typically, Villagers (often referred to as *Yorkvillians* for some reason) were presumed by the *Yawn* and *Saturday* to be male, and their activities easily reduced to

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580 Martin Barber, Interview with Author, March 29th, 2007.
581 Ron (the Thud) Thody gets a byline in *Saturday*, Fifth Issue, December 1966.
582 How well were such publications read? It is rather impossible to know for sure. But, my interview subjects tended to make reference to the Georgia Straight (Vancouver), the Oracle (San Francisco), or the East Village Other (New York) before they mentioned the homegrown variety of underground paper.
583 The reason for this oddity is that the publisher claims that the humorous and literary content is of permanent reading value, which is not to be discarded like an old newspaper. "*Saturday*, 3rd Issue, 1966.
“balling” and getting lit. As U.S. cultural historian Beth Bailey has argued, such an underlining of male sexual conquest as the primary hip occupation (alongside getting high) was ubiquitous throughout North American alternative press in the 1960s. She notes that sex, and the female body in particular, was associated with freedom, and the revolutionary potential of the counterculture. Even a casual reading of the *Yorkville Yawn* or *Satyrday* establishes female nudity, especially breasts, as a dominant aesthetic theme. Breasts are objects of fascination – symbols, perhaps, of freedom and liberation, but objects nonetheless. The Villager (as presented by these organs) is male, into dope, and looking to get laid. A typical one-liner from late 1966 finds editor Ron Thody boasting that the kinds of “adult problems” Villagers face from day to day are “how to ball the chick in the next pad or where to get the next turn-on.”

But this was, of course, knowingly disingenuous. For if *Satyrday* and the *Yawn* were concerned with anything, it was the escalating police presence in the Village, and growing paranoia over Toronto’s disdain for the hip scene. In one illustrative example, the case of a local 19-year old hippie named (Gunter) Hans Wetzel was turned by the Village papers into a *cause celebre*, a signpost and warning to any who might fail to appreciate just how fully the legal deck was stacked against them. Born of a riot, a fracas between greasers and hippies which spilled over into a fully-borne insurgence in the streets, Wetzel’s arrest on dubious charges turned him into both the scapegoat for the mess, and a martyr for the hip cause.

At the height of the greaser/hippie confrontations in Yorkville – a period characterized by the occasional fistfight and a persistent fears of a riot – a group of 25 young greasers from east Toronto armed with scissors roamed around the Village of a

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584 *Satyrday*, 5th Issue, December 1966.
Saturday night, aiming to cut off the hair of their chosen enemies. A disturbance ensued, as around 600 greasers and hippies faced off on Avenue Road, shouting obscenities at one another and marking their turf. Meanwhile up the street, Hans Wetzel and two friends were being denied service at the Mont Blanc café (presumably for their long hair and shabby appearance). On their way out the door they bumped into two men (about whom little is known apart from that they were black) and a fight ensued. Wetzel ran to get help, and according to the cops, randomly attacked one of the officers who was trying to break up the greaser/hippie face-off.

By the wee hours of Sunday morning, the corner of Avenue Road and Yorkville became a mob scene, as some 2000+ young people engaged in a full blown riot, replete with bottle throwing, sporadic brawls, and chants of “kill the cops” directed at the two officers who were first on the scene. As the officers stood on parked cars trying to restore order, one of them trying to restrain his 17-year-old prisoner Allan Eggleton, the other trying to restrain the unfortunate Wetzel, the crowd surged and began to tear at the two cops’ uniforms, even making off with a Billy club and one of their hats. Soon enough, a further 20 policemen arrived and the cleanup began in earnest.

Eggleton and Wetzel, along with two other hippies were the only people arrested. In at least one account of the ruckus, this was entirely explicable as a result of the class character of the two groups in the face-off. “The Greasers, who have had long experience with [police], ran and were lost in the crowd,” mused Frank Longstaff, while “the

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585 According to Frank Longstaff: “The Saturday night ruckus in May was caused by one of the few Villager-Greaser mix-ups. On the Friday night before, Greasers had found some Villagers alone in side alleys and had cut their hair. On the Saturday night, Villagers were ready for more trouble and around midnight, a scuffle broke out between two Villagers and two Greasers.” Longstaff, 12.

586 This, one of the rare instances in which black youth were connected to the Village scene, is maddeningly under-investigated in the press.
Villagers, with their middle-class backgrounds did not know enough to get away quickly.587 Wetzel, it was reported (by the *Toronto Star* who carried this story on the Front Page), was charged both with assaulting one of the police officers and with a count of obstruction; he was being held without bail. By noon the following day, Villagers had begun to congregate at the College Street police station (about 1 kilometre south of Yorkville) where Wetzel was incarcerated. Protesting unfair, trumped up charges, they chanted and marched in his defense. By Sunday evening, police had begun to arrest the protestors for “causing a disturbance”, among the vaguest and most effective of the weapons in their arsenal.588

As Alderman Helen Johnson called for a curfew for Yorkville youth, effectively ending the Village scene at midnight, Villagers began to rally around their martyred comrade. “Alderman Helen Johnson,” complained *Satyrday*, “is still ranting stupidities that would never make the public prints, were it not, for the publicity proneness of the Yorkville Village itself. Any ridiculous thing she says about the Village makes the papers.”589 Wetzel, it was said, was being blamed for the whole fiasco, and had become a whipping boy for a frustrated Metro police force, sick of dealing with Yorkville politics. But those politics would come back to bite them. The day following Wetzel’s conviction on all counts, but before he was sentenced to four months in prison, thousands of protesters gathered at Nathan Phillips Square carrying yellow placards decrying “Police Brutality” in Yorkville, and announcing that “Christ Had Long Hair Too!” Warned that if they set foot in the square they’d be arrested, protestors milled on the sidewalks. “Isn’t

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587 Longstaff, 12.
the Square public property?” asked a reporter of Ron “Crowbait” Masters, a reporter for *Satyrday* and one of the leaders of the event. “Not if you have long hair,” was his spiked reply.\(^590\)

*Satyrday* and the *Yawn* recognized the symbolic significance of the case, and began their coverage from the perspective that Wetzel was simply an innocent man fallen victim to the repressive and corrupt Metro police, and their inability (or unwillingness) to protect the hippies from the greasers who were coming down to Yorkville to fight. But, they were not alone. Ron Haggart of the *Toronto Star*, easily the greatest defender of Yorkville in the mainstream press, argued very nearly as strenuously as did the underground papers that Wetzel was a victim of circumstance. Calling him a “brilliant boy” with a “near-genius IQ”, Haggart presented Wetzel’s case to Torontonians as sympathetically as could be. As Wetzel went on trial that July and then onto appeal in the fall, both *Satyrday* and Haggart were reporting that everyone from Justice Shroeder (of the Ontario Supreme Court) on down were destroying Wetzel out of collective spite for the Village. “[Shroeder’s] condescension came when he bowed to an Establishment ruled society which frowns down it’s [sic] long, collective, frustrated nose at the long-hair and new ideas of youthful Villagers,” *Satyrday* (somewhat awkwardly) proclaimed.\(^591\) For his part, Haggart reminded his readers that “the Magistrate believed Wetzel was guilty of a senseless assault on a harried policeman,” underlining both the implausibility of Wetzel’s decision to randomly assault a cop, and that cop’s own inexperience and anxiety, “and

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\(^{590}\) *Toronto Star*, July 22\(^{nd}\), 1966.

\(^{591}\) *Satyrday*, 5\(^{th}\) Issue, December 1966.
Wetzel was led downstairs to the cells, where he cried.” In an issue from early 1967, a *Saturday* editorial referred to Haggart as “the *Toronto Star*’s formidable truth-seeker.”

In all, five defence witnesses told the court that Wetzel and two friends had been attacked by two black men outside the Mont Blanc coffee house on Avenue Road. One crown witness testified that Wetzel had yelled “I’m going for the cops” as the fight erupted. Wetzel had run up the street to find some help, only to emerge into the riot at Avenue Road and Yorkville. Undaunted, he rushed up to one of the two police officers and grabbed him on the arm from behind (presumably to alert him to the fight). “They [the five defence witnesses] then testified that the officer, without any warning, whirled around and belted Wetzel and then arrested the youth for assault.” During testimony, the same officer admitted to being new to the Yorkville beat, and that at the time of the alleged assault he had been extremely nervous: “to tell you the truth,” he had testified, “I expected it [an attack] at any minute.”

Although the obstruction charge was thrown out, Wetzel was given one month in prison for assaulting a police officer. Haggart’s response was impressive, even vast. He published another essay on the young man every day for nearly a week, each one more complimentary than the last, each one designed to demonstrate Wetzel’s strength of character, obsession with honesty, overall excellence at school, and probable innocence. “He was advised to get his hair cut,” Haggart explained, “but he didn’t because he felt that would be an dishonest representation. In other words, to cut his hair for his trial

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592 *Toronto Star*, November 2nd, 1966.
596 *Saturday*, 5th Issue, December 1966.
would be, to Wetzel, the same thing as a lie.”\textsuperscript{597} \textit{Saturday}, reeling from the injustice of the decision, concluded that anarchy and riots were the only plausible result of the Magistrate’s decision. “In effect he is telling the public – particularly the Yorkvillians – not to seek the aid of police when trouble brews. If you do, baby, you’ll only get thrown in the pokey. So let the riots begin.”\textsuperscript{598}

\textsuperscript{597} \textit{Toronto Star}, November 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 1966.
\textsuperscript{598} \textit{Saturday}, 5\textsuperscript{th} Issue, December 1966.
PART FOUR:

*Summer in the City, 1967*
Chapter Seven:

Under the Spell of the Hippies

Toronto’s Yorkville district was blamed yesterday for the downfall of Herbert Beedell, 21, who was jailed one year for trafficking in narcotics here [St Catharines, Ontario]... Troubles began for Beedell, a musician, when he went to Yorkville and “came under the spell of the Hippies,” his lawyer, Frank Keenan, said.

-Toronto Star, March 19th, 1967

The Diggers became the face of it. They were the people who gave it form and structure. I mean, there was nobody else. Everybody else was... they were backdrop in a way. What would you call them? They were the cast of thousands. They were the scene.

-Michael Valpy, 2006.599

By mid-summer 1967, Yorkville was a tumultuous, contradictory and exciting place. Spared no respite from the harsh glare of media, authorities and young people alike, Yorkville was decidedly a world worth discussing, exploring, decrying. All of the practices, activities and behaviors that were said to have characterized the youth scene in the first half of the Sixties (namely, sex, drugs and rock’n’roll, not to mention violence) seemed to multiply at every turn, and with every passing day. By year’s end, a veritable humanitarian crisis was in the works, exacerbated by the advent of amphetamine use, and perpetuated by the continued (if inadvertent) glamorization of the district by media and municipal authorities through repetition of the mantra that Yorkville and what it represented was a foreign, contaminated, destructive element in modern society. To young people who tended to empathize with the Yorkville scene and its attendant critique of authority, such a mantra was nothing less than a brilliant advertising campaign.

599 Michael Valpy, Interview with Author, October 5th, 2006.
Throughout 1967, the Villagers multiplied, got younger, got older. Hair grew wilder, and outfits ever more peculiar. By summer’s end, one might have little noticed a barefoot, shirtless dude with curls falling past his shoulders, a bandana holding it roughly in place, wearing outsized pants first hemmed circa 1925, picked up for pennies at the local Sally Ann. He could have been 17, 22 or 12. But, most importantly, he was no longer probably a suburban Torontonian from a middle-class background. The social makeup of the Village was changing, complicated by fresh numbers of fed-up farm-boys and -girls, Eastern and Western Canadian small-towners looking for big city excitement, and, most significantly, homeless and needy youth looking for community and escape. It was in this cohort of Villagers – a group boasting of little money, few social connections, and often scant urban experience or sophistication – that many saw the beginnings of a serious humanitarian crisis. Moreover, ever since the Hans Wetzel fracas, police presence in the Village had expanded in kind.600

By the time the first autumn rains began to cool the September air, there was almost nothing in place to protect these Villagers from their illusions. Yorkville had no shelters, and just a very few safety nets, usually provided by the Diggers (a Village-based humanitarian group based on their forebears in the Haight) and other responsive members of the community. The promise that had set so many of these newer Villagers a-hitchhiking to the Big Smoke (the promise of a perpetual block party, replete with whenever-orgasms and jubilant, giggling highs) faded swiftly in the rearview after a few nights in the slammer for vagrancy, a couple weeks of those persistent hunger pains, or the realization of an unshakable burning sensation down below.

600 “Recently, the police force has been sending a more mature, experienced group of police to patrol the village. We believe this is mainly a result of the Wetzel debauchle [sic].” Satyrday, Second Issue, 1967.
The reality of Yorkville was that while drugs were plentiful, sex was abundant, and rock’n’roll ubiquitous, security, health, and comfort were as elusive as Godot. The City fathers had become so frustrated with the counterculture that they were often blinded to the harshest realities of the very district they decried. As, one by one, their predictions came true (of widespread indigence, disease, violence, rape and drug addiction) they stood back, perhaps unsure of how to respond. Or was it that they were unwilling to respond? Amid the burnt-out roaches of smoky summer days, Yorkville was descending into its darkest period, a three-year bummer characterized by a distinct lack of support for its indigent Villagers, and the disintegration of what had been a seedbed for radical lifestyle experimentation, for the great pursuit of living otherwise.

The year 1967 marks a turning point in the significance and role of media coverage in the hip scene, and the counterculture in general. As Alice Echols, Todd Gitlin and Thomas Frank have each explored, spurred by exaggerated and often hysterical media coverage of the counterculture, the relationship between hip youth culture and big business hit new degrees of complexity in the months surrounding (and following) 1967’s so-called Summer of Love. As with the case of Rent-a-Beatnik schemes in the late 1950s, media often played complicated roles in the production and propagation of hip codes. At once the delivery boy, the mandarin, and the gun, media played all roles at once in this sport of shoot-the-messenger. Part advertiser, part emissary, part detached observer, part vicious critic, and part giddy optimist, Toronto’s major newspapers each looked into the Yorkville scene at least once a week in 1967, and nearly every day during the summer, offering a perpetual re-construction of a scene which was hurtling toward

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critical mass, its seams bursting under the unrelenting pressure of a daily influx of ever more searching youth from across the country and beyond.

The following Chapters are concerned with 1967, arguably the most important year in the Yorkville narrative, and the year all historians who have considered the Canadian counterculture have singled out for scrutiny. Discussions of its principal media-driven events – including the *Perception '67* Psychedelic Festival, the Victoria Day Love-In, and the “Siege of Yorkville” in late August – will help us to pierce the history of Yorkville in this tumultuous year. However, these chapters will also explore some less-well-remembered events and issues, including the massive bust of two Toronto-based Biker clubs in September, the week-long Psychedelic Rock Festival at the O’Keefe Centre, and the attempted Hippie colonization of Wasaga Beach, a vacation spot some 100 km north of Metro.

Alongside all of this, these chapters have a few main thematic concerns, all related to the competing heuristics employed in debates over the identity of the Village. In the case of 1967, the year in which Hippie culture seemed to explode into the public consciousness, panics over drug use, the moral and mental health of hip youth, and the degeneration and corruption of female sexual identity dominated discourse on the Village scene. These chapters will also explore the ways fears surrounding sexuality and gender played into media-driven panics over Yorkville as a kind of moral vacuum, a trend which culminated in a series of City Council attempts in early November toward the eradication of Hippies from the face of the City. Finally, these chapters will revisit the Church Drop-In Centre, Yorkville’s hip Community Centre, and examine its continued role in an increasingly volatile youth culture.
Hippie Wonderland or Festing Sore?: The Village and the Hip Binary

As others have rightly pointed out, the standard binary opposition of counter-versus straight culture in the 1960s made a very smooth transition into a product of media and corporate framing reinforced by consumption and identification. The commodification of hip, an enterprise which had legs long before it marched into the 1960s, hit new levels of sophistication and success during the decade of a thousand slogans. Advertisers, famously exposed as the “hidden persuaders” in Vance Packard’s 1957 bestseller, expanded their chances for success in the 1960s through the revolutionary innovation of market segmentation. To take a famous example, the “Pepsi Generation” campaign (1961-1966) saw the mass of consumers as divisible into fractions and components, each comprising its own market segment, each apparently demanding its own particular brand of advertising. But, the illusion of segmentation was the very genius behind its success – advertising hip to the hip and youth to the young worked best when both “hip” and “youth” were themselves demarcated and controllable.

602 Thomas Frank takes pains to undo the widespread belief that advertisers merely co-opted hip attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. Rather, he argues, advertisers in the late 1950s had already moved toward “individualism” and “youth” as primary figures of consumerism. “Seeking a single metaphor by which to characterize the accelerated obsolescence and enhanced consumer friendliness to change which were their goals, leaders in [advertising] had already settled on “youth” and “youthfulness” several years before saturation TV and print coverage of the “Summer of Love” introduced middle America to the fabulous new lifestyles of the young generation.” Frank, 27.

603 The complex interplay between consumption, identity and politics has been explored in a variety of monographs in recent years. But a few highlights: Nan Enstad, in her study of New York working women in early part of the 20th century, explores the “imaginative value” these women placed on ladyhood, and the ways their consumptive practices challenged dominant meanings of public women (Enstad, 1999). Lizabeth Cohen’s recent work on consumption in post-war U.S. politics demonstrates (among other things) the centrality of shopping to discourses of patriotism and nationalism in the 1950s and into the 60s (Cohen, 2003). Joy Parr’s study of Canadian manufacturing in the suburbanized post-war years establishes the complicated relationship many people had with the expanding culture of consumption. Joy Parr, Domestic goods: The Material, the Moral, and the Economic in the Postwar Years (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

categories. What was the real coup, however, was the development of a means of advertising hip to the decidedly unhip, and youth to the ripened.

By appropriating hipness (a move which was consolidated throughout the 1960s) and taking up behind its wheel, steering it around the corners, advertisers (and, by extension, the corporations they worked for) helped both to entrench the binary understanding of hip versus square and to demolish the sense of authenticity many of the first waves of hip youth had cherished about their community. As this trend toward commodification advanced with abandon during 1967 (a year-long “Summer of Love” which was basically a hip advertising slogan divided into days), its parallel (and no doubt the advertisers’ greatest ally) was the stepping up of anti-hip proselytizing from hopelessly (and proudly) uncool conservatives across North America. Yorkville and Haight-Ashbury, by 1967 the two most significant Hippie centres in Canada and the USA, respectively, were not just the implied subjects of a thousand advertising campaigns (Pepsi, Columbia Records, Volkswagen, etc), but they were also subjected to near-daily publicized attacks from an ever more vitriolic conservative establishment. The rub, the paradox: both the exploitative advertising campaigns and the vociferous conservatives fed the counterculture even as they dismantled it.

Yorkville’s political enemies made up in bombast what they lacked in subtlety. Led by Allan Lamport, the major anti-hip Councilors and Comptrollers were rarely out of the media spotlight throughout the year, as each took up a parallel position on the front line. Unlike their predecessors in this pursuit, whose main concerns tended toward

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605 Cohen has argued that the expansion of consumption in the post-War period both advanced and complicated the process of racial, class and gender inequality in the United States. However, her arguments, while germane to our discussion, fail to consider the role of “hip” consumption in any detailed way. As a result, one is left wondering where hip, rebellious youth fit into her formulation of the “mass” and the “segment.” *A Consumer’s Republic*, 318-322.
“cleaning up Yorkville,” and making it safe for commerce, they expanded on the frame that Yorkville constituted a foreign, criminal, alienating territory, arguing that it comprised a kind of figurative infection which threatened to spread through Metro. Emphasizing the unkempt aesthetic and lackadaisical work ethic displayed by many happily-impoverished Villagers, these City Fathers took to the position that what was at play in Yorkville constituted a sickness, a kind of moral and social vortex which could no longer be condoned.

Whereas in previous years Yorkville was hotly debated, its supporters confident that youth culture was engendering the hip charm otherwise absent from English Canada’s largest city, under their leadership the anti-hip agenda turned to the view that Yorkville was no longer up for debate. No, they insisted, Yorkville was clearly a disaster area, the bane of a permissive generation of liberal leadership, a moral sinkhole of Gomorric proportions, and plainly indefensible.

And, since Toronto’s psychedelic drug culture had metastasized in the little quarter (getting stoned was by now more than fully fledged as the defining activity for hip youth), they had piles of evidence to back their position. In mid-March, Provincial Minister George Ben (a representative for the Bracondale district) lifted public discourse over Yorkville to the rare air when he formally called for the Legislature to “break up” the Village, citing sexual and mental (not to mention moral) degeneration.606 Basing his comments on a personal “investigation” of the district, Ben’s first-person account emphasized the seamiest aspects of the scene, and unmistakably refused to note anything positive. Furthermore, if his account appeared too one-sided to be representative, he

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606 It remains unclear just what Ben meant by this. How exactly does one “break up” a district?
offered up as evidence a harrowing recording he had made of a 17-year old girl who told him she had just come down from her 40th (!) acid trip.

The young woman was a former prostitute and the victim of violence of the ugliest sort, her arm bearing the name of the “Detroit pimp” who had carved her up for failing to hustle enough business. And, as a coup de grace, Ben reminded his (likely) stunned audience – stories of this nature were quite unknown to the Provincial Legislature – just exactly where these young people were coming from, who they were underneath their insane performances, what lay beneath their hip masks. “Places like these foster drug addiction and crime… [yet] many of the youngsters come from good families up north – from [wealthy Toronto suburbs] Forest Hill and Leaside. They’re just children coming down for kicks.”

The gauntlet was thus thrown: your middle-class sons and (especially) daughters are being lost to Yorkville – what will you do to save your children? In a valiant effort to miss the forest for the trees, Ben’s argument (and the case taken up by many other conservatives following his lead) appears to victimize everybody, relying on the assumption that what happens to young people in Yorkville isn’t their fault, but is rather the fault of degenerated Yorkville itself. Empty Yorkville, end this Village scene, and save the middle-class children from their ruination.

No one piece of news reporting put the screws to Yorkville any harder than David Allen’s prominent multi-installment exposé which ran throughout April in the Toronto Star. Foregrounding sexual degeneration, but sure to establish Yorkville as home to all manner of temptation and moral chaos, Allen’s first piece heralded spring in “The Acre of Action where the Teenyboppers are Prostitutes.” His thesis, mirroring the arguments

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put forward by George Ben less than two weeks earlier, was that Yorkville was itself the problem. “It’s the place which attracts teenagers by the thousands, hooks them, and won’t let them go,” he declared.608

Yorkville today is the place where: the prostitutes are teenyboppers; a 15-year-old can buy and sell marijuana in a church basement; you can live in an all-night restaurant for days on end; a 16-year old lost her virginity to a man she’d known only a few hours; the same girl – she’s almost 17 – tonight will sell her favors for $20; Fifteen-year-olds boast about how much marijuana and LSD they’ve taken…609

Allen’s litany of sin, while rather obviously only comprised of two or (at most) three personal narratives – the fifteen-year-old who sells drugs at the Church is likely also the one who boasts about how much dope he eats; if it was the same “girl” who lost her virginity and then became a teenybopper prostitute, this would satisfy the rest of his examples – had the intended effect.

As Allen, Ben, and others stepped up their invective, their Hippie enemies found their sense of community solidifying, deepening. Feeling embattled and misunderstood, and in need of a medium through which to respond to all of this criticism and allegation, many Villagers turned to the one figure in the scene whom the media had already singled out as its hip representative of choice. Charged with defending Yorkville and its Villagers against its mounting army of detractors, Yorkville’s emissary would become, overnight, a sensation, the face of the summer of ’67, and, for better of for worse, the de facto leader of the Village scene.

608 Toronto Star, April 5th, 1967. (My emphasis.)
609 ibid.
Politics, Politicos, and the Hip Archetype

David DePoe materialized on the cultural radar very early in 1967, appearing in profile articles in the major newspapers to discuss his expected role in the Yorkville community. As a volunteer for the Company of Young Canadians (CYC), DePoe was dispatched to Toronto to help develop humanitarian efforts through and for the Villagers.⁶¹⁰ Overnight, DePoe, a well-known Village-based cab driver and hippie, became the kind of media darling that Yorkville had been missing; a face, swagger and voice for the scene. His middleman status further enhanced his credibility – for this wasn’t just a hippie Villager, but also the estranged son of one of Canada’s top journalists, a paid volunteer for a government organization, and by all accounts a sophisticated and clever leader.⁶¹¹ With both the media and the City looking for someone in particular on whom to focus their attention, DePoe seemed a perfect fit: a well-spoken, aesthetically appropriate, and seemingly media-hungry young man, whose ability to attract controversy was apparent from the start. In what was undoubtedly an ego rub of mastodonic proportions, with his first act as CYC rep in the Village DePoe had managed

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⁶¹⁰ The Company of Young Canadians (CYC) was a Liberal Government initiative, championed by Judy LaMarsh and others in Pearson’s cabinet, which came into being in 1966. This innovative youth program was inspired by the American Peace Corps, but, in the spirit of a youth-crazy era, it was designed to be run autonomously, by its youth volunteers. It was a political response to the popularity of campus activism in the mid-60s; the development of an alternative, government-sponsored activist organization can be read in a variety of ways, and was indeed hotly debated by virtually everyone in the late 1960s. Decried by politicians as a state-supported Communist organization, attacked by New Left activists as a blatant tactic in a pervasive Liberal passive revolution, and cynically used by many of its own volunteers merely as a means for funding and support, the CYC was a colossal failure for the Liberal government. Until 1970, when the government took up the reins and refused the CYC its autonomy, even its volunteers couldn’t necessarily be counted among the supporters of the CYC and its mandate. The program limped along until 1977.

⁶¹¹His father, Norman DePoe, was arguably the most recognizable face on Canadian television in the 1960s, as principal correspondent on national (and occasionally) international affairs on the CBC.
to attract the disapproving glare of no less an authority figure than the former Prime Minister, John Diefenbaker. 612

On the second day of the year, DePoe had been part of a demonstration in front of the US Consulate in protest of the escalating American war in Vietnam. By all accounts, it was an uneventful demonstration – no beaten heads, no property damage. But that it appeared to have been led by a young man who was on the government payroll was an event in itself. In fact, DePoe claims that neither he nor Lynn Curtis, the other CYC volunteer associated with the scene in the press, had any leadership roles. “I had better explain that I didn’t lead the damn thing,” he wrote to fellow organizer Bill Poole. “I fell into a leadership role simply because I had my guitar with me…” 613

A political uproar ensued, culminating in Prime Minister Lester Pearson’s call for an investigation into the still-adolescent Company and their practices. But, unlike so many other young men (for it was never women) who became exemplars of the Yorkville scene, DePoe clearly relished this media and political attention. Unlike those others, he had an agenda. As he explained recently:

I used the media consciously. I grew up in a house with a media person. My father, you know, was a print radio and TV journalist. And so, I knew people at the news desk at the CBC. I could phone up and say “there’s something happening up here.” I’d phone the guy at the Toronto Telegram… I mean, I could phone these people and go “there’s something interesting going on, you should send someone down to cover it.” 614

Considering the frequency of coverage of all things Yorkville in the months leading up to 1967, DePoe must have been fully prepared for the kind of fame he was courting.

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612 Leader of the Opposition John Diefenbaker was a vocal critic of the CYC and of DePoe and Curtis’ role in the protest. In public, PM Pearson defended his volunteers, explaining that the two CYC volunteers had acted privately, and “as citizens of a free country.” Still, behind closed doors, Pearson was not pleased, and phone calls were made. Hamilton, 47-50.
613 Hamilton, 47.
One of the people on DePoe’s phone list was the Globe’s Michael Valpy, a fellow CYC-er and Villager. Dedicated to promoting the Village scene in a human, unfiltered manner, Valpy was well-respected by his friends in the Diggers. Anomalous enough in an era when media was so pervasively distrusted by young people as an arm of the dreaded “establishment,” Valpy’s close connections to the scene are even more impressive when one considers that he worked for what was among the more conservative of the media outlets at the time.

I had to keep some distance because otherwise I would have been in a total conflict of interest. […] First of all, everybody [in Yorkville] knew who I was and what I did. You know, some of this stuff sounds a bit immodest, but… My recollection is that I was trusted, and that if people wanted help from the media, I would be the person to call. My reporting was solid enough and good enough, and met the Globe’s journalistic standards, such that I could get articles into the paper, and was able to tell the story of what was happening up there, especially the abuse by the police.615

By the spring of 1967, DePoe had a significant ally at the Globe, along with additional contacts (including his old roommate Bill Cameron at the Star) and acquaintances at the other outlets. The stage was set for the emergence of a celebrity.

Having recently defected from the Student Union for Peace Action (SUPA) to the fairer fields of the CYC – a move which did little to endear him to the tumultuous New Left scene on the University of Toronto campus616 – DePoe was familiar with the vicissitudes of youth politics, and the role of the Yorkville hip scene in the politicization of the counterculture. His view, laid out in a recent interview, was that Yorkville represented a kind of unconscious political bloc, a sleeping giant that needed to be awoken to its power, strength and political influence.

615Michael Valpy, Interview with Author, October 5th, 2006.
616As Cyril Levitt pointed out in his seminal study on the New Left in the US, Canada, and West Germany, such defections signalled the co-optation of the movement, “the equivalent of committing a mortal sin in the New Left.” Children of Privilege (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984) 97.
Because I was media savvy, and because my name was a recognizable name, I would very consciously use [the CYC] to promote the cause and values of the counterculture, of Yorkville, of the youth, the generation thing that we were trying to get across, to the media and the public. I saw myself as a conduit to get that out there.617

He, like all CYC volunteers, had been given explicit directives not to become a leader, but rather to remain a facilitator, an enabler of positive change.618 Young volunteers like him were sent out across Canada in late 1966 and into ‘67 with similar orders, but none was sent to such a volatile (and well-publicized) neighbourhood.619

For their part, the Village paper Satyrday, run by Andrew Mikolasch and Ron Thody, had laid the groundwork for hip resentment of the CYC and its attempts to “send the cream of Canada’s youthful do-gooders […] into the deepest jungles of Toronto’s Yorkville Village.” Under a typically irreverent sketch by Thody (of Peggy Morton, a recent convert to the CYC, wearing SUPA buttons and being boiled in a cauldron by a gaggle of hippies), the CYC platform of working for positive change in the Village scene is denounced with an impressive vehemence. Morton, then among the more prominent members of the CYC and SUPA, had offered Satyrday a brief assessment of Yorkville which concluded that it may not be entirely healthy. “Cool it Peggy,” began Satyrday’s pointed response. “Yorkvillians are not disturbed children. They are adults, disturbed or not. If you treat them as lost, unhappy waifs, you’ve had it.” So, then, what were the problems Satyrday associated with the Village scene? “Some of their real problems are

617David DePoe, Interview with Author, December 20th, 2004.
618What did the CYC in was its own incompetence. And that incompetence was universal. Far more than David’s project here – it caused embarrassment, unquestionably. But, what really was the death knell was that it was funding the separatists in Quebec! You know, Gilles Duceppe was a CYC volunteer... They were taking CYC money to fund separatist activities. But, what David was doing was a totally legitimate project in terms of the CYC mandate, which was to build and empower community. Certainly it was an uneven contest between the kids, city council, the cops, the property owners. So, it was a totally legitimate project!” Michael Valpy, Interview with Author, October 5th, 2006.
how to ball the chick in the next pad or where to get the next turn-on.” So, the real problems (as established by the Village organ) were all related to the hippie archetype. In this simple construction, Villagers are all male, sex-obsessed, and looking for dope.

Before a month had passed, Morton was no longer with the CYC’s Yorkville project, and a new, more ideally-suited representative was sent in. Enter David DePoe.

DePoe’s greatest contribution as Yorkville’s CYC volunteer was his development (with a small group of other Villagers) of the Diggers. An anarchist humanitarian collective, loosely based upon the example laid out by the San Francisco Diggers and those in New York’s Greenwich Village, but not officially affiliated with either group, the Diggers took to ministering to the needs of Yorkville’s hip youth. “In the fall of ’66,” DePoe explains, “I moved onto Hazleton Avenue and I was starting to just lay the groundwork for community organization. And the Diggers was the first thing that kind of happened, as a way of organizing the community into something.”

The core group of Village Diggers was comprised of DePoe, fellow CYCers Don Riggan and Brian “Blues” Chapman, and, to a lesser extent, former martyr Hans Wetzel

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621 In fact the whole Digger ideology was based upon the English Diggers (a.k.a. the Levellers), a proto-anarchist group which became active during the Civil War years, 1649-50, whose basic premise was an abolition of private property, along with the entire profit-based economy. In its San Francisco incarnation (in turn the inspiration and influence for the Yorkville Diggers), the Diggers was a profoundly contradictory and exciting political (or, perhaps apolitical) collective. In the words of one of the most famous collaborators, Peter Coyote, “the Diggers was an anarchistic experiment dedicated to creating and clarifying distinctions between society’s business-as-usual and our own imaginings of what-it-might-be, in the most potent way we could devise.” Their great pursuit of living otherwise was based around the realization that in a profit-oriented economy, the only thing that cannot be co-opted is “doing things for free.” They established free food stalls, free medical clinics, free stores, endorsed free entertainment, free love, free everything. See Peter Coyote, Sleeping Where I Fall: A Chronicle (Washington: Counterpoint Press, 1998) 34-5.
622 Ruby agreed with my assessment that the San Francisco Diggers were rather different in their operation, mandate and style than their Yorkville counterparts. “That’s where the name came from. Occasionally you heard reports about what they were doing. We were interested, but there was no formal mechanism at all [connecting us]. […] I’ve always been an anarchist, still am. Blues was interested in anarchist thought, and Dave was interested in anarchist thought.” Clayton Ruby, Interview with Author, March 3rd, 2006.
and law students Clayton Ruby and Paul Copeland. Their popularity among Villagers (for all four had been on the scene, as it were, for months and years), combined with their consistent drive to keep Yorkville healthy, safe and progressive, put them in ideal stead to promote the cause. In fact, no less a critic of DePoe’s hippie flamboyance than Ian Hamilton still conceded of the Diggers that “the lives they saved could probably [alone] justify the cost of CYC.” But, while the CYC was still footing the bill for their controversial endeavors, it was through their greatest ally, champion and fundraiser, that they would achieve the level of recognition and support they needed pushed their initiatives into the black.

June Callwood, famed journalist and mother of a fellow Villager, had caught on to their humanitarian concerns from the get-go. “When I really got my nose rubbed in it,” Callwood lately recounted, “was when our 19-year-old son (who was doing a bit of drugs) clashed with me and moved out and found a room over the Grab Bag. Through him I met Blues Chapman, Don Riggan and David DePoe. Clay Ruby who was then a law student was interested in [their group]. All these were the kind of people I understood.” Callwood, a mother of four whose interest in the Village scene was primarily parental, soon came to be impressed by the intelligence, compassion, and vitality expressed by her son’s new friends. She began to “get” it, to understand just what these young people were trying to accomplish in the Village; not only that, but she started to empathize with their concerns, their anxieties, and their desire to stake out some new

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624 I have tried, and failed, to contact both Don Riggan and Brian Chapman – in both cases I left detailed (and repeated) voicemail on their phone lines, but received no response. I have not found Hans Wetzel, nor have I yet met anyone who knows how to contact him.

625 Hamilton, 58.

626 June Callwood, Interview with Author, March 11th, 2005.
cultural territory. Unlike most parents of her generation, for her Yorkville began to make
sense, even to become attractive.

“[About] our son’s rebellion,” she admits, “vicariously I was thrilled!” Thrilled,
that is, until something fundamental seemed to change. “He [her son] began bringing
home kids who didn’t fit. You couldn’t talk Nietzsche with them, they had almost no
education. They had teeth rotted from neglect. They were strung out – I’d never seen kids
like that. They weren’t like kids of the Depression when I was a teenager who were kind
of whole kids. These were broken kids.”627 Callwood, hearing that the Diggers were
setting out to help this growing number of transient, alienated and unhappy youth who
had come to latch onto the Village as a refuge, approached them with an offer of support.

“To us this was good,” DePoe explained recently. “This middle-class woman
who came in and cared for these kids and decided that yes, homeless kids need a place to
sleep, and food, and so on.”628 The four young men worked with Callwood to get word
out that Yorkville’s street scene was growing at too feverish a pace, and that shelters,
food and health counseling were badly needed. By early 1967, they had secured a base of
operations (next door to the Grab Bag convenience shop on Yorkville Avenue), were
working toward the inception of a youth shelter called Digger House, and were busy
developing a variety of local initiatives in preparation for what was expected to be the
biggest summer yet in the Village.

“We were all very close friends,” recalls Ruby, “and [we] worked together on
every project, along with June Callwood… The five of us really did everything together.
Well, June less than the others ‘cause she had a life and a family, so the four of us did

627 ibid.
everything together.” Together, they rapidly became the public face of the Yorkville scene. With DePoe as their principal, the Diggers assumed the mantle of Village leaders, and took their place at the vanguard of the Yorkville cultural movement. As Ruby puts it, quite simply “David, Blues, and Don were the head of the [Village] hierarchy.”

But some Villagers prefer not to look at it in those terms. “We were consciously trying to set aside notions of status,” explained one man, who has chosen to remain anonymous.

These were the contact people. Remember that what was going on was an attempt at overthrowsing the notion of hierarchy, so, really… most of us were dismissive of all of that. Obviously they were sort of contact people with the press, so we valued that. They were capable spokesmen and that they said things that were in line with our own attitudes. We valued that, and appreciated that. But we didn’t really look up to any of them.

Certainly many Villagers concurred with this sentiment in the period. However, the case remains that the Diggers, by positioning themselves as the contact people, did indeed foster the impression (however self-constructed) that they represented the cutting edge of the Village scene.

In two contemporary accounts of the demise of the Company of Young Canadians, the visibility of DePoe’s Diggers was even cited among the primary reasons for the de-stabilization of the government program. Because he allowed himself to be turned into a spokesperson for the New Left through Yorkville, DePoe represented the uncomfortable connection between activism and hip identity, an association which was

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630 Clayton Ruby, Interview with Author, March 3rd, 2006. Ruby leaves his name off the list because he, being a law student, was not as single-minded about the scene as his friends. “Not me, I wasn’t a Hippie. I don’t think I was an outsider, no. I was as much an insider as you could get. I had lots of friends, and people reacted very normally and openly to me, period. I don’t think there was any discrimination at all, but it was also clear that I was a guy in law school. My priorities were not their priorities.”
631 Anonymous LSD Dealer, Interview with Author, October 13th, 2006.
forced, at best. And, in allowing himself to become a media firebrand, and for accepting his role with such enthusiasm, he was effectively stripped of any credibility as a revolutionary socialist activist. DePoe told me, however, that the two 1970 book-length studies of the CYC were off-base in their overstatement of his role in the destruction of the Company. When asked if he was aware of how the media might twist his work, spin it out of his control, he included Ian Hamilton’s book in his response.

"Yeah, because you could see how it would come out at the other end. You’d say, oh man, they got that one wrong. They didn’t really understand. There were some of them who absolutely didn’t. This book called The Children’s Crusade which was more about the Company of Young Canadians and such... well, they had an agenda and they got it wrong from the point of view of the people who were in it, you know? At least, they misunderstood out purpose and the meaning as it played out for us."

Forty years on, DePoe was still smarting from Hamilton’s finger-pointing. To be fair, Hamilton’s book (along with Margaret Daly’s similar study) made sweeping criticisms of DePoe and Curtis which tread close to the insulting. Daly even includes a two-page play-by-play of the Diggers’ late-August meeting with Alan Lamport (see below) which does little but carp on DePoe at every turn.

Of course, the CYC never achieved much credibility in the radical scene – it began and ended as an always already co-opted activist group. The government-funded Company, envisioned by Judy LaMarsh and other Liberals as a kind of Canadian Peace

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633 David DePoe, Interview with Author, December 20th 2004.
634 Daly, 71-73.
635 Clayton Ruby recalls that while “a lot of our people went off to the CYC, I didn’t. It was an interesting experiment. I think it did a lot of good, and a lot of interesting things happened. It was slightly more mainstream than SUPA, which was a necessity when you’ve got government control. There was great debate about whether it was politically useful to [join CYC]. But it wasn’t a hardline thing at all. It wasn’t even a left-right thing, frankly. It was just a real debate about whether or not working within a governmental structure you could make the fundamental social change we thought was needed, or whether it was always going to be superficial. But, in the end the truth seems to be, in hindsight, that neither one worked.” Interview with Author, March 3rd, 2006.
Corps, was met with considerable distrust (even disdain) by many New Left politicos. As 60s activist Myrna Kostash laid it out in her memoir-cum-history of the Canadian Sixties, many “SUPA activists… repudiated CYC, saying that a government agency could not make the revolution.”⁶³⁶ A government-run youth organization with aspirations of becoming a Canadian version of the Peace Corps? How could any self-respecting politico with counter-hegemonic objectives sign on to a government programme predicated on the old liberal chimeras of middle-class social responsibility and guilt?⁶³⁷

But, Kostash suggests, many were tempted by the promise of funding. “[The] CYC had money,” she explained, “it offered salaried jobs and consultants’ fees and all the accoutrements of a real office, and it had lots of publicity.”⁶³⁸ Myrna Wood, Peggy Morton, and many other decidedly dedicated politicos took up the CYC’s offer of subsidies for their social activism, even though they were aware of the probable consequences. There was always the hope, as Art Pape put it, that through the CYC the activists might “use the system against itself,” – and with money scarce, especially for social activists who had been trying to operate apart from “establishment” humanitarian organizations, the CYC’s offer of much-needed cash was hard to resist. Wood recalls this curious situation as “one of the real contradictions of the era”:

The CYC bought off the leadership [of SUPA]… A number of people like Peggy [Morton] and I were put on the payroll, and most of us were very suspicious about the whole thing, and said this whole idea of the CYC is contradictory to our aims, but I guess we thought we could use it for a few

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⁶³⁶Kostash, 20.
⁶³⁷ Such opportunism convinced many would-be SUPA stalwarts to bail out of the nascent student radical movement and into government-sponsored liberal activism. The big book on the relationship between these two organizations remains unwritten, but it is a hugely important story. I would certainly like to suggest that the advent of the CYC could be regarded as a highly effective passive revolutionary response on the part of the Liberal Order to redefine the character of a student movement increasingly taking up radical politics.
⁶³⁸Kostash, 20-21.
months. And for most of us, that’s what happened… Then, after a year and a half had gone by, we found out retrospectively that our leaders had been paid huge amounts, huge compared to us, and that they had socked [the cash] away in their bank accounts before going to law school, or whatever. So, while [Peggy and I] were writing that paper, part of that time we were working in that office.

For his part, David DePoe agrees; it was indeed all about the money.

A bunch of us in SUPA decided that we were going to go into the CYC and use their money in order to do our stuff, you know, what we wanted to do. There was this big debate about: “you’re gonna be a sell-out ‘cause you’re taking government money.” And we said: “whatever! It’s free money and we can use it to do what WE want.” You know? In other words: organize poor people, organize native people, organize youth, organize people to get what they deserve in the broadest sense. Power to the people.

Perhaps the most arresting thing about this construction is the connection made between youth and native people, as though the oppression and class/racial identity issues were comparable, even similar.

Such connections were often made in the late 1960s, as the category “youth” came to be viewed through a Third-World prism, and thus became an acceptable subjectivity around which to organize. Yorkville, for DePoe, seems to have represented a worthy site of oppression, and its Villagers a people in need of liberation, rights and representation.

In other words, young people should have a voice that’s respected, native people need to be organized and respected… And we strongly believed

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639 Wood and Morton, along with Judy Bernstein and Linda Seese, were at work composing what would be the first major statement of the Women’s Liberation movement in Canada. “Sisters, Brothers, Lovers… Listen…” , although somewhat tame by today’s standards, was indeed a powerful statement in its day, rattling SUPA male hegemony and precipitating the dissolution of the Union by the end of the year. This foundational paper was republished in the early 70s in Women Unite! (Toronto: Canadian Women’s Educational Press, 1972).

640 Myrna Wood, Interview with Author, April 19th, 2006.

641 David DePoe, Interview with Author, December 20th 2004.
that we could create a more democratic society by going out and organizing how people power people. I, having been in Yorkville decided that these young people… we could do some organizing so they could have a voice. They could, in all their diversity and difference, they could be listened to.642

Whatever standing the Company had been afforded by independent New Left groups, it lost very quickly as a series of noisy, well-publicized debacles (at least a few of which prominently involved David DePoe), set up the CYC as a divided, foolish Children’s Crusade.643 But, while it funded DePoe, for better or worse it also funded the development of many of the most important, most innovative, and longest-running social programs in the Village. Without the exposure afforded them through the CYC, would the Diggers have gained so much ground toward their humanitarian aims?

As Van Gosse has recently reminded us, “the counterculture was never synonymous with the broader New Left […] but there were clearly links between them.”644 Indeed, because New Left politicos, bikers, greasers hippies and teenyboppers all drank from the same cultural broth of accelerated post-1950s North American society – even if it tasted mightily different to each – it seems ahistorical to overemphasize any categorical boundaries between their cultural activities. I suggest that the repetition of this one-dimensional construction has allowed us to both over-romanticize the hippies and to under-explore them at the same time. Because they have tended to appear so vacant, so ineffectual, so fluffy alongside the serious business and doings of (for

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642 ibid.
643 Both Hamilton and Daly, two contemporary chroniclers of the CYC, title their respective books using the language of youth, but in a derisive way. Daly’s Revolution Game emphasizes the playful, disingenuous approach she saw young volunteers adopting through the CYC; Hamilton’s Children’s Crusade speaks for itself. (Although, it is worth mentioning, Kurt Vonnegut’s ultra-hip novel Slaughterhouse-Five had recently come into print – its subtitle was Or, the Children’s Crusade, a Duty Dance With Death (New York: Laurel Books, 1969, 1991).)
644 Still, it is worth noting that in this same study Gosse separates the counterculture from the New Left in his analysis, leaving his discussion of their “links” to a six page section at the end of a 210-page text. Van Gosse, Rethinking the New Left (New York: Palgrave, 2005) 202-208.
example) the SDS or the SUPA, we have allowed them to slip into the drawer of trinkets and oddities. Ultimately, it has seemed less important to chronicle and examine the hippie counterculture (in any meaningful way) than it has to repeatedly explore the more conventional histories of the New Left and their ilk. Apart from a few notable exceptions (the work of historians like Philip DeLoria, Beth Bailey, and Alice Echols stand out boldly), most historical assessments of the period do not serve the hippie scenes nearly so well as they do these radical political movements.

Part of this, of course, is grounded in the reality that many politicos looked at the hippies with disdain. Myrna Wood (for her part) adheres to the categorical definitions of counterculture vs. politico, echoing the articulations of many of her peers: “To me they [the counterculture] were hippies, who were more into lifestyle, their personal lives, rather than changing society. And that is why I sort of disrespected them.” In her recollection, political youth looked to the Yorkville scene with a mixture of frustration and disparagement.

[We thought them to be] selfish little bastards, many of them, in fact. What I would have said, and I think what most of my political friends would have said was: those people are just wasting their time. If we don’t change society, then there will be no freedom for those people, or for anyone else. Still true today. So, it was kind of useless.

While Wood surely speaks for many of her contemporaries from the political movements, her vitriol obscures the degree to which the politicos interacted with these same “selfish little bastards”.

Many of the politicos in SUPA (and some of the CYC volunteers) looked to the hip politics in Yorkville, and especially the attempts to connect hip identity with minority
prejudice and social violence, as misguided (at best) and, at worst, insulting. Wood explained the general reaction she (and many of her ilk) had upon seeing Yorkville’s youth culture attempt to associate itself with third world identity politics.

There were hippies who clearly believed that their lifestyle could change society. I don’t know how they ever got that impression. They were ignoring reality. They were also, I would have said, innocent and naïve, ignorant children of fairly well-off middle-class society. To have been around, as they were, in those years when the most horrendous things were going on, to black people, to poor people of all kind… I mean, in the midst of all that, to think that by, I don’t know, by singing and just maintaining the attitude that everything is just going to be peaceful, man, and we’re just going to chill out, and be peaceful, and there is harmony, and there’s no room for this disharmony in our lives, and… well, excuse me! I mean, that was racist, if nothing else. There’s no other way I can explain it. This kind of escapism defined the hippies.647

This view (echoed by other former Villagers) appears to demonstrate a straightforward adversarial relationship between class- and youth-based politics in the period. For Wood, Yorkville was a non-issue, an insignificant battleground in a wider war in which the stakes were so very much higher.

Judy Pocock, who was both an activist and a Villager complicates this either/or dichotomy separating hippies from politicos, but cautions us against blowing it up. “The whole Yorkville thing was connected; it was much more of an environment than a political movement,” she explains, with characteristic incisiveness.

And within that environment there were many, many different types. And there were a lot of politics, and there were a lot of people who saw themselves as political. And some people were sympathetic with politics. And you know there was also a very anti-political strain within that: you know, do your own thing, don’t bother me I won’t bother you, you know, be cool. So, I would say it was more of a culture rather than a movement. I think that’s valid.648

647ibid.
648Judy Pocock, Interview with Author, June 24th, 2006.
But DePoe, generally regarded as the capital P-politico in the scene, happily distances himself and the majority of Villagers from the activist Movement. “[Villagers] just looked at them [politicos] like: Ahh, you guys have your own agenda. You people are like Ideologues, and we’re against all that. Oh yeah. We were against Ideologues and ideology and we just wanted to be who we were, that kind of thing. They came with their little speeches, and we would just say: Go away.”\footnote{David DePoe, Interview with Author, December 20th, 2004.} For her part, former Villager Judy Perly sets up her view of the disjuncture between the Hippies and the politicos in much the same way: “My brother went on to become an ultra lefty, a Maoist. Canadian Liberation Movement. So, at the same time as the Hippie culture, you have a lot of very left wing politics going on in Toronto. The intelligentsia was into the left wing politics [while] the less intelligent were into arts. Like me. I was into the light shows.”\footnote{Judy Perly, Interview with Author, June 27th 2006.}

Joking aside, Perly’s assertion is perceptive. In her experience, the intelligentsia (as she calls them) represented a real antithesis to the Yorkville scene. Their politics were stultifying and enervating, when she and her friends just wanted to be free, have fun. “It definitely was like that,” she explains, “there were different layers going on. There was art, there was music, there was politics. Which group were you going to join?

Political people were… horrible. They were going to change the world, and be very authoritarian about doing it. My brother was one of the leaders of the new left, and he was NOT a Hippie. He didn’t smoke dope, didn’t get into folk music, whatever. He never went to Yorkville. The New Left was much more this area: Bathurst and College, Bloor Street, the University of Toronto. Yorkville was mostly really busy on the weekends, with suburban kids trying to change the world by smoking dope and doing artistic things. Having different kinds of relationships. But the political ones were trying to change the world in a different way. [Politicos and Hippies] are much more together now than they were then. No, Yorkville
was not the political centre. Only in that you had some draft dodgers there, and stuff. But, even they were mostly on Baldwin Street.\textsuperscript{651}

The Village, then, even in this most politically charged of years in Yorkville’s Sixties, was not generally regarded as a site of political organization, ideology or activism. The introduction of the Company of Young Canadians to the Village was meant in some way to remedy this, to marry the political leanings of the New Left to the hip hedonism of the Villagers. However, in this light, it follows that for many politically-motivated young people, including Wood, Morton, Pocock and others, the CYC’s decision to focus Yorkville’s voice, power and media presence on the astoundingly un-necessary issue of Village traffic jams was proof that the Diggers had lost the plot.

\textit{Yorkville, Sex, and Feminism in the Summer of Love}

While the nascent Women’s Liberation Movement in Toronto in 1967 was indeed born out of, and certainly did learn from, the climate of free love, this ethic of liberated sexuality operated for many women as a figurative prison. While providing a context in which people were free to have more and better sex, with more partners and fewer repercussions than ever before, it also reinforced an atmosphere which equated female sexual freedom with male sexual gratification.\textsuperscript{652} As Alice Echols has demonstrated, “for women, the so-called sexual revolution was a mixed blessing. Women were having more sex (and with less guilt), but they were also more sexually vulnerable. Instead of undoing

\textsuperscript{651} ibid.
\textsuperscript{652} The emergence of female sexual gratification as a political issue (catalyzed by Anne Koedt’s often brilliant 1968 missive “The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm”) began the slow process for many women of turning the focus of their sexual energy toward their own pleasure. As the myth of frigidity was ground down in the wake of such feminist articulations, sex became more pleasurable for women (and men) who turned their minds to this line of thinking. Koedt, “The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm”, reprinted in Taking it to the Streets ed. Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003) 422-428.
the deeply rooted sexual double standard, free love only masked it in countercultural
dieties.”653 Or, in the pithy phrasing of a foundational Canadian position paper on
Women’s Liberation: “We are allowed sexual freedom but are still faced with a loss of
respect on the part of many males if we take advantage of that freedom.”654 Moreover, no
clear articulation of what exactly “free love” was seems to have been laid down and
publicly understood – unlike their bohemian forebears in the Greenwich Village scene of
the 1910s, some of whom were known to keep their doors open during sex so as to refuse
the stifling convention of privacy during coitus, Villagers tended toward a far more
casual approach.655

After a few years of frustrations, doubletalk and contradictions, many feminists
turned away from free love, disappointed to have found that “hip” still referred to a
certain kind of male behaviour, while women were repeatedly cast as the shiny satellites
orbiting around their sun. As U.S. feminist Rita Mae Brown sums up their basic attitude,
“the guys in the movement were just awful. They were Neanderthals. They were
Neanderthals who had read too much Hegel and Marx.”656 In her 1970 kiss-off to the
male left, radical U.S. feminist Robin Morgan spoke for many when she very deliberately
equated hipness with misogyny. “Goodbye to Hip Culture and the so-called Sexual
Revolution,” she pointedly declared, “which has functioned toward women’s freedom as

654Judy Bernstein et al, “Sisters, Brothers, Lovers… Listen…” in Women Unite!: Up From The
Kitchen, Up From The Bedroom, Up From Under (Toronto: Canadian Women’s Educational Press, 1972)
39.
(especially in this eighth chapter to her book) underlines the politics of sex in the 1910s among the
bohemians in ways which simply cannot be applied to the Village scene as I have understood it. For
example, speaking of Emma Goldman and Neith Boyce, two sexual moderns par excellence, Stansell
observes that they both looked to the politics of free love as “opening up a space of reciprocity where
jealousy, hurt, and humiliation could be banished to a bygone era of women’s powerlessness.” Stansell,
297.
656David Allyn, Make Love Not War: The Sexual Revolution, an Unfettered History (Boston:
did the Reconstruction toward former slaves – reinstituted oppression by another name.”

Canadian feminist Jean Rands was no more sanguine in her assessment of the failures of male politicos to recognize and support women’s liberation. “The student movement was dominated by articulate young men,” she explained, “who were arrogant and full of themselves. Women were intimidated, and there was a lot of nasty, misogynist stuff that happened.” Denise Kouri, also an active Canadian feminist, recalls the kinds of resistance put up against her efforts: “Men would actually say things like, ‘You’re ugly and just need a good fucking.’” Significantly, in this litany of recollections of the chauvinism of youth movements in the era, these women do not mention the hippies at all – nor are they alone in this. In a survey of the Toronto Women’s Liberation Newsletter in the years 1970-1971 (which fall, admittedly, at the tail end of our study), little mention is made of “counterculture”, or indeed of any hippie pursuits, aesthetics or activities. The emphasis was on politics and salient issues in the emerging struggle for power – the Abortion Caravan, child care at the University of Toronto, and sexual health were of far greater concern than were the cultural politics of hippies and greasers.

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657 Morgan’s paper, originally printed in Rat, a New York-based underground paper, was reprinted all over the US and in Canada before the end of 1970. It has recently been reprinted in Dear Sisters: Dispatches from the Women’s Liberation Movement eds. Rosalyn Baxandall and Linda Gordon (New York: Basic Books, 2000) 53-57.


659 Ibid, 9.

660 There is virtually no mention of hippies (or the counterculture), for example, in either Becki Ross’ overview of the emergence of lesbian separatism in Toronto in the late 1960s and into the 1970s, or Adamson, Briskin and McPhail’s study of Canadian feminist history (which also emphasizes Toronto as a seedbed for the movement). See Becki Ross The House That Jill Built: The Emergence of Lesbian Feminist Discourse (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); Adamson, Briskin and McPhail, Feminist Organizing For Change (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

661 "Toronto Women's Liberation Newsletter 1970-1971, inclusive. My thanks to Ian McKay for drawing this material to my attention."
Among the few assessments at our disposal of the relationship between Villagers, hippies, and Toronto feminists is offered by Myrna Wood:

We certainly took to the idea of free love, in our meaning of that phrase, but, at the same time, you know, we couldn’t help but be conscious of how males used it. And so, if there was one dominant theme of Consciousness-Raising [sessions], it was that! How to deal with the constant arrogance of male attitudes and ideas [about sex]. And that was just more so among the counterculture, the hippies. I mean, it was bad enough amongst the politicals, but it was worse among the hippies.662

Whether or not it was worse among the Hippies, free love did operate in Yorkville in predictable ways. It tended to be tied to an identity performance, yet another badge of identity associated with hipness and anti-establishmentarian authenticity. The girls-say-yes-to-boys-who-say-no framework (designed around the Anti-Draft Movement, but reflective of the Great Refusal writ large) suggested that hipness was a free ride to free love, a veritable ticket to sex.

Repercussions (most notably pregnancy) for women in this era of limited sexual education were often severe. While oral contraception (the Pill) was available to many women (usually through a certain subterfuge or nod-and-a-wink relationship with a sympathetic doctor since it was still only available to married women) it was by no means universally taken; nor was it 100% effective.663 Pregnancy was rarely understood by Villagers to be a mutual responsibility – it was the girl’s fault she got pregnant, and anyway, how could she prove who the father had been? As a result, more often than not,

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662 Myrna Wood, Interview with Author, April 19th, 2006.
a surprise pregnancy meant the end of one’s Yorkville experience. It seems that performing Village identity with a protruding belly was unsustainable.

One observer of the scene witnessed a variety of examples of female turnover in the Village, all tied to sexuality. “A few have left because of unhappy love affairs and a very few to get married to villagers and settle down in a conventional way. A number have also returned home because of pregnancy. There is no opportunity for an unwed pregnant girl to find security in Yorkville. Her baby is believed to be her responsibility and the fathers usually do not help in any way.”664 One (male) weekender explained to the same observer that, in the view of many Villagers, “when a girl gets pregnant, she gets motherly and she wants a home and family and to be respectable.” This “motherliness” is what calls them home, to their parents. Unfortunately, he admitted, if they do not (or can not) go home, “many girls in the village give up their babies to the Children’s Aid Society when the ‘guys take off’. ”665 A poem (entitled “a poem”) printed in an early 1967 issue of Satyrday supports this construction, painting pregnancy as a female responsibility, something she must face on her own:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{It's all quite complicated,} \\
\text{Double-talk at its best.} \\
\text{But you'd better go through it all, my dear} \\
\text{(Please get a pregnancy test).}\quad \text{666}
\end{align*}
\]

Colleen Riley, who moved to the Village in 1967 with her six-year-old son, came for the work, the scene, and the music – but was never under any illusions that she, as a single

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664 Smart and Jackson, 46.
665 ibid, 47.
mother, would be one among many. “Even my son hailed me as a pioneer woman in those days,” she recalls with considerable pride.667

But, what was it like to raise a child in that environment? By way of response, she offers this instructive story, emphasizing the contrasts which characterized the scene:

“There was a little milk store across the street. And my son would go to get a quart of milk or something, and have to walk by the seniors, you know, at Mt. Sinai, the hospital on Yorkville, and the hippies would be sitting up against the fence, while in the background there would be the ladies in their wheelchairs out enjoying the sunshine. And as [my son] walked by they’d say *hey kid, want some drugs?* and he’d say *no thanks.*”

To Riley, such a scenario is illustrative of two simultaneous realities of Village life in the 60s: on the one hand, here was the danger represented by drug culture and hippie irresponsibility, while on the other hand, here was all of this potential danger taking place under the watchful eye of the seniors at the old folks’ home. Riley reminds us that, from 1967 until she moved away in 1971, the Village always felt safe to her and her son. Even as young people in the scene got deeper into the needle drugs, and as the general impression was that Yorkville was descending into disrepair, “the [Rosedale] ladies would come with their poodles! They’d walk their poodles up and down [Cumberland]!”668 This is the continuing counterpoint to the narratives of sex, drugs and rock’n’roll – Rosedale ladies, wheelchair-bound seniors and errand-running 6-year-olds, right there amid the hippies and their vice-ridden scene.

The flipside of Riley’s view: Marilyn Brooks, Riley’s counterpart in the Cumberland fashion scene, declares that “I was happy I was on Cumberland, and that I

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668 ibid.
wasn’t on Yorkville, because it was too much, like a sort of cesspool of desire.”669 Desire for escape, and for a chance to perform a new version of the self; for many young women and men, weekenders arriving in the scene looking to perform at hipness, to try drugs and sex and to generally explore this scene, a typical series of experiences may have run something like this:

It’s hard to describe the scene. But you’d go into those houses: people would be passed out, you’d have art always on the wall, tie dye was big, incense burning, stuff from India, Afghanistan. There would always be strangers dropping in, backpacking, what not… It wasn’t like it is today where it’s like a social thing, you smoke a joint, blah blah blah. In those days, you’d go to parties to get stoned. People were not smoking at home particularly; they’d go to these parties. But, people wouldn’t know how much to smoke, you’d go to these parties and we’d smoke so much dope that in an hour everyone would be on the floor! But it was all the incense, and the hookahs, and then you’re on the floor. You didn’t even know who you were next to, and in a half an hour you were making out with somebody you didn’t even know who they were.670

While group sex, nude parties and other such daring manifestations of sexual adventurism were few and far between, the media made sure to report on any that caught their attention, suggesting to those not in the know that such activities were nightly affairs along Yorkville Avenue. In one shiny instance, the Toronto Star alerted readers in late May to the break-up of a Village orgy by police, ostensibly on the grounds of “permitting drunkenness”. The three people directly involved, two male and one female, had been found naked, drunk, and sprawled out when police officers burst in on them (the precipitating reason for the bust is unclear). The girl, a 13-year old runaway from Winnipeg, was said to have been so drunk she was nearly unconscious. A 16-year old girl who lived in the apartment, but who had not been present for the police action, took the stand in defense of the two boys, aged 19 and 20. Described by the Star as “wearing a

670 Judy Perly, Interview with Author, June 27th, 2006.
short, short skirt under a short plastic coat”, the young woman testified that, although she
did indeed live there, she did not know who paid the rent. The Magistrate, as he handed
out sentences, explained: “anyone involved in any way in the debauchery of young ladies
should be sent to jail.” To this statement, and to what was no doubt the profoundest
displeasure of the judge, the 19-year old defendant insolently returned: “the what? De-
bitch-ary?” The two young men were given 35- and 10-day prison sentences,
respectively.671

For his part, *Wild Bill’s* stories of the sexual availability of weekender and
runaway girls and women very much suggest a free and liberated sexual landscape.

> It was easy [to pick up girls]. Because ¾ of the weekenders were down
here for that. Girls would stay at my apartment every weekend. They’d
come in by GO train, or VIA. They’d come into town, see me, and say:
*can I come up to your place?* I’d say: *sure, I’ll be home at 8:00.*

The young women, having come to Yorkville for a weekend of illicit fun from suburban
Toronto often had no pre-arranged places to stay, so such arrangements were worked out
casually and no-strings attached. There to take drugs (“what usually happened was that
they would come in on Friday afternoon and take blotter acid”) and to try out some of the
Free love that they had heard about, Villagers like *Wild Bill* had no trouble accepting
their offers.

However, the dark side of such casual sexual dealings emerges early and often in
*Wild Bill’s* recounting of his adventures with inexperienced Weekenders.

> One night I said to a [Weekender] girl, *I got one question. Everyone calls
you a virgin, are you a virgin?* She says *Yeah, but I don’t wanna be.* So I
said, *Well, why don’t you and me go into the bedroom?* So we went in
there, and I knocked her up. She told me she was on the Pill, but she
wasn’t. [Meanwhile], her girlfriend, same thing! She went home knocked

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up that weekend too. But neither of them were on acid. When they were stoned I would never do a thing. They were straight sober that weekend.

Yet another Villager refused this framework as phony, sensationalized. “I think the girls felt quite free to say no, and they said no lots,” he stressed. “Free love is a philosophy dating back to the eighteenth century probably, or the nineteenth century certainly. There wasn’t that much of that really; it was more like a buzz in the press. People were freer and were experimenting more, and so on, but lots of people were in stable relationships and so on.”\textsuperscript{672}

Today, it is not uncommon for former Movement, hippie, and straight men alike to publicly recognize their inability (or failure) in the 60s to appreciate the depth of their own chauvinism. Memoirs are seldom devoid of a kind of healthy guilt over men’s failure to come to terms with sexual politics in the Sixties. However, such attempts to right those wrongs often smack of the same sort of ambivalence toward feminism that precipitated the issue way back in the Summer of Love. The insulting belief that if we hadn’t been such a bunch of pigs, those women wouldn’t have had to turn to radical feminism is often sneaking around the back alleys of their recollections. As David DePoe recounted, his first real recognition that feminism was on the rise came at a rather private moment:

This was the genesis of the women’s movement: [laughing] I had a very personal experience with this. This woman that I slept with, she wasn’t very happy because it was a real quickie and she said: You didn’t treat me with any respect! Right? And: You son of a bitch you just used me for yourself! The personal is political! And that started the whole thing about: We’re not going to be serving coffee anymore, we should, we’re gonna be part of it, we want to be in the leadership too. They said: Guys, you bunch of sexist pigs, wake up! Male chauvinist pigs – that was what we were.

\textsuperscript{672}Anonymous LSD Dealer, Interview with Author, October 13\textsuperscript{th}, 2006. Still, he continued, “there were kinda orgy situations that did develop, with people taking MDA. I didn’t attend, but they were described to me.”
Still, DePoe claims that this moment (his dimly offensive vision of his own sexual screw-up as the “genesis of the women’s movement” notwithstanding) was what spurred his attentiveness to the demands of the nascent women’s liberation group within the SUPA and CYC. For him, at least, the light bulb had been turned on.

Back in June, 1966, the Toronto Women’s Liberation Work Group (a University of Toronto student group) had presented a paper to the Toronto-based Student Union for Peace Action (SUPA) outlining theory and proposals for positive change within the organization. The male-dominated SUPA had responded without enthusiasm, as was their general custom when faced with criticism from the feminists among them. The plight of women was simply invisible to many SUPA activists whose eyes had been trained on noticing the inequality issues attached to people of colour, people of limited resources, or (to put it more generally) those to whom the labels of Third World or Colonized People would most clearly fit. Inspired by the American Civil Rights movement, and more recently the shift towards power-based articulations of marginalized identity in the postcolonial context, SUPA activists had still largely failed to appreciate just how effectively this language of liberation they had adopted could fit into the context of the second wave of feminism.

Alice Echols, among the most prescient historians of the era, establishes the central issue at stake in this discussion:

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673 Moira Armour and Pat Staton, Canadian Women in History: A Chronology (Toronto: Green Dragon Press, 1990) 82.

The relationship between women's liberation and the larger Movement was at its core paradoxical. The Movement was a site of sexism, but it also provided women with a space in which they could develop political skills and self-confidence... Most important, it gave them no small part of the intellectual ammunition – the language and the ideas – with which to fight their own oppression."675

As it was with the American Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the bell was tolling for SUPA by late 1967, yet the male-dominated leadership failed to appreciate the root cause.676 Feminism – specifically the emerging radical feminist movement – would play a vanguard role in pulling both organizations apart.677

And so, in the autumn of 1967, another (rather more famous) paper was presented to the SUPA leadership, this time in the form of a sustained attack on the chauvinism and exclusivity of the SUPA structures.678 By aligning their submissive, basically powerless position within the SUPA hierarchy to the position of most women in liberal-capitalist society, the authors pushed their friends and colleagues to consider their own short-sightedness and hypocrisy: "We assert that SUPA people have the same hangups, frustrations and neuroses as the rest of society... SUPA, in respect to women, [has] totally accepted the mores of the dominant society."679 A shrewd and calculated move: point out the common enemy (the hegemonic society and establishment) and then demonstrate SUPA’s blind alliance with it. The expectation was that sparks would fly, and that SUPA's many followers, organizers and activists would face the reality of their collective failure to engage with such a central issue of exploitation. But, evidently, that never

675Echols, Shaky Ground, 79.
677No one has told this complex story more fully than Alice Echols, Daring to Be Bad (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).
679ibid, 37-8.
happened. Rather, the position paper was vaguely acknowledged but maddeningly ignored.

David DePoe recalls his positive reaction to the paper as being the minority opinion among his male movement friends: "Well, a lot of the guys reacted really defensively, but to me I thought: you’re right.

Personally I thought: that’s right. I mean, you can’t believe in the equality of blacks and not believe in the equality of women. You can’t believe poor people need to be viewed with dignity and respect, and Native people [...] and rule out half the population like this. It makes no sense to me. So, to me, what Peggy Morton said (she was the one I remember): Absolutely. I agree. You, know? So I joined the side that said: Yes, we have to listen to this, we have to do this, they have to be in positions of leadership and so on and so forth.680

DePoe’s support notwithstanding, the four authors of the position paper felt that they hadn’t been properly heard. Incensed and not a little confounded by another aloof reception from those who would have been their best allies in this fight, many dynamic and driven SUPA women left the organization to found Women's Liberation groups in Toronto (and, eventually, throughout urban Canada).681 In a parallel story, Laurel Limpus, among the active feminists in the Toronto Student Movement [TSM] in 1967, explained in 1971 “how we left the left”.

Some men in the New Left Caucus [a recent splinter group from the TSM] were circulating a paper of little anecdotes which were very chauvinistic in character – bad caricatures of femininity. It accidentally fell into the hands of the women’s caucus of the group. Ten women read it, blew their minds, got together in one night and write a position paper. In that paper, we said that we had no intention of working with men who, in private, had that kind of caricature of us. […] They kept saying that the paper wasn’t chauvinistic. We said that it was – that it spoke to our oppression. We

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681The University of Toronto Women's Caucus of SUPA formed the Toronto Women's Liberation Movement (TWLM) in the fall of 1968, which then formed a working women's committee [...] and did strike-support work.” Adamson, 44.
said: “we’re defining for you how you oppress us. Either you accept our
definition or you split this movement.”

Here, as in the previous example, there is a marked failure on the part of the male Left to
“self-criticize”, and to appreciate their own roles as oppressors, as perpetuators of a
regime of paternalism and male chauvinism.

Given such examples, women from within and without the New Left began to
meet around Toronto at consciousness-raising (CR) sessions, meetings geared toward
empowerment and education away from the destructive influence of male chauvinism.

Such groups "were usually made up of eight to ten women who met regularly over a
period of time. They operated without a leader, and discussion could include [...] personal
relationships with men, sex and sexuality, body image, or friendships and attraction
between women." The fruits of such grass-roots organizing became apparent right
away as the alternative ideologies generated through these informal ‘teach-ins’ were
disseminated rapidly through the city, suggesting alternatives for women who, up 'till
then, might have only been seen as mere objects of the male Subject. As feminist
historian (and contemporaneous activist) Nancy Adamson notes, "more formal political
meetings were essential to organize those women who had been reached, but it was the
CR group that got so many out to those meetings in the first place.”

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682Laurel Limpus, as told to Sherry Rochester, “The History of the Toronto Women’s Liberation
Movement”, Toronto, mimeo, 1971. Canadian Women’s Movement Archives, Toronto Women’s
Liberation fonds. (Materials collected and recorded by Ian McKay.)
683See Ross, 1996. See also Rebick, 12.
684Adamson et al, 44.
685See Bonnie Kreps’ brief to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada for a
concise, and pointed discourse on this central premise. Radical Feminism 1, in Women Unite, 71-75.
686Adamson et al, 45.
The Siege of Yorkville, Re-Visited: DePoe, Lamport, and the NFB

On the night of August 22\textsuperscript{nd}, a throng of some 400 so-called hippies staged a silent march out of the district that had come to be their weekend address, down Bay Street and into the heart of downtown Toronto. Led by a visiting American activist named Mary Kerson, the protesters marched in a snaking file of twos south to City Hall and, after being asked to move along by the police, back north to Queen’s Park where they staged a sit-in until just after midnight.\footnote{Her name is also given as Kearns. \textit{Toronto Star}, August 23\textsuperscript{rd}, 1967.}

This demonstration, among the largest to emerge from the Yorkville scene, was not simply designed to express the flawed but oft-repeated argument that Hippies are basically peaceful and harmless. The real effect here was to illustrate to all observers (followers, and detractors alike) that, without them, the “Village of Yorkville” would cease to exist. Their absence from the Village, not their hushed, peaceful excursion into the greater Toronto cityscape, was what characterized the exercise.

Following years of build-up, mounting coverage in the press, and viral word-of-mouth, Yorkville was now unquestionably synonymous with Hippies. As such, their absence from the district on that August night was deeply conspicuous. For the first time in months, traffic flowed freely along skinny one-way Yorkville and Cumberland. The couple dozen coffee houses sat empty, undercover police were unable to make any significant drugs arrests, and, as the \textit{Toronto Star} pithily noted, pedestrians were allowed to move “unhampered on the sidewalks.”\footnote{\textit{Toronto Star}, August 23\textsuperscript{rd}, 1967.}

But, at the same time, the neighbourhood seemed vacant, staid, colourless. The “Hippies,” read a headline the following morning, had “show[ed] it’s not Yorkville
without them.” Their identities had become so intertwined in the popular imagination, so fused following years of sustained media exposure of the Village and its hip denizens, that the counterculture had redefined the expected map of meaning represented by Yorkville. The little neighbourhood was no longer simply associated with countercultural activity – it was itself a countercultural activity.

In a sense, Yorkville had come to represent the Canadian counterculture at large – for both the silent demonstrators and the municipal authorities who would have had the Village rid of the counterculture, this erroneous assumption had become accepted, endorsed, even (as in this case) celebrated. As synecdoche for the youth movement, Yorkville was powerful and dominant; by the end of the summer of 1967, the fate of the Hippies (and whatever they had come to represent), was seen through the prism of the Village. And so, the perceived failure of the counterculture to wrest ultimate control from the municipal authorities, a failure which is understood to have culminated in its eventual wholesale removal from the district by the early 1970s, is born of this commitment to the equation of Yorkville and countercultural activity.

This is a shame, and not only because it is an oversimplification, or because it serves to undermine current youth agitation by blinking on and off like a big red light reading “we failed.” The problem with this line of thinking is that Yorkville, the Toronto hip scene, and the counterculture at large was only very briefly defined by this conflict. As the rest of Making the Scene has demonstrated (and will continue to demonstrate), hip Yorkville was around for years before the two-week “Siege of Yorkville”, and stuck around in various forms for another three years or so. But, why were the events of late

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689 Ibid.
August so monumental for so many? Why have they formed the nucleus of most accounts of the period?

Media frames consistently emphasized the most comprehensible ideologies active within and without the Yorkville community. And so, David DePoe, son of a famous CBC broadcaster, controversial volunteer for the Company of Young Canadians, came to constitute a Hippie version of the Canadian politician, and thus a reasonable (and comprehensible) body around whom to revolve the counterculture. And, since what would be framed as his principal political concern was a call to close Yorkville Avenue to traffic, his activist cause was easily dismissed as cute. In nearly every way, as an archetypal Village hippie, DePoe was unparalleled. By the time DePoe emerged as the “Super Hippie,” he had already become the spokesperson of his class: a bearded, guitar-playing, LSD-taking, sexy model for the counterculture.

It didn’t hurt that DePoe’s adversary was himself a caricature of Mr. Jonesism. Alan Lamport, the blustery and unswervingly old school Mayor-of-Toronto-cum-City Controller, had quite comfortably settled into his role as defender of all things conservative by early 1967. Recognizing a base of conservative voters in Toronto, anxious over the raucous youth cultures that had been featured in near daily reportage for years, Lamport singled out Yorkville as his issue. And, as a result of his persistent attacks on the district throughout 1967, Lamport came to represent the conservative establishment to Villagers and the public alike. “He selected himself [to be a leader] as well,” DePoe maintains. “He was outspoken and colourful… so, he set himself up as the opponent.”690 By throwing his hat into the ring, and taking up the role as spokesman for traditional, establishment Toronto, Lamport indeed finagled himself into a position from

which his “colourful” attacks on the counterculture – his indomitable loathing for the Hippies remains today a perverse joy to study – could be given their widest possible audience. His self-styled role as arch-nemesis to DePoe and his band of Diggers was eaten up by media sources only too pleased to be offered such a deliciously reductionist frame for their coverage of the Village. Throughout 1967, the tight-suited Lamport (often dubbed Lampy in the press) matched DePoe’s every move with yet another stunningly angry denouncement of Village youth culture. In mid-June, for example, Lamport called for Metro police action to “disperse Yorkville’s beatnik-type” teenagers, claiming that he was prepared to “go to the limit” to rid the city of this “sore,” now that Yorkville had become a “generator of delinquency.” A week later he was calling for federal assistance in the fight to erase this “blot on the city,” since hippies seemed to be coming “from all over.” By early August, in a watered down version of his colleague Herbert Orliffe’s earlier suggestion that hippies be rounded up and sent to work camps, he was calling for the institution of identity cards for Yorkville youth. In DePoe’s incendiary words, what Lamport was really casting about for was the “final solution” to Toronto’s hippie problem.

This dichotomous relationship, while it did lead to some major media events (most famously the two nights of Sit-Ins on Yorkville Avenue prior to the silent protest outlined above), ultimately illustrates very little of the complicated lived experience of the Yorkville scene. And yet it has been held up, in no fewer than three sincere takes on the history of the Yorkville counterculture (including those by Doug Owram, Myrna

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691 Toronto Star, June 16th, 1967.
Kostash and Pierre Berton) as the central narrative from which emanate all other worthy stories. Such a framing device operates as a map of meaning for Yorkville, hemming it in as a zone of difference, a countercultural activity which was performed by a certain type of actor. Both the frame of the hippie archetype (the expected hip identity) and the connection of Yorkville with countercultural activity in general allowed the disparate, diffusive, contradictory countercultures therein to be rendered definable, cogent, comprehensible. And, perversely, that much easier to attack and obliterate.

As both an active hippie resident and a self-styled community organizer, DePoe was a bridge between political activism and hip Yorkville. His efforts to facilitate communication between what he saw as clashing generations and ideologies were inevitably shaped by his unambiguous association with the counterculture, his past work with SUPA, and his current capacity as CYC volunteer. But, his media-driven performances of the hippie lifestyle, and his proselytizing on the virtues of the anti-conformist ethic, served to place him in the position of group leader rather than mediator in the cultural conflict. Eventually, his was the only voice which garnered any sustained attention – his friends and colleagues in the Digger outfit he helped to found were referred to as *other hippies* while he was quoted at length, described in detail, and referred to as *Mr. DePoe*.

As the summer of ’67 built up toward an inevitable showdown between the two sides (which variously shake down as young and old, Village and Toronto, hip and straight, DePoe and Lamport), the Diggers planned and executed a series of protests designed to promote their cause (in this case, their call to turn Yorkville into a pedestrian mall). The Diggers, having attracted considerable attention through their various
initiatives (they had opened a storefront Free Shop next door to the Grab Bag, they were negotiating with the City to create a shelter for hip street youth, and Digger lawyers Clayton Ruby and Paul Goodman had recently started the Village Bar, a Legal Aid Service), and, more importantly, they were being listened to. People seemed prepared to pay attention to their calls for change, to their ideas, and to their peculiar but meaningful criticisms of the status quo.

The truth is, when given the opportunity to present their case for change, for protecting hip Yorkville from encroaching developers, and for common understanding between hip and straight alike, the Diggers dropped the ball. On August 17th, when DePoe, Chapman, Riggan and a group of Villagers and hangers-on were invited to a “Talk-In” at City Hall, they (flanked by film crews from both local and national news, not to mention the National Film Board) filled the room with their noise, their disdain for hierarchy, and what can only be called their aggressive naïveté. While Alan Lamport, in his paternalist and condescending manner, genuinely tried to find some kind of middle ground between his side and the detested hippies before him, DePoe sat largely silent, apparently deferential, even aloof. In the words of one of his colleagues (who remains anonymous):

If you’re gonna cut an issue, you gotta cut an issue… These guys don’t have a spokesman. DePoe walks in and practically right away he says, “Any questions?” Hands the ball right over to the enemy. If you don’t intend to speak, don’t be the leader.694

The young Villagers in the audience joked, cajoled and proclaimed their irreverence as Lamport outlined his desire for the outright commercialization of Yorkville. However, their response to his plan was never properly articulated – rather, their answer to his

694 Margaret Daly, 71.
rationalization that Yorkville should become a sparkling shopping centre was hails of derisive laughter. In anticipation of the impending showdown between Hippies and the City, the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) had sent a film crew to Yorkville led by a young filmmaker named Mort Ransen. The plan was simple: observation of and some participation by the Yorkville scene, in an effort to explore the curious forms of social rebellion taking place in midtown Toronto. However, while the crew was at work (filming what would become *Christopher’s Movie Matinee* (1968)) it became clear to everyone that more was at stake here than just a collection of weird young people vying for an enclave of freedom – as political tensions began to rise leading up to the protests of late August, another film crew was sent in (under the direction of the late Robin Spry) to chronicle the deepening conflict.

In an early scene in *Christopher’s Movie Matinee*, Lamport is interviewed in his office just following the conclusion to the ‘talk-in’ he has orchestrated with the Diggers. He is proud of his accomplishments, and visibly pleased with what has taken place. “I took it upon myself,” he begins, innocuously, “to talk to these people called Hippies. Now, they’re not all bad, not all kids are bad. But, sometimes you get a cancer area… and we’re trying to ferret that out.” The insight into Lamport’s conservative view is impressive. In a few sharp sentences, he cuts right to the core of his views on the role of

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695 Lamport’s singling out of DePoe as his adversary at the Talk-In began from the outset. See *Christopher’s Movie Matinee*, (1968).

696 Inevitably, as it seems we must do for all major events associated with the Village in the 1960s, we must turn to the role of the media in the propagation of myths and realities surrounding the scene. As *Christopher’s Movie Matinee* so clearly demonstrates, the role of the media in the creation and exaggeration of the events of late August was pervasive. This film, alternately fascinating and boring to the point of stultification, moves between the interiors of City Hall and coverage of the fractious “talk-in” between DePoe and Lamport, scenes of violence and disarray on the streets of Yorkville Avenue, and various sequences vaguely organized around the principle of young kids making a film.
Yorkville in the state of youth culture today. “If we stop some of this – and this meeting today will do it, I’m sure – we’ll get these fellas back on the right track, and try to help them out.” For Lamport, the right track is, above all else, occupation, industriousness, and the embrace of a work ethic he sees lost in the haze of Yorkville’s coffee bars.

The Talk-In, of which the film provides a generous sample, demonstrates Lamport’s incredulousness to the young people and their vague notions of progress and prosperity. “Why do you wish not to work?” he demands, “Do you want more recreation? Something to give you aims and objectives?” Exasperated (although forcing a studied, patronizing calm), Lamport allows “Blues” Chapman to respond. Well-spoken, and decidedly calm, the striking young man begins by explaining that work, as he sees it, offers little to those who see the job as a kind of drudgery. Voicing the hip pursuit for a more authentic way of being, he explains that he and his contemporaries shouldn’t be tied to the kind of “personal pride and dignity people have, and their ability to be happy, or satisfied, with a job.” Lamport leaps after this, and lets his cards be shown, immediately, conclusively: “But you refer to the word dignity. Now that’s a very good word. A number of them there [as he points to the thirty-or-so hippie onlookers] haven’t been washed for weeks. Now, they aren’t seeking dignity, are they?”

Such a scene, witnessed by a mere few but loudly broadcast on the CBC, the CTV and in the newspapers, demonstrates a variety of ways in which hip Yorkville and its

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697 Earlier that year, one City Controller took such frustrations over hip refusals to work, to be productive members of society in the traditional sense, to an impressive extreme. Herbert Orliffe actually suggested that Hippies should be placed in “work camps.” His proposal didn’t make it very far. See Berton, 173.

698 Toward the end of the meeting, Lamport tried to back away from this outburst, admitting “There are obviously none of you who haven’t washed,” by way of apology. Globe and Mail, August 18th, 1967.
conservative critics were enmeshed in a tangled web of divergence. As one young man (off camera) declares: “Practice leaving us alone,” Lamport replies: “Unfortunately society doesn’t work that way, just exactly the way you like it.” In perhaps the greatest moment of the film, the young man fires back with a retort that the Sixties have taught him, and which was becoming a kind of mantra for the disaffected, the bored, the curious, the fed up: “Well, that’s why we dropped out.”

DePoe, the human face the Hippie Summer, and of Yorkville in general for so many people (including, however grudgingly, everyone I have interviewed) should be allowed the last word here. His terribly open and honest recollections of the period are mitigated by his concern that he has been overly canonized while others have been left out. When I asked him how he responds to the suggestion that he was the most important of all Villagers, he oscillated between confidence and reluctance in his response. “I was probably important. But you see, it wasn’t just me.” In this instance, in fact, Brian “Blues” Chapman emerged as the primary speaker for the Villagers. Even though DePoe was singled out at the get-go by Lamport who, as the Villagers shuffled into the offices for the meeting could be heard to call “Which one is DePoe, where is DePoe?”, and although he was seated at Lamport’s left hand at the head of the table and the room, he remained surprisingly inanimate. Chapman, articulate and soft-spoken, took up the reins and engaged with Lamport through the most fractious sections of the dialogue.

But the dialogue was merely the beginning of a week of protest – a few nights later, the Diggers (perhaps trading on the considerable attention lavished on them

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699 In the *Globe and Mail*, for example, this dialogue was recounted under the telling Headline, “Flowers between toes, hippies enter the world of Lamport.” The clash-of-two-worlds frame writ large. *Globe*, August 18th, 1967.

700 *Christopher’s Movie Matinee*, NFB, 1968.
following the Talk-In), took to the streets of Yorkville with hundreds of Villagers and sat
down in protest. Close the street to cars, return the street to the pedestrians, and respect
Yorkville as a hippie centre – the political Village had found its issue, and, organized by
the politically-trained CYCers and Diggers, they were prepared to make their voices
heard. The Sit-In, which lasted for a few hours as a simple protest, suddenly turned
violent when, inexplicably, the police broke ranks and began beating, dragging, and
brutalizing the Villagers, throwing them into the backs of paddy wagons to be hauled off
to jail. DePoe was, famously, among those arrested for his part in the protest, and spent a
night in the Don Jail, along with the Digger matron, June Callwood. The Toronto Star’s
front page headline the following day proclaimed a “‘Jail-In’ for 46 after Yorkville’s
‘worst’ brawl.”

Following years of televised Civil Rights protests down in the States ending in
bloodshed, bottle-tossing and arson, Torontonians were genuinely frightened by what
seemed to have been a political riot in Yorkville. But what was worse was the realization
that Toronto’s police force may have responded with unjustifiable violence to the protest.
Well-publicized allegations of police brutality hit the city like a firestorm by the end of
the week. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association called for a Royal Commission into
charges of brutality in Yorkville, citing concerns that, for some time, police had been
“pressing their authority [in Yorkville], particularly in regard to the movement of
pedestrian traffic, well beyond legal limits.” Their concerns over the pervasiveness of
injuries to the protesters, of “broken bones” and other evidence of maltreatment, were
listed in front page articles in the Star, the Telegram and the Globe, and as top stories on

the CBC and CTV news reports.\textsuperscript{703} In the end, Toronto’s police force would have a great deal to answer for, not the least of which being the fact that the phone call to the fire department during the protest – a false alarm call which brought fire trucks to an impassible Yorkville Avenue and which precipitated the ensuing beat-down – had originated in the police phone system.\textsuperscript{704}

City Hall’s Nathan Phillips Square became the site of ongoing protest, as hundreds of Villagers and sympathizers made the scene. Some held a “starve-in”, essentially a hunger strike designed to protest the traffic issue, but were foiled when police busted 12 of them for trespassing.\textsuperscript{705} Hundreds of others, however, managed to avoid arrest as they joined in chants, singsongs (Frère Jacques and Allouette were among the tunes heard by a Globe and Mail reporter, for some reason), and in recitations of the 23\textsuperscript{rd} Psalm.\textsuperscript{706}

Most significantly, this week of protests demonstrated the illusion of a united Yorkville: not only were there hippies carrying placards and chanting, but here were politicos and radicals standing in solidarity, here were greasers and toughs come to show support. “When we did our thing down at City Hall” stresses DePoe today, “the Vagabonds Motorcycle Club came down and protected us. They sat down with us, all night, in their black leather jackets, and made a ring around this bunch of hippies to protect us. They were like our bodyguards.”\textsuperscript{707} But for many Villagers, all this noise simply wasn’t worth getting involved with. Bruce Cockburn, a Village-based musician,

\textsuperscript{703}ibid.
\textsuperscript{704}This information was revealed in early November, as the trials of the hippie protesters got underway. Globe and Mail, November 10\textsuperscript{th}, 1967.
\textsuperscript{705}Toronto Star August 30\textsuperscript{th}, 1967.
\textsuperscript{706}Globe and Mail, August 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 1967.
\textsuperscript{707}David DePoe, Interview with Author, December 20\textsuperscript{th}, 2004.
speaks for many when he confesses that “I remember hearing about the sit-in, but I really wasn’t involved in things like that then.” By no means were all Villagers geared toward politics and protest, even at this most fraught political moment.

Now a political hot potato, the Yorkville protests had garnered serious national attention. The Diggers, however, felt they still hadn’t been given enough opportunities to air their grievances at City Hall. And, riding a surging tide of energy, antipathy and the sense that perhaps this time they were undoubtedly in the right, they acted out a little street theatre for their City Fathers. Some thirty Villagers, led by a US Army Deserter named Smokey, streamed into a chamber at City Hall that was being set up for an impending Board of Control meeting, took over the room, and (outrage of all outrages) sat in the chairs. Ostensibly a protest over the council’s refusal to hear DePoe earlier in the day, the so-called “chair-in” was pretty innocuous, but highly effective.

The chairs were given up after about 45 minutes, and the floor was ceded to DePoe who listed demands and arguments over the closing of Yorkville to traffic. His performance in front of the Board lasted an incredible three hours – he was routinely interrupted by Board members and hippies alike, cheering and shouting from the seats in the back – and only terminated after other citizens who had been waiting in line for their own chance to speak on municipal matters grabbed the microphone and complained. The major papers very happily covered this wild scene – it made for dynamite copy. Here was the tough, shaven-headed Smokey (described by DePoe as “like security for us; a tough, tough guy”) leading a group of long-hairs into the Board of Control and literally

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708Quoted in Jennings, 169.
Infuriated, Lamport did exactly what everyone was expecting, and angrily denounced the hippies, grumbling about “anarchy.” For their part, the protesters booed him resoundingly.

The following day, Smokey and his 13 roommates were arrested following an early morning raid on their Hazelton Avenue house. Busted for a variety of offences including drugs, trespassing and possession of a “spring knife” were twelve men and two women, including at least two protesters from the previous afternoon. Smokey was in fact the very protester who had occupied Mayor Dennison’s chair. Few Villagers believed this coincidental. Nor was it deemed an accident that another Draft Resistor, a 20-year old named Frank Michalski, was picked up by immigration authorities in Webster’s hamburger joint (a 24-hour Yorkville mainstay) that same day and threatened with deportation.

The public response to all of this is tricky to gauge, but a variety of opinions is apparent from the Letters to the Editor section of the Toronto papers which, for a time, were wholly given over to debate over Yorkville. From a Minister at the Bayview Church of Christ (“Where would Canada be if the United Empire Loyalists merely grew long hair and beards to protest the Revolution of 1776?”) to a former resident of the Village (“The trouble started when adolescent suburbanites and unemployed out-of-towners swarmed in”), a diversity of views of the hip scene crowded the pages. “If the theory of dialectical development is correct,” wrote one hopeful commentator, “then the meeting of the ‘lost’ youth of Yorkville and the city fathers in the Metro Chambers

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recently was history in action.”\(^{714}\) Even as some Torontonians wrote in to the papers in support of the hip initiative to close Yorkville to traffic – “I feel that the city fathers are confusing hippies with good planning” – there was a scant little support for hip lifestyle, behaviour, or perspectives.\(^{715}\) Commonly, the sense was that throughout the mêlée, the hippies had shown that they were “empty-headed”; they were living in a “rat-den village”; they were “low-grade simians.”\(^{716}\)

Meanwhile, the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), who had stumbled upon a killer scoop with two film crews stationed in Yorkville at work on two separate films at the time of all of the brouhaha, had managed to inculcate the sense that they had somehow incited the whole affair. Recalled to Ottawa on August 24\(^{th}\) amid allegations that they had tried to orchestrate a Queen’s Park protest, had paid their interviewees, and had encouraged their subjects to act up in front of their cameras, directors Mort Ransen and Robin Spry had no choice but to comply. However, within two days they were reinstated by the NFB, under the condition that upon returning to Toronto they would stay away from Yorkville and the hippies. Allegations that they had paid their subjects were dropped after a review of the film crews’ respective “kitties”.\(^{717}\) In the end, the incident did little more than make for a great scene in Ransen’s *Christopher’s Movie Matinee*: as the young Villagers read about the NFB’s ejection in the newspapers, they saw themselves described as “hippies”. “I didn’t even know I was a hippie!”, declares one young man.\(^{718}\)

\(^{714}\) *Globe and Mail*, September 1\(^{st}\), 1967.

\(^{715}\) *Globe and Mail*, September 8\(^{th}\), 1967.

\(^{716}\) *Toronto Star*, September 1\(^{st}\), 1967.

\(^{717}\) *Globe and Mail*, August 26\(^{th}\), 1967.

\(^{718}\) *Christopher’s Movie Matinee*, NFB, 1968. See also *Flowers on a One-Way Street*, NFB, Dir Robin Spry, 1967.
But David DePoe had found himself the central character in the whole wild show. On September 23rd, the Toronto Star’s weekly insert magazine *Star Weekly* ran a cover story on him, famously dubbing him the “Super Hippie”, and effectively turning him into a celebrity. The article, written by DePoe’s old university friend William (Bill) Cameron, glamorized DePoe as little else had before it, offering colour photographs (one of which pictured a shirtless DePoe for some reason) and a full-scale interview. “Oh man,” recalls DePoe, “I was so embarrassed by that!”

When I went to speak at high schools, the girls had the picture in their locker! It was like I was Paul McCartney! Oh my God, it was scary. I mean, I couldn’t believe it the first time I went to a high school. […] I got invited to go and speak in, I think it was Rouen Noranda. And I walked down the hallway and all these girls started to scream! And they all had my picture from *Star Weekly*. In their lockers. Oh my God, you know? It was certainly an ego trip, but at the same time it was scary. Like, I’m sort of thinking inside: “This is just me – I do what I do, trying to be honest and true to my values. I’m not a friggin’ rockstar!”

Rock star or no, DePoe had solidified his place in the firmament. Adamant to this day that he was too-often singled out, that it was never he alone behind these famous events, the case remains that he was consistently presented by the media and at the Board of Control as the man at the helm.

If it “wasn’t just me,” as Depoe maintains, then who was it? Who were these people, and what were they trying to accomplish on those days in late August, 1967, in

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720 “I was embarrassed because that isn’t how I saw myself or felt about myself and I thought “oh man this is bad because now everybody’s going to…” Oh, I got a lot of harassment! [Cameron] used me to get himself established as a magazine writer. So, I felt exploited by Bill, big time. I mean, he’d probably admit it now! This was his breakthrough into magazine writing. His first big article. We were about the same age. For him, he would have been 23, 24.” David DePoe, Interview with Author, December 20th, 2004.
721 ibid.
front of the cameras and the reporters and the cops and the cheerleaders? “We thought of ourselves as a community who wanted to welcome people in,” DePoe concludes.

It was sort of very liberal, very naïve, but very genuine. We wanted people to get out of their cars and see that we weren’t some kind of crazy freaks, and that we had something to say, and that we should be treated like human beings and not like freaks. That the way we were living... just because we decided to reject the so-called “work ethic,” we were still trying to make meaningful lives for ourselves. So the motivation for that [the traffic protest] was we wanted them to close the street and get out and walk so they could meet us like human beings. I mean, we really truly believed that, right?

And we rejected the values of the mainstream society -- we wanted it to be an alternative way of living and so on. A counterculture, if you want to call it that. We were against the mainstream culture. Fair enough, but, we believed in peace and love and understanding, essentially.722

Set against the monolithic authority of the mainstream culture, the Diggers’ carnivalesque protest débâcle can claim no victory on any grounds. While some sympathy was curried for the hippies after images of their heads getting busted were broadcast on the CBC and later in the NFB documentaries covering the incidents, neither was Yorkville Avenue closed to traffic nor were hippies rendered any less incomprehensible to the average Canadian.

Throughout the remainder of the year, and into the following three summer seasons in the Village, the Siege of Yorkville loomed as a moment of excited futility, and stood as an example of the insubstantiality, even the arrogance, of Village politics. One Villager took out a page in Satyrday on the anniversary of the protest to announce his disdain for the constructed significance of the event. “Why,” he demanded, “was sitting down in mid-street to stop traffic indicative of anything at all?”723 As DePoe reminds us, the traffic protest wasn’t about the environment, nor was it about police brutality or

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722ibid.
723Satyrday, Volume 3 Number 5, August 1968.
coercive politics. What was it about? It was about creating a space “so they could meet us like human beings.”

724Ibid.
Chapter Eight:

*The Flower Children, et les Fleurs du Mal*

*My son’s beautiful and I’m terrified! What's going to become of him?*
  
  *-Toronto Star, March 31st, 1967*

*Yorkville is not a place but a state of mind.*
  
  *-Rev. Philip Karpetz, 1967*

*The most important thing that we found out about the Yorkville image was that Yorkville is hippies.*
  
  *-Smart and Jackson, 1969*

In early September, 1967, the popular CBC program *Newsmagazine* sent host Knowlton Nash into Yorkville to make a 15-minute documentary on the Village scene. The result, a captivating glimpse into the district as framed by the nation’s public broadcaster, featured a lengthy conversation with a young man named Bill, a soft-spoken aspiring writer. He was, according to Nash’s narration, “a real hippie.”

This notion of the “real hippie”, or the “true Villager” had begun to matter a great deal in the scene by the end of the Summer of 1967. While down in San Francisco the Diggers were preparing to hold a funeral for their co-opted community following the hypefest that was the Summer of Love, Villagers were also struggling to draw lines around authentic hippie identity. Nash’s attempts to define Village hippies is coloured by such confusion. “The real hippie drop-outs,” he offers, “who probably number only a few hundred, have left society to contemplate their individual souls, usually with the help of mind-expanding drugs like cannabis (that’s marijuana), or LSD.” To complicate matters,

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^Smart and Jackson, 48.
Nash includes a brief interview with a young woman who declares that she doesn’t know what a hippie even is. She then relents, drawing distinctions between real hippies (of which she figures there are only four in Yorkville) and what she calls “summer help.” Nash then returns to Bill, his central character, the young man to whom the CBC has referred as a representative of these real Village hippies. “If enough people drop out of the society, it’ll be altered,” Bill proclaims, in his sleepy manner. “It may eventually be the creation of a subculture. A large enough subculture could modify the existing culture.”

But Bill, although articulate and informative, was not being at all ingenuous with the CBC reporter. Nor was he even any kind of authentic hippie, at least in his own estimation. Rather, he was a paid volunteer, an expressive kid trapped in Yorkville by a sticking lack of funds. Yet another one of Yorkville’s soon-to-be famous artists, musicians and authors, the star of Nash’s documentary was none other than a young William Gibson.

Years later, Gibson, this supposed representative of authentic hippiedom, responded to the query: was that you in the CBC film on Yorkville? “Yep, that is indeed me,” was Gibson’s reply, “though nothing I’m saying there, at such painful length, is even remotely genuine. They were offering $500 for someone to monologue about the

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728 Gibson, widely credited with the invention of the cyberpunk genre in literature, is the author of many novels all concerned (in various, innovative ways) with the subversive, the countercultural, and the revolutionary potential of thinking otherwise. Throughout his various masterworks, such as the prophetic, kinetic pre-Internet Neuromancer (New York: Ace, 1984) or Pattern Recognition (Berkeley: Berkeley Books, 2003) the complex, post-9/11 examination of consumer culture, a struggling mission to transcend the virtual and to embrace the real underscores the action. In short, this unwavering tension between the authentic and the plastic in a society of spectacle is his consistent intellectual premise.
summer of lurve [sic]; And I was (1) somewhat articulate, and (2) wanted desperately to
get my ass out of Yorkville...

In a universe where a furnished bedsit [sic] on Isabella Street (comfortably
far from the site of this taping) rented for $25 per week, $500 was serious
money. That isn't my girlfriend, by the way, but another media-
opportunistic, someone who smelled CBC money and welded her
unshowered hip to mine as soon as she saw the cameras. They paid her,
too, though not as much, as she didn't have a speaking part. So there are
multiple layers of irony, in this ancient footage. I'm not, in spite of what
they say, from Vancouver; I'm from Virginia and rightly anxious not to be
recognized as such. I'm thoroughly fed up with the particular Children's
Crusade being examined here, and want nothing more than a ticket out of
it. My love-beaded sweetheart is someone I only know well enough to
cordially dislike.\footnote{See \url{http://www.williamgibsonbooks.com/archive/2003_05_01_archive.asp} \[Last Accessed February 22nd, 2007\]}

Throughout this period, as the Village entered its fractious, desultory late period,
distinctions between true or authentic hippies and the plastic or weekend hippies
highlighted many discussions, and appeared in most reporting. Authenticity – loosely
defined, impossible to gauge – seems at the very least tied to commitment.\footnote{Charles Taylor has put this into clear terms. "Being true to myself means being true to my own
originality, and that is something only I can articulate and discover. In articulating it, I am also defining
myself. I am realizing a potentiality that is properly my own. This is the background understanding to the
modern ideal of authenticity, and to the goals of self-fulfillment or self-realization in which it is usually
couched. This is the background that gives moral force to the culture of authenticity, including its most
degraded, absurd, or trivialized forms. It is what gives sense to the idea of ‘doing your own thing’ or
out of school, moving out of one’s parents’ house, taking acid and other mind drugs,
accepting, supporting, or at least admiring radical politics, and generally distancing
oneself from the establishment (whatever one takes \textit{that} to mean) all combine in the ideal
archetype of the true hippie. While William Gibson’s little subterfuge was a means to an
end (and, in retrospect makes Knowlton Nash and his team look the fool), it also
demonstrates the subjectivity of the authenticity meter. Performance was everything –
Gibson knew it, and he played the part on command when the offer looked good. As we survey Villagers’ complaints over “real hippies” leaving Yorkville only to be replaced by poseurs, weekenders, and plastic hippies, we would do well to bear in mind Gibson’s performance, and what it tells us about the muddiness of the distinction between true and inauthentic performances of hip.

Perception ’67 and the Case of LSD

While marijuana had been a somewhat familiar proposition in the years prior to Yorkville’s ascension to the fore, LSD was still undiscovered country by the end of 1966. A veritable artifact of the 1960s, and intrinsically linked to the character and verve of its youth culture, LSD promised a virtually authentic, total and indelible experience. If the defining ethics of the 60s counterculture were existentialism and the search for authenticity in pre-fab North America, LSD claimed to offer immediate gratification on both counts. Here was a quick fix for your false consciousness, your angst, repression and alienation: eight hours in Owsley’s wobbly kitchen.

Inexorable as love or madness, an LSD trip could last anywhere from 6 to 10 hours, and could offer the user myriad visions, perceptions, sensations, revelations – all apparently authentic while being, at least empirically, unreal. And so, LSD offered an easy-access authentic experience, tailored to one’s own psyche, immutable and iridescent, but highly personal. If the existential quest is the unending pursuit of an authentic state of being beyond the mauvaise foi through which one has been conditioned, LSD’s promise of near-total escape from social constructs and structures of normalcy

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731 Doug Rossinow has made this link in his The Politics of Authenticity (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) 53-68.
established it as the existential drug *par excellence*. But its “total experience”, for years thought to be a chemically-induced schizophrenia by researchers and psychiatrists, did indeed mimic the effects of a psychotic break in its users. At its root an LSD trip has always been about willful madness.\(^{732}\)

One former Villager explained the significance of LSD in bold relief.

> What happened to me was, after smoking a bit of pot, and really being quite embraced by the community as it existed, it just enlivened my imagination, broadened my scope. In short order I lost my virginity which was an enormous relief. And, as well, I took an acid trip. I’ll never forget it: it was in one of those big old houses, I think it was on Bernard Avenue… It transformed life, it transformed the world, it broke down my sense of isolation, and all the constructs of the ego, you know, that we (not to get too philosophical or spacey on the whole thing), but we define ourselves through these internal constructs that we make our way through the world with. And it just swept all of that away.\(^{733}\)

But for conservatives – for *most people*, regardless of politics or station – LSD’s cosmic draw was simply impossible to comprehend. Here was a drug which was said to promote synesthesia (the profoundly disorienting perception-jumbling of (for example) hearing colours and seeing sounds), and people *wanted* to take it! This was deliberate insanity, a kind of self-induced psychosis – what did it mean that the children of the baby boom were trying to escape reality with such sincerity? But, since it was still legal in Canada to take LSD (it was illegal to sell it, but possession and consumption of the drug was allowed, if proscribed by virtually everyone), its place in the narcotic constellation was

\(^{732}\) LSD has been the subject of a variety of scholarship on the counterculture. Perhaps the best sustained history of the drug can be found in Martin A. Lee and Bruce Shlain’s *Acid Dreams: The Complete Social History of LSD* (New York: Grove Press, 1985)141-169. For a helpful discussion of the relationship between authenticity, alienation and LSD, see David Farber “Intoxicated State/Illegal Nation: Drugs in the Sixties Counterculture” in *Imagine Nation* ed. Braunstein and Doyle, (New York: Routledge, 2002) 17-40.

\(^{733}\) Anonymous LSD Dealer, Interview with Author, October 13th, 2006.
unclear, at best.\textsuperscript{734} Unclear, that is, until the right disaster turned LSD from a weird, provocative proposition into a malevolent, hulking killer.

On March 16\textsuperscript{th}, 1967, a 20-year old student at the Royal Conservatory of Music plunged to his death from the Bloor Street viaduct, becoming Toronto’s first LSD casualty.\textsuperscript{735} John Stern, an aspiring musician, son of an upper-middle-class family from the Toronto borough of York, took the drug for the first time in his life at around 5 o’clock in the afternoon, and was dead before midnight. With his death coming less than a month after the much-vaunted Perception ’67 Festival at the University of Toronto – a three day event designed around the idea of mind-expansion and psychedelic experience – Stern’s apparently drug-directed suicide led many to speculate whether too much support was being afforded this chemical brew. It didn’t help that Stern’s father, grief-fueled and biting, put the blame squarely on the shoulders of “pseudo-experts” who glamorized the drug by suggesting that it might “expand the horizons” of creative people. “They murdered my boy – there’s no doubt about that” he declared, referring to the speakers at Perception ’67.\textsuperscript{736}

Initially designed around the artistic conceit of re-creating the psychedelic experience through sensory and aesthetic experimentation and stimulation, the centerpiece at Perception ’67 was a kind of \textit{faux}-Fun House replete with weird sounds, disorienting visuals and other unidentifiable sensations. The brainchild of 24-year old visual artist Michael Hayden, the Hayden Environment was designed to imitate (perhaps

\textsuperscript{734} Marcel Martel, \textit{Not This Time} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005) 16.
\textsuperscript{735} A writer at \textit{Satyrday} claimed that this fact meant that “pseudo-hip Toronto has at last caught up with New York, Chicago, and San Francisco.” \textit{Satyrday}, Second Issue, 1967.
\textsuperscript{736} \textit{Toronto Star}, March 20\textsuperscript{th}, 1967.
even re-create?) the psychedelic experience without drugs. Employing a combination of film, slides, sound bites, lights, prepared textiles and other materials, and blaring music, the Hayden Environment (also known as "The Mind Excursion") would attempt to offer disorientation, discomfort, and a vertiginous psychic experience to people presumably fearful of actually doing drugs. This watered-down version of the LSD experience was of course well-publicized as part of an attempt to play down the centrality of drug use to the theme of the Festival; it would allow non-drug users to feel involved, to feel somehow connected to the goings-on, but ultimately offer nothing of the profundity of an actual eight-hour LSD experience.

This is likely apparent even to the uninitiated, but taking a “trip” through a fun house, which might last anywhere from ten to twenty minutes, during which one is surely at-all-times aware that the exit is right around the next corner, can hardly be compared to (for example) the often terrifying time-loss which can accompany an LSD experience, an overpoweringly claustrophobic bewilderment which makes seconds drip by like minutes. According to 30-something journalist Robert Fulford (who was the first subject to explore the installation), this baffling ten-room LSD “environment” comprised of “horrible screams in the darkness… eerie pulsing music… creepy-crawly black plastic

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737 Hayden had been a regular in the Village art scene since his first one-man show the previous year at the Gallery Moos. He is presently based out of Santa Rosa California, and continues to create art. See samples of his work and a short biography at http://www.thinkinglightly.com/hayden/resume.html [Last Accessed February 22nd, 2007]

738 Hayden wrote to me in an e-mail about his role in the Festival: “I personally invited the participants from NYC = Allan Ginsberg, Tiger Morris, Ralph Metzner, Timothy Leary, The Fugs, (when I lived in New York, I was 1/2 block from where Tuli Kupferberg and Ed Sanders published The East Village Other) etc, as well as The City Muffin Boys, from Toronto, to perform.” February 27th, 2007 12:38:26 AM

739 See Martel, 41-42.

740 Always concerned about the effects of commercialization and co-optation of the Village scene, the advent of such drug-use-as-popular-entertainment enterprises prompted Satyrday to proclaim “The Establishment is your corner dope peddler” in the spring of 1967. Satyrday, Second Issue, 1967.
walls… blinding lights and deafening sounds… floors that don’t feel like floors at all… [and] gigantic staring faces” was, as far as he could imagine, “a remarkable success.”741

Perception ’67 participant Judy Perly remembers the environment as less an attempt to recreate the LSD experience than just another in a series of sensory art exhibits popular at the time. “They had these environments. University of Toronto had one. You would go in and feel like you were in a womb, very touchy-feely. What had happened was that smoking marijuana was getting people more into their bodies, more focused that way.” But these types of “environments” were somehow understood to be diminished experiences. What was more popular, says Perly, was the developing art of light shows.

You have to remember the Sixties were very visual. People were doing all kinds of stuff that was interesting. They had these light shows where they would paint discs with oil – it was all to do with drugs, to tell you the truth. So the whole idea was that you would smoke marijuana, or a lot of people were dropping acid and then they would go to these light shows.742

Perception ’67, then, was part of a developing artistic movement toward invoking the sensory disarmament that accompanies psychedelic experience, but it was also part of a new paradigm in artistry devoted to creating art that was best experienced while under the influence of psychedelics.

However, most of the other installations and venues at Perception ’67 were more obviously about a specifically drug-induced version of “mind expansion.” Such notable (American) figures as Allen Ginsberg, Richard Alpert, Paul Krassner, Ralph Metzner and a pre-recorded Timothy Leary all made the trip to Toronto to attend what would be a weekend-long celebration of the “there” out there. Dubbed a “prohibited person,”

741Toronto Star, Feb 11, 1967. He did admit that the drug experience was likely somewhat more intense.
742Judy Perly, Interview with Author, June 27th, 2006.
Timothy Leary, who had been recently convicted on a drug smuggling charge, was denied entry to Canada by Minister of Immigration Jean Marchand.\textsuperscript{743} Speeches, jam sessions, teach-ins and happenings comprised the two-day lineup, tickets for which sold out in a mere four hours to inquiring Torontonians eager to catch a glimpse of such psychedelic luminaries.

The brief Festival, which culminated in a glorious performance by New York-based rockers The Fugs at Convocation Hall, ultimately did little to foster new appreciations of LSD and the psychedelic pursuit. Rather, the Festival seems to have been about preaching to the converted, about proselytizing on the richness and brilliance of LSD experience to a group of the Experienced. Media coverage remained generally aloof, detached, and mildly amused by the sheer weirdness of the whole event. After they had registered such offhand praise as “Groovy!” (Paul Krassner), “A Blast!” (Alpert) and “Fantastic!” (Ginsberg), the Star’s Gary Dunford concluded that approval had been bestowed, at least by the super-famous-psychedelic-American community.\textsuperscript{744}

But their praise for LSD was much less direct, and a good deal more complicated. Perhaps the most straightforward speaker was Leary associate and former Harvard professor Richard Alpert (who would be reborn as Ram Dass while studying in India later that year). Alpert took up the provocative position that his use of LSD was a means to “break the status quo and get to a meaningful future,” even if it meant “10 years of living like a psychotic.” But Paul Krassner, hip journalist extraordinaire, was more blasé about the role of LSD in his life. “[LSD has] about as much effect as an ice cream soda – I refuse to look upon it as a panacea,” he proclaimed, with trademark Krassner cynicism.

\textsuperscript{743}Even his tape didn’t make it, as it was seized at the border by officials. Toronto Star, February 13\textsuperscript{th}, 1967.
\textsuperscript{744}ibid.
Moreover, he concluded, “there are far too many idiots taking LSD trying to avoid seeing their own idiocy.”

Perhaps the most exciting session of the weekend was the head-to-head between writer-in-residence Earle Birney and ur-hippie Allen Ginsberg, an at times fascinating discussion of the role of the transcendent in the artistic process. “There are times when art, or lovemaking or solitude or mountain-climbing or any human experience produces the same experience as LSD,” proclaimed the great bearded Beat poet, more than a little disingenuously. “All the pill does is inhibit conditioned responses,” he concluded, instructing his audience that while LSD can be transcendent and influential, so could be Shakespeare, or personal creativity itself. In a final bluff, Ginsberg followed his hollow assertion that an acid trip and a really good read comprised basically the same event: “Poetry” he reasoned, “offers a psychedelic experience.”

But it wasn’t poetry that inspired 20-year-old John Stern to leap to his death off the Bloor Street viaduct a few weeks hence. At least, that was the conclusion reached by his father, by MPP George Ben, and by a variety of influential Torontonians who worked to put LSD on the agenda in a much less celebratory way than did the organizers of Perception ’67. Stern’s death was front page news, as was the fact that the young musician had attended a number of sessions at Perception ’67. Apparently Stern and his friend (identified only as Les) had been planning to take LSD “for some time,” before they (somewhat inexplicably) went out to a hotel near the Toronto Airport (outside of Toronto proper) to take their trip. Believing that “if he tried LSD it would give him greater creative power,” Stern had read up on as much acid-lore as he could find. He even

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745 ibid.
746 ibid.
747 Martel, 14-15.
tried to prepare his body for the maximum LSD effects by starving himself all day long, and dissolving the drug in hot water. At the last minute, Les got cold feet, and Stern took the drug on his own. After some initial euphoria, he began to fall into a “deep depression,” and, while the two friends shared a cab back to mid-town Toronto, Stern became “panic-stricken.” At this point, unaccountably, Les left his terrified friend and went his own way home. Some two hours later, Stern dove to his death, four miles from his parents’ home in the borough of York, with a handwritten note in his pocket reading “The most important thing is to love God.”

As the investigation into Stern’s death picked up steam, fueled by public concern and the kind of persistent media reportage usually afforded perfect case-in-points such as this, information came to light which began to lay in some weight behind the claim that this death could be blamed on the recklessness of LSD’s proponents. It turned out that not only had Stern attended Perception ’67 with his friends, but he had also been present at a house party on Avenue Road (adjacent to Yorkville) at which Richard Alpert himself had held court, preaching to his young flock on the value of the psychedelic experience.

Sidney Katz, staff writer for the Toronto Star and frequent commentator on the Toronto youth scene, concluded that “much of the criticism directed at the US psychologists [Alpert, Timothy Leary, and Ralph Metzner] is justified,” citing what he called their “irresponsible enthusiasm.”

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748 This story was recounted in great detail in all three major papers, over the 20th and 21st of March. See, especially, Toronto Star, March 20th, 1967; Toronto Telegram, March 20th 1967; Globe and Mail, March 21st, 1967.

749 Curious thing (but signifying nothing): a few days after the Toronto conference, Alpert made the scene at the inauguration of the League for Spiritual Discovery’s headquarters in New York City. In an effort to get his audience to focus, he related to the crowd about a particularly interesting breakfast date he had shared with Marshall McLuhan and Allen Ginsberg while at Perception ’67. Don McNeill, Moving Through Here (New York: Citadel Press, 1970) 4.
But while it may have been Alpert’s encouragement that had inspired the young man to take LSD for the first time, it turns out that what Stern ingested can only be described as a rather heroic dose of pure, “clean” acid. The long-awaited shipment of uncut LSD had arrived from Chicago only a few days prior to Stern’s death on the 16th of March, too soon for word to get around warning of its astonishing strength. Rather than being packaged in 200-300 microgram capsules (a standard “dose”), these pills were each packed with about 500 micrograms of the mind-bending chemical.

If the only on-record account of dropping this particular batch of the drug is any indication, even the experienced were powerless to retain any form of control while riding that much pure acid:

I took [two capsules for] what I thought to be a healthy dose – 400 micrograms. Judging by what happened, it must have been 1000 micrograms. I was so frightened I sat on the floor with my legs crossed, in the same spot, for five hours. I flipped out completely. I went through a complete mental and physical death. I was disoriented. I achieved a state of non-being. I wanted to go even further and get out of my body [and] one way of doing that is to destroy your body.\footnote{\textit{Toronto Star}, March 31st, 1967.} 750

So many trippers were finding the LSD experience too intense that psychedelic dealers began to realize that demand for their product might begin to suffer. One former Village LSD dealer explained the situation: “So what happened was that as people started having bad trips – and of course the press was relentlessly negative on the whole thing, throughout North America – I think the dealers cut the doses way down…

In fact I \textit{know} it. The classic dose was about 250 micrograms – that’s 250 millions of a gram. It was cut down from that to about 40 mics. Which will give you a buzz, but nothing like before. Later on, when I was intending to take a trip, and when I knew what the source was, I would often take six doses, which would move it up to the classic dose.\footnote{Anonymous LSD Dealer, Interview with Author, October 13th, 2006.} 751
But was John Stern the victim of the hype surrounding LSD? Not according to *Satyrday*, the Village newspaper, which ran a scathing article condemning the “sensation-hungry” Toronto press for propagating a fabricated story making Stern “to appear untarnished” in his personal life. “What the fearless press did not report was that those who knew Stern in Yorkville say that he had at least 20 to 30 previous ‘trips’ on LSD, and was obviously no stranger to its effects.” But, that was merely a taste.

He was known by many as “Stern the Burn”, a reference to his connection with the dope business in Yorkville. [...] Our informant and others said Stern kept his stash at his parents’ home. [...] Did [his father] know, for example, that his son was pushing hashish and marijuana in Yorkville? His father charged that Yorkville was a bad influence on his son. Perhaps it was the other way around.

With this, one of the clearest examples of disagreement between *Satyrday* and the mainstream papers, we are left wondering: how did the mainstream papers miss this information? Or, why would it have been suppressed? *Satyrday* offers their own interpretation: referring to Stern’s death as “the event our Establishment has been waiting for,” *Satyrday* suggests that whitewashing Stern’s character might have been deliberate, a ruse to stir up anxiety over a new danger to middle-class youth.752

Oddly, while Yorkville found itself again at the centre of a drug hysteria (this time over LSD and suicide) some hip youth were turning away from the district while on their acid trips. “Certainly for the first few trips,” explained an anonymous Villager, “until you get your feet under you (so to speak) in that new world, it would be unwise to go into Yorkville.”753 LSD-high Villagers were said to avoid the scene because folks were known to play “mind games” on them, especially if it was clear that they were.

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753 Anonymous LSD Dealer, Interview with Author, October 13th, 2006.
tripping. In one young man’s description, such mind games could prove terribly frightening, even damaging to someone in such an altered mental state. (Of course, one man’s “terribly frightening” is another man’s “total experience” – the unpredictability of LSD was part of its allure.) According to one unidentified Villager, some of the things these unfriendly people did (such as “putting your face close to his and staring into his eyes, explaining that you can see directly into his brain”) could make the defenseless tripper come unglued. For, while such a prank may sound juvenile, on strong acid, look out. The same young man (who, for these reasons, avoided Yorkville while tripping) was decisive about the potential damage such “games” can cause. “To the person under LSD,” he warned, “the effects can be demolishing.”

A demolishing experience on LSD (hopefully one which ends without a leap off of a viaduct) was known in the Village as a bummer, or a “bad trip.” One of the most pressing concerns for young people experimenting with the volatile and unpredictable drug was that, in general, Toronto hospitals and clinics hadn’t the faintest idea of how to treat bum LSD cases. That is, until Dr. Bill Clement came along. Having just completed in-depth research of the potent tranquilizer Valium, and blessed with a maverick and inherently hip personality, Clement was, even for a married thirtysomething doctor, perfectly suited to the unpredictable field of Village medical treatment.

Unlike most other doctors in the city, Clement looked at LSD trips scientifically. While other doctors would simply strap stoned kids to a bed in the psych ward, zonk them on Thorazine, and watch them have a horrible time, Clement refused to avoid the

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754 “But I took many trips and on many occasions went through Yorkville. I was a kind of established character on the street, and I never was messed with in that sort of way at all.” Anonymous LSD Dealer, Interview with Author, October 13th, 2006.
755 *Toronto Star*, March 31st, 1967
issue so neatly. And so, at his clinic at Queen Street Mental Health, “I developed a treatment procedure for bad trips.”

Bad trips are, actually, acute anxiety inducing synesthesia. Bear in mind that when we see somebody, when we saw somebody at Queen Street, they walked in off the street usually accompanied by 4 or 5 of their friends who tried to talk them down. We had a limited staff, and limited resources. No resources. So, I came up with the brilliant idea: Valium is a neat little drug... And here, we had these kids coming in with acute anxiety. Why not give them, since the usual dose for Valium is 10 mg, why not give him 50 mg? Because the drug results [for Valium] were incredibly safe.756

Clement’s gambit worked. In fact, it worked so well that, before long, Villagers knew that if their trip went south, Bill was the man to see.757

Clement’s deep knowledge of Valium also protected Villagers from the most common treatment at hospitals at the time, the anti-psychotic Thorazine.758

[Thorazine?] No! Bummer! Some brilliant soul, a truly creative young man, discovered that if you added Ajax cleanser to your LSD you would get increased visual effects. And I mean, who doesn’t want that? I mean, you’re getting the picture of the environment I found myself working in! So, when you put the Ajax cleanser into the LSD for big visual effects, if you give the person Thorazine their blood pressure goes way up, and they die. This is not a good idea. I mean, I’m working in a public hospital – there’d be all sorts of paperwork... [laughs] Anyway, I had just finished the Valium research, so I really knew Valium backwards and forwards.759

756 W.R. Clement, Interview with Author, March 5th, 2006.
757 According to Villager Suzanne DePoe, “Queen Street [Mental Health] was the only place in the city that knew how to treat LSD. They knew how, and they would. Both, which was a jackpot. We didn’t go anywhere else, there wasn’t any point. Bill Clement did his work well. You know? He trained people how to treat bad trips at Queen Street and then he put the word out, that that was where to go. He was the only psycho-pharmacologist that I knew of who had any knowledge of psychotropic drugs!” Interview with Author, March 14th, 2006.
759 W.R. Clement, Interview with Author, March 5th, 2006.
The work Clement and his staff were doing at Queen Street didn’t go unnoticed, especially in the LSD panic that engulfed the City after 1966. Having been informed that a Toronto pharmacologist had developed a treatment strategy for LSD, the Poison Control Branch of the Federal Department of Health came to Clement, asking for guidance.

They say: will you write poison control cards for us? [I said] OK, give him 50 mg of Valium, put him to bed, and tell him to fuck off. In the morning he’ll wake up and say: Oh boy, what a night. You’ll say: how’ ya feeling? He’ll say: alright. Fine: you’re discharged, fuck off. There are no after effects, no nothing. The only reason you keep them in the hospital [overnight] is that you’ve given them an overdose of Valium.\textsuperscript{760}

It is not impossible that Clement’s recollection of this conversation is somewhat more colourful than the actual discussion.\textsuperscript{761} Still, the point remains the same. While the media and City Hall fanned flames of fear with their repeated reports painting LSD as a leap off the precipice, Villagers (and, increasingly, young people all over the City) knew that if things got too weird, if their reaction was too intense, or if their friend seemed to have broken free of her moorings, there was a doctor a few blocks away who, perhaps uniquely in North America, had a method of treating their case that was both safe and effective.

\textit{Village Excursions: A Love-In, Wasaga Beach and the O’Keefe Centre}

As the Village approached critical mass, its population so swollen with the young, the curious, the lost, the enlightened, and the deeply stoned, it also spread beyond the

\textsuperscript{760} ibid.
\textsuperscript{761} “I’ve often wondered whether Bill oversold himself,” offers Valpy. “But, I suspect he didn’t. I mean, he probably saved a lot of kids’ lives. You know, by pumping them full of Valium. He sure did love Valium…” Michael Valpy, Interview with Author, October 5th, 2006.
confines of the Village proper. There simply wasn’t enough room in Yorkville, and what room there was was crowded to the point of discomfort. Most Villagers didn’t, couldn’t live in the Village – even if they did spend many of their waking hours there. Still, it was the undisputed site for congregation, for community, for connection. And, in the absence of any other recognizable sites for the expression of Village identity, young people looking to partake in the counterculture simply headed for the one place they knew they could find it and play along.

Until the advent of large-scale rock concerts and festivals – which came into their own following San Francisco’s successful Monterey Pop Festival in late Spring, ’67 – “Yorkville” tended to take place in Yorkville. But now that the Village was becoming too hard to hold, too full to be contained, external sites for the expression of Village identity suddenly made more sense. Such expressions of hip community and youthful rebellion outside of their expected and defined territory posed a confounding question for those who were busy railing against the horrors of Yorkville. The question was epistemological: How to understand a phenomenon, a youth identity, a “foreign territory” that seemed ever more able to bleed through the figurative confines of its terrain? If this youth culture isn’t Yorkville, what is it?

One way to approach the issue, and which managed to maintain both the heuristics of foreignness and geographic specificity, was to treat events at which significant numbers of Village youth congregated at sites outside of their expected area as aberrations. Yorkville was a place, but it was also an attitude, a belief, a look, and a culture – and it did not belong outside of its confines. When it appeared to be trying to spread to new areas, as it was seen (and feared) to be doing throughout 1967, authorities
and residents collectively responded with distress and panic. Such events provided instances when what had come to known as “Yorkville” was most overtly exposed as a performance – it was a character that could be carried from place to place, all the while remaining tied to its meaning: hippie. The words now interchangeable in both the press and in the public imagination, Yorkville and Hippie denoted place and identity as if they were the same things. Consequently, sites for countercultural congregation were, throughout 1967, treated as Yorkville field trips, populated by “Yorkville-types” and, in one memorable case, even decried as colonization schemes.

Toronto’s first Love-In was held on Victoria Day (a Holiday Monday in late May) at Queen’s Park, about a half kilometre south of Yorkville. The (almost) impromptu and unstructured gathering attracted thousands of people from across Metro and beyond, eager to participate in the unstructured celebration. An earlier attempt at developing a Love-In-type event, an Easter parade organized by Don Riggan and Blues Chapman, had been a stale affair, marred by cold weather and a lackadaisical turnout. Ron Thody, writing in *Satyrday*, complained that “it was hardly successful.” But, he quickly added, “who’s to put it down? At least the small, Yorkville hippy parade was a beginning and, as spring explodes in Toronto, bigger parades and a projected Human Be-In […] are being discussed.”

The main thing, explained Thody, was that the parade, replete with a theatrical crucifixion of a Village habitué named Spider, “proved that Yorkvillians are doing more than sitting in loud cafés and dim coffeehouses and decrying the state of the world in relation to their own existence and that of straight society’s. In other words, they are learning that it’s great to dig the idea of love and brotherhood.”

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763 Ibid.
Chapman were equally inspired by the parade, even though it was somewhat less exciting than they had hoped. Collaborating with DePoe, they planned another, much larger event to be held in late Spring, when the weather was more amenable. And so, the Victoria Day Love-In was born.

By all accounts, the Victoria Day Love-In was a success – there were no arrests, no drug freakouts to be reported, and none of the milling hippie teens were nabbed for causing “disturbances.” Rather, there was the spectacle of a concentrated phalanx of Villagers (and more than a few “non-Yorkville” observers) whose colourful, jubilant performance of hip was on display outside of the confines of Yorkville for the first time. For many observers of the scene, it was as if Yorkville itself had moved a block south – media sources used the words hippie and Yorkville interchangeably in their reports. And, just as Yorkville was known to be a favourite tourist destination for Torontonians looking to escape the reality of the rest of the city, the Queen’s Park Love-In attracted so many “sight-seers” that, according to the Toronto Star, they outnumbered even the four or five thousand hippies.764

Myrna Kostash, Doug Owram, and Pierre Berton have all emphasized the Queen’s Park Love-In in their capsule histories of the Yorkville scene. For all, it represented a romantic, Dionysian moment; a happy calm before the inevitable storms of controversy that would overtake Yorkville later in the summer. To Kostash, writing roughly ten years after the event, the Love-In was characterized by:

…languorous crowds meeting under the sweet greenness of the newly leaved trees, in long skirts and hand-painted rubber boots, carrying enormous paper flowers and kaleidoscopes, there to play music for each

other and join in large dancing circles around the flute players, to admire young men with earrings and a rose behind the ear…

Young Villagers approached passersby, offering them flowers and their love. Police, unsure of what their role should be, spent their time pulling long-haired teenagers down from trees. Leonard Cohen, by now an established international star, famously made the scene, played a few of his darkly poetic folksongs, flowers behind his ear. As Buffy Sainte-Marie entertained the crowd with her peculiar brand of folk music, the crowd was courteous, charmed, and docile. To Pierre Berton, they were “peaceful, naïve and winning.”

The Love-In, a variation on a theme established on January 14th in San Francisco at the heavily-advertised and reported Human Be-In, was designed by Yorkville’s Diggers. Following the even more successful (and entirely more spontaneous) New York Be-In on Easter Sunday, a celebration attended by some 10,000 and which was, by any objective standard, miraculously peaceful, the Toronto Love-In would be designed around the premise of love.

Hans Wetzel, having recently formed a short-lived organization called the Yorkville Cultural Activities Committee with his fellow Diggers, applied to the City for the necessary permits for the gathering. Although some bureaucracy snuck into the process, the City did issue the permits, leaving little in the way of legal obstacles for the throng at the jamboree. The police couldn’t issue citations, not unless something unreasonable happened. Apparently, the only real offense reported all day was that half-

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765 Kostash, 125.  
766 Berton, 174.  
767 See Don McNeill, Moving Through Here (New York: Citadel, 1970) 7-10, for a beautiful and unflinching report on the event. Of the New York Be-In, McNeill wrote: “The password was “LOVE” and it was sung, chanted, painted on foreheads, and spelled out on costumes.” 8.
a-bed of yellow flowers had been picked by hippies looking for horticultural ornaments; still, the Toronto Star managed to slip this minor infraction into its lead paragraph, for good measure.\footnote{Toronto Star, May 23\textsuperscript{rd}, 1967.}

One month after the Love-In, as the oppressive heat of a Toronto summer descended, sticking as it does to the walls of high rises, like a stifling beds...n of Villagers got the itch. Just north of Toronto, about an 80-minute drive up the recently-completed Highway 400, lay escape: the long stretch of Georgian Bay beachfront known as Wasaga.

Yorkville, of course, didn’t really move to Wasaga – the Summer of 1967 saw the Village fill to overflowing with young people, pouring in from around the country – but a significant number of “Yorkville-types” \textit{did}, at least for a time. Predictably, just like their counterparts back in Toronto, locals (especially merchants and residents) were none-too-pleased by the sudden influx of long-haired hipsters. By July 11\textsuperscript{th}, the Wasaga Beach Village Council were formally requesting more police to aid them in their drive to eliminate the “long-haired bearded vagrants who sleep on garbage cans” from their vacation community. Citing shoplifting, all-night parties, and “love-making,” Wasagans in the packed council meeting complained bitterly that the 7-mile stretch of beach was being overrun by “Hippies from Yorkville.”\footnote{Toronto Star, July 12\textsuperscript{th}, 1967; Globe and Mail, July 17\textsuperscript{th}, 1967.}

This conception of “Hippies from Yorkville” spreading to other areas was potent. Only a few months earlier MPP George Ben had referred to hippies as “a cancer that is spreading through Metro” – now here they were colonizing a sleepy vacation town?

Again, as I have underlined elsewhere, Yorkville is here understood as an identity, not
just a place. In this case, Yorkville’s hippies had spilled out of their expected locus, carrying the Village with them to Wasaga. However, this time their presence wouldn’t stick. Armed with reinforcements from the Toronto police force, the Wasaga authorities managed to round up most of the offensive young people and get them either sent home (to Yorkville, one supposes) or, if they were young enough, into the arms of their parents.770

Reports of shoplifting and noise were the violations which precipitated this crackdown – and while the latter charge was likely pertinent and wide-ranging, one hesitates to believe that all of the young people weekending in Wasaga were up to no good, or (even less likely) stealing from shops. This crime simply wasn’t reported in Yorkville; why should it be different in Wasaga? Reports of poverty, dirtiness, and hunger were more likely accurate (and they harmonize with most reportage on Yorkville in the era); but, still, none of these is a criminal offence. How could the village council justify their round-up of hippies and “drifters”? It seems that, having seen what became of Yorkville, the Village council in Wasaga Beach was prepared to do whatever it took to rout a hippie takeover of their village. And, for what it is worth, it worked: this would be no Yorkville North.

By the end of July, Toronto had found a place on the map of happening North American hippie scenes. This fact was not lost on San Francisco impresario and concert promoter extraordinaire Bill Graham, who could sniff out a youth market at fifty paces. In the Haight, his efforts at turning derelict buildings into premier concert venues had hugely influenced the development of the psychedelic rock’n’roll scene. With so many guaranteed stages to play, tons of free publicity, and stoned, focused, dedicated

audiences, bands had a degree of freedom in the Haight that they simply didn’t have in most other scenes in 1967 (or, perhaps, ever since). It is no accident that some of the most exciting American bands of the psychedelic period happened to surface out of Graham’s stable of local artists. The Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, Quicksilver Messenger Service, and Big Brother and the Holding Company all honed their crafts on stages in rickety old buildings like the Fillmore and Winterland, two of Graham’s best-known hotspots. But the Haight couldn’t hold them for long – after the massive success of the Monterey Pop Festival in late Spring, a veritable coming out party for the San Francisco sound (as psychedelic rock was being called), Graham took his most popular bands on the road. “That's when the fun began,” recalls Grateful Dead bassist Phil Lesh.771

On July 23rd, around 20,000 turned out to see the Jefferson Airplane play a free show at Nathan Phillips Square, in front of Toronto’s new, space age City Hall. Perhaps the finest and certainly the most popular psychedelic band of the moment, the Jefferson Airplane’s fascinating mix of blues, rock, folk, and even classical styles (the inexorable march of their acid-washed missive “White Rabbit” is clearly based on Ravel’s *Bolero*) defined the psychedelic moment. Boasting two (sometimes three) vocalists, dueling guitars, and daring, un-encoded drug references in their surreal lyrics, they offered a new vision of the commercially successful rock’n’roll band. Loose, jarring, frequently sublime (but just as frequently cacophonous), the Airplane set a standard for scores of psychedelic rockers to follow.

Bill Graham’s gambit (throw a free concert and then reap the financial windfall as kids clamor for more at a series of five subsequent paying gigs) demanded that the

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Airplane nail this first, teaser performance. Realizing what their promoter had gotten
them into, the stress level in the band reached a peak in the days leading up to the show –
“If we are bad in Toronto, if we blow it,” complained an apprehensive Spenser Dryden,
drummer for the Airplane, “then nobody, but nobody is ever going to come and see us
again.”772 But he needn’t have worried – Toronto was ripe for a scene, and a scene is
what the Airplane would bring. As July slipped by, anticipation was peaking in the
Village – here was the authentic hippie thing, the real deal, and it was coming to Toronto!
Light show artist Joshua White sums up the exaggerated excitement shared among many
Villagers: “For us this show was the San Francisco scene – the good vibes, the love –
coming to Toronto.”773

For most of the psychedelic neophytes experimenting with the form in the
Village, the City Hall show was the first opportunity to see their forebears live. For his
part, Peter Goddard, then a young rock journalist, was decidedly keyed up by what he
witnessed on the makeshift stage. It was a happening, he was quick to recognize, that
seemed to unite “hippy havens from Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco to
Greenwich Village to Yorkville” in praise of the “one avant-garde God” that is
rock’n’roll music.774 The communion between artists and audience members was central
to this presentation – the stage appeared somehow superfluous, everywhere at once, as
the band and the audience united in a shared performance of psychedelia. The unity was
remarkable: Jorma Kaukonen, guitarist for the Airplane, told Goddard, “I’ve never seen

773 See Alice Echols, Scars of Sweet Paradise: The Life and Times of Janis Joplin (New York:
Henry Holt and Co, 1999) 109. He and his friends would discover, however, that the “good vibes” were
more mythical than real, as “what came to Toronto… was an extremely unpleasant group of people known
as the Jefferson Airplane and a very strange bunch of kind of hostile guys known as the Grateful Dead. And
then there was the Headlights Light Show, which was two guys fighting with each other.”
such a crowd! Usually they come too [sic] look and sometimes to touch. But this group seemed to be getting into the swing of things.”

The audience splashed in the fountains, danced and spun in effortless circles, sharing the apples and candy tossed out to them by the band. “Flowers, pagan amulets, tiny bells on girls’ ankles, a general assortment of baubles, bangles and beards were in abundance, as were bare feet,” observed Goddard. For the thousands of Villagers, here was the opportunity to perform their Yorkville scene alongside some of their Haight-Ashbury contemporaries. But this was only the beginning. The free concert, while ostensibly about the expression of the ethic of free music for the people, was pretty clearly designed by the famously cash-obsessed Graham to generate interest in the Airplane – after all, they were booked into the O’Keefe Centre for a week-long run beginning in a few days.

“This is the O’Keefe?” demanded the front page of the Toronto Star on August 1st.775 Underneath an oversized photo of two gyrating hippies, the Star marked the arrival of the “San Francisco Scene” (as the tour named itself) with a mixture of shock and excitement. The Grateful Dead, the Jefferson Airplane, and Yorkville band Luke and the Apostles had taken over the venerable, decidedly high-brow O’Keefe Centre. Following the success of the City Hall show, the Airplane and their counterparts in the Dead were prepared for a vibrant, exciting audience; what they got instead was a near-cataclysm.

From the beginning, there were problems. According to Dead bassist Phil Lesh, “the sound system had a buzzsaw noise in it, probably caused by one of the stage-light dimmers.” The sound problems led to serious dissent among the members of the band, exhausted from their hectic schedules, too many drugs, and the pressure of what they felt

775My emphasis.
was an all-important show: “For the first time, Jerry [Garcia] and I started grumbling to each other about the music’” admits Lesh. “With too many shows and not enough rehearsal, the music wasn't moving forward to our satisfaction; [guitarist and vocalist] Bobby [Weir], being years younger and a bit spaced, became our target. We confronted him after the show about working harder to keep up.”

Longtime Dead fans may not realize just how close the Dead came to breaking up after that first night at the O’Keefe. Already annoyed with their own performance, it didn’t help that they were savaged in the Globe and Mail’s famous review in language so vicious that to this day it stands out as the worst appraisal Lesh recalls having ever read of his Grateful Dead.

The review of our first night still cracks me up: ‘five simian men, presumably reeking with San Francisco authenticity... not volume, but noise... a jet taking off in your inner ear, while the mad doctor is perversely scraping your nerves to shreds.’ Wow, we got his attention, huh? At least we now know what we are – we're Musimians! 777

In fairness, the reviewer didn’t spare Yorkville’s musical contribution either.

The Dead may have played badly on that all-important first night, but so did locals Luke and the Apostles. The band, among the biggest draws on the Village scene, was described by a clearly exasperated Urjo Kareda (a new music columnist) in the harshest of terms. “Amid their self-conscious, pretentious and stupefyingly awful performance, there was not a shred of talent.”778 Karada’s hostility was not simply aimed at the music – he pointed fingers at the scene as well, attacking it for its flimsiness and its emphasis on performance over substance. Although preposterously harsh, his assessment reminds us just how central all of this performing was to the Village community, especially when here, on a field trip (as it were) to the O’Keefe Centre.

776 Lesh, 109-111.
777 ibid.
778 Globe and Mail, August 1st, 1967.
“It was a pity,” wrote Karada, “that the audience response which the group [Jefferson Airplane, who he actually enjoyed] inspired was frequently so superficial.

One revolting sub-teen stood onstage trying out a variety of Judy Garland gestures with no greater interest than having himself photographed. There were many like him; an objectionable distraction for those who had come to listen, and not to indulge in ludicrous self-exposure.779

Of course, not everyone was there to “indulge” in such theatrics. For many, this first chance to experience a full-on San Francisco-style acid party carried great significance. For Villager Judy Pocock, it was a threshold moment. “I do remember the first time I smoked marijuana,” she confided, “and it was David DePoe that gave it to me! And that was the summer of ’67. We had come down from [a summer camp] to go and see the Jefferson Airplane and the Grateful Dead.”780

Heralded as a “cultural revolution” in the Toronto Telegram, the O’Keefe shows are widely remembered by Villagers as a high point in their Yorkville experience, even though the shows took place some two kilometres south of the district.781 Getting high, hearing the blissed-out insanity that was the San Francisco sound, Village youth (and especially the musicians among them) found in that week-long engagement room to spread their wings, to explore, and to exaggerate their performances of Hippiedom, of Village identity.

Dancing in the aisles, even on the stage, throwing flowers at the musicians, stoning themselves on acid, pot and pills, the audience made the scene. The shows (which improved dramatically with each successive performance, leading up to a spectacular finale as all three bands jammed together onstage for 50 minutes on the final night) have

779 ibid.
780 Judy Pocock, Interview with Author, June 24th, 2006.
781 Quoted in Jennings, 164.
been collectively called the moment “the old Toronto Sound died,” as in the churning
wake of that O’Keefe run, dozens of psychedelic bands were formed. And, for Luke and
the Apostles, it marked the end – they disbanded in triumph after that last epic jam
session, as leader Luke Gibson (perhaps influenced by what he witnessed that week)
found himself drawn to more psychedelic material than his blues-based Apostles could
handle. Within a couple of weeks, he’d be asked to join the newly-formed Kensington
Market, a band which found itself almost immediately at the forefront of the Yorkville
psychedelic sound.782

Bikers, Villagers, and Outlaw Chic

Since the Wetzel “riot” of May, 1966, the Vagabonds motorcycle club had been
expanding its presence in the Village and, by the summer of 1967, were an integral part
of the Yorkville landscape.783 At first, their contributions to the community were
considered by many Villagers to have been utterly beneficial – in Frank Longstaff’s
account of the summer of 1966, the Vagabonds were described as the performers of “an
important service” in the Village. “Not only do they keep other troublesome elements
out, but in squabbles between different elements of Villagers they are often called in as
arbitrators and policemen.”784

But, as their interest in the district increased, so did reports of the more untenable
performances associated with the exaggerated masculinity of biker culture – especially

782 ibid, 163-4.
783 According to at least one account, however, this presence was sporadic and inconsequential. Miguel Maropakis claims that “I don’t remember bikers, OK? I lived here, and had so many places, and I don’t remember bikers! Never remember fights. I don’t know where these stories come from. I had the Bassetts [media moguls] in my place, I had the Eatons in my place... If there were these fights, all these elements, they wouldn’t have come around!” Miguel Maropakis, Interview with Author, March 29th, 2007.
784 Longstaff, 12.
intimidation, violence, and sexual assault. The Vagabonds, having taken over a house in the Annex “which serves as their headquarters and a place to take their girls for parties”, began to colonize other joints in the district, seeking to expand their area of influence. Over the summer of 1966, for example, they tried (unsuccessfully) to oust the university students from the Place Pigalle (or, the Pig) and turn it into their own haunt. Eventually, they gave up and would subsequently set up shop in the Matador. While one observer could optimistically claim that, by September, 1966, “they [Vagabonds and Villagers] live in a state of peaceful co-existence with co-operation but few friendships crossing the group lines,” there is no doubt from his report that the main reason they were tolerated was that their presence in the Village helped to demarcate the space as a Vagabond area – a trick which tended to keep out other biker clubs such as the feared Satan’s Choice or Paradise Riders. For many, the Vagabonds constituted the lesser of some fairly serious evils.\textsuperscript{785} But, come September, 1967, this would all melt away.

The First Annual National Convention of the Satan’s Choice motorcycle club was held over a weekend in late September, 1967, in a farmhouse in Markham Township, just Northeast of Toronto. Designed to “promote good will and sociability within the club”, the two-day meeting of the notorious club was also built around the inclusion of the Vagabonds, another Toronto club, into the fold. Some 300 members of the Ontario-based Satan’s Choice, representing 11 chapters including Oshawa, Kitchener, Windsor, Montreal, Peterborough, Guelph, St. Catherine’s and Kingston, were united for a weekend of partying, planning and discussion. On Saturday, an all-night bender was held in the farmhouse, to which the Vagabonds were invited, and a football game between the Toronto chapters of the Choice and the Vags was on the books for the next afternoon.

\textsuperscript{785}ibid.
Around midnight, some 23 policemen tried to break up the party, but were beaten back under a shower of beer bottles, rocks and drunken threats. They did, however, manage to come away with a case of beer and the cashbox from behind the makeshift bar inside, proof that the party was breaking more than noise regulations. According to the Toronto Star, the officers were “jostled, punched, kicked and spat on before they piled back into their cars and made what one officer said was ‘a tactical withdrawal.’” According to the Toronto Star, the officers were “jostled, punched, kicked and spat on before they piled back into their cars and made what one officer said was ‘a tactical withdrawal.’”  

Within 90 minutes, over 80 police officers from across the region had assembled enough force to knock out the two clubs in one fell swoop, now that they could be charged with liquor violations and assaulting police officers.

Back at the party, it seems that little was done to prepare for such a raid, even after the first officers had been chased away under a barrage of flying glass. But, sure enough, at 4:00 am on Sunday morning, the party came to an abrupt and absolute halt as some 30 police cruisers, manned by 84 officers representing nine municipalities, descended on the farmhouse in what was one of the biggest raids ever conducted in Canada. Sixty-four bikers (including nine women whose allegiances are unclear) were hauled off to jail, including Bernie Joseph Guindon, the Choice’s national president (and “supreme commander”). Among the items seized were weapons (ranging from sawed-off shotguns and revolvers to axe-handles and bike chains) and a giant stash of booze. Some marijuana was also found, although it was only attributed to two of the men specifically, while all 64 were charged with possession of dangerous weapons and being “found-ins” under the Liquor Control Act. When the smoke cleared, the arrested Club members faced a total of 131 charges.

The football game was cancelled.

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For the past few months, the Vagabonds had taken to cruising the Yorkville streets for kicks. They also sold drugs, provided muscle, and ran some prostitution rings. The Choice weren’t as dominant in the Village scene, but they certainly made their presence known whenever they felt the itch, gunning their bikes up and down the overcrowded, stifled streets. “For them, of course, it was all about predation, basically,” explains a former Village dealer. “They were there to exploit a market, you know, muscle their way around. It was a kind of, you were kind of dealing with the devil in a sense. But at the same time, we were trying to get this [LSD] experience to people. So, you found yourself agonizing about it a bit.”

The relations between bikers (hardly the poster boys for peace, love and good vibrations) and the hippie Villagers were often strained. Running as they did along class lines, these identity categories appeared incompatible on a pretty fundamental level. In many cases, that incompatibility kept bikers and hippies apart. “I mean, we didn’t have much to talk about,” explains a former Villager. “You just don’t share the values. But, of course, they engineered the importations; I mean, they brought in great whacks of pot, so there’d be that interaction.” Still, many hippies and bikers alike were willing to look past the chasm which separated them (ideologically, materially, philosophically) after word had come down from the Haight that hippies and bikers were working, living and partying together. As Murray McLauchlan recalls, beginning at or around the same time, “people in the Village attached a certain kind of glamour to bikers in those days.”

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787 Per DePoe: “No. There wasn’t much involvement there with Choice. It was the Vagabonds that hung around Yorkville, not the Satan’s Choice. We were, I think, scared of Satan’s Choice.” Interview with Author, December 20th, 2004.
788 Anonymous LSD Dealer, Interview with Author, October 13th, 2006.
789 ibid.
790 Jennings, 170.
At a month-long party out in sunny California, Ken Kesey and the Pranksters had indeed thrown one of their famous Acid Tests at which they dosed the Hell’s Angels (the most fearsome bikers in California, if not the whole of the United States at the time) in an effort to convince them that their countercultural pursuits were not mutually exclusive. “We’re in the same business,” the psychedelic prophet famously told the Angels. “You break people’s bones, I break people’s heads.” Even their language was shared: the Pranksters had borrowed the Angels’ term for a lousy ride (a bummer) to describe a bad trip on LSD. For the Angels, the motorcycle represented freedom, authenticity, community; for the Pranksters and a growing mass of hippies, it was acid.

To the shock and dismay of many observers, the Angels seemed willing to try this supposed wonder drug; but some of their fears were assuaged when, at least at first, tripping seemed to make the Angels peaceful. Allen Ginsberg notoriously referred to them as “angelic barbarians,” excited as was Kesey by what was thought to be the bikers’ primitive authenticity and utter disregard for order and convention. According to Charles Perry’s history of the Haight, the shock of witnessing the scene at Kesey’s ranch during that period of first contact between the Pranksters and those “angelic barbarians” was nothing short of paralyzing: “You’d come over the footbridge to Kesey’s wooded retreat, get your LSD-dosed pill, watch the Angels gang-bang some willing girl, chip in

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791 Quoted in Echols, *Shaky Ground*, 43.
793 Haight-based artist Jack Jackson confided to Alice Echols that the Angels never lost their violent, frightening edge, even when on the supposedly pacifying dope. “Biker guys [were] taking acid and smashing heads. It was like climbing in bed with Hitler.” Echols, *Shaky Ground*, 43.
for spaghetti, [or maybe] wander around the woods among the sculptures and unexpected microphones…”

In the Village, this merging of worlds took place at a slower rate, and minus the crucible of Kesey’s LSD-themed yard. However, it was happening through 1966 and into ’67, as a group of Vagabonds took up residence in a house on Hazelton, and began to hang out at the el Matador, an Avenue Road coffee house. Their leader, Edjo, was a familiar sight, cruising his big red convertible up and down the streets, looking for someone to cop his dope, or a few girls who might be interested in trying out their free love on him. “The Matador was the Bikers’ coffee house and clubhouse,” explains Wild Bill, a former biker. “Anytime you’d walk in there you’d see three-quarters of the guys in there were bikers.” But that other 25% of people were hippies, greasers or others who, taking a page out of Kesey’s book, felt unthreatened by the outlaw culture of the bikers.

In the context of a Bonnie and Clyde-infused hip scene – the angrily anti-establishment film’s mid-August Montréal première met thunderous support from hippies and politicos alike – violence, especially political violence, was harvesting consent, respect, and even a certain existential allure. As the gorgeous, youthful and vibrant criminals blazed across the screen late that summer, a braless Faye Dunaway sporting an

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795 Perry, 14-15.
797 Bob Brown, a Haight-based musician, tried to explain this apparent contradiction of peaceniks making connections with bikers: “I can only believe it was the fascination the weak feel for the strong… Maybe there was some sense that the Establishment had their cops, their thugs, and now we had ours.” Echols, Shaky Ground, 43-44.
equally historically-inaccurate béret, Warren Beatty embarrassing the establishment with a winning smile and a gun, the idea of violence seemed that much more viable, that much more fashionable to the gathering youth movements. As Pauline Kael argued in an extraordinary review of the film, the significance of the movie lay in the way it invited its audience to identify with its frustrated, disaffected, bored, murderous, and yet somehow glamorous anti-heroes. “By making us care about the robber lovers,” she concluded, “[Bonnie and Clyde] has put the sting back into death.”\textsuperscript{799} Their death, that is – the sting was never felt so keenly as in the movie’s final moments, as horrific hales of tommy-gunfire riddled the eponymous couple. Somehow, the good-guys killing the bad-guys here seemed disgusting, oppressive, ferocious in its excessive, uncompromising violence. Bonnie and Clyde were killers, sure, but they were also beautiful, young, sexy, unfettered and free. Until the establishment, cowardly hiding in the underbrush, ripped them apart in luxurious slow motion, those perfect bodies torn to shreds in a chorus of a thousand bullets.

If an existential search for authenticity underwrote the hip appreciation of identity, then revolutionary violence, if understood as an authentic expression of radical selfhood, may be considered distasteful, but can never be denied.\textsuperscript{800} The late 1960s saw the glamorization of violence (especially when directed against the establishment, however loosely defined) take hold of a variety of youth social movements, many of

\textsuperscript{799} Kael’s review, originally published in the \textit{New Yorker}, October 21\textsuperscript{st}, 1967, has been collected in the indispensable volume \textit{For Keeps: 30 Years at the Movies} (New York: Plume Books, 1996) 141-157.

\textsuperscript{800} Herbert Marcuse, font of inspiration for many politicos, made a clear distinction between the violence “of the oppressed and the oppressors.” As Jeremy Varon has pointed out (in his discussion of political violence in Germany and the United States in the post-hippie period), Marcuse “distinguished between reactionary and emancipatory violence” and, as such, provided a framework for justifiable (ie authentic) violence. If violence is employed as a means to free oneself (or others) from their alienation from freedom, from the shackles of oppression, then it is (while morally unfortunate) acceptable, even perhaps laudable. See Varon, \textit{Bringing the War Home} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) 188-9.
which had previously been focused upon the pursuit of peace through non-violent means. Into this context, hippie respect for (and pursuit of) the bikers fits somewhat more easily. Although recognized as dangerous, especially for women who sporadically fell into the horrific role of being an *unwilling* gang-bang participant, the bikers represented the radical refusal of normalcy that many Villagers professed to respect above all things. Theirs was an authentic performance – of working-class angst, perhaps; of primitive masculinity, radical id-fulfillment, anti-establishmentarian self-interest. Frightening, mysterious and darkly attractive, bikers were thus mythologized as fellow travellers in the great pursuit of living otherwise.

By no means were all Villagers over the moon about the presence of bikers in their scene. Ambivalent Villagers often avoided them, but knew that to be tight with these hulking dudes was to have achieved a certain status in the community. DePoe, Riggan, and Chapman, for example, all hung with bikers and made a point of trying to include them in Village politics. Indeed, some very colourful characters became known to the Villagers after the Vagabonds began to integrate into the scene.

Murray McLauchlan lived on Hazleton with this guy called Moses, a member of the Vagabonds, who was sort of a philosopher type. He was a deep thinker, y’know? He read, which was unusual for a biker. Every winter he would take his Harley apart in the front room of the house and fix it all up and then put it back together. He had this mighty Wurlitzer in his kitchen with the most amazing collection of 45s on the planet. Blues, y’know, just an amazing collection: early rock’n’roll and R&B, and all kinds of stuff. And he just played whatever he wanted in his kitchen.

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801 It should be noted that the glamorization of biker toughness had legs back to the 1950s, and persistent media attention on these “rebels” had helped to foster unearned reputations and false images. As chronicler of the California Hell’s Angels in the mid-1960s, Hunter S. Thompson was shocked by the degree to which the bikers *acted* like bikers. “The Hell’s Angels as they exist today were virtually created by *Time*, *Newsweek*, and the *New York Times*”, he concluded. *Hell’s Angels: A Strange and Terrible Saga* (New York: Random House, 1967) 37.

And yet, these lively characters were also part of a gang structure which was well-known to be involved in violence of the worst sort.\footnote{As Alice Echols has pointed out (with regard to the biker-hippie alliance in the Haight), “the Angels, whatever their individual talents, acted as a group.” Echols, \textit{Shaky Ground}, 43.} McLauchlan was under no illusions about what his roommate was involved in: “They knew there was money to be made in Yorkville, with a healthy market in grass and speed… Make no mistake about it, your average motorcycle gang \textit{is} a criminal organization.”\footnote{Jennings, 170-1.}

Gang splashes (as gang bangs (and rapes) were known to Villagers at the time) cannot be divorced from other biker involvement in the Yorkville scene. \textit{Wild Bill’s} offhand definition of the practice suggests just how routine such violent exploitation of hippie women may have been for some Village bikers.

The splash thing… they would literally, four or five guys were sharing a place, and one of the guys would pick up a girl. Well, if you’re gonna bring her back over to the house, we’re gonna all have fun with her. Get her stoned, and splash her.\footnote{\textit{Wild Bill}, Interview with Author, March 11th, 2005.}

The Diggers’ and other male Villagers’ willful ignorance of this side of the biker scene remains confounding today. DePoe doesn’t pretend that rape and sexual exploitation wasn’t going on between the bikers and other Villagers, but never suggests that much was done to stop it from happening.

The Vagabonds. I mean, they did things that we didn’t like. Like gang rape. You know? They would call girls a \textit{splasher}. And they’d take her to their clubhouse and they’d, ten guys would, y’know, basically fuck her, and that’s what they did. Right? So I mean that stuff we didn’t like.\footnote{David DePoe, Interview with Author, December 20th, 2004.}

Interestingly, Depoe’s close friend and fellow Digger Clayton Ruby doesn’t recall bikers as being of much importance in the Village scene. “I think they wanted to exploit the
women,” he recalled, but he remembered there being “no [sexual violence] that I would see.” However, his reasoning as to why the Bikers likely didn’t have to resort to rape seems misguided.

There was lots of sex everywhere. So, the need for sexual violence people would scratch their heads and say: Why, what’s the point? Go meet somebody down the block, somebody that’s interested.807

The reality was that over the following years, rape, gang splashes, and a variety of other degrading and outrageous acts of violence against women were indeed a part of the Village scene.

Bikers, often as part of initiation and hazing rituals, would use women from the Village as entertainment, preying on their youth, relative innocence, and what they hoped was a naïve toeing of the free love line.808 If the biker philosophy was “booze, fuck and ride,” as one Vagabond member put it in late 1967, all were expressions of identity and status – how much could you drink, ride, fuck?809 Wild Bill refuses the term splash, but confirms the rest.

With sex, with girls, I’ll admit there were certain things done. What got my attention was that you used the word splashes. The word wasn’t splashes. [That word] comes from the hippie kids. The girls would, literally, if you had a place to crash, would put out. Now, you can have a girl come and stay in your apartment, two girls, three girls, their friends, they’ll come to your apartment thinking that by three of them coming to one guy’s apartment they’re protected. That they’d protect each other. It don’t work that way. Because [once] I walked girls home, three or four girls together, from the Village scene and ended up screwing all three of them.810

Safety from sexual violence, then, wasn’t found in numbers. And, its pervasiveness is apparent in all of the material at our disposal when studying the post-1966 Village scene.

808 Smart and Jackson, 19.
809 ibid, 35.
810 Wild Bill, Interview with Author, March 11th, 2005.
In one of the few extant contemporaneous interviews with a Village biker, violence and sex were indeed foregrounded, even conflated, in the discussion. The interview subject, described as a working-class, eastern European immigrant, explained that biker violence, including sexual violence, was always about status. “The girls we picked up were horrible,” he confessed.

[But,] it was a desperation type of thing. You have to participate in sex to keep up. Toughness was important – being able to show scars, carry around knives and beat up guys. When you have a car, you drive around and you pick up some sluts – basically they were sluts. […] And you have a little party, not much of a party, just where you can get drunk so you don’t see how ugly the broad is. The broad is also drunk and she doesn’t know what is happening to her either.811

With everyone over-drinking to insulate themselves from their mutual disgust, this was sex for the sake of sex; violence for violence’s sake. More about peer pressure than satisfaction, at least in this formulation, the girls were objects used to promote male power within the organization; this was sex to impress, to justify their presence in the biker club. Certainly the epithet “slut” – used here to in some way blame the young woman for what was done to her – seems misplaced when one learns that this apparently sexually promiscuous girl still has to be obliterated on booze before she will submit to their advances.

Even the Voice of the Annex, a community newspaper prepared by and for the neighbourhood immediately to the west of the Village, openly reported the presence of biker gang-bang pads on their blocks, whose residents were "using strong-arm methods to extort money and girls from Yorkville Hippies."812 This commodification of women, and the open expectation that trade in money and women could be equated somehow, colours

811 Smart and Jackson, 22.
numerous such reports from the period. Women within the biker fold were often treated as mere property, and by were subject to severe repercussions if they ever tried to escape their man. A 1969 report (compiled from information gathered during the winter 1967-68) outlined the kind of horrors perpetrated upon one woman who tried to cut out of the Vagabonds.

The motorcycle girls are vulnerable if they are abandoned by their ‘old man’ because they face the alternative of cutting their association with the gang or possibly being gang splashed. There is kudos [sic] associated with unusual sexual practices such as oral-genital stimulation and intercourse in groups of three to fifteen people. One girl was forcibly taken by 12 motorcycle gang members to Windsor where she was gang splashed three times in 36 hours. The resulting extensive vaginal hemorrhaging over several weeks may have caused permanent damage.813

According to Village youth-worker June Callwood, such an outrage was “common,” but only very rarely reported to police, parents, hospitals, anyone. “You get raped by a million people,” she explained, “and the last thing you want is that anyone knows. It’s your shame that it happened. Well, that culture prevailed at the time. You got gang-raped and you didn’t tell anybody.”814 Such a culture of silence was exacerbated by the apparent alliance between hippies and bikers. How does the “do your own thing” philosophy fit into a context in which my “thing” is gang-raping women?

The Markham Convention of September 1967 was not exempt from this dubious policy of conscripting Yorkville women for gang rapes. In fact, shortly before the raid on the farmhouse, an 18-year old woman was discovered lying naked, semi-conscious and in serious condition in a Markham Rd. ditch near the scene. Found by a passing motorist, she was rushed to Scarborough General Hospital where she was found to have severe

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813 Smart and Jackson, 20-21.
internal injuries, the result of a brutal gang rape. All she was able to tell police was that she remembered nothing after leaving Yorkville to go to the party. Her boyfriend had reported her missing just around the time that she was found. One of the members interviewed by the press explained that the only reason only around 85 Club members were there at the time of the second raid (some 20 managed to escape, many crawling on their bellies through fields) was that most of the partiers had gone down to Yorkville to “pick up something to eat and pick up some fresh girls”.815

It must be remembered that rape was hardly the sole domain of the bikers in the Village. For example, the rape of an 18-year old woman in a Prince Arthur Street flophouse had recently raised the attention of humanitarians, media and Councilors alike at the time of the biker outrage in Markham. The young woman had been walking along Yorkville Avenue looking to meet a girlfriend when she was grabbed by a 22-year-old man and brought back to the nearby house. She was raped in a locked room, upstairs, screaming loudly enough to alert neighbours to the assault. While the dozen or so others living in the house attempted to break down the door to the room, she managed to get free, escaping to the street where she hailed a taxi to bring her south to College Street and the police. Everyone in the house, even those who had tried to save her from her attacker, were busted for vagrancy, and spent the night in jail.816

In the ensuing weeks, attention in the courts and among City Council members to the possibility of widespread sexual violence in the Village picked up. Young women, often picked up on vagrancy charges, were routinely sent home to their parents under the

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condition that they would never return to Yorkville again.\textsuperscript{817} In early October, following a Ravi Shankar concert at which some 2000 Villagers reveled in his suddenly hip take on Indian Classical music, a 13-year-old girl was busted on drug charges, fuelling the debate.\textsuperscript{818} By November, the \textit{Globe and Mail} was reporting on what it feared was rampant prostitution in the Village as young women had no other means to make ends meet. As ever more young people seemed to be disappearing into the vortex at Yorkville and Avenue Road, anxious parents were often seen wandering the streets holding photographs of their missing children, frequently shockingly young.\textsuperscript{819} Taking advantage of the apparently lucrative situation, a Toronto-based private detective agency began running ads on the CHFI radio station under the slogan: “Lost your son or daughter in Yorkville? We’ll find them for you.”\textsuperscript{820}

\textbf{The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy: Violence and Authentic Village Identity}

On the evening of May the 10\textsuperscript{th}, a 37-year-old father of four named William Brigaitis was murdered in front of the Penny Farthing after a brief skirmish. Following a dinner for insurance underwriters at a nearby hotel, Brigaitis and four colleagues had decided to walk through Yorkville, apparently “to see how the Villagers live.” Along the way, the men entered into a confrontation with a pair of teenage boys – it was never made fully clear as to who started the scrap. At some point during the altercation, one of the teens jumped onto a three-foot brick wall and, from this elevated position, kicked Brigaitis in the head. Reeling from the blow, Brigaitis dropped hard. Too stunned to put

\textsuperscript{817} \textit{Toronto Star}, October 18\textsuperscript{th}, 1967. In this particular example, “Margaret”, a young woman, is said to be heading home to “forgiving parents” after her run in with the law.  
\textsuperscript{818} \textit{Toronto Star}, October 7\textsuperscript{th}, 1967.  
\textsuperscript{819} \textit{Globe and Mail}, November 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 1967.  
\textsuperscript{820} \textit{Toronto Star}, October 28\textsuperscript{th}, 1967.
his hands out to break his fall, he struck his head against the concrete on his way down, fracturing his skull and causing bleeding in his brain. As the assailant ran off, chased by the victim’s friends and some other witnesses, Brigaitis’s limp body was carried into the coffee house. He never regained consciousness, and was subsequently pronounced dead on arrival at Toronto General Hospital.821

The following day, City Council members were offered what stands as the most remarkable suggestion for legislating youth out of Yorkville. Citing Brigaitis’s awful fate, Controller Herbert Orliffe concluded that Torontonians (and Canadians in general) needed to go further to take back control of their teenagers, and (by implication) their streets. Something had to be done to “help these undisciplined young people,” he explained. And so, although he admitted that this solution might not “fit in well with our democratic way of life,” nevertheless he proposed that Toronto “send these people to work camps.” His plan was simple: if unemployed youths drifted into Yorkville, they would become eligible for a “draft,” “just like the U.S. Army does it.” Then, they would be sent to camps, where they would be instructed in a “useful trade” and where they could “work off their frustrations.”822

Although Orliffe’s suggestion was generally disregarded as extremist, its significance was not lost on Villagers sensitive to the idea that the Brigaitis murder was being used as an example of Village reality. One Villager (writing under the name Kama Gilboe) suggested in a letter to the editor that Orliffe’s remarks were merely “asinine” since murder was by no means a commonplace occurrence in the Village.823 Not only that, argued Gilboe, but “the young man who has been jailed is not a ‘villager’ and does

823 The Sanskrit word *Kama* signifies *desire*, often sexual – this is a probable nickname.
not characterize what the Yorkvillians believe in and stand for.” The murderer’s performance was all wrong – although the incident did indeed take place in Yorkville, in front of one of its most popular joints, and although the battle was between a young man and an older, adult man, this time it wasn’t to be connected to Village identity. It wasn’t, one was reminded, “true” Village behaviour.

But violence was, for at least some of the young people frequenting the scene, a reality, and a vital identity performance. As one greaser put it, “I love fighting – I can be mean and I can be good.” For this young man, the basic moral and ethical divide was most starkly proclaimed through the relationship between might and right. “You can tell by fighting whether you are right or wrong,” he declared. “If you lose, you are wrong.” Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the young man believed that “fighting [was] one way for the greaser to establish his identity.” But, that identity, in the context of a developing middle-class hippie identity, was simply untenable. The lines between “true” Village performances and inauthentic expressions of identity were deepened, exaggerated.

Ron Haggart, by now known to all as a staunch defender of the hippies and their Village, penned an editorial condemning outbursts such as Orliffe’s, and suggesting that the real problem with Yorkville was everyone but the Villagers themselves. Citing the lamentable failure of the Fish Net, the recent refusal of the Diggers’ request for a shelter for Village youth, and persistently ignorant editorializing from the Toronto Telegram, Haggart concluded that: “Yorkville may eventually become the crime belt and the centre for bums and hoodlums that the magistrates, the politicians, and the crown attorneys

\[824\] *Toronto Star*, May 26th, 1967.
\[825\] Smart and Jackson, 24.
thought it was a year ago… But the people to blame will not be the kids of Yorkville, who tried so desperately to make Yorkville their own.”

Instead, Haggart argued that the self-fulfilling prophesy forwarded by those who repeatedly associated Yorkville with violence, vice, and criminality was the reason violence, vice and criminality were on the rise in the Village. Accepting wholesale the assumption that authentic Village identity was the hippie performance, and thus refusing the presence of non-hippies as aberrant, Haggart stands by the vision of Yorkville as a hippie haven marred by the intrusion of others. “If Yorkville now falls apart,” he chided, “if Yorkville now fails as a centre for peaceful and passive nonconformity, essentially controlled by young people themselves, a great deal of the blame will rest on an arrogant officialdom unable to distinguish in its own middle-aged mind between hippies and hoodlums.”

For the next six months, William Brigaitis’s murderer, a 17-year old named Ziggy Nowoszynski, sat in prison, charged with manslaughter. Although young, at no point was he fashioned into a *cause célèbre* for Villagers. He was an outsider, a teenager from the Danforth area of Toronto (an immigrant- (especially Greek-) heavy enclave east of Yorkville); although never referred to by this name, he fits the general description of greaser, and was treated as such. Even though he and his comrade both testified that they were being threatened by Brigaitis and his four friends, and that the men had come to Yorkville specifically to start a fight with Villagers, it seemed no one believed his testimony. When both of the teenagers testified that Nowoszynski had kicked the man out

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827 His name is given differently in each publication. In the *Toronto Star* he is Zigmonde Nowoszynski, while in the *Globe and Mail* he is Zigmund Nowosynski. I have chosen to go with the former spelling.
of fear for his own safety after being cornered by Brigaitis and being called a “punk”, there was no public outcry, and no Villagers came to his defense. And when Nowoszynski was finally found guilty in mid-October by the Supreme Court, there were no protests on his behalf, and no editorials decrying his scapegoating.

Given the extraordinary coverage of the Village and all things connected to it, it is surprising that this case received so little press attention. Apart from the initial flurry of interest in the days after the event itself, little was written on it in the major papers until the trial itself, and then only short, matter-of-fact articles were slipped in towards the back of the editions. While Hans Wetzel had the details of his case (hearsay and otherwise) outlined by champions like Ron Haggart, and had his life story laid out for a wide audience in lengthy articles, Nowoszynski’s biography remains a mere sketch. He was 17 (or was it 18? It seems the newspapers were unsure). He was on probation at the time of the altercation with Brigaitis (but for what?). He was from the working-class Danforth area of Toronto. He was named Zigmond (or Zigmone?) Nowoszynski (or Nowoszynski?). The one thing about him that was most loudly proclaimed, that seemed indisputable, was that he didn’t belong in Yorkville. (“There are two kinds of people who frequent the Village,” wrote Yorkville poet Eric Layman in late-August, 1968, “those who belong there; and those who don’t but think they do.”828) Ultimately, all that was made public knowledge about this case was that a teenage boy came to the Village, got into a fight, killed a man with one kick, and was completely disowned by the community. As Kama Gilboe proclaimed, regardless of what he may have thought about himself and his place in the scene, Nowoszynski was “not a Villager.”

828 Satyrday, Volume 3 Number 5, August 1968.
Greasers and bikers, and working-class youth more generally, tended to look at the world with less a view toward entitlement than did their middle-class hippie counterparts. The police and municipal authorities were more explicitly the adversary of the predominantly working-class bikers and greasers – nothing was expected from them by way of concession, and, perhaps, little was deserved. But hippie youth, raised as many of them were in middle-class homes, had come to see the world through a different lens. Hippie youth culture was, as Rev. James Smith pointed out, much more likely to resist municipal sanctions on their versions of freedom than were other youth subcultures, believing that their wants and desires were plainly entitled to them.829 This self-righteousness, exaggerated through the frustrated battles over “unfair” jail terms for possession of illicit drugs, represents a key facet of the peculiar hippie response to regulations and convention. Whereas working-class youth maintained a simmering, mutual dislike and distrust towards the Toronto police, the hippies chose to engage them openly, determinedly, as corrupt, unfair, and violent, further tempting police attention.

Sociology student Frank Longstaff Jr. had argued, his position endorsed by Ron Haggart as “a sensible conclusion”, that “as for the Villagers’ attitude toward police, it did not have the same fear and avoidance patterns as found among slum youth.”

Villagers are more likely to taunt the police than to avoid them, and when they feel the police are intimidating them, they organize committees, stage protest marches, and inform the newspapers. In other words, they use avenues of (middle-class) protest that lower class teenagers are not aware of or would not employ.830

Longstaff’s view, again, reifies the hippie as middle-class, peaceful, and intelligent while setting up any other Village youth as inauthentic, outsiders, pretenders to the true Village

829 Smith, 8.
830 Quoted in Haggart’s column, Toronto Star, May 17th, 1967.
identity. Not only that, but he refers to a Village “attitude” toward police, as though the true Villagers acted as one. Still, his construction harmonizes with the story of the clash between Nowoszynski and Brigaitis – for while hippie Hans Wetzel was turned into a martyr for the cause of Village identity and lifestyle, greaser Ziggy Nowoszynski was left alone, hanging on a limb.

Perhaps this is why Nowoszynski felt so abandoned that, while awaiting his sentencing, he removed his reading glasses, broke one of the lenses, and tried to tear open his wrists. A guard, hearing him moaning in pain and fear, found the teenager lying in a pool of blood. Nowoszynski survived the attempt, only to be sentenced two days later to four years in prison for manslaughter. Although it was generally agreed that he hadn’t meant to kill Brigaitis, he had intended to kick him. During the sentencing it was revealed that the probation officer who had visited Nowoszynski the day before the suicide attempt had warned officials at the time that he had concerns the young man would try to kill himself. Nothing was done to protect him.

Moreover, instead of being pitied, a bandaged Nowsynski was admonished for his attempted suicide. “I am giving you the opportunity to learn a trade,” scolded Justice Eric Moorhouse while sentencing the 17-year old to four years in the penitentiary. “Don’t feel sorry for yourself;” he advised. But the tragedy of Ziggy Nowoszynski, who took a life for no good reason and paid with so much of his own, doesn’t end in the Kingston Pen. In early October, 1972, a few months following his release, Nowoszynski attended a house party on Gloucester Street, less than a kilometre south of Yorkville. At the party,

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Nowoszynski was handed a .22-calibre rifle to admire. The loaded gun went off, and the 22-year old would die from his wound.  

**White Slavery Just North of Bloor: Narratives of Sexual Danger**

In the mid-1950s Herbert Marcuse, German émigré and soon-to-be hip philosopher *par excellence*, prefigured the embattled role liberated sexuality would play in the coming counter-hegemonic struggle: “In a repressive order which enforces the equation between normal, socially useful, and good,” he predicted, “the manifestations of pleasure for its own sake must appear as *fleurs du mal*.” Indeed, the 1960s saw both an increase in youth activities which appeared to be chasing the “pleasure principle” and a proportional increase in often hysterical reactions from the established order, unable or unwilling to comprehend the refusal of the equation between *socially useful* and *normal*.

Throughout 1967 we have seen various incarnations of this hysteria, this confusion, this often over-the-top rhetoric and condemnation of hip behaviour. But, just as this frenzy managed to maintain distinctions between the degeneration of middle-class youth and the (less-unexpected) corruption of Others, the gendered response to hip Yorkville is equally uneven. While men, the archetypal hip figures, the expected Villagers, and certainly the expected embodiment of the category “Hippie”, were castigated for their apparent refusals of work, pride in appearance, and masculine responsibility, women were repeatedly constructed as victims, powerless to resist the magnetic sway of hip male culture.

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832 *Toronto Star*, October 2, 1972. He is here listed as Zigmone Nowosynski.
Late autumn saw a spate of articles published in all three major newspapers exploring narratives of sexual danger in the Village. In each, the dominant themes were older (male) hippies using drugs to lure young, otherwise uncorrupted girls (read: virgins) into their “pads”, stoning them on pot or LSD, and making them their sexual toys. In each article, the young women are presumed to have little sense, few tools at their disposal, and a marked inability to make decisions for themselves. They stray innocently into Yorkville, drawn by the docile allure of hip, and they leave (if they leave) fallen, corrupted, damaged.834

Drugs played a significant role in this construction. The repeated warning that hippies would lure young girls to their apartments with the promise of dope cut two ways: on the one hand it emphasized youth fascination with dope that had become endemic to Toronto over the past few years, and on the other it played on fears that otherwise innocent girls were making decisions while suffering drug-induced incapacitation. Both of these sentiments were no doubt true, inasmuch as many young girls were indeed coming to Yorkville throughout the 60s, but especially after 1965, drawn by the promise of sex and drugs. And, many teenage girls were indeed trying pot and sex in Yorkville, and often with men who were older and more experienced. As Satyrday complained, “the parties that are so concerned with the widespread use of pot and L.S.D. […] blame the cheap movie image of the corner dope pusher for seducing the minds of twelve year old innocents. [But] he is, as far as we’re concerned, a friendly neighbourhood figure, or at worst an opportunist.”835 However, the way the newspapers framed such activities failed to appreciate that perhaps a great many of these young

834 Recall Judith Walkowitz’s work on the construction of Whitechapel as a “labyrinth” in which young women become trapped, lose their agency, and wind up destroyed. Walkowitz, 100.
women wanted to get stoned and laid. Because their desires, decisions and intelligence were assumed to be either wrong, naïve or drug-induced, they were conveniently stripped of their power in media frames which followed the line that “hippies” were corrupting “girls.”

Catherine Carstairs, in her recent book on the social history of narcotics in Canada (pre-1961), explores the ways in which “white slavery” narratives were employed in the 1920s to vilify Chinese Canadians. It is remarkable how the race-based anxiety that she describes can be used to illustrate the discourse of hip sexual danger so prevalent throughout 1967 and beyond.

The ‘victims’ of the ‘evil Chinese drug traffickers’ were always young, and the narratives of their corruption fed into long-standing fears about the dangers posed by urban environments and unsupervised leisure… Notions of female vulnerability allowed authors to portray some women as blameless victims of ‘drug addiction disease.’ Many stories of female drug users were copied directly from ‘white slavery’ narratives – a young woman was taken in by an older person, drugged, and then forced to earn a living through prostitution.836

In a curious update on those old fears that used to keep anti-drug activists like Emily Murphy awake at night and hunched over their typewriters, such frames reinforced the notion that Yorkville’s foreignness was inherently wicked. While Murphy, writing in the early 1920s, vilified Chinese Canadian men by propagating the myth that they used opium to turn white women into drug-addled sex slaves, Don DeLaplante of the Globe and Mail disparaged hippies in much the same way in late autumn, 1967. “Older hippies,” he reported in a seminal front page exposé, “are preying on the girls as a form of free sex and leading them into prostitution.”837

836Catherine Carstairs, Jailed for Possession (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006) 21.
DeLaplante’s article is dominated by alarming quotations from police officers, each one reinforcing the claim that young girls (helpless, pathetic, and immature) were bound to suffer sexual exploitation in the Village. Deputy Chief Bernard Simmonds offered an uncomplicated vision of the degenerative powers of the Village: “The real evil of Yorkville is what is happening to these young girls… They come to the Village as good kids, mixed up perhaps, many from fine homes, and these beatniks grab them and within two days they are ruined.” For his part, the Sergeant in charge of Yorkville’s plainclothes unit was dramatic and pointed in his explanation: “The course a girl runs in Yorkville is very short.”

The word “ruined” here is, we can assume, code for the loss of female virginity. The lingering obsession with protecting virginal women from the crude advances of men may seem antiquated today, but it was still a potent rallying cry in late 1967. DeLaplante’s article was but one of a series of reports on the sexual danger young girls faced from the inherent evil of hippie depravity. The persistent depiction of Yorkville men as rapists – or, at the very least, sexual opportunists – seems predicated on this notion of female vulnerability and inherent physical weakness. In most reports from police officers, for example, the young girl over whom all of this concern is being lavished is reduced to a nameless, powerless sex object. A Toronto Star article from early November reads as a bleak post mortem assessment of the scene. “The once colourful Village,” it read, “is now a place where girls are sold for prices ranging from a few cents

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838 ibid.
839 This language is, of course, not new to the 1960s. Carolyn Strange, in her study of women in Toronto around the turn of the century, uncovered a variety of white slavery narratives, all connected to anxiety over the entrance of young women into the workforce. Toronto’s Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880-1930 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998). See especially pages 98-103, and compare the language of Rev. Shearer (a famous propagator of the white slavery line), to what we see on display in discussions of women in Yorkville. For example: “Let women accept these jobs [and] the innocent lambs go blindly to the slaughter.” Strange, 99.
to $15 by boyfriends who no longer want to sleep with them or who need the money for something more important.” Drug-based sex slavery defined the frame.  

Accelerating such fears were the climbing numbers of runaway teenage girls across Canada, and the assumption that a great many of them had slipped into the Village vortex. By early November, Toronto police were searching the Village for some 123 girls under the age of 16, and another 73 girls between the ages of 16 and 20, all of whose parents or wards had reported them missing and heading for Yorkville. What would they find when they arrived there? One police officer emphasized the evil inherent in the Village community, tarring them with a wide brush: in Yorkville, sex is “a communal affair. The girls are fed a little marijuana and in a few days they are passed around to everybody.” By August, 1968, Satyrday ran an article exposing the problem of the exploitation of runaways, admonishing those “exploiters” for their negative presence in the Village: “To entice a young, uninformed, un-self-sufficient [sic] person into using methedrine, being a prostitute or even worse, the exploiter relies on his victim’s ignorance and inexperience,” explained Eric Layman. Having established the aggressor/victim frame, Layman divides the victims into two categories: “Those enticing young people into crimes like petty thievery, etc., can already be punished for contributing to juvenile delinquency; but turning a young girl into a prostitute or a speed

841 In the U.S., by way of comparison, the Federal Bureau of Investigation was searching for some 90,000 runaways in 1966. In Europe, some 10,000 were reportedly on the road, many of them headed for India. See Roszak, 33-35.
843 Globe and Mail, November 2nd, 1967. By contrast, in the much wider and more complicated Haight-Ashbury scene, such fears were being expressed from the inside as well as the outside. Hippies themselves were releasing missives about the sexual dangers faced by women, such as this famous (anonymously released) example from August, 1967: “Pretty little 16-year-old middle-class chick comes to the Haight to see what it's all about and gets picked up by a 17-year-old street dealer who spends all day shooting her full of speed again and again, then feeds her 3000 mikes [sic] and raffles her temporarily unemployed body for the biggest Haight Street gang bang since the night before last.” http://www.redhousebooks.com/galleries/haight/haightHate.htm [Last Accessed, May 5th, 2007]
freak is something far worse.” In Layman’s view, a view we have seen echoed by the media and municipal authorities, the danger of Village exploitation was gendered. Boys might end up in prison, having been pulled into “petty” criminal activities; but for girls, “something far worse” lay in wait.

Rather, the media (and municipal) freak-out over the denigration of female sexuality in the Village was more likely tied to the wider disgust over the liberated sexuality practiced among youth more generally. The Globe and Mail, in an attempt to offer these disenfranchised women a chance to defend themselves and their decisions, printed brief vignettes on five Villagers. After a lead paragraph explaining the stakes involved here (some 196 runaway girls in Yorkville, 50 active carriers of venereal disease, marijuana charges, vagrancy charges, etc), the floor was given to the young women. The first, a 16-year old from Oakville (a Toronto Suburb) named Beth, explained that “I just like to ball, and I don’t care what anybody thinks. I’m never insulted when a Villager asks me. I like to give… Everybody balls here. It’s quite a common thing. I mean, sex is enjoyable, so why not do it? At least we’re honest about it.” Linda, also 16, offered a different perspective, claiming that she had yet to sleep with anyone in the Village, even after having been there for 6 months: “The boys will leave you alone, if that’s what you want. Even if you crash where they’re staying. A lot of them respect you for it.” Karen, a 17-year-old from Sault Ste-Marie (some 800 km from Toronto) complained that she was broke, hungry, and sick. “I haven’t had a meal in two days,” she complained. But, she explained that “I don’t intend to go sleeping around and there are a

844 Saturday, Volume 3, Number 5, August 1968.
845 Although instances of sexual slavery and prostitution were a part of the Yorkville scene – there can be no doubt that opportunism and exploitation were as present in this community as in any community of young people, anywhere – it must be noted that in none of my interviews was this point recollected, or even volunteered at all.
lot of girls who feel as I do.” Susan, also 17, had crossed the country from Vancouver to make the Yorkville scene. She claimed not to be worried about venereal disease, even though she was sexually free. “It happens. That’s the chance you take with free love… Pregnancy? Now that’s a problem… When you’re pregnant, the people here won’t have anything to do with you. But, they’ll welcome you back after it’s over. Sure, the girls come back – and do it again.” Finally, Rita, whose age was not provided, was not a Villager, *per se*. Rather, she was from Forest Hill (a wealthy Toronto Suburb). She liked to sneak away to Yorkville to find what she felt wasn’t available at home. She agreed with Linda that in Yorkville, one didn’t have to sleep with everyone if one didn’t want to. “I don’t do anything if I don’t like the guy,” she maintained.846

This glimpse into the scene suggests, right there on the page below the headline “Wasn’t Molested, But She Came Close,” that the supposed universality of female sexual exploitation, prostitution at the hands of villainous hippies, and drug-fueled mindlessness was more a product of panic than truth. Of the five young women, none suggested that she had been the victim of Yorkville’s sexual exploitation machine – rather, all conveyed the relative *safety* of the scene, and the freedom that they felt therein to “ball,” or not to ball, and to choose their partners deliberately. If the *Globe* was looking for evidence to support the rising anxiety over sexual danger in the Village, they didn’t find it.

Still, City Hall was on the alert, and in reaction to what they had read in the *Globe* on November 2nd, a few distressed council members loudly proclaimed their renewed intentions to rid Yorkville of its hippies. One Controller, Margaret Campbell, expressed her exasperation at the thought of such activity among these children: Yorkville, she declared, represents “something sick in our society.” The question of whether to raise the

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juvenile age of consent from 16 to 18 was tabled, as was the notion of instituting a
“Yorkville curfew” of 6 p.m. for anyone under the age of 21. “We should be getting rid
of this element,” raged Allan Lamport, “not making a haven for them.”

A Hip Community Centre, the Drop-Out’s ‘Granite Club’

As The Church took on the role of community centre to an expanding Yorkville
youth culture, it underwent a parallel transformation in the eyes of its observers. Now as
much a contested territory as Yorkville itself, St-Paul’s Avenue Road United Church had
taken on the identity of a countercultural space, and with it all the trappings that such a
distinction entails. Addiction Research Foundation fieldworker Gopala Alampur
remembered the Church as a key site for Yorkville activity in the winter of 1967-68.

Yes, the Church. All the time. Well, the Church was more like, not a
religious place... They’re not trying to preach, or anything. It’s a Drop-In
centre... They allowed you to smoke – not pot probably, but there was
always an occasional guy lighting up – and then they played beautiful
music and they danced away all night long. A community centre. A place
people can go when it snows, or [when there’s] wind and rain, there’s a
place people can go and seek shelter.”

As it was with Yorkville, hanging around at The Church was itself becoming understood
as a countercultural activity. Some greasers continued to frequent the centre, but there
was no mistaking that the Church was known as a hippie space. Of course, as it was
with Yorkville before it, this countercultural activity was inevitably based upon
assumptions about drug use.

\*ibid.\*\*Gopala Alampur, Interview with Author, February 14th, 2005.
\*To some extent they still came to the church, and I was able to talk to them and relate to them.
I’d say ‘guys this is a good thing and we need to respect everybody and we need to respect you and you
need to respect us and we’re here to just be together,’ so on and so forth.” David DePoe, Interview with
Famously, and somewhat unfairly, called a “dope dealer’s post” by Chief of Police James Mackey, and derided in a well-publicized sermon in front of a neighbouring congregation as “the Church that sold dope,” the Drop-In Centre and Rev. James Smith were, by 1967, under increasing fire for what was seen as a tacit encouragement of a Village drug and sex culture.\(^{850}\) The \textit{Toronto Star}’s David Allen, in a series of exposés on Yorkville in early spring, argued that, along with nearby Webster’s all-night restaurant, the Church was “drawing the drug and flesh peddlers” to the district.\(^{851}\)

Although he concedes that teenagers hanging around the Church were more than likely stoned at least some of the time – drug use was pervasive in the Yorkville scene, and the Church was never going to be an entirely drug-free zone – David DePoe claims that drug dealing out of the basement was explicitly \textit{verboten} by the Diggers and other hip leaders. Still, one anonymous LSD dealer recalls finding his audience in the area around Webster and Avenue Road (in other words, around the Church): “In those early days when I had first turned on […] I started out dealing, really, on the streets… I can recall doing my deals around the Church, around the Mont Blanc, the Matador, the Upper Crust… [Smitty] wasn’t allowing anything, but he also wasn’t strip-searching everyone coming and going, so…”\(^{852}\)

A vivid illustration of both the sincerity of Smith’s efforts to keep the centre clear of drugs and of the kind of resistance he faced in maintaining his policy can be found in Mike Waage’s recollections of his own firing for drug use. Working at the time in a variety of positions at the Church, and formally under a contract with the CSO, Waage was, by late 1967, a central figure among the staff of the centre. But, torn as he was

\(^{850}\) Smith, 10-11.
\(^{851}\) \textit{Toronto Star}, April 8\textsuperscript{th}, 1967.
\(^{852}\) Anonymous LSD Dealer, Interview with Author, October 13\textsuperscript{th}, 2006.
between his responsibilities at the Church and his own beliefs and practices, Waage finally reached a point where he was no longer in line with what Smith saw as the direction of the centre. “I was doing LSD one night,” he explains. “[It was] a whole bunch of us, most of the staff actually. It was this dilemma: [Smith] would keep us on if we promised we would never do it again, and my attitude was simply, ‘How do I know if I’m never gonna do it again?’ And so I got fired, whereas the people who said ‘of course not’ – but probably did it again promptly afterwards – didn’t [get fired].”

DePoe recalls that not just the Diggers, but much of the Yorkville scene looked to Smith and his project as a necessary, highly commendable enterprise. It was on the hippie youth not to blow the opportunity he had afforded them, the chance to preserve a kind of safe, private cultural centre away from the persistent scrutiny of police and parents. And, thus, the issue of drug use was paramount.

He was a really good guy and we would try our best to keep the place clean – like the basement of the Church. I mean, those of us who were the hippies, you know? We said ‘look, this is a special place and we can’t mess him up. You know, we can’t like betray his trust by doing stupid stuff in here. No drugs in here; no taking drugs, no selling drugs. No. You can’t do that.’ And there were some people who, you know, you get people with all kinds of attitudes, you know, and angry people and mentally ill people and people with problems. People who’d say, ‘ya, you’re just a goddamn fascist and I’m not going by your rules.’ We’re saying ‘look here, this is part of our community and you can’t do that.’ So, yeah, he [Smith] got in trouble.

But DePoe’s view that it was just a few messed up kids spoiling the scene doesn’t entirely harmonize with Smith’s recollections of the CSO staff spending “much of its

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853 Waage is quick to undress the assumption that Smith was naïve about his staff, or his clientele. “One might wonder about him in a variety of ways,” he cautions, “but, yeah, I think he was a good man. […] He was used to some pretty rough stuff. He wasn’t as unrealistic or silly as one might suppose sometimes. I’d say later he might have become a little delusional, but he’d been through some pretty serious accidents [by then].” Interview with Author, March 3rd, 2005.

time policing the crowds” or of taking “OD’s out of the centre on stretchers nightly while others ‘talked down’ their friends on acid.” Drug use and possession was indeed so pervasive at the Church that “all you had to do was yell ‘Narco Squad’ and the place would empty in a minute flat.”

For his part, Smith credits DePoe with inviting much of this new, unwelcome scrutiny of the Church through his determined political displays and performances. As Smith explains,

> The Hippies inherited the police action that had built up against the Greasers, but it was a different ball game. The Greaser and the Biker welcomed a hard-hitting war and struck back again and again. The Hippies took to protest and wanted something done about harassment. […] DePoe moved in... and began to fan the action into larger demonstrations. The Press, whom we largely ignored in the Greaser years… moved in and began to write its pulp-selling stories.

Again, it is worth noting the way that most everyone, on either side of the issues, credits (blames) the media for the construction of Yorkville as a site of danger, violence and moral degradation.

But it wasn’t just about drugs, sex, and parties. As a community centre, the Church did serve as a political space, and on more than one occasion the staff invited the media inside to observe organizational meetings and strategy sessions. Especially for the Diggers in 1966-7, the Church basement served as a managerial base, a place in which ideas could be presented to the community, volunteers could be gathered, marches and sit-ins could be designed and orchestrated. “Rev James Smith was a really good guy,” recalls DePoe. “He was such a supporter! He said ‘anytime you need space, maybe places

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855 Smith, 11.
856 ibid.
857 Smith, 10.
for people to sleep, or some food…” He threw open his doors. [...] He let us use the church basement all the time. We could be in there, and have our opinions out.”858 These meetings were democratic, but there was rarely any doubt about who the leaders were, and what the agendas were all about. DePoe describes his role in a telling manner: “I was supporting, I was helping, I was speaking on the behalf, I was listening. I was really a representative but at the same time believing in participation.”

This curious mix of dynamic leadership and participatory democracy never quite developed beyond the messy, inconclusive meetings held sporadically in the Church basement, among the kids and the stoners, the musicians and the politicos, the greasers and the runaways. “We would have the meetings and we would put forward… not motions, but we would try to reach a consensus on what we were going to do, on what we wanted at all those meetings in the basement of that Church.”859

Raising enough money to keep the Drop-in Centre alive in the face of all of this denigrating media and municipal (not to mention irate parental) scrutiny was a constant struggle. In the early 60s, at the height of the greaser period at the Church, a number of Toronto’s more wealthy churches had come together to help support the efforts at St-Paul’s Avenue Road United. However, after years of diminished use of the centre and amid wide speculation that the Church was simply a front for criminal activities (activities which were being, de facto, sponsored by the centre), it had become ever more difficult to secure financial backing for the project. To make matters worse, the Church was in the position of being the primary meeting place for an ever-widening swath of Yorkville youth. Smith recalled that “for what seemed like an eternity, the CSO was the

858 David DePoe, Interview with Author, December 20th, 2004.
859 Ibid.
lone agency in Yorkville.”\textsuperscript{860} And, as Telegram writer Aubrey Wice dubbed the centre the \textit{Lone Oasis of Troubled Kids}, Smith joked that it had become “the drop-out’s Granite Club,” a reference to the toney country club in North Toronto frequented by many of the parents of his current flock.\textsuperscript{861}

By late 1966, the significance of the Church as a necessary and potentially useful project for the protection of otherwise alienated Yorkville youth had begun to trump allegations of impropriety therein. “Grants began to come in from the Corporation of Metropolitan Toronto and the Addiction Research Foundation. United and Anglican Headquarters both became supporters. The Kiwanis of the Kingsway contributed many items such as a pool table and a stereo.”\textsuperscript{862} At its height, the budget for the Church’s Drop-In Centre reached $50,000.

But, was there more to this humanitarian aid than simple benevolence? How connected was the Church Drop-In Centre to Christian missionary efforts, either real or subliminal? “You know, in a way there was [a connection],” explains Mike Waage. “Religion wasn’t really a part of downstairs’ agenda, but I suppose… Well, the United Church was behind the, was funding the, well \textit{was} the Community Services Organization.” Some of the mistrust foisted upon the CSO and the Drop-In Centre was built on the assumptions of there being some kind of underlying designs at work in their ministrations. As Waage interprets the climate of the period, such fears were not necessarily misplaced:

The Church really wanted to reassert itself in what they feared was becoming a totally secular society. And the United Church was very active. Some of the Catholic groups were very concerned. Yeah, they were

\textsuperscript{860} Smith, 11.  
\textsuperscript{861} ibid  
\textsuperscript{862} Smith, 14.
losing ground with the public. They were trying to come up with innovative ways to engage a new generation of people. This was part of it, in a way, if for no other reason than because even if the Drop-In Centre wasn’t keeping suburban runaways connected with the Church, they can always send groups of us out there to talk to kids. Go to the little churches and give a presentation about Yorkville, with hopes that they’d stay put.[…] Churches were very concerned about playing to empty houses in those days – it looked like [religion] was on its way [out].

Moreover, some Villagers, recognizing their responsibility to the maintenance of the Church, of this first and best locus for their escape from the streets, had begun a campaign in 1965 to levy 10 cents from their fellow Hippies as an entrance fee. Rather impressively, by the end of 1967 they had raised $4000. Over the summer of 1968, “a work-camp for kids saw 40 loads of clay removed from under the church and soon the whole area was cemented and partitioned. The $4000 was spent in wages, food and material.” 863

By the end of the summer of 1968, the Church was still an indisputable scene. But, as ever more young people poured into the Village, and their older and more experienced counterparts began to look elsewhere for their kicks, how long could it last? Could Smitty find a way to renew the relevance of the Church in this new era?

863 Smith, 11. There is no available information on what the clay was doing under the church in the first place.
PART FIVE:

Yorkville’s Hippie Disease, 1968-70
Chapter Nine:

Let Me Tell You Who They Are…

Probably, there are no more than 300 hippies involved, together with about a thousand greasers and about two hundred motorcyclists. Perhaps the hippie population is the most strikingly small; it is smaller than skid-row, the drug addict, and delinquent populations of Toronto. But the amount of interest in Yorkville expressed by the news media and people in general is very great.

- Smart and Jackson, 1969

In late summer, 1968, Canadian Welfare magazine published the substance of a speech given to the Women's Canadian Club earlier that year by famed Canadian journalist June Callwood. Discouraged and nearly hopeless in its tone, Callwood's speech unleashed upon her audience of upper middle-class, largely white and Christian women, a hail of horrific and damning revelations. Opening with a reminder that she had spent the past months playing landlady to Digger House, a shelter designed to house the kind of young people who "disgust" her audience, Callwood's agenda appears to have been to attack her audience for holding to the erroneous belief that hip youth were responsible for their lot as street youth. Not so, explained Callwood, who went on to describe these "children" as "society-damaged." The fault for their predicament was, according to her assessment, anyone's but their own.

"Let me tell you who they are," Callwood began.

"They are the loneliest, most frightened people in this land. They are the children of the poor who are made wretched by living at the lowest level of subsistence we can manage without the embarrassment of having them die of starvation. They are the children of alcoholics and prostitutes and child-beaters; they are the children no one wanted in the first place; they are the children who went to eleven schools and lived in 14 foster homes

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864 Smart and Jackson, 82.
and can call any woman mother; they are the children of middle-class parents whose own despair and ambition and anxiety occupied all their attention, with nothing left over for a child; and of the parents who truly thought that love is something that can be given in the form of toys and television sets.865

According to Callwood, this "damaged" youth culture, comprised of unfortunates from all social classes, all walks of life, was "the visible mark of our disgrace [as Canadians]."

But Callwood's pronouncements, vividly realized and rhetorically insistent, were based on an insight that "the original hippie movement" (which she brazenly romanticized) had come and gone, leaving behind a "new wave of badly mangled and desolate kids who now form the core of the movement." Her argument (which she maintained until her recent passing) is that these "original hippies" were concerned with "trying to find room somewhere on this crowded earth and practice simple generosity, from the heart and to strangers [sic]," while these new hip kids were merely troubled pretenders to that fine pursuit. "They have the aspiration to be beautiful, loving people," she explained, "but their mental and emotional faculties are almost destroyed. They could imitate, but they could never understand" those "original hippies" and their lofty goals. In other words, the authentic hippies were all but gone – only their pretenders remained.866

One year on, Callwood's writing on the scene would darken to the point that her feelings of horror, frustration, and helplessness were left exposed. “The regulars now” she wrote late in 1969, “are those too tired to move. Plugged into drugs that are killing them slowly, they languish. They came to find love, but it’s gone, and what can you do?

866 ibid.
As they decay, the police pick them over; so do the dealers who cut the product with poisons and the thugs who take the girls and sell them.”

This was not simply an outsider’s vision of the scene – Callwood was echoing the opinions and concerns of many Villagers by mid-1968 about the advent of new versions of Village identity. In a detailed examination of the scene entitled “Positive and Negative,” Village poet Eric Layman reported in late August, 1968, that “despite the changes in Yorkville in the past few years, it has not yet lost all the people who, in the final analysis, are the ones who hold it together and give it the positive aspect of its identity.” Still, he cautioned, there were far too many new people in Yorkville, “whose conduct threatens to turn the Village into a combination of Orphans’ Home, Den of Vice, Refugee Camp, and 12th Century Insane Asylum.” “If things continue as they are developing now,” he concluded, “the Village might soon end up being nothing at all.”

For their part, a new underground newspaper named Harbinger reported on “The End of Hippies” in mid-summer, 1968.

A variety of media sources toured the Village as autumn descended on the scene following the August sit-ins, and tended to agree that the youth culture in the Village was restless, dissatisfied with the current situation. Michael Valpy, a reporter for the Globe and Mail and very much a fellow traveler of the Village scene throughout 66-67, remains convinced that Yorkville’s fall can be traced to 1968.

You have to understand that only very early was this sort of a middle-class rebellion phenomenon. It increasingly, and quickly became a phenomenon of kids who were wounded in a lot of ways. There was a lot of psychological problems, kids who had been abused in many ways at home. They were running to Yorkville as an alternative to a life that they

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867 Callwood, The Underside of Toronto, 128.
868 Saturday, Volume 3 Number 5, August 1968.
couldn’t cope with... My memory is that by ‘68 it had definitely changed. It was more of these [wounded] kids.\textsuperscript{870}

The contemporary media reports and on-the-street interview respondents tended to agree. “Today, it’s a small stretch of jungle all but deserted by real hippies,” concluded the \textit{Star} in early November.\textsuperscript{871} Who was left behind? Some journalists found this impossible to answer. They had come to find \textit{hippies}, an apparently stable, visible and coherent community, but instead had found something else “its new inhabitants are runaway girls, small-time hoodlums who sell marijuana, motorcycle gangs, young men dodging the military draft in the United States, and the lost.”\textsuperscript{872} Writing in the popular women’s magazine \textit{Chatelaine}, Catherine Breslin also referred to the Village as a “teen-age jungle” before facetiously claiming that since real live \textit{hippies} were so hard to find, “in ten years of tackling tough magazine subjects, from Montreal underworlds to a bare-footed royal wedding in Luangprobang [sic], I have never tackled a tougher assignment.”\textsuperscript{873}

By mid-summer, 1969, the conservative daily \textit{The Toronto Telegram} even went so far as to declare that \textit{all} of Yorkville's "hippies are gone." The article, entitled "Yorkville Re-visited" takes a retrospective view of a by-gone era, an era which is said to have reached its zenith during the highly publicized “Siege of Yorkville” in August, 1967, that two-week period characterized by sit-ins, confrontation, and police overzealousness. But, at the Telegram, this zenith had come into focus only with a little perspective: "looking back now from the distance of two years, the famous hippie sit-down in the middle of Yorkville Ave takes on another coloration. It seems, if anything at

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{870}Michael Valpy, Interview with Author, October 5\textsuperscript{th}, 2006.  
\textsuperscript{871}\textit{Toronto Star}, November 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 1967.  
\textsuperscript{872}Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{873}Catherine Breslin, \textit{Chatelaine}, October 1967.
all, rather quaint." Written on the occasion of the culmination of the last of the criminal trials of participants in the protest – David DePoe had been recently acquitted of two counts of causing a disturbance – the article reads like a dark eulogy. Casually reducing the phenomenon of Yorkville youth culture to a quadrumvirate of interrelated (perhaps identical) shorthand, the article relates, but certainly does not lament that since "David DePoe is gone, the hippies are gone, the Yorkville of 1967 is over, [and] the trials have ended," Yorkville can now move on.875

The assumption that there was some kind of "original hippie" whose sudden absence from Village life amounted to the spiritual death of the hip experiment informs most sympathetic reportage and studies of the Village in this period. This memory of a first wave of hip youth having been replaced by a disastrous second cohort is widespread and commonly used to define the late Yorkville era as shady, fetid and dangerous. Between Rochdale College, which opened its doors in September 1968 to hundreds (eventually thousands) of college-aged youth right on the edge of the Village, to the already budding hip community on Queen St West (a diffuse area to the south and west of Yorkville), it was increasingly apparent that hippie didn't need to be performed in the city centre – it could be performed anywhere, everywhere.

Moreover, the perceived necessity for Yorkville to be a demarcated space for hip congregation, the core belief that Yorkville somehow belonged to the hip youth who flocked there most evenings, became increasingly redundant as the mainstreaming of hipness accelerated throughout the city, the country, indeed the western world. If, in 1966, one could be said to perform "Yorkville" in suburban Lawrence Park by donning

875 ibid.
hippie garb and smoking dope, by 1969 to do so would simply be to perform as "hippie". The idea of a specific hip space was losing relevance as hip spaces became decentralized, more democratic, and less highly observed. Performances of hip, from outlandish clothing to the heretofore underground psychedelic music, from the spread of dope through public schools and universities to the liberalization of sexual relations amongst young people, were no longer specifically tied to Yorkville in the public imagination. Indeed, hip became mainstream so quickly in the 1960s that such superficial rebellion seemed merely cliché by the end of the decade.876

And so, the notion of a “Yorkville youth” took on new connotations in the late 1960s as people like Callwood emphasized the essential differences between the new Villagers and the so-called original wave of hip youth that had colonized the Village. No longer was "Yorkville youth" shorthand for "hippie"; by the summer of 1968 it had become synonymous with a certain needy, distressed and alienated portion of the counterculture: its homeless, its disturbed, its junk-sick, its infected. And the truth is that from 1968 to 1970, as developers tightened their hold on the district, as police managed to arrest ever more Villagers on dope offences, as disease and drug addiction spread like oil on water over the young people who congregated in Yorkville's all-night restaurants and cafés, the Village scene fell into a complicated, and often bleak, downward spiral into hip irrelevancy.

As Michael Valpy puts it: “For sure the first period is over-romanticized, and the media played a role in that. But I don’t think the latter period is over-dramatized [because] there was a scary number of wounded kids [coming to Yorkville].”

876 Thomas Frank makes this point repeatedly in his study of advertisers in the post-War period. Frank, 1997.
I’m just not certain enough of my sociology here, but we were going through a truly phenomenal period of social change in the 60s, and kids were just falling through the cracks. I mean, you can blame the urban-rural divide, you can blame the prioritization of post-secondary education (what happens to kids who can’t make it in?), the pandemic use of drugs, going from OK drugs to the real bad stuff, and kids frying their brains on God knows what chemicals. These very lonely, failed, hurting kids. I don’t know how many of them there were [in Yorkville]. Maybe it was over-dramatized, I mean, maybe the numbers weren’t all that huge, but they were in pretty bad... a lot of them were in really bad shape.

Ultimately, we must consider the late 1960s in the Village as a period of breakdown, of declension. While it certainly was a bright and joyful time for some Villagers – and their experiences mustn’t be diminished – for a great many other Villagers this period was defined by pain, addiction, and disillusionment. As Miguel Maropakis bluntly recalls, “there were [still] a lot of right kids here. From a lot of rich families. And they got totally lost here in the crowd. In the drugs, you know. Junkies. There were a lot of junkies.”

June Callwood’s initial concerns over what she perceived to be the “broken kids” that were hanging around the district led to her becoming a regular visitor to the area, and among its most significant and vocal witnesses. Moreover, Callwood’s position as emissary of sorts to both the middle-class and to the hip kids among whom she walked afforded her a crucial role in the debates over the character of the district. Highly influential, and unfailingly vocal in these years, Callwood’s speaking tours did much to help her charges, but this chapter will show the ways that, perversely, they also may have speeded the dissolution of the scene she had admired so much in the years before 1968.

This section will detail the late period in the Yorkville scene, exploring the ways that hip youth struggled to save themselves from the scourges of hard drugs, the consolidation of developers, the increased presence of bikers, expanded police activity,

877Miguel Maropakis, Interview with Author, March 29th, 2007.
and a growing popular view that their very identities were becoming *passé*, irrelevant, even pathetic. At the same time, they were also compelled to face the reality that the Diggers, Callwood, and other humanitarians' efforts to attract attention to alienated Village youth served to flesh out the impression that Yorkville was essentially a disaster area.

For, if the true or “original” hippies were gone by 1968, then who *were* these young people, sporting long hair and headbands, smoking dope and dropping LSD, playing at free love, hanging around Gandalf’s head shop, wearing beads and baubles, cowboy hats and patchwork skirts? If the hippies were gone, then who was filling the Cumberland rock’n’roll clubs, or the few remaining Yorkville coffee houses? Some exciting music was still there to be heard – bands like Mashmakan, the Kensington Market, Mainline and Mandala all rocked the scene in the late 60s. Who were the hundreds in the audience at the Rockpile, the newly-opened concert venue at Davenport and Yonge that was seeing performances by international sensations Led Zeppelin, Cream, and the Doors playing alongside these homegrown heroes? Who was dancing all night long with the body-painted go-go girls at the Mynah Bird? Or checking out the Rockshow of the Yeomen at the Night Owl? Or the Sunday night jam session at Flick?

Yorkville’s folk musicians were as exceptional as ever, with the likes of Murray McLaughlin, Bruce Cockburn, David Wiffen and Eric Andersen all fighting for a chance to play the Riverboat in those years. So who were the folks coming down to see them? The Church basement, the Mont Blanc, the Matador, and Webster's burger joint were still popular hangouts, still scenes that got moving every evening as young people piled in,
many of them blazed, high and blissful, just like the old days. But these weren’t the old days.

This section will attempt to answer these questions, while exploring the series of humanitarian and academic efforts undertaken in the late 60s which tried to devise initiatives to help save Yorkville youth from themselves. However, it will attempt to navigate these choppy waters with a persistent eye to the reality almost never expressed by the humanitarian and other groups considered below: that alongside the horror of drug addiction and speed freaks, the brutality of gang rapes and other violence, and the often bleak experiences of many Villagers in the late 1960s, there were innumerable moments, episodes, narratives and parties that were nothing but fun, nothing but pleasant, and were untouched by the darker scene around them. While this section does indeed recount some pretty ugly episodes, it doesn’t mean to suggest that this was the only stuff happening at the time – rather, these were the issues people tended to pay attention to. Since these problems were relatively new to the scene, they tended to loom large in characterizations of the period.

Village Identity: Greasers, Hippies, Weekenders and Bikers

The Addiction Research Foundation (ARF) was by no means the first to consider Yorkville and its denizens as a distinct, inscrutable culture. This discourse of foreignness (historically associated with ethnic or class-specific ghettos within wider municipal contexts) had always served to inculcate the view of Yorkville (and the aspect of white middle-class youth culture which comprised its expected inhabitants) as an aberration. The Village was a space in which something must have gone wrong; where some
divisive, transformative element had been introduced. Alternative identity performances (especially as evidenced through increasingly outlandish clothing, affected mannerisms, obscure figures of speech, and even predilections toward certain hyper-modern genres in music and the arts) were of principal interest to observers, but through it all, no apparently alien aspect of the Yorkville scene garnered more attention from media, municipal authorities and youth culture alike than its emphasis on drugs.

And so, it occurred to some that the only way to approach the youth culture in this constrained precinct was to enter into it, surreptitiously, to learn its language, and to find some way to participate in its practices. On October 27th, 1967, under the auspices of the Addiction Research Foundation, a 27-year-old graduate student named Gopala Alampur went to live as a hippie in Yorkville. According to the ARF’s famous Report of early autumn, 1969, Alampur, recently arrived in Canada from his native India on a student visa, “grew a beard, wore typical Yorkville clothes and beads, and took part in the life of the ‘Village’ until May 1, 1968.”878 For a period of six months, the undercover Alampur infiltrated, observed, and interviewed a wide swath of Yorkville Villagers, amassing a sizeable cache of ethnographic information on the ‘cultures’ of the community.879

The ensuing Report, prepared by the ARF’s Reginald Smart and David Jackson, synthesized Alampur’s field notes into a fascinating, gloomy vision of an alien

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878 Smart and Jackson, 2.
879 Alampur, having recently arrived in Canada from Hyderabad to work towards graduate distinction in anthropology at the University of Western Ontario, was a rather unlikely choice for an undercover field agent. Having done ethnographic field work with the Toda – the nature-worshipping tribe living in the Nilgiri mountains in Southern India – Alampur was expected to have learned from his experience not to let “new cultures” mystify him. However, there is a great difference between being confused or disoriented by ancient, primitive cultural experiences and the bewilderment many Torontonians shared when they heard tell of Yorkville’s young drug, music and sex scene.
community in crisis; a factionalized, dangerous and foreign ghetto.\textsuperscript{880} But it also did much to define a set of class-, race- and gender-based divisions within the Yorkville scene: a simplistic, clear-cut system for decoding and representing Yorkville’s diverse and diffusive populations. And, crucially, it never failed to underline the assumption that Yorkville and its denizens constituted a kind of anthropological curiosity – a spectacle of antimodern difference right in the heart of a modern city.

The 90-odd page Report began by setting out its theoretical position and framework. “Yorkville was studied as a viable subculture or set of symbolic and material arrangements made by a society embedded in a larger society”, it explained.\textsuperscript{881} Yorkville, then, was conceptualized by the study as a distinct locus for deviant or subcultural activity – the study would not question the veracity of this foundational premise. However, this conceptualization was said to have been the only assumption deliberately carried into the project by its participants, as “an effort was made to minimize conceptual presuppositions and free the study of any special position.”\textsuperscript{882} According to Gopala Alampur, the \textit{raison d’être} for the project was laid out very succinctly to him, and was free from any theoretical scaffolding: “Jackson and Smart brought me down to figure out who these people were,” he explained recently.\textsuperscript{883} That “these people” were unknown to them, that the question \textit{who are they?} was so central, underscores the foreignness

\textsuperscript{880} Alampur explained to me that there was very little interpretation or artistic licence imposed upon his findings by Smart and Jackson’s Report. For all intents and purposes, the Report reflects his work, not theirs. Therefore, all references to the Report should be treated as the views of Gopala Alampur, and not the work of Smart and Jackson.

\textsuperscript{881} Smart and Jackson, 1.

\textsuperscript{882} ibid.

\textsuperscript{883} Gopala Alampur, Interview with Author, February 14\textsuperscript{th}, 2005.
associated with the scene. The known versus the unknown – such a dynamic opposition should have made for a straightforward reconnaissance project.\textsuperscript{884}

Alampur wasted no time in setting apart four main cultural groups within the context of the Village, and (as had Frank Longstaff during the previous summer) establishing them as the dominant categories of identity in Yorkville. “I like simplifying difficult concepts,” Alampur recently explained. “So when I saw these people, there were various types of behaviour.”\textsuperscript{885} These categories – Hippies, Bikers, Greasers and Weekenders – were then carefully filled out in the ensuing pages as Smart and Jackson interpreted and synthesized Alampur’s findings. The result is a hugely informative, but often bizarre bit of scholarship, complete with a makeshift survey (conducted by looking out of a window over Yorkville Ave at various times during the day and night and counting the people on the street, before dividing them into what were assumed to be their four respective categories), a lexicon of Yorkville terms, and four lengthy character studies designed to personify these four categories of countercultural identity.

Throughout, drug use is the \textit{leitmotif} of the Report. Smart and Jackson never stray far from the argument that hanging around in Yorkville and drug use are to be understood as simultaneous occupations – in fact, each of the identity categories is in some real way defined (by the Report, at least) by its degree of predilection for psychotropic substances.

\textsuperscript{884}But by refusing to consider Yorkville as anything but a deviant society standing in uneasy opposition to the ‘straight’ society – rather than working to complicate the functions of Yorkville within a hegemonic process – the study falls prey to its own conceptual trap. Yorkville winds up being treated by Alampur and, subsequently, the ARF, as an ethnographic wonderland, a set of distinct and coherent categories of youth identity worthy of study and documentation. And, as such, youth cultures in Yorkville were given a highly subjective, largely distorted overview, one which emphasized the constructed differences between (and fractions within) pseudo-ethno-groupings rather than exploring the cosmopolitan realities of the Village.

\textsuperscript{885} Gopala Alampur, Interview with Author, February 14\textsuperscript{th}, 2005.
Unlike the typical khaki-shorted ethnographer who moves into a tribal community and, for a time, attempts to live with and become a part of a foreign scene, Alampur donned instead the very garb of his expected subjects in an effort to blend into the Village. Perhaps unaware of Frank Longstaff’s warnings following his surreptitious Village experience the previous summer, a certain subterfuge was at the core of the ARF’s enterprise. Importantly, Alampur’s choice to get into a beard and beads immediately positioned him inside one (at most two) of the four distinct identity groups to which his study would adhere: his clothing, and general preoccupation, was based on his preconceptions of hippie aesthetics. As such, a further level of suspicion of his questions and observations was likely at work when he approached bikers and greasers (since weekenders, as hippie poseurs, would presumably have considered him one of their own). The ARF Report admits that “hippies and weekenders were more readily encountered than greasers or motorcyclists,” although it does not suggest Alampur’s disguise as being the root of the issue.  

Moreover, Alampur’s adoption of the name Krishna (his middle name) worked to associate him with the Hindu religion (which was, in fact, his own). As the interest in and veneration of eastern mystic and spiritual traditions was passed from the Beats and early Villagers on down to the current scene, this association tended to inspire some of the hippies and weekenders to seek him out for spiritual guidance. “They thought I was guru,” explains Alampur. “Some people used to come and see me from all over. Haight Ashbury, Greenwich [Village] […] and say ‘Krishna was the guru’. People came to see ‘Krishna’ lots of times.”

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886 Smart and Jackson, 3.
My life became easy mainly because if you asked people in Yorkville, no matter who they were, they’d say: “I’m an artist”, I’m a poet”. Some people think they’re Jesus Christ or whatever, you know, which is fine. So they dressed like that, and walked like that, and presented themselves like that. And so they asked me: what are you? They asked me, why are you here? What are you? I mean, “narc” was the term used for suspicious characters, foreigners, the new people who came in. Because they were thinking, hey, there’re gonna be drug busts! Lots of undercover [police activity]. So my method was… I’d say, I’m a writer, which was fair. And then I used to record all the people’s conversations, just like you do. 887

The Report argues that Alampur was able to overcome the suspicions of the Villagers at large for three key reasons. One, he was able to offer his Village apartment (paid for by the ARF) to people as a place to crash, have a snack, to stay warm, and to use a bathroom; two, he was in the habit of giving away food and clothing, but never money, to Villagers in need, citing a kind of social responsibility based on a hip ethic of anti-materialism and sharing; and three, most significant of all, he had convinced the Villagers that he was an experienced drug user himself. Early upon his arrival, likely by way of introduction, Alampur passed around some Indian cigarettes (the popular brand Charminar) which were widely thought to contain marijuana. They, of course, did not – people were fooled by their exotic flavour and curious smell. But, the association between Alampur and this unfamiliar type of pot (people claimed that they experienced a kind of intense euphoria when “on” the stuff) stuck. 888

In an environment in which drug use and identity were so closely interrelated in the local commonsense, by associating himself with drugs, Gopala Alampur became an active participant in the Yorkville scene. He even began to collect and give away narcotics that Villagers left in his apartment. “People gave me [drugs],” he recalled. “I

887 Gopala Alampur, Interview with Author, February 14th, 2005.  
888 Smart and Jackson, 3.
used to smoke anyway, cigarettes. So all these people come and give me drugs of all kinds. And I used to store them under the air conditioning filter or something. I got a stash, a good spot. And I used to get: Hey Krishna, lay some stuff on me, man. So, I used to give any guy that wants to smoke this or that.”889 Alampur, then, did involve himself as an actor in the very drug scene that he was assigned to study; not only would he tacitly encourage people to use drugs around him, he would supply them with the drugs they were looking for.

“I used to tell them: Hey, in India, the culture is: we smoke,” he explained. “Opium is normal. It’s natural. A lot of poor guys do smoke, in the streets. He can go buy a big ball of opium, put it in the hookah then smoke, and sit down, sleep under a tree, and live happily.” This emphasis on ‘the natural’ became a major factor in Alampur’s identity performance in the Village. He would use his status as Indian (and all of its attendant cultural generalizations) to protect himself from the drugs he was uncomfortable with. “I did drugs,” he explained to me, “[but], no, I don’t do all of this LSD and, what other stuff was there? Speed. Right? Any chemicals? No. I’d tell them: Being an Indian I don’t believe in any of this chemical stuff. [Only] natural stuff. So, that played better. So, only marijuana, hashish and opium. So, they could get hashish and marijuana [from me].”890

Alampur was, unbeknownst to his new-found friends/objects of study, in no danger of being arrested or prosecuted for his participation in the drug scene. For, in embarking upon this mission, Alampur was not naïve – he was aware of the potential dangers that faced him upon infiltrating a world in which illegal activities would be

889 Gopala Alampur, Interview with Author, February 14th, 2005.
890 ibid.
taking place around him at every turn, and he voiced his concerns to his employers early on.

Firstly, I didn’t want to take any chances, going there without protection… Listen, I don’t belong in this country. I’m a foreigner. […] So, somehow I think they got me immunity of some sort. I recall that they paraded me in front of the entire RCMP [Yorkville detail]. They said: Hey, you see this guy, leave him alone. Bust him, but then let him out of the back door. Take him for a couple blocks. I felt a little more secure. 891

Although Alampur claims he could never keep straight who the narcotics agents were and weren’t while living in Yorkville, it seems fair to assume that they would have remembered him: an Indian undercover ARF field agent nick(code)named Krishna. 892

As a result of this relative safety, this freedom from prosecution, Alampur was able to operate out of his apartment without fear that he would be interrupted by the otherwise commonplace police incursions into private residences. He established his apartment as a kind of ‘free space’; he hoped to encourage Villagers to drop in to his rooms at all times of the day or night, and maintained a steady store of supplies which he would use to entice them to stay, to open up, and to tell him their stories. 893

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891 ibid.
892 Alampur’s status as outsider (as a non-native Torontonian, a non-Anglo, non-middle-class Canadian) was likely intended by the ARF to lend some legitimacy to claims of the impartiality of the study. Un-, or at least less-, influenced by the hegemonic ideologies and cultural processes of middle-class Toronto, Alampur was expected to be able to view the Yorkville scene without the baggage a locally-raised observer might carry alongside her. But, outsiders (under the very rubric adopted by the ARF that set Yorkville apart from the ‘straight’ society) were likely to be mistrusted and feared by the Villagers. Moreover, Alampur’s double outsider status (both as an adult, and as a non-Villager insinuating himself into the scene) was then further exaggerated by his Indian-ness, his visible minority status automatically differentiating him from the vast majority of the Villagers. In other words, to use a scientific allusion (for this was a scientific endeavor), Alampur’s observations, his interviews, and his conclusions, must be appreciated with regard to the famous ‘uncertainty principle’.
893 When I asked David DePoe if he remembered the Addiction Research Foundation infiltrating the Village and preparing a Report during the winter of 1967-8, he responded without surprise: “Well, I knew who Reg Smart was, and I thought he was sort of an exploiter and not a very nice person […] But, honestly, I never knew about that!” And yet, even if DePoe (along with many other Villagers) was unaware of the ARF project as it was ongoing, he was quick to place the name ‘Krishna’ when I asked him if he recalled an Indian man who lived in the Village at around the same time. “I […] knew this guy Krishna, and I was really kind of suspicious of him”, he explained. Interview with Author, December 20th, 2004. However, Alampur is surprised to hear this: “David DePoe… was not even there when I was there. He
whether he felt accepted by the Yorkville community, whether they bought his line that he was a writer at work on a book, Alampur responded without reservation. “Absolutely, no doubt about it – absolutely. I used to have a place that was open. I used to have a one bedroom apartment or something. It was a studio apartment. It was always open. And, I always had bread and peanut butter sandwiches. And they would come. Sometimes bananas! Sometimes for people that smoked pot and hash and all this I’d have orange juice and stuff...”

Although the Report claims that Alampur’s apartment attracted “all types of Villagers, male and female, drug users and criminals, weekenders and hippies, motorcyclists and greasers [who] came to his place at various times and talked spontaneously,” it is unclear as to how freely these people talked. Were they truthful? Accurate in their representations? Or were they hiding behind a veil of paranoia and self-preservation? For, in light of escalating drug busts and increasing street violence, it was hardly unlikely that this strange new Villager was an undercover police informant. There was, of course, an imposing spool-to-spool tape recorder running all the time in his apartment, and the ever-present microphone in one’s face tends to throw even the most unselﬁsh person off his game. His cover story of, if asked, telling people that he was so interested in Yorkville because he was writing a book about the Village, likely did little to alleviate any concerns about his motives. Given the already paranoiac climate of a neighbourhood plagued by the spectre of undercover police work and surveillance, we

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894 Gopala Alampur, Interview with Author, February 14th, 2005.
895 Smart and Jackson, 3.
must presume that, as was the case for Frank Longstaff the previous year, any information provided to Alampur was passed through the sticking web of suspicion.

The four identity categories developed and defined through the ARF Report serve as the backbone for all its attempts to rationalize the activities and ideologies in the Village. As each category serves to place boundaries around behaviors, and establish difference and commonalities between various types of youth cultures and countercultures, each category also simultaneously re-invents and propagates the notion of Yorkville as a factionalized, contested territory. But, crucially, by dividing the expected denizens of Yorkville into distinct categories of identity and performance, Gopala Alampur (and subsequently Smart and Jackson) presented the Yorkville scene (however unconsciously) as a kind of gangland, split along lines of class, ethnicity and gender. In the first place, all four groups were characterized as primarily male, with female hangers-on, even though women were clearly as important (in both their numbers and the significance of their performances) as their male counterparts. In the Report, the expected occupants of each category are always male – women are, however improbably, left to perform supporting, insignificant roles.

Obvious from the fact that Alampur chose (or was given) the disguise of the hippie (beads, shaggy hair and beard) is the conclusion that the ARF saw hippies as the most significant fraction in the Village. However, they were later surprised to find that hippies were outnumbered by the greasers virtually all of the time, as Alampur’s notes and survey results both indicated. Moreover, the Report stressed that, blind to the reality of a diverse Village scene, the general public (whom they termed the “straight world”)

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896 Of course, they were hardly the first to do this. Indeed, Making the Scene has relied on a similar (if more deeply considered) version of the variations on Village identity.
believed “that Yorkville is hippies. When everyone questioned gave us their opinion on the village, they were actually talking about the hippie phenomenon. There was no recognition of the motorcycle gangs or the greasers… In general, Yorkville was seen to be long hair and beads.”

Although critical of the public’s oversimplification of the Village scene, the ARF Report still offers the bulk of its attention to the hippies. One comes away from the Report with a rather more comprehensive vision of the structure and criteria of this category than of any of the other three. At the very same time as the Report repudiates the claim that the hippies were the most significant group in the district, it serves to propagate this same notion. To the ARF, as it was to many Canadians by 1968, Yorkville and the hippies were simply the same thing.

In fact, Smart and Jackson acknowledged the awkwardness of the category almost right away. “During the interviews for this study,” the Report explains, “no one was willing to say they were a hippie.” And yet, Alampur’s notes clearly emphasized the hippie as a readily identifiable category of identity and activity. He constructed for this group a somewhat hazy visual description of this “culture”, which he then used to identify hippies on the street: “There is no uniform, but a costume – a style characterized by comfort, freedom, and eccentricity… The costume aspect in the hippie dress is designed to reflect individuality so that hippies may look alike in characteristics such as long hair, dirty clothes and beads, but each is dressed to portray a unity.”

The weekender is the curious catch-all category. Vaguely defined as young pretenders who come to Yorkville “to participate in the Village life for the weekend,” the

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897 Smart and Jackson, 48-9.
898 ibid, 9.
899 ibid, 10.
generally high-school-age teens are best understood as curious, but non-committal 
Villagers. Ostensibly made up of inauthentic performances of all three other 
categories, the weekender category seems most often to be comprised of pretenders to the 
hippie mantle. (Weekenders, for example, are referred to as “plastic hippies” by many 
Village residents.) Thus, the weekender tends to be described by Alampur in somewhat 
contradictory terms. While he maintains that weekenders wear costumes designed to 
“harmonize with [either] the motorcycle gang, the hippie, or the greaser,” he explains that 
weekenders in general can be seen wearing “bell bottom pants, brightly coloured shirts, 
and psychedelic patterned mini-skirts,” decidedly atypical garb for either greasers or 
bikers as he sets them out.

Nevertheless, he is quick to point out that weekenders are easily distinguished 
from the hippies because they are “always clean and well groomed,” and because they 
wear “more expensive and more colourful clothing than the other groups.” Class, then, 
or at least affluence, is a distinguishing factor here. “When the weekenders come, they 
bring money”, explains Alampur – which is to say that one can distinguish a hippie from a 
weekender by her spending habits. If a person is buying something from the Grab Bag, 
for example, odds are she is a weekender; in Alampur’s recollection, hippies were 
unlikely to have much disposable income.

The key to understanding this category is to see it as the transitional stage 
between typical young person and a Villager. Alampur saw the weekender as someone

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900 It should be noted that Weekenders did not only come to Yorkville on weekends. Any day or 
night, any time, kids came down to the Village for a few hours to cop some pot, find a date, or simply sit 
and do their homework. The title ‘Weekenders’ is meant to convey the merely occasional leisure activity 
that performing Yorkville was to these kids.

901 Smart and Jackson, 16.
902 Ibid.
903 Gopala Alampur, Interview with Author, February 14th, 2005.
who dressed up, came to Yorkville, did drugs, had sex, but did not otherwise inhabit the Village – as a pretender who was both absent from and actively engaged in the meta-culture of Yorkville. As such, Alampur recognized that as weekenders became more enamored of the scene, as they began to engage more and more freely in the culture, they were likely to sever their connections to the outside world (high school, suburban home, university) and move wholesale into the Village. “People from Toronto who enter the Village as permanent residents generally begin as weekenders,” he explained, “and will eventually become committed to a Village group.”

This process wasn’t inevitable, of course: it was also possible that, after a time, “they will leave [after] having satisfied their curiosity.”

The bikers and greasers were often grouped together as being from lower-class, non-Anglo, and typically violent backgrounds. According to the Report, bikers were frequent gang-rapists and infrequent murderers, and greasers were often speed addicts, thieves and, sometimes, prostitutes (gay and/or straight). Meanwhile, their hippie and weekender neighbours were generally of middle-class, white, Anglo-Christian backgrounds. They were better educated, more docile, and less apt to commit rape or other acts of violence. However, the key distinction between the bikers and the greasers lay in the bikers’ emphasis on community. Greasers tended toward individualism and

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904 Smart and Jackson, 16.
905 ibid.
906 Most motorcycle gang members come from working-class families. Generally, their early experiences include violent or delinquent behaviour on the part of their parents… most members have done poorly in school, read few books, and appear to be primarily interested in machinery, sex and alcohol.” Smart and Jackson, 21.
maintained few fraternal bonds, according to Alampur, while bikers constituted a kind of family with firm and easily apparent codes, rules, and hierarchies of power.907

The greasers, according to Alampur, were roughly the same age demographic as their hippie counterparts (“between 16 and 25 years of age”) but were characterized by a vast majority of males over females – Alampur judged their ranks to be filled by about 70 percent young men.908 However, here the similarities plainly end: while hippie youth tended to receive rather laudatory, if condescending tributes and descriptions by Alampur, the greasers were immediately set up in the Report as a violent, unfriendly, opportunistic fraction of aberrant, immigrant youth.909

“Greasers are more aggressive and more delinquent than the other groups [excluding, one supposes, the bikers?] …Within the greasers, there are basically two subgroups – the young criminal on his way to becoming a rounder and the drug addict whose habit has caused him to be completely alienated from the straight society.”910 Greasers are depicted as having come from “lower class families” in which “many have suffered sever deprivation in semi-criminal environments.”911 Significantly, Alampur found that greasers “resent the hippies as drop-outs and lazy ne’er-do-wells.” As one greaser told him: “rich people can afford to be bums. Poor people can’t.”912 However, this class-based resentment is somewhat neglected in the subsequent discussions of the

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907 *In fact, [Greasers] are called ‘the paranoid people’ because they fear that intimate relationships may cause them to divulge evidence of criminal activity to informers.” Smart and Jackson, 23.
908 *ibid, 22.
909 Some of my interview subjects agreed with this basic view. “The sort of greaser, rounder was sort of a downtown thug character. A bit more urban. A lot of them were into speed or whatever. They hadn’t really engaged or bought into the hippie sensibility at all, so they were very kind of cynical about it all. They were a lot more likely to be into these other drugs that me and my friends, although we experimented with them, we checked them out, they weren’t for us.” Anonymous LSD Dealer, Interview with Author, October 13th, 2006.
910 Smart and Jackson, 23.
911 *ibid.
912 *ibid.
uneasy relationship between the two principal groups. Rather than emphasize the exploitation of hippies by greasers as a gleeful attack on middle-class asceticism by lower class have-nots – an interpretation which, going on the information presented in the Report, is entirely plausible – the Report seems to avoid the issue rather entirely, instead coming down on the greasers for taking advantage of relatively meek hippies.

Moreover, the clearly racial origins of their nickname is interrogated by the Report not as evidence of a dangerous, racialized division between identity categories but rather as an instance of *inadequate* racialization.

The term ‘greaser’ is used because ‘They put grease on their hair and grease in their food’, to use the words of one Villager. This statement implies that many have come from eastern and southwestern European backgrounds. [However,] Greasers also have large representation [sic] of people from countries, such as the United States and the West Indies, although there are many Canadian-borns among them.913

In other words: the Report seems to conclude that the assumption that all Greasers are swarthy eastern and southern European immigrants is insufficient. This is as if to say that while some are those *naturally* ‘greasy’ types, not *all* of them are naturally greasy? In the one case study which appears near the end of the Report, there appears a telling reiteration of this accent on the natural predisposition to dirtiness suffered by eastern Europeans: “[Jay’s father] made sure he was wearing a clean shirt, often having to change it three times a day ([this is] typical behaviour of a ‘greaser’).”914

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913 This is one of a very few direct mentions of people of West Indian or Caribbean descent moving through the Village scene. One of the few black men to frequent the scene, Burnley “Rocky” Jones, wrote to me in an e-mail about his recollections of a man named Len, who ran a bookstore. He was “an old leftwinger [sic] who was passionate about the black struggle.” His only other immediate recollection of black presence in the Village was of the African trinkets sold at the Artisan, a Village store. Fri, April 21st 2006 10:06:02 AM

914 Smart and Jackson, 75.
The emphasis on greasers as the most immoral constituents in the Village is maintained unabated in the Report.\textsuperscript{915} Alampur clearly did not come to respect or admire this category of behaviour and identity in his time in the Village. Lower-class youth harboring aspirations to move up in the world, the greasers were portrayed as being “highly motivated to achieve in material and economic terms… Their economic aspirations are middle-class, but their methods come from the underworld… As they talk about their criminal activities it becomes apparent that they take craftsman-like pride in such activities as stealing or peddling.”\textsuperscript{916} Alampur’s Report also emphasizes the Greasers’ penchant for violence: “They value they place on aggression is another characteristic which unites all greasers… They often carry knives or guns.”\textsuperscript{917}

Alampur observed that “women are property and are afraid to be unfaithful” in the greaser scene. His Report demonstrates that there were many more men than women who fit the greaser mould, but that those women who did tended to be in some real danger, sexually, physically or emotionally. “Many of these girls are lesbians who work with a male greaser as a prostitute,” he observed, even though they “have no sexual interest in men.” Elsewhere, he claimed: “in the greaser group both male and female turn to homosexuality and prostitution in large numbers.”\textsuperscript{918} For their part, “the male greasers are very interested in ‘hustling broads’ from the hippie and weekender groups… To the

\textsuperscript{915}It should be noted that in other reports on the scene I have perused, such a negative view of the greasers dominates. For example, in a Master’s Thesis from 1968, the author wrote that “they are behind the drug racket, the prostitution and the credit card rackets in Yorkville, and they force many of the youth in these other groups to work for them.” Ruth Patterson, “An Exploratory Study of the Opinions of Local Religious Leaders Towards Yorkville,” Unpublished Masters of Social Work Thesis, University of Toronto, 1968.
\textsuperscript{916}Smart and Jackson, 24.
\textsuperscript{917}ibid.
\textsuperscript{918}ibid, 60.
male greaser who is not a junkie, sex is more important than drugs.”

Ultimately, the picture we receive of greaser gender relations is sketchy and unstable.

The Report never fails to underline the class conflicts at work between the greasers and the hippies. However, there is little doubt as to which ‘class’ the Report sides with in this conflict. Greasers are, by comparison, undoubtedly the least admired category for Alampur: they are, in the Report, variously described as being “feared and despised”, “less intelligent than hippies and weekenders”, and “grandiose and loud”. It is difficult not to sense some perverse pleasure, however unconscious, in the Report’s offhand remark that “Motorcycle gangs enjoy an opportunity to beat them [greasers] up because other Villagers condone this activity as justified.”

Such blatant disrespect for this, the most populous category in the Yorkville scene in the winter of 1967-68 (according to their survey), further inculcates the view that the expected Yorkville inhabitants, the hippies, were suffering at the hands of an aggressive, uninvited force. “Usually the greaser lives outside the Village, at home, with relatives, or in an apartment” the Report reads, subtly reminding us that they don’t have parents, per se, but rather the much vaguer “relatives.” “They come to Yorkville for the same reasons the motorcycle gangs do – ‘To get some action’. They find victims and customers among the weekenders and hippies.”

Victims and customers: the hippies and weekenders are reduced to the objects of greaser oppression.

There is no doubt that Alampur sympathizes with these “passive hippies,” viewing greasers and bikers as an unfortunate impediments to the development of the more desirable hippie community. Even today he recalls the Village in terms suggesting

919 ibid, 24.
920 ibid, 25.
the beauty of the hippie experiment being sullied by incursions from greasers and, to a lesser extent, bikers. Of the two principal categories, the hippie and the greaser, Alampur recently recalled:

One is gentle, kind, [unintelligible]; they are a minority. That is the true hippie. That is the true flower child: harmless. They left home, and just wanted to escape from the norm. And then the greasers, they’re all kinds of these aggressive guys who say ‘hey, this is a great spot to be a part of all that stuff...’ The majority population were the greasers. Those were the criminal element. Those were the guys who were taking advantage of the situation. And moved in… and then getting worse and worse because of drug pushing or, you know, conducting illegal businesses of a kind.”

The relationship between Yorkville and these two chief groups are represented both in the Report and in the mind’s eye of Gopala Alampur, 30 years on, as fundamentally split between the black/white of aggressive greaser and harmless hippie behaviour.

The bikers receive a somewhat more sophisticated rap in Alampur’s Report, but there is even less of a sense that Alampur was able to infiltrate their world, or to gain their confidence, than was true even of the greasers. What results is a distant, hearsay-influenced overview of the category. For example, while the Report is clear that most motorcycle gang members came from working-class families, and that, generally, “their early experiences include violent or delinquent behaviour on the part of their parents,” it provides no evidence to support either position.

Such generalizations, pervasive and fundamental to the Report in the main, seem even more central to the depiction of biker behaviors and identity in Yorkville. For example, when faced with a gap in information about how bikers must support themselves financially, the Report opts to speculate rather than to admit insufficient

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921 Gopala Alampur, Interview with Author, February 14th, 2005.
922 Smart and Jackson, 21.
research: “one can only suspect that they get money from their families, or other gang members, or from illegal activities.” Finally, the only interview with any biker offered by the Report in its overview of the motorcycle club category comes from a former biker, who has “sold his bike and left the gang to go back to school.”

Judged to be between 18-28 years old bikers were, on average, the oldest Villagers, according to the Report. Described as being “generally bigger and more strongly built than the other inhabitants of Yorkville”, bikers “wear leather jackets or levis jackets with the sleeves cut out, with jeans and cowboy boots. […] Many wear long hair and beards.” This aesthetic is gendered masculine because all “official motorcyclists are males” although there were women who are acknowledged to be “associated with them in roles carrying lesser status.” Although the Report lists a number of biker gangs that it claims to be active in the Village (Hells Angels, Paradise Riders, the Thunderbolts, Satan’s Choice) it is clear that the Vagabonds are the most powerful club in Alampur’s estimation. The Report describes the interior of their clubhouse (located “across town”) and testifies that the club has about 50 members, with 40% of these men being married.

The Case Study of “Jay – a Motorcycle Gang Member” which appears toward the end of the Report seems to be the primary source for much of the information on offer about bikers in Yorkville. Jay, the American-born lower class son of a delinquent father and battered mother, had quit school after grade 9. He fell in and out of associations with

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923 ibid. The Case Study of “Jay”, a biker, comes later in the Report. This case study seems the basis for most of the generalisations made in this initial overview section. Jay is born of a Polish mother and Hungarian father.

924 There is only one indication of whether Alampur had firsthand knowledge of this or not. In his case study of Jay, he makes reference to the “swastika flag in his club room”; elsewhere, he refers to the Vagabond headquarters being adorned with “pictures of motorcyles, hippies, Hitler and Mussolini, and a swastika flag.” (Smart and Jackson, 19) Still, the superficiality of the rest of the Report suggests that he gained much of his understanding of the Bikers through second-hand information.
biker clubs for a period of time until, after quitting his odd jobs and getting serious about starting a bike repair shop, became a full-time active member of a club that frequented the Yorkville scene. Alampur’s respect for Jay is apparent – he refers to him as “obviously intelligent”. However, he seems to have been unable to elicit much information out of him regarding anything but drinking and sex.

These descriptions of biker ‘culture’ unproblematically conflate the various activities of the five or more clubs into one, monolithic Motorcycle Gang – a representation which, it seems, is based upon the case study of this one (former) Vagabond club member. In a lengthy passage outlining the procedure for joining a biker gang, the Report relates what appears to be the specific experience of this one prospective member as if it were a common biker practice. “To join” Alampur explains, “a member must sponsor [the guy] and the club would accept him as a ‘striker’. The probationary period for a striker can last from two to eight weeks. [...] When a member acts ‘smart’ during striking the club may make him suck a female’s genitals before the assembled members.” This episode is echoed in the case study of Jay’s experiences as a biker in his discussion of his “weakness” for “chicks”. Alampur explains that: “There is a good deal of talk in the club room about perverted sexual acts carried out by various members. ‘Eating a girl out’ (male sucks the female’s genitals) is not uncommon.” That the performance of cunnilingus in front of the gang might be an embarrassing punishment for the man is implied; that the act might be torture for the woman is curiously absent.

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925 Alampur also concedes that “in his own dirty and bearded way he projects poise.” Smart and Jackson, 78.
926 ibid, 19.
927 ibid, 20.
With regard to drug use, the Report concluded that bikers were less likely to use drugs (apart from marijuana) than the other groups, but stressed their obsession with alcohol. It was put to Alampur by a biker that “booze, broads and bikes” were all that he cared for. Nevertheless, the bikers’ ties to the underground crime world often put them in the position of messengers for the drug trade. Greasers, it was explained, also abused alcohol, but tended toward amphetamines, glue sniffing and even heroin, eschewing the psychedelic drugs. Hippies and weekenders were understood to be preternaturally obsessed with being high on psychedelic drugs such as LSD and marijuana, but were also said to be interested in trying any and every drug they could get hands on. Typically, they smoked marijuana and hash on a daily basis, and did LSD at least once a month. In general, the Report concluded, hippies and weekenders largely refused alcohol as a “down trip,” and liked the kind of high they got out of pot and hallucinogens.

What is perhaps most arresting about this study is the utter banality of these conclusions. Such trite and expected generalizations betray the complex relationships between the Village and its inhabitants, visitors, and observers. And yet this Report, issued in 1969, came to be accepted as the standard study of the Village, its inhabitants, and its expected meaning as a countercultural centre. Although there were blotches of inconclusive results and incompatible accounts dotted throughout the Report, the authors were so intent on relying on the four categories of identity and performance that they seem to have been unable to engage with these inconsistencies. The “hippie,” for example, who explains in an interview that he had been a gay prostitute in the past, and that he had used heroin, would seem to contradict their treatment of the hippies as a

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928 ibid, 21.
929 See Toronto Star, January 28th, 1969;
promiscuously heterosexual, soft-drug using category. But there is simply no
interrogation of this evident discrepancy. Moreover, the simple fact that women are
virtually silent suggests the real neglect of a central identity in the Village.

For all of its faults, the Report still stands as the most detailed first-hand account
of the scene in that winter, 1967-1968, as the Village was entering its final phase. If
nothing else (besides being a fascinating overview) Alampur’s observations and
conclusions, inconsistent though some may have been, establish the multifarious,
contradictory and downright complex identity pool at work in the Village after the
Summer of Love. Bikers, greasers and weekenders had come to outnumber the hippies
significantly; hard drugs were rampant, sexual violence a serious concern, and poverty
and alienation were on the rise.

Were the identity categories too distinct? Certainly. But, these circumscribed
categories were relevant, at least in the general sense, to the Villagers who surrounded
Alampur that winter, and in the years before. As we have seen in previous Chapters, the
Village community was comprised of various competing and overlapping identities. The
problem with Alampur’s formulation wasn’t that he tried to reify these four faulty
categories, but that he hewed so closely to them in his search for meaning that he failed to
appreciate just how intertwined they were both in the real sense and in the public

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930Why had such an apparently unrepresentative figure been used as a case study? Alampur recalls
that he was likely chosen for superficial reasons. “Maybe he was the most popular, that’s why. I must have
been fascinated with the guy, his looks probably. I don’t know? There was no scientific base for my case
studies. […] I should have probed into whole autobiographies before I picked one. My case study then must
have been a poor representation of the population. Other than that, the guy was genuinely a hippie, and
gentle.” Gopala Alampur, Interview with Author, February 14th, 2005.

931“One clear conclusion of this study is that Yorkville does not represent a monolithic cultural
process. It is better termed a ‘culture area’ than a subculture. The diversity in persons who frequent the area
is very great as are the differences in their backgrounds, current behaviour, philosophy of life, and attitudes
towards drugs and sex… The high degree of cultural diversity, of course, makes cultural change a difficult
and complicated process if the larger society were to proceed against Yorkville by attempting to change the
ethos.” Smart and Jackson, 81.
imagination. For his part, when asked how he felt about the rigidity of the four categories outlined in the Report, Villager Mike Waage’s response was both apposite and fittingly contrary: “I’d say there was a diverse variety of people [in Yorkville]. And some may have gone through all of those categories, some might not have gone through any of them. You know?”932


“We have no interest in trying to channel the Village kids back to straight society,” explained 21-year old Trailer volunteer Greg King in 1968. “Unless, of course, that’s what they really want.”933 This position, yet another rigidification of the boundaries between the ‘straight’ world and Yorkville, also demonstrates the peculiar and highly effective position taken up by Trailer for the two years of its existence. Responding rather than ministering, listening and helping rather than teaching and enforcing, Trailer was built on the idea of Yorkville as a self-contained community, altogether separate from the rest of Toronto, with its own particular problems, requiring its own particular set of solutions. From late May 1968 to mid July 1970, Trailer would move with the Yorkville scene, an integrated and expected facet of the performance of Yorkville; from the Village to Rochdale to rock festivals at Mosport Park, Trailer was relied upon as a local, friendly, necessary Yorkville charity.

On May 27th, 1968, the Jewish Family and Child Service of Metro Toronto established what they called a “Mobile Counseling Unit” right in the heart of Yorkville. “Trailer”, as it was named (for it was, indeed, a 40-foot mobile home), sat at 70 Avenue Rd, and was initially introduced to the Village as part of a three-month study designed to

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932 Mike Waage, Interview with Author, March 3rd, 2005.
933 Globe and Mail, June 7th, 1968
test new initiatives to help troubled youth. The poetry of using an actual Trailer (a vehicle, capable of quickly re-establishing itself wherever the action was) was not lost on the post-1967 Yorkville scene. Over the next two years, Trailer would go through a series of permutations, each one mirroring, mimicking shifting realities among its young constituents. Naturally, it also spoke to the realization, however unspoken, that Yorkville was no permanent hip enclave – if the events of 1967 had taught Villagers anything, it was that the Village could move, but only if it stuck together. Trailer, a mobile centre, reflected the gathering mutability of the Village scene.

As Eric Layman explained in his lengthy discourse on the problems besetting the Village scene: “acid and speed freaks, panhandlers, and others […] will listen more seriously to their better oriented friends – if to anyone at all – than to a policeman, social worker, or any other authority symbol.”934 Recognizing this reality, the principles, or “working concepts” underlying the Trailer project included “youth’s right to self-determination”, servicing youth “on their own ground”, a “youth serving youth policy”, and a restructuring of services to the “pace and rhythm of youth’s needs”. The plan was uncomplicated: provide a space in the midst of the Village in which medical and legal issues (many of which were otherwise dismissed and/or avoided by Villagers because of the ties of hospitals and aid agencies to the ‘establishment’) could be freely and safely discussed. Like the Fish Net and the Church Drop-In, the Trailer quickly became treated as another hangout in the Yorkville landscape. As Trailer staffer John Kileeg explained after that first summer in 1968, “Villagers tended to think of the Trailer as a Haven, meeting place, or general ‘gab’ spot. They casually came into all parts of the trailer and

934 Saturday, Volume 3 Number 5, August 1968.
settled as one of the group. The trailer staff accepted this and freely promoted a fairly relaxed, casual atmosphere which appeared to encourage some of the Villagers.⁹³⁵

The real centre of the operation was a middle aged former army doctor named Anne Keyl. Loved by many, feared by all, Keyl’s professional dedication to the scene was as extensive as it was anomalous. Michael Valpy’s recollections of the scene are coloured by a variety of fond memories of the “tough old bird”.

She was an expert in Venereal Disease, and she had acquired that expertise at Camp Borden during the war! She ran a VD Clinic at Women’s College where, most of the time, she was treating prostitutes. I think either Chapman or DePoe made contact with her because the hospitals were turning away a lot of kids. I mean, Toronto General wouldn’t treat any of them unless it was truly an emergency. If they were dirty, and the hair was long, and the rest of it… So, my recollection is that she used her own money to fund a clinic, and that became the medical arm of Trailer.⁹³⁶

Famously militant and organized, Keyl was the antithesis of her laid back customers and patients.

Anne Keyl just intrigued me. I still have this image in my mind of her organizing her interns and residents sort of two by two to march from Women’s College Hospital up around Queen’s Park circle carrying tables and medical paraphernalia, everybody in their white coats! It was done at night, in this little parade up Avenue Road to Yorkville.⁹³⁷

But she was thorough, professional, and may well have saved a lot of young lives during her tenure with Women’s College and Trailer.

It is worth mentioning that, unlike more explicitly religious missions the Fish Net, and to a limited extent, the Church Drop-in Centre, the Trailer was merely Jewish by


⁹３⁶Michael Valpy, Interview with Author, October 5th, 2006.

⁹３⁷ibid.
association. Neither was the Trailer preaching from any moralistic dais, nor was it even obvious that it carried an association with a Jewish organization. The Trailer was, instead, a secular experiment, funded by a Jewish charitable group but run by young people from within the community itself – and, it is clear, this was the reason for its high degree of success at turning people on to its intentions, and remaining an effective mission within the Yorkville scene.

Kileeg’s Report to the Social Planning Council of Metro Toronto, written in September 1968 (at the culmination of the initial three month Trailer ‘experiment’), detailed his responses, observations and criticisms of the endeavor. Alongside these more significant assessments, Kileeg illuminates the daily routines of the average Trailer volunteer, and in so doing establishes the types of services provided by this innovative enterprise.

My daily program included the following:
1. The transportation of Villagers who were medical emergencies to the hospital.
2. The transportation of Villagers to regular medical clinics at Women’s College Hospital every Tuesday evening, and to VD clinics at Toronto Western and Women’s College Hospitals every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings.

Referral of:
- a) Village clients to the Good Shepherd Refuge, Salvation Army hostels, Fred Victor Mission, Seaton House and the Digger House;
- b) applicants to emergency welfare;
- c) emergency legal problems to legal aid or to the volunteer legal back-up person;
- d) under-age youth to the police Youth Bureau;
- e) various clients to appropriate psychological or psychiatric services…938

The Trailer was indeed involved in a wide variety of initiatives: consider the multiplicity of issues the Trailer claimed to be prepared to remedy in their advertising leaflets. These leaflets, ubiquitous on Yorkville Avenue throughout 1968 and 1969, invariably listed a diversity of common Village problems, brightly described in ‘local’ language:

938 Kileeg, 2.

Clearly, the Trailer was a multi-faceted operation, aiming to meet a wide assortment of needs. But, responding to the issues surrounding drug use, sex, and indigence without passing paternalistic judgments, without appearing to have any ulterior motives, and without demonstrating any overt connection to the establishment structures and ideologies which were so distrusted in the Yorkville scene, the Trailer’s staff was able to minister to the Villagers more effectively than their less secular cousins.

As the *Globe and Mail* reported, underlining the language of religious conversion, “everybody at Trailer stresses that they are not there to save but only to help the young Villagers.” Rather than working from without, ministering to the flock from the morally elevated position of pastor or missionary, Trailer operated from within – while the Church Drop-In or the Fish Net could be transformed into community spaces, could become incorporated into the landscape of Yorkville a few nights a week, Trailer was immediately an integrated facet of the Yorkville performance. And, one cannot discount the fact that Trailer offered a safe environment for otherwise embarrassing, socially awkward, or otherwise potentially shameful circumstances and symptoms. Anne Keyl was tough, but she was a pro – her patients would neither be turned away, nor would they be insulted or made to feel like failures for their situations. In a scene in which VD was as common as nicotine fingers, this was undoubtedly a good thing. “Funny story,” recalled Michael Valpy.

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940 *Globe and Mail*, June 7th, 1968.
[Name Redacted] was very good looking. Very attractive to girls. And of course, he was constantly getting gonorrhea. There’s this funny story of Anne down on her knees treating him, and looking up and saying: [Name Redacted], we’ve got to stop meeting like this!  

Dispensing with ethics lessons couched in religious rhetoric, and sidestepping the deleterious association between the Church and the middle-class ideology that was avoided like Black Death in the Village, the Trailer was taken up by Villagers in the summer of 1968 as a locally-sanctioned alternative.

Kileeg’s 1968 Report highlights this line above all others. “The Villagers suspect anyone from the establishment,” he began, “[such as] social workers, church workers, Youth Bureau, etc. Several workers moving into Yorkville have met passive resistance which has approached hostility.” And so, the Trailer used a kind of subterfuge to avoid falling into this pratfall – it was, after all, funded and overseen by the Jewish Family and Child Services, hardly a counterculture outfit – by allowing its onsite operations, and the majority of its counseling, to be performed by Yorkville youth volunteers sympathetic to the beliefs, aesthetics and age of their constituents. Because the volunteers “dressed like their clients and talked their language” – in other words because they performed Yorkville themselves – other Villagers found them approachable, and disregarded the association between Trailer and the establishment.  

In Kileeg’s estimation, “[Trailer] demonstrated the value of using ‘in’ people to make the initial approach to alienated youth when back up services were available… it was recognized and accepted where other attempts have failed.” However, the staff was so young (ages ranged from 18-23 that summer) that Kileeg, in the same breath as

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941 Michael Valpy, Interview with Author, October 5th, 2006.
942 Toronto Star, January 8th, 1970.
943 Kileeg, 11.
expounding on the success of employing youth volunteers to treat Villagers, blamed the overcrowding, clutter, and disorganization of Trailer on their green age. The trick was simple, if awkwardly performed: there was an obvious need, in Kileeg’s view, for “continuous ‘behind the scenes’ overall control and supervision” of the site. And yet, this need was overshadowed by the reality of the situation: the very success of the Trailer at insinuating itself into the Yorkville scene was reliant upon its being peopled by (apparently un-adulterated) local youth. As Kileeg warned, “further supervision and planning may have the effect of disturbing the relaxed setting of the trailer and may tend to repel the Villagers.”

Trailer legal volunteers, such as Clayton Ruby, Paul Copeland and John King (all law students at the University of Toronto), made it very clear to the press what their intentions were with regard to their clients’ practices. “We’re not here to drag people in and tell them not to take dope; we’re not here to moralize or reform,” King told the Toronto Star in June, 1968, mere days after the Trailer’s inception. Ruby and Copeland had begun to conceptualize the Village Bar Association in late 1967, a legal-aid project based in Yorkville which would eventually become a key facet of the Trailer’s operation. As Ruby recalls:

The thing that I did was set up a street legal project. Nowadays you grow up in a universe in which there [are] all kinds of free legal services available in community centres or whatever, called clinics now. We had the first clinic in North America – the first legal clinic. For a while we were actually on the street. So we set up a little table, a school table, and I’d organize law students and lawyers to man that table for certain number of hours of the night, in the early evening. And we’d sit there and give legal advice to people who were being hassled by landlords, or hassled by cops, or stores that wouldn’t let them in, stuff like that. We’d intercede, we’d threaten law suits, we’d put up bail sometimes.

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944 ibid.
The kinds of cases taken up by these young lawyers and law students tended to revolve around the key issues of drugs, vagrancy and the ubiquitous “causing a disturbance” charge.

My first case was done with Ian Waddell […today an NDP politician in British Columbia]. He and I did our first case together as law students. We defended 20-odd hippies, including the “world’s oldest hippie”, a guy who was about 82, or 72, for trespassing. They were living in a house that was abandoned. They broke into this abandoned house, and that’s where they were all living. There was about 20-odd of them, from about 16 up. And they were all acquitted. This was the Village Bar.

In short, explains Ruby today, the majority of the cases were really about civil rights for Villagers. He and Copeland even set to work penning what would become an extremely successful pocketbook, a guide to civil rights for Villagers who might find themselves entangled with the Canadian justice system. Whimsically titled law law law, and eventually published by the nascent Anansi Press (run by a collective of hip Toronto writers), the guide would go on to become among the biggest sellers in the country. However, not everyone was pleased with the idea. Police officers especially stood to lose ground if their constituents were able to represent themselves as victims of bullying and prejudice. Moreover, the Law Society wasn’t about to let these young upstarts sully the name of their institution.

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946 ibid.
948 Paul Copeland and I wrote a little book called law law law which we published first as a pamphlet we gave away for free. Give people their rights. Then we expanded on it to do all kinds of stuff with the help of other lawyers, Elaine King helped us, she was a judge who died recently. That got published by Anansi Press, and it financed the entire Anansi list for a few years because it made money on it at one dollar a booklet. It became a bestseller! It sold over 10,000 copies. Which in those days was a bestseller in Canada. We were thrilled to have Anansi, thrilled they printed it. It went through a lot of editions.” Clayton Ruby, Interview with Author, March 3rd, 2006.
One day Paul Copeland and I, he was a first-year lawyer, we got a summons from the treasurer of the Law Society [of Upper Canada], the head guy… And the summons was, “come to the Law Society, we’ve had some complaints.” So we show up at the Treasurer’s office and the secretary Kenneth Jarvis is there, with Arthur Martin who was then treasurer (and later a Court of Appeal judge): a stern, older man. And he demanded that we change our name because it was misleading, (which we didn’t do), […] and [he said]: “we want you off the street! It’s not becoming a lawyer to be on the street giving legal advice.” Of course, we were on the street because that’s where the kids were! They didn’t want to go to a lawyer’s office, or any office. They were on the streets, you’ve got to go to where they were. Seemed perfectly sensible to us, but we were forbidden from doing that, so we stopped, and we rented a storefront at that point, a basement storefront, on Yorkville Ave.\textsuperscript{949}

The Trailer’s balancing act on the straight razor of this apparent cultural divide was fraught with difficulties, beyond the clutter and disorganization of Village youth. Other established and well-funded aid agencies in Toronto, whose help the Trailer (with its tiny, under-trained staff) could surely have used, tended to mistrust the Trailer. It was too Village-oriented, too haphazard in its procedures to be considered an ally. On the other hand, the young Trailer staff had little time for these established agencies, predictably regarding them as too clinical, too formal and too rigid in their procedures. As a result, very few aid agencies (such as the CAS and the CMHA) were able to sustain any serious dialogue with Trailer staff. Both the CAS and the CMHA found that their only response against the charge that they were too set in their ways, that they were too much of the establishment, was to send their own youth representatives in as advisors.

Trailer would shut its doors in mid-July, 1970, with then-Director Judy Johnson citing a shared fear amongst its staff that it had become “an irrelevant institution. Trailer

\textsuperscript{949}ibid.
helped kids for a long time” she explained, “but in many ways we became an institution ourselves, and institutions are what many kids are fighting against.”

Toronto’s Hippie Matron : June Callwood and Digger House

"Our family joke," smiles June Callwood, "is that our kid got out of Yorkville and I didn’t." The story of Callwood’s association with the Yorkville scene in the mid-to-late 1960s remains largely untold, and enormously underappreciated. A middle-class mother of two whose career as a journalist had made her a public figure, Callwood’s interest in Yorkville was born out of a very personal connection. Her son, Barney, had begun to frequent the district in 1964, eventually moving into a room above the Grab Bag. Still, her initial experiences of the Village were generally positive – she met his friends, when he brought them home to get a free meal, and was impressed by their intelligence and commitment to progressive ideals.

Crucial to Callwood’s vision was the dichotomy of whole/broken: in her view, “broken kids” – vaguely defined as under-educated, psychically disturbed youth – had recently begun to appear in Yorkville, and were languishing in a scene cold to their problems and needs. And so, she became a regular visitor to the area, and among its most significant and vocal witnesses. Moreover, her position as emissary of sorts to both the middle-class and to the hip teens among whom she walked, afforded her a crucial role in the debates over the character of the district. Callwood’s recollections of the events revolved around the popular misconception of just who was hanging around in Yorkville,

950Toronto Star, July 16th, 1970 ; Early in 1969 Johnson had already predicted the end of the Trailer and Yorkville. In a televised interview on the CBC in early 1969, she explained that “We [Trailer staff] felt that there was some kind of a change.” Yorkville Upheaval, CBC Television Special, Reporter Bill Casey, Jan 29, 1969. http://archives.cbc.ca/IDC-1-69-580-3203/life_society/hippies/clip10
951June Callwood, Interview with Author, March 11th, 2005.
and how many options these youth really had available to them. “This was… just as it was turning from the intellectual, interesting revolution against hypocrisy, to really an enormous problem of dislocated and helpless youth.”

She pointed to a piece that ran in the *Toronto Star* which set up the idea that middle-class Toronto youth were so determined to be Yorkville hobos that they were even sleeping in hotel lobbies. “And I knew first-hand that these were not the middle-class kids that were being portrayed. Everybody thought they were still the middle-class kids.” This misconception seemed to her the root of the problem of Yorkville. The impression of the Yorkville scene – what was soon to be dubbed the hippie scene – as being comprised of “drop outs” from middle-class homes in suburban Toronto, was not at all representative. These new kids simply weren’t like her son and his friends Blues Chapman and Clay Ruby had been back in 1965. They were younger, and far less prepared (emotionally, physically, intellectually) for the Yorkville that had received them. What frustrated Callwood most was that, even after years of rising numbers of young people migrating to the district, there was still very little there for them, no social institutions, no shelters.

And, because they still thought of the bohemians as middle-class university kids, no one appeared to be concerned about this aspect of the Village. In a recent interview she explained:

What had happened was that the middle-class kids [had only been] *imitating* poverty: they were wearing shabby clothes and torn jeans, and letting their hair grow. [But] right across the country the message went out to all the kids who’d been in 30 foster homes that there was a place where they would blend in, [where there’d be] lots of drugs, lots of sex, and

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952 ibid.
953 ibid.
Since Callwood didn’t see much residual evidence of the positive side of the bohemian crowd that she remembered from 1965, she found herself taking up a lonely occupation. As a respected middle-class journalist living and working among hard drug-taking, socially ambivalent, under-educated, homeless youth, and publicly enamored of the central refusals which had once underwritten the scene to which these young people had hoped to become a part, Callwood was castigated on both sides as a member of the opposition. Was she a hip apologist or yet another establishment figure trying to undermine the counterculture?

Perhaps because she was of the media herself, Callwood was quick to recognize the complicated way that media reportage on Yorkville (whether slanted contra or pro countercultural activities) tended to act as “a superlative aid to recruitment.” Michael Valpy agrees with Callwood’s assessment, but puts the media obsession with Yorkville into some perspective.

[Yorkville] was now attracting not just kids who were sane and upwardly mobile and all the rest. As a result of the media coverage, it attracted this new population. So, I guess in that sense the media was responsible in some way. But, it had all the elements of a major media story: it had political conflict, police versus citizen conflict. It had images (real or not) of sex, of drugs, of deviant behaviors. I mean, it was stuff the media would just love. And, they did. And then, because of the coverage, it began attracting this whole different population. That’s when it tanked.

This proliferation of magazine articles, newspaper updates, television specials and even National Film Board-sponsored studies offered contradictory assessments and treatments.

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ibid.  
June Callwood, “Digger House” in The Underside of Toronto, 125.  
Michael Valpy, Interview with Author, October 5th, 2006.
of the scene: the counterculture is powerful, beautiful, ideologically sound and necessary; the counterculture is disastrous, violent, unsafe and wretched; the counterculture is illusory, passé, a home for poseurs and wannabes; the counterculture is vibrant, exciting, sexy, fun and cool. Such a complex mélange of contradictory value assessments was part of the allure of the scene; very often, the nexus of hip culture develops at the site of ambiguity.

Hip scenes, though, also regularly cohere around poverty, drug addiction, and despair, as the search for an authentic experience in a commodified, alienating world often translates into a fascination, even a pursuit of death. No less an authority than Terry Southern, author of the gleefully filthy Candy and eventual co-author of the screenplay for Easy Rider, defined “hip” as a dance between death and junked-up bliss: Hip, he wrote to his friend Paul Krassner, implies “a certain death of something near the center. […] About the hippest anyone has gotten so far, I suppose, is to be permanently on the nod.”957 As is often said, there is no more authentic experience than the fatal moment: the “like a dog!” instant, the final existential crash. This is the needle push, the “petit mort” of the orgasm, the gathering storm of the acid rush. This is the ashes-in-your-mouth hunger of junk-starved street life. (This is, also, hardly a new idea. As long ago as the seventeenth century, John Donne was exploring the connection between “the nod” and death. “And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well / And better than thy stroke” ran his mocking rebuke of death’s dominion.)958 Because so often the respect, the hushed-toned reverence, is saved for those who can touch the void and return unscathed – changed, perhaps, but alive. At the root, the hip performance has always been about

957 See Leland, 260-261.
surviving death until you don’t. Indeed, the hip pantheon is an assembly of corpses, a slow motion montage of young people who chased, and finally caught, oblivion.

June Callwood watched her son’s new friends and read in them the black taste for death. For their part, the newly-formed Diggers came together around the same realization. But how to curb this enthusiasm for horror, for the knife edge thrill of danger? The immediate response was the obvious one: shelters, community-building, welfare programs and counseling – mundane conclusions, to be sure – had never been tried in the Village. If implemented properly, if understood by all to be organic components of the Village – Village-run, community-endorsed – then maybe they could work?

Coming together, Callwood and the Diggers agreed that money was the key. She went first to see if Toronto’s welfare system was inadequately processing cases from the Yorkville district, because Villagers seemed to be unable to receive benefits: “I went to the City to see if there’d be a faster way to get them welfare. Well, there wasn’t – “no address? Well then, you have to get an address.” 959 Next, Callwood turned to the hospitals, especially the emergency rooms, and discovered their unspoken policy of refusing to treat Villagers.

One [kid] that I knew very well, she stayed with us over the weekend many times, she was suffering from hunger. Very emaciated. And she went to one of the hospital emergency [rooms] and was turned away. […] It was appalling. The rejection in hospital emergency wards – it was shocking. I mean, you’re supposed to take care of people, not make moral judgments! 960

What was needed, above all else, was a shelter at which counseling, safety and understanding were available to these young people.

959 June Callwood, Interview with Author, March 11th, 2005.
960 ibid.
Establishing such a shelter, it was agreed, would solve a number of the problems the Diggers were facing in their attempts to provide aid to needy Villagers. In the absence of any central shelter, young, broke, and homeless runaways were holing up in crash pads, flop houses and such, often hiding there for days on end from the realities of their illnesses, their addictions, their fears. Such overcrowded places tended to be unhealthy environments, full of the junk-sick and often the deranged. Spread throughout the university housing areas around Yorkville, crash pads were the new Village community housing, a sign of the rising rents and general disrepair of the Village itself. “Crash Pads were proliferating, and these kids were hidden,” explains Michael Valpy. “One of the problems DePoe and Chapman and Clement had was in actually knowing where they were so they could get help to them.”

If the hospitals weren’t prepared to provide these services, and if homeless shelters were inaccessible to most young Villagers, what was needed was a shelter run by Villagers for Villagers. And so, Digger House was born. “The City was buying properties along Spadina for the Spadina Expressway,” recalls Callwood. Since the Spadina Expressway plan (a wildly unpopular initiative which would have seen a freeway carve through western downtown Toronto) was beginning to falter under pressure from protesters and homeowners, Toronto was suddenly stuck with a whack of houses they had been busily buying up.

So [the City] would rent it to me, a house that had about 8 bedrooms, for about 600 dollars a month. So I put down $600. Now, I was not going to be able to do that for very long. It was a lot of money. We had four kids [my husband and I] were still contributing money to!962

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961 Michael Valpy, Interview with Author, October 5th, 2006.
962 June Callwood, Interview with Author, March 11th, 2005.
Municipal money was scarce. Ministering to the masses of hippies and greasers was hardly a priority for a City Council who preferred to see them die out, rather than be coddled back to health. Undaunted, Callwood turned to prominent Toronto Churches and Synagogues to remind them of what she believed were their social responsibilities.

   I thought: This is Biblical! You’re supposed to give shelter to the helpless. So I went to the churches and two synagogues, with varied results. Nothing from the Catholics. Nothing from the Presbyterians. $200 from Beth Tzedec [a large conservative synagogue]. $200 from the Anglicans. $5000 from the United Church. And, not only $2000 from Holy Blossom Temple (a large reform synagogue), but also the help of their Social Action Committee, which at that time the leaders were Howard Perlmutter and Fred Zemans. They became active in trying to help.⁹⁶³

With money in hand, young hip allies in Riggan, DePoe, Chapman and their incipient Digger organization, and a renewed outrage fueled by her discoveries of such clear municipal failures to respond to the escalating social crisis she envisioned, Callwood and her volunteers began to focus their energies on their Spadina Road haven for Village youth.

   The house was, by all accounts, a dump. At least at first – before long, Digger volunteers and the first rounds of residents had transformed the place into a somewhat less dumpy version of itself. "Every room has been painted, the wood varnished, there are even rugs on the floor. The front of the house received a wild Chinese red coat of paint. In their bedrooms, each wall, in fact each panel of a door is usually a different colour." (One wonders what the neighbors thought of the aesthetic incongruity of a "wild" red house full of hippies having suddenly appeared on their otherwise red-brick and plain block.) "Drop down to the house and look. It was a dump. It is now a beautiful, old, distinguished looking house," entreated one volunteer in a request for funding from the

⁹⁶³ ibid.
City. "It looks great!" she enthused. Meanwhile, Callwood continued a relentless campaign of letter writing and speech-making, rallying support (money and food) from all over the city.

The aesthetic transformation of Digger House was cast as a kind of group therapy exercise by Sheila Pennington, an early volunteer. "As the house begins to shine, so do its occupants. Care and respect are contagious. These youngsters are beginning to care for themselves...[,] their hair is clean, they bathe regularly. For the first time they are beginning to think and care about who they are as individuals."

For a year or so, the money held out, if only barely. The story of Digger House (often referred to as "Hippie Haven" by police and media) is driven by this constant shortage of funds, and a parallel paucity of support from the City. And yet, by early 1968, it had become an integral and utterly vital service for the Village-based street youth in need of support, shelter, and guidance. As Callwood was quick to point out in her frequent requests to the City for funding and supplies for her shelter, there was nowhere near enough in the way of support options in place for these young people.

In Yorkville there is only the magnificent and gallant Community Services Organization of St-Paul's-Avenue RD United Church (which on weekends closes its doors on the maximum it dares to contain, some six hundred). It is a drop-in center which cannot provide overnight shelter, but does distribute free food: about 100 meals a day. [There is also the Trailer.] And then there is the Digger House, with 20 beds.

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964 Sheila Pennington, "For the first time in my life I don’t feel that I want to run away", Unpublished document, Toronto Archives, Series 100, File 1245, Box 46693-8, Undated.
965 From a typical letter from Callwood to the Welfare and Housing Committee: “As newspaper accounts are beginning to bear out, the hippie movement is no longer dominated by bemused intellectual dropouts but has become the refuge of young people whose personality, health and sanity have been damaged by a catastrophic family background.” Toronto Archives, Box 46693-8; Series 100; file 1245, June 17th, 1968.
966 "Sheila Pennington, "For the first time in my life I don’t feel that I want to run away", Unpublished document, Toronto Archives, Series 100, File 1245, Box 46693-8, Undated.
967 June 8th, 1968. MEMO to all members of Metro Welfare Committee in ref. to Yorkville Diggers. Written by Callwood. Box 46693-8; Series 100, file 1245. Her emphasis. The Toronto Archives
In its first incarnation, the Board of Directors for Digger House understood the shelter as "a half-way house between running away and returning to society." Comprised of a lawyer, a psychiatrist, a professor from York University, a housewife and a prominent journalist (Callwood), the Board was decidedly middle-class and well-connected. However, its first round of applications for financial support went unheeded; apart from a successful application to Ottawa for an Income Tax exemption, nothing in the way of institutional or governmental assistance was received for the first year.

The first live-in house administrator, a social worker named Vance Davis, was well-liked by his colleagues and Directors for his "maturity" and "ultimate faith in the potential of these youngsters"; however his presence, both as an onsite counselor and responsible adult, surely rankled many of his wary charges. Beside Davis, two other live-in staff (one male and one female) helped to maintain order, safety, and cleanliness in the crowded, snug environment, often helping with the cooking (when there was any fresh food to cook) and the enforcement of rules such as curfew and (relative) quiet.

Indeed, fresh food was a persistent issue at Digger House. While the occasional casserole or lot of baked goods was donated by benevolent souls, in general the Digger House pantry was bare, and its residents often went rather hungry. As a rule, whatever money they managed to acquire was to be directed to the communal food fund; however, drugs, so central to the identity structure of many of the residents, frequently won out in

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968 Sheila Pennington, "For the first time in my life I don't feel that I want to run away", Unpublished document, Toronto Archives, Series 100, File 1245, Box 46693-8, Undated.

969 ibid.
the battle between empty stomach and empty head. In an effort to promote self-sufficiency, some practical Diggers planted a vegetable garden in the backyard of the house, but the few carrots, heads of lettuce, beans and tomato plants it produced were but small pebbles thrown into the grand canyon of rumbling teenage bellies.

The typical letter to the Metropolitan Welfare and Housing Committee from the Digger House crew stressed the inevitability of social disaster if their mission to house and shelter young people went unsupported. The young people were invariably presented as "desperate"; while their complete and unambivalent distrust, even hatred, for adults was emphasized at every turn. "These youngsters," explained one such letter, "starved both physically and emotionally, view adults as hostile, rejecting, suspicious, and authoritarian." It seems that in requests for funding, the association between lower class youth, broken homes and alienation is counterpoised against a vision of the middle-class as successful and emotionally secure. The general refusal of complexity here, the deliberate presentation of these needy young people as uniformly mentally deranged, disturbed, even hopeless, is sensationalist in every way, and not a little disingenuous. In their efforts to secure the view of these young people as unquestionably in need of municipal financial support, such letters often strayed into the territory of excess, even absurdity. One request, from a female volunteer assistant at Digger House (also a graduate student in Psychology) went so far as to characterize Digger House as the "Humane Society" for youth: "Instead of preventing abuse and misuse of animals it protects teenagers."

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970ibid.
971Surely Callwood knew that middle-class families were just as likely to produce unhappy children?
972ibid.
The residents of Digger House were, of course, a mixed bag of young people, mutable and therefore all-but-impossible to characterize in any meaningful way. Since it would have been patently absurd to approach the City for funding for a shelter designed to house productive, happy, if slightly alienated young people, the emphasis was instead placed upon the extreme cases of truly disturbed, unwell young people who were washed on their shores. “These were young people the hippies had never imagined,” Callwood wrote in 1969. “The broken-hearted and nearly destroyed victims of multiple foster homes, parents who were drunks, or insane, or hotly hostile, homes that were bleak and dangerous because of bitter, angry poverty.” The “real hippies”, as Callwood and others seemed to agree, “had health to squander”. Since they had come from the middle-class – “because no source but affluence and liberalism could have produced them” – “their childhood legacy of warm beds, orange juice, pediatricians, regular dental checkups, and summers at the lake” paradoxically steeled them for the “reckless adventure” of poverty and privation.

It was, perhaps, no accident that among the most successful books of the early 1960s was Maurice Sendak’s Where the Wild Things Are, a children’s bedtime story which in many ways suggested a formula for the “reckless adventure” of middle-class rebellion to come. In it, a young boy is scolded for “making mischief” around the house while dressed up in a wolf costume. His punishment is that he be sent to his room without supper. While up in his room, the boy imagines a feral land full of terrible danger, monsters, and other such like. However, he demonstrates an easy camaraderie with them (in his costume) and in next to no time they bow to him, naming him King of the Wild

973 June Callwood, “Digger House” in The Underside of Toronto, 125.
974 ibid.
975 ibid.
Things. Soon enough, of course, his mastery over the “land of the wild things” grows tiresome – there is nothing left to conquer, no mystery to solve. The wickedness, the danger, the searing thrill of being wild had turned cold. So, the boy returns home, victorious, wiser, to the safety and comfort of his room, only to find his supper waiting for him. “And it was still hot.”

In one of the more astute observations of the hip refusals of affluence and authority, Callwood recognized that “few can live for extended periods in a state of risk without having safety in their bones”; in her view, despair needn’t creep under the skin if one always feels the enveloping blanket of security. Caught up in the hip death chase, there is a yawning, fundamental gap between the vanishing sense of confidence one feels when alone on the darkened street with no money and no options, and the climbing sense of adventure the same situation might inspire in a suburban kid with his parents’ phone number in his pocket. As we shall see in the following chapter, in the late 1960s this gap would only widen.

Chapter Ten:

The “Perverse” Psychology of Village Youth

In the Village, you know that you are equal. There is no difference between you and the next guy. You know that you are accepted.

-Anonymous Greaser to Gopala Alampur, 1968

THE NEW ANTI-SEMITISM……DESTROY THE HIPPIES!

- Satyrday, Front Page, August 1968

As his Drop In Centre began to wind down its role (both as a result of the mounting criticism and of the realization of many volunteers that it was no longer serving a positive purpose in the Village scene), James Smith began to withdraw, his role filled by a Catholic layman named John Reid. Described by Smith as a man who “wrestled with the deep despair of man” and who understood “the depths of [Villagers’] agony”) Reid had a tough time with what he saw in these young people, what he learned from them, and what he envisioned in their future. Struggling with the daily turmoil, the persistent crises, and the mounting cases of overdose and violence that characterized his scene, Reid (already once published as a novelist) turned to his writing to help him come to terms with what he was witnessing. By 1969, a new novel was coming together, envisioned as an “historical novel” set in the present, which would provide a detailed, harrowing, and bloody narrative of Yorkville’s rise and fall.

The result, an epic, swirling cacophony of philosophical posturing, mysticism, moralism and debauchery, was the fascinatingly overwrought Faithless Mirror. The novel (which was also, according to reviewer Herbert Rosengarten, the longest work of fiction

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978 Smith, 30.
yet published in Canada) amounts to a vast denunciation of the Village of the late 1960s, and a stirring endorsement of the view of Yorkville as a once beautiful, now desperate community.979 Indeed, while Reid’s novel begins in a bright, hopeful community, it ends in apocalyptic horror – his characters mired in an intractable hell, bloody, coarse and sinister, as the godless and recklessly individualistic Yorkville scene implodes on itself.980

Reid’s vision of Yorkville as an antediluvian disaster area was not just confined to his novel. By late 1969 he was making public pronouncements on the recent history of the Village, and on the grievous state of its current scene. Positioning himself alongside June Callwood as another middle-class hippie ally in ministerial clothing, Reid penned a desperate, damning missive for the liberal Canadian Welfare Magazine which was reprinted in the Globe and Mail in early October. Using a young woman named “Lynda” as a stand in for the scene (something he would later do to great effect in his novel with the synechdocal character Steyl), Reid offered a capsule history of the Village’s rise and fall, of its slip from the precipice of idealism into the inferno of aimlessness. “The first Yorkville died,” he explained, “about September 1966; it was composed of a hard core of older and more serious hippies, of above average intelligence, dedicated to a way of life inherited from the beatniks of a decade earlier.” These true hippies, we are told, and their Yorkville, didn’t die any natural death; rather, they were killed by rampant “publicity” that brought in tourists, and the subsequent inauthenticity of this Village performance. “By the summer of 1966,” he complained, “many of the tourists were teenagers, made up to resemble each other, and mistaking other groups like themselves, in beads, bell-bottom

979 See Rosengarten’s spot-on review in Canadian Literature, Issue No. 65, Summer, 1975.
trousers and long hair, for the authentic phenomenon.” Immediately, drug use swelled, as
did the spectre of sexual violence. “They came looking for girls,” he says (reminding us
that they was assumed to be men) and, as if by some cause-effect response, “girls became
available.”

After 1967, Reid suggests, “most came, now, from broken homes; they brought
their emotional problems to Yorkville, where, in contact with others like themselves, the
problems augmented.” But it was 1968 which marked the beginning of the third period,
the fall of Yorkville, according to Reid’s article. “Something had released upon us a mob,
many of them under age, from all over Canada… they were young innocents who corrupt
faster.” Caught up in this cohort was Lynda, his charge and demonstration subject. A rape
victim, speed freak, and suicide survivor (all before the age of 17), Lynda came to the
Village because it was the “in” place, and her life was destroyed.

Following a devastating string of highs and lows while cranking speed and heroin,
Lynda, desperate to get clean, has come to Reid for help. The scene is horrific,
paralyzing. He is holding her down in bed as she shakes through her withdrawal,
delirious and agonized. “At 4 a.m. she went slack. Then she began talking; she saw
herself and Yorkville in a sterile light of utter contempt.” She slipped back under,
writhing in his arms, until suddenly, in a moment of clarity in the eye of her storm, Lynda
suddenly knew her attacker, knew where to point her finger. “And with a low despairing
howl [she] filled the dark room with: “God – damn – the Star Weekly.”

A certain portion of the post 1967 Village scene was indeed burdened with fear,
confusion, and danger. Moreover, following a disastrous hepatitis scare in August 1968,
Yorkville was widely regarded both by the media, many Torontonians and by its own
(hippie or no) as having run its course. This “epidemic,” so voraciously consumed by both press and public, both ready to pounce on any tale of danger and depravity connected to the Village, seemed definitive proof that the hippie community had finally hit bottom, was finally being punished for its sins. As Reid’s story suggests, the end days for the Village played out for some as a journey through hell. But, we must bear in mind, it was not all doom and gloom from the tomb – for every Lynda there was another young person whose experience of the Village in the late 60s was carefree. It is just that that version of the scene no longer mattered to anyone very much. Instead, the idea of Yorkville as a sick community dominated discourse and press reportage. Following the hepatitis epidemic, Yorkville was increasingly cast as a site of fear, a repository of failure – it had few defenders, and even fewer optimistic representatives. This was the end.

**A Day in the Life: Performing Yorkville, Performing Dope**

In early 1968, Gopala Alampur asked a variety of his interview subjects to describe a typical day in the Village. Acutely aware of the lack of “regular schedule” in the lives of these young people, Alampur was curious to know how Villagers understood and articulated their own aimlessness and indigence. His first respondent, whom he dubbed a weekender, provided his version of a typical day in the life.

About noon there are signs of motion, yawns. Everybody sleeps in. They walk around, sit around, go down to Queen’s Park. They are usually just sitting around. They talk about drugs and sex. [...] Around 5-6 p.m. the drug thing starts. ‘Where am I going to get my next joint so I can do up tonight?’ is the question in everyone’s mind. By nightfall everybody is out and they all get together and talk about where the next joint is going to come from and then they go to the Church. People gather together in groups. Hippies go from one group to another. They know everybody. It is like a community. The general attitude is that nobody seems to care about anything. Later on the clubs start opening up and cars start driving
through. It is like a Zoo. At night the village is the night spot. After midnight the tourists have gone and the hippies wander around until 2 a.m. Then they go to a restaurant.

Significantly, this rather prosaic description of the randomness of a typical Village day is juxtaposed by a description from the same source of the weekend in the Village. “On the weekend,” he explained, “there is an influx. The pushers come out. The hippies stay up all night on the weekend. The police are there.” Of course, so are the weekenders, the teenyboppers, and anyone else who doesn’t have responsibilities on Saturdays and Sundays.⁹⁸¹

Alampur concurred with his interviewee’s remark on the lack of sleep indulged in by many Villagers. Because the typical scene during the day was rather uneventful, Villagers “go to sleep whenever they are tired” just as they “eat whenever they can get food.” “When they visit their friends,” he found, “people take the opportunity to sleep on chairs, on the floors, or wherever they can find space.” And, since all-night parties were common occurrences, “often one encounters people who haven’t slept for over 24 hours and when they do get to bed, they are totally lost and do not know when they will awake.”

For those who did wake up and face the daylight hours, Alampur agreed with this interviewee that “most of the Villagers spend their day around the Village looking for drugs on which they can get ‘high’. Their main concern is drugs; how they can procure drugs, to whom they can sell them, or where they can find a place to take them.” Another of Alampur’s interview subjects provided a much more drug-focused description of a Village day in the life:

⁹⁸¹Smart and Jackson, 51.
When you wake up you go to restaurants in the Village, go to the Church to meet different people, talk about various people that have been high the night before; and try to find a place to crash. Most of your time is spent talking to your friends. You talk about how and with what you have been ‘high’ [sic], how many trips each one had, and several other things. I am usually awake all night talking. Whenever me and my friends are stoned, we sit around and ‘blow our minds’.

Indeed, according to most reports, visiting friends and a general wandering about was tempered by persistent discussions about pot, about the joy of doing up, and about the general plan for getting stoned that night. Perhaps curiously for a community comprised of hormonal teenagers and twentysomethings, “drugs and talk about drugs form the main sort of recreation in Yorkville, with sex a poor second.”

As discussed in the previous chapter, Alampur’s primary interest in the Village was its status as a drug culture. As such, his Report makes extraordinary claims regarding the prevalence of drug use in the Village – by his estimates, Yorkville was indeed, by early 1968, utterly overrun by substance abuse. “The variety of drugs used freely in Yorkville,” he claimed,

can only be astounding to the outsider. It is almost impossible to inventory them, as reportedly new drugs or new mixtures are introduced each week. The substances in regular use for kicks or mood changes include, marijuana, hashish, LSD, amphetamines (speed), frost, cough syrups, asthma preparations, codeine pills, morning glory seeds, STP, airplane glue, nose drops, strammonium [sic], opium, DMT, nail polish remover, cigarettes, depressants of all sorts and, of course, alcohol.

But it wasn’t just the range of drugs that impressed Alampur; it was the commonplace, casual use of drugs (any drugs) by people with no sense that their behaviours were potentially dangerous. “There is virtually no consensus that drugs in general are harmful enough to discourage use.” In fact, apart from heroin (which he said only greasers would

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982 ibid, 52.
dare to use), the general rule with regard to drugs was: give it a try. “I don’t like to criticize any drug,” a hippie told Alampur, “until I have tried it at least once. I would like to try everything once and find out the best and stick to it.”983

In that quest for the “best” drug, many Villagers put themselves through some fairly horrific experiences. Some, for example, experimented with shooting “ordinary sugar into their system” and even water directly into their veins, both of which would produce results more painful than euphoric. Since sugar is used to cut heroin (and other injectables), and water is necessary to mix and cook the stuff prior to shooting it, Villagers may have (quite wishfully) been hoping that some of the mix would still bring them some of the way. (However, it is also possible that Alampur was here getting his facts wrong – both “water” and “(brown) sugar” are street names for heroin.) Regardless, indiscriminate and highly unpleasant drug experiences were not at all uncommon in the scene by the spring of 1968.

A worthy case in point is the sudden flare-up of interest in “frost”, a highly noxious substance used to freeze drinking glasses, which fascinated Alampur for its litany of unhappy effects. In his words: “some of the Villagers fill a balloon with it and then inhale it. The first reaction is almost a sort of choking sensation. As soon as the user recovers from this he begins to speak with a queer bass voice. During the frost ritual, people laugh at one another, giggle, scream and hold their heads, probably to feel if their heads have frozen. The frost reaction lasts only a few minutes.” One greaser told him that “he could go on 100 trips with a two-dollar frost can.” “When you close your eyes,” he told Alampur, “it is beautiful.” Captivated, Alampur witnessed a frost session, indeed he

983 ibid, 61-2.
may have even held it at his apartment, and recorded various people’s comments while under the influence of the stuff.

Groovy stuff, baby, putting me right out of my mind, wow! wow! wow! I don’t understand this at all. God, am I stoned. [...] Never gotten stoned like this. Really weird. Best stuff. [...] Little green lights running down your head. Your veins are green. Holy God, does it ever screw up your mind. [...] Do you understand what I am saying? I don’t know what I am saying. Does my voice sound like I think it’s sounding? It’s blowing my mind. Holy God, does it ever fuck you up. [...] You can feel it on your teeth. Cold mouth. Feels like going real fast, then slowing down. Is it harmful? This won’t kill you. [...] I can’t even feel it now. He’s gone. I think it’s kind of dangerous. It kills one thousand brain cells. It’s like a pick in the crowd. You’ll freeze your fuckin’ fingers. That will fuck him this time. Am I all fucked up. Baby you know what I like. I am so stoned, what’s happened, I have gone way out. I don’t believe my fuckin’ eyes. All gone. Can’t be all gone. Hold it, it’s gone.984

This bizarre scene, and others like it, led Alampur to the unhappy conclusion that, on a day-to-day basis, many Villagers were deliberately putting themselves in harm’s way, chasing down the death trip. Paradoxically, he concluded, “many Villagers are very worried about the physical and psychological effects of various drugs, but they continue to use them.” Indeed, Alampur puzzled at the fact that, although “many Villagers believe that their drug use has done them irreparable harm,” this knowledge did not inspire them to give up the practice. Even though “in numerous conversations they say that ‘their minds are fucked up’ [...] , few seem to stop using drugs for that reason.”985

But, as we have seen, throughout the 1960s Yorkville and drug use had been regularly conflated in the popular press, in municipal reports, and even from within the Village. By 1968, given all of this build-up, how else could these young people perform Yorkville if not through using drugs? By mid-1968 (in what was surely part-goof, part-public service announcement) the underground Toronto paper *Harbinger* was publishing

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984 ibid, 66.
985 ibid, 69.
a “Yorkville Stock Exchange” which detailed the going prices for various drugs, simultaneously performing a critique of the economy of narcotics in the scene, and establishing Yorkville as the centre of the drug trade. As Alampur himself had discovered, “one could not maintain status as a Villager without frequently using drugs.” Although “crucial to the definition of a Yorkville hippie is that he uses drugs,” it was also crucial to the definition of the Villager at large.

**Hepatitis Attacks! : Yorkville, the Hippie Quarantine**

In mid-summer 1968, Yorkville became the very “festing sore” that Syl Apps and other conservative City Councilors had claimed it to be. Throughout July, Dr. Anne Keyl of Toronto’s Women’s College Hospital (through her role as supervisor of Trailer, the “hippie clinic” in Yorkville) had admitted an “unusual number” of patients suffering from hepatitis and “most of these individuals, both in-patient and out-patient, were associated with the Yorkville district.” June Callwood, persistent hip ally and former landlady at hippie hostel-cum-shelter Digger House, explained Keyl’s role in the fostering of an epidemic:

Dr Anne Keyl... she was sympathetic... And she wanted to know what was going on in Yorkville. She was worried about their health and [for me, it was:] finally, here was the establishment starting to worry about them. She was in her fifties, a short stout woman, plain spoken. And when I told her about the conditions, the health condition of these kids, she was appalled. Then somebody came in [and was] diagnosed with Hep B. And she took off on it, huge. Everybody had to get immunized.

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986 Harbinger, August, 1968.
987 Smart and Jackson, 61.
989 June Callwood, Interview with Author, March 11th, 2005.
She (and her staff) met with the Medical Officer of Health for the City of Toronto and the Provincial Epidemiologist on July 30th, and then again on August 2nd, where it was concluded that, although “the number of cases of infectious hepatitis reported in Toronto in July 1968… was still less than half the number reported in July 1966,” the right move would be to undertake a survey to try to determine the extent of hepatitis in Yorkville.  

According to the final Report of the hastily assembled Hepatitis Co-ordinating Committee which was published the following September, 1969: “Subsequently, two unforeseen events took place, either of which would have been sufficient to transform the ‘quiet’ survey into a front page news story.”

On the afternoon of the first survey clinic (August 2), at least two newspapers received telephone messages advising that the clinic would begin work that day and suggesting that this would be a good opportunity for a news story. The second incident was the wide distribution in Yorkville, on August 5, of a typewritten single-sheet flier headed, “Danger! Danger! Danger! Hepatitis.” The source is unidentified but the news media were in possession of copies in time for the daily papers of August 6.

This well-timed invitation was actually the brainchild of Wilfred (Bill) Clement, chief pharmacologist at Queen Street Mental Health Centre, and well-known Yorkville guru. Following a particularly unproductive meeting with local health officials, Clement took matters into his own hands.

I recall being in a meeting [on Yorkville and Hepatitis] with the people from Toronto General and Women’s College Hospital... The nice ladies from Women’s College Hospital were asking the Province to put up the money for needles to score the blood. The Province doesn’t want to pay for it. This goes on for half an hour – they’re arguing about the fucking spikes!

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990 Best, 1.
991 ibid.
992 ibid, 2.
993 W.R. Clement, Interview with Author, March 5th, 2006.
Clement, infuriated by this apparent lack of interest in helping the Villagers – Toronto’s hospitals were notorious for a paucity of concern for hip youth and their health issues – was also dumbfounded that the Province wouldn’t pay for the needles necessary to measure the spread of the illness.\textsuperscript{994} “We’re talking about maybe 1000 dollars,” he explained recently. “We were also talking about an epidemic that we were trying to nip in the bud. That’s the whole purpose – we’re going to nip this fucking thing in the bud. [Hepatitis] is a drag!”\textsuperscript{995} In the end, Women’s College Hospital found the money to buy the needles, but not before Clement, enraged by the apathy he had witnessed in the meeting, had alerted the local press to the situation.\textsuperscript{996}

Trailer played a central role in the humanitarian effort to contain the hepatitis outbreak, being (with The Grab Bag, a local convenience store) among the first spots in the district to offer free testing for the disease.\textsuperscript{997} The incendiary leaflet, it must be assumed, was designed to coax certain otherwise indolent Villagers into action on this potentially devastating issue. Yet, in constructing the possibility of a hepatitis epidemic as a kind of foregone conclusion, the flyer acted as an extraordinarily effective anti-advertisement to the district. And, Clement’s alerting of the media both to the flyer and to

\textsuperscript{994} A full-blown study of the “Health of Yorkville, while allowing that some doctors and nurses (and Hospitals in general) had begun to grapple with effective ways to approach the “complex task” of treating Yorkville youth, lamented that “others appear to have no motivation to adapt to the problems created by widespread drug use and have virtually atrophied to the point of consistent irrelevance.” This project was born of the confusion and interest surrounding the 1968 Hepatitis fracas. Merrijoy Kelner, Martin Shain, Peter Hawley, Robin F. Badgley, “The Health of Yorkville” Unpublished Report to the Ontario Department of Health (Toronto: Department of Behavioural Science, University of Toronto, 1970) 72.

\textsuperscript{995} W.R. Clement, Interview with Author, March 5\textsuperscript{th}, 2006.

\textsuperscript{996} ibid. Clement, it should be stressed, still maintains that the exaggerated approach taken up by the medical authorities in their effort to contain the possible spread of Hepatitis was the right move.

\textsuperscript{997} For more on the role of Trailer in the daily lives of Villagers, see: Kileeg, 1968.
the hepatitis testing stations helped to re-establish boundaries around Yorkville, and to re-enforce the popular perception that it was a community in crisis.

The arousal of public alarm had, as we have seen, been an unreliable tactic for limiting Yorkville’s appeal. The threats of violence, sexual depravity, and pervasive drug use which had been variously employed by media and municipal authorities over the past years to foster a public outcry and an eventual cleanup of the district had virtually always achieved the awkward effect of further attracting curious youth to the district. And yet at the same time, a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy had seen the district become increasingly violent, sexually decadent, and drug-fueled. But with this abrupt hepatitis epidemic came the opportunity to establish Yorkville as a new variety of sick community. Yorkville was no longer figuratively ill, it was now quite literally infected.998

Almost immediately following the initial newspaper articles of August 3rd, Yorkville’s Villagers began to evacuate. Although the first report in the Toronto Star made it plain that the suspected cause of the outbreak was needle-sharing, it also explicitly claimed (incorrectly) that intravenous drug use was typical hippie behaviour: “Ten doctors from two Toronto hospitals spent last night in Yorkville looking for cases of a form of hepatitis often found among hippies. The disease is believed to be transmitted by hippies using contaminated hypodermic needles.”999 The national daily the Globe and Mail went a step further, referring to an apparent epidemic of “a little known variety [of the disease] that has come to be known as hippie hepatitis.”1000

998 Nayan Shah, in his study of the ways race and disease were conflated in constructions of Chinese immigrants and residents in San Francisco, observed the way such discourses “created nightmares of proximity between the diseased and the healthy.” Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco’s Chinatown (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001) 88.
999 Toronto Star, August 3rd, 1968. (Emphasis added.)
1000 Globe and Mail, August 3rd, 1968. (Emphasis added.)
Meanwhile, many members of the Toronto Police, hugely overrepresented in the Yorkville district in their efforts to curb illegal drug activity, vandalism and underage vagrancy, became concerned that their beat was hazardous to their health. Perhaps as a result of hearing that Women’s College Hospital had set up a clinic in anticipation of an epidemic among Yorkville youth, many cops from the Yorkville beat refused to get their prophylaxes anywhere but there. “There was a cop ward at Toronto General,” explains Bill Clement, but “the cops refused to go to the cop ward to get shots. The cops were terrified! They insisted on going to Women’s College because they didn’t trust anyone else.”1001 The following morning, photographs of a throng of uniformed police lined up to get shots appeared in local papers.1002 “Some asshole […] seems to have phoned all the newspapers. I was shocked and appalled – I open the paper, what a lovely picture!”1003 To the casual observer, little question would have remained: Yorkville was indeed infected with a dangerous and unpredictable disease.

As the Trailer and the Grab Bag established their testing stations, reporters and observers from various media took up their vantage points in the Village.1004 And, because frenzied reports of a probable epidemic were floated by doctors and the police even before the results of blood testing came back, reporters were left with a very easy front page headline for the following Tuesday morning: “Hepatitis among Villagers now an Epidemic, Doctors Fear.”1005

1001 W.R. Clement, Interview with Author, March 5th, 2006.
1002 See: Toronto Telegram, August 8th, 1968. Also, see: Toronto Star, August 8th, 1968.
1003 W.R. Clement, Interview with Author, March 5th, 2006.
1004 The shopkeepers at the Grab Bag had taken to wearing surgical masks, a point that the Toronto Star was quick to document. Toronto Star, August 8th, 1968.
Toronto was about to get a crash course in epidemiology. A combination of serum hepatitis (now known as Hepatitis B) and the more communicable infectious hepatitis (Hepatitis A) was apparently found in up to 20 Villagers on that first weekend.\(^{1006}\) While the serum form of the liver disease had been expected (as it was well-known to be communicated through needle-sharing and sexual contact), the second form was not. The evident presence of infectious hepatitis, which could be spread through contaminated food, water, human contact, and a variety of other media, threatened to move the epidemic beyond the boundaries of hippiedom.\(^{1007}\)

But A.R.J. Boyd, the Medical Officer of Health for the City of Toronto, was quick to make it clear in press statements that infectious hepatitis had yet to be conclusively found in Yorkville, and he emphasized that until it was found, the word *epidemic* was being misused. “And,” he cautioned, “the word epidemic is itself sometimes misleading. All the word means is that a great many more cases of a certain disease are showing up than is usual. So far, that is not the case with hepatitis. After all, there have been some years we’ve had 500 reported cases of the disease.”\(^{1008}\)

Rather than heeding his words, reportage of the apparent epidemic continued unabated – and Dr Boyd, along with those City Councilors who took up his line, was castigated for dragging his feet.\(^{1009}\) Even on August 8\(^{\text{th}}\), when Boyd was forced to admit that two cases of infectious hepatitis had been conclusively found among the stricken Villagers – and that one of them was David DePoe’s younger sister and minder of Trailer,

\(^{1006}\) *Globe and Mail*, August 5\(^{\text{th}}\), 1968.
\(^{1007}\) According to Callwood: “Everybody had to get immunized. And, it was a nasty shot – my son Casey who was 6 or 7 years old at the time had to be immunized because he was with me all the time at Digger House.” Interview with Author, March 11\(^{\text{th}}\), 2005.
\(^{1008}\) ibid. It had been observed at the meeting of August 2\(^{\text{nd}}\), to which Clement referred, that “the number of cases of infectious Hepatitis Reported in Toronto in July 1968, although greater than in July 1967, was still less than half the number Reported in July 1966.” Best, 1.
\(^{1009}\) *Globe and Mail*, August 7\(^{\text{th}}\), 1968.
Suzanne DePoe – he still refused to pander to pressure from the press (and, increasingly, the community at large) to dub the situation an epidemic. He also attempted to clarify the muddied results of the initial rounds of testing in Yorkville which had come back variously reporting up to 500 possible cases of the disease. “[These] blood tests are inconclusive,” he stressed. “The same test could be positive if someone were beaten up and badly bruised. It just shows tissue damage. I want more than that. The picture is still not at all clear.”

Suzanne DePoe, the daughter of prominent CBC newsman Norman DePoe, and the sister of a certifiable “Super Hippie,” had a unique perspective on the hepatitis epidemic. As one of a very few full-time volunteers at the Trailer, DePoe was alerted to the prospect of a hepatitis predicament very early on. She recalls:

Dr Anne Keyl was Bill Clement’s counterpart at Women’s College [Hospital]. I think what happened is that they were getting some sick kids in her clinic with liver functions off, and they figured out it was hepatitis, and they knew that because of the way [hippies] lived in communal houses and probably the hygiene wasn’t that great and Hep A spread so easily that they had to get them [tested]. So, that was my next job: pinching sick kids off the street and getting them into the clinic for blood tests.

But, her proximity to the disease – she had, for months prior to August 1968, been working with the ill and addicted Villagers who came to Trailer seeking help and advice – proved to be a problem when, very early on in the development of the outbreak in August, she was felled by the disease, and was counted among the two initial cases of infectious hepatitis.

And then I got hepatitis. I got taken out just as it got big. You see, I was getting a blood test once a week because I was dealing with them [sick

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1010 Globe and Mail, August 8th, 1968. This story appeared on the front page.
1011 Suzanne DePoe, Interview with Author, March 14th, 2006.
And the minute my liver function went off the tiniest bit they whacked me into isolation in Women’s College [Hospital]. And there was a picture of me in the *Globe and Mail* in bed in the hospital.¹⁰¹²

And so, the young woman became a *cause célèbre* for a media and public who were, by now, very comfortable and familiar with the name DePoe, and its close association with the Yorkville scene. And, Clement is quick to remind us, “needless to say Norman DePoe was decidedly pissed off. He was the chief CBC news announcer!”¹⁰¹³

Meanwhile, the nefarious tourist activity that was *Yorkville* was being explicitly re-constructed in media reportage, and likely in the minds of many frightened Torontonians, as potentially lethal. Just going to Yorkville could kill you. The *Toronto Star*, on August 7th, underlined this characterization with a dire front page pronouncement: “In theory, any visitor to Yorkville who ate in a café, bought any object or contacted *any person*, may have been exposed to the disease, a liver infection which can eventually lead to death.”¹⁰¹⁴

Newspaper reports in the following days painted a grim portrait of a community in peril. As the apparent numbers of victims escalated – almost 150 people, including as many as 6 policemen, were reportedly felled by the disease by August 9th – editorials appeared, critical of the City for its slow response to such an obvious catastrophe.¹⁰¹⁵ Before the end of the week, the Province had taken over the investigation “because people in Yorkville may have spread the disease outside the city of Toronto.”¹⁰¹⁶ While Dr. Boyd attempted to quell the fears of a frightened public by blaming the press for

¹⁰¹² ibid.
¹⁰¹³ W.R. Clement, Interview with Author, March 5th, 2006.
¹⁰¹⁴ *Toronto Star*, August 7th, 1968. (Emphasis Added)
¹⁰¹⁶ ibid.
overzealous and inflammatory reportage, downtown hospitals were overrun by spooked Villagers, “desperate” for a test. Fear, knowing no boundaries, was in no way confined to Toronto: it was reported that three days after the initial accounts of the Yorkville outbreak, a public swimming pool in London, Ontario (some 200 km away) was being drained as a “precautionary measure.”

By the following Monday, the Province of Ontario was formally asking the public to “stay out of Yorkville,” and appealing to them to “satisfy their curiosity at a later date.” Businesses began to suffer. Coffee houses and rock’n’roll clubs sat empty. There were reports that, even in 30-degree heat, cars passing through Yorkville were rolling up their windows. One Villager, who provided the pseudonym Luke the Drifter, explained to the Star that hippies were being treated as pariahs, more than ever before, on the streets surrounding the Yorkville district. “All sorts of guys are swearing at you if you come near them. They all think you’re going to give them hepatitis. One lady screamed at me, ‘Don’t breathe near me, you ----!’”

On August 12th, York Council voted 5 to 4 to ask the Province to close off Yorkville to the general public – establishing a makeshift quarantine – and to order all of the restaurants and coffee houses in the district to close down.

Fears of diseased hippies spreading their infection throughout Metropolitan Toronto, along with an apparent desire to keep countercultural youth in one place, culminated in the scuppering of a project to build a badly-needed youth shelter at the

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1017 *Toronto Star*, August 8th, 1968.
1018 *Toronto Star*, August 9th, 1968.
1019 ibid.
1022 ibid.
corner of Queen and Bathurst Streets, about four kilometres from Yorkville. Originally for the project, if only grudgingly and apprehensively, the Queen-Bathurst Merchant Association had now turned vehement in its attempts to quash the venture. Armed with the profoundly effective (apparent) evidence that hippies carried an infectious and lethal disease, the Association petitioned Mayor Dennison and Controller Margaret Campbell to shut down the plan. “We said we would go along with the shelter,” explained George Starr, president of the Merchant Association, “but that was before the sickness.”

Even local celebrities found themselves subject to a new kind of prejudice. Three members of the psychedelic rock band Kensington Market, among the biggest local draws on the Toronto scene, were asked to leave a coffee shop on Bloor St (at Lothian Mews, just adjacent to Yorkville) because they looked like Villagers. “I don’t care too much about who we serve,” explained Stephen Kefkoto, manager of the Coffee Mill. “But, you know – the hepatitis scare. They were obviously Village residents. Usually they don’t come in here.”

For businesses in the Village, it was not so much a question of turning people away as attracting them. On the first Friday after the outbreak was reported, it was estimated that the crowds on Yorkville Ave were but a tenth of their usual size. Coffee houses and other hangouts were sparsely populated, and dining spots were Reporting a dip (by up to 80%) in reservations. As Marilyn McHugh (of the Penny Farthing coffee

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1024 *Toronto Star*, August 14th, 1968. Elsewhere in this edition, a headline ran “Nail her death certificate all over Yorkville”: a man whose wife had been felled by Hepatitis four years previously was anxious to do anything he could to alert people to the dangers of the disease. Neither he nor his dear departed wife, it should be noted, had ever even been to Yorkville.

house) put it: “The whole street is down.” Many wondered openly if the Village would ever recover.

By August 15th, blame for the outbreak was ascribed to the lax laws which had allowed Yorkville to become a hotbed for infection. As a result, City Controllers concluded that “stronger laws [were] needed to put down hippies.” Now afforded the opportunity that many on the Board of Control had been looking for – a viable reason (and workable mandate) to rid Yorkville of its hippie population – the move to clean up the district was underway. “As strange as it may seem,” speculated Controller Fred Beavis, “this [hepatitis outbreak] may have done a lot of good for Yorkville.”

In a sense, Beavis’s assumption was correct: countercultural Yorkville was beginning its long goodbye, fading into the murky twilight of the sixties. The hepatitis outbreak was just another signpost along the way, but it was the one which clearly marked the beginning of the end; following almost a month of constant media and municipal announcements that it was the epicentre of an incurable infection, hip Yorkville would never recover.

And yet, the truth is that the famous Yorkville hepatitis epidemic never really took place. When, more than a year later, the Report by the Co-ordinating Committee for the Ontario Department of Health was published, it admitted that the vast majority of the (very few) cases of the illness were easily traced back to the unsanitary practices of intravenous drug users, never more than a small minority in the Yorkville scene, the basic point that Dr Boyd was making all along. In fact, the Final Report concluded that, of the total of 32 patients hospitalized for probable hepatitis during the outbreak, “the 27 who

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1026 Globe and Mail, August 10th, 1968.
were classified as probable [serum] hepatitis and the three as possible hepatitis used drugs intravenously. The remaining two, who did not use drugs intravenously, were classified as probable infectious hepatitis." According to one clinical account which was included in the Final Report, only 25 patients with a diagnosis of hepatitis were admitted to Women’s College Hospital during the period July 3rd to September 30th – a period three times the length of the epidemic episode. Of these 25 patients, 20 were male, and the age range spanned 16-27, with a mean age of 19. Only one of these patients did not use any drugs, but the remaining 24 all used drugs (amphetamines) intravenously.

All of the turmoil and confusion, the fear and anxiety, it would seem, had been massively exaggerated. This was no epidemic – rather, it was, as the Medical Officer of Health had maintained throughout the three-week panic, a minor outbreak which was virtually confined to intravenous drug users, and had nothing to do with the water, food, or sanitary practices of the vast majority of Villagers.

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1030 Callwood maintains that Anne Keyl did the right thing by raising the spectre of epidemic, because we’ll never know if she stopped it in its tracks by acting so deliberately. “But she got all the shots, she did it in the Trailer, set up a little clinic there, and everyone thought she was overreacting. But, there wasn’t an epidemic. So, did she nail it, or was she overreacting? We’ll never know, but there wasn’t an epidemic.” Interview with Author, March 11th, 2005.
1031 The immediate fallout from the “epidemic” on Yorkville businesses and hangouts was, as was pointed out above, dire, but it was its combination with the more organic result of the end of summer vacation which served to devastate Yorkville merchants in the following months. Per Bill Clement: “It was the end of August; it was a natural event. Go home, have baths, get haircuts, go to school. I mean, these are middle-class kids!” Interview with Author, March 5th, 2006.

David DePoe’s last word on the scene came in early July, 1969, following his victory over charges dating back to August ‘67. His appeals successful, DePoe, now 25, was interviewed by the Toronto Star. In what must have been a striking revelation to some of his former followers, fans and friends, DePoe took the opportunity to condemn the Village and its current hippies. “The whole dropout thing in the sense of kids coming to Yorkville is over,” he explained. “Hippies aren’t going to make a revolution.” Two years on, the events of the summer of 1967 seemed irrelevant to a more jaded, more deeply politicized DePoe. Within a year, as a final refusal of the viability of a hippie revolutionary movement, he would join the Communist Party of Canada.1032

A study of newspaper coverage of Yorkville in 1969 and 1970, the final two years of the Village scene, and the beginning of the serious push toward re-development, yields predictable results. As the middle-class hippie scene disappeared from the Village stage, and as ever more troubled youth descended upon the Village in search of community, comfort, drugs, sex and escape, the press turned paternalistic, anxious, and dismissive. Yorkville was over; what remained was refuse and castaways, the busted detritus after a fearsome storm. Although some former residents dispute, one might say rail against, the reports of street violence and danger in late 60s Yorkville, they continued to pile up, effectively dominating coverage of the scene.1033

1033 “There was never violence. I have lived here for years!” exclaimed Marilyn Brooks in a recent interview. Interview with Author, March 29th, 2007. “I always felt safe,” offers Colleen Roberts, a resident from 1967-1971 (who was also raising a child, under ten years old at the time, in the Village). Interview with Author, March 29th, 2007.
As June Callwood decried Yorkville’s inability to take care of its own, as DePoe finally removed himself from the Village stage with a stunning refusal of the hip scene, and as bikers and greasers had effectively taken over the drug trade, the press simply gave up on the Village. The years 1969 and 1970 saw continuing coverage of Yorkville in the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*, but few articles gave more than a halting appreciation of the current version of the scene. With the press having effectively turned up its collective nose at what it now repeatedly reported as a violent, speed-addled Yorkville, this late period in the Village scene is when one finds the complaints of an anti-Yorkville bias in the media most precise. Indeed, there is very little light here. But, given the mounting evidence of illness, addiction, mental disease, violence and criminal activity in the Village, coupled with the growing resentment of the scene expressed by many of its former champions (all of whom had moved on), what was left to report?  

A series of developers who had been quietly buying up properties throughout the Village since 1966 announced various plans to build various high rises, hotels, and parking garages in the spring of ‘69. Their plans were buoyed on the wave of popular sentiment that the Yorkville hip scene was played out. As Toronto planning chief Dennis Barker “warned” the Planning Board that building high rises in Yorkville would spoil the character of the Village, three members of the Board explained that such projects were needed in order to “clean up Yorkville.”

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1034 A common complaint at Rochdale College (which would open in September, 1968 – see below) was that too many Villagers were hanging around. See the film *Dream Tower* Dir. Ron Mann, National Film Board of Canada, 1994.

1035 In the *Toronto Star* of January 18th, 1969, Richard Wookey lays out his plans for the post-hippie era. Also, see *Toronto Star* of January 24th, for Harry Jordan’s similar vision of the future. Development will be the final push to rid the Village of its unwelcome hippie usurpers.

1036 *Toronto Star*, January 29th, 1969.
By mid-March, Barker had softened his position, as the high rise construction went ahead amid a firestorm of letters-to-the-editor complaining of prejudice toward hippies, and a lack of respect for the bohemian character of the Village. Whatever Barker’s reasoning, the Board got what they were looking for: by 1970, noise, debris and dust dominated the Avenue Road portions of Cumberland and Yorkville, effectively keeping people (read: hippies, young people in general) from congregating in those areas.

In May, 1969, New York Congressman Adam Clayton Powell (famously overseeing the degeneration of the South Bronx in his home state) toured Yorkville, and made a dramatic, and telling statement. “Where I come from,” he told the Globe and Mail, “they call it nigger renewal… I guess they call this hippie renewal.”

The spring and summer of ’69 saw a series of violent incidents, all of which were reported in the press, reinforcing popular perceptions of Yorkville as a danger zone. In late May, an undercover police officer named Jack Campbell was approached in the Village and “asked if he wanted a woman for $5”. He bit, and followed the apparent pimp to a room over an Avenue Road restaurant where he met another man. From there, Campbell was led by the two men across Avenue Road and onto Bedford Avenue. There, he was jumped by the two men he was with, along with two others who had appeared behind them. He identified himself as a cop, even while he was being kicked and punched by the four men, but he wasn’t left alone until he managed to pull his revolver and fire a shot into the ground. A week later, in what must have seemed like an

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1037 Globe and Mail, May 21st, 1969. For a brief history of the (racially motivated) neglect of the South Bronx (and Powell’s role in the ugly affair), Chang, 7-19.
effective kind of retaliation, a “youth” was served a 15-day sentence for swearing at police officers in Yorkville.1039

Even more chillingly, gun violence, virtually unheard of in the Village prior to 1969, began to haunt the scene. In late June, two police officers found a .32 caliber automatic pistol in a crashpad on Howland Avenue, after they were led there by a suspicious character they found hanging around in front of a “Yorkville restaurant.” It belonged to the man’s 20-year old girlfriend.1040 Less than a month later, Gordon Clark, a 19-year old Villager living on Huron Street, was killed by a shotgun blast to the face by his flipped-out friend, insane in the throes of a methedrine overdose. Flying high and full of the horror of what he’d just seen – and done – John Bouweraerts ran to the Trailer for help, telling them his friend had accidentally shot himself. In the courts, the whole awful story came out. It had been an accident: a stoned, edgy misfire while Bouweraerts was showing Clark how to load the gun.1041

In August and September of 1969, at least two stabbings occurred in Yorkville and its environs, both involving Villagers. In one case, a 19-year old was stabbed in the back in Yorkville by another teenager.1042 In mid-September, an American ex-pat was slashed in the face by three youths in an apparent anti-American attack.1043 One young man, arrested for packing an offensive weapon, explained to police that he always carried his hunting knife when he went to Yorkville out of fear for his life.1044

1039 Toronto Star, June 4th, 1969. Unquestionably, police were targets in the paranoid environment of the Village in the late ‘60s. In mid-August, for another example, a cop was jumped by some Villagers and kicked in the throat, damaging his voice box. Toronto Star, August 12th, 1969.
1042 Toronto Star, August 25th.
1043 Globe and Mail, September 13th.
1044 Toronto Star, August 8th, 1969.
As more violence, more hard drugs, and more disturbed youth flowed through the scene, police presence was expanded in kind. The courts saw a veritable parade of Villagers throughout ’69, most on drug charges. Some examples: in early March, 1969, a 20-year old woman was handed a four-year sentence for heroin trafficking in the Village\textsuperscript{1045}; a series of co-ordinated busts in late August nabbed nine Villagers on a variety of drug charges\textsuperscript{1046}; in September, a would-be speed dealer was busted while trying to sell fake pills to the police\textsuperscript{1047}; in November, a Villager known as “Judas” got three years for dealing\textsuperscript{1048}; in mid-December, a Villager was handed a 3 ½ year sentence for his trafficking in LSD.\textsuperscript{1049}

The gloves were off; the sheen was off; the Village now undeniably a land changed. In a classic example of the degree of police presence in the Village, and the refusal of the scene by its most likely participants, an LSD dealer told the Toronto Star in the fall of ’69 that he no longer dealt his chemical in the Village. “It’s dangerous [there], and anyway he doesn’t dig the Village people anymore,” explained David Lewis Stein in a special report.\textsuperscript{1050} He now dealt his drugs in the wealthy, old Toronto enclave of Rosedale. It was safer.

\textit{The Health of Yorkville, 1968-1970}

Of the post-Hepatitis Village, authorities, parents, investigators and health officials alike wondered aloud, puzzed, incredulous, mystified: \textit{Why is it that these kids}

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\textsuperscript{1045} Globe and Mail, March 5\textsuperscript{th}, 1969.
\textsuperscript{1046} Toronto Star, August 27\textsuperscript{th}, 1969.
\textsuperscript{1047} Toronto Star, September 17\textsuperscript{th}, 1969.
\textsuperscript{1048} Globe and Mail, November 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 1969.
\textsuperscript{1049} Toronto Star, December 13\textsuperscript{th}, 1969.
\textsuperscript{1050} Toronto Star, September 27\textsuperscript{th}, 1969.
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don’t seem to care? One of the most significant findings that came out of the Hepatitis panic was that a Villager was highly unlikely to seek out medical assistance, even in the face of demonstrable proof that his or her condition demanded attention. This phenomenon, clearly endemic among the embattled, much maligned Yorkville scene, was also reflected in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury which had begun to suffer from the pernicious effects of needle drugs and mental illness at roughly the same time as its northern cousin. However, as with all examples in the Yorkville/Haight comparison, the American epicentre for countercultural activity and identity performance experienced the crisis more vividly, and on a much grander scale.

The Haight, by 1968, was entering into a disastrous period of decline, largely precipitated by a municipal failure (whether deliberate or not) to respond to the influx of impoverished and often delinquent youth in the months and years after January 1967. By 1970, when three health care workers familiar with the district wrote a Report detailing "The Health of Haight-Ashbury," their prognosis was dire, to say the least. Building on the premise (astute and eminently applicable to the Yorkville scene) that "people who do not measure up to middle-class standards pose a problem for organized medicine," their summary of the degeneration of the district relied on the persistence of the problem of avoidance.\textsuperscript{1051} Put plainly, hip youth in the Haight were avoiding medical attention, even when they clearly needed it, out of a combination of fear and mistrust of authority and establishment symbols of any kind, and an epidemic of disdainful and unhelpful physicians who discouraged hip youth from coming to see them.

Although violence, chronic diseases, malnutrition, viral infections and drug-
exacerbated psychosis had become ever more rampant in the district in the three years
following the Summer of Love, the Report complained that "physicians appear unwilling
to attempt to solve the local health problems. Like many policemen, the public health
representatives seem to look on young drug abusers as subhuman."\textsuperscript{1052} This, coupled with
the legitimate fear on the part of such young people of being handed over to the law if
they reported their drug practices to a "straight" physician, had forced many in the Haight
to avoid medical attention entirely.

And so, as the Haight-Ashbury Free Medical Clinic, the first privately operated
facility in America to cater to adolescents in such conditions, struggled to provide aid to a
population far too large, too diverse, and too needy to be adequately served by such a
small, under-funded, and experimental operation, some of its physicians set out to
determine the cause of the crisis of avoidance. Their response, both prescient and hugely
perceptive (and, again, in some ways reflective of the Yorkville scene), was to argue that
the San Francisco Public Health Department, rather than responding positively to its role
as host city to an expanding hip counterculture, "attempted [instead] to isolate and
thereby destroy their community."\textsuperscript{1053} By allowing the hippie ghetto (which, by virtue of
its proximity to the low-rent Fillmore district, was much less geographically valuable to
middle-class San Franciscans than was Yorkville to affluent Toronto) to degenerate into a
state of disrepair, to allow property values to fall rapidly and dramatically, and to suffer
the scourge of hard drug use and burgeoning epidemics of poverty, illness and

\textsuperscript{1052}ibid, 83.
\textsuperscript{1053}ibid, 93.
homelessness if not gladly, at least unsympathetically, the Public Health Department had facilitated the sudden crisis in the district.

As many hippies and other veterans of the Haight scene moved away in droves in the months and years following the media frenzy of the Summer of Love, the influx of alienated, disaffected, troubled youth looking for a little of what the newspapers and their parents had warned them against only increased. And with them, inevitable as a hangover, followed the death knell for the once vital district.

Up north, it was instead a government-funded commission that took up the study of "The Health of Yorkville" in October, 1968.\textsuperscript{1054} The response of Ontario’s Department of Health following the unsettling revelation of hepatitis was to initiate a massive, full-scale study of the drug and sexual practices of the district, centering on the “sociological aspects of health problems prevalent among this segment of the population.”\textsuperscript{1055} Not only was the emphasis of the study to be placed upon determining the degree of and types of illnesses active in the scene, but also to come to a kind of conclusion around why Yorkville youth also chose to avoid medical help. What was it about this disease of the spirit which had deranged Yorkville youth to the point that they had become so utterly self-destructive? What was the linkage between Hippie ideology and behaviour, drug use, and the Toronto medical services?

The most immediately striking thing about the study is its nearly complete neglect for the diversity of youth activity, identity and behaviour in the Village scene. From the opening statement to the last pages of the nearly 200-page unpublished Report, “hippies” is the name given to the “study population” at issue. However, this umbrella

\textsuperscript{1054} Kelner \textit{et al}., 1970.
\textsuperscript{1055} ibid, 1.
classification is essentially an amalgam of all four of Gopala Alampur’s identity categories – needless to say, one finds significant contradictions and behavioral inconsistencies within this broad, unrepresentative category. Moreover, the Report (being primarily concerned with the worst health issues at stake in Yorkville) tends to emphasize such relatively unlikely hippie drugs as heroin, speed and other harder, often injectable drugs. In sum, while the Report claims to outline the hippie subculture of Yorkville, and to explain the various reasons as to why this subculture has tended to avoid seeking out medical assistance for its ills, in reality what it is about is the small, but by no means insignificant, portion of the Village scene that used needle drugs. Again, the category “hippie” was being used to connote “Yorkville”; and, again, “Yorkville” was being used to connote “drugs”; finally, again, all three terms were being used in their monolithic, uni-dimensional senses: as, in turn, “the people”, “the place”, “the activity”, as though each was all, and all was each.

In the study, Hippies/Speed/Yorkville are all conflated, intertwined, confused. And, while the methodological approach to the study (which takes pains to accommodate the problem of Yorkville youth being mobile, shifty and difficult to characterize) aims toward a coherent understanding of the place of the Yorkville scene within larger processes inside (and even outside) metropolitan Toronto, it remains married to a vision of Yorkville as a hippie zone in which speed has become the drug of choice, further complicating, confusing, even obscuring the history and development of the Yorkville scene. 1056

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1056For example, the “study population” employed for the “Survey of Young People’s Behaviour in Relation to Health Care” included some 515 young people, but only 103 that were designated “Yorkville”. The other subjects were found throughout the Metro Toronto area, including at Rochdale College (124 subjects), roughly three blocks away from the Yorkville district. Hence the claim:
The study opens with a lengthy examination of ten hours in the life of a particular subject (known only as John) as he attempts to secure medical treatment for his apparent drug addiction and attendant liver problems. “John is a sixteen year old speed freak” is our introduction to his plight, his identity. His association with Yorkville is merely implied by the umbrella title of the study to which he is treated a representative subject – this is, after all, a study of the Health of Yorkville.

John is described in terms which suggest his falling into Alampur’s hippie category (“long, abandoned-looking hair,” “does not try to control events around him, but rather lets things happen to him,” “comes from a well-to-do middle-class family,” “adopting the ‘spokesman of peace’ role with anyone who can stand it”). However, his amphetamine use frustrates Alampur’s view that only greasers indulged in needle drugs, suggesting either a new development in the Yorkville drug scene – Alampur’s Report was completed some four months prior to the start of field work toward the Health of Yorkville study – or the over-simplification inherent in Alampur’s categorization of behaviour.

Either way, John is presented as a boy who, although “not representative of all the young people we shall be describing”, is confronted with problems defined as “typical in their complexity and diffuseness”.1057 These problems – drug addiction, symptoms of pressing medical issues, and a general malaise and apathy toward seeking out medical care – are presented in the form of a “diary” from a “detached youth worker” who tries to help John to secure treatment. The youth worker’s attempts to this end are frustrated by a variety of problems, not the least of which is a Toronto General Hospital [TGH]

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1057 ibid, 2.

“Essentially, we have done a group survey in which the study population is continuously redefined by the participants themselves.” Kelner et al, 17.
Emergency Room which comes across as openly hostile to treating a drug-addicted Yorkville youth. In the end, John does not receive adequate help (even with the aid of this mediator) for 6 ½ hours – most of this time was spent arguing and debating treatment strategies with various doctors and nurses at the TGH. Eventually, John was shipped to the Queen Street Mental Health Centre after it was suggested that there might be “an underlying schizophrenia” at work.1058

The peaking antipathy toward Yorkville youth – since there was by the late 1960s such an apparently unconscious and unproblematic association between drug use and Yorkville – had created a dangerous trend in Toronto’s emergency rooms.1059 Yorkville youth, struggling with the various stigmas and realities implied by their associations with the Yorkville scene, were faced with an uphill battle once they made the decision to try to escape their drug addiction, social alienation, mental illnesses, or physical discomforts. Young people hardened by months of street life, junk-sick addicts aching for a hit, and/or paranoid teens scared that the cops (or worse, their parents) will be informed that they have been taking injectable amphetamines are shown to be treated by various Toronto Hospitals as hopeless cases, as being somehow not worth the time and attention of physicians.

But, according to the findings of the study, there was a growing epidemic of mental illness, drug addiction, and physical deterioration at work within the Toronto (especially the Yorkville) youth scene. There was unsettling, even alarming evidence presented in the Report that nearly 77% of the study Population was unhealthy – and that fully one third of this unhealthy fraction was decidedly ill. The study came to this

1058 ibid, 9.
1059 Apart, as we have seen, from Women’s College Hospital and Dr. Anne Keyl, both of whom could generally be counted upon.
unhappy conclusion after reviewing the findings of its survey of signs and symptoms experienced by Toronto youth. A series of 36 signs and symptoms were listed on the survey offered to this study Population, and respondents were asked if they had experienced any of them in the past two weeks. The responses were then organized into categories (“healthy,” “low symptoms,” and “high symptoms”) based upon the number of times respondents had ticked the various boxes beside the list of symptoms.

These signs, ranging from the somewhat innocuous (“Loss of appetite”, “Loss of Weight”, “Headache”, “Sweating”, “Easily Startled”) to the rather severe (“Urethral Discharge”, “Blood in Stool”, “Excessive Vaginal Bleeding”, “Lump in Abdomen”) paint an ugly picture of the types of illnesses being endured by many of these Villagers. Such symptoms, indicative of anything from malnutrition, dehydration, and/or sleep deprivation to hepatitis, venereal disease and/or cancer, were found to literally plague the respondents to the survey. Ultimately, 22% of the sample was deemed healthy (i.e. they failed to check any boxes), while 53% were “low symptom” subjects and 24% were “high symptom” subjects.1060

Unsurprisingly for a group of young people prone to drug use, fear of police persecution/prosecution, and whose perceived identity (as hippie, Villager, greaser, whatever) remained a source of scorn and derision for many fractions of society, the two most commonly reported symptoms were “Restlessness and Agitation” and “Nervousness and Tension.” “Loss of Weight,” a common side effect of even simple drug use, poverty, and an unsettled lifestyle, figured high on the list as well, appearing in over 75% of the cases in the “high symptom” category. According to the study, “a similar picture [was]

1060 The categorization process broke down thusly: 1-5 check marks meant a “low symptom” subject. 6-25 symptoms meant a subject belonged to the “high symptom” category. If a respondent failed to check any boxes, she was placed in the “healthy” category.
presented by the following symptoms: Excessive Fatigue, Pain in the Chest, Loss of Appetite, Nausea, Pounding Heart, Shortness of Breath”; again, such symptoms could easily be explained as related to excessive, but generally benign use of marijuana, tobacco, alcohol, even caffeine – as any keg party attendee knows, those are the basic, expected symptoms of the morning after the night before. However, they could also be indicative of more severe, chronic illnesses. Because these respondents were so unlikely to have any of these symptoms checked out by a physician, we are left with a high percentage of youth who, judging by their checkmarks on a questionnaire, could be suffering from anything from thyroid cancer to a particularly vicious hangover.

Amphetamine use, more and more of an issue in the post-1967 era in the Yorkville scene, had begun to refigure the hierarchy of power within the district. As younger, more disaffected, more troubled youth continued to frequent the Yorkville district in the late 1960s – rearranging the social structures which, although always in flux, had been fairly well established prior to the advent of harder drugs – the disintegration of so-called Hippie ideologies occurred rapidly and irrepressibly. Psychedelic drugs such as LSD continued to be used, but the emphasis on this particular drug as the dominant “hard” drug in the district was fast disappearing.

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1061 Even casual, or occasional speed use can lead to increased muscle tension, backaches, chest pain, shortness of breath and dizziness. (Kelner et al, 37)

1062 A telling piece of evidence: by the time of the Health of Yorkville Study, cannabis use had become expected behaviour for the Yorkville district to the extent that it was considered mere “Simple Drug Use”; “Soft Drugs”, even more significantly, now were comprised of the psychedelics which until only recently had been considered ‘hard drugs’: LSD, Mescaline, Psilocybin, Opium, STP and MDM (a forerunner of MDMA, the present-day ‘Ecstasy’ drug); “Hard Drugs”, then, had become nearly exclusively comprised of needle and addicting drugs: Speed/Methedrine, other Amphetamines, Heroin, Morphine, Cocaine, Barbiturates, Belladonna, Stramonium and Glue rounded out this list. What is immediately striking about these categories, from a medical point of view, is that the “soft drug” category is comprised of a series of drugs which are by no means any safer than those in the “hard drugs” category. Opium is highly addicting, for example, and STP, LSD and Mescaline are all highly unpredictable, commonly causing severe adverse reactions. (Kelner et al, 45)
Methamphetamine, and needle drugs of many descriptions, became the predominant issue among observers of the Yorkville scene. One LSD dealer in the late 60s complained that, as a result of the lumping of LSD with other, less beneficial drugs such as speed and heroin, not only was LSD seen by many young people as an escapist drug, a party drug, but it was also being dealt by increasingly dangerous criminal elements. “It is not in any sense a party drug!” he stresses. “And people take it in combination with other things! You know, they’d drink a bunch of beer and do a few lines and this and that, and then drop some acid, and then they’d wonder why the acid didn’t do for them what they had heard it would.” As a dealer, and as a Villager who saw the LSD experience as a sacrament that needed to be shared, he found himself torn between his belief that hippies had an obligation to keep LSD available, and the necessity of dealing with dark criminal elements in order to do so. “As I got into the dealing scene,” he laments, “there were a lot of unholy alliances. You wanted to get your stuff distributed, but, unfortunately, because of the way the law was fucked up the way it was, you were forced to deal with criminal networks.”

Of course, criminals, preying on the ever more destitute and transient population, made less money on LSD than on their new cash crop: speed. While LSD may have been illegal, and therefore at least somewhat lucrative (especially in a concentrated community of acidheads such as the Village), no non-addictive drug could ever compete with

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1063 “So we started seeing more of these guys we called rounders, those kind of downtown thugs, and pimps and… And then of course, because of the prohibition, you really had to deal with [these] criminal networks. And so, in order to go and buy your bag of pot or your hit of acid, at the street level you were often being offered other things as well. This is the situation that still goes on – it’s one of the fundamental fucked things about these stupid, unjustifiable laws.” Anonymous LSD Dealer, Interview with Author, October 13th, 2006.
amphetamine for return customers.\footnote{The grim reality is that, more than any other element, it was speed that transformed the character of the Village in the late 1960s. Young people, happy or unhappy, indigent or affluent, were all vulnerable to the addictive, unstable, and suddenly highly available chemicals as they drifted through the collective consciousness of the Village.}

And, the Health of Yorkville study discovered, to its considerable horror, that speed had rapidly become a tolerable (if not quite accepted) performance of Village identity. Even worse was the way many Villagers seemed to be interpreting the symptoms of their various illnesses – many of which were directly attributable to their drug use – as badges of honour. The study suggested that “although such symptoms [chest pain, shortness of breath, persistent back- and head-aches] are sometimes viewed with alarm by the user of drugs, they can also be seen as ‘desirable’ attributes of risk-taking… the threat to life involved in such experiments seems to heighten the user’s pleasure.”\footnote{I’d blame suppression for a lot of that,” explains one of the Village’s major LSD dealers in the late 1960s. “Because it muddied the lines between […] drug experiences. It muddied the line between [psychedelic] substances (which in my opinion are reasonable interests of reasonable people) and these other noxious substances like PCP and STP and TMA and fucking \textit{cocaine} and all this other crap!” Anonymous LSD Dealer, Interview with Author, October 13th, 2006.} In the bewildered commonsense of a drug culture which saw itself as inevitably disconnected from the ‘straight’ world, any such sign of community interconnectedness was to be celebrated.

Instead of perceiving the symptoms of, say, hepatitis as miserable, adverse results of their drug use, many amphetamine users reported to the study that they enjoyed, even \textit{sought out} such a distinction. In an interview with an “ex-speed-freak,” the study was informed that: “if you got hepatitis, it sort of implies that you were shooting with one of

\footnote{Kellner et al, 37-38.}
the big time somebodies and you got it from them. So that is what they do – it means that you are a registered speed-freak.”

This use of speed-related illnesses as status devices suggests a more recent and markedly more severe disjuncture between hegemonic ideologies regarding health and power and those within this subgroup. The position taken by the study, that the Yorkville speed community was a distinct, separate and otherwise incomprehensible Other, is reflected in its conclusion that “the drug-using community, and the speed community in particular, is a world apart.” It had become not simply a case of alienated, drug-addicted youth who needed assistance; this phenomenon could only be understood in terms of its circumscribed Otherness. “[This community] has its own rules of conduct, sanctions, rewards and pressures… The speed-freak’s investment in the community is frequently one of total dependence. He needs the ritual of the life-style and the effect of the drug (in that order) simply to provide a baseline identity and sense of purpose for himself.”

For many Villagers, the public impression of speed freaks as suffering through their addiction was an attribute to be cultivated as an attention-getting device. The realization that so much concern was being lavished upon this particular fraction of the Yorkville scene perhaps invited many newcomers – more and more comprised of the long-suffering refuges from broken and violent homes, destitute hitchhikers from the small town north, too-young runaways in no shape for the struggle of street life, and the clinically insane – to choose the mantle of “speed freak” as a means of being recognized, of achieving a certain status in their new home.

1066 ibid, 38.
1067 ibid, 48-49
Status, however, did not necessarily mean respect or trust. Many Villagers saw little that was authentic in the speed freak performance. “Speed-freaks are funny people” explained one Villager in the summer of 1969. “Like, they always think their kidneys are falling out or their livers are swollen and they are hypochondriacs. They really get into walking around going ‘oh-h, my kidneys!’ They don’t stop shooting speed; they just like complaining… They want you to say, ‘Oh, poor little speed-freak!” Still, this story demonstrates the kind of need felt by many of these young people, now mired in the deadly cat and mouse game of shoot-cop-shoot. Looking for attention, pity, help, many of these neophytes were slipping into a vertiginous, and brutishly short, future of addiction.

So, not all of the members of the study Group in the “high symptom” category perceived their illnesses to be enviable – fear and insecurity both played significant roles in keeping many ill Villagers away from emergency rooms. The study put this problem succinctly, further entrenching the position that this youth group must be seen as an Other, with distinct and different ideologies, behaviors, identities: “They often fear being Reported to the police,” the study explained, but more importantly “they dislike being preached at over their appearance, way of life and behaviour.” In this case as in most, the expression of community was as much a reflexive as an active exercise. While drug use was a badge of countercultural association among Yorkville youth, signifying a wide range of counter hegemonic ideologies, behaviors, even identities, in the simple practice of doing up, the external (mis)understanding of such ideologies and identities was equally important. For most Villagers, the belief that the straight society was unable to

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1068 ibid, 40.
1069 ibid.
comprehend the scene was at least as important as the need for Village youth to understand one another.

But how well-received were these Villagers by the medical profession? What did the doctors and nurses themselves think about the influx of heads suffering from drug-related illnesses? According to the study, the answers were far from encouraging. In fact, the general tone of the section of the study which deals with the concerns and feelings of medical professionals is deeply critical. While the study allows that some doctors and nurses (and hospitals in general) had begun to grapple with effective ways to approach the “complex task” of treating Yorkville youth, “Others appear to have no motivation to adapt to the problems created by widespread drug use and have virtually atrophied to the point of consistent irrelevance.”\(^\text{1070}\)

The apparent source of much of this mistrust and criticism of the Toronto medical establishment is a survey that the study had administered to a group of medical professionals at two major downtown hospitals (whose names were withheld by study). According to the results, “we found that the majority of doctors and nurses in the two major downtown hospitals surveyed would like to see the treatment of drug-related cases removed from the hospital setting, and place high priority on the provision of alternative facilities outside the hospital.”\(^\text{1071}\) In other words, the study found that most doctors and nurses in these two major hospitals (who chose to respond to their survey) preferred not to deal with such cases themselves.

The main concerns expressed by the doctors and nurses in the study orbited around the frustration they felt toward treating drug addicts with band-aid solutions rather

\(^{1070}\) ibid, 72.
\(^{1071}\) ibid, 68.
than offering them long-term, effective cures. The study was decidedly unsympathetic to this position, very nearly avoiding the issue altogether. Indeed, the general conclusion offered by the study is highly pessimistic, and dismissive of the truncated care offered by these two downtown hospitals: “If the attitudes expressed by medical personnel in our survey can be regarded as expressing medical and nursing opinion in general, there is a poor prognosis for improving the quality of care available to young people … in our study.”

But, in the emergency room, this artificial disjuncture between ideologies – straight doctors versus hip youth – played to the considerable disadvantage of the sick Villagers. Unwilling to be treated as a weird, unfortunate child – but simultaneously portraying himself in just so deliberately cultivated a fashion, based on his distaste for a society he hoped to subvert – the Villager who found himself in a downtown Toronto emergency room more than likely found the experience utterly alienating. Treated as an unfortunate, a disappointment, a failure, such a head would be asked to endure the horrific realization that his very identity as a Hippie (for example) had brought him low. Still, if he were there to be treated in just this way – if he were interested primarily in the attention of others over his experience with drugs – he was sure to get exactly what he was looking for in the typical emergency room.

The importance of status and authenticity, given its most extreme articulation by junk sick Villagers who bragged about their illnesses, was also noted by the study in its assessment of the kinds of drugs taken (and championed) by Villagers. In the summer of 1969, the investigators analyzed a variety of drugs they obtained in the Village, and came up with some disquieting results. “Users are often not getting what they think they are

\[1072\] ibid, 69.
“getting,” they concluded. “For example, LSD is frequently contaminated, cut, or inert or psychoactive in unexpected ways as a result of poor synthesis. Heroin is rarely heroin and is usually cut. Mescaline [sic] is often LSD and subject to the same provisos as above.” Still, the study concluded, this didn’t seem to bother most of the Villagers they interviewed: “it is important that young people think they have used a substance.”

Of the ‘Avoider’ (the name provided for the fraction of Villagers who avoid medical assistance) the study explains: “He does not want to be treated as an oddity or as a freak, but as a human being trying to pursue ordinary goals, albeit in a perverse and disturbing fashion.” Thus, what doctors and nurses were faced with was a paradox, and a certain lose-lose situation. The patient wants to disturb, yet hates to be seen as a freak; the patient refers to himself as a freak, clearly enjoys the status this title confers, yet abhors being treated as anything but an equal.

Of course, it shouldn’t take too many experiences with drug addicts for medical professionals to realize that even if the patient has come to the hospital seeking attention for his drug addiction, he may simply be seeking attention. In this case, after he has received the interest and concern he has sought, he will return to the street to look for another hit. Can it be surprising, then, that many health care professionals became frustrated by the caricatures that came to them with track marks up and down their arms? When a speed freak walked through the door, why wouldn’t a nurse read him as a nuisance, rather than a patient? Or, more likely, as yet another nameless, faceless speed-freak, undifferentiated in his symptoms, appearance, stock stories? And so, the study

1073 ibid, 160.
1074 ibid, 92.
discovered, “medical personnel often unintentionally reinforce the speed-freak’s negative identity and behaviour by concentrating on his drug use.”

And so, an odd and treacherous paradox was born: “The speed-freak can acquire status from the speed community by contracting hepatitis, and have the status perversely confirmed by the medical profession.”

Confirmed through external recognition, shock, concern (feigned or real), the speed freak’s status (as “speed freak”) then becomes the only real thing that can be perceived by either party. No longer necessarily visible as a young man or woman with a sickness – and no longer presented to the nurse as such – status, identity and behaviour are reductively displayed, and superficially perceived. For, the young woman’s disease is inevitably understood to be as much a result of her association with the counterculture, with Yorkville, as it is with the drugs that have wasted her body. As we have seen elsewhere, such a conflation of the triumvirate of location/behaviour/identity ruled all interpretation: thus, for the medical profession in the late 1960s Yorkville, drugs, and hippie meant the same thing. Cure one, cure all.

**A Complete Cycle: End Days at the Church Drop-In**

As other humanitarian aid groups moved into the Yorkville scene, a curious kind of competition became evident. A new breed of distrust, previously barely apparent amongst the Church regulars, had become evident in the wake of the allegations of drug-pushing out of the centre. As the CSO staff tried to downplay the accusation that they sanctioned drug use and dealing, they were also met with the even more dangerous allegation that Bikers were using the Church as a means to collect victims for their

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1075 ibid.
1076 ibid, 41.
1077 Smith, 10-11.
“splashes”, or gang rapes. The subsequent decision to ban the Bikers from using the Church at all was met with an unhappy reaction from the do-your-own-thing fraction of the scene.\textsuperscript{1078}

That reaction, coupled with mounting fears that the CSO might be willing to turn in some drug users to offset the contention that they sanctioned drug use, prompted a boycott of the centre. James Smith explained the boycott in vague, ambiguous terms: “this political boycott was the work of underground activity groups that classed the CSO as ‘establishment’. There was a difference in ideology which the CSO was powerless to change if it was to keep its financial support.”\textsuperscript{1079} One assumes that Smith means by this that because the Church was accepting its financial support from establishment sources, that it could not be trusted by some factions of the Yorkville youth. However, the ‘underground activity groups’ to which he refers remain shadowy.

Meanwhile, the Diggers, working to introduce Digger House as a comprehensive food bank and shelter for Yorkville youth, were finding their efforts emulated by the 49-ers, another aid group born out of the scene. The story of the 49-ers is rickety at best – theirs was a short-lived, restless organization – but when they eventually joined forces with the Diggers in 1968 they began to have a greater impact on the scene.\textsuperscript{1080} This new, youth-operated aid group came to the Church with the plan to organize a mass feeding for hundreds of Yorkville youth. As the Church was in the midst of a boycott which had seriously injured its reputation among Villagers (and especially among the more paranoid, drug-addled heads who most needed the shelter offered by the CSO), Smith and

\textsuperscript{1078} Smith, 12.
\textsuperscript{1079} ibid.
\textsuperscript{1080} Frustratingly, no one I asked could tell me why they were named the 49-ers. One guesses that this might have been a show of connectedness with the San Francisco scene (the 49-ers were, historically, the miners who filed into the Bay Area in 1849 in search of gold)?
company decided to allow the Diggers/49-ers to take over the Centre, if only “against our better judgment”. This was a regrettable move. “They must be given an ‘A’ for effort in their food program,” mused Smith, “but they defied all city regulations and completely embarrassed their host.”

They called our volunteers the ‘bottle-picker-uppers’ and made them feel irrelevant. After three days all cleaning stopped and the garbage was piling up mountain-high. Since they got their supplies from market leftovers the basement and kitchen were strewn with rotten vegetable leaves and peelings. There were quarrelling factions among the Hippies and some were fronting for a marijuana supplier. On the fifth day, we threw in the sponge…

The Centre recalled its volunteers, and re-opened as before with the boycott remaining in place, and hanging over its head. The summer of 1968, characterized by the noisy and frightening hepatitis scare, saw the effective end of the Centre as a primary centre for the old guard of hippie Yorkville. Smith found the new generation of Villagers who arrived following the events of August (which he describes as the “hepatitis hoax that dealt the death blow to the Village”) to be “a dull and difficult clientele.” Apparently unorganizable, they were more violent (knifings were cited as one of the reasons young people no longer showed for the meetings at the Centre), and took to swallowing harder drugs in larger quantities. “Once [Mike] Waage could talk or threaten the teeny boppers out of taking street drugs,” lamented Smith, his dismay and defeat as plain as a lick of fire, “but the new crop ceased to respond.”

A masters student in the School of Social Work at the University of Toronto wrote her thesis on Yorkville youth in the Spring of 1968, using Smitty’s Drop-In Centre.

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1081 Smith, 13.
1082 ibid.
1083 Smith, 14.
as a base for her interviews and observations. Of 36 youths in her focus group between the ages of 16 and 24, all but two provinces were represented. Not only that, but eight countries apart from Canada were listed as place of origin by the respondents. Fully none of them had enjoyed any form of university education, although four had tried technical schools. Moreover, all but five of the 36 dropped out of high school before Grade 13 – four as early as Grade 8. Smitty was, by 1968, running a multi-faceted Centre; his flock – young, undereducated, often homeless – was hardly definable in the same terms as it might have been a few years earlier.1084

Equally disturbing to Smitty and his colleagues in the ministry was the role of the Drop-In Centre in the Village. No longer did it seem as “our community centre” as DePoe had characterized it, but rather it was becoming a place to score drugs, pick a fight, or find a sexual partner. Smith himself was called out a number of times in the press and even from the pulpit for his ministry at the church that was “drawing the drug and flesh peddlers” to Yorkville.1085 As safe havens on the streets of Yorkville and Cumberland were getting thinner and fewer, the Church Drop-In remained available, relatively safe, and reliably full of young people looking for the same thing as you were.

“Look, we had private school Catholic girls coming into Yorkville,” explains Wild Bill. “Every afternoon, when school was out! They’d get out of class and then, knock knock knock… ‘I’m looking for [so-and-so], is he around?’ […] You know when somebody

1085 Toronto Star, April 8th, 1967
wants to fuck, you look right at them, you know. [But, say, I wasn’t interested.] I’d say, ‘Go up to the Church, go to the Drop-in, and drop in. Some guy will pick you up.’”\textsuperscript{1086}

Although the Drop-In ran along into 1971, with varying measures of success, it was no longer a party spot, no longer the often jubilant dancehall it had been all those nights back in the mid-60s. Now catering mostly to young people from the immediate area (rather than simply anyone who happened to want a place to hang out), the Drop-In entered 1970 at the tail end of what Smith has called “a complete cycle.” “A new crop of ‘little brothers and sisters’” had, just as had those of the greasers before them, “adopted the centre. They live in the Yorkville –Annex area and spend a great deal of their evening hours listening to CHUM and playing the table games. The presence of travelling Hippies is accepted nonchalantly by this group.”\textsuperscript{1087} Accepted, but not expected, hippies no longer made the scene.

\textsuperscript{1086} Wild Bill, Interview with Author, March 11\textsuperscript{th}, 2005.
\textsuperscript{1087} Smith, 26.
Conclusion:

Rochdale, Rural Communes and the Hippie Diaspora

In the 1998 film *The Big Lebowski*, perhaps the best Hollywood picture to deal with the legacy of the 1960s, the aging hippie played by Jeff Bridges finds himself in a darkened, fire-lit and book-lined study, discussing politics with an FDR-looking millionaire some thirty years his senior.1088 “Your revolution is over,” counsels the conservative figure, as the bemused hippie walks away. “[My] condolences. The bums lost. My advice is to do what your parents did: get a job, sir. The bums will *always* lose. Do you hear me?” But he doesn’t.

Do we?

Did the Villagers lose the culture war? If Yorkville was their Canadian Waterloo, then much of the evidence above certainly suggests that they did. Yorkville, by 1970, was a pretty memory – many of its current strain of Villagers strung out, wounded, junk sick and diseased. And where were those “true hippies” that used to inhabit the streets, the coffee houses, the jam sessions? Not in Yorkville anymore; nor hanging around the Mont Blanc, nor Webster’s, nor the Church Drop-In. Sure, you might find them at the Riverboat for a big show, at the Rockpile (Toronto’s answer to Bill Graham’s venerable Fillmore) to see the Doors, Kensington Market, the Grateful Dead, or Led Zeppelin. But, when the last notes rang out, even before that cerulean smoke cleared, they were gone, spreading into the night. Not back to the Village for coffees and connections, but *gone*.

But we know that they weren’t gone. The Village was gone, and its Villagers dispersed, but the reality of the early 1970s and beyond is that the numbers of young people performing at hipness, espousing anti-establishment visions and opinions, taking mind drugs and practicing a version of free love, clamouring for tickets to the next big rock festival, were swelling. In chapter two I outlined a variety of theoretical positions from which we could approach the Village scene; all have been employed above in anticipation of this key question, this apparently ambiguous ending. Most everyone who takes a moment to consider the story of hip Yorkville comes to the convenient conclusion that, since it was, and then wasn’t, a hippie centre, then the young people must have failed to win the day. The bums lost. But there are other, more sensible ways of assessing this outcome, all tied to the themes we have explored above.

In Yorkville, throughout the Sixties, a series of competing heuristics (that is, ways of condensing, simplifying) saw the Village become an interpretive battleground. Its maps of meaning were based, all of them, on mutable concerns. Was Yorkville to be an oasis of beat youth or an enclave of carriage trade sophistication? Was it to be the haven for hippies or a rejuvenated shopping centre? A greaser and biker hangout, or a middle-class drop out centre? A young scene or an old scene?

In the end, but merely superficially, one side of this battle won the ground – Yorkville, by the end of 1970, was well on its way to becoming a shopping district with few connections to the hip scene. And because Yorkville was, throughout the 1960s, conflated with hippie Toronto, with hip energies and identities; because performing Yorkville was understood to be the same as performing hippie; because Yorkville seemed to represent the whole scene, a synecdoche for the otherwise diffusive hip youth culture;
because of all of this, when Yorkville was refigured by developers and municipal
initiatives it was possible (at least metaphorically) to perceive this as the annihilation of
the hippies.

It didn’t help that most of the Villagers who would otherwise have been spending
their days and nights on Yorkville and Cumberland had found a new, virtually invisible
home at nearby Rochdale College.1089 Off the streets, effectively erased from the visage
of the city, Rochdale’s scene operated as a (mostly) self-contained, even self-reflexive
unit. Yorkville may have been metaphorically cut off from Toronto, tied to a map of
meaning which treated it as a circumscribed island of difference within the wider
cityscape; but Rochdale actually was cut off.1090 Its inhabitants cloistered (some rarely
ever leaving the building!), contained, under a kind of self-imposed exile from the wider
community, Rochdale in some ways represents the failure of integrationist politics in the
hip world. But, in a very real sense, its inception marked the end of the Yorkville scene.

Rochdale College was born of the post-Baby Boom movement in education
towards accommodation and experimentation. Accommodation, that is, of youth and
individuality; experimentation with the form, function and process of pedagogy. The
innovation of Rochdale College – an 18-storey apartment complex completed in 1968 at
the corner of Bloor and Huron St, not half a kilometre from the Village – was that it

1089 I won’t pretend to offer a history of this exciting, unique scene here. Two histories of the
College have been produced, both worthy in their respective ways. See David Sharpe, Rochdale: The
Runaway College (Toronto: Anansi, 1987); Mietkiewicz and Mackowycz, Dream Tower: The Life and
Legacy of Rochdale College (Toronto: Ryerson, 1988).

1090 See, for example, Ralph Osborne’s lively memoir of his time as the General Manager of the
College. He barely goes outside. For years! Osborne, From Someplace Else: A Memoir, (Toronto: ECW
would be both a home to hundreds of students and a sprawling campus. Here was experiential education on a grand scale – no structure to speak of (unless that’s what you asked for), no classrooms, no homework, no rules. Learn as you learn. Rochdale opened (even though the building remained unfinished) in September 1968, just as the Yorkville hepatitis scare wound down, delivering a second blow to an already struggling Village community.

From the very beginning, young people streamed into Rochdale, and they brought with them all of the problems that would keep Rochdale from ever really achieving any of the goals its founders Dennis Lee and Howard Adelman had set for it. By 1969, as its authors gave up on their creation in frustration and despair, Rochdale was collecting the accrual from an eroding Village scene: with crashers and otherwise homeless teens, runaways and needle freaks, poets and radicals, hippies, bikers and greasers looking for a new scene. Rochdale became Toronto’s new epicentre of hip. Improving on Yorkville in a variety of ways (no cops, no parents, no politicians, no money, fewer (well, different) hassles) and re-creating, apart from live music, the best of what the Village had to offer (plentiful drugs, abundant sex, likeminded young people, a sense of community), Rochdale was the pushbroom that swept through the Village in the late Sixties, carrying most everyone away.

From 1968 to 1975, Rochdale served as an ongoing happening fueled by drugs, sex, politics and the radical pursuit of freedom, a tumultuous and vibrant pedagogical

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1091 See Dennis Lee’s record of the frustrating experience of University politics in the 1960s, and his list of reasons for founding the College. “Getting to Rochdale” in This Magazine is about Schools (Winter, 1968). Such high hopes.
experiment gone wrong (or right, depending on one’s understanding of education), and a self-imposed concentration camp for the hip performance. Whereas Yorkville represented a “cancer that is spreading through the city” to many conservatives, Rochdale was self-contained and, as such, absolutely non-threatening. These hippies and freaks wanted to stay inside; indeed, that was kind of the point! Toronto, however accidentally, had managed to find a way to rid its streets of hundreds of its most radical hippies, speed freaks, pot heads and non-conformists. As Yorkville slipped into its desultory final period of rising rents, drug abuse, mental illness and intense redevelopment, Rochdale called out to the curious and the desperate alike: *Yorkville is over, but we have only begun.*

For those hundreds of committed Villagers to whom Rochdale’s promise of high-octane zaniness, constant partying, experiential education and revolving-door community wasn’t appealing, there was always the back-to-the-land option. In the late 1960s and especially the early 1970s, rural communes and farms were founded across Ontario, often run by ex-Villagers. Most famous of these was the series of communities founded near Killaloe, Ontario in the late 1960s, including the Morning Glory Farm and, later, Rochdale Farm. Examples of a certain radical refusal of Canadian society, such communes also reflect (as did Rochdale) what is often referred to as the failure of the hippie scene. By removing themselves from the wider community – in some cases this removal was fairly substantial, as some farms were very nearly self-sufficient – these communities had, in effect, attempted to fully step out of the hegemonic process that

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1093 For a documentary portrait of the Rochdale scene, see *Dream Tower*, Director: Ron Mann, National Film Board of Canada, 1994. Some good material is there, including an excellent section recounting the role of speed in the destruction of College life, but one sincerely hopes that a more coherent film will be made one day, one which finds the energy to discuss the full eight-year history of the College, rather than using the first three years as a stand in for the whole. Still, one point the film does make well is the dislike *Rochdalians* held for Villagers in those early years. It was believed that those Village kids were coming to the College and disrespecting the environment, trying to re-create the Village in the high rise.
Yorkville, as a highly visible battleground and symbol, was so much a part of. (Debates over these issues raged throughout the late 60s and into the 70s, and in some cases persist today.) Still, the continued presence of such intentional communities affords these back-to-the-landers a last laugh, one supposes, on that score. With many of them still living to the ideological credos which had led them to establish the community in the first place, the remaining 60’s-era rural communes represent a highly successful attempt to re-make the scene in a new setting.1094

The hippie Diaspora, as represented by the emergence of communes, by the fortress-like island of hip commonsense and performance that was Rochdale, was also, of course, present in the simple dispersion of hip performers and identities into the wider population in the post-Village era. The end of hip Yorkville may have meant the end of a scene where young people found a public stage on which to congregate (and, crucially, to confront the wider society), but anyone who lived through the early Seventies and beyond knows that hippies hardly disappeared when their expected home was finally given over to developers. Rather, hippies became, if anything, more visible, as longer hair, hip fashions, and drug use bled into the mainstream. And while greasers – never a well-defined subculture to begin with, and certainly a very difficult scene to pin down – bled into other identity performances into the 1970s, bikers only consolidated their presence in urban centres. As Thomas Frank and others have persuasively argued, the media, political

1094See the Mother Earth News, Issue #8, March/April, 1971, for a lively and informative overview of the Killaloe/Barry’s Bay intentional community scene in the early 1970s. Available at: http://www.motherearthnews.com/Livestock_and_Farming/1971_March_April/Visit_To_The_Canadian_Hog_Farm ; And, as I ready this manuscript, a lengthy story was published in the Toronto Star entitled Living Green Before their Time, May 20th, 2007. Essentially an apology to the hippies of the Morning Glory farm (and, by implication, other such intentional communities) for their early turn to environmentalism and adoption of “green” values, the article reminds us that many of these communities still exist, thrive, even, and maintain many of the most exciting, significant, and radical hip beliefs, practices, and aesthetics.
and consumerist obsession with youth culture in the Sixties led to the mainstreaming of what had been, during the Village heyday, distinctively hippie aesthetics and performances. In the 1970s, such Yorkville activities as “soft” drug use, freer sexuality, and shaggier hair were no longer specifically tied to the hippie phenomenon.\textsuperscript{1095}

In a sense, the spreading out of hippie identity and activity from prescribed centres such as Yorkville (or the Haight, or Kitsilano, or the East Village) produced a wider cultural shift than had the more focused earlier phenomenon. Hippies were everywhere; although drop-out culture had been demystified, and radical student politics had lost much of their former cohesiveness, their legacy was present, apparent, in most every aspect of Canadian society well into the 1970s and beyond.

So, the stuffy conservative character in \textit{The Big Lebowski} was right (the “bums” \textit{had} lost the ground war, the war of \textit{manoeuvre}, the revolution, as it were) but he was just as hopelessly wrong. All of the emphasis on the battle for ground, for space, was misplaced, a misunderstanding of the real culture war. In the end, the pervasive influence of hip ideologies and performances is evident, even in this era of neo-liberal repression, in virtually every lighted corner of the global village. Throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, the Grateful Dead were the highest-grossing music act in the world, attracting lawyers, freaks and politicians, ageing hippies and the wistful young, all of them still acutely aware of the continued relevance of hip aesthetics and ideologies. The Burning Man festival, which attracts tens of thousands of neo-hippies to its carnivalesque proceedings each year, attests to the size and scope of the next generation of what, in 1965, was just a small collection of idealists and drop outs.

\textsuperscript{1095} Frank, 1997.
Ultimately, to reduce the Yorkville experience to the simple equation of win/lose
is to miss the plot. In the first place, it assumes that there was something to win,
something that could be gauged. But, the bikers were looking for fun, money and
freedom. The greasers wanted upward mobility and a taste of escape. Weekenders wanted
something to do for a few days, something to align themselves with, and a place to party.
And those hippies, “true” or not, were looking uncomfortably to the world they would
inherit, to borrow Tom Hayden’s lovely phrase, hoping that if they just lived and loved
differently enough, a new future might open up. From 1960 to 1970, thousands upon
thousands of young people made the scene in that little Village, attracting attention,
confusion, and all that electric noise. And that scene, above all else, has stood as a point
of reference, a signpost along the road to a transformed society. The road is long (and it’s
mostly uphill). But we will get there.

What Yorkville represented for that brief period in the 1960s remains as relevant
today as it was to its participants at the time: in the most radical sense, and for all of its
various collaborators, it was about performing identity in new, exciting, and
fundamentally unfettered ways. It was about escaping the expectations of a world which
seems fraught with conformity and boredom, alienation and violence, apathy and
repression. It was about repeatedly making and re-making an inspiring, unforgettable,
invigorating scene, built on the twin principles of experimentation and freedom.

What can’t we learn from that?
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