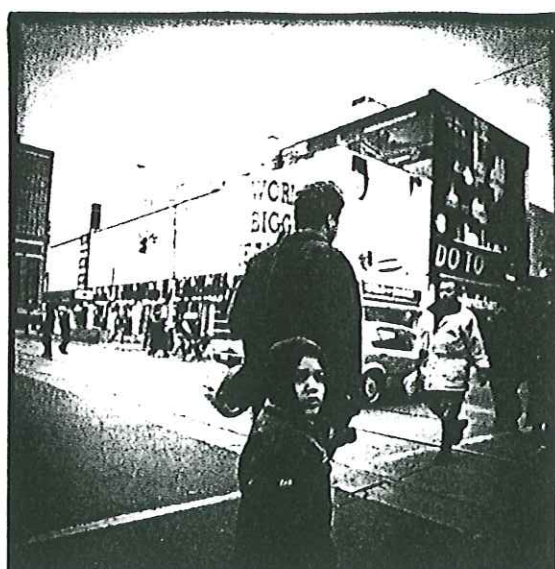
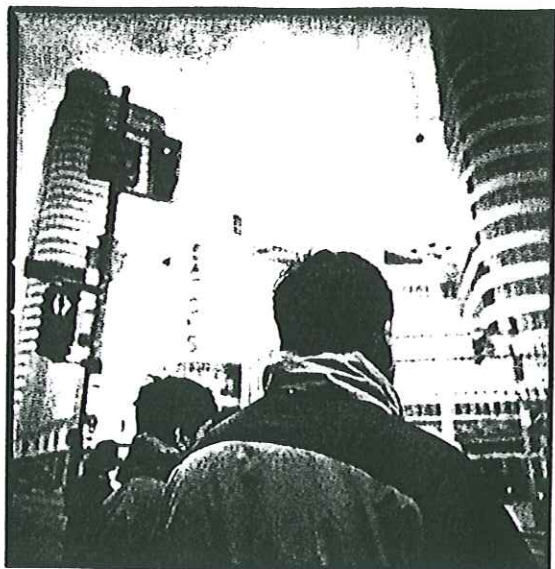




YONGE AND DUNDAS

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POLITICIANS THINK it's a disgrace—a cesspool of dollar stores, porn shops, panhandlers and wayward teens. So does your mother, who used to warn you not to come here. But her chiding only added allure to this tawdry, tacky, seedy centre of the universe. To an adolescent from suburbia, Yonge and Dundas was, quite simply, sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll.

The forbidden promise of Sin Strip was a weekend rite of passage. Lurid posters beckoned from the doorways of Cinema 2000, the Zanzibar and the twenty-five-cent movie parlours, as natural a part of the downtown landscape as palm trees in Florida. Your mother was terrified you'd go to see *Trading Places* at the Imperial Six and come home a junkie, and her fears weren't entirely irrational. It was here you discovered what "bong" meant, browsing through the head shops and their sea of cheap T-shirts, dirty greeting cards and rock posters featuring big-haired, dangerous men. Meanwhile, big-haired, somewhat less dangerous

men blared trash rock from their Camaros as they cruised Yonge Street, lit by the neon garishness of Sam's spinning records.

Now the glittering retail flagships are moving in, as the raffishness and lowlifes are swept out—all part of a city-sponsored cleanup getting under way this month. The Eaton Centre is opening its doors to the street, unleashing its megamall sterility. Yonge and Dundas will become another brand-name theme park, and cease to be, well, Yonge and Dundas.

When New York was in the midst of disinfecting Times Square, *The Economist* argued against the renovation, reasoning that there are already lots of places where people can "take their mothers-in-law out for cocoa." Cleansed of its honky-tonk and GIRLS GIRLS GIRLS, Yonge and Dundas is poised to become cocoa and mother-in-law territory. Your little sister can go buy a Roots bag in peace and never know what she's missing.

—Hugh Graham