

GLAMOUR IN THE GOOD:
EXHIBITING GLAMOUR'S EXPRESSION IN TORONTO'S URBAN IMAGINARY

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the beguiling but illusory concept of glamour as a historical and aesthetic component of Toronto's urban imaginary. In the years since William Howland, Toronto's 25th mayor from 1886-87, coined the phrase "Toronto the Good," Toronto has undeniably shed its good moniker and steadily positioned itself as a glamorous world-class city. This dissertation uses glamour as a prism to illustrate how the city's literature, art, fashion, music and film have contributed to Toronto's emergence as a cosmopolitan global city. Alongside these art forms, this study uses a comparative analysis to examine how historical and cultural developments such as the construction of Casa Loma, the popularity of the 1926 Miss Toronto pageant, the 1960s counterculture of Yorkville, the celebrity of the Toronto International Film Festival, the aftermath of the 1990s recession and the rise in gentrification have helped to shape a unique expression of glamour for the city.

Drawing upon archival materials, primary and secondary sources, and close readings, this dissertation charts a history of glamour in Toronto and demonstrates how Torontonians have continuously negotiated, courted, and challenged the expression of glamour in the city. This history reveals the role gender and sexual orientation have played in the rise of glamour in Toronto and the conditions that shape the way women, in particular, have accessed and experienced glamour in the city. Ultimately, these contexts shed light on the ways in which Torontonians have historically navigated the tensions between glamour and "the good."

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Introduction: A Cartography of Toronto Glamour

“She was dark, you know, and yet she had that white skin. There’s a kind of flower called freesia — when the petals are very white, they have the color of her skin. And there’s a strong sweetness to it — strong and ghostly at the same time. It smells like spring with the ghosts in it, between afternoon and dusk. And there’s a word they call glamour. It was there.”

— Stephen Vincent Benét, “Glamour,” 1937

“Pure unadulterated glamour is something I have always craved: to be swept away, to see the world through rose-coloured glasses, to be titillated by beauty and excited by life’s endless possibilities.”

— Jeanne Beker, *Finding Myself in Fashion*, 2011

To be glamorous in Toronto was politically incorrect and kind of ridiculous. We were always accused of being dilettantes and in a way it was provoking those same people to continue accusing us.”

— AA Bronson, “Asked and Answered,”

The New York Times Style Magazine, 2011

Memory, All alone in the moonlight

In 1986, my grandfather bought my family tickets to see a production of Andrew Lloyd

Webber’s popular musical *Cats* that was staged at the Elgin theatre in downtown Toronto. I

summoned the appropriate amount of excitement, as only a young child can, at the prospect of being entertained for over two hours by a multitude of acrobatic cats soaring across the stage all the while singing music set to the poetry of T. S Eliot. As I sat enthralled by the skin-tight glittery leotards and the wild colourful leonine hair, I had, perhaps, become too in touch with my inner feline; as the music dulled during a particularly poignant scene among the Jellicle cats I let out a raucous yawn and sufficiently embarrassed my mother as she slowly sank in her seat. The theatre outing was thus deemed a disaster and I was swiftly reprimanded for not being able to control my boredom. As I was a young child I was unable to properly express to my mother that I was anything but bored by the production. I had simply become too preoccupied by the splendour of the music, dancing and costumes. As the spectacle of the production whirled around me like a phantasmagoric maelstrom, I had completely lost myself and forgotten that I was one among many in the audience as I let out the offending yawn. I look back on this event as a momentary experience of glamour; a temporal shift that alters the present, for glamour, Judith Brown argues is “the illusion of duration, of stopping time to draw in, like a puff of smoke, the possibilities of a moment” (9) or, just perhaps, a drawn-out yawn.

Cats is often a punch line to a pointed barb regarding theatrical bad taste yet despite its notoriety I continually and unabashedly tear up upon hearing the voice of Elaine Paige as Grizabella belting out “Memory” from the Original London Cast recording — which I of course played ad infinitum after that first fateful production. I imagine countless others have been moved and enchanted by Grizabella, the old and disheveled “Glamour cat” who has been shunned by the others because of her tattered appearance and lurid past which prompts the other cats to sing solemnly, “And who would ever suppose that *that*, was Grizabella, the Glamour Cat!” No doubt there is a certain Proustian sentimentalism in my emotional response. My own

memories of this moment have been completely shaped by sensorial enchantments including both the temporal and locational. A trip to downtown Toronto in 1986 instilled in me an overwhelming sense of excitement at having the opportunity to explore the countless shops and colourful cast of downtown dwellers that populated the Yonge Street strip. My eyes burned at the bright neon twin records spinning on top of Sam the Record Man while right next door two enormous yellow and red “A’s” hovered over the street as an advertisement for A & A Books and Records. For a child in 1986, Yonge street meant downtown and downtown meant danger and adventure. This intoxicating mix was further elevated by the very act of going to the theatre, which I had only previously experienced on television and movies featuring well-heeled adults (and Muppets) setting out for Broadway. Imagine my disappointment when I realized that the Elgin was not exactly like the New Amsterdam Theatre; indeed, the Elgin was not the paragon of elegant Edwardian architecture it is recognized as today. Rather, the theatre was slightly run down and partially renovated, which incidentally provided a fitting background for the gritty glam of the *Cats* universe. It was, in fact, the success of *Cats* that encouraged the Ontario government to provide funding for the theatre to fully restore the venue, which now comprises two theatres, The Elgin and Winter Garden, both stamped with National Historic Site of Canada designations.¹

A child’s concept of glamour is simple. For me it was easily tied to celebrity, big hair, and sequins — this was the 80s, after all. Yet, in the presence of the glamour cat with “the border of her coat [...] torn and stained with sand” impressed upon me the complexity of glamour’s

¹ Sarah Hampton’s article, “They prowled the stage” in *The Globe and Mail*, March 19, 2005, provides useful details about how the success of *Cats* helped to generate a theatre going audience in Canada. Specifically, the legacy of *Cats* is particularly evident in the high-profile commercial musicals that have toured the country such as *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Les Miserables*.

expression. As I got older I reveled in glamour's camp value, which *Cats* certainly possesses in abundance, and cheered on drag queens in sparkling diaphanous gowns at Buddies in Bad Times in the city's gay village, and delighted in the corseted crowds at midnight showings of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* at the Bloor cinema. In her seminal "Notes on Camp," Susan Sontag articulates how often glamour, like the idea of camp, is a result of a feeling rather than a tangible construction:

Again, Camp is the attempt to do something extraordinary. But extraordinary in the sense, often, of being special, glamorous. (The curved line, the extravagant gesture.) Not extraordinary merely in the sense of effort. Ripley's Believe-It-Or-Not items are rarely campy. These items, either natural oddities (the two-headed rooster, the eggplant in the shape of a cross) or else the products of immense labor (the man who walked from here to China on his hands, the woman who engraved the New Testament on the head of a pin), lack the visual reward – the glamour, the theatricality – that marks off certain extravagances as Camp. (para 28)

Sontag's discussion of a deliberately unsophisticated glamour suggests that an adjunct glamour exists. The phenomenon of "glam," a term more commonly associated with 1970s pop music heralded by gender fluid and flamboyantly fashionable artists such as David Bowie, Marc Bolan and Roxy Music, captures the punk ethos of this outgrowth of glamour and camp. Darren Pih, the Tate Liverpool's curator for 2013 exhibition, "Glam: The Performance of Style," makes the case that:

Glam is characterised by its use of stylistic overstatement, revelling in revivalism, irony, theatricality, and androgyny, privileging surface effect and

artifice over meaning. Its expression remains instantly recognisable, yet even in general terms the definition of ‘glam’ remains unstable. Glam evades a fixed sense of chronology and timeframe with different meanings and connotations across *national boundaries*. (11, italics added).

While glam was understood to be a wholly British expression (Pih 11), in tracing the cartography of glamour in Toronto’s urban imaginary the concept of glam becomes a useful armour against the raised eyebrows that studying the relationship between glamour and Toronto certainly provokes.²

To be sure, in writing about glamour and Toronto there is an inherent campiness to the subject; to borrow A. A Bronson’s observation, it is a somewhat *gauche* undertaking. Yet the concept of glam forges an entryway into the larger discourse of glamour’s relationship to Toronto. Much like camp, glam similarly “relishes, rather than judges, the little triumphs and awkward intensities of ‘character.’ ... Camp taste identifies with what it is enjoying. People who share this sensibility are not laughing at the thing they label as ‘a camp,’ they’re enjoying it. Camp is a *tender* feeling” (Sontag para 56; italics in the original). In writing this dissertation I have been pleasantly reminded about the tender feelings associated with certain events I experienced while growing up in Toronto and how what I assumed to be mundane experiences have profoundly shaped and continue to shape the theoretical orientation in my reading and understanding of glamour in the city.

² In this I am reminded of the anecdote from the introduction to *Fashion: A Canadian Perspective* (2004), in which Alexandra Palmer laments the oft quoted refrain, “What? . . . I didn’t know there was any Canadian fashion” (3) and hopes that her text can remedy this mindset by demonstrating that Canada is in possession of a unique fashion identity. I share a similar hope for my study by showcasing Toronto’s lengthy relationship with glamour.

The symbiotic relationship between camp and glam was put on full display, albeit accidentally, in the winter of 2020 when *Cats* resurfaced to entertain audiences once again on a larger theatrical platform. The Australian-British Academy Award winning director, Tom Hooper, took it upon himself to direct a live action version of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical featuring a stunning cast of celebrities such as pop singer Taylor Swift and esteemed British actor Dame Judi Dench. The results of his efforts caused an uproar with critics who pointed out that the human-like cats yearning to travel to the Heavy-side layer, the unexplained but assumed afterlife for worthy Jellicle cats, ended up becoming more of a horrifying excursion down the uncanny valley as the cats resembled escapees from Dr. Moreau's island rather than sleek anthropomorphic felines. In recognizing the inherent campiness of the film, Dumpster Raccoon, a Toronto-based film series devoted to "trashy" cinema, put on their very own Jellicle Ball at the Revue Cinema in Toronto's west end. The event was billed as a sing-along screening of *Cats* in the style of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* with participants encouraged to don their best cat-inspired fashion (I wore a Halston leopard printed dress that I had purchased on sale from The Bay). Audience members volunteered to perform in drag or to put on a burlesque performance or to sing a torch song alongside the film's musical score to compete for glory at the Jellicle Ball. The tickets for the two available performances sold-out in a matter of hours, showcasing the gleeful desire for Toronto audiences to let the memory live again.

Indeed, there is nostalgia in glamour and glamour in nostalgia. The city in its current guise as a sleek global cosmopolis with the hip handle "The 6ix," so-named by the popular musical artist Drake in reference to the city's "416" area code,³ bears little resemblance to the

³ While "The 6ix" took off as a cool label for the city in 2016, the Toronto-based rap artist, Kardinal Offishall introduced the phrase "T Dot" in the early 2000s and this moniker continues to remain popular to this day.

Toronto of my youth with its decaying theatres and dizzyingly bright flashing store fronts that lit up the city's streets. These divergent representations of the city make the act of reflecting upon Toronto and its accompanying memories more of an elegy than wistful imagining. Elizabeth Wilson similarly compares nostalgia to an act of mourning that fades into loving memory:

Nostalgia then becomes the recognition that we have been whirled away far ahead of ourselves into a landscape of estrangement. At the same time, though, beware. The familiar past we recreate so lovingly in memory, when it was the real, lacked the certainty we retrospectively endow it with. If nostalgia were sentimental it would be a lie or at best a gross distortion of the past. (E.

Wilson, *Cultural Passions* 49)

The gross distortion of the past, I would argue, is the domain of glamour. Glamour has historically been linked with sorcery and metamorphoses; it is precisely glamour's manipulation of reality that makes its essence so seductive. Glamour's etymology traces back to the old word "gramarye," an alteration of the word grammar which connotes learning as well as the mystifying effects of magic or the act of being charmed. The word, glamour, was popularized in English by Sir Walter Scott in 1805 with the publication of his long narrative poem, "The Lay of the Last Minstrel." Glamour, Scott wrote, "Could make a lady seem a knight; / The cobwebs on a dungeon wall / Seem tapestry in lordly hall." Scott's use of glamour was an Anglicized version of "glamer," which according to *An Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language* from 1897 referred to "the supposed influence of a charm on the eye, causing it to see objects differently from what they really are" (qtd. in Gundle et al. 3).

The early twentieth-century American poet and novelist, Stephen Vincent B  net, similarly identifies this sense of distortion when he tries to articulate the space that glamour

occupies by describing its intangible yet recognizable quality, musing, “And there’s a word they call glamour. *It* was there” (italics added). In tracing the origins of “It,” that is, the phenomenon which explains the innate seduction and fascinating qualities that certain individuals possess, Joseph Roach argues that “most of us also think that It necessarily entails glamour, and so it does, but not for long” (1). While *It* may cling to those blessed few, glamour casts a wider net to include not only people but architecture, design and other material objects. Glamour’s multivalences are therefore often construed as unwieldy as Bénét’s protagonist exhaustively notes: “I didn’t want to make the best of things—I wanted it all. You can’t compromise with glamour. Or that’s the way I feel” (222). Certainly, glamour’s resolute nature is particularly prominent as it blurs the boundaries between history and memory. Bénét tirelessly meditates upon glamour’s ability to summon the past, creating a longing for a bygone era that perhaps never really existed. I concede, therefore, that my reading of glamour in Toronto is often coloured by my own nostalgia, history and memories combined with my idiosyncratic conceptions and notions of glamour, or put simply, that’s the way *I* feel.

A Moment on Glamour

Glamour, as a concept, is as enigmatic as it is certain. For this reason, many academics have attempted to trace and define a history of glamour to lay bare its most basic components, which range from fashion, celebrity and sexuality to cellophane and cigarettes.⁴ The common connection in this scholarship is that glamour, while a seemingly abstract concept, does indeed

⁴ See Wilson: 2007; Gundle: 2008; Brown: 2009; Dyhouse: 2010.

have a lengthy history. Judith Brown articulates glamour's "historical lineage" (5) by addressing the methods in which glamour has punctuated various moments in history:

Indeed, one might find precedents for glamour in a number of cultural practices, products, and figures from earlier centuries. Marie Antoinette jumps to mind, as does Byron, Baudelaire, and Sarah Bernhardt. One also pictures Chaucer's French-speaking, luxury-loving Prioress, the jewel-laden courtiers of the Renaissance, and the Orient-inspired fashion of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The late-nineteenth-century discourse of aestheticism stands out as the most direct antecedent to glamour. (7)

Brown is not the only scholar to observe that glamour's roots were firmly planted during the Romantic Movement of the nineteenth century. Elizabeth Wilson argues that Romanticism gave rise to the myth of the bohemian and "as soon as the bohemian appeared on the urban stage there were eager consumers of stories of glamorous and sordid individuals, men and women of genius and eccentricity, who lived exciting lives and challenged the conventions" (*Bohemians* 3). In *Young Romantics* (2010), Daisy Hay further explains that the "young Romantics" (as opposed to the older generation of Romantics such as Scott, Wordsworth and Coleridge), made up of poetic luminaries such as Lord Byron, Percy and Mary Shelley, John Keats and Leigh Hunt, were especially famous for creating their own genesis myths in order to maintain the glamour that surrounded them. These myths that boasted of and championed the artistic revolutionary spirit of the bohemian were deliberate and practiced. Wilson has described and analyzed the ways in which, since the nineteenth century, a succession of youth cultures, each with their own idiosyncratic mode of dress and countercultural attitudes, has been associated with the myth of the bohemian. She reframes Lawrence Grossberg's argument regarding contemporary hip culture

and its tendency toward “authentic inauthenticity” (qtd. in E. Wilson, “Bohemian Dress and the Heroism of Everyday Life” 239) as a hallmark of nineteenth-century bohemian practice and boldly claims that “many bohemians were postmodernists *avant la lettre*” (“Bohemian Dress and the Heroism of Everyday Life” 240). As a dialectical conceptualization of bohemian habitus, “authentic inauthenticity” is also a useful framework for understanding glamour’s conception as a purely modern phenomenon.

Peter Bailey, Réka Buckley, Stephen Gundle, Elizabeth Wilson, Carol Dyhouse, Iyla Parkins and Judith Brown have noted that from the late nineteenth century onward, glamour was connected to the commodity culture of modernity, specifically through the expansion of visual culture through technological advances in printing, photography as well as changes and developments in urban centres. Peter Bailey has related glamour to modernity and identified it as a property involving public visibility of a desirable object, such as the Victorian barmaid who functioned as a distancing mechanism fueling desire and envy from her patrons. Buckley and Gundle, while arguing there are no theories of glamour (334), contrast with Bailey by pointing out that in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, ideas associated with glamour presented themselves in abundance through commercial presentations such as moving images and the cinema, which stimulated desire not by distance but by the novelty of access for the wider viewing public.

Glamour’s performance is easily detectable through its seductive combinations of celebrity, fashion and enigmatic *It* appeal. Stephen Gundle addresses the power of performance as a fundamental component of glamour’s essence: “Glamour is always theatrical; it is a performance or parade that has no meaning unless it is widely viewed. Indeed, it is only through the perception and reception of visual effects that *it* comes into existence” (*Glamour* 389-90;

emphasis added). Glamour, as Mary Desjardins attests, exists on a continuum “ranging from an overly studied and too serious investment in star mystique (Lana Turner and Bette Davis) to a superglamour which is exemplified by the sensuality of a star like Rita Hayworth, and a more natural and relaxed charm and beauty that come from wit and intelligence (Arden, Lamour, Bergman)” (29). The glamour continuum as outlined by Desjardins reflects glamour’s multivalent meanings and trajectories that range from the flamboyant glamour of the Hollywood studio system to the quiet glamour of aspiration. In this regard, the performance of glamour is often paradoxical in its desire for attention yet self-conscious in its aesthetic appeal.

As the Hollywood glamour machine gained popularity, the term “glamour” came to be associated more commonly with women and with a certain type of feminine allure as expressed through Marlene Dietrich’s various husky-voiced seductresses or the cool chic elegance of Greta Garbo (Dyhouse 10). Elspeth Brown points out that during the Hollywood Production Code era, glamour fell prey to censorship. The Catholic League of Decency tried to redefine glamour by erasing any trace of sexual appeal and immorality associated with the concept. Glamour was therefore repackaged to suit a more acceptable form of expression for American audiences. Fashion magazines worked alongside Hollywood to “clean up” glamour by giving their models a girl-next-door appeal that was “devoid of the dangerous, queer energies of a Garbo or Dietrich” (E. H. Brown 291–92). In the post Hays Code years, a brash and more garish glamour emerged and wrapped itself up in the cloak of celebrity. Pamela Church Gibson laments that “the notion of glamour has been irreparably tarnished by the contemporary lionizing of celebrity and the endless misattributions of the word *glamorous*, so that the term has become gradually stripped of meaning” (22; italics in original). Yet, as Elizabeth Wilson cautions, while glamour and celebrity are frequently tethered together, they are in fact fundamentally opposite: “Celebrity is all about

touch; glamour is untouchable” (“A Note on Glamour” 71). Glamour is also, arguably, everywhere. *Glamour* is splashed across the checkout counter on the magazine shelves at the grocery store; glamour photography is offered in portrait studios found at the local mall; glamour is the name of a popular cheap perfume available in drugstores. To be somewhat crass, glamour is an entire billion-dollar industry. Yet it would be too simple to write off glamour as a victim of the postmodern era. Consequently, one of glamour’s best parlour tricks is its ability to break down the barriers between “high” and “low” culture, thus occasionally showing its hand and opening itself up to scrutiny and critical discussion.

The discourse of glamour changes remarkably depending upon its beneficiary. For Jeanne Beker, the Toronto-based fashion personality, glamour, like fashion, is aspirational and decadent. For AA Bronson, one of the founding members of the Toronto art trio General Idea, glamour is an *agent provocateur* that seduces and corrupts. Both Beker and Bronson are regarded as luminaries of Toronto’s art, fashion and music landscape — arguably spaces where glamour resides. Their work has helped shape and articulate an idea of Toronto that attempts to go beyond “the good” moniker that has long coated the city in a dull sheen thanks to William Howland, the 25th mayor of Toronto from 1886-87, who coined the phrase “Toronto the Good” in an attempt to rid the city of all manner of vices, most prominently gambling, drugs and prostitution. Glamour’s discrepancies are particularly pronounced in two short stories from the turn of the nineteenth century that were featured in the Canadian edition of *The Delineator*, a journal of fashion, culture and fine arts, printed and published in Toronto. In Maude C. Murray’s “Mother and Son” (1895) glamour resides in the superficiality of material goods: “Wealth and position exert so powerful an influence over the world that young men and women are constantly sacrificing the real feelings of their hearts for the glamour of one or the other and are surprised

when happiness is not the result” (501). However, in “Made on Earth” (1898) by Cornelia Atwood Pratt, glamour’s expression is one of bewitchment. In order to convince Mary that the right path for her in life is to marry her sweetheart Jim and become a proper homemaker, the devout Hester advises: “We’re selfish when we’re young, and it takes some glamour to make us choose the harder life” (627).

Glamour’s history is kaleidoscopic in its shifting forms, patterns and eras. In considering glamour as a refraction, rather than a reflection, of historical moments extends the possibilities and interpretations of glamour’s expression. In researching a genealogy of glamour in Toronto, I am keenly aware of glamour’s discursive and refractive history, the glamour of the past revealing itself in traces and moments. Judith Brown employs the concept of a *moment* in her work to emphasize glamour’s ephemerality and possibilities, noting that “glamour is bound by the desire-infused moment” (82). As a shorthand, the word “moment” captures the intangibility and intimate connection that glamour wields. In this, my history of Toronto glamour unfolds in brushes, glimpses and moments.

Mapping and Meaning

In Daphne du Maurier’s famous bestseller, *Rebecca* (1938), her unnamed heroine is shocked to discover her fondness for Monte Carlo, a city she had, until recently, found tedious and charmless. Yet as she is taken on a car ride with the mysterious and debonair Mr. de Winter, she remarks that Monte Carlo suddenly had “a glamour about it that had not been before. I must have looked upon it before with dull eyes” (30). Glamour, as du Maurier’s protagonist recognizes, is complex and needs a clarity of perception, or a guide, to fully appreciate its essence. I am similarly interested in the protean texture of glamour and the discourse that has emerged in

identifying its expression in a variety of visual, literary and cultural texts and practices in or about Toronto. Or rather, my aim is to unveil Toronto's multifaceted glamour for those plagued with dull eyes.

Glamour, of course, is not so easy to pin down. It is often referred to as an "elusive concept" (E. Wilson, "A Note on Glamour" 95) or more definitively as "a formal category and an experiential site of consumer desire, fantasy, sexuality, class, and racial identity" (Brown 1). The grammar of glamour inserts itself into the rhetoric of those intangible qualities that once demand and defy definition. Glamour's complexity, or rather, its associative range of qualities complicate its meaning. For all its vivid depictions in magazines, film and art, the realm of glamour is exclusive to the broad scope of the imagination. Glamour, in this regard, is personal. I contend that ideas tied to glamour are experienced through the concept of mental mapping which is typically used in spatial research to describe feelings of fear, stress and desire. We are all in possession of a mental map that drives our experiences, relationships and emotional valences. In particular, studies of mental mapping are used to describe and qualify the urban experience.⁵ Fredric Jameson's work on cognitive mapping echoes a similar approach in our understanding of our individual experience of the city arguing that a "mental map of city space [...] can be extrapolated to that mental map of the social and global totality we all carry around in our heads in variously garbled forms" (353). These garbled forms are part of our sensory experiences, our aesthetic relationships, our glours. For Du Maurier's protagonist, "the glamour of [Monte Carlo] had gone" (43) after an unfortunate dispute with Mr. de Winter, which left her distraught.

⁵ See Matej et al., 2001; Den Besten, 2008.

Her concept of glamour in that particular moment, therefore, became a reflection of her experience of the region which had been tainted by the disagreement.

Arguably, our conceptions of glamour are often tied to experiences from the past that provide the foundation for our own glamsapes, that is, the composition of ideas, images and cultural exchanges of glamour. This notion is not to be confused by the concept of glamour zones, those spaces that Saskia Sassen identifies as “airports, top level business districts, top of the line hotels and restaurants” (Sassen). In *Modernity at Large*, Arjun Appadurai identifies and outlines five -scapes (ethnoscapes, financescapes, technoscapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes) that reimagine human communities in the era of globalization and offer a useful way to consider different global cultural flows. Moreover, Appadurai’s development of the five scapes provides a productive framework for understanding an individual’s imagined world. The fluidity of scapes and mental mapping definitely speaks to glamour’s slippery texture:

Appadurai’s theory is clearly linked to the elaboration of other postmodern concepts such as indeterminacy and fluidity. One way in which cultural geographers have represented movement through these fluid spaces and ‘scapes’ is in the use of mental maps, which represent our *relationship* to the material rather than its concrete form [...]. (Johnson et al. 115–16)

I find the notion of a “scape” practical in determining a schema for a deliberately impractical subject such as glamour especially in its relation to cities. Stephen Gundle emphasizes this symbiotic relationship in his sweeping study on the subject of glamour claiming that “in the history of glamour, cities are always important” he continues to argue that “the very idea of the modern city is bound up with wealth, power, beauty, and publicity” (*Glamour* 54). Yet as cities evolve, so too, do ideas relating to beauty, wealth and power, which makes the glamscape a fluid

concept. Incidentally, within the discourse of urban studies very few scholars mention glamour as a proponent for urban development, yet glamour is critical for cities and how they work, change and develop (Clark 15). As an illusory form, glamour's essence becomes more tangible once rendered as a scape from our mental maps. From this, the mapping of Toronto's glamscape begins.

Imaginaries and Glamsapes

The Queensway is a long stretch of road straddling the municipalities of Toronto and Mississauga. The scenery along The Queensway boast strip malls, massage parlours and low-income development projects that make it indistinct from any other North American thoroughfare. In recent years, however, the neighbourhood has formed the Queensway Business Improvement Area (BIA) designed to raise the profile of the environs by rebranding itself as an entertainment, dining and shopping destination complete with an advertisement campaign featuring flags along the lampposts with the website "shopthequeensway.com" pasted underneath. Amidst this re-branding, tucked away among the various cookie-cutter plazas, is a parlour with a black facade and a logo in large Art Deco font that displays "Salon Glamour." The sudden emergence of *glamour* on this unremarkable expanse of the city not only showcases a certain *chutzpah* but also reveals a paradox. Glamour is broadly defined by its innate ability to charm, and enchant yet glamour is not a description that has been readily applied to Toronto.

Certainly, the Toronto of the new millennium is a far cry from its previous incarnations as Muddy York, a reference to the city's lack of proper sewer and drainage systems in the mid nineteenth century and The Big Smoke, a dig at the city's desire for a large reputation with little to show for it — the proverbial "smoke and mirrors." Meanwhile, the mephitic "Hogtown"

continues to linger, as befits the moniker. According to an editorial headline in *The Globe and Mail* from June 23, 1898, the nickname was bestowed upon the city because: “In the smaller cities of the Province when a man wants to say nasty things about Toronto he calls it Hogtown” (qtd. in Bateman). Without a doubt, criticizing Toronto has been a historic point of pride for Canadians living outside the city. As legend has it, the famed occultist and writer Aleister Crowley once pronounced that “Toronto makes a Scottish fishing village on a Sunday morning look like an opium dream” (qtd. in Worth 13). Meanwhile, the protagonist of Margaret Atwood’s celebrated Toronto-based novel *Cat’s Eye* (1988) confirms Toronto’s charmless reputation in her diatribe against the city: “Once it was fashionable to say how dull it was. First prize a week in Toronto, second prize two weeks in Toronto, Toronto the Good, Toronto the Blue, where you couldn’t get wine on Sundays. Everyone who lived here said those things: provincial, self-satisfied, boring”(*Cat’s Eye* 13–14). Of course, for those familiar with Toronto and its history, this is an old yarn. In Phyllis Brett Young’s *The Torontonians*, written almost thirty years prior to the publication of Atwood’s work, the “prize” joke is used as party banter among guests. Young’s characters register the joke for what it is, a casual way to make fun of Toronto and its reputation. Nevertheless, the joke’s underlying sentiment hints at a desire to see the city framed by a different narrative lens, one that approaches the textual glamour of such notable cities as New York, London and Paris.

By the 21st century, however, Toronto experienced a renaissance of sorts. Under the banner of “Torontopia,” the city embarked upon a makeover overseen by a collective of Toronto-based artists, musicians and writers who wanted to showcase the city’s creative vitality through a fresh perspective:

Torontopia started appearing on posters, on flyers, in blogs and song titles.

What began as a sly wink in the indie music scene soon evolved into a genuine philosophy applied to larger civic engagement. Torontopia was/is about re-imagining your city, creating new models, forging new communities, building sustainable institutions, celebrating diversity. It's not foolish enough to boast of a perfect society; it relishes the imperfections, the mundane, the everyday, and in the process inspires art that could be either ephemeral or epic or both [...]. (Barclay)

Nevertheless, an undercurrent of cynicism prevailed. In an essay titled "Making a Toronto of the Imagination" for Coach House Books' inaugural *uTOpia* series, an edited collection of titles devoted to civic engagement and city pride that came out of the Torontopia movement, Bert Archer laments that Toronto is "a city that exists in no one's imagination, neither in Toronto nor in the rest of the world." He goes on to add that "Toronto is a place people live, not a place where things happen, or, at least, not where the sorts of things happen that forge a place for the city in the imagination" (220). Since the publication of this essay in 2005, Toronto has seemingly rejected the proposal that it remains an unimagined city. As a matter of fact, the city has been the recipient of countless love letters in the form of film and fiction and used as a deliberate backdrop as a site of spectacle in the same vein as Los Angeles, New York, London and Paris. More to the point, Toronto has drawn on its unique glamscape to play itself and to invite an imagining of the city on a global level.

In 2014, Toronto's gamble to shed its untrendy and prudish image paid off as Toronto's West Queen West neighbourhood received the ultimate fashionable coup by placing second in *Vogue's* "15 Coolest Neighbourhoods in the World." The magazine cited the city's "newfound

prominence — and desirability — amongst globe-trotting tastemakers” (Remsen) as a reason for entry into the hallowed halls of cool.⁶ *Vogue* singled out the neighbourhood’s artistic haunts such as The Drake and Gladstone hotels in conjunction with other notable galleries referred to as “hallmarks of hipness” that heralded the neighbourhood’s chic appeal on the global scale. By 2016, Toronto was on the tip of everyone’s tongue as writers tried to unpack the meaning behind “The 6” after Drake revealed the cover art for his album *Views from the 6* which featured the world-renowned Toronto artist sitting on top of the city’s CN Tower. Drake has no doubt been instrumental in raising Toronto’s global profile. In particular, in his role as the Global Ambassador for the *Toronto Raptors*, the city’s basketball team, Drake boosted the team’s popularity through his hugely successful *We the North* campaign which combined images of the *Raptors* in action with scenes from various Toronto neighbourhoods filled with ordinary citizens playing basketball. In 2019, the *Raptors* won their first NBA World Championship and Toronto was once again thrust into the global spotlight. In spite of Archer’s earlier protests that Toronto is a city where nothing happens, the Toronto of the new millennium is a demonstration of the ways in which a particular imagination of a city can be dynamic and fluid.

Imaginaries relate to “literary productions, notions of urban myth, memory and nostalgia in the city and its environs, or to the sociological imagination re-cast within the changing realm of new technologies and forms of communication” (Westwood et al. 1). Archer rightly notes in his essay that there are “many Torontos” (222); the city is a palimpsest that has been rewritten over many times, each layer inscribed with various interpretations of the city waiting to be told.

⁶ West Queen West was bested for the number one “coolest neighbourhood” in *Vogue*’s “Global Street Style Report” by Tokyo’s Shimokitazawa district.

In “Theorizing Toronto” (2000), Ioan Davies undertakes a reading of the city in the same vein as Italo Calvino’s *Invisible Cities* and argues for an interpretation of Toronto that is as vast and broad as the city itself:

The various theorists and creative writers who have engaged Toronto have likewise imagined different spaces: the space of perfect democracy, of a ‘global village,’ of a feminist utopia, of a bourgeois urban paradise, of the city with perfect acoustics. While Toronto is none of these, their contrary images contend in the making of the city and the structure of the city’s many forms of architecture, as well as the multiple forms of life that inhabit these structures, provide marks of these contestations, indications of competing imaginaries.

(30)

Toronto is a city made up of distinct neighbourhoods and as Davies astutely notes each is filled with different lived experiences, cultures and imaginaries. Anthony King similarly explains how urban imaginaries are integral for the development of imaginary urban identities:

‘Urban’ and its antithesis, ‘rural,’ are descriptive categories. They describe the nature and attributes of particular types of environment and settlement. To be described as urban supposedly gives some insight into a subject’s lifestyle, their habitus. Living in a city, bearing the identity of an Angelino, Berliner, New Yorker, or Delhi-wallah, confers the added value of attributes of a particular city. (8)

But what if, as Davies recognizes, the city confers many identities? Competing imaginaries? To be sure, the culturally ingrained habitus of the Torontonians is in constant flux. In this, my dissertation adopts Davies’ extensive reading of the city and uses glamour as a framework for

understanding how these competing imaginaries interrupt and interrogate the ways in which Toronto has been imaginatively projected.

My dissertation has equally benefitted from Amy Lavender Harris' work in *Imagining Toronto* (2010) by adopting her method of reading and mapping Toronto's literary genealogy to highlight and defend the lengthy history of the imagined city. Harris makes the case that Toronto is indeed a textual city, and her work seeks to interpret Toronto literature against the backdrop of the city itself. Harris writes in her introduction:

This book is predicated on a belief that rather than comparing Toronto to the world's other great literary cities and finding it wanting, we should instead realize that Toronto's literature reflects an entirely new kind of city, a city where identity emerges not from shared tradition or a long history but rather is forged out of commitment to the virtues of diversity, tolerance and cultural understanding. (14)

Harris' approach to the city reflects my interpretation of the relationship between glamour and Toronto. Whereas cities such as the aforementioned Paris, London, New York City and Los Angeles are instinctively associated with glamour in the global imagination, Toronto is constantly negotiating its glamscape and stature.

Chapter Breakdown and Methodology

My dissertation is an illumination of Toronto's lengthy and often fraught relationship with glamour. I aim to demonstrate how the city is in possession of a unique glamscape that has not been effectively studied before through an exploration and analysis of the personalities, literature, film, art and artists that have contributed to Toronto's expression of glamour. I

acknowledge Judith Squires' (1994) warning that by cherry picking certain stories from the city risks a whitewashing romanticism: "New 'urban romanticism' or new 'localisms' seek a cohesive city life, one which avoids real conflicts and fails to confront real diversity; and does so through physical enclosure and exclusion" (qtd. in Westwood et al. 6) and certainly in relation to the study of glamour — the verb to glamour or glamourize is itself an action to render something more attractive than it actually is — there is a risk of glossing over and neglecting parts of the city that do not fit into glamour's chic narrative. Nevertheless, while there is a tendency in the discourse surrounding glamour to marginalize or completely overlook the unseemly, the grotesque and yes, the gauche, this would misinterpret glamour's meaning.

Glamour in the Good, therefore, suggests a reading of glamour in Toronto that goes beyond glamour's familiar totems. In each of the chapters that follow, the focus is on a different reading of glamour through disparate art forms, people and places in the city that deploy the language of glamour and traces their contributions, and often interrelations, upon the production and expression of glamour in Toronto. I have largely confined myself to close readings of these texts and personages and have relied upon previous scholarship related to Toronto's history and theories of glamour to help inform my arguments. I have also relied upon a range of materials from films to photographs, many of which have been courtesy of the Toronto Archives, in addition to using the online archives from *The Toronto Telegram*, *The Globe and Mail*, and *The Toronto Star* for historical reference. These digital archives have often acted as my personal time machines, revealing the tempo of glamour in the city.

The first two chapters comprise an overview of Toronto's early glamour to demonstrate that a traceable history of glamour exists in Toronto. These chapters focus on traditional stalwarts of glamour such as beauty, celebrity, fashion and wealth to sketch a brief history of

glamour for the city from the mid-nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth century; however, the history presented here is by no means exhaustive. Rather, these chapters illustrate how modes of glamour are connected through various historical and iconic events, architecture and prominent personalities, both international and national, to showcase a longstanding network of glamour in Toronto. Chapter 1 “Toward an Architecture of Glamour in Toronto,” demonstrates that Toronto’s modernity has had a glamorous aspect that extends back into the nineteenth century and Chapter 2 “Toronto’s Modern Glamour Girls,” makes the case that Modern Toronto women were integral in defining expressions of glamour for the city. Ultimately, these chapters are a heuristic attempt to establish how definitions and expressions relating to glamour remain slippery in the changing course of history.

Chapter 3, “Glamour in the Margins: Reading Glamour in Toronto’s Literature,” explores the language and grammar of glamour in the city’s literature and makes the case that its expression in these texts is gendered and performative. I provide a close reading of Phyllis Brett Young’s *The Torontonians* (1960), Margaret Atwood’s *The Robber Bride* (1993) and Sheila Heti’s *How Should a Person Be?* (2010) to illustrate how glamour, to borrow Judith Brown’s terminology, emerges as a “dimension” of Canadian urban literature, specifically, a female urbane dimension of the city that spans decades and eras ranging from Toronto’s modernization period of the 1950s and 60s to the recession of the 1990s and finally to the rise of gentrification in the twenty-first century city. I use Russell Smith’s *Noise* (1998) to contrast the feminized literary glamour of the city with its hip, white, neo-bohemian male to illustrate how the modes of glamour in the city take on a different role and treatment when the main protagonist is a man. As Brown notes, “glamour not only upsets the firm lines dividing masculine from feminine but also has the photographic power to rivet the eye, stir desire, and alter memory, holding a piece of the

past continually in the present” (9). In this regard, the texts examined in this chapter propose a distinctly feminine reading of glamour for Toronto which often rely on memories from the past to reveal the underlying anxieties and desires for the developing city.

In Chapter 4, “La Ville Bohème: Unveiling the Glamour of 1960s Yorkville,” I contend that to walk down the narrow corridors of Yorkville’s winding neighbourhood streets in the 1960s was an effective performance of fashion, identity and conspicuous glamour despite the pervasive hippie imperative to shed these tokens of capitalism (Auslander 40). My research begins with a survey of Gerrard Village, Toronto’s original bohemian epicenter, and then follows the counterculture migration to Yorkville, the new “Village,” which eventually formed the headquarters for the city’s youthquake. In this chapter the myth of the bohemian, the frequently debated and illusory figure who Elizabeth Wilson argues is often equated with glamour (“Bohemian Dress and the Heroism of Everyday Life” 240), looms large. Not unlike the glamorous yet flawed characters found in Puccini’s famous opera from which this chapter’s title is borrowed, Yorkville’s youth culture participated in a performance of bohemian identity that at once embraced the glamour of rebellion but also let its members fall victim to the pitfalls of excess. I explore this tension in detail through the chapter’s concluding case study on Perception ’67, a psychedelic festival and fashion show at the University of Toronto, as well as pointing to Rochdale College, the experimental alternative co-operative living space, to reveal the limitations of the glamorous bohemian myth for Toronto’s hip youth.

Chapter 5, “Glamour on Display: Performing Glamour in Toronto,” examines the role that Toronto-based artists have played in developing and performing the discourse of glamour in the city and how their performative practice of glamour helped inform a mythology for the city. I use the performance of glamour exhibited by Yorkville hippies and artists in the previous chapter

to articulate how these expressions of glamour underscored the work of the Toronto-based art trio General Idea, whose headquarters at 78 Gerard Street, not far from the centre of Yorkville, became a meeting place for the Yorkville bohemian crowd. The work of General Idea articulated a presumption and desire for glamour in their artistic production that culminated in a treatise on glamour published in their magazine *File* in 1975. In depicting themselves as architects of glamour, General Idea attempted to reify glamour's expression in Toronto in the 1970s by drawing upon constructions of pageantry and spectacle in their work, such as in The 1971 *Miss General Idea Pageant* and *Going Thru the Motions*, despite a growing disdain for glamour during this time period. In the second part of this chapter, I turn to the work and persona of Carol Pope, the lead singer in the Toronto-based rock band, Rough Trade. I draw connections between the work of Pope and General Idea and their frequent collaborations to showcase their celebration and performance of glamour's queer aesthetic in the city. I conclude this chapter by examining the legacies of General Idea and Carol Pope's work through the art of Toronto-based artist Will Munro and his practice of what I refer to as radical glamour. Munro's work was informed by General Idea's glamour credo and Pope's unapologetic performance of glam queerness to reflect diverse bodies, cultures and sexualities in the city.

In this dissertation's concluding chapters, I make the case that Toronto's cinema envisions a glamour unique to the city. In Chapter 6, "Grotesque Glamour in Toronto Film," I provide a close reading of twentieth century Toronto films: *Outrageous!* (1977) directed by Richard Benner, *Videodrome* (1983) directed by David Cronenberg and *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing* (1987) directed by Patricia Rozema. I argue that these films perform a grotesque glamour, that is, an unlikely combination of glamour's aspirational desires and its repugnance toward the contemporary mainstream, in their depiction of the city. In Chapter 7,

“Cinephiliac Glamour in Early Twenty-first Century Toronto Film,” I study three twenty-first century Toronto films: *Bollywood/Hollywood* (2002) directed by Deepa Mehta, *Chloe* (2009) directed by Atom Egoyan and *Take this Waltz* (2012) directed by Sarah Polley. My analysis of these films engages with the concepts of beauty, wealth, celebrity and luxury as a corollary to Toronto’s perceived glamour in the millennium, — at once owing to the global celebrity of the Toronto International Film Festival and from the Torontopia ethos, — and how these totems of glamour stand in stark contrast to the grotesque glamour exhibited in earlier Toronto cinema.

One of this study’s primary concerns is to build a framework for reading glamour in Toronto. *Glamour in the Good*, therefore, explores glamour as a heuristic method for addressing the relationships that exist among literature, art, film and other various material cultures as well as understanding how personalities and historical events help to illuminate the scope of Toronto’s glamscape. The mediums that range from the textual to the cinematic and which also extend to the spaces of fashion and art, key components of the urban glamscape, emphasizes the view that Toronto is a city in which such practices of glamour are established and continue to thrive, not just in memory, but in the broader urban imaginary.

Chapter One: Toward an Architecture of Glamour in Toronto

In the 2017 *Toronto Star* article, “Putting Spotlight on City’s Glamour,” the journalist Edward Keenan establishes a connection between Toronto’s unsung architecture and the sudden spate of Toronto-centred music videos that have popped up over the course of that year from such noted Canadian artists as Drake and The Weekend. Keenan wistfully muses that “sometimes you need something like a music video to make you look at your own city with new eyes. See the *glamour* of your home” (italics added). Keenan’s article highlights the hidden beauty of the city through its intricate brutalist structures that adorn the cityscape and the untapped haunting allure of the city’s labyrinthine ravines and cul de sacs. For Keenan, the glamour of Toronto reveals itself through the aura of these celebrities who have successfully portrayed the city as an enchanted cosmopolis to complement their global appeal. The glamscape that Keenan describes is replete with modern architecture and the promise of youth. More excitingly, in singling out Drake and The Weekend, two prominent male musicians of colour, Keenan’s vision of glamour highlights the diversity of the city and its inhabitants and challenges Toronto’s deeply puritanical origins and with that the face of glamour, which tends toward the feminine and white. Yet, implicit in Keenan’s editorial is that Torontonians lack a sense of historicity when it comes to understanding the material practices of glamour they unwittingly bypass every day. My aim for this chapter, therefore, is to upend Keenan’s premise by demonstrating how Toronto has actively capitalized upon and engaged with an architecture of glamour from its early beginnings.

This chapter begins by drawing upon Keenan’s claim that Torontonians have historically only valued the innate glamour of their city once “globally celebrated artists [show] a look at the city that maybe has a more global appeal, a more jet-set aesthetic” (Keenan, “Video Images of Local Haunts Help You See the Glamour of Home”). While Keenan was referring to the twenty-

first century popular artists who have glamorized Toronto's contemporary urban landscape, his observation that when the city is internationally recognized by artists and celebrities who are "glamorizing the [Toronto-based] elements of their lives," the upshot is that others begin to see the city as "a place worth celebrating and appreciating" and while under-recognized and certainly not part of its contemporary imaginary, this sentiment is almost as old as the city itself.

Upon declaring nothing but his genius upon his arrival at the port of New York in 1882, Oscar Wilde set off on a sensational tour of North America to promote the British Aesthetic Movement. Wilde made a highly publicized visit to Toronto and gave two lectures to packed Toronto audiences. Wilde's visit not only made a significant impression in the Canadian press, but also bolstered Toronto's nascent undertaking of glamour's expression as a cultural corollary for the developing city's aesthetic tastes and values. While in Toronto, Wilde was introduced to Henry Pellatt Junior, the doomed financier and owner of Toronto's famous castle, Casa Loma. This section of the chapter focuses on Casa Loma as an example of Toronto's developing relationship with glamour as a negotiation between excess and success. The tension between these two poles is further explored in the final section of this chapter which focuses on how the Eaton's department store in Toronto in the early twentieth century and the construction of the Eaton's College Street store in 1930 used and capitalized on the language and aesthetic of glamour to support a modern vision for Toronto on an international scale. I conclude by comparing the glamour of the Eaton's department store to the grandeur of the now defunct Toronto Arcade, Toronto's first shopping mall, to illustrate how the expansion of shops and shopping was often driven by the desires and the habits of ordinary Torontonians in pursuit of a moment of glamour typically reserved for Toronto's upper-class society.

One of the main themes of this chapter and the following chapter is the formation and development of Toronto's modernity from the late-nineteenth to the early twentieth century. Many of the rapid changes in the city were marked by the arrival of new and changing tastes and styles which were often influenced by fashion and designs from the United Kingdom, continental Europe and the United States, and Torontonians were eager to contribute their own ideas to this dynamic aesthetic landscape. At this point in time, Toronto, while an important economic stronghold for Ontario, had yet to be recognized as the country's leading intellectual, cultural, industrial and political capital. This honour was plainly reserved for Montreal which was regarded as the most important and arguably most glamorous city in Canada (Myzelev 3–6).

What follows in this chapter is an examination of four moments in Toronto's early history which I identify as having informed and elevated the city's glamorous stature and position in the country. As discussed in this dissertation's introduction, the concept of a moment is indescribably linked to glamour in its sense of intangibility and ephemerality, and looking to certain moments throughout history can inspire; as Walter Benjamin wrote in *The Arcades Project*, "To discover in the analysis of the small individual moments the crystal of the total event" (461 N2,6). Looking at these individual moments in Toronto's early history crystalizes the various strands which have helped to illuminate the city's tight network of glamour and urbanity. These cultural entanglements of glamour have had, as these two chapters propose, long lasting effects for an imaginary of the city as contemporary and connected to larger global tendencies.

Glamour in the Wilde

In 1882, Oscar Wilde visited Toronto at the of age 28 as part of his North American tour for his lecture on the “Aesthetic Movement,” a popular philosophy in the late nineteenth century with its *cri de coeur* of “l’art pour l’art” or “art for art’s sake,” which championed artistic freedom and shunned artistic criticism based on moral objections. According to Judith Brown, Wilde “most perfectly signifies a turn toward glamour as a powerful new aesthetic” (7) and his expression of glamour had profound implications for Toronto’s elite society.⁷ In *Our Aesthetic Categories* (2012) Sianne Ngai makes the case that everyday mundane words such as cute, zany, and interesting are aesthetic categories that may not necessarily reflect the cathartic awe of the sublime or the pleasurable rewards of beauty but help to explain the resulting affect from minor aesthetic experiences. As an aesthetic category, glamour inspires an aspirational affect. At its most thoughtful, calling something or someone glamorous is often an expression of quiet yearning and desire for the untouchable and exclusive yet more often than not, the word glamour is often a placeholder for celebrity or fashionable figures. In considering Wilde’s “turn toward glamour” as a “powerful aesthetic” and what this means for Toronto’s cultural development one

⁷ In “Tea in Toronto and the Liberal Order, 1880-1914,” Keith Walden is mindful about pointing out that the term *society* is notoriously fraught. He notes that while ‘society’ may share the same values as the ‘upper class’ they did not necessarily share their wealthy lifestyle. For the purposes of this chapter, I use the phrase “elite society” to denote those Torontonians who represented “an aggregate of leisured, cultured, or fashionable persons regarded as forming a distinct class or body” (Jacob’s qtd. in Walden, “Tea in Toronto and the Liberal Order, 1880–1914” 2) Many of these elite Torontonians would be considered successful pillars of society, such as government officials, military officers, and other professionals and high-ranking citizens who would traditionally hold leadership positions in the city (Walden 2-3).

must recognize that by the late nineteenth century, Toronto's elite society were keen to leverage the growing influence of celebrity culture to their advantage.⁸

Elite Torontonians were discovering that their influence and fashionable aura had dimmed considerably as the newspapers and press began to pay more attention to the growing realm of entertainment. Suddenly theatre actors in the city were recognized as influential figures, which gave much of Toronto society pause as the members of this elite society had always seen themselves as the authorities on what was considered good taste. More to the point, Toronto society did not want attention to be taken away from their attractive lives.⁹ As the theatre world was beginning to find increasing respectability, Toronto's high society needed to search for various avenues to maintain their status as the bearers of prestige and glamour. Enter Wilde. Through his lectures to elite Toronto audiences on beautification, art and design, Toronto's *beau monde* could reinforce their aesthetic dominance, which they feared was beginning to dim in favour of the glamour of the theatre.

Wilde became involved in the Aesthetic Movement while at Oxford University, where he developed a reputation for his flamboyant clothes, unmatched wit and extravagant lifestyle. By the early 1880s, Wilde had already gained a substantial following through his poetry and outlandish persona and was recognized as one of the leaders of the new Movement. To be sure,

⁸ Pamela Church-Gibson, however, argues that Wilde was welcome into salons predominantly for his wit and talent rather than for his celebrity status (168) and it should be noted that at the time of his North American tour he had yet to write the masterpieces that would have catapulted him to the world's stage.

⁹ For more information on early celebrity and society in Toronto see Keith Walden's "Toronto Society's Response to Celebrity Performers, 1887-1914." In this 2008 article he writes about the importance of Toronto's *Saturday Night* magazine, founded in 1887, and how the coverage in the magazine on the city's theatrical musical scene exacerbated tensions between Toronto's elite society and this new burgeoning celebrity scene.

both the Movement and Wilde were admired and scorned in equal measure. Critics argued that the Movement promoted self-indulgence, and Wilde's extravagant comportment was ridiculed in the press and the English satirical magazine *Punch*. In 1881, Gilbert and Sullivan wrote the operetta, *Patience*, as a satire of the Aesthetic Movement. The operetta featured a character named Bunthorne, who many audience members thought strongly resembled Wilde with his indulgence for beauty and effeminate nature.¹⁰ It was in fact the famed theatre producer of the operetta, Richard D'Oyly Carte, who convinced Wilde to tour North America not only to provide additional publicity for the show but also to provide a series of lectures on the philosophy of Aesthetics to help North American audiences better understand what Gilbert and Sullivan were satirizing (Hammill 72). D'Oyly Carte's and Wilde's gamble paid off, as tickets for his lectures were immediately sold out in over 100 cities and towns. At each one of his stops, he gave one or more of the same three lectures: "The English Renaissance," "The Decorative Arts" and "The House Beautiful."

The fanfare heralding Wilde's arrival in Toronto was captured by the newspapers of the day including *The Globe*, *The Toronto Mail and News*.¹¹ All were trying to make sense of the zeitgeist surrounding Britain's famous dandy. On February 7th, 1882, the city news section of *The Globe* announced:

¹⁰ There is still some debate about who the precise target of satire in *Patience* is. Many theories range from the American-English painter James McNeill Whistler to the English poet Charles Swinburne.

¹¹ In 1936, *The Globe* merged with *The Mail and Empire* (itself, formerly *The Toronto Mail* which had merged with *The Toronto Empire*) to form *The Globe and Mail*. The *News* was purchased and rebranded as *The Toronto Times* in March 1919; however, by September of that year the newspaper folded as it could not keep up with the competition from the six other Toronto dailies. While the *News* may not be as familiar to many as *The Globe and Mail*, its legacy lives on in the working-class ethos of *Toronto Daily Star* (previously known as *The Evening Star*). After a lockout from the *News* over labour disputes in 1892, many of their workers found employment with the *Star*.

Oscar Wilde, the Prince of aesthetes, is to pay a visit to Toronto soon. Let all love-sick maidens take time by the forelock, getting themselves garments bedight with rose and lily; and let conservatory proprietors set at once to work raising sunflowers. The Harvard students walked in sunflower laden at a lecture given by the aesthete a night or two ago, and surely Toronto students will do no less when he comes here. Therefore, let the sunflowers be made ready; and even young maidens might earn a smile by providing a few bunches of lilies. It will be a great opportunity. (“City News”)

The tone of many of these publications leading up to his arrival were evocative of Gilbert and Sullivan’s mockery of the Aesthetic Movement in *Patience*. Toronto-based author and local historian Greg Gatenby suggests that because some social circles in London found Wilde to be entirely ridiculous, then Torontonians, of whom many were still British in origin, would reason that “if London thought him laughable, well, we here in Toronto could be just as up-to-date as London and would also find him silly” (Gatenby). Of course, conversely, many Torontonians would have wanted to emulate the progressive and sophisticated values of those Londoners who followed Wilde’s aesthetic practice. In this regard, the florid, tongue-in-cheek prose of the editorial and subtle pot shots at Wilde’s signature sunflower accessory did not dampen the spirit related to Wilde’s arrival.

On the morning of May 24th, Wilde was met at Grand Trunk Station on Front Street by one of Toronto’s official delegates and taken to the private box of his host, the Lieutenant Governor John Beverly Robinson, at City Stadium to watch a lacrosse match between Toronto’s team and the St. Regis Indians from the Cornwall Reservation. According to Gatenby, Wilde was used to having just one or two people greet him upon arrival in a new place, but at the train station he

found himself surrounded by Toronto's large Irish population, who were familiar with the political poetry of Wilde's mother, Speranza, and were "determined to show Oscar that Toronto was special" (Gatenby). Wilde had arrived on Victoria Day, which ensured that the stadium was full of revelers, who "craned their neck for a view of Wilde, who was wearing his black western sombrero" (Gatenby). All in all, Wilde appeared to enjoy himself and made a point of telling the *Toronto Globe* that he was very taken by the game. This note of approval was perhaps part of a charm offensive over his perceived poor manners the night before in Belleville, where he had arrived over an hour late without apology.

That first evening in Toronto, he gave his talk on the decorative arts at the long since torn down Grand Opera House located at 11 Adelaide Street West.¹² His discussion was advertised as "the practical application of the principles of the Aesthetic Theory to Exterior and Interior House Decoration, with observations upon Dress and Personal Ornaments" (Morris Jr. 174). According to a special dispatch to the *Chicago Tribune* every seat in the theatre was taken and "seldom held such an aristocratic audience" ("Oscar Wilde in Toronto" 6). It is not immediately clear whether this was a subtle dig at Toronto audiences and their taste culture or at Wilde, who in this dispatch was referred to as "the apostle of aestheticism" in a perhaps not entirely reverential manner. *The Globe* authenticated the *Tribune's* description of the spectators by commenting upon the Opera

¹² In "Toronto Society's Response to Celebrity Performers, 1887-1914," Keith Walden explains how the development of theatre houses in Toronto was a hallmark of the city's increasing urbanization: "In 1850, [Toronto] had a single purpose-built playhouse, seating seven hundred. A quarter century later, it had three, with a combined capacity of over four thousand people. By the end of the Edwardian era, the Grand Opera House, the Majestic, the Princess, the Royal Alexandra, and Massey Hall were all offering live performances, as were sundry vaudeville and burlesque establishments" (377). In 2020, the only theatres that still remain are the Royal Alexandra and Massey Hall. The Princess of Wales Theatre, which opened in 1993, is ostensibly named after Princess Diana, who had given consent to use her name, but the name, too, is an homage to The Princess Theatre, whose doors closed in 1931.

House's "select audience" most of whom were likely invited at the behest of the Lieutenant Governor, the very top of Toronto's elite society (Walden, "Toronto Society's Response to Celebrity Performers, 1887–1914" 375). This type of an invitation would have provided Toronto's elite society with a platform to perform their social supremacy and to demonstrate their sophisticated aesthetic tastes. Moreover, in inviting Wilde, elite Torontonians were effectively exercising their aesthetic hegemony by affirming his suitability for Toronto society (Walden, "Toronto Society's Response to Celebrity Performers, 1887–1914" 380–81).

A year before Wilde's visit to Toronto, one of the most famous actresses in the world, and Wilde's friend and muse, Sarah Bernhardt, was on her own North American tour and she gave two performances, a matinee and evening presentation, at Toronto's Grand Opera House on March 19, 1881. The management at the Opera House anticipated strong ticket sales since Bernhardt was a popular celebrity and tales of her lurid personal life had elevated her glamorous persona in the public consciousness. However, sales for her shows were remarkably low in Toronto partially due to high ticket prices and a growing condemnation over her moral character. The assistant rector, William Stephen Rainsford, of the St. James Cathedral, the city's oldest Anglican Church dating back to the establishment of the York parish in 1797, wrote a letter to the *Mail* decrying Bernhardt's impending visit by pleading with his fellow worshippers that "moral considerations alone should keep fathers and mothers away" (qtd. in Bradburn) from watching her performance. Nevertheless, in "Sarah Bernhardt's Visits to Canada," historians John Hare and Ramon Hathorn suggest that one possibility for the lacklustre sales for her performance in Toronto was simply because Toronto audiences could not understand her French and thus would not enjoy the performance. As Toronto audiences helped to sell out Wilde's lectures a year after Bernhardt's visit, Hare and Hathorn's suggestion regarding Bernhardt's

French being an audience deterrent appears more credible than their other proposition that Toronto audiences were just not “theatrically-oriented” (Hare and Hathorn).¹³ Indeed, Kevin O’Brien provides a comprehensive overview of Wilde’s visit in *Oscar Wilde in Canada* (1982) and trains a gimlet-eye on the upper-class make-up of the audience:

Wilde’s lecture at the Grand Opera House in the evening was advertised for 8:00 p.m., and the largest audience of the season filled with ‘the best people of Toronto’ awaited him. The majority of the audience was female, one whole front row being taken by the pupils of a ladies’ college. The well-dressed audience included many women in various degrees of Aesthetic attire. The whole main floor (over a thousand seats) was reserved and filled to capacity. The balcony had a few empty seats, as well as a few empty heads who enjoyed themselves whistling snatches of *Patience* while awaiting Wilde’s arrival.

(106)

O’Brien’s tiny dig at the audience members mindlessly whistling songs from Gilbert and Sullivan’s operetta *Patience* nevertheless underscores Wilde’s broad appeal. Faye Hammill argues in *Sophistication: A Literary and Cultural History* (2010) that “the popularity of Oscar Wilde in America reveals the transatlantic appeal of the spectacle of aestheticism and dandyism” (72). Hammill argues that Wilde’s arrival in America offered a space for Americans to exhibit a performance of sophistication that suggested a certain social elitism “since cultural knowledge, refinement and urbanity could be used to demonstrate not only their separation from the

¹³ It is worth noting that Wilde often gave credit to Bernhardt for encouraging him to undertake the North American tour (Marcus 1018). He even claimed that he only agreed to don an oilskin costume at Niagara Falls “only when he was informed that such a great artist as Mdlle Sarah Bernhardt had [also] worn a dress of that kind” (qtd. in Marcus 1018).

burgeoning middle classes but also their equality with the European upper crust” (72).

Sophistication and glamour plainly share many similar traits although Hammill is quick to point out that “The word ‘sophistication’ undoubtedly has a much longer and more etymologically complex history than ‘glamour’; I would also argue that the idea of sophistication as a desirable quality goes back a little further than the idea of glamour” (19-20). To be sure, sophistication’s etymological roots date back to ancient Greek with the term sophistry, a disparaging term used to describe a method of argument meant for deceiving others. Meanwhile, glamour’s introduction into the English language through Scott’s poetry in the eighteenth century makes it the younger of the two. While scholars such as Gundle and Brown regard glamour as a wholly modern phenomenon, the non-tangible elements of glamour such as allure, desire and longing have long been translated through various aesthetic and expressive forms. Hammill is right not to collapse sophistication and glamour together as these qualities serve different purposes, however, they may — and often do — work in tandem. In this regard, elite Toronto audiences, much like their American counterparts, used Wilde’s platform to perform their sophistication as well as using his visit to exhibit a familiarity with glamour’s familiar accoutrements of fashion and beauty.

Wilde approached the topic of his lectures with a sincerity that the newspapers noted did not necessarily correlate with his flamboyant appearance. However, in a *Globe* article from May 25, 1882, the detailed analysis of his clothes betrays a reverence for his public display of fashion:

He was dressed in a grey tweed pair of trousers and cobweb-coloured
velveteen coat and vest; his necktie was a dark green in colour, tied loosely
around his neck, and covering his shirt front. He wore a handkerchief to match.
He had a flowing coat, with a deep velvet collar, and secured to his form by a
tessellated cord, which passed across his chest. He wore a black felt hat of

unusual proportions. The earnest or intense expression of his almost feminine face, his long flowing hair, and his tall, handsome figure, and graceful movements gave him a striking appearance, producing immediately a favourable impression. ("Oscar Wilde")

The detailed description of his outfit suggests that his appearance may have been considered vastly different than the average Canadian gentleman, who typically "wore the kind of garments which either financial necessity or personal preferences dictated" (Collard 60). Canadian dress historian, Eileen Collard argues that most Canadian men dressed to "suit their own convenience" (64), although "for special occasions waistcoats made of brocades, silks, velvets and fancy cloths appear to have had a certain popularity during the last quarter of the 19th century" (64).¹⁴ Wilde's lecture content and noted sartorial choices suggest that late nineteenth-century Toronto audiences were eager to engage in discourses on fashion, style, and luxury and to learn more about the Aesthetic Movement, which, according to Elizabeth Wilson, "was a later reaction to the need for beauty and the search for glamour" (*Cultural Passions* 69). The uncomfortable reality is that glamour remains a search for some and a reality for those with the right combination of power and wealth. Toronto was one of the few Canadian cities that brought in large crowds for Wilde's lectures. Lectures in Kingston and Ottawa were poorly attended, and the *Ottawa Citizen* pointedly dismissed his ideas as impractical for the average Ottawa resident. Of course, the criticisms from the *Ottawa Citizen* regarding Wilde's more elitist notions are not

¹⁴ I came across a small article in the *Toronto Daily Star* on August 16, 1926 that caught my eye detailing the latest fashions coming out of New York City. The journalist, Aileen Lamont, excitedly writes that "Velvets seem destined to be utilized in nearly all kinds of costumes for fall. Black and navy blue are generally being chosen for day wear, while the reds and browns and turquoise blues appear in the evening costumes. Green and grey is a favorable combination" (Lamont 20). Only 44 years after his lecture tour does it appear that Wilde's fashion style became more mainstream in North America. 1/18/21 3:01:00 PM

without merit. The majority of his audiences were likely members of English-Canada's elite society, who were "formed by both birth and merit" (Vipond qtd. in Myzelev 15), and for those who had neither, Wilde's observations would not have made much of an impact.

Wilde reserved most of his praise for Toronto, which he regarded as "a bright little town." This compliment appears to have been sincere given his less admirable observations with regard to other Canadian cities and provinces. For instance, he credited Quebec with having a "noble situation, but I was sorry to see that there was so little life or spirit in it" (Morris Jr. 173). He also disapproved of Ottawa's lumber mills, which released black smoke into the sky and sawdust into the Ottawa River, lamenting "the things of nature do not really belong to us [...]. We should leave them to our children as we have received them" (Morris Jr. 171).¹⁵ In an interview given in Boston, Wilde told a reporter at *The Globe* that Canada was "distinctively a land of noble rivers." Canadian architecture, however, is damned with faint praise as Wilde comments that "The Parliament buildings at Ottawa were 'extremely beautiful in proportion and design and most delicately proportioned. Where they fail, and all the public buildings in Canada fail, is in monotony of colour. A building should please one by its colour, as do the old buildings in Venice, where lines of coloured stone are used decoratively.'" Toronto, nevertheless, is somewhat saved from Wilde's reproach. Despite noticing the city's houses "with that horrid white brick" ("Oscar Wilde"), he singles out an unnamed building at the University of Toronto as "one of the most beautiful buildings in Canada," and he reiterates his fondness for Toronto,

¹⁵ Of course, Wilde's experience in Ottawa was not entirely without import. It was in the city that he met Frances Richards, a local artist and the daughter of Albert Norton Richards, the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia. Wilde recommended her to Whistler and she later studied art in Paris. Five years later, Wilde sat for a portrait by Richards after she had moved to London and joked "What a tragic thing it is, this portrait will never grow old and I shall." This observation, noted Wilde, formed the genesis of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Morris Jr. 172).

exclaiming that “He had there ‘most interested and intellectual audiences, in no city more than in Toronto” (“Gossip By The Way”).

In highlighting Toronto’s judicious taste and aesthetic, Wilde painted a picture of a city that did not shy away from the pursuit of glamour and beauty. Wilde’s popularity in Toronto and his recognition of Toronto’s sophisticated audiences acknowledges a following and curiosity among elite Torontonians in the exultation in beauty and of the arts but also a nascent rejection of sedate formalism.¹⁶ Indeed, the lively artistic activity that was happening in large Canadian cities such as Toronto and Montreal in 1882 was due to good “economic conditions [...], and people could afford to turn to art and culture” (O’Brien 47). Magazines and newspapers kept budding aesthetes abreast of design and culture abroad: “Art news from England was a regular feature in the good papers. Educational features on home decoration and detailed descriptions of the new homes of the rich were common features in the Saturday editions” (O’Brien 48). Of course, Wilde’s presence was not welcomed by all in Toronto. The opening sentence from an article in *The Evening Telegram* begins with the tongue-in-cheek observation: “Miss Oscar Wilde seems to be a charming young lady, although her costume is rather unfeminine” (qtd. in O’Brien 107). Nevertheless, Toronto publications which had earlier disparaged Wilde’s presence and particular glamorous aesthetic later found that his ideas were beneficial for the city, such as when Wilde impressed upon his enrapt crowd his main argument: “There is nothing in life that the touch of art cannot ennoble [...] All the teaching in the world will do you no good unless you surround your workmen with beautiful things. [...] It is better to live without art than to live with

¹⁶ There is only scant scholarship referring to the “The Toronto Dandies,” an elitist order of prominent Toronto Orangemen in 1850s Toronto that perhaps suggests a propensity toward a particular glamour that separated these men from the other Orange orders made up primarily of working-class men (Houston and Smyth 108).

bad art” (Morris Jr. 171). Many newspapers conceded that “Mr. Oscar Wilde is not such a fool as he looks” and that his use of “beautiful language” could not possibly be replicated in the column of a newspaper (qtd. in Gatenby). Moreover, many of the papers which had initially derided him wrote articles that recommended having an art school in direct contact with manufacturers, although Wilde was never directly credited for this inspiration (O’Brien 107).

Wilde’s second lecture on “The House Beautiful” at the Pavilion in Allen Gardens, which focused on women’s dress and decor was a last-minute addition to his tour after successfully selling out his first lecture in Toronto. His audience was predominantly made up of women, for whom he lamented that “I did not imagine until I went into some of your simpler cities that there was so much bad work done [...] bad wallpaper horribly designed and that old offender, the horse hair sofa” (Wilde qtd. in Jones). He was by no means letting Toronto audiences off the hook for their aesthetic tastes as he admonished them, alongside his previous audiences, in his lecture on house decoration:

Your people love art but you do not sufficiently honour the handicraftsmen. Of course, those millionaires who can pillage Europe for their pleasure need have no care to encourage such; but I speak here for those whose desire for beautiful things is larger than their means. I find that one great trouble all over is that your workmen are not given to noble designs.

His appeal to those who desire the beautiful without recognizing the labour behind it speaks to the nature of glamour. Glamour’s aesthetic is meant to appear effortless yet often the mechanisms in order to achieve it are strenuous. Accordingly, after his lecture Wilde found himself in the company of a young Henry Pellatt Junior, who later earned considerable wealth from investing in the railway and the Toronto Electric Company (O’Brien 109) only to later lose

it all in his hubristic quest for glamour.¹⁷ As a cautionary tale, Pellatt certainly plays an important role in the history of Toronto's early glamour.

Casa Loma's Glamour of Excess and Regress

“I think of [Henry Pellatt] as a true Torontonians. And I think of his castle
as an integral part of Toronto.”

— T. W. (Tommy) Thompson, Metro Parks Commissioner qtd. in Frayne

Amid the long stretch of Davenport street, perched high upon a hill, stands Toronto's majestic castle, Casa Loma. To this day, tourists coming to Toronto will pay a visit to Pellatt's most lavish creation, which overlooks the city's downtown core. Casa Loma, Spanish for “Hill House,” is Toronto's one and only neo-Gothic castle and exhibits a glamour of excess and wealth to match the excesses of its creator. Pellatt's fondness for opulent glamour was modelled after the ideologies and aesthetics of the American Gilded Age. While travelling throughout the United States for business, Pellatt admired the lifestyle of New York's *nouveau riche* and from them he learned about “using architecture to showcase one's changing social circumstances” (Myzelev 44). However, when he returned to Canada, his ostentatious displays of wealth such as luxury cars, well-tailored suits and the later construction of Casa Loma, stood in stark contrast to the more modest Canadian values of the time (Myzelev 164). The architecture of Casa Loma in

¹⁷ Incidentally, while both Wilde and Pellatt exhibited glamour's gloss in the public sphere, they were both similarly publicly stripped of their glamorous veneers as a result of their private lives.

1914 was completely out of place in Toronto in its presentation of bravado, calling for some to jokingly refer to the residence as “Casa Monster” and the “new mammoth on the hill” (Myzelev 172). Alla Myzelev explains that the construction of Casa Loma has come to symbolize “the tension that existed between modernity and modernization” (19) in Toronto, as the old-world aesthetic of the castle was at odds with Pellatt’s modern vision. Pellatt’s fortunes were built on inventions of the modern age, such as starting the Toronto Electric Light Company in 1883 and within six years securing a 30-year monopoly to supply street lighting to the entire city. He also invested in the Canadian Pacific Railway, and he was part of the Toronto Electric Railway Company, which operated the city’s streetcar system (Hauch, “King of His Casa Loma Died Penniless More Photos Story Idea?”). His connection with trains and electricity suggests an affiliation with modernity and mobility and a literal and figurative delivery of Toronto to light.

The castle, however, did not reflect this modern outlook. Its large framework was meant to evoke the eighteenth-century notion of the Gothic, including its glorification of large cathedrals, castles and even its literature (Myzelev 171).¹⁸ Gothic literary theorist Maggie Kilgour points out that, “in general, the Gothic has been associated with a rebellion against a constraining neoclassical aesthetic ideal of order and unity, in order to recover a suppressed primitive and barbaric imaginative freedom” (3). Of course, the Gothic sensibility for rebellion is reinforced by glamour’s revolutionary spirit, which tends to upend respectable society (E. Wilson, *Cultural Passions* 69); this sensibility was certainly not lost on Pellatt in his extravagant construction. Pellatt’s vision of an opulent residence to entertain royalty and other visiting dignitaries demonstrated a yearning for a new standard of glamour and excess in a Canadian context despite

¹⁸ For further reading into Casa Loma’s literary antecedents see Peter Coffman’s article, “Casa Loma and the Gothic Imagination,” (2003).

resistance from those wealthy Canadians who felt it was un-Canadian to be so boastful (Skelly 11). His love of luxury and decadence was not in step with the Torontonians Protestant work ethic and austere sentiments toward excess and entertainment. Just as Wilde had observed during his visit over thirty years prior, Toronto houses continued to remain run-down and were starting to decay since there was no city control over the repair of these facades (Myzelev 162). Meanwhile Pellatt's luxurious abode not only stuck out by dint of being a castle overlooking the city, but also as Peter Coffman points out, this bold display of affluence was considered garish in the face of Canadian restraint:

At the time of the castle's completion, most of Toronto unfolded from the bottom of Casa Loma's spectacular hillside site southward toward Lake Ontario-nestled, as it were, at the castle's feet. This strong visual impression of almost feudal domination persists today, in spite of the city's subsequent northward expansion and growth of its downtown core. (8)

There was little mistake that this glamorous simulacrum of royalty was a declaration of his affection and affectation for American gilded age style expressions of boastful wealth. In fact, Pellatt was so motivated to create his own fiefdom that he appealed to Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier and the Governor General Earl Grey for the knighthood, which he was granted in 1905 and from then on he was to be only referred to as Sir Henry Pellatt (Myzelev 46). This background of excess is also firmly and consciously located in the architectural make up of Pellatt's Gothic castle (Coffman 8). According to Myzelev, Casa Loma was very similar in architecture to Strawberry Hill, the castle designed by Horace Walpole and the inspiration for his famous 1764 Gothic masterpiece *The Castle of Otranto*. Ironically, the prophecy that haunts the novel, that "the castle and lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family, whenever the

real owner should be grown too large to inhabit” (Walpole 16), befell Henry Pellatt. Through lavish spending on horses, luxury cars and extravagant dinner parties and balls known for their “inexhaustible quantities of French champagne, exotic dishes such as oyster soup, and expensive imported cigars” (Myzelev 173), Pellatt, by 1923, was nearly bankrupt. His financial situation was also affected due to the increase in living costs brought on by World War I, as a result of which the taxes on Casa Loma were raised considerably. Pellatt simply could not afford the upkeep of the premises any longer and the castle eventually became property of the City of Toronto in lieu of unpaid taxes in 1933 (Myzelev 177).

Pellatt’s downward trajectory is a reminder that glamour is a paradox: glamour is often achieved through success and wealth, and yet as Wilson observes: “Glamour is tragic; many of the most glamorous figures achieved glamour through suffering” (“A Note on Glamour” 100). While Pellatt’s extraordinary wealth meant that he did not suffer to achieve his glamorous status, it was, however, his pursuit of glamour which eventually caused his suffering. Nevertheless, his efforts arguably had some positive outcomes. As a businessman with expensive and cultured tastes, Pellatt would have been cognizant of glamour’s value in the city despite being accused of displaying unnecessary indulgence. This tension between opalescence and conservatism was debated in the newspapers and in an article in *The Globe* from December 6th, 1913 asks the critical question “Why Blame Only Sir Henry?” to suggest that this grandiose development initiative could have potential benefits for the city:

In building Casa Loma and employing hundreds of workmen Sir Henry did something more beneficial than if he had spent half a million abroad in riotous living. The Globe does not believe that he should be penalized for so spending his money. Were the land on which he has erected his castle taxed at its proper

value the castle itself might well be taxed lightly or not at all. Such a policy would encourage other rich men to build beautiful homes. (“Why Blame Only Sir Henry”)

The proposal to build beautiful homes recalls Wilde’s plea at Allen Gardens in his lecture on “The House Beautiful” to value the work of craftsmen and aim for beauty. Ostensibly, much of the resistance toward Casa Loma, and by extension Pellatt, was not so much against his extravagant lifestyle; indeed, many of the castle events were reported with enthusiasm and whimsy.¹⁹ However, as a fiscally conservative city, many Torontonians were primarily concerned with the property’s taxes. In 1913, Casa Loma had a lower property tax assessment under the municipality’s single tax law. As a result, Casa Loma, which cost about 3.5 million dollars to build (about \$70 million dollars today) was only assessed at \$100,000 for its land value and not its property value (“Single Tax and Casa Loma”). Pellatt argued that that the taxes on his property should be kept low because he would be unable to sell Casa Loma due to the size and cost of upkeep (Myzelev 173). As a journalist in *The Daily Star* noted on December 10th, 1913, “Sir Henry Pellatt has erected on his land a building that is somewhat useful, but not very useful to the community” (“Single Tax and Casa Loma”) which echoed the resentment from Toronto property owners who would have to pay full property taxes on *their* “useful” houses.²⁰ This conservative attitude toward what was considered useful to the community appeared to change

¹⁹ For examples of the coverage of some of these events see the society pages in the *Toronto Daily Star*. One tea party in particular at Casa Loma on January 22nd, 1912 was admired for its “exquisite pink begonias” and for the orchestra which “was stationed at one end and the beautiful vista had the effect of fairyland en fete.” Much attention was paid to Lady Pellatt’s “beautiful gown of grey satin embroidered with silver and gold and black velvet hat with plumes of pink shading to white” (“Tea at Casa Loma”). There is no sense in this report that there is a hint of malice over its indulgent extravagance.

²⁰ I am thankful for my partner, Jeffrey Batcher, who is a municipal property analyst for the city of Toronto, for confirming with me the breakdown and implications of these property taxes.

by 1927 when once the city began to discuss what to do with Casa Loma after Pellatt's departure in 1923. There were some musings that the building could become a pudding mill or iron foundry until one of the council members gave an impassioned entreaty that "Casa Loma is known all the world over [...] It means a great deal for the city of Toronto" ("May Run Castle On Hill As An Apartment Hotel"). No doubt, saving the integrity of the castle was a flagrant metaphoric display of Toronto's ambition for cultural hegemony in Canada and an assertion of Toronto's push toward becoming an important urban metropolis through this glamorous royal beacon.

Eventually the city arranged for the castle's keys to be handed over to the Kiwanis Club of West Toronto, a philanthropic organization, which had cared for Casa Loma since 1936 and turned the estate into a leading heritage tourist attraction, and in 2013, the Liberty Entertainment Group took over operation. In this period the castle underwent various makeovers in support of community initiatives that ranged from the charitable to the commercial. An article in the *Toronto Daily Star* on January 3, 1966 describes Casa Loma as a "swinging place" for visitors, complete with such forthcoming attractions as folk singing, theatre and "a-go-go-dancing" as part of the castle's refurbishment project. James Stothers, chairman of the Kiwanian Casa Loma Committee, pointed out that "the castle is now heavily booked on Friday and Thursday nights for school proms" and goes on to explain "There is a certain *glamor* to a castle but the main reason proms are so popular is because the students are not running into liquor problems here" ("Swinging Place: That's Casa Loma '66"; italics added)—a reference to the castle's lack of liquor license. Stothers' off the cuff remark returns to the singular glamour of the castle architecture and its ability to induce feelings of awe at its sheer grandeur. In this regard, there is a sense that Pellatt was well aware of Casa Loma's deliberate glamorous effect on Toronto and

while he was not fortunate to continue the life of glamour he envisioned for himself, his castle could provide a glamorous imaginary for the city that embraced the modern and encouraged rebellion in the face of conformity.

Present-day Casa Loma rents out its expansive glamorous facade as an event space and theatrical set for various television and film productions. In 2016, Casa Loma was used for the televised remake of *The Rocky Horror Picture: Let's Do the Time Warp Again*. The wild mix of grit, camp and glam that pervades the *Rocky Horror* universe is arguably analogous to the castle's Gothic sensibilities and pleasures of excess which fittingly underscores the film's message: "Don't dream it, be it." Like a modern-day Castle of Otranto, Casa Loma, to this day, reifies and articulates a glamour and mythology unique to Toronto that straddles the discomfort of excess and the yearning for the past and the possibility for change.²¹

²¹ According to the staff at Casa Loma, there have been ghostly sightings of Henry Pellatt and Lady Mary Pellatt, who will occasionally visit the grounds to make sure that their castle has been maintained.

Capitals of Glamour: Eaton's and The Toronto Arcade



Figure 1 Models posing at the Eaton Garden Party in 1930 Toronto. Copyright is in the public domain. City of Toronto, Fonds 1266, Item 20594

The Eaton's represented by this photograph (Fig. 1) exudes a glamour that reflects the promise of beauty and change that fashion affords. A photograph of two young models posing seductively at the Eaton Garden Party fashion show in Toronto in 1930 embraces a distinct glamour "embodied through the feminine" (Parkins, *Poiret, Dior and Schiaparelli* 87) and the fashionably elite. Having opened a chain of successful department stores across the country, the Eaton family, regarded as Canadian aristocracy and often compared to the patrician Kennedys in the United States, were bearers of glamour, much like their neighbour Henry Pellatt. Eaton's, along with

their competition Simpson's, were heralded for their elaborate fashion shows, which brought in large audiences consisting predominantly of women vying for an opportunity to catch a glimpse of the latest European couture. Eaton's even had its own film studio and "used film as a marketing tool to reinforce its underlying fashion show message of up-to-date knowledge of the latest design trends" (Palmer 126).²² Eaton's understood that the circulation of glamorous images, especially of young fashionable women, helped underscore the allure of the store for its predominantly female clientele. In the 1920s and 1930s, single working-class women with very little money to spend would still manage to purchase clothes in Toronto department stores and for the most part, Eaton's was *the* store (Srigley 93).

Eaton's strengthened its glamorous allure when in 1930, the T. Eaton Co. of Canada opened the largest retail store in the British Empire at the corner of Yonge and College streets in downtown Toronto (C. J. Wright 1). Through its Art Deco design and "classical style with a dash of modernity" (qtd. in Srigley 94), the College street store became the Eaton's flagship store and drew in crowds from abroad to gaze at the window displays and explore the sights and sounds of new merchandise. The Eaton's College location was a departure from the department store's traditional retail strategy, which typically catered to a working and middle-class clientele. This new location was outfitted to entice Toronto's fashionable elite. Nevertheless, if one was unable to afford the wares at the College Street location, they could go to the Eaton's Annex, located a few blocks northwest of Eaton's College, at the corner of Albert Street and James Street, where goods were cheaper and geared toward a lower-class clientele (Srigley 91). Despite the location's

²² Alexandra Palmer notes, however, that as the 1950s progressed, many retailers found there was less interest in original couture models due to increased production, availability and varying price ranges for couture-related designs. She argues, "though couture retained its glamour and prestige it was rapidly displaced in women's wardrobes by copies and *prêt-à-porter*" (Palmer 134).

predilection toward and elevation of finer tastes that gave the store an air of exclusivity, as Cynthia Wright argues:

For the less wealthy, walking into a department store such as Eaton's College Street may have had the excitement of walking onto a Hollywood movie set; a further allure was that all classes of people might meet there as in the lobby of a fashionable hotel. Indeed, hotels done in the modern style were a staple of the Hollywood glamour films of the 1930. (128)

Gundle, too, confirms how all classes in modern urban society were often susceptible to glamour's blend of "desirable and opulent lifestyles, spectacle, and sex appeal. [...] although they each related to it in different ways" (*Glamour* 73). This creation of momentary glamour for middle and working-class Torontonians was not out of the ordinary for the Eaton company. In 1910, the company hired Edith Macdonald, the editor of the women's page in the *Toronto Daily News*, to provide whimsical text for advertisement in the *Toronto Globe*. Her tone was canny and wry with "references to such figures as Ruskin and the poet Cowper, [which] assumed an impressive degree of cultural literacy on the part of her readers" (Haight 50). As most Torontonians in the early twentieth century were accustomed to receiving most of their information from daily newspapers, the advertisements in the *Globe* were made up to look like a Woman's Society page complete with various subsections devoted to fashion trends from New York and Paris, and decorating and design tips in a separate column called "You were inquiring?" Macdonald wrote under the *nom de plume*, "The Scribe," which maintained an air of mystery and fun for her readers, of whom she wrote that Eaton's "means not only the filling of humdrum needs, but supplies the primal glamour of shopping" ("Today is Opportunity Day"). Macdonald was writing for a predominantly female readership and she employed language later

used by many middlebrow authors with its breezy effusiveness to engage and delight middle-class readers. By the same token, for those who could not afford to shop at Eaton's, these advertisements offered a proxy access to the glamour and joy of shopping.

Eaton's had a mission to usher in the modern material world for Torontonians. In addition to their daily advertising, they began, starting in 1913, to invite well-known design dignitaries, such as Paul Poiret, Frank Alvah Parsons, and Herbert Cescinsky to provide lectures that would complement the spring and fall showcases for new trends in fashion and interior designs for that year (Haight 50-1). For Torontonians unable to attend these lectures, they were able to catch up on these innovative ideas in Macdonald's summaries for the *Globe* ads. A few years later, the construction of the Eaton auditorium in 1930 was the apotheosis of the Eaton company's vision of modern glamour for the city. When French architect Jacques Carlu was brought to Toronto to design the seven-floor auditorium at the College Street location, he provided a primary example for Canada of the Art Deco mode in both the interior and exterior of the store (Eckler 9).²³ Art Deco, as Virginia Postrel points out, is a visual and architectural style, whose glamour lies in the "promise [of] effortless progress [...], flouting form-follows-function physicality to serve psychological aspiration" (28). The Art Deco design of the College Street Eaton's interior and its new auditorium wanted to capitalize precisely on this sense of aspiration for its future shoppers. Under the auspices of teaching Torontonians about modern interior design they encouraged their customers to come to the auditorium specifically to:

²³ "In Canada in the 1920s and 1930s, many Canadian retail establishments were becoming increasingly influenced by the modern Art Deco mode yet most of these designs were primarily reflected in the exterior rather than the interior such as the Simpson's Montreal store with its Art Deco exterior constructed in 1929" (Wright 128).

Study its lighting, its colour scheme, the placing of its mirrors, its exquisite simplicity and fine proportion and you'll have gained a good idea of what the modern movement stands for when interpreted by such brilliant exponents as Jacques Carlu, the designer of the Auditorium. (From an Eaton's pamphlet, date unknown, qtd. in Wright 138).

Of course, these lessons in décor were not entirely benign; in front of the exquisitely placed mirrors was the modern furniture that they wanted to sell. However, despite their best efforts in promoting an aspirational glamour for Toronto middle-class homes, many Torontonians were not buying this type of home furnishings. Reminiscent of Pellatt's struggle against Torontonian conservatism in the face of excess, Jacques Carlu told the *Toronto Daily Star* that "some of our original intentions were too visibly in contrast with Toronto convention and we would, of necessity, have to avoid the extremes of 'modernism'" (Russell, "Eaton's College Street" qtd. in Wright 165). Yet, as Wright argues, while Torontonians still held conservative values in many facets of modern life in the 1930s, other North American cities were also losing interest in the glamour of Art Deco and the modern movement as a whole in the face of the Great Depression (165).

While the aura of the bygone Eaton's department store may be lost, (and now long gone having shut its doors as a company in 1999), its glamour radiates in the photograph of the two women at the Eaton's garden party. Brown rightly points out that "[glamour] [. . .] comes to stand in the place of the aura, signaling its death yet bearing its enchanted trace; glamour indeed becomes a twentieth-century response to the loss of both authenticity and spiritual belief" (105). The shift from aura to glamour points to "democratization, urbanization, consumerism, and the rise of leisure practices and the erosion of class boundaries" (Parkins 86). However, the Eaton's

College Street, was not interested in eroding these class boundaries. The women who could not afford the wares at College Street understood that they could always make their way to the Annex store. For many of these women, the experience of entering the Eaton's College Street was an opportunity to transcend class boundaries and indulge in a momentary glamour afforded by the space. Certainly, the present-day department store may not confer the glamour of the nineteenth-century Parisian Bon Marché, but department stores are often purveyors of urban identities and national attitudes. For instance, Macy's and Bloomingdales are indelibly linked with New York City just as Marks & Spencer is perpetually associated with London. Similarly, while many Eaton's department stores exist across Canada, the Eaton's stores in Toronto reflect a shift from the valued aesthetic tastes of Toronto's elite to a more democratized version of glamour available at an affordable price.

The Eaton's stores, however, were not the first shopping centres which catered to a fashionably diverse clientele. Built in 1883, the Toronto Arcade was at one point considered the first modern shopping mall in the city. In *Toronto: Past and Present*, writer and historian Charles Mulvany, describes how the Toronto Arcade appeared in 1884:

Among the most important public buildings of recent dates must be classed the Arcade between Yonge and Victoria Streets. The front entrance is on the former street, to the beauty of which its imposing cut-stone facade with its wide archway and Egyptian pillars in bas-relief are a valuable addition. The spacious passage-way of the Arcade is furnished with stalls, glittering with all that is most attractive to pleasure-seekers. The Arcade will be to our city as the Burlington Arcade is to London, the Palais Royal to Paris, the haunt of fashionable loungers, the bazaar whence visitors to Toronto carry away some

memento of their stay, a most commendable commercial speculation for whose success we must all wish. (58)

Mulvany's wistful musing on the Toronto Arcade faintly echoes Benjamin's famous quote from the passage in an *Illustrated Guide to Paris* written in 1852: "so that the arcade is a city, a world in miniature" (36 A1,1). For Mulvany, the essence of the city that is captured in the Toronto Arcade emulates the inherent sheen of glamour that attaches itself to cities such as London and Paris with their fashionable bodies and conspicuous displays of material goods, although many of the stores in the arcade sold their merchandise at bargain prices which would have set it apart from the College Street Eaton's department store. Unfortunately, Mulvany's desire for the long-term success of the arcade did not come to fruition. By the 1950s the building began to show major signs of deterioration, and by 1954 the building had been ravaged by two separate fires.

There is little scholarship on the Toronto Arcade and its cultural impact on the city, yet its architecture suggests that a larger cultural framework of glamour exists in the city and that informs part of the historical fabric of Toronto's urban imaginary. In this retelling, glamour reveals the tensions between traditionalism and modernity and as well as the economic disparities between the city's lower, middle and upper classes. As if in acknowledgement of the arcade's influence on Toronto's modern consumption practices, the sprawling Eaton Centre that took over much of Yonge Street between Queen and Dundas in the mid-1970s was meant to replicate the glamour of the nineteenth-century Toronto Arcade with its use of a cast iron and glass archway to bathe much of the centre in natural sunlight. Meanwhile, the building that once housed the Toronto Arcade is now a mixed used office space. Yet, at night, the building lights up in colourful LED lights, a faint reminder of the space's former glamour and glory.

Conclusion

By weaving together historical threads of the city, this chapter demonstrates that Toronto, from its early beginnings, has capitalized upon and been a place of glamour through various icons, eras and places. Indeed, Toronto's glamorous character did not perish on the front steps of the Eaton garden party like Fitzgerald's Gatsby in the pool, but rather continues to flourish through various multifaceted platforms. This chapter establishes that in the aftermath of Wilde's lectures and through the aspirational expressions of glamorous excess as exhibited by Pellatt and the Eaton's department stores resulted in favourable changes for the city as it began to engage with its burgeoning modernity.

While this chapter primarily focused on the men who helped develop the architecture of glamour in Toronto, many women in this period were also laying the foundation as labourers, consumers, and entertainers. The following chapter focuses on how Toronto women steered glamour's expansive reach in the city as it began to embrace its modernity, revealing a glamorous language particular to Toronto that has been far too long under-realized. In exploring these early moments of glamour in Toronto emphasizes glamour's plasticity as it reconfigures itself for future generations, and reading glamour into these moments demonstrates how they are constantly renegotiated over time.

Chapter Two: Toronto's Modern Glamour Girls

Jean Ford Tolmie was the first woman to win the Miss Toronto beauty pageant on August 14th 1926. The contest took place at the Sunnyside Bathing Pavilion, the landmark public pavilion by the lakefront framed by a neo-classical archway that “evoke[d] a sense of grandeur; swimming here was not simply fun, it was ennobling” (Hume, “Toronto’s out-of-Bounds Attractions”). The setting of the pageant was by no means incidental. According to local historian Charis Cotter, “the pavilion provided [...] an atmosphere of glamour and romance. With its Italianate arches and colonnades, open courtyards and upstairs terrace, the Sunnyside Pavilion brought a taste of Mediterranean ease and elegance to the shores of chilly Lake Ontario” (Cotter). The pavilion, which opened in June 1922, provided an opportunity for bathers to enjoy the beach with proper amenities such as lockers, showers, and space to have tea on the terrace. Throughout the 1920s and 30s, the Sunnyside environs, which included the pavilion, surrounding boardwalk and amusement park, saw a never-ending procession of vaudeville acts, magicians, acrobatics, dancing bears and trained seal performers. This flamboyant parade of Toronto’s early urbanity unfolded, to borrow a phrase from nineteenth-century cultural critic William Hazlitt, as an “endless phantasmagoria.” The park, in this regard, captured the vivid display of modern social metropolitan life. Gundle argues that “this visual inclusiveness [in the early modern city] constituted a vital condition of glamour” (*Glamour* 54). For early twentieth-century Torontonians, the public spectacle emboldened by Sunnyside’s sumptuous architecture and irresistible surrounding environment was a glamscape that showcased Toronto’s broader culture of leisure and pleasure.

In 1925, after two unseasonably cold summers, the park officially opened its “Sunnyside Outdoor Natatorium” although the locals affectionately called it the “tank” because of its

enormous proportions. At 300 feet by 75 feet, the “tank” could accommodate 2000 swimmers and at one point it was recognized as the largest outdoor pool in the world (Filey 78). Swimming has long been acknowledged as an archetypal modern sport due to the focus on smooth controlled movement and disciplined bodies (Day 186). As the largest swimming pool in the world, The Sunnyside Outdoor Natatorium, was a powerful symbol of the city’s modernity and glamorous allure. The vogue for poolside glamour, and with it the associated properties of luxury and wealth, conjures up images of lean fashionable bodies leisurely basking in the sun’s warm glow. The tank’s vast waters and its surrounding beach and boardwalk not only provided respite from the summer heat, but also gave Torontonians a chance to “parade like peacocks” to show off their bathing fashions and “suntanned muscles” (Sniderman qtd. in Filey 78), thus participating in a glamorous spectacle made possible by the poolside.

My reason for lingering like a bather on the lido on the subject of Sunnyside is to emphasize Toronto’s glamour in relation to its burgeoning modernity. The Sunnyside Pavilion and its encompassing amusement park continues Chapter One’s discussion of the glamorous moments that formulate an understanding of Toronto’s identity construction as a modern city. Within the urban fabric of Sunnyside resides the experience of modernity with its emphasis on flow and mobility, both physical and social. Here, tenets of glamour such as beauty, luxury and fashionably sleek bodies were presented, performed, and negotiated along the park’s boardwalk and waters. In this chapter I take us to the Sunnyside pavilion to analyze the 1926 Miss Toronto pageant as a case study on the negotiation of glamour as a fundamental property in the creation of the modern Toronto woman. I focus on the winner of the 1926 Miss Toronto pageant, Miss Jean Ford Tolmie, as a representation of the tensions between the modern and traditional Toronto urban woman, and I show how glamour, as a result, operates as a barometer of social change.

The next part of this chapter moves from the local glamour of the Toronto Modern Girl to the international glamour of one of the city's most famous and celebrated actresses and quintessential New Woman: Mary Pickford. Fittingly, the city's overwhelming devotion to Pickford resulted in her own Sunnyside moment when admirers caused a traffic jam trying to get close to her when she attended a baseball game in the park in 1938 (Filey 82). While Pickford was known as "America's Sweetheart," she never failed to praise her Toronto roots, thereby forging a connection between the glamorous Hollywood star and the city where she was born. The last section of this chapter makes a connection between the Toronto Modern Girl and the rise of the Glitter Girls, the name given to Toronto's socialites of the 1980s and 90s, and how through their charity work they, like the Modern Girls before them, purposely associated a distinct glamour with the city.

Glamour's Pageantry: Miss Toronto

"My dad didn't like the idea I was doing it. It was very frivolous and he was not into girls that thought anything about glamour. He didn't like me to look in mirrors or anything like that"

(qtd. in Karstens-Smith, "Miss Toronto").

– Sheila Courrier, 3rd place winner in the 1953 Miss Toronto Pageant



First Miss Toronto contest Sunnyside 1926 Jean Ford Tolmie (in white) was winner #1028J
 City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, f1244_jt1028j

Figure 2 The First Miss Toronto Contest at Sunnyside in 1926. Jean Ford Tolmie, the winner, is second from the left. Copyright is in the public domain. City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 1028J

Toronto embraced a particular feminized glamour through the persona of Jean Ford Tolmie, the winner of the first Miss Toronto pageant. Tolmie, in this regard, came to represent traditional Toronto's capitulation to the rising global glamour of the Modern Girl. The Modern Girl is frequently represented by the flapper, the enduring popular cultural icon from the 1920s, with her bobbed hair and untailored shift dresses that allowed her to dance freely to the fresh sounds of jazz music, the soundtrack for unencumbered young adults. This carefree image of the Modern Girl adorned countless advertisements and took up much space in the public imagination. By the middle of 1919, *Macleans*, Canada's popular news magazine, replaced their covers, which had previously featured soldiers and generals, with colourful covers depicting young women with

freshly rouged cheeks and short hair dressed in outfits with plunging necklines. The impression of the Modern Girl with her impossibly long and lean limbs suggested an ideal body and surface to match the ideal skyscraper and car with its push toward the linearity of modernity. Anne Anlin Cheng argues that in the early twentieth-century these “flirtations” with surface “led to profound engagements with the reimaginings of the relationship between interiority and exteriority, between essence and covering” (Cheng 11). In this, the Modern Girl was simultaneously deployed as a sign of the glamour of modernity and progress, but she was also a symbolic threat toward the traditional family structure as her supposed unruly behavior, such as drinking, smoking and overt sexuality, was salacious fodder for newspaper articles.

Carol Dyhouse makes the argument that the Modern Girl “presaged the impact of the screen sirens and glamour icons of the 1930s” (Dyhouse), thus making her glamour as distinct as the period she found herself in. In recent years, many scholars have turned their attention to examine the role the Modern Girl played in the commodity culture of modernity as well as her rise as a global, and often commercial, phenomenon who challenged prevailing notions of femininity. The Modern Girl Around the World Research Group based at the University of Washington demonstrated that the Modern Girl was a heuristic category that offers new insights into how women’s bodies and consumption habits were shaped by nation-building efforts that were often steeped in racial and class inequality.²⁴ Nevertheless, as Christina Ann Burr (2017) astutely points out, despite more attention paid to the Modern Girl as a global sensation, there is still little scholarship that explores the Modern Girl in a Canadian context, let alone, the Modern Toronto Girl as adjunct to the city’s modernity. Burr cites Carolyn Strange’s *Toronto’s Girl*

²⁴ In 2008, the research group published their findings in their edited collection *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*.

Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880-1930 (1995), as an important text that sheds light on the plight of the working woman and the regulations on women's lives during this period; however, she laments there is too much focus on the "peril" and less on the "pleasures" for the modern woman in the city (Burr 117). In *The Modern Girl: Feminine Modernities, the Body, and Commodities in the 1920s* (2015), Jane Nicolas argues that the ubiquitous image of the Modern Girl was integral to Canadian consumer culture yet she is continually dismissed as insignificant in nationalist discourses. Many of the essays in *Consuming Modernity: Gendered Behaviour and Consumerism Before the Baby Boom* (2017) attempt to tie modern Canadian feminine identity to the rise in consumption practices among women across the nation yet there is little focus on the modern girl's position as an important part of the urban fabric of modernity. Literary historian Victoria Kuttainen has endeavoured to trace the figure of the Canadian Modern Girl through various magazines across the country only to conclude that "her place and image in relation to the project of national literature remains blurry at best" (Kuttainen). The challenge, therefore, in writing about the modern Toronto woman is the recognition that the subject has been unfairly and routinely relegated as a mere "blip" in history (Burr 117) and that all too often modernist studies have tended to ignore settler colonies like Canada in broader discussions of modernity and nationalist discourse (Kuttainen). My aim in focusing on the The Miss Toronto pageant of 1926 is to argue that the contest and its location at the Sunnyside Pavilion cautiously negotiated the role of the Modern Girl in post-WWI Toronto and to show how glamour played an integral role in articulating the city's modernity.

Gundle addresses the glamorous appeal of the pageant spectacle, especially in the early twentieth century, by noting that "women and girls who entered beauty pageants usually aspired to fame and success; they had absorbed Hollywood's 'me too' message, which encouraged the

belief that anyone can make it” (Gundle, *Hollywood Glamour and Mass Consumption in Postwar Italy* 105).²⁵ Of course, the glamour exhibited in Gundle’s assessment reflects a particularly American model of glamour. Indeed, “America had the glamour of modernity,” notes writer Alice Spawls with its grandiose display of “automobiles, cocktails and beauty” (Spawls). Spawls paraphrases Aldous Huxley’s amazement over the rise of the American capitalist machine as an industry of “soaps, skin-foods, lotions, hair-preservers and hair removers, powders, paints, pastes and pills,” which he wrote about in *Vogue* in the early 1920s.²⁶ Torontonians in the 1920s were certainly not immune to the cultural influences of their neighbours to the south; nevertheless, they did not passively absorb the prescribed glamour of American modernity. On the whole, Canadians were wary of cultural pastimes from the States and regarded American entertainment such as jazz and movies to be a corrupting influence on their youth. Beauty pageants were met with a similar distrust by Canadians, yet by the 1920s, with the advent of American beauty products flooding the market, many of these types of contests began to find an audience on Canadian stages (Nicholas 143–44).

In 1923, two years after the first Miss America contest in Atlantic City in 1921, Winnifred Blair from Saint John, New Brunswick was crowned the first Miss Canada at the Montreal Winter Carnival. Through these pageants, organizers wished to promote a vision of traditional Canadian womanhood by focusing on the athleticism, knowledge and moral character

²⁵ In the twenty-first century, the phrase “me too” was no longer a symbol of the American Dream but rather a rallying cry for women to empower each other to speak up and create a community against sexual harassment. The movement was started by sexual harassment survivor and activist Tanara Burke in 2006 and then was later popularized on social media with the “#metoo” campaign, which was led by many prominent actresses in the wake of the Harvey Weinstein sexual abuse allegations in 2017.

²⁶ In 1922, under the editorship of Dorothy Todd, British *Vogue* attempted to redefine itself as a modernist cultural journal. They employed contributors such as Huxley, Virginia Woolf, Vita Sackville-West, Wyndam Lewis, and Gertrude Stein to give the magazine a more avant-garde flavour. Unfortunately, the readership did not approve of this new editorial direction and Todd was fired in 1926 (Fisher).

of their contestants. Blair was often photographed with her skates to fit in with the “Northern image of Canada” (Nicholas 154) and to stand as a symbol of “typical Canadian womanhood” (Gentile). This representation of the wholesome Canadian woman was meant to stand in stark contrast to the image of the wanton American flapper, who threatened to undermine the behaviour of “good” Canadian girls with her drinking, smoking, and brazen sexuality (Nicholas 152). As a distinctly American invention, the flapper also raised nationalist concerns over the increasing commercial influence from south of the border. Jane Nicholas argues that the flapper was regarded by many Canadians as challenging traditional family values. In particular, her independence and wayward lifestyle was a threat to motherhood and her role in producing the future generation of Canadians (191). The perceived threat to the moral character of Canada’s women was not entirely unfounded; by the 1920s there was an increasing panic among Canadians that the rise of cities would fundamentally change traditional Canadian society.

In 1921 the Canada Yearbook proudly announced that both Toronto and Montreal boasted over half a million people. Of the many Canadians moving into urban centres were young women lured by the promise of independence, career opportunities, and the chance to take part in modern amusements not afforded to them back home, such as shopping and going on dates free from parental supervision. The greater visibility of young women in the city reflected the changing nature of Canadian cities and of Canadian traditional values. As Nicholas argues, “concerns about immigration, concerns about urbanization, concerns about cosmetics, concerns about moral character — it was all pushed down onto her body” (“How the Modern Flapper Gal of the 1920s Spurred Moral Panic in Canada”). No longer were young women staying at home until marriage; they were making their way to cities far from the domestic spheres of their mothers’ generations which was an unsettling prospect for many older Canadians. This strained

dichotomy between the traditional and the modern, as well as the rural versus the urban, may be read in the photograph of the finalists for The Miss Toronto pageant of 1926 (Fig. 2). All five women are standing in a row wearing traditional wool flannel bathing suits that revealed as much of a woman's body as was considered acceptable at the time. Unlike the Miss Canada pageant, the Toronto pageant's emphasis on bathing costumes suggests a nod toward the concept of the fashionable modern urban woman rather than the nationalist sentiments of the solid Canadian matron in the wilderness (Nicholas 161).

By the 1920s, swimwear was so common in American pageant environments that they were often referred to as "Bathing Beauty Contests." Nevertheless, there was pushback from Canadian critics who saw this "parade of female flesh" as vulgar and akin to Miss America's "carnival of shamelessness" (*The Catholic Register* qtd. in Nicholas 167). Yet, as a symbol of glamour and modernity, the swimsuit straddled the divide between the flapper and the sportswoman (M. Morgan 155), and by the late 1920s, images of women with exposed bodies in sportswear such as swimsuits featuring short bobbed hair became major signifiers of the modern woman (Poiger 330). The swimsuits on stage at the Miss Toronto contest were much more revealing than the traditional suits that had been commonly worn at the turn of the century. These new swimsuits fit tightly and revealed the contours of the chest, arms and legs. Indeed, the women on the stage in these revealing costumes would have certainly been a draw to the Sunnyside Pavilion, which enhanced the performative spectacle of the competition — and this is what Sunnyside's management was hoping for. The pageant was conceived as an attempt to attract more people to "the poor man's Riviera" after Sunnyside's Attractions Manager had visited Atlantic City's pageants. After placing advertisements in various Toronto newspapers, Sunnyside's management received an enormous response from 454 hopeful applicants (Filey

94). According to Might's Greater Toronto City Directory of 1926, there were 650,005 living in Toronto,²⁷ and on the day of the Miss Toronto contest, *The Toronto Daily Star* (the *Star*) reported that over 35,000 Torontonians were in attendance.

Despite the titillating thrill of seeing young women parading on a stage in their bathing suits, an element of conservatism prevailed in the pageant regulations. To enter the Toronto contest, women had to be between the ages of 16 and 25 and have never "stood before the altar and said 'I will'" ("Over 100 Girls"). In discussing Tolmie's win, the *Star* headline emphasizes that "She has no hysterical ambitions. She intends, she says, to be married, 'some time before the end of the year'" ("Miss Toronto Plans to Wed"). In maintaining their single status, these young women were assuring the public that they were "unblemished" and that they were not taking time away from their prescribed duties as wife and mother (Nicholas 171). In this regard, in choosing Jean Ford Tolmie as Miss Toronto, the judges cautiously negotiated their vision of the modern Toronto woman:

Despite the fact that almost everything about the Miss Toronto contest in 1926 pointed towards an embrace of modernity with its direct links to popular commercial culture, when Tolmie was chosen as Miss Toronto, surprisingly, the judges picked a winner who did not embody the image of a flapper. She had dark, long hair, wore stockings that covered her entire legs, and was dressed all in white. She was chosen over the other finalists who looked much more like flappers with bobbed hair and rolled stockings. [...] Clearly despite

²⁷ According to Might's Greater Toronto City Directory, the grand total population of the Greater Toronto Area, which included Toronto's suburbs, in 1926 was 745,236 (Might Directories Ltd. 12).

the prevalence of the ‘flapper look’ judges preferred a winner who had a more traditional look. (Nicholas 172–73)

To be sure, Tolmie’s outmoded image, compared to her competitors, became a part of her enduring marketability. In *The Toronto Daily Star* on August 16, 1926 the headline blazed in bold capitalized letters: “MOTHER OF ‘MISS TORONTO’ FORBIDS GIRL TO BOB HAIR” and continues: “‘Absolutely out of place for her type of Beauty’ says Mrs. Kate Ford Tolmie — Will Permit Movie Contracts if Offers Are Made, Adds Mother” (“Mother of ‘Miss Toronto’ Forbids Girl to Bob Hair”). In keeping her locks long, unlike her Miss Toronto competitors, Tolmie eschewed the fashionable craze for bobbed hair, which was the quintessential trademark of the much-maligned flapper.

The crowning of Tolmie as the face of Miss Toronto can be read as a careful and deliberate choice on the part of the judges in their attempt to control the image of the modern Toronto woman. As Tolmie’s mother rightly pointed out, her “type of beauty” and style of hair served her well as one of the judges was quick to remark that “Miss Ford is not only beautiful, she is intelligent [...]. [A]nyone is intelligent who has enough sense to wear her hair like that!” (“Miss Toronto Plans to Wed”). The judge’s connection between Tolmie’s hairstyle and her good sense underscores the city’s obsession with women’s hair and appearance leading up to the contest. A week before the event, *The Toronto Daily Star* was giddy with anticipation over the different types of manes that were expected to feature at Sunnyside’s Pavilion: “Only five have long hair, while six have short boyish tresses.” In capital letters the paper emphasized that “MANY ARE BLONDES” (“Over 100 Girls”). In her study on Irene Castle, the early twentieth-century actress and dancer who popularized the bob haircut in 1914 through the mass circulation of her photographic image, Marlis Schweitzer explains that much of the pearl clutching over this

hairdo was because “Bobbed hair was an acceptable style for young girls and even boys, but it was hardly appropriate for a grown woman, for whom long hair was supposed to represent maturity and physical attractiveness” (Schweitzer 216). Later in the 1920s, the bob was well recognized as a global symbol of female emancipation from traditional gender norms (Leonhardt 50). In his meditation on hair as an element of the envied and sought after *It* factor, Joseph Roach muses that “hair often resists efforts to control it” (127), which means hair may only bestow the aura of *It* momentarily. Yet, while hair may resist control, hair is often used as a means of control to police bodies.²⁸ The seeming mockery by the media toward the women who have cut their “crowning glory” in favour of a “boyish cut” affirms the sense of disdain by staid Torontonians for the encroaching flapper style that had begun to influence the city’s youth.²⁹ Closely reading these newspaper columns reveals how the mix of women’s visibility, mass consumption, objectification and anxieties were all placed onto the body of the modern Toronto girl. In this I contend that the media’s focus on hair in the 1926 Miss Toronto contest was not only a reflection of the deep-seated anxieties surrounding the rise of the modern woman in the city but also how her image would reflect the city and Canada’s identity on an international stage.

As part of the prize package for winning Miss Toronto, Tolmie was guaranteed an entry into the Miss America Pageant alongside other “Misses” from across Canada, such as Miss Winnipeg and Miss Niagara Peach. However, there was one major stipulation with regard to

²⁸ There is a wealth of scholarship that has explored the various ways in which hegemonic societies have imposed colonialist aesthetics on to the hair of marginalized bodies. See Sarah Cheang (2008), Cheryl Thompson (2009) and Esther Berry (2019).

²⁹ Incidentally, the writer who was covering the pageant for the *Toronto Daily Star* did not make the connection between the doyen of the bobbed cut and the delicate poses of the contestants when noting that “Their hands trailed their hips gracefully, [in] Irene Castle fashion” (“Miss Toronto Plans to Wed”).

their entry. According to *The Toronto Daily Star*, while Canadian contestants were understandably barred from competing for the actual title of Miss America since they were not born in the States, it was, however, unclear why they were unable to fully partake in the pageant program:

The worst feature of the affair from a Canadian observer's point of view is that these girls are making appearances in all the events. The general public here does not know that they are barred and they cannot be blamed for thinking that the girls are merely being beaten by better looking girls of their own country. This last, of course, is far from being a fact. Since the Canadian girls did attend it is a matter for sincere regret that they were not given a chance to test their looks against the beauties developed under the stars and stripes. ("Canadian Girls Are Barred")

In her seminal *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture* (1998), Kathy Peiss observes that the Miss America pageant was where "physical proportions, facial beauty, and appealing personality delineated the feminine ideal" (127). Banning the Canadian contestants from participating in some of the pageant's main events was in effect preventing these Canadian women from successfully challenging this assertion of America's beauty. Moreover, the international contestants were deliberately cast as bit players in support of the main American stars. Whereas as each American "Miss" had a float to herself, the Canadian girls had to share

their float with Miss Australia and Princess America II, “the last full blooded Indian,” which only served to emphasize the colonial and hegemonic implications of the pageant spectacle.³⁰

Perhaps the Miss America pageant had a reason to be fearful of the competition from their neighbours to the north in the battle for sovereignty over female beauty. One of the members in the audience of the Miss Toronto contest Frederick G. Dietrich, from the Atlantic City pageant committee, was very enthusiastic about the crowd and contestants. In an interview with the *Star* he declared: “There are more pretty girls and prettier girls in Toronto, [...], than in most American cities.” The reporter concluded that “Beauty [...] is one of our great unexplored natural resources” (“Miss Toronto Plans to Wed”). Tolmie’s beauty was especially singled out for its uniqueness among the blondes and bobs. Her long dark hair and features stood out as ethnically ambiguous, which caused the *Star* reporter to opine that “Hers is the beauty of Chile or the Argentine rather than of the less exotic Toronto” (“Miss Toronto Plans to Wed”). Many scholars have written extensively about the unbearable whiteness of the beauty pageant industry. Jane Nicholas in particular discusses in detail how whiteness was fundamental to the institution of Miss Canada through her embodiment of the Great White North — a vision rich with untapped and natural resources.³¹ Praising Tolmie’s exceptional appearance suggests a renegotiation of the Canadian beauty paradigm to complement the city’s burgeoning modernity. As Gundle surmises, “the woman of glamour was often a foreigner who was seen to encapsulate

³⁰ Miss Niagara Peach, however, had her own float presumably because she was mistaken as an entry from Niagara Falls, New York (“Canadian Girls Are Barred”).

³¹ Toward the end of the twentieth century, the lack of cosmetic coverage for women of colour was bemoaned by the winner of the 1990 Miss Toronto pageant, Karen Johnson, who pointed out that the makeup artists at the time “did not know how to do the makeup for ethnic skin, which I found really surprising.” After they had put on her makeup she was dismayed to discover that she “looked like a peach fuzz — I was two, three times whiter than I actually was.” Eventually, Johnson ended up washing her face and doing her own makeup for the show (Karstens-Smith).

some particular spirit like French eroticism, Latin passion, or Eastern exoticism. In both cases, there was ample opportunity for the construction of dream-inducing narratives about the subject's rise from poverty, her mysterious origins, or her varied life experiences" (*Glamour* 12). In this regard, while Tolmie's image was not necessarily modern per se, her effect of placelessness and mobility afforded her a patina of modern glamour: for herself and the city.

Tolmie's glamour, or rather, the glamour of "Miss Toronto," was unequivocally tied to Toronto. Her image was used to promote fashions for various companies across Ontario that all made sure to let their customers know that "Miss Toronto" proudly wore their garments. In addition to her modeling and in-store appearances, her presence was included in a well-advertised staged performance only two months after receiving her "Miss Toronto" title. In large advertisements in *The Globe and Mail* and *The Toronto Daily Star*, Tolmie's name was granted top billing for a stage production on October 4th, 1926 at Toronto's Uptown Theatre:

Jack Arthur Presents

"Miss Toronto"

(Jean Ford Tolmie) in

"The Mannequin"

With Other Artists, and

The Aeolian Male Quartette

"The Mannequin" was a musical interlude conceived by Jack Arthur, the musical director for the Uptown Theatre, which was meant to be a prologue for the feature film, *The Midnight Sun*. In further promotion for the event, Tolmie was praised as "the greatest feminine personality of Canada" and moreover, as "Queen of the Beauties." Her presence in this performance would be accompanied by "rainbow tints, shimmering metal and entrancing melody" ("What Press Agents

Say About Coming Events”). The fanfare surrounding Tolmie’s appearance was significant when considering her performance was in support of a film starring Laura La Plante, the well-known American silent-screen actress. The similarities between La Plante’s rise to stardom and Tolmie’s nascent entry into the celebrity spotlight were remarkable and suggest that the two women were deliberately juxtaposed.

Just as Tolmie achieved fame in her white figure-hugging woolen swimsuit, La Plante first garnered attention at age 15, when she was cast as a Christie Comedy Bathing Beauty. The concept of the bathing beauty was popularized by Mark Sennett from Keystone Studios in 1914, seven years before the swimsuit competition at the first Miss America Pageant in 1921. Sennett wanted to see his actresses in fetching swimwear that “showed off their knees” as opposed to the traditional suits which hid their figures (Petersen). The popularity of the bathing beauty on screen inspired many studios to follow Sennett’s formula, such as the Christie Film Company, which was, incidentally, founded by two Canadian brothers, Al and Charles Christie. In terms of appearance, La Plante, like Tolmie, began her movie career sporting long brown hair; however, at the suggestion of the director (and later husband), William Seitzer, she began to bleach and bob her hair, which catapulted her to Hollywood celebrity (Thomas Jr.). Though Tolmie plainly stated to the *Star* that she had no ambitions for movie stardom despite winning the title of “Miss Toronto,” she had already cultivated an allure of mystique by using a different last name to obscure her true identity like many Hollywood starlets before her, such as La Plante, who added an “e” to her last name “after friends pointed out that it needed a proper feminine French ending to go with the ‘La’” (Thomas Jr.). Two days after Tolmie’s historic win as the first “Miss Toronto” on August 14th, the *Star* ran a full-length interview with her father, who admitted that he was surprised to discover that his daughter had not only entered the pageant but was also

registered under the name “Jean Ford.” Tolmie’s brother had used their mother’s maiden name, “Ford,” to enter his sister in the contest since he was confident she would win despite their father’s distaste for this type of pageantry. In retelling the story to its readers, the *Star* framed this narrative as a compelling family melodrama:

The father, A. N. Tolmie, knew nothing of the girl’s entry into the competition of the beauties until he saw her name and her picture in the papers. When on Saturday night he got the news that his daughter was the winner, the tidings had a curious effect on him. Tears welled up into his eyes. He had not approved of the contest or of his daughter’s entering it, but realizing that out of 454 Toronto maidens she had been acclaimed by five judges and by the great majority of 35,000 spectators as the most beautiful, it was but natural that the heart of the father should be full to overflowing. (“Miss Toronto’s Father Objects to Beauty Shows So Mother’s Name Used”)

Tolmie’s win was no doubt read as a feel-good story about a young woman who changes her father’s mind and wins the approval of his affections. A somewhat similar narrative plays out in *Midnight Sun*, which focuses on a young woman, played by La Plante, who must convince an older man to let her be with her true love. By having Tolmie appear before *Midnight Sun* in a musical interlude called “The Mannequin,” the model figure who Gundle suggests sparks “awe-struck fascination as though they were a new part of the aristocracy” (*Glamour* 279), subtly connects her image and narrative to a cinematic type of glamour inspired by the city.

The Toronto beauty pageants advocated a desire for a glamorous self-image, not just for women, but also for the public, who could partake in the spectacle of the pageant, all the while luxuriating in the extravagant pavilion setting that the city had provided. The Miss Toronto

pageant continued for many years, and by 1937 the competition was taken over by the Toronto Police Department Amateur Athletic Association and was conducted in conjunction with the Association's annual Police Games. The pageants began to fall into disfavour with the rise of the women's liberation movement in the 1970s, and by the early 90s there were no longer advertisers willing to sponsor the \$25,000-a-year contest, which resulted in the end of the Miss Toronto pageant in 1992 (Karstens-Smith). While the city no longer hosts these pageants, a trace of their glamour remains. On the side of The Rhino, a bar located on Queen St. in Toronto's Parkdale neighbourhood, an increasingly gentrified area in the city's west end known for its Tibetan and



Figure 3 Graffiti portrait of the 1926 Miss Toronto pageant on the side of the Rhino in Parkdale. © Kathryn Franklin

Caribbean foods and vintage fashion stores, is a graffiti portrait of the 1926 Miss Toronto pageant (Fig. 3) which was based on a photo that appeared in the newspaper (Fig. 4).³²



Figure 4 The crowning of "Miss Toronto" 1926, Jean Ford Tolmie. Copyright is in the public domain. City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 1028N.

³² Unfortunately, I have been unable to find any information about the artist or date of this mural.

The finalists, including Jean Ford Tolmie draped in her Miss Toronto sash, stand side by side on the wall awash in vibrant colours. One may argue that these painted women on the wall still remain objects to be gazed at, but their presence also hearkens back to a period in Toronto's history when the Modern Girl wielded a certain amount of social power, and that power was tied to glamour. Beauty, and by extension, its inscription onto the female body, has always been a component of glamour. Perhaps it is not coincidental that this painting appeared along the side of a bar, for in analyzing the Victorian barmaid, Peter Bailey argues that she maintained a glamorous position as the bar, similar to the stage in a theatre, provided a social distance from the rest of her patrons so that she could be desired from afar. Gundle and Castelli have critiqued Bailey's argument, suggesting that the glamour of these ubiquitous figures was in reality "very modest" and that they were regarded "at the bottom rather than the top of the glamour hierarchy" (13). No doubt, the glamour exuded from the 1926 Miss Toronto pageant was a perhaps a modest glamour, yet seeing the images of these women in the present day rendered on the side of a bar emphasizes a distinct Toronto glamour that captures the glamscape that these young women suddenly and cautiously occupied in early twentieth-century Toronto.

Mary Pickford: America's Sweetheart and Toronto's Glamour Girl

Further east from the mural of the 1926 Miss Toronto contestant is another tribute to local Toronto glamour. Stretching along University Avenue is the Hospital for Sick Children, a building made famous as the second largest pediatric hospital in the world after the Boston Children's Hospital. Yet, if one looks closely, in front of the hospital is a plaque and an accompanying bronze bust of a young woman in repose (Fig. 5) with the following description:

Born in 1893 in a house which stood near this site, Gladys Marie Smith appeared on stage in Toronto at the age of five. Her theatrical career took her

to Broadway in 1907 where she adopted the name Mary Pickford. The actress's earliest film, 'Her First Biscuits,' was released by the Biograph Company in 1909 and she soon established herself as the international cinema's first great star. Her golden curls and children's roles endeared her to millions as 'America's Sweetheart.' She was instrumental in founding and directing a major film production company and starred in over fifty feature-length films including 'Hearts Adrift,' 'Pollyanna' and 'Coquette.' For the last named film, she received the 1929 Academy Award as the year's best actress.

(Toronto heritage plaque)

The glamour of Mary Pickford was undeniable both on and off screen. During the silent era she enchanted audiences through close up shots of her face. Her expressive eyes communicated a wide emotional range and her halo of curls gleamed by the light of the camera. By 1919, at the age of 27, Pickford formed United Artists alongside other actors and directors, including her (soon to be) husband Douglas Fairbanks, Charlie Chaplin and D.W. Griffith. United Artists was the first major independent production company controlled by artists with the express mandate to ensure creative autonomy over the



Figure 5 Mary Pickford bust and plaque outside of the Hospital for Sick Children on University Avenue. © Kathryn Franklin.

production and distribution of their films. Her stardom escalated further after she and Fairbanks married and thus formed Hollywood's first celebrity couple; they combined their names to form "Pickfair" long before the celebrity portmanteau fashioning of "Brangelina" to describe the union of Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt and "Bennifer" for Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez (Church-Gibson 56).

While Pickford was referred to as "America's Sweetheart," she maintained that she was a proud Canadian and told a group of reporters when she and Fairbanks had come back to visit Toronto in 1924 that she "boast[s] of it. After the showing our boys made in the war! [...] Canada has helped my success too. I love Canada very much and I love especially Toronto" (qtd. in Brait). Establishing a plaque and bust in Pickford's image in the middle of one of Toronto's busiest intersections monumentalizes and aestheticizes her glamorous Hollywood experience and negotiates a space for the commemoration of one of the city's most glamorous icons. Moreover, commemorating Pickford's childhood home sentimentalizes and mythologizes this particular era in Toronto's history. To be sure, Pickford's biographer, Eileen Whitfield paints an idyllic picture of Pickford's childhood neighbourhood:

Homes were allowed on the east side only, giving families like the Smiths a view of rows of flowering chestnuts, specially brought from the United States and the first such trees to appear in Toronto. They shaded the sidewalks and grassy boulevards, scattering petals, nuts, and leaves. Maple trees were also in view, turning a deep, brilliant red in the autumn. In spring there were intoxicating lilacs. (10)

Whitfield's florid account of Toronto's bucolic beauty at the turn of the century evokes a fairy tale-like vision for the city. Indeed, her depiction seems to contradict the less charming portrayal

of the city as “Hogtown,” a pejorative used by smaller cities in the province at the time and still continues to be used across the country.

The absence of a similar commemoration in Montreal for Norma Shearer, one of the most famous Hollywood stars of the 1920s and 30s who, along with her husband, Irving Thalberg, the vice-president of MGM studios who “provided a patrician image that was closer to East Coast elegance than Hollywood glitz” (Gundle, *Glamour* 186), suggests that Montreal has a different relationship with this type of early celebrity glamour, or rather, the city had a different type of relationship with a particular anglo-glamour.³³ Shearer’s background was similar to Pickford’s as both came from a life of poverty in their respective Canadian cities only to have their stars soar in the Hollywood studio system. Both women were married to influential Hollywood men, and these unions made them enviable ambassadors for the silver screen. Moreover, Shearer won the academy award a year after Pickford for *The Divorcee* in 1930, where she shared the stage with her older brother Douglas, who won an Oscar for sound recording. Shearer, however, gave up her Canadian citizenship in 1931 to become a United States citizen (Pace) whereas Pickford stated that she “wished to die as a Canadian” and applied to reclaim her Canadian citizenship.³⁴

Certainly, it would be too facile to dismiss the lack of a monument to Shearer in Montreal as retribution for rejecting her home country; moreover, that narrative would have to ignore her presence on Canada Post’s Commemorative Stamp in 2012. Rather, Pickford’s identity was so

³³ When Shearer became an American citizen in 1931, newspapers across Canada reported on her naturalization with the exception of *The Montreal Gazette*, Norma’s “home town paper” which “instead [ran] a publicity piece on Walter Huston’s Toronto origins on the same day” (Nash 26 N57)

³⁴ Katja Lee makes the astute observation in her discussion of Mary Pickford’s transnational celebrity that “until 1946 Canada did not have its own citizenship laws — one was legally a British subject and to be ‘Canadian’ was a cultural rather than political identity” (5). Once Pickford had married Fairbanks, an American, she was legally neither a Canadian nor British subject.

tied to Toronto that she was rarely called Canadian, but rather “Toronto-born” or a “Toronto Girl” (Lee 2); indeed, according to Canadian critic, director and writer Herbert William Whittaker, she was “Toronto’s most famous daughter” (qtd. in Sperdakos). In 1934 she is even quoted as saying in *The Toronto Star*: “I belong to Toronto and Toronto belongs to me” (Knowles 3). In claiming Pickford’s celebrity, Toronto attached itself to her glamour, eventually reifying her aura in bronze where her presence continues to look out into the city today.

Yet, Pickford herself was not necessarily attached to glamour. In a *Toronto Daily Star* article from 1940, the actress explains to noted Canadian journalist, Gordon Sinclair, that “I’m no glamour girl, never want to be a glamour girl and don’t like glamour girls.” In response to Sinclair’s question about whether Hollywood tried to glamorize her she plainly tells him, “Some people had the idea, but I couldn’t go for that nonsense. Can anybody imagine me as a glamour girl?” Sinclair expresses incredulity at her answer by writing “I had a distinct feeling that someone named Mary Pickford was giving me the business” (Sinclair 7), since it would seem so preposterous that such a major Hollywood star would reject glamour’s luxurious embrace. Pickford’s wariness toward glamour may have had to do with her steadfast devotion to her audience, who had bestowed upon her the “America’s Sweetheart” moniker. This was a significant gesture as studio publicity departments were typically in charge of their actors’ public personas. Prior to becoming “America’s Sweetheart,” Pickford was routinely known as “the Biograph Girl” after the production company she had worked for and “The Girl with the Curls” in reference to her signature long ringlets.³⁵ To show her gratitude for this honour, Pickford would continue to exclaim “I am a servant of the public. I’ve never forgotten that” (qtd. in Lowe

³⁵ Pickford traveled with a suitcase of ringlets, which cost \$50 each (Nicholson).

432). However, Pickford's reluctant glamour was at odds with her celebrity. When she and Fairbanks were photographed for their world tours in the early 1920s, they were dressed in stylish coats and furs and surrounded by adoring fans. The two stars were shown with large quantities of expensive luggage, and they posed alongside trains, planes, and luxury automobiles. Gundle addresses the glamour exuded by Fairbanks and Pickford in these photos and suggests that they "convey something of the identification with modernity and mobility that they embodied" (*Glamour* 186). While Pickford identified these promotional tours as part of her work, what the audience saw was two icons of glamour enjoying the spoils of their riches.

As a consummate business woman, Pickford certainly understood the value of maintaining a glamorous allure by cloaking herself in mystery. She turned down profitable advertisement offers for fear they would undermine her carefully cultivated self-presentation. Pickford's refusal to have her name "bandied about in all sorts of good, bad, and indifferent commercial projects" (*Glamour* 195) inspired other actors to guard their similarly glamorous projections by not readily lending their images to commercial marketing. Moreover, in the same vein that Tolmie exhibited an otherworldly and exotic appearance that ingratiated her to a certain glamorous disposition, Pickford, too, maintained an aura of placelessness rooted in an enigmatic glamour. In a CBC interview she responds elliptically to a question regarding what country she prefers to be associated with: "English is my grandmother, Toronto, Canada is my mother and the United States is my husband" (qtd. in Lee 49). Tellingly, Toronto is her mother, the place of her birth, but her response also feminizes her place of origin, aligning the city with modern women. To be sure, Pickford's star persona was tied to her girlishness despite only playing a pre-adolescent girl in only seven of her 52 feature films (Sharot). Nevertheless, she was definitely a New Woman — the precursor to the Modern Girl or, as some have suggested, she was her

metaphorical mother.³⁶ In *Mary Pickford: Hollywood and the New Woman* (2016), Kathy Feeley argues that “Mary Pickford is a good example of the early 1900s ‘new woman,’ because she succeeds in her profession and in doing so gains access to all kind of opportunities” (qtd. in “Mary Pickford as a Symbol of the ‘New Woman’”).³⁷ Her determination to be a success began after her father left her family when she was only three years old, which left her mother to care for three young children. In 1900, at the age of seven, Pickford was apprenticing and gaining skills in Toronto’s theatre world. She eventually began starring in various productions and went on to become the family’s main breadwinner. Her mother, however, was initially wary of her daughter’s profession as her mother had “come of age in the late 1800s, a time when actresses were still considered unrespectable and controversial, if sometimes glamorous, figures” (Feeley). Considering her mother’s tepid feelings towards her daughter’s entry into the sordid glamour of the theatre provides further insight into Pickford’s dismissal of the suggestion that she herself could ever be a glamour girl despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Yet, as her actions throughout her career indicated, glamour girl or not, she was a business woman who capitalized on the production of glamour to further her success.

Fundamentally, what the beauty contests and Pickford’s public glamour articulated was the need for the Modern Toronto woman to be seen as an active participant in the modernization

³⁶ The Modern Girl Around the World Research Group (2008) and Jane Nicholas (2015) warn that it is often risky to make hard and fast distinctions between the two sets of women since they share many modern sensibilities.

³⁷ Gayln Studlar, in comparison, argues that the innocent characters Pickford played in her films are infused with Victorian values and rather belie her New Woman status: “Those men might find her enticing innocence a comforting alternative to the models of feminine sexual subjectivity offered by the flapper and the New Woman.” Studlar continues to argue, “Pickford’s many child-woman heroines also could serve an identificatory function for women and girls who might read her as a comforting ‘asexual’ figure of freedom whose youth released her from the demands — including the sexual demands — of adult femininity” Studlar, however, admits that Pickford, herself, was at odds with many of her characters and that she was a consummate business woman with immense wealth and no children which certainly lends credibility to her New Woman status (Studlar).

of the city. Through these legacies of the New Woman and the Modern Girl in Toronto, one may find her business savvy, mobilization, fashion and consumption practices in the Glitter Girl of the 1980s and 90s.

All that Glitters is Gaud

The Glitter Girls were the wives of prominent Toronto business men who resided in the affluent Toronto neighbourhoods of Forest Hill, Rosedale, and the Bridal Path. The Glitter Girls included Patricia Appleton, Anna Maria de Souza, Catherine Nugent, Carole Grafstein, and Liz Tory, mother to current Toronto mayor John Tory. Anna Maria de Souza, wife of the investment banker Ivan de Souza, was a standout glitter girl for the organization of her well-attended and celebrated Brazilian Balls that helped to embolden Toronto's reputation as a city that could handle a party (McLaren). The annual bash, known as "The Braz" for regular party-goers, raised millions of dollars for hospitals, educational institutions and organizations in Canada and Brazil. In an interview for *The Globe and Mail* in 2012 after the Braz had come to an end, Canadian media mogul and honorary Brazilian Ball chair Ivan Fecan declared that "In its day, it was the biggest and glitziest Hogtown event around. You saw politicians, bankers, captains of industry cheek-to-cheek with semi-naked Brazilian dancers, all in the name of charity" (qtd. in Verner). While the Braz maintained an exclusive glamour of its own, as the \$1,500 per person price of admission guaranteed that only the city's wealthiest patrons were in attendance, the glamour of the balls arguably came second to the power of glamour that the Glitter Girls wielded. In *The Glitter Girls: Charity and Vanity Chronicles of an Era of Excess* (1993), former *Globe and Mail* society gossip columnist Rosemary Sexton writes about and details the vast influence of these women in the 1980s and 90s, noting that "their galas were numerous and their gowns expensive

and glamorous, their networks were expanding, and their ball profits enormous” (Sexton). Subsequently, their lavish lifestyles and high-end fashions were often on display in the society pages of Toronto’s newspapers.

Nevertheless, after the publication of her tell-all book regaling the antics of these high society women, Rosemary Sexton lost her column in *The Globe and Mail* in 1993. She was told that her brand of journalism was not appropriate for the austerity of the 1990s as the city and rest of the country were trying to get out from under the devastation of the recession. Toronto readers, in particular, were no longer interested in reading stories about the extraordinary lifestyles of the incredibly rich (Kastner, “The Ex-Chronicler of Glitter Girls Still Has a Few Things to Say”). The dismissal of these types of narratives contradicts Gundle’s argument that society craves stories in the media about “rich, beautiful, exhibitionist women” (*Glamour* 387). To demonstrate his point, Gundle uses the 21st-century antics of the hotel heiress, Paris Hilton, as an embodiment of this fascination. Gundle maintains that a figure such as Hilton contributes to a “wide-spread desire for self-transformation and vicarious living that continues to fuel dreams of glamour” (387). He goes on to further identify that this type of glamour is an “accessible ideal, a touch of sparkle that can add *something* to every life” (Gundle, *Glamour* 387; italics added). From Gundle’s description it is not clear what this *something* is nor how the sparkle of glamour augments the realities of those that do not share the same conspicuous wealth as Hilton or The Glitter Girls. It is significant to note that Gundle is making his case for Paris Hilton as an aspirational figure of glamour in 2008, at the height of the Great Recession. For Gundle, glamour “provide[s] consolation and escape to masses of impoverished people” (392) yet his argument undercuts the very serious emotional and financial hardship that the effects of economic crises have on the lives of ordinary people. Pamela Church-Gibson has, too, argued that Gundle’s use

of Hilton and figures like her as models of contemporary glamour is a misinterpretation of the word and its practice (22). In this regard, I would propose that the “glamour” exhibited by socialites such as Hilton and the Glitter Girls share a performance of gaudy glamour, that is, a type of glamour that is “open, shameless, vulgar, in-your-face, *nouveau riche*” (E. Wilson, “A Note on Glamour” 101). Unlike the modest yet modern glamour of Tolmie and Pickford, theirs was a glamour of excess, which hearkened back to the brazen pre-modern glamour of Henry Pellatt and Casa Loma but with a gaudy postmodern sensibility.

Glamour delves into the realm of the gaudy once glamour’s untouchability becomes overly mediated and common. This is a glamour that taps into Veblen’s theory of conspicuous consumption as its effect is no longer aspirational but is derided rather than desired. Moreover, in times of economic despair, the desire for glamour gives way to practicality. This was certainly the case when the Eaton’s Annex store, as discussed in Chapter One, began to offer the cheaper version of the types of goods typically sold at the College Street store. For Depression-era Toronto working-class women who went shopping at the Annex store, this was an opportunity to dress up not to feel a moment of glamour but “because they needed to feel of a ‘class that deserve[d] to be served’” (Srigley 94).³⁸ Certainly, the Glitter Girls did not possess an unmediated “cool distance” (Brown 163) of glamour as imagined in the slick linearity of the Modern Girl. Yet like Tolmie and Pickford before them, the Glitter Girls were constantly photographed and the details of their lives, which included their event planning, fashion choices, marriages and

³⁸ In “Clothing Stories: Consumption, Identity, and Desire in Depression-Era Toronto” (2007), Katrina Srigley argues that while the Depression is often associated with the mass unemployment of working-class men, for women in Toronto, the diverse economic structure of the city provided many women with opportunities for work specifically in personal service, clerical work, manufacturing and teaching and nursing. As a result, the number of women workers in the city rose over the decade of the Depression (85).

more enticingly, their in-fighting, were eagerly consumed by a public that relished their local antics until there was no longer interest in this type of brash ostentation as these displays of wealth were considered distasteful in the recession of the early 1990s.

Sexton acknowledges in her book that the Glitter Girls exhibited “a life that may seem to the outside world as unbelievably glamorous but which at times is insufferably monotonous. Being a socialite is, despite the mystique surrounding it, one of the most boring lifestyles in the world” (Sexton). Indeed, while the Glitter Girls were not necessarily caught up in glamour, they were well aware of the social power glamour yields and, more importantly, how their expression of glamour was a more contemporary cosmopolitan reflection of the city. As Nicholas has argued, the Modern Girl in Canadian society was regarded as upholding the performance of white modernity at the expense of other racialized modernities; however, in the postmodern 1980s and 90s in Toronto, the city’s racial canvas was radically different. The Glitter Girls, for the most part, were refreshing models of aspirational glamour made up of Italian, Jewish, Chinese and Brazilian women. The noticeable diversity among the Glitter Girls caused journalist Jack Batten to dryly comment, “Even the apparently WASP person [...], Liz Tory, wife of John who general-manages the Thomson empire, and mother of John who general-manages the Progressive Conservative election campaign, is one-quarter Jewish” (Batten). The success of their various charitable events such as the Brazilian Ball, where one was to see “politicians, bankers, [and] captains of industry, cheek-to-cheek with semi-naked Brazilian dancers” (qtd. in Levine) was a testament to their determination to help Toronto shed its “good” reputation and with it the implications of WASP nation-building.

Conclusion

Four months after the Miss Toronto contest, in November 1926, the *Toronto Daily Star* sent a wire to Mary Pickford in Hollywood with the following:

Some of your friends are wondering why you have never bobbed your hair at a time when so many women have done so. We think our people would be interested in knowing your reasons and we wonder if you would be good enough to let us have them?

To which Pickford responded:

Thanks for your telegram. Many others have asked the same question. Rightly or wrongly I have never bobbed my hair for reasons which I will be glad to give in detail by post. I would like very much to know just how my friends in Canada feel about the general question — to bob or not to bob. Will greatly appreciate knowing their answer if you can find any way testing the matter.

(“Mary Pickford Asks the Star to Query About Bobbed-Hair”)

In order to get to the bottom of this answer the *Star* devised a contest open to every woman “old or young” in Canada, asking them to detail their reasons for bobbing or not bobbing their hair. The winners were to receive a cash prize and a chance to display their chosen telegrams at the Uptown Theatre, which would be showing Pickford’s latest film, *Sparrows*. Incidentally, Pickford did eventually bob her hair for her role in 1929’s *Coquette*, for which she won the Academy Award. This transformation made the front page of *The New York Times* because her fans were so shocked that she was no longer “The Girl with the Curls.”

The everyday expression of glamour as mediated in popular culture is arguably the domain of women. In Toronto, women have historically borne the media’s intense scrutiny,

which has focused anywhere from hair to fashion to lifestyle choices (lavish or not). Glamour, of course, is a paradox. It is at once timeless and anachronistic. Wistful references to Hollywood's bygone era of glamour betray an eagerness to trade glamour's current glittering gloss for a more seductive seriousness. Dyhouse illustrates how this shift is nothing new by recounting how "the sunny glamour girls of the 1930s and the early 1940s gave way to the darker, moody, bad girl beauties of *film noir*" (108). In this regard, glamour neither fades nor recedes; rather, the slippery texture of glamour metamorphoses in keeping with the historical moment in which it finds itself. The following chapter further explores the evolving feminine language of glamour in the city through an analysis of Toronto's literature.

Chapter Three: Glamour in the Margins: Reading Glamour in Toronto's Literature

While the trope of the Canadian landscape and wilderness has long dominated literary discourse, the Canadian urban novel has had a powerful, albeit often invisible, history, articulating a counter-narrative to the myth of the land (Edwards and Ivison 10). Prior to the 1970s very little Canadian fiction was actively situated in Toronto.³⁹ Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman* (1969) notoriously takes place in a nondescript and anonymous urban landscape with vague hints that the downtown she describes may be Toronto and not a nameless American metropolis. Nevertheless, for many years Torontonians maintained an intense bias against their own writers, resulting in a cultural negation of the city's literary heritage. This "persistent self-loathing" (Harris 19) extends as far back as the turn of the century as outlined in "Literature in Canada," an essay written by novelist and critic Robert Barr in 1899:

The bald truth is that Canada has the money, but would rather spend it on whiskey than on books. [...] What chance has Canada, then, of raising a Sir Walter Scott? I maintain that she has but very little chance, because she won't pay the money, and money is the root of all literature. The new Sir Walter is probably tramping the streets of Toronto to-day, looking vainly for something

³⁹ In *Toronto Short Stories* (1977) the editors state that "because Toronto looms so large in the consciousness of so many Canadians, one would assume that it occupies a similarly prominent place in our literature, our mythology. But that's not the case. Apart from a handful of novels by such writers as Morley Callaghan, Hugh Garner, Graeme Gibson, Richard Wright, and Hugh Hood, and some poetry — especially that of Raymond Souster and Dennis Lee — there's not as much there as one might expect. And most of what is there has appeared in the last 10 years ... In fact, the only Canadian city that has produced a significant body of literature is Montreal" (Daymond and Wolfe viii–ix).

to do. But Toronto will recognize him when he comes back from New York or

London, and will give him a dinner when he doesn't need it. (qtd. in Harris 19)

In summoning Scott, the patron of glamour, Barr effectively addresses a longstanding desire for glamour's expression to radiate not simply within the pages of the city's literature but also in its celebration of literature as a national good. As this dissertation's introduction illustrated, "hating Toronto" has long been a national pastime, from Lister Sinclair's 1948 radio play *We All Hate Toronto* to Jack McLaren's illustrated 1956 satire *Let's All Hate Toronto* and Albert Nerenberg's 2007 documentary of the same name. An op-ed in the *Peterborough Examiner* from November 1954 even posits that: "Toronto secretly prides itself on being thought of as the *bête noire* of Ontario and has deliberately encouraged the belief that it has a cloven foot" (qtd. in Plummer), which at least grants some autonomy for the city's notoriety.

Yet in the decades after, particularly in the early aughts, Toronto as a tangible space imbued with its own sense of culture and mythology became increasingly popular in fictive works by Toronto authors.⁴⁰ Justin D. Edwards and Douglas Ivison, the editors of *Downtown Canada: Writing Canadian Cities* (2005), champion the rise of the Canadian urban novel with their *cri de cœur* to honour the country's downtown spaces in its national literature:

No longer are we content to engage in thematic studies which privilege the wilderness, rural areas, or the small town as the place upon which Canadian identity is constructed. Instead we seek to bridge the gap that exists between the lived experiences of most Canadians, who overwhelmingly live in urban

⁴⁰ See Russell Smith *Noise* (1998); Dionne Brand *What We All Long For* (2005); Stephen Marche *Raymond and Hannah* (2005); Michael Redhill *Consolation* (2006); for a comprehensive list and celebration of the city's literature see the now defunct, but still available, website "Reading Toronto" <http://readingt.readingcities.com/index.php>

environments, and the public mythology of Canada and critical production on Canadian literature and culture, which has, until recently, largely focused on rural and wilderness spaces and small towns. (6)

The literary shift that began to assert itself toward the latter part of the twentieth century suddenly highlights Canadian cities as spaces equally worthy of celebration and critical discourse.⁴¹ Toronto-based literature continues to contribute to and shape the production of the city, and arguably the city has contributed and shaped the production of literature (Edwards and Ivison 9) and through these fluxes invites various readings of glamour in the city.

This chapter expands upon the complexities and practice of reading glamour in Toronto's literature ranging from the mid 20th century to the first decade of the new millennium. I begin with a brief overview on the "grit-as-glamour" narrative, which has been primarily the domain of the white neo-bohemian male writer, to discuss how reading glamour in Toronto is a gendered practice. Next, in a continued discussion of the modern Toronto woman as the embodiment of the negotiation between tradition and modernity, I examine the feminized language of glamour that materializes in the domestic sphere of 1950s Toronto through Phyllis Brett Young's groundbreaking 1960 novel *The Torontonians*. Young's text offers a striking entry point into the discussion concerning glamour's expression in the city by focusing on a moneyed and upper-class Toronto. As Coral Ann Howells argues, we can understand "*The Torontonians* [as] a product of Canadian cultural nationalism of the '50s and '60s, reflecting a new era of prosperity

⁴¹ In describing Vancouver artist and novelist Douglas Coupland's book *City of Glass* (2009) an *Amazon* review proclaims, "Toronto has Margaret Atwood, Montreal has Mordecai Richler, and now Vancouver has its own literary spokesperson." While *Amazon* reviews are designed for a popular reading market this, albeit, simplistic statement addresses a desire by a larger Canadian reading public for artists to capture the unique spirit and frustrations of urban living across the country.

and consumerism [...]” (“From Rowanwood to Downtown: The Torontonians and Girls Fall Down” 56). In this, I extend her point to include how Young’s text promotes a cosmopolitan glamour particular to Toronto. I follow this section with an exploration of Margaret Atwood’s 1993 novel *The Robber Bride* to reveal the anxiety of glamour in the post-recession era city. By invoking glamour’s historical etymological usage and drawing upon the dark glamour of the Gothic, Atwood’s characters are charmed and seduced by a glamorous figure named Zenia in different parts of the city and at different points in their lives that simultaneously correlate with the development, history, and gentrification of the city. Zenia, I argue, represents the changing pace of the city and expressions of desire and fear for the new and unknown. *The Torontonians*, too, engages with this similar sense of anxiety of the city coming into its own, yet glamour, I argue, functions as a distraction to stave off the ennui of the bored housewife figure as she anticipates the possibilities for the developing city. My final section examines the performance and practice of glamour in Toronto in Sheila Heti’s experimental 2010 novel *How Should a Person Be?* Heti’s text functions as a counterargument to Harris’ claim that Toronto suffers from cultural amnesia when it comes to its own literary genealogy:

[I]n a city where nearly everybody seems to be a writer or aspires to be one, where books have their own festivals and television shows, where celebrity authors are jostled and fawned over in the street — books, no matter how enthusiastically they may be read, reviewed and rewarded when they are first published, soon slide irretrievably into oblivion like flotsam beneath a somnolent sea. (21)

By forging and articulating her own artistic space through the myth of the Bohemian, the character of Sheila in *How Should a Person Be?* challenges the assumptions of fame, mythology

and glamour in the city in the early 21st century as it navigates the onslaught of gentrification leading up to the Great Recession of 2008-09. These three texts, I maintain, share and articulate a feminized urbane glamour that builds upon the dimensions of Canadian urban writing and showcases glamour as an integral component in the development of Toronto as an internationally recognized glamorous textual city.

Glamour, (Second) Sex and the City

The three texts which are the main focus in this chapter have been chosen because they reflect glamour's various temporal shifts in Toronto's fictions. What connects these novels is that they are written by women, and in particular, white, middle-class Toronto women, whose narratives are inextricably informed by the urban experience of the Toronto Modern Girl. Carol Dyhouse notes "glamour was often linked to a dream of transformation, a desire for something out of the ordinary, a form of aspiration, a *fiction* of female becoming" (3, italics added). One may be reminded of Flaubert's Emma Bovary poring through her fashion magazines while she daydreamed of a more glamorous life filled with fun and adventure that would take her away from her boring husband and the rituals of domesticity. This is not to say that there is not a delineation of male glamour in Toronto literature, which is perhaps best expressed in Russell Smith's 1998 novel *Noise*. In *Noise*, glamour functions as a corollary of the white hipster male living in downtown Toronto in the late 1990s. Smith's work follows up on the themes explored in Daniel "Jones" Jones' 1994 punk short story collection *The People One Knows: Toronto Stories*. Jones' stories are populated with narratives featuring various derelicts who live in Toronto's urban core; he focuses on the male artist figure and romanticizes his struggles in Toronto's lurid downtown streets as if to suggest that these narratives reflect an "authentic"

experience of the city. In *Neo-Bohemia: Art and Commerce in the Postindustrial City* (2006), Richard Lloyd investigates how the rise of neo-bohemian culture in urban centres has redefined neighbourhoods previously understood as marginalized by championing their “gritty glamour” (91). Lloyd articulates how this aesthetic primarily appeals to the young white men who can seamlessly navigate this type of urban lifestyle:

For male participants in the arts scene, who were mostly white and hailed from relatively privileged backgrounds, navigating the gritty street involved adopting an ‘outlaw aesthetic,’ expressed through both dress and demeanor, that was similar to the persona that Norman Mailer attributed to the ‘existential hipster’ during the 1950s. (80)

This glamorized protagonist in Toronto’s urban fiction often reveals himself as his own Byronic hero, living and contributing to the gentrification of the areas in which he lives among “aspiring artists, high-wage ‘creatives,’ and scenesters” (McFarlane 141), all in the name of a neo-bohemian lifestyle that is often easily afforded to young white men described by Lloyd. Glamour for the young urban Toronto male asserts itself as a right, rather than a longing. This insistence is so strong that it was hardly surprising to discover that the German translation of *Noise* features a cover of a young white man with peroxide-coloured hair screaming and shaking his fists into a void. The book’s German title was naturally called *Glamour*.⁴²

The language of glamour articulated in *Noise* reflects a masculinist determination and ambition not only for the protagonist but for the city as well. In a discussion regarding Toronto

⁴² Translated by Marlies Ruß for the Munich based publishing company List-Taschenbuch-Verl in 2000.

literature, the protagonist of *Noise*, James, laments that there is little written about the realities of living in Toronto's growing metropolis:

It used to be that you could get a lot of recognition by writing about Canada, as long as it was about small towns and nature [...]. You could have canoes and the prairies or, also, sad women, very sad women who were fat or whose husbands had left them or something. There was a lady who wrote about fucking a bear, which was like a union with the land. There was a lady who wrote about mystical experiences she had at a cottage in northern Ontario. I was never sure what that was about. They were important at one time, very stern and important. I had to study them in school. (*Noise* 135)

Justin D. Edwards argues that James' diatribe attempts to disrupt "the flow of nationalism by challenging the stereotypes of Canadian space" (263); nevertheless, James' evidence for the lack of national urban imagination in literature relies upon examples of female grotesques and Canadian women authors writing about women far removed from the city. His invective ends with a dismissal of these contributions by women writers as being only "important at one time." The following sections of this chapter offers a counter reading of glamour as it relates to different generations of women's experiences in Toronto written by women writers. The language of glamour reflected in these Toronto-based narratives with women at the fore embrace Dyhouse's notion of the fiction of female becoming in a city similarly at the precipice of glamorous transformation.

***The Torontonians* and the Spaces, Challenges and Language of Feminized Glamour**

“Early morning sunlight warm against the thin, smooth contour of one cheek, Karen sat in the breakfast-room and thought about suicide” (7). The opening sentence of Phyllis Brett Young’s *The Torontonians* faintly echoes Ezra’s Pound’s famous imagist poem, “In a Station of the Metro” with its simple yet profound meditation on the morning.⁴³ The cool detached narrative style and stony prose reveals themselves like a photograph in a dark room, slowly and precariously setting the tone for the rest of the novel. An inherent sheen of glamour is apparent in the untouched beauty of the “Early morning sunlight,” an alluring spectre, followed by the description of Karen’s slick cheek as if she were a brand-new sports car. Meanwhile, Young’s opening line hints at the sinister elements of the novel with its casual suggestion of suicide and Karen’s darker desires. This breezy nonchalant approach to self-harm is faintly reminiscent of a 1929 journal article from *The Iowa Homemaker* titled, “What About the Glamour?” in which Nielsine Hansen bemoans that “there will be days when your public will ring in kicks from morning until night until suicide looks like the primrose path” (3) yet despite the annoyance and despair she concludes “Isn’t there some glamour in that?”

Phyllis Brett Young captures Toronto through a lens of post-war ennui, where ladies lunch and men work on Bay Street and come home to cooked dinners made by their wives — living up to its reputation as “Toronto the Good.” Karen Whitney, the protagonist of Young’s proto-feminist novel,⁴⁴ dreams of being more than just a mother and wife in her nicely

⁴³ “The apparition of these faces in the crowd; / Petals on a wet, black bough” (Pound).

manicured, upper class home. Her psychological struggle to achieve a sense of purpose beyond her socially prescribed role forces her to reflect upon certain events that happened in her life while growing up in the city. As Karen carefully examines her past, Young expertly weaves Toronto developmental milestones into the narrative, such as the opening of the Yonge subway line in 1954 and the design plans from 1958 to construct the new City Hall. This *pas de deux* reveals as much about Karen's personal growth as the city's, as if the two were intrinsically tied. The sense of optimism that concludes the novel reads as a forecast for the city that insists there is potential beyond Toronto's simple "good" moniker and for the modern desires of the city's inhabitants. Gundle points out that "More than anywhere else, it was the modern city and its institutions that supplied the stage on which such personalities could flourish. [...], the magic of glamour was inseparable from the hurly-burly of the metropolitan life" (*Glamour* 50). Karen, too, recognizes the potential for her own personal glamour that correlates within the glamorous space that Toronto suddenly occupies and sets up a striking binary between her suburban life and the glamour of the city.

The Torontonians was serialized in the pages of *Chatelaine* appearing in three instalments in the October, November, and December issues of 1960. According to Nathalie Cooke and Suzanne Morton, "in the 1960s *Chatelaine* explored the very issues at the heart of Young's novel — the roles and choices available for women in a changing world and the

⁴⁴ Phyllis Brett Young's daughter, Valerie Argue, acknowledges in the foreword to the 2008 reissue of *The Torontonians*: "My mother was not a feminist. However, she undoubtedly would have been had she been born in 1944 instead of 1914. In *The Torontonians* one can see her attempt — played out through her heroine Karen — to come to terms not only with post World War II materialism but also with the strong social pressure on a woman to find fulfillment as lady of the suburban manor" (viii).

possibilities and anxieties caused by change — in a number of formats within each issue” (xxv).

As a distinctly feminine text that was featured in a woman’s magazine devoted to “female issues” including fashion and lifestyle advice, *The Torontonians* exemplifies a glamour that specifically references the modern Toronto woman’s experience.⁴⁵

For women reading Young’s text in the far reaches of Canada’s smaller communities, Toronto’s glamorous position as a growing modern cosmopolis would have been keenly understood. In *Roughing it in the Suburbs: Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties* (2000), Valerie Korinek discusses an article from 1954 that describes how a young woman from northeastern Nova Scotia was magically transformed into “The Cinderella from Pugwash” while getting a head-to-toe makeover in Toronto. When she returns to her small town with her new hairdo and sophisticated fashion, her family is shocked and a little dismayed by her new cosmopolitan style. As Korinek remarks, “the meaning was obvious in this piece: style and glamour triumphed over down-home values and the natural look” (201). So, too, does Young’s text reveal the ways in which glamour in the city is a chimera that is both fanciful and frightening in its ability to change public personas and ambitions.

Much of the narrative focuses on Karen reminiscing about her life as a younger woman with her lover in Geneva when the world seemed to be full of possibility instead of limited by her current life circumstances as a homemaker in a fictional Toronto suburban neighbourhood called Rowanwood. Certainly, *The Torontonians* would have resonated with readers of *Chatelaine*, who would sympathize and share Karen’s frustrations:

⁴⁵ Many issues that were tackled in the pages of *Chatelaine* in the early 1960s are rather progressive given the context of the era. In the “Features” section women wrote articles exploring difficulties in and out of the home including frank discussions about the ambivalence of motherhood which included the line that another pregnancy was as “welcome as the income tax” (Cooke and Morton xxv).

If you had been a stranger from another planet, you might have wondered if Rowanwood was inhabited at all. You would not have understood the phenomenon of mid-morning doldrums. You had to live in Rowanwood to know that the men had all left the boxes in which they lived for other boxes in the business section downtown; to know that the women were either hidden inside cleaning the former, or had gone off in smaller mechanized boxes to the shopping plaza. These things explained to you, you, the stranger from another planet, would still fail to understand why the women should spend so much time shut up in their boxes. You would, if you had come equipped with any knowledge of the civilization you had invaded, wonder how on Earth women had allowed themselves to be hoodwinked into believing what the manufacturers wanted them to believe — that they had never had it so good.

(55)

Karen's observations about middle-class suburban living precede the famed song "Little Boxes" written by Malvina Reynolds in 1962 and made popular by Pete Seger in 1963. The song was a satire about suburbia and conformist middle-class attitudes. Whereas Reynolds makes light of the "ticky-tacky" little box houses, Young, who would have seen and likely been inspired by the progress made by Toronto's modern women, has Karen left wondering how the glamour of urban modernity has left her shut out of the city to become a homemaker in a mundane suburban box. What Judith Brown calls "The Moment of Glamour" in literature is the point where the character exists in a moment distinct and set apart from the ordinary passage of time: "There will be no reckless galloping forward of narrative time but the unsteady interplay of past, present, and future that become layered, almost inseparable [...]" (78). Young's narrator often breaks into the

second person, effectively blending the passage of time and sense of place that forges the moment of glamour. The speaker's tone is at once sympathetic and accusatory, prompting us to wonder whether the speaker is admonishing Karen or the reader when she reflects:

You did not at the time realize what was happening to you, because when you were really young, rather than 'still young' as the magazines now put it, you were resilient. Incredibly so. It wasn't until much later, when you found yourself thinking of death as a restful state, and saw your friends leaning on barbiturates, whiskey, and tranquillizers, that you began to understand that, somehow, mechanical evolution had outstripped any social evolution as it might apply to you and most of your generation. (13)

The narrative shift from omniscient to second person is simultaneously intimate and alienating — an effect that reveals part of the grammar of glamour in its “unsteady interplay” of narrative points of view. Glamour, Brown notes, is “the ache for the beautiful thing just out of reach” (87), and in reading glamour the narrative must effectively convey the “beautiful thing” as far from the reader's grasp as possible. In reading Karen's castigation of how society treats women, the reader cannot fully identify with Karen without potentially acknowledging her own deeper desires, which the second person narrative demands. For women readers in the 1960s, this would be a provocative meditation on their own positions in society, a longing for the beautiful things that still remained out of reach to them.

Brown further argues that “Glamour is starkly aligned with the coldness of technology, the rush into the future [...], and therefore bears a relationship to reality, although its reality is nevertheless one of masks and illusion” (106). *The Torontonians* at its core is about the “mechanical evolution” of the city and the hesitancy with which the characters accept its steady

development into a cosmopolitan urban centre. Karen jokingly remarks, “Toronto itself, in spite of what the rest of Canada seemed to think of it, had been a lovely city to live in. At the time nobody would have dreamed of calling it the New York of Canada” (101). Caroline Rosenthal further corroborates this claim: “In an international perspective, Toronto lacks not only the glamour but also the darker aspects of New York. It is commonly regarded as the safer, cleaner, and more tolerant, albeit duller, of the two cities” (31). The use of “glamour” in this context is clearly instructive in its suggestion that Toronto’s urban imaginary is devoid of glamour, especially compared to the much-mythologized New York City. Reading glamour in Toronto literature, therefore, becomes an exercise in challenging these preconceptions of the city.

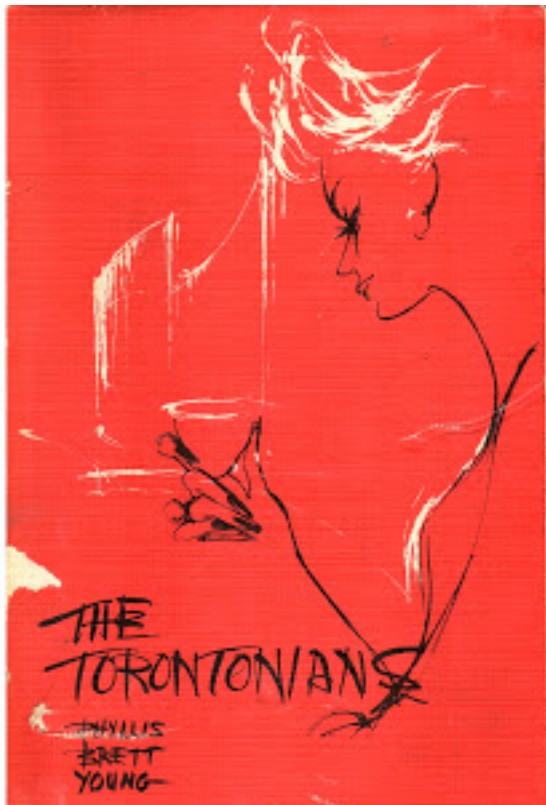


Figure 6 Original 1960 Cover of *The Torontonians* published by Longmans, Green & Company. © Valerie Argue. The use of this material is by permission of the copyright holder.

The cover of the 1960 Canadian version of *The Torontonians* features a sketch of the new Toronto City Hall in the background while at the fore is an outline of a stylish woman drinking from a martini glass (Fig. 6). The cover was designed by the fashion artist Jean Miller, who had crafted the cover for *Psyche*, Young’s first book published in 1959. Young had requested Miller’s signature willowy woman outline to be placed alongside a blueprint of the newly conceptualized City Hall, which prompted *Star* columnist Lotta Dempsey to comment that it “is probably the first book to have the new City Hall on its cover” (Dempsey). As Howells points out, “Young’s emphasis is on fashionable body images of women and glamour” (“From Rowanwood to Downtown: The

Torontonians and Girls Fall Down” 58) and the cover recalls the iconic image of the modern girl with her tall, lean body evoking the streamlined linearity of modern skyscrapers and flat smooth decorative surfaces. Miller’s depiction of Karen alongside City Hall simultaneously aligns her with the modernization of the city yet also captures her ambivalence and anxieties as her eyes focus downward toward her martini glass and not cast forward toward City Hall.

The construction of the new city hall in 1965 by the Finnish architect Viljo Revell was a feat of modernist architecture and a nod toward Toronto’s future. With its two curved asymmetric towers the new City Hall ushered in an era of enthusiasm and pride for the city. Revell had won an international competition to construct a building that would define the city. Many Toronto firms had put forth their own designs but were rebuffed by the jury for looking too plain and boring.⁴⁶ Architect George Kapelos told the *The Toronto Star* in an interview to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the construction of the new City Hall why the competition was so important for the city: “It wasn’t just about Toronto, but a convergence of a whole lot of issues that catalyzed here in this city. People were agitating for newness and modernity. Around the globe, interest in rebuilding cities was intense. Issues such as decolonization, monumentality and national identity were on everyone’s mind. The timing was amazing” (qtd. in Hume, “At 50, Toronto’s City Hall Is Still Ahead of the Curve”). The juxtaposition of City Hall’s blueprints alongside the silhouette of the woman on the cover of *The Torontonians* conveys the grammar of glamour in its nod toward futurity and inaccessibility. The woman is presented as an ephemeral figure of beauty and fashion yet “glamour goes beyond mere fashion. Although the concept of glamour includes fashion, it ultimately involves more than what a woman puts on her body. It

⁴⁶ Many of these designs were exhibited in 2015 at the Paul Cocker Gallery for their exhibition “Shaping Canadian Modernity” as part of the 50th anniversary celebrations of City Hall.

deals with the lady herself” (Basinger qtd. in Steele 38). *The Torontonians* is a text that *deals* with the transformation of a city and the anxieties and desires that lie within. Both City Hall and the woman on the cover of *The Torontonians* are rendered as apparitions that are longing to come into their own.⁴⁷

At the start of the novel Karen is 40 years old and already has two grown daughters who are both away at university. She married her husband, Rick, right out of college and immediately had children at a young age. She then stayed home to take care of her children while her husband was away, all the while looking the part of the “executive’s wife in a fish blue cotton dress, its utility denied by a wide collar and a frivolously full skirt” (46). Karen’s speech is often imbued with the tropes of glamour: fashion, beauty, and youth. At one point she looks in the mirror and remarks: “I look, [...], as if I had stepped out of *Vogue*. A cardboard doll cut out of nothing. I am a success. I have conformed to the pattern, and I wish to God I hadn’t. How have I let this thing happen to me? When did it begin, and where?” (47). Ilya Parkins muses “[...] the glamorous feminine figure might be better understood to complicate the chain of binaries on which modernity rests” (“Elsa Schiaparelli and the Epistemology of Glamorous Silence” 192). In this regard, Karen’s slow mental breakdown ultimately challenges the prevailing associations and binaries set up among man/culture/city and woman/nature/home. Phyllis Brett Young keenly understood the shifting dynamics of the city, and with it the shifting dynamics of the domestic sphere, and how Toronto was burgeoning with a new sense of identity as the city saw itself “perched at the edge of modernity” (Harris 289). The 1950s post war culture in Toronto

⁴⁷ Incidentally, when *The Torontonians* was published in the United States it was given the new title, *A Gift of Time*, and any trace of City Hall was completely excised from the cover.

exhibited in Young's text brims with cautious optimism and genuine desire to embrace the modern:

Toronto was a boom town where, with the easing of the liquor laws, you could at last buy a drink in public. That is, a real drink, something stronger than four-point beer. A cocktail in a place like the Cork Room, or the Silver Rail, cost you three times what it would have cost you at home, but you went to the bars in spite of this because the bars represented glamour and novelty. (60)

Young acknowledges Toronto's puritanical past by highlighting its harsh liquor laws but invokes the glamour of the bar as a fashionable space of conspicuous consumption that embodies the changing mores of the modern city.

It is precisely the text's insistence on changing values and assumptions that makes *The Torontonians* a novel of manners, and arguably, a novel of *manors* as well, given how much attention is placed on the nicely manicured lawns and interior designs of the houses in Rowanwood. The language exhibited in the text verges on high modernism with its change in narrative tone and imagistic tendencies, yet simultaneously the text often reads like a Noël Coward play set in the suburbs of Toronto instead of Manhattan featuring a cast of well-heeled sophisticates exchanging witty *bon mots*.⁴⁸

“But don't you love it darling?”

“That might be putting it a little strongly,” Rick said.

⁴⁸ Faye Hammill's *Sophistication: A Literary and Cultural History* (2010) and John Potvin's *Bachelors of a Different Sort: Queer Aesthetics, Material Culture and the Modern Interior in Britain* (2014) provide excellent analyses into the grammar of glamour in the works of Noël Coward.

“You’re not a woman.”

“I think somebody once pointed that out to me before.” (70)

The charming interplay among the characters is interspersed among the various social gatherings that they are either hosting or attending, thereby exhibiting a constant air of sophistication and glamour. Young, for her part, made a point to treat Toronto as the “sophisticated, cosmopolitan city it is” (Grewal) and, as such, she created characters that reflected a Toronto imbued with the tenets of glamour and sophistication in popular fiction. In this regard, she effectively shifted the discourse away from the wilderness and ravines, and embraced the beauty, desires and tensions of the modern city.⁴⁹ To be sure, Karen’s meditations upon the development of the city are filled with worldly insight and solid criticism:

After Geneva, you were more critical of Toronto than you had been in the past, but paradoxically you loved it more than you ever had, and you were damn proud of it. It was not London, and it was not Paris, but it *was* Toronto, and that was more than good enough for you. You were terribly excited about this St. Lawrence Seaway thing they had started to talk about, because you could see that if it went through, your city, your Toronto, could become one of the great inland seaports of the world. (149)

Under Karen’s judgemental eye, *The Torontonians* unfolds like a creation myth that explains the essence of the city to the rest of the world. In the introduction to the 2007 reissue of the text by McGill-Queen’s Press, Young’s daughter writes, “It was not just Toronto and Torontonians but Canada and Canadians that Phyllis Brett Young wanted to put on the map, and in each of her

⁴⁹ For a more nuanced discussion of modernity in the Canadian novel see Colin Hill’s *Modern Realism in English Canadian Fiction* (University of Toronto Press, 2012).

works she tries to do just that. As she said in an *Ottawa Citizen* interview (7 April 1960), “I write because I love Canada and I wish more and more people would write about Canada as it is today” (xi).

Certainly, *The Torontonians* exhibits a very *white* and wealthy expression of glamour echoed by Karen’s recollection of some social doggerel she read in *Saturday Night*: “Toronto has no classes, / Only the Masseys and the masses” (144). Indeed, who are the Torontonians in *The Torontonians*? Howells asks “who are these people designated by the novelist as representative of the city and its values?” (58). No doubt, there is a whiff of hubris in a title that suggests it is *the* definitive text of the city. Howells points out that Young’s title is ironic given that “the spatial conception of Toronto is focused almost entirely on the new burgeoning suburbia [...]” (59). Karen refers to this area as “The Hill” referring to the geography of the neighbourhoods north of Bloor St. Rowanwood, while fictional, would have resembled tonier uptown neighbourhoods, such as Rosedale, Forest Hill and Leaside. Amy Lavender Harris addresses this question about who exactly are the Torontonians that Young is discussing in her text:

The novel depicts four populations dwelling (then as now) in uneasy coexistence: the staid Toryish urban establishment of the Annex and Forest Hill; the ambitiously modern movers and shakers of the downtown core; the voracious materialists of its sprawling suburbs; and, making room among themselves in the interstices of the city, the ‘New Canadians’ beginning their own transformations in Toronto. (289)

This study in contrasts also speaks to the often-contested nature of glamour. Beyond glamour’s common material components of beauty, youth and wealth, lie less charming elements, such as class division, commoditization, and envy. Young’s text reveals these chasms as her text

explores how the search for glamour often results in depression and dissatisfaction especially for those in the upper-middle class environs who, in Young's fictional setting, often cast envious glances toward their neighbours in a constant longing for more. However, there are many different types of glamour that extend beyond fashion and luxury. As Virginia Postrel notes "Glamour is an imaginative process that creates a specific emotional response: a sharp mixture of projection, longing, admiration, and aspiration. It evokes an audience's hopes and dreams and makes them seem attainable, all the while maintaining enough distance to sustain the fantasy" (140). For Young, writing in the 1950s and 1960s, Toronto had the potential for glamorous escape much in the same way that narratives that feature prominent textual cities such as New York, Paris or London offered its characters the experience of seduction and enchantment. In this regard, *The Torontonians* suggests a comparison with Henry James' 1886 novel *The Bostonians* with its themes of feminism and developing improved roles for women in society. Yet, while James was writing for his American audiences, Young was adamant that Canadian writers should "resist the temptation to write to the American market, if they wish to develop a Canadian literature"; as she tells the *Montreal Gazette* journalist, Beverley Mitchell, "I feel that if we write for our people, about our people, we'll gradually get our novels accepted [in the US]. Right now, we have neither the glamor of being really foreign, nor are we the 51st state" ("Writer Denies Need for Inspiration"). Her use of glamour is illuminating as she aligns it with more unfamiliar and presumably exotic terrain. Young, aware of the tensions between "old" and "new" Canadians, incorporates this sense of lost glamour in her text when the foreign becomes familiar.

In *Imagining Toronto*, Harris addresses one of the more overtly satirical moments in the novel when one of Karen's obnoxious neighbours, Millicent, phones and insists that Karen partake in the charity bridge tournaments she is organizing to help "New Canadians":

You could trace the history of the world back across a good many years just by remembering Millicent's brief but forceful enthusiasms. The Koreans, the Israelis, the evicted Egyptians, the Hungarians. Without even looking at a newspaper, you could be quite certain that things were relatively quiet in foreign parts if Millicent could find nothing more alarming with which to concern herself than the difficulties, if any, of New Canadians. (14).

The joke, Harris points out, is that Millicent fails to recognize Rowanwood's homogeneous population made up entirely of white Anglo-Saxons; the motto of its inhabitants is "everybody should live in ranch-style bungalows and be just like themselves" (21). "The Torontonians" that Young describes are set apart by their many privileges and differ from "The Koreans," "The Israelis" and the other "New Canadians" in that they have the luxury of conforming to the post-war capitalist dream of the nuclear family. This is a type of glamour, a gendered and classed one, to be sure, and in this the concept of glamour has rightly been criticized for its focus on wealth, whiteness, and the over-exoticization of certain cultures and people,⁵⁰ but of course, *The Torontonians* is also a product of its time. Laura Mulvey provides further context by referencing American mass consumption in the 1950s:

It was a time when, in the context of the cold war, advertising, movies and the actual packaging and seductiveness of commodities all marketed glamour.

Glamour proclaimed the desirability of American capitalism to the outside world and, inside, secured Americanness as inspiration for the newly

⁵⁰ See Gundle's chapter on "The Hollywood Star System" in his detailed discussion about glamour and exoticization in Hollywood in *Glamour: A History* (2008).

suburbanized white population as it buried incompatible memories of immigrant origins. (*Fetishism and Curiosity: Cinema and the Mind's Eye* 96)

In this regard, I would argue that Michael Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987), a book that looks at the development of Toronto in the 1900s from the perspective of the immigrants that helped contribute to the construction of the city, is patently unglamorous in its treatment of the city's construction and class discrepancies.⁵¹ This darker depiction of the city's past does not figure into the language of glamour exhibited in *The Torontonians*. Rather, Young's text is filled with intrigue and excitement over the waves of immigrants entering the city, such as the Italians, Greeks, Portuguese, Poles, and Yugoslavians who have effectively changed the city's predominantly British character after World War II (Cooke and Morton xx).

Margaret Atwood's *The Robber Bride*, published more than 30 years after *The Torontonians*, demonstrates that while Toronto is recognized as a multicultural urban centre in the 1990s many of these deep-seated reservations over new developments in the city persist. Through her character, Zenia, a woman who has drawn from multiple cultures to fabricate her personal history, Atwood provides a Gothic exploration into the anxieties of the changing city and the glamour of the unknown.

Celebrity, Identity and the Anxiety of (bad) Glamour in *The Robber Bride*

In 1978 Margaret Atwood created a long comic strip with the succinct title "Hairdo," which was featured in *Weekend Magazine*.⁵² In this cartoon, Atwood "ridicules female fashion, conformity

⁵¹ I do, however, concede Brandon McFarlane's point that argues for Lloyd's gritty-glamour in post-industrialist narratives such as in Ondaatje's text and Michael Redhill's *Consolation* (2006).

⁵² A pull-out magazine from *The Montreal Star*, February 4th, 1978.

to changing definitions of glamour, and the role conditioning that makes female glamour seem more important than intelligence” (Wilson qtd. in Nischik 165). In effect, Atwood is sending up the same institutions, which exactly fifty years prior to the date of her comic had made such a sensation over Mary Pickford bobbing her hair and losing her signature curls. The first panel of the comic presents itself as a women’s magazine entitled “The Glamour & Fashion Page” with the subtitle “How to Achieve Effects You Would Not Have Thought Possible Even in Your Wildest Dreams!” The next panel showcases Atwood as a child made up with “Shirley Temple” curls, which eventually give way to unruly adolescent hair and make her a target of fun for her peers. Atwood makes clear her outsider status and discomfort with glamour and instead turns to literature, where she proclaims “all things are possible” (panel 7). In her university years she declares, “I renounced the quest for glamour and became unkempt” (panel 14) much to the horror of her roommates at Harvard, who burn her unfashionable hush puppies while Atwood attends The Governor General Awards ceremony. Atwood describes their behavior by wryly explaining, “My roommates, being American, were impressed by the idea of a Governor General. They vetoed my Hush Puppies” (panel 19).

In *Engendering Genre: The Works of Margaret Atwood*, Reingard M. Nischik regards Atwood’s preoccupations with glamour in “Hairdo” as a conduit to exploring Canada’s discomfort with its position on the global stage:

Atwood points out from the beginning of her pictorial representation of ‘stardom’ that success/celebrity and envy seem to go together, especially when the audience is not at ease with itself, as is the case with Canadians and their often problematic relation to stars from their own country. In panel 3, the ‘glamorous girl’ is persecuted by other girls as well as an older woman, who

with scissors, knife, and axe want to cut off her beautiful curly hair — that is, rob her of her (at the time) only sign of glamour. This panel in a way is a self-ironic depiction of Atwood's statement in *Second Words* that 'We [Canadians] cut tall poppies.' (229)

The uneasiness that Canadians display over conspicuous celebrity that Nischik addresses above and as noted by Atwood's reference to Canadian "tall poppy syndrome," the self-deprecating cultural phenomenon that thrives on discrediting successful public figures, supports my reading of *The Robber Bride* as an exercise into the anxiety of glamour as a symptom of the rapid growth of Canada's largest urban centre, Toronto.

In *The Robber Bride*, Toronto becomes an enchanted city in the country's landscape that reinforces glamour's etymological usage as a means to charm. The novel begins with the three women protagonists, Tony, Roz and Charis, at their monthly lunch gathering in a Queen Street restaurant bar, the Toxique. Their date is upended by the sudden appearance of Zenia, their nemesis, who they had thought was long dead. Zenia is presented as a shapeshifter who tailors the facts of her life to suit the woman she is manipulating to gain favours, such as success, sympathy, and shelter. The concept of shapeshifting recalls Scott's poem on glamour's illusory power to make a "ladye seem a knight," and Zenia certainly uses the power of glamour to make a con artist seem like a lady. The friendship that forms among the three women is a result of the shared emotional devastation that Zenia has left in her path, which includes her cruel seduction of their husbands. In a series of flashbacks, Atwood shows how all three protagonists were easily charmed by this supposed sorceress in different parts of the city and at different points in their lives, which correlates, much like in *The Torontonians*, with the city's changing landscape, most notably the rise of gentrification and the ongoing effects of the Great Recession.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Canadian economy had entered into a recession that lasted until 1992. Atwood's text, published a year after the end of the recession, documents the effects of the economic downturn in Toronto. In particular, her narrative focuses on gentrification as an aftermath of the recession and the "reassertion of economics over culture" (Hackworth and Rekers 4). Queen St. at the start of the 1990s was on the cusp of gentrification, partly due to zoning laws that began repurposing industrial zones into pedestrian-friendly mini villages (Keenan, *Some Great Idea* 68). Atwood illustrates these changing dynamics of the city in her assessment of the post-recession Queen St.:

The rents have gone up and a lot of the second-hand bookstores and scruffier artists are gone. The mix is still fringe fashion, Eastern European deli, wholesale office furniture, country-and-western beer drinkers' bars; but there are brightly lit doughnut shops now, trendy nightspots, clothes with meaningful labels. (*The Robber Bride* 30)

Her unflinching description of the gentrification of what was traditionally a street that was home to the city's avant-garde artists and punks, as Chapter Five will illuminate further, is a mourning for the city's lost alternative culture. It is worth noting that *The Robber Bride* was published the same year as Rosemary Sexton's *Glitter Girls* and both were reviewed in the "Books" section of *The Toronto Star* on October 2nd, 1993. In her review of *Glitter Girls*, Susan Kastner bemoans the tedium of its subjects: "Imagine that you have virtually nothing to do in life but shop for clothes in which to go shopping for more clothes" ("All That Glitters Is Not Golden"). Meanwhile, Philip Marchand's column, right next to Kastner's, praises "Atwood's [sharp] eye for [conveying] the social landscape of Toronto" ("The Damage That Women Do"). Significantly, both texts revolve around Toronto women in conflict, but in the aftermath of the

recession, Toronto readers were understandably not gripped by narratives of the excessive wealth and spending habits of the wives of Toronto's well-known businessmen. Atwood, on the other hand, wisely chooses to focus on three working women from different class backgrounds to examine the changing dynamics of the city.

Atwood traces this glamscape with a mixture of desire and fear not wholly unlike what is depicted in the pages of *The Torontonians*, yet whereas the possibility of the glamorous modern city is welcome in suburban Rowanwood, the women of *The Robber Bride* engage with a different sort of glamour, or rather, a *bad glamour* that awakens them to their own appetites and apprehensions. *Bad glamour* is a phrase I have borrowed from both Judith Brown and Toronto poet Stuart Ross, who writes about wayward cowboys and desolate churches in Berlin in his poetry and short story collection *Bad Glamour*. While he does not explicitly name Toronto in his work, there is a sense that certain spaces invoke what he refers to as “the unbearable sight / of bad glamour” (“Bad Glamour”). Bad glamour is not a denouncement, but rather a glamour that Brown notes is “not unlike the sublime, that eighteenth-century symbol of negativity and delightful terror” (13). In this regard, “bad glamour” represents those spaces that encompass overwhelming feelings of fear and awe.

The Robber Bride is divided into seven sections, and two of these sections are framed by “the Toxique.” Toxique, of course, serves many meanings in this context. The Toxique is no doubt a metonym for Zenia, the woman who stole all of the protagonists' husbands — the eponymous robber bride, whose very presence is a toxic force to anyone who comes near her. The Toxique is also a space where bad glamour is in abundance:

The Toxique is one of their favourite places: not too expensive, and with a buzz; though it's a little arch, a little grubby. Plates arrive with strange textures

sticking to their undersides, the waiters may have eye shadow or nose rings, the waitresses tend to wear fluorescent leg-warmers and leather mini-shorts. There's a long smoked-glass mirror along one side, salvaged from some wrecked hotel. Posters of out-of-date alternative-theatre events are glued to the walls, and people with pallid skin and chains hanging from their sombre, metal-studded clothing slouch through to the off-limits back rooms or confer together on the splintering stairs that lead down to the toilets. (31)

The fictional Toxique,⁵³ located on Queen St. “past Dragon Lady Comics, past the Queen Mother Café, past the Bamboo Club with its hot graphics” (30), is an inexpensive haven for local artists and students.

In *The Robber Bride*'s depiction of the city's metamorphoses into a developing neo-bohemia, which recalls the hip bohemian aesthetic of Yorkville in the 1960s as will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, a certain type of feminized grit-as-glamour aesthetic emerges as women occupy a central space in the city's topography. From the aptly named “Dragon Lady Comics” to the “Queen Mother Café” to *Queen St.* itself, Atwood's narrative challenges the “distinct articulation of male privilege in the normative neo-bohemian construction of the edge” (Lloyd 84). Grit, as a cultural marker for the neo-bohemian society, is also a character trait for the women that populate Atwood's text in their battle against toxic individuals like Zenia and the men that have become her prey. While the Toxique is a masculine noun in French, the bar is ultimately feminized by the various generations of women occupying its space in a posture of true grit.

⁵³ According to *The Globe and Mail* journalist, Val Ross, “The Rivoli, a Queen Street West bistro with black interior and punk waitpersons is a likely bet for The Toxique” (“Playing the Atwood Guessing Game”).

The women first spot Zenia through the mirror in the Toxique. Dressed completely in black and smoking a cigarette, Zenia is the picture of the glamorous femme fatale: “Zenia blows out smoke, lowers her gaze. She stares at Tony. She stares right through her. But she sees her all right. She sees all three of them. She knows how they feel. She’s enjoying it” (39). Brown theorizes the cigarette as emblematic of glamour, noting that it is an “experience that moves one out of the material world of demands, responsibilities, and attention to productivity, and into another, more ethereally bound, fleeting, beautiful, and deadly” (5). Cigarettes feature prominently in both *The Robber Bride* and in *The Torontonians*. In *The Torontonians*, Karen jokes, “I smoke too much. And so what? As that doctor in England has said, the one who was doing cancer research, there was something a little silly about giving up a pleasure in order to move from one morality group to another” (10). Cigarettes, especially in the context of the 1950s, conjure up images of old grandes dames of film noir staking their defiance against the oppressive conventions of society. Karen repeatedly refers to the film *Casablanca*: “That was one of the things about having lived in Toronto more or less all your life. You practically never met anybody with whom you could not find some common ground, some point of mutual contact. It was only very rarely that you did not, in effect, meet somebody who remembered Bogart in *Casablanca*” (144). In referencing this American classic film from 1942, Karen slyly aligns herself with the love-torn Ilsa Lund played by Ingrid Bergman. Bergman’s character famously never smoked on screen, despite the fact that Bergman herself was a heavy smoker. She claimed that she wanted Ilsa to be regarded as a “good girl” and “good girls” do not

smoke.⁵⁴ Karen similarly struggles with being “good.” Like Ilsa before her, Karen, too, finds herself oscillating between two men yet ultimately does not stray from her husband.

The cigarette as a totem of glamour reveals how women stage their gender in society. Elizabeth Wilson writes, “Smoking orchestrated time, gave it a rhythm, punctuated talk, theatricality mimed both masculinity and femininity, was the intellectuals’ essential accessory, was also an erotic gesture, enhancing the master of some unknown drinker seated at her table, veiled in a bluish haze” (*Bohemians* 37). The cigarette, therefore, is a talisman. For Zenia, it is a prop to convey her worldly stature, whereas for Roz the cigarette allows her to revel in part of Zenia’s inherent glamour: “[Roz] touches up Zenia’s martini, and pours herself another, and offers a cigarette, words pouring out of her like ink from a squid. Camouflage. She’s relieved to note that Zenia smokes. It would be intolerable if she were thin and well-dressed and unwrinkled and a knockout, and a non-smoker as well” (416).

Zenia, no doubt a word-play on *xenia*, the ancient Greek concept for the hospitality extended toward a guest traveling far from home, is the complete opposite of the welcoming host; rather, the women are forced into circumstances where they must welcome her into their lives and home. Tony, the first of the women to meet Zenia, carefully observes that Zenia needs to be invited in before she crosses any thresholds, much like a helpless young heroine unwittingly inviting a vampire into her house: “[B]ecause people like Zenia can never step through your doorway, can never enter and entangle themselves in your life, unless you invite

⁵⁴ For further reading on Bergman and smoking see the chapter “Consuming the Unrespectable: Smoking and Femininity” in *Smoking in British Popular Culture 1800-2000: Perfect Pleasures* by Matthew Hilton (Manchester UP: 2000).

them. There has to be a recognition, an offer of hospitality, a word of greeting” (133).⁵⁵ Zenia also shares characteristics with the concept of xenophobia, the deep-rooted fear, and often exoticization, of foreigners and the unknown. Zenia is multifaceted and complex; as Atwood’s narrative unfolds, she slowly reveals how the composite of Zenia’s character is based upon a series of faux histories specifically tailored to each woman that she charms out of house and husband. Zenia’s various histories have no roots in Toronto, where all three protagonists grew up and later met in university.

The title of Atwood’s novel pays homage to the “The Robber Bridegroom,” a fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm in which a young woman is able to outwit her evil suitor who threatens to devour her. While Atwood’s text is replete with allusions to fairy tales and folklore, her prose concedes to her more Gothic leanings. In *The Robber Bride* Toronto resembles Frankenstein’s monster, an assemblage of various parts and histories. Roz reinforces this sentiment when she is deciding which charity fundraiser to support: “Hearts, Lungs and Livers, Eyes, Ears, and Kidneys, all have their proponents; some, knowing how Torontonians will do anything to disguise themselves, are even going into costume balls” (98). Zenia, in the guise of the glamorous figure, beguiles all of the major characters to reflect upon their pasts, forcing them to dig into the uncomfortable disguises of their personal histories. Yet Zenia, too, is a Frankenstein’s monster of sorts. She is not only a collage of various life histories, but she is also

⁵⁵ Zenia is faintly reminiscent of Sheridan Le Fanu’s famous female vampire, Carmilla, from his 1871-2 novella of the same name. Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* is recognized as one of the first vampire tales. Written 25 years before Stoker’s *Dracula* it gained attention for its focus on the erotic relationship that develops between the vampire Carmilla and Laura, the novella’s protagonist. Laura unwittingly invites Carmilla into her home, which sets the stage for the bloody destruction that follows. Incidentally, a Toronto-based web series loosely based on *Carmilla* was developed for online audiences between 2014-16 that showed Laura and Carmilla meeting in university in the same way that all three female protagonists meet Zenia, and by the season’s finale, Laura and Carmilla are sharing an apartment in Toronto.

a physical grotesque. As Roz archly notes after seeing Zenia, who has had multiple plastic surgeries, at the Toxique: “Still, Roz can picture the stitch marks, the needles tracks, where the Frankenstein doctors have been at work. She knows the fault lines where Zenia might crack open” (118). Zenia’s glamour, in this regard, is deeply rooted in the Gothic tradition and conforms to the grotesque glamour that was depicted on screen in various Toronto films in the 1970s and 80s as will be further discussed in Chapter Six.⁵⁶

A number of critics have written on and documented the doubling effects — a prominent feature of Gothic novels — of Zenia and how her inherent otherness shapes the relationship with each of the three main characters in the text.⁵⁷ Coral Ann Howells suggests: “It would appear that Zenia is threatening not because she is the other of these women, but because she is their double, forcing them to look at repressed dimensions of otherness within themselves” (*Margaret Atwood* 205). Zenia’s glamour, that is, her ability to bewitch everyone around her, allows the women to consider their own glamorous potential despite not having her same, albeit fabulist, rich history. In this, Zenia recalls Henry Pellatt’s Gothic castle, Casa Loma as discussed in the first chapter. While Casa Loma was designed with the intent to illuminate Pellatt’s glamorous aspirations and to raise Toronto’s international cultural capital, instead the castle and Pellatt were derided for their extravagance and excess. Yet, only once Pellatt had been forced to move from

⁵⁶ Elizabeth Wilson notes: “Glamour crept into the English language at the same time as industrialism provoked the reaction of the Romantic Movement with its love of gothic, because these changes were connected. The gothic served as the opposite of Enlightenment rationality, but it was also pressed into use as a critique of the iron necessities of the new world of work and factory cities, now longing for an authenticity that seemed to have been lost in commerce and business” (“A Note on Glamour” 99). Also see Valerie Steele and Jennifer Park: *Gothic: Dark Glamour* (2008).

⁵⁷ For further reading see Lorna Irvine’s, “Recycling Culture: Kitsch, Camp, and Trash in Margaret Atwood’s Fiction” (2000) and Coral Ann Howells’ chapter “Atwoodian Gothic: From *Lady Oracle* to *The Robber Bride*” in her book *Margaret Atwood* (2002). As well, see Fiona Tolan’s “Situating Canada: The Shifting Perspective of the Postcolonial Other in Margaret Atwood’s *The Robber Bride*” (2009).

his home was a concession made toward the particular glamour which a castle affords a city. Zenia, like Casa Loma, is initially feared for her innate glamour until the women come to recognize the power that glamour possesses.

In her exploration of Elsa Schiaparelli and her “cult of glamorous silence”, Ilya Parkins notes that Schiaparelli represented a “paradoxically magnetic inaccessibility, an enigma whose mystery was the foundation of her appeal” (190). Zenia’s version of glamorous silence manifests in her inaccessibility as a result of her ambiguous origins that prevents the other women from pinning her down. Her past is entirely made up of wild fantasy, yet she seamlessly passes herself off as a former prostitute from a family of White Russians, or a wandering pack of Romanian Gypsies, or the displaced child of Berlin Jews. She maintains these fictions with the aplomb of a seasoned professional impersonator. In effect, she resembles another Golden Age of Hollywood Swedish actress, Greta Garbo. The spirit of Garbo is frequently summoned in discussions surrounding glamour and celebrity. Parkins, Brown, Gundle, and Postrel, among others, invoke the image of Garbo and her sense of timeless glamour through her reclusivity and aura of mystery.⁵⁸ Garbo was notoriously evasive about her personal life and retired from the public eye at age thirty-six, guaranteeing that the public would never see her grow older; thus, her famous face retained its cinematic perfection. Yet, what Garbo’s glamour, in its intangibility and “silence,” reveals is a fundamental paradox in glamour’s epistemology. How does one begin to know the unknowable?

⁵⁸ Roland Barthes famously exclaimed, “The Face of Garbo is an Idea, that of Hepburn, an Event” (64).

This central question is crucial to glamour theory; it is a concept defined precisely by what it is not. Similarly, Anglophone Canadians are often defined by our proximity to the United States yet our identity hinges precisely on being *not* American. Atwood has long written about Canadian identity and its position as “other” to the cultural monolith that is the United States.⁵⁹ In her essay on “Canadian American Relations,” Atwood says that Canadians had become “addicted to the one-way mirror of the Canadian-American border — we can see you, you can’t see us — and had neglected that other mirror, their own culture” (*Second Words* 385). This unresponsive gaze recalls the initial reunion with Zenia at the Toxique. Toni, Roz and Charis feel as though Zenia is staring right through them from the reflection in the mirror. Zenia refuses to acknowledge their presence in the restaurant while the women fear they will be seen by this *revenant* from their past. In this regard, the women embody a very stereotypical Canadian response in their deference toward the hostile and larger-than-life Zenia. Constance Classen and David Howes further argue:

From Atwood’s perspective, Canada has traditionally occupied, and internalized, the position of the female in relation to the dominant, male land to the south [...] and so the figure of the female is well suited to represent the Canadian character [...] Furthermore, Atwood’s statements on Canadian cultural identity can be seen as paralleling and informing the apparently more personal and feminine expressions of identity in her poems and stories.

(“Margaret Atwood: Two-Headed Woman”)

⁵⁹ Atwood’s *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972) is still considered a groundbreaking study of Canadian literature and Canadian national identity.

The women's encounter with Zenia at the Toxique establishes the glamorous connections in the text, that is, the "connections between selves and the social world through the ongoing act of interpreting the glamorous figure, who is seen to possess a kind of distant interiority" (Parkins 192). As the quintessentially glamorous figure, Zenia's worldly exoticism and untouchability provide a framework for the other women in *The Robber Bride* to articulate a particular glamour that is distinctly associated with Toronto.

Atwood's Toronto is "nostalgic, wistful, unsettled, but largely resigned to what it has gained or given up in a city described as little more than a palimpsest of other cities" (Harris 189). As Toni walks along Spadina Avenue, she comments on the diverse range of cultures around her:

She likes the mix on the street here, the mixed skins. Chinatown has taken over mostly, though there are still some Jewish delicatessens, and, further up and off to the side, the Portuguese and West Indian shops of the Kensington Market. Rome in the second century, Constantinople in the tenth, Vienna in the nineteenth. A crossroads. Those from other countries look as if they're trying hard to forget something, those from here as if they're trying hard to remember. Or maybe it's the other way around. (41)

Fiona Tolan notes the various ways in which Zenia slyly allows the women to participate in her glamour:

Zenia's betrayal is consuming because each woman has come to rely on the positive image of herself that Zenia reflects. Lonely and neglected, Tony is seduced by this proffered reflection: 'for aren't they both orphans? Both motherless, both war babies, making their way in the world by themselves [. . .

.]’ Similarly, multiracial Roz is encouraged to recognize something of herself in Zenia’s exotic glamor: ‘So Zenia is a mixture, like herself!’ (462)

Tolan does not mention Charis in her account of Zenia’s various seductions, yet Charis, perhaps more than any of the other characters, fully transforms after meeting Zenia. Charis was born Karen, but after a childhood trauma she began to identify with her assumed name as a coping mechanism. Charis’ name, like Zenia’s, has a mythological lineage.⁶⁰ Charis is the name of one of the Charities, Greek goddesses, or “Graces,” of charm, beauty and nature. Charis also resembles Charon, the name for the ferryman who carries the souls of the newly deceased to Hades. Charis, too, travels by ferry daily to return to her home on the Toronto Islands, thus further imbuing the city with a mythological sensibility. After encountering Zenia, Charis triumphantly channels her mythological namesakes:

In the morning she feels more like herself, like Charis. She doesn’t know where Karen has gone. Not back underneath the lake; it doesn’t feel like that. Possibly Karen is hiding somewhere else inside their shared body; but when she closes her eyes and searches with the mind’s eye, here and there within herself, she can’t find her, although there is a dark patch, a shadow, something she can’t see. When she makes love with Billy she doesn’t think about being Karen, or Charis either. She thinks about being Zenia. (307)

⁶⁰ In “Mythological Intertexts in Margaret Atwood’s Works” Sharon R. Wilson offers an in-depth mythological reading of all of the women in the *Robber Bride*: “Tony is the goddess of memory, Mnemosyne, mother of the nine muses, Athena, goddess of war and wisdom. Roz is the obvious lush-bodied earth, mother goddess, and protecting angel of the other characters. Since Charis’s name suggests the wife of the lame craftsman, Hephaestus, maker of magical things but lord of the underworld, and since she, like Charon, not only ferries across the figural River Styx but is the first to recognize Zenia’s return, Charis represents the underworld and the spirit world. Since she ‘dies’ as Karen, is reborn as Charis, and finally reclaims Karen, Charis is the whole cycle in herself” (“Mythological Intertexts in Margaret Atwood’s Works” 223).

Wilson provides a useful insight into the ontology of glamour: “[...] the only spiritual or supernatural element that enters into glamour is the extent to which it can provide a home (albeit of a kind that might seem trivial to many) for a displaced search for perfection” (*Cultural Passions* 69). In separating mind and body, Charis enacts how glamour performs cultural and spiritual work on exceptional individuals. The performance of glamour in *The Robber Bride*, specifically, is a demonstration of female creative power.

In *Self-Fashioning in Margaret Atwood's Fiction* (2005), Cynthia G. Kuhn astutely describes how glamour is distinctly a feminized and supernatural phenomenon in *The Robber Bride*:

Notably, the three women are sitting together at the Toxique when Charis sees Zenia falling to her death in the flame of the candle — just after one of them jokes about being crones. Crones, witches, and wise women become increasingly important through the novel, especially in conjunction with Zenia's death, and the concept of 'glamour' relates both to appearance and to magic. All of the women are figured as witches, but initially Roz, Charis, and Tony think of Zenia as such without recognizing their own witchy powers [...] In addition to pointing to archetypal figures of power, the 'crone' concept both identifies and rejects negative associations connected with aging, particularly for women. While their aging selves may not be considered glamorous according to cultural standards that worship visible youthfulness, Roz, Charis, and Tony are experiencing increased glamour (i.e., magic and wisdom) potency. Zenia's magic, in contrast, relies upon other people's perceptions.

(80)

Carol S. Gould further notes, “glamour belongs to one inclined to bewitch or enchant” (238), and while all the women, and their partners, have at one point been enchanted by Zenia, by the novel’s end they pity her, secure with the knowledge that indeed even Zenia would become an old “crone” like the rest of them, imbued with many years of the knowledge of glamour.

At the end of the novel, all three women throw Zenia’s ashes into Lake Ontario and spend an evening reminiscing about the past and about Zenia: “Was she in any way like us? thinks Tony. Or, to put it the other way around: Are we in any way like her?” (Atwood, *The Robber Bride*). Glamour provokes anxiety as well as hostility, especially in women. Atwood acknowledges this wholeheartedly in her comic *The Radio Interview* from 1994 (Fig. 7).

Figure 7 Vol. 1, 963 The Radio Interview, 1994. Cartoon: Margaret Atwood. Image omitted due to copyright restrictions. For a reproduction, please consult the following source: margaretatwood.ca/cartoons-art

Nischik analyzes how this particular comic speaks to the ways in which women writers are often routinely subjected to questions that conflate their work with their personal lives:

Yet the answer ‘Zenia’ is even more effective, at least for a perceptive reader of *The Robber Bride*, than simply disconcerting the ignorant interviewer. Zenia in *The Robber Bride* comes across as mysterious not least because she is hardly ever allowed to speak for herself. Her character is the montage product of other characters’ projections. In this way, the figure of Atwood in the comic *does* have similarities to Zenia, after all: namely, concerning the public image that Atwood can control only to some extent; she is mostly at the mercy of a public largely ignorant of literature and projecting their simplistic views and prejudices onto her. (234)

While Nischik's vision of an ill-informed public is rather bleak, I contend that the public is obviously not ignorant of literature as a whole but likely oblivious to Canadian literature with a strictly urban centre at the core of its text. By aligning herself with Zenia's character, Atwood dares to be glamorous in the same way that she dared to have a novel primarily made up of female characters in downtown Toronto in 1993.

In 2012, Atwood published a short story in *The Walrus* that functioned as a sequel in miniature to *The Robber Bride*. "I Dream of Zenia with the Bright Red Teeth" reunites her three main protagonists, Roz, Tony and Charis, now much older and helping an increasingly cognitively disoriented Charis, who believes the spirit of Zenia has inhabited her dog. It is hardly surprising that Atwood wanted to return to these characters, as each one is possessed with distinct personalities that can fill many short stories to come. However, there is also a sense that Atwood is correlating the changes of her characters, both physically and psychologically, with the growth of the city. She writes:

The three of them used to eat at the Toxique, back in the days of Zenia. Queen Street West was edgier then: more green hair, more black leather, more comic book stores. Now the mid-scale clothing chains have moved in, though there are still some residual tattoo joints and button shops, and the Condom Shack is soldiering on. The Toxique is long gone, however. Roz settles for the Queen Mother Cafe. A little elderly and battered, but comfy, like the three of them.

("I Dream of Zenia")

Long gone are the days of the gritty glam of the Toxique and with that Queen Street's more punk leanings; the women have settled into their new roles as older women and now choose to dine in the appropriately named Queen Mother Cafe. The café, unlike the Toxique, actually exists and

has been one of the few restaurants on the Queen Street strip to resist gentrification. Rather, the cafe resembles a bohemian den from the 19th century and imbues Queen St. with an old-world glamour that is not easily recognized on a street filled with Starbucks, sushi restaurants and high-end cannabis shops.

Rosenthal argues that “As an imaginative city, Toronto is still in the process of becoming, not because there has been no fiction set in Toronto earlier in the twentieth century, but because it is only now that it is being discussed as a significant corpus of literature and as a way of symbolically building the city” (33). Indeed, as Toronto, and Toronto’s literature, entered the twenty-first century, the public image of the “Toronto” novel radically shifted. Sheila Heti’s *How Should a Person Be?* (2010) shows how much the city has changed since Atwood’s *Robber Bride* specifically in relation to concepts of identity, celebrity and the performance of female literary glamour in Toronto.

Glamour as Praxis in *How Should a Person Be?*

Fifty years after the publication of *The Torontonians*, and seventeen years after the publication of *The Robber Bride*, Sheila Heti continues Phyllis Brett Young’s and Margaret Atwood’s fictional explorations of how white women in Toronto have performed forms of glamour that have in the process influenced the city’s identity, in her experimental quasi-fictional memoir, *How Should a Person Be?* (2010). Heti’s text begins with the protagonist, Sheila, confessing that she wants to live a simple life but one in which she is the only famous person alive: “[...] but not talk about it too much. And for no one to be too interested in taking my picture, for they’d all carry around in their heads an image of me that was unchanging, startling, and magnetic” (*How Should a Person*

Be? 3). While Sheila never explicitly states “I want to be glamorous,” her definition of fame relies upon the practices of glamour that Nigel Thrift has delineated in a tripartite classification:

The object effect: an object standing for a world without troubles or with troubles you want [...].

Engaging in alternate versions of ‘me’ that can act as a particular imaginary norm, often speculatively and in parallel, in order to realize a particular form of character [...].

Calculation, but it is a calculation that must go unnoticed. It must appear effortless [...]. (298–99)

In her quest to discover “How Should A Person Be?” Sheila, in effect, attempts to distill these pillars of glamour into a digestible product as befitting the life of an artist.

At the onset, Sheila invokes the notable Andy Warhol and Oscar Wilde, in whose work glamour is a constant theme, exclaiming: “I admired all the great personalities through the ages, like Andy Warhol and Oscar Wilde. They seemed to be so perfectly themselves in every way. I didn’t think, *Those are great souls*, but I did think, *Those are some great personalities for our age*” (1-2). Of course, Sheila is not interested in how to be an ordinary person; underlying her search is how to be a person that will be analyzed and idolized in the future. As distinctly non-Canadian queer male artists, the spectre of both Wilde and Warhol underscore Canada’s own particular brand of “otherness” within the realm of conspicuous celebrity. Warhol in particular “believed that [glamour] was not just a property of the stars he adored. Rather it was an effect that emerged also through the admiration and involvement of ordinary mortals. Glamour did not hinge on deferential awe but an attitude of participation and appropriation. In other words, it was something that could be taken over and refashioned by its consumers” (Gundle, *Glamour* 307).

Heti similarly refashions notions tied to literary success in her bold search for glamour and celebrity as she casts a critical eye toward a culture that Atwood had previously described as “cutting down its tallest poppies.” In “A New Canadian Myth for New Canadian times,” a blog post written three years after the publication of *How Should a Person Be?*⁶¹ Heti makes a clear argument for re-examining the paradigm that makes it difficult for young Canadian artists to achieve success. Heti responds in a blog post to a profile that was done on her in *The Globe and Mail*,⁶² in which the newspaper decried that her book only gained success once it was given praise in the United States.⁶² In her post, Heti argues that this myth of the Canadian publishing industry often gets interpreted as a fact, which does a major disservice to the wider Canadian literary community. Her post makes the case that “it’s time for a new story” as she makes clear that her success was predicated upon the help *she* sought from her fellow artists, and peers — the “involvement of ordinary mortals,” — she has immortalized in her text (“A New Canadian Myth for New Canadian Times”).

How Should a Person Be? acknowledges the obstacles on the path to becoming a famous, or as Sheila notes an “Important,” artist in the city:

At the bus station, sitting on an orange moulded plastic chair, I looked through a huge book called *Important Artists* - the only book I had packed for my journey. [...] all I wanted was to take a different route to the one thing that would justify the ugliness in me: I would become Important. [...] Reading through the bios and taking notes, I learned that artists originated in a hundred

⁶¹ See <http://backtotheworld.net/2013/04/15/a-new-canadian-myth-for-new-canadian-times-by-sheila-heti/>.

⁶² See <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/books-and-media/book-reviews/how-should-a-novel-be-dont-ask-sheila-heti/article11134050/?page=all>

and eleven cities, but by the Important phase of their careers, they populated thirty-nine. Twenty-three of those cities had only one artist in them, and the remaining sixteen held the rest. Twenty-seven percent of the artists had left their country of birth. Not a single American-born artist had moved outside of America. Of the sixteen cities where more than one Important Artist lived, seven held only two artists who were Important: Buenos Aires, Rio, Vienna, Vancouver, Leipzig, Tokyo, Cologne. I eliminated those seven, for the odds were too small of becoming Important there, and I was left with only nine cities, where three or more Important Artists lived:

Glasgow	4
Dusseldorf [sic]	5
Mexico City	6
Paris	7
Amsterdam	8
Los Angeles	9
London	15
Berlin	19
New York	30

In the future, would the list say:

Toronto	3? (179-80).
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Ultimately Sheila opts to go to New York City since she cannot wait for a future time when Toronto would be filled with “Important” artists (180). However, after a series of small setbacks she recognizes her “real duty in the world. I told myself without hesitation: *Go home*” (216).

Sheila remarks with horror while she is in New York that she has “somehow [...] turned myself into the worst thing in the world: I was just another man who wanted to teach me something!” (214). It is tempting to read this exclamation as a metaphor for Toronto as a second tier/female city that often takes its cues from more world class or masculine cities such as New York, but Heti subverts this angle by having her protagonist return to Toronto willingly to perform her “real duty,” which was to establish herself as an “Important” artist in the city she refers to as home.

Heti's Toronto exists primarily in the Queen West area of the city, which when she wrote the book, was known for hip bars and galleries that line the side of the street, creating an atmosphere of a little bohemian oasis. It is certainly a different Queen Street than the one in *The Robber Bride*, written seventeen years prior, where the marks of the post 1990-91 recession in Canada are clearly visible in the changing dynamic of the streets, with its mix of gritty bars and trendy furniture and clothing stores. Heti's text, however, was published a year after the “Great Recession” of 2008-9, yet as she notes at the back of her text that the events in this book took place around 2005 and 2006. By the early 2000s the gentrification of Queen St. West was fully underway. In “Go West, Young Hipster: The Gentrification of Queen Street West,” Heather McLean notes that along the stretch of Queen St. West between Dovercourt St. and Dufferin St, an area that had long been populated by residents in lower income housing, there was, in 2005, an application to open a seventh bar within “the 125-square-metre corner of Queen and Beaconsfield and the fifth bar to open or reopen since 2004” (156). Heti's text, much like Atwood's, addresses the fears of gentrification and with that the increasing precarity for artists in the city. Her concept of Toronto and the “important” people in it functions primarily in relation to her proximity to her friends, who dwell in the city's downtown area bordered by Queen Street

West. While Sheila, the character, exists in a vacuum of her own narcissism, Heti, the author, structures her text within the city's broader cultural historical framework, and Queen Street West was historically the centre of political and artistic creativity in the late 1970s and the 1980s and will be further discussed in the following chapters. However, by the mid 1980s the effects of gentrification were beginning to take their toll on Toronto's artsy boulevard, as described by Atwood in *The Robber Bride*. In the 1986 Fall issue of *FUSE Magazine*, Rosemary Donegan, as part of an investigation into Toronto's various artistic communities, poses the question: "What is to Become of Queen Street West?":

[T]he simplest and most cynical view would be based on recent experiences of urban gentrification. The scenario is that artists and musicians of Queen St., as marginal elements in the city, are playing out a process of urban gentrification, defined by a larger urban economy of Domes, parking lots and real-estate developers. Artists move in — due to the low rents, improve local real-estate values, then they are pressured out by the bourgeoisie and developers who move in — redesign, renovate, restore — and make money. (20–21)

Donegan accurately predicted that Queen Street would become a "victim of its own success" (21). The artistic communities that Donegan profiles have in recent years moved to the eastern and western borders of the city, while Queen Street in its present incarnation would be identified as a "glamour zone," that is, the spaces of the city that are made up of luxury commodities such as top of the line restaurants, high-end clothing stores and boutique hotels.

The glamour zone as described by Saskia Sassen is a useful descriptor for the corporate luxury spaces that occupy the global city, and sociologist Kieran Bonner rightly articulates the class privileges that are inherent within these spaces: "Whether for the corporate users or for the

‘others,’ place connotes a site of opportunity: in the case of the travelling corporate user, place is for glamour and ‘super-profits’; in the case of the devalourized, it is for economic survival, legitimacy rights, and voice. The place of the global city is, in essence, the place of opportunity” (279). While glamour has been routinely defined by its ties to massive wealth and consumption, Bonner’s critique of the global city as a place of opportunity also underscores glamour’s more aspirational qualities often available only for the privileged few.

Queen St. West performs a more bohemian glamour in contrast to the upscale luxury of Queen St.’s commercial centre located between University and Spadina, that McLean warns perpetuates a narrative that “poverty [is] rendered ‘edgy’ for people attempting to create a bohemian experience for pubgoers and second-hand-clothes shoppers” (158). Whereas *The Robber Bride* engaged with glamour through its use of the Gothic, *How Should a Person Be?* employs the myth of the bohemian to underscore Toronto’s glamscape. Much like *The Robber Bride*, the text unselfconsciously lists Toronto establishments as if on par with other popular iconic urban institutions, such as New York City’s CBGBs, suggesting the reader would naturally be familiar with The Communist’s Daughter and the shabby chic Paul Petro gallery — Petro himself makes a brief cameo in her text. By drawing upon notable personalities in the city and then turning them into characters in her text, Heti, like Warhol before her, provides the oft quoted “fifteen minutes of fame” for her and her friends in the pages of her work. Moreover, both artists participate in the grand tradition of the myth of the bohemian — the idea that the artist is set apart from his fellow human beings. As Wilson details, this long tradition encourages “new generations [to] build on them, so that the bohemian myth [becomes] self-perpetuating, the bohemian an icon that bec[o]me[s] more and more encrusted with additions based on successive artistic lives, both famous and obscure [...] Memoir and anecdotal reminiscence were, in fact,

the typical bohemian forms of ‘evidence,’ often unreliable in an empirical sense, valuable primarily as sources of legend” (*Bohemians* 6). At the end of *How Should a Person Be?* is a simple note of text after Heti’s biography, which states: “One could say this book began in 2005, but really it began in 2006,” as if making a space for her text as part of Toronto’s folklore and perpetuating the mythology of the “Important” people within its pages.

How Should a Person Be? therefore unfolds as a performance of extimacy, or public intimacy (Thrift 291). The text often reads like a gossip magazine or unfolds in the style of reality television which by 2010 was highly popular with shows like *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* and the *Real Housewives* series. Heti’s understanding of this media landscape is revealed in her narrativizing the sordid lives of actual people in the city, with Heti fashioning her eponymous character in the role of the “It” girl that everyone wants to follow. Joseph Roach rationalizes that *It*, much like the word glamour, embodies a host of multiple definitions. In a description closely resembling glamour, Roach notes *it* “isn’t just physical or, more plausibly still, [it] is fundamentally polymorphous. Few have It, but almost everyone wants to get it anywhere he or she can find it” (4). In her desire to uncover how a person should *be* Sheila is also seeking *It*: “I didn’t know how to be, I would surely lose all *its* favours, *its* protection — as if the universe could delight in me for being a certain way” (42, italics added). Sheila’s search for a practical map to selfhood reflects the loss of *It* in a culture that eschews performances of literary glamour.

Heti’s work, in this regard, functions as an acknowledgement of the glamour labour artists do in the city. I have borrowed the phrase “glamour labour” from Elizabeth Wissinger. While Wissinger’s *This Year’s Model: Fashion, Media, and the Making of Glamour* (2015) examines

the labour of glamour in the modelling industry, her focus on body and image resonates with Heti's narrative. Wissinger makes the argument that:

Glamour labor works on both body and image — the bodywork to manage appearance in person and image work to create and maintain one's 'cool' quotient — how hooked up, tuned in, and 'in the know' one is. Glamour labor involves all aspects of ones' image, from physical presentation, to personal connections, to friendships and fun. (3)

Heti's text articulates this type of labour through Sheila's obsession with looks and how she appears to others, finding refuge in beauty as evidence of how a person should be. In "Sheila Goes to the Salon," the first chapter of *How Should a Person Be?*, Sheila describes her experience of being in the salon's urban environs, in a "high-end commercial building with a good movie theatre, a large bookstore, a ritzy shoe store, a perfume store, and two expensive restaurants. It was very spacious, with a yellow and white colour scheme" (46). As if in dialogue with Heti's sensual experience of the city, Wilson remarks that "The appearance of glamour resides, though, or is created in combination with dress, hair, scent, and even *mise en scène*" (*Cultural Passions* 76). Later in the chapter, Sheila meditates upon the salon's appeal: "Nothing bad could happen in a hair salon, I knew, and nothing ugly or out of the ordinary did. I felt more comfortable and safe there than I had ever felt anywhere. The days I spent at home, working on my impossible play, were miserable; I longed to be at the salon. When I was at the salon, I wished to be nowhere else" (48). Roach devotes an entire chapter in *It* (2007) to the subject of hair as an integral component for *Its* appeal. He argues that "hair can exert a magical power even greater than that of accessories and clothes, in part because it functions as both simultaneously" (117). Thrift, too, deliberates upon the glamorous properties of hair, noting that "... hair has

become a crucial moment in generating glamour, based in part on new technologies that allow hair to become more and more aesthetically expressive” (306). As Chapter Two demonstrated in its description of modern women gravitating toward the chic bobbed style, hair can be symbolic of glamorous possibility. Hair can also be contentious as demonstrated by the debates over Mary Pickford’s golden curls and Jean Ford Tolmie’s more conservative locks which the Miss Toronto judges declared to promote the image of the ideal Toronto woman.

While longing for beauty and glamour through the transformative powers of hair is not a narrative endemic to the streets of Toronto, it connects the city to a broader tradition of reading glamour in city texts and also acknowledges the resistance toward such readings. Sheila’s reflection upon the cathartic possibilities that the salon affords reveals her vulnerability as an artist in the city in a culture that often derides blatant desires for success and the yearning to create an artwork that cannot be ignored. For when one walks into a salon one expects to be *seen* upon leaving.

Conclusion

Reading glamour in Toronto literature is an investigation into the excitement, anxiety and anticipation for Toronto’s growing cosmopolis and acknowledges and insists upon glamour as a fundamental component of the city. Glamour is a dimension of Canadian writing and this chapter aims to disrupt assumptions suggested by Rosenthal and others who claim that Toronto does not participate in the often dark and innate glamorous narratives of textual cities such as New York and London. Rather, as I have shown, Toronto has spent the past half century negotiating its literary glamour through the performances of women in the city.

Certainly, the language of glamour that infuses a text such as *The Torontonians* communicates a distinctly white, middle-class feminine desire to move beyond the suburban domestic sphere of the 1950s and into the developing and lively bustle of the urban core that the city promises. Toward the end of *The Torontonians*, Karen walks towards Queen's Park and makes the realization that the freshly manicured homes of Rowanwood are not for her:

A city with a future, like an individual with a future, could never remain static for long, could not afford to expand indefinitely along the lines of least resistance. The suburbs, as they now existed, were the city's lines of least resistance. The towering buildings to the south were the real yardstick of its stature. (319)

Toronto's downtown, for Karen, represents the future and with that the promise of the new. Meanwhile *The Robber Bride* and *How Should a Person Be?* complicate this desire as these post-recession narratives reveal a grittier glamour to the city than the shining modern sky scrapers that sprinkle the downtown core in Karen's vision. To be sure, the expression of glamour in these Toronto-based texts reveals a certain sense of civic pride that assumes an innate glamour for the city that, much like definitions of glamour, remains fluid.

This chapter has been primarily concerned with the expressions of glamour that surface in Toronto-based literary fiction and its tendency to focus on the glamorized position of the woman in the city. Certainly, the seductive appeal of women in urban environments inspires fictions of freedom, both sexual and psychological, as well as darker narratives influenced by the very real threats and anxieties that the city provokes for the single woman urban wanderer. The language of glamour in these texts written by women writers, therefore, conveys the delight in taking up space in Toronto — to go beyond the margins — to proclaim the value of their artistry

as “important” in the city they call home. The next chapter returns to the glamorous figure of the Bohemian and the creation of Toronto’s Bohemia in the 1960s, also known as Yorkville village, and how this small neighbourhood played a large role in the development of Toronto’s international glamour.

Chapter Four: La Ville Bohème: Unveiling the Glamour of 1960s Yorkville

“I started hanging out in Yorkville, which was Toronto’s little slice of sixties bohemia. On weekends, my friend Karen and I took the Don Mills bus downtown. Karen was a miniskirted rebel with white lipstick, mod bob and layers of eyeliner. Her needs were simple: a skin specialist and the love of any long-haired boy. My needs were more complicated. The streets of Yorkville were overflowing with kids searching for nirvana. They sat on the steps outside the Grab Bag, the only variety store on the street. They drank coffee at the Penny Farthing. At night there were so many clubs to hang out at — Charlie Brown’s; the El Patio; the Purple Onion; and the Mynah Bird, where a woman swayed back and forth, half naked, in a swing suspended from the ceiling. [...] Yorkville seemed like a different galaxy. I ran towards that bright, beckoning, aura-enhanced light”

– Carole Pope, *Anti Diva* 9.

“Yorkville today is the place where: The prostitutes are teeny-boppers; 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 now almost 17 — tonight will sell her favors for \$20; Fifteen-year-olds boast of

how much marijuana and LSD they've taken; And it's the place which attracts teenagers by the thousands, hooks them and won't let them go"

– David Allen *Toronto Daily Star*, April 5, 1967.

Certain urban spaces and eras are forever marked by glamour's indelible touch: New York City's Greenwich Village evokes the glamour of the 1950s Beatniks while Paris' Montmartre recalls the glamour of the Bohemians of the Belle Époque era. Similarly, Carnaby Street conjures up images of "Swinging London" and its youth decked out in tailored mod suits and Mary Quant mini-skirts seduced by the glamour of youthful independence. For Toronto, the small neighbourhood known as Yorkville, an area that is bordered by Avenue Rd. and Davenport with its streets leading down to the high-end stores of Bloor Street's Mink Mile, so-dubbed for its luxury brand stores that dot along the four blocks to Yonge Street, has been a crucial space for the development of Toronto's praxis of glamour. In *Psychogeographic Walking Tours of Toronto* (2010), Shawn Micallef notes that: "When the subway pulls into Bay station, the fine print underneath the word 'Bay' says 'Yorkville,' a reminder that Yorkville is an important enough location to warrant mention, an honour the TTC hasn't given to any other Toronto neighbourhood" (76). Micallef's observation points toward Yorkville's rich history and its past stature as a space that cultural geographer Alison Bain refers to as "shrouded in counter-cultural glamour" (423). Decades before Yorkville was synonymous with luxury condominiums and upscale boutiques, "The Village," as it was most commonly referred to throughout the 1960s, aligned itself alongside other popular urban cultural centres as an adopted space for white-middle class youth enchanted by the promise of a new bohemia.

In the 1960s, “youth” emerged as a powerful category across the globe imbued with political significance. The aftermath of the post-World War II baby boom yielded an unprecedented number of teenagers and young adults. In North America especially, many young people under the age of 25 were discovering that they felt alienated from the materialistic culture that their parents, raised in the depression era, had come to embrace. By the mid-1960s, many of these middle-class youth sought out other like-minded individuals and came together, often in large urban centres and college towns, to share their dissatisfaction with the mainstream. Cultural historians, such as Stuart Henderson, have argued that Yorkville in the 1960s represented one of these key sites for Canada’s countercultural revolution and was *the* centre for alternative lifestyles finding refuge from the dominant culture.⁶³ Yorkville, according to Henderson, was not simply a geographic destination for wayward Toronto youth but also a site of identity performance for Canadian youth culture. In this chapter, I make the case that glamour was an essential component of this performance of identity in Yorkville.

This chapter establishes Yorkville as a site of conspicuous glamour during Toronto’s youthquake of the 1960s and asks how the myth of the bohemian figure shaped the concept of Yorkville, both physically and conceptually, in the popular cultural imagination. The first part of this chapter looks at how the myth of Yorkville as a space for bohemian exploration was initially influenced by the residents of Gerrard Village, Toronto’s original bohemian epicentre. The performance of glamour found its stage in public spaces such as the Bohemian Embassy, the coffee shop that acted as a nexus point between Gerrard Street and Yorkville and helped to

⁶³ Yorkville was not only a space for Canada’s wayward youth, in a CBC investigative report, “Safe Haven in Toronto for Draft Dodgers” found that over 90 draft dodgers were hiding out in the Yorkville area in 1966 (Bondy).

nurture a culture that embraced the bohemian ideals of art for art's sake discussed in Chapter One. Next, this chapter explores the use of fashion as a corollary of bohemian glamour in Toronto, one that was particularly instrumental for women's creative practice in the city. Finally, this chapter analyzes Perception '67, the psychedelic festival and fashion show held at the University of Toronto in the spring of 1967, which showcased the limits of glamour's reach in the city and ultimately its end as the reflection on Rochdale College's failed glamour demonstrates.

Tracing the Geography of Glamour from Gerrard to Yorkville Village

Yorkville was not Toronto's first bohemian epicentre. Gerrard Village, which was located on and around Gerrard Street, between Elizabeth and Bay Streets, was an area that prompted notable Canadian journalist Pierre Berton to declare the space in the 1920s "our ghetto, our Bowery, our Chinatown, our East Side" and then in the 1930s "our Soho, our Montparnasse" (qtd. in Baute) in reference to other historic refuges of artistic and intellectual life. As Rosemary Donegan notes, "identifying [Gerrard] as 'the Village' was common. Toronto artists drew their models and ideas about being an artist from the international metropolises. Montparnasse, Soho, Bloomsbury, Greenwich Village, the East Village; these 'Villages' kept alive a model and public concept of the 'artist'" (15). At the beginning of the twentieth century, Gerrard Village was a veritable who's who of Canadian literary and artistic talent. Most famously, the Group of Seven's Lawren Harris made many of his early sketches in the area, including his "Houses on Gerrard Street" (1918). Another well-known artist, Albert Franck, rented a shop in the Village and sold work that showcased Toronto's wintry cityscape and the houses and stores that punctuated the Village scene. As well, it was in the Village that the legendary friendship between Ernest Hemingway

and Morley Callaghan was cemented while Hemingway was working at the *Toronto Daily Star*. In the 1930s the two men frequented the bars and caf  s, although, according to Toronto lore, it was mainly the bars.⁶⁴ By the 1960s, the Village grew and encouraged a growing beat culture that saw scores of Toronto’s literati, actors and musicians spending countless nights in coffee shops, in particular the famed Bohemian Embassy, which was located on St. Nicholas, a street halfway between Gerrard Street and Yorkville. The Bohemian Embassy, replete with an entrance waving a flag that bore the Coat of Arms of Bohemia, acted as a meeting point between the two Bohemian poles until it was razed to make way for the construction of the Toronto General Hospital. According to Stuart Henderson:

When it opened on St Nicholas St in 1960, the Bohemian Embassy seemed like a bridge between the gloaming Gerrard St. scene and embryonic Yorkville. Famous for its wildly eclectic entertainment, the Embassy promoted local talent of all kinds, from folksingers to comedians, writers to painters. Toronto’s strong stable of poets were encouraged to use the Embassy’s stage to try out new material, and Margaret Atwood, Milton Acorn, Earle Birney, and Gwendolyn MacEwen all made that heady scene. (*Making the Scene* 49)

⁶⁴ My grandparents, Hilma and Albert Holm, owned a restaurant in Gerrard Village named “Mary Johns” in the early 1960s, which was a frequent hotspot for many artists and writers, including Ernest Hemingway when he was a journalist in Toronto in the 1930s, although his patronage of the restaurant was not during my grandparents’ ownership. Albert Franck was also a frequent customer of the restaurant and in Harold Town’s biography of Franck there is an anecdote that involves the painter and my grandfather: “Albert painted Mary Johns several times; on one occasion he asked Albert Holm, the proprietor, if he would like to look at a sketch of the restaurant. Holm did and said, in disbelief, ‘You did the back and I just painted the front’” (qtd. in Lorinc).

The list of performers who found their footing at the Bohemian Embassy is extensive and impressive. In addition to the above-mentioned poets, the coffeehouse hosted famous musicians just starting out, such as Joni Mitchell, Gordon Lightfoot, Ian and Sylvia, and even a young Bob Dylan, who came to visit the Embassy but was not allowed to perform because “the guy who ran the poetry nights didn’t recognize him” (Chong 126).

The Bohemian Embassy was one of the first venues to hold a poetry night in the city. In an interview with the CBC, Margaret Atwood remarked that these were the first poetry readings that she had ever given and were also nearly her last since she was frustrated by the noise of toilets flushing and coffee grinding in the background (*Margaret Atwood Remembers the Early Days of the Toronto Poetry Scene*). In her short story, “Isis in Darkness,” Atwood’s narrator sets the scene of the Bohemian Embassy’s artsy aesthetic:

The coffee-house was on a little cobbled side street, up on the second floor of a disused warehouse. It was reached by a treacherous flight of wooden stairs with no banister; inside, it was dimly lit, smoke-filled, and closed down at intervals by the fire department. The walls had been painted black, and there were small tables with checked cloths and dripping candles. It also had an espresso machine, the first one Richard had ever seen. This machine was practically an icon, pointing as it did to other, superior cultures, far from Toronto. (“Isis in the Darkness” 42)

Atwood’s narrator describes the Embassy as a decaying space mixed with decadent flourishes such as the Embassy’s espresso machine that at the time was considered an exotic luxury (Mount 99). For Toronto’s youth culture, coffeeshops played an integral role in their social lives. Firstly, in drinking coffee and congregating until the wee hours in the name of art, Toronto’s hip youth

performed their version of the bohemian ideal. As Wilson notes, cafés historically functioned as a space for intellectual exchange among bohemians; the culture that the café provided “was the consummation of the bohemians’ love affair with urban life” (*Bohemians* 34). For young Torontonians in the 1960s, the coffeehouse articulated Pierre Bourdieu’s idea of bohemia as a “society within society” (55). In the coffeehouse they could drink espressos and cappuccinos and consider themselves a part of the “superior culture,” in the same vein as the celebrated beatniks in more cosmopolitan spaces, such as Greenwich Village and Paris’ Montmartre. Secondly, on a more practical level, for Toronto youth under the age of twenty-one, coffee was the only the substance they could legally drink.⁶⁵

While the beatnik aesthetic counterculture ideology of the early 1960s drew heavily on American culture (Henderson 48) — creating a trickle-down effect that on the surface may have appeared as though Toronto’s hip culture was only an imitation — the revelry in bohemian glamour was indeed distinct for the city. Toronto-based fashion designer Marilyn Brooks, whose popular store The Unicorn was first established on Gerrard Street, recalls her first time at the Embassy: “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 thought, wow, this is *it*, you know?” (qtd. in Henderson 50). In finding *it*, Toronto’s youth culture saw the possibility for glamorous production in the city. Coffeehouses such as The Bohemian Embassy provided a space to experiment with different artistic forms and to meet other like-minded aesthetes.

⁶⁵ In 1971, Ontario lowered its legal drinking age from 21 to 18 years of age. However, after much public outcry over high school students attending their classes while intoxicated, the age was raised to 19 in 1979.

In 1963, The Bohemian Embassy hosted what was billed as “Canada’s First Beatnik Happening.” The events at the coffee-shop consisted of “a polyglot group of poets, painters, dancers and actors doing just about what they want to do in an indefinable length of time” (Barker 31). This happening was inspired by the Happenings that began in Greenwich Village artists’ lofts in the 1950s and had since spread throughout New York City and to other parts of the US, such as Dallas and Chicago (Duff 28). Happenings were meant to function as an original mode for human interaction and to encourage people to come together to develop a new set of aesthetics and ethics for society (Suvin 139). The Happening as a public event was influenced by Dada and abstract-expressionism and, unlike traditional modes of popular culture that leave the public as passive consumers of the spectacle, the ethos behind these Happenings was a fundamental reaction against the dominant culture. Happenings were a way of saying:

NO to spectacle no to virtuosity no to transformations and magic and make
believe no to glamor and transcendency of the star image no to the heroic no to
the anti-heroic no to trash imagery no to involvement of performer or spectator
no to style no to camp no to seduction of spectators by the wiles of the
performer no to eccentricity no to moving or being moved. (Rainer qtd. in
Suvin 140)

With all these negations, the Happening at the Bohemian Embassy vigorously nodded its head toward the visual pleasures of spectacle, stardom and glamour.

The event organizers invited the CBC to the event on January 10th, 1963 and as the *Toronto Daily Star* reported, the presence of the broadcaster turned the event into “a bevy of no talents [using] the happening as an opportunity to shove their faces before CBC cameras” (Duff 28). The owner of the Bohemian Embassy, Don Cullen, agreed that what was presented to the

public and on the CBC was not a success; however, as he explained to the *Star* “this [Happening] was attempted strictly as an experiment and that if they continued with this art form it would indicate that he and the Bohemian Embassy were in agreement with the Da Da [sic] philosophy that the universe is in chaos,” for which he emphatically declared, “I don’t agree with that theory” (Duff 28). In this regard, the Happening at the Bohemian Embassy was a re-imagining of what a Happening *could* be in Toronto. This particular Happening was defiantly *not* a Greenwich Village happening that rejected the comforts of popular culture but rather one that used the popular and accessible medium of television to advertise its personal brand of bohemianism. As one of the Happening participants bemusedly explained to a CBC reporter about his performance during the evening’s events: “It happens to amuse me very much. I enjoy the happening. I happened to be here. I happened to look at the ad above the happening and that happening happened to be of interest to me. So here I happen to be. Or not to be. That would be the question” (Willis). The participant’s elliptical response resonated with the coffeehouse’s sense of joviality and fondness for word play and disruption in the grand Dada tradition. For instance, the Embassy was not only a frequent annoyance for the Toronto Police Department as it had to field calls from nervous parents about the goings on of their children, but also a headache for the Bell Telephone Company, which had listed the Embassy in their yellow pages under “Consulates and other Foreign Government Representatives,” causing much confusion for residents who would call the coffeeshop to learn about its “colorful country” (Elliott 45). In response, the Embassy handed out 25-cent Citizenship Cards that, as Cullen promised, would be “in aid of the lost causes of: Culture in Toronto, Intelligent Conversation, Informality, Inter-Galactic friendship, and General Subversion” (qtd. in Mount 100). As much as these citizenship cards were a novelty

gag, the implication of their sentiment was clear: gaining citizenship to Toronto's Bohemia was a declaration of non-conformity against the status quo in Toronto.

The legacy of Gerrard Village as a bohemian refuge was realized on a grander scale in the youthful migration toward Yorkville in the 1960s when the neighbourhood developed into a more commercial centre. Indeed, Berton's forecast for Gerrard Village as an "intriguing island in the heart of downtown Toronto, whose doom has been predicted (wrongly) for so many years" (qtd. in Baute) was correct. The Village's heart continued to beat in Yorkville.

From Hip to Hippie

At the height of Yorkville's popularity in 1967, sociologists from the Addiction Research Foundation (ARF), Reginald Smart and David Jackson, conducted an in-depth analysis of Yorkville's burgeoning subculture and concluded that "Yorkville is to Toronto what the Village is to New York and Chelsea is to London" (109). Smart and Jackson continue with their cosmopolitan comparisons by noting that "'Yorkville,' like 'Hollywood,' creates an image of particular, eccentric styles of life. It could be seen as a kind of non-alcoholic skid row for young people – where youthful social drop-outs congregate for shared drug experiences" (110). For Smart and Jackson, Yorkville was less a space of glamorous bohemian exploration and more of a meeting spot for lurid encounters.⁶⁶ Through their study they identified four groups of people

⁶⁶ Henderson confirms my suspicion that Smart and Jackson's research was heavily biased from the outset. In *Making the Scene*, Henderson explains that this study was funded by ARF and as a result "youth cultures in Yorkville were given a highly subjective, largely distorted overview, one that emphasized the constructed differences between (and fractions within) pseudo-ethno-groupings rather than exploring the cosmopolitan realities of the Village" (331n21).

that populated the Village environs: Hippies, Weekenders, Motorcycle gangs, who saw themselves as the “defenders of the Village” (117), and Greasers — a classist and racially charged epithet that was used because, as one Villager put it, “they put grease in their hair and grease in their food” (117).⁶⁷ Smart and Jackson paid particular attention to the “weekender,” the better groomed hip young adult who brought “charm, colour, and money to Yorkville” (115). Nevertheless, they were considered interlopers by resentful local Villagers, who referred to these weekend tourists as “Plastic Hippies” (116).

The phrase “plastic hippie” was not unique to the hippies of Toronto’s Yorkville Village. In “The Flowering of the Hippie Movement” published in 1969, John Robert Howard, the Distinguished Service Professor emeritus of sociology at Purchase College who was teaching sociology at the City College of New York at the time of his research, studied the rise of the hippie phenomenon in San Francisco’s Haight-Ashbury area and, like Smart and Jackson, focused on four categories of hippies: the Visionaries, the Freaks and Heads, the Midnight Hippies, and the Plastic Hippies. From these findings he analyzed the impact of these groups on the larger society. Howard concluded that plastic hippies are “young people who wear the paraphernalia of hippies (baubles, bangles, and beads) as a kind of costume. They have entered into it as a fad, and have only the most superficial understanding of the ideology” (43). The tension between the *plastic* and *authentic* hippies reflects the paradox of the myth of the bohemian. While often the glamour of the artist bohemian emerges from a devotion to art, beauty and love, often the reality of this lifestyle is less whimsical, with many devotees falling prey to degradation, drug addiction and sickness. Meanwhile the “plastic” bohemian has the luxury of

⁶⁷ The 1971 musical *Grease* by Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey, picked up on these themes in their exploration of working-class youth subculture from immigrant families in the 1950s.

reveling and relishing in the glamour of the iconic hippie image – often without consequences such as homelessness or poverty. In this, the use of the word plastic is instructive. Plastic, as Judith Brown notes in her chapter on the glamour of cellophane, “is mere idea” and “connotes a kind of luxurious royalty” (169) as its lustre reflects the fleeting ephemerality of desire. Indeed, “[Weekenders] are in a state of transition; eventually they will either become committed to a Village group or they will leave, having satisfied their curiosity” (Smart and Jackson 116). Plastic, according to Brown, has historically been causally linked with glamour as a corollary of modernity. She cites an article in *Fortune* magazine from the 1930s that enthusiastically declares: “the synthetic plastic [...] is a glamorous substance and a tribute to the powers of man” (150). Hippies, of course, are not interested in the powers of man but rather the power of community and collectivity. The myth of the glamorous hippie, with their “romantic, druggy, murky and floaty” (Wilson 173) fashions and expressions of being, was often just that, a myth that gained traction in popular culture. For wayward youth making their way to Yorkville to experience a taste of Bohemia, the myth of the hippie was about to be laid bare.

When the researchers from the ARF study came to Yorkville they wanted to get at the core of understanding “the phenomenon of white middle-class youth’s adoption into bohemianism” (qtd. in Henderson, *Making the Scene* 28) and through their work they were “genuinely surprised to find that the identity category ‘hippie’ did not constitute the largest group in Yorkville” (Henderson 28). Smart and Jackson noted derisively that “Villagers often decorate their apartments with posters of personalities, most of whom are from a time long past. The regression to the fantasies and hero-workshop of childhood may be seen as a futile attempt to find the identity models which were lacking in their home life” (121-2). Howard was more generous in his observation and assessment of the proclivities of the Haight-Ashbury hippies. He

argued that their allegiances to bohemian values were not futile but rather forged a discourse that interrogated the state of American values: “The ideology of Bohemianism includes: the idea of salvation by the child, an emphasis on self-expression, the notion that the body is a temple where there is nothing unclean, a belief in living for the moment, in female equality, in liberty, and in the possibility of perceiving new levels of reality” (Howard 53). Yorkville, as a literal and metaphorical space, was certainly as illusory as every other countercultural hub that found itself in certain urban centres in the 1960s in search of their own Bohemia. Nevertheless, for young Torontonians in the 1960s, Yorkville was a contested space. It was *their* battleground, for identity, meaning and power (Henderson, *Making the Scene* 7).

Smart and Jackson concluded that “People from Toronto who enter the Village as permanent residents generally begin as weekenders” (116), which implicated the instrumental role that the “plastic” hippies played in performing Yorkville’s bohemian glamour. Henderson similarly addresses the role that the plastic hippies had in shaping the wider Yorkville myth:

In Yorkville, tourists came to see Toronto’s Haight-Ashbury, Canada’s ‘hippie ghetto’ — the district becoming famous as a ‘foreign country.’ And although the signs they were looking for — drug use, free love, outlandish clothing, bohemian artistry, heavy bikers, long-haired boys, and barefooted girls – were often being performed by people who were themselves tourists in the scene, [they came] to the Village on their days off school to dress up as Villagers and play the part, it didn’t matter. (118)

Indeed, to walk down the narrow corridors of Yorkville’s winding neighbourhood streets in the 1960s was an effective performance of conspicuous glamour informed by the mythology of Yorkville. In “1966: The Tunnel of Endless Pleasure,” celebrated Canadian writer Matt Cohen

provides an account of this performance of glamour in Toronto that he experienced as a “tourist” in the Yorkville scene. He details strolling along Spadina Road, making his way to Bloor Street, and eventually ending up in Yorkville. As he enters the bohemian bacchanal, he has a cosmic experience with a young hippie woman, who introduces him to Buddhist group therapy. He muses how this mysterious woman brought him tea while he strummed a guitar and they discussed the power of revolution — an anecdote that is almost apocryphal in execution and faintly reminiscent of another famous Cohen’s reveries about a lover, who fed him “tea and oranges.” Indeed, the reverie that Matt Cohen conjures up relies upon the glamorization of the hippie myth to show that “Toronto is, incredibly more than it seems: an infinity of delectable possibilities, an adolescent theme park throbbing with folk, music, jazz, drugs, protest marches, idealists of all ages, delusions of grandeur, delusions of wealth, delusions of righteousness — Toronto is a veritable fan dance of entertainment” (103). While Cohen’s reminiscence is an attempt to upend the myth of Toronto the good in order to remind his readers that Toronto was once the Canadian centre of countercultural intrigue, he also sheds a light on the Villagers’ collaborative spirit in maintaining Toronto’s performance of glamour through metaphoric “fan dances” which thus protected and upheld Yorkville’s mythology.

Henderson suggests that the various performances of identity through totems of glamour such as fashion, luxury and celebrity were at the root of the hip Yorkville scene. He records the observations of a resident, who commented upon the seduction of this public spectacle:

‘God, you know, they were watching you [...] there’s all these people coming to watch us. [...] 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.’ (117)

As one can see, Yorkville operated for many as a visual experience. In the years after 1964 as the Village became more popular with the migration from Gerrard Village, Yorkville saw scores of people from across the province, and the country, as well as draft dodgers from the US such as famed cyber punk writer William Gibson, arriving to bask in the spectacle of performance of the hippies. Many of the youth that descended upon Yorkville did not subscribe to the hippie ethos, but simply aspired to the fashion of the scene.⁶⁸ These scenesters often sported long wigs and dyed their clothes in what one of the Villagers said was an effort “to look cool” (Henderson, *Making the Scene* 117–18). In *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger claims that “This state of being envied is what constitutes glamour, and publicity is the process of manufacturing glamour” (125), and for middle-class suburban Canadian youth, the Yorkville scene allowed them to showcase a lifestyle that was antithetical to their parents and to embrace a glamour far removed from the conventional.

Fashioning the Yorkville Scene

Reading the language and grammar of glamour into Yorkville’s history is a revelation of the urban imaginary’s protean nature and the capriciousness of aesthetic economies, that is, the way in which aesthetic values and economic calculations are intertwined with fluctuating cultural

⁶⁸ I recall asking my parents, who would have been in their early 20s living in Toronto during the height of Yorkville’s hipdom, whether they ever considered themselves a part of the hippie culture. My mom demurred and said that at age 23 she was “too old to be a hippie,” but she and my father did go down to Yorkville to hang out in the coffeeshops to listen to music. She said that “I didn’t know any actual hippies. We just followed whatever was in fashion.”

concerns (Entwistle). Wilson expresses how changing aesthetics in fashion often correlate with shifting perceptions of glamour: “Dress did not simply indicate power in the obvious sense of a uniform; nor was it about mere wealth. More subtly, it brought the combination of person and clothing to a pitch at which that person created glamour by means of daring departures from the conventionally well dressed, combined with an aura of defiance” (Wilson, “A Note on Glamour” 98). Indeed, the variants of glamour, such as luxury, beauty and daring spectacle, speak to the flux of fashion, and certainly by the height of its popularity, Yorkville was a space that recognized its glamorous allure and promoted luxuriating in what the locale had to offer. Yorkville and its denizens were increasingly recognized as Canada’s hippie destination in the same vein as San Francisco’s Haight-Ashbury and New York City’s Greenwich Village. Specifically, as I demonstrate in this section, the fashion that was exhibited on Yorkville’s streets was a major attraction.

The headline of an article in *The Toronto Daily Star* from 1968 proclaims in bold letters: “Beautiful Girls of Yorkville” alongside photographs of a chic young woman parading along the Village’s winding streets followed by a detailed description of the various looks that one may come across in the Yorkville scene:

Although Toronto’s Yorkville district most often makes headlines as a local trouble spot, it’s got a definite double nature. It’s also a major fashion centre, especially for the young set who want to keep up to date on what’s happening in design. [...] Swinging youngsters gravitate to the area, not to hang around or look for trouble, but to find out what’s the latest groove in hip young fashion. As a high percentage of the fashion-conscious crowd are attractive young women, all this activity makes the area a real paradise for girl-watching

enthusiasts. And whether they're dressed up for an evening at the theatre or for window shopping, the beautiful girls of Yorkville provide a rich contrast in styles. In one short evening's survey you're likely to see everything from the briefest of minis to trim pantsuits and flowing Indian saris. Office girls in neat suits and hats, university students in casual slacks and sweaters and hippies in 'antique clothes' resurrected from grandma's attic are among the young women who turn out to Yorkville to see and to be seen. (Mason 39)

Many young women during this period were making their way to stores, such as The Unicorn, which had at this point moved to Yorkville's Cumberland Street from its previous location in Gerrard Village. In an interview with *The Toronto Daily Star* in September 1968, owner Marilyn Brooks gushed that "Toronto is the hottest boutique centre on the continent." She goes on to exclaim that it "beats San Francisco, Chicago and New York" as "the designers in Toronto boutiques are making their own creations [...] but in other cities the boutiques that made it big five years ago have gone super big and are selling manufactured items" (qtd. in Evasuk 35). The rise of the boutique in Yorkville and with it the hordes of young women that came to the Village to scour the latest fashionable finds, which ranged from "brief tunic dresses and glamorous evening pants to Eskimo art dresses and evening gowns that look as if they stepped out of the Victorian era" (Evasuk 35), contradicts Henderson's assertion that "overt male fashion is the only performance mentioned [in the media], as though women couldn't make the cut, had no real purchase over this aspect of the scene" (111). For Henderson, the image of the long-haired bearded hippie became the dominant shorthand for Yorkville, and therefore he concludes that the scene was read as male. Certainly, the Village scene was steeped in misogyny and sexism and of course the media was quick to print stories involving the sexual exploitation and corruption of

young white women. Indeed, there has not been as much focus on the women who participated in fashioning much of this hip Toronto scene as the media, and scholars such as Henderson, have favoured the public vision of an archetypical Villager who tended toward the bearded and beaded.

In “My Life in Clothes and Books,” Karen Mulhallen, the Toronto-based poet describes how she developed a relationship to the clothing and fashion that emerged out Yorkville and Gerrard Villages. She acknowledges that during this period of the 1960s youthquake in Toronto “clothes not only signaled my identity, but also were active in its construction” (Mulhallen). In reflecting on her youth, Mulhallen effectively maps a geography of fashion for the city:

Toronto wasn’t as swinging as London, with its mod wear for men, but
Toronto did have several designers’ shops in Yorkville, on Cumberland and on
Yorkville and on Bellair, and even on Avenue Road, and in the Village on
Gerrard Street, and in Honest Ed’s Village on Markham Street. And the city
was buzzing with the marvelous energy brought to it by the American draft
dodgers. Clothing became fun, and a direct expression of the sexual revolution.

Mulhallen is also quick to point out that while clothing offered a freedom of expression and frivolity that she found in various shops in Yorkville and Gerrard Village, including The Unicorn, The Poupée Rouge and Dr. John’s, she was also equally content wearing no clothes, which, as she coyly notes, “befits the sexual revolution.”

Mulhallen was by no means the only woman that was comfortable baring it all in public during this period. The headline of an article in *The Toronto Daily Star* from August 12, 1966 cleverly boasts “Topless dancing – more or less a bust” as a result of a smoke machine that had gone awry and left a “half nude, gagging go-go girl [...] trapped in her cage” (Dunford C23).

The show took place at the Mynah Bird coffeehouse, which was known for its go-go dancers in cages. Yet on this evening the owner, Colin Kerr, wanted to up the ante and introduce “Toronto’s first bohemian nude show” (Henderson 97), featuring a lone topless go-go dancer. Unfortunately for Kerr, there was a malfunction in the dry ice machine, which caused the bar’s guests, including many members of Toronto’s media, to stumble out into the street while choking on the clouds of carbon dioxide that began to fill the bar. Henderson’s take on this catastrophic evening in *Making the Scene*, as an evening strictly designed for the male gaze, helps underscore his argument that the Yorkville scene was primarily “constructed as a male-centred counterculture” (98). Nevertheless, his assertion fails to include the voice of the one person at this event who could provide nuance to the discussion of female agency, namely, Ann, the 21-year-old topless dancer the evening centred around. In *The Toronto Daily Star* article, Ann acknowledges that “I don’t know if Toronto is ready for topless [...] it’s a fashion, a fad. I don’t want this to be a burlesque” (qtd. in Dunford C23). Mulhallen’s memoir essay similarly showcases her bold sense of self. She makes the case that even without clothes she was still developing her identity through the freedom that fashion offered whether material or through the “unconscious source of deep emotion” (E. Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams* 11). The power of the female nude body was not meant exclusively for male titillation just as the sexual revolution was not reserved for only one of the sexes. This tension surrounding the Mynah Bird and its go-go dancer could be best summed up by celebrated Toronto-based author Susan Swan, who saw the freedom that these dancers possessed as representing a new sexual space for women. As Swan opined, they encompassed something “between the wholesome bounce of a cheerleader and the allure of a stripper” (qtd. in Sullivan 194).

In this regard, Henderson's claim that only men were truly "making the scene" severely undermines, not to mention underestimates, the role of women's creative production in the hip Yorkville culture of the 1960s. His conclusion is cemented by his view that long hair and beards were symbols of rebellion and, as a result, the media was primarily focused on this new crop of hirsute male. He cites a *Toronto Daily Star* article from 1966 to confirm his position 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?'" (Henderson, *Making the Scene* 111). The media's focus on the unruly display of hair worn by men in Yorkville corroborated Henderson's argument that women had "fewer means of demonstrating their hipness through fashion than men" (Henderson 113). Henderson argued that since women were incapable of growing beards and many women already had long hair which was acceptable in society, it was difficult for them to express dissent in the same way as the men. However, as Chapter Two illustrated, women's hair has often been a contested site and hair was very much a focus in the media as many modern Toronto women chose to bob their hair as a fashionable expression of independence. Henderson admits receiving pushback from his observation as one of his female interviewees asserts that "There were a *lot* of hip women [in Yorkville]. Men had the long hair, the beards and stuff. But women had the long dresses" (Perly qtd. in Henderson 113). Nevertheless, Henderson insists that women wearing dresses did not conform to the same rebellious spirit of sporting "long hair and unruly beards" (113) since the mothers of these hip youth would also presumably have been wearing skirts and dresses, which would offset this expression of hipness. Henderson cites the "steely-eyed" (113) observations of Joan Didion and her experience in Haight-Ashbury in 1967, in which she saw the same tired gender dynamics reinforced, to affirm his assertion that women in this hip Toronto scene were the victims of "ideological touchstones" (113). From a strictly

fashion standpoint, Dyhouse argues, “the style disruptions of the 1960s youthquake had a dramatic impact on images of feminine desirability” (4). The sense of raw sexuality that women were displaying through their clothing (or lack thereof) confirms Henderson’s gender bias against women in the Toronto scene. What Henderson fails to recognize is that fashion was an important medium that helped create an avenue for women-led creative entrepreneurship in the city.

Of particular note is designer Pat McDonagh, who in 1966 had just come to Toronto from London after designing costumes for Diana Rigg’s Emma Peel in *The Avengers*. McDonagh is credited with bringing the mod look to Canada (Ferrier Mackay) and this “swinging 60s” London style influenced the ROM’s major exhibition of 1967 titled *Modesty to Mod: Dress and Underdress in Canada, 1780-1967*. Opened by Princess Alexandra, the first cousin of Queen Elizabeth II, the exhibition was draped in a patina of glamour befitting her royal highness who had made headlines as a “glamour girl” in her youth for being a doyen of the fashionable London nightlife scene (“Mayfair Glamour Girl Not Margaret, But Alex”).

McDonagh went on to become the designer of choice for fashion conscious Torontonians who appreciated “glamorous garments showcasing innovation in textile techniques” (Ormsby). She opened up a store in Yorkville called The Establishment and then later another store on Yonge Street called The Re-Establishment. Alongside other fashion designers and boutique owners, such as Marilyn Brooks of The Unicorn, Rohaise Nicholls of The Bizarre, and Suzy, the “swinging owner” of Poupée Rouge (Moreau 61), McDonagh fashioned many of the aesthetic identities of hip Toronto youth in the 1960s. McDonagh was singled out in a *Toronto Daily Star* 1969 article for her designs, which create “glamorous moments at home, for the theatre, for cocktail parties” (Stapleton 59). The phrase “glamorous moments” sticks out in this profile by

the *Star* as “glamour stayed somewhat out of fashion from the 1950s through to the 1970s: the word itself was much less frequently used by fashion editors and in women’s magazines. There was less need for coded sexuality in a world of free love” (Dyhouse 3). Nevertheless, for young Torontonians, whose aesthetic tastes were often behind the times of their “groovier” urban counterparts in London and New York, glamorous clothing offered one mode for the sensual expression of the scene.

The notion that Toronto could achieve a “moment of glamour” was a revelatory concept that also opened it up to push back from the status quo. McDonagh recalls an event in Toronto from 1967: “I did a show for my store on Bloor Street, up on the rooftop above Bellair. The models — three black girls, three Swedish blondes and three fiery redheads — had searchlights on them and iron balls chained to their feet. Traffic backed up down to Yonge Street” (McDonagh 12). The clothes were from her *Avenger* collection of that season, which contained primarily vinyl minidresses. The audience, among them the famous model at the time Twiggy, who Dyhouse singles out as ushering out the era of the “glamorous sophisticate” in favour of the “wide-eyed, startled-and-innocent look” (4), stood in a parking lot across the street. According to McDonagh’s recollection for an article in *The Globe and Mail*, this was an evening that befitted the heady Yorkville scene of 1967, until the police arrived and charged the audience with drinking outdoors without a license. Their champagne glasses were duly confiscated.

Through the medium of fashion, Yorkville in the 1960s positioned itself as Toronto’s premiere glamorous destination in its dizzying combination of spectacle, sensation and celebrity, which may seem somewhat contradictory given that the media insisted the Yorkville counterculture was on a heavy rotation of sex, drugs and rock’n’roll, hell bent on corrupting innocent women and youth. Of course, there was some of that too. Henderson’s text is replete

with accounts of biker coercion, sexual violence, and drug overdoses in the Yorkville scene, but these narratives too, while unsettling, form part of the glamorization of Yorkville. I am not suggesting that sexual violence or violence and self-harm is glamorous. Glamorization in this instance refers to the “idealization, glorification and dramatization” (Shulman qtd. in Postrel 52) that Yorkville performed for the tourists who descended upon this tiny neighbourhood awaiting to be seduced by the danger, fashion, and freedom of youth. The media also played a crucial role in the creation of Yorkville’s glamorization through their non-stop reporting on the scene’s drug use, far-out fashions, and fearmongering from various politicians and well-known figures about the Village’s reputation and the corruption of Toronto’s youth.⁶⁹ Given all of these disparate accounts it may seem as though this was a tale of two Yorkvilles and to a degree it was.

“Yorkville *the street* is a lot different from Cumberland *the street*,” as Marilyn Brooks explained in an interview with Henderson. She further explains: “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” (qtd. in Henderson 133). Yet it was precisely these two portraits which helped to contribute to the development of Toronto as a global city. Indeed, Yorkville Avenue helped shaped the impression of the city as glamorous destination for hip congregants worldwide, while Cumberland was overtly tied to fashion and shopping through the women who helped to promote this glamorous impression of the fashionable city.

⁶⁹ Ontario MPP and former Toronto Maple Leaf’s player, Syl Apps, famously referred to Yorkville in the 1960s as “a festering sore in the middle of the city” (qtd. in Hauch, “Yorkville, Birth of Toronto’s Indie Scene” IN8).

Styling Psychedelia: The Glamour and Pain of Perception '67

By 1967, Yorkville was not simply a hip destination for wayward youth keen to experiment with drugs, dress outlandishly, and partake in the freedom of the sexual revolution; rather, “Yorkville” as an idea was manifesting itself in the cultural imagination both nationally and internationally. Yorkville, in this regard, was no longer bound by geographical boundaries; Yorkville, as a concept, could be translated into events that lay outside the neighbourhood’s district (Henderson 174). One such event that drew upon the Yorkville ethos and aesthetic took place at the University of Toronto. In February 1967, the University College Literary and Athletic Society (The Lit) put on a festival called “Perception ’67.” Since its inception as the University College Literary and Scientific Society in 1854, The Lit, as it became known in the 1920s, had been responsible for organizing student events such as musical reviews, and putting together publications such as literary journals, and the campus newspaper the *Gargoyle* (Levi 167). However, by the mid-sixties, members of The Lit were no longer content with putting on their annual Arts Ball, a dance they had sponsored since 1927, since they felt that these traditional modes of student gatherings no longer reflected the values of the growing counterculture. In 1966, The Lit held a “Pop” Arts festival to replace the annual Arts Ball to promote “aspects of modern popular culture as supermarket décor, fashion shows, go-go dancers and electronic music, and slices of life drama” (qtd. in Levi 170). The success of the Pop Arts festival paved the way for Perception ’67 as an opportunity for Toronto youth to showcase how its psychedelic scene was just as dynamic as the scenes in San Francisco and New York. The festival was “to make people aware of the subculture of psychedelics and make them realize this is a vital issue” (Cruchley 17). The festival director, Jane Markowitz, was inspired by a group of New York

artists known as USCO who produced “LSD art,” and she wanted to create a festival in Toronto that brought together a sensual and arousing experience (Bullen 14).

The term psychedelic comes from the Greek *psyche*, which refers to the mind and *deloun*, which means to make visible or clear. The word was coined in 1956 by psychiatric researcher Dr. Humphry Osmond and was first introduced in the English language in a letter to Aldous Huxley. Osmond and Huxley were pioneers of the psychedelic movement, and the psychedelic experiences the two shared were recorded in Huxley’s work *The Doors of Perception* published in 1954. The three-day event at U of T was designed around the concept of “Perception,” which appeared to be in tribute to Huxley’s and Osmond’s exploration into the possibilities of mind expansion that certain drugs could arouse. The psychedelic effects commonly associated with LSD were of particular importance to the festival’s mandate. Music, lectures, debates, and rooms designed to stimulate the LSD experience were part of the promotion to draw in an audience for the festival. During this period, LSD was a legal substance for use in Canada, yet it was illegal to sell the drug. There was, however, widespread panic over the use of LSD in the Village, among other drugs such as marijuana, that was widely reported.

Drugs and glamour share an uneasy relationship, and while it is easy to romanticize the opium dens of the 1920s with visions of silk sheaths and fainting couches, the consequences from over-consumption and habitual use can be harmful and, in some cases, lethal. For many involved in Toronto’s counterculture, the glamour of hallucinogenic drugs lay in their promise of feeling and seeing sensations beyond the imaginary, without any regard for potential complications as a result of their misuse. In Toronto, a month after Perception ’67, the city was mourning the death of 21-year old John Stern, who had jumped to his death from the Bloor Viaduct after a particularly nasty acid trip. The fallout from Stern’s death was immediate. His

father placed the blame on “pseudo-experts” who glamorized the drug for its creative benefits (Henderson 176), and pressure was put on politicians to ban the drug. As a result, in 1968 the Canadian government completely banned the use of LSD (Martel 213).

Perception '67's keynote speaker was supposed to be Timothy Leary, the famed psychological researcher who had been dismissed from Harvard for his controversial LSD experiments in 1963. His mantra to “turn on, tune in, drop out” became the rallying cry of the counterculture, and it was also the motto of his League for Spiritual Discovery (LSD), an organization inspired by Leary's philosophies. Dr. Leary, however, had been convicted in 1966 and received a 30-year sentence (although his conviction was overturned in 1969). A petition to the U. S. government by ten members of the University of Toronto faculty had gained Leary the right to come to Canada without fear of arrest for violation of his parole conditions, but as a drug trafficker he was ineligible to enter the country (Levi 176). The faculty members made clear that they did not agree with Leary's views but agreed that “he would make a valuable contribution to the symposium” on the subject of “the effect of psychedelics and their relevance to contemporary society” (*Toronto Telegram* qtd. in Levi 176). Faculty support was not enough. *The Toronto Telegram*, a notoriously conservative newspaper, alerted the immigration officials to Leary's proposed trip; this subterfuge was supported editorially by the usually liberal *Toronto Daily Star*, which declared that “there is the possibility of real harm, and even tragedy, if Dr. Leary induces some of his hearers to experiment with LSD” (qtd. in Levi 176). As a result, the Canadian government effectively barred Leary from the country.

Once again, the Toronto media was instrumental in shaping public impressions of Perception '67. The pages in the major city newspapers contained articles devoted to psychedelia, sex, and LSD. In the days leading up to and during the two-day festival the papers

hyped the event with a sense of urgency by declaring that “nearly everybody who’s anybody on the psychedelic scene is in Toronto today for Perception ‘67” (“... All On a Trip to Toronto”). They spent a lot of time profiling the major players in the psychedelia scene who would be attending and performing at the event, such as the famous beat poet Allen Ginsberg and the New York musicians The Fugs. Regarding the latter, the *Star* quickly pointed out that “though their records sell in Toronto record stores, no Toronto radio station will play them – too many four-letter words in their songs” (“... All On a Trip to Toronto”). The fanfare surrounding the Fugs’ performance no doubt secured them a solid crowd at Convocation Hall for the event. The attendees included Marshall McLuhan, “who along with his wife, sat throughout the concert wearing a blinding, psychedelic third eye (light refracting discs) on his forehead” (qtd. in Thomas, “Sex (Psychedelic or Otherwise) Was the Message” 18). McLuhan’s presence and support at the event was not a surprise given his own feelings toward LSD. While he professed that he had never taken the drug, he saw LSD as a “way of miming the invisible electronic world” in a way that allows people to free themselves “from acquired verbal and visual habits and reactions, and gives the potential of instant and total involvement, [...] which are the basic needs of people translated by electric extensions of their central nervous systems out of the old rational, sequential value system” (qtd. in “The Playboy Interview” *The Playboy Interview*).

McLuhan’s meditation upon the communicative effects that the psychedelic experience affords individuals through LSD’s hallucinogenic properties is reminiscent of Judith Brown’s assertion that glamour emerges from new systems, both technological and philosophical, and how these new forms inform glamour’s “thrill of transgression” (158). The Toronto newspapers, however, did not see the glamour in the event and wrote articles dripping with disdain and mild amusement, much in the way it had covered the Happening at the Bohemian Embassy, with its

playful headline, “A Funny Thing Didn’t Happen Last Night.” One positive headline in the *Star* by a young Robert Fulford read, “I went through the mind excursion - and I liked it” (B1). However, for the most part, the headlines were less charitable: “Psychedelic was one word. ‘Dull,’ ‘boring’ two others” (qtd. in Ferry 18).

Despite the presence of some of the most high-profile writers and thinkers of the time, such as Richard Alpert, who worked previously with Leary on LSD research at Harvard, and Paul Krassner, the founder and editor of the satirical magazine *The Realist*, much of the local newspaper coverage was devoted to the “Psychedelic Fashion Show.” The star attraction of the show was Dr. Joan “Tiger” Morse, a fashion designer from New York City who was also known for being a part of Andy Warhol’s Factory entourage. Morse’s designs were recognized for engaging the framework of psychedelic performance. Many of her clothes were fabricated from material substances ranging from rubber and vinyl to aluminum foil and mylar, and many were wired for sound, smell, and light. Tiger Morse was credited for bringing a downtown sensibility to her designs, which fed into the philosophy of the counterculture as reflected in the naming of her men’s store, “Drop Out,” an allusion to the men who wanted to “drop out” of the gray-flannel and tie look after five o’clock (Fischler 37). No doubt, Tiger Morse’s appearance in Perception ’67’s psychedelic fashion show was a natural choice for the festival’s organizers, and her proximity to Warhol and her well-known avant-garde designs provided the star power needed in the absence of Leary and lent the event a global flair. However, the organizers had not anticipated Morse’s diva-like behaviour. She arrived late and then complained that the dressing rooms were too small, declaring “my clothes are going to get sick” (qtd. in Thomas, “Drug Festival Gets Off to a Dopey Start”). When she saw that the models chosen for the event were

what she considered too professional for her natural-look fashions, she threw a fit and stormed into the women's washroom, where she stayed until the fashion show was over (Levi 180).⁷⁰

The *Star* devoted much of their coverage of Perception '67 to Tiger Morse's antics and directed very little attention to the rest of the fashion show's participants. As a result, the shenanigans surrounding the show garnered more attention from the press than the show itself. There is brief mention in the *Star* coverage that the show began with "eerie Indian music" and readings from *Alice in Wonderland* while models dressed in "wild, mod (and very revealing) costumes started dancing on stage" (Thomas B25). *Star* reporter Ralph Thomas laments with his tongue firmly planted in his cheek that "not a single psychedelic dress has been seen. Not one costume lit up, made any smells or sounds. There wasn't even a dress made of vinyl, mylar or aluminum foil (which is what psychedelic dresses are made of)" ("Tiger" B28). Journalist Patrick Scott is even less kind, remarking, "The fashion show was a bust, notwithstanding the fact that there wasn't a full grown one in it. It consisted chiefly of a clutch of scrawny girls (I think) trying to keep in cue with the lighting technicians (or whomever they dragged in off the street to act as lighting technicians), when they weren't trying to find their way on and off the stage" (26).

The overt sexism and general negativity in the press surrounding Perception '67's fashion show and general programming reflected the city's more conservative values and fear of this youth culture. Indeed, as 1967 ushered in Canada's centennial celebrations, there was shockingly little reporting that considered what the youth participating in Perception '67 events and the broader counterculture meant for Canadian identity as it entered its hundredth year. The media's

⁷⁰ In an interview with the *Globe and Mail*, Tiger Morse protested that "it's not true I locked myself in the ladies' washroom for an hour Friday night [...] I was just in there for a while, that's all" (qtd. in Millin).

mockery and general contempt of Perception '67's attempt to establish a discourse on psychedelia in the city is reminiscent of the media coverage of Oscar Wilde's visit to Toronto in 1882 discussed in Chapter One. Indeed, the *Telegram*'s condemnation of Wilde because "he wears his hair long – just like a woman" (qtd. in T. Taylor 57), would not have felt out of place in a similar article about hip youth in 1967 Toronto. While the press deemed the event a disaster, the festival was instrumental in bringing the university, which was only a short walk away from Yorkville, "into contact with the emerging counter-culture of the 1960s and the reactions of the larger community, and especially adult authority, toward it" (Levi 187). Perception '67, in effect, helped to establish and legitimize Toronto's counterculture as a relevant youth movement with worthy ideas to consider.⁷¹

As concerned as the newspapers were with the events of Perception '67 during the three-day festival, the fervor surrounding the event and its aftermath was considerably toned down afterward. The one exception involved making tenuous links between the event's advocacy for LSD and the recent death of John Stern. It was later discovered that Stern had not only attended the festival, but also been present at a house party where Richard Alpert was the guest of honour "preaching to his young flock on the value of the psychedelic experience" (Henderson 179). In 2007, however, memories of the event had changed. A brief mention of Perception '67 appeared in an article in *The Toronto Star* that paid tribute to Montreal fashion designer, John Warden, who had died the previous month. The *Star*'s fashion writer, David Livingstone, recalled that the

⁷¹ In "Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll, and the University College Lit: The University of Toronto Festivals, 1965-69," Charles Levi recounts how through these festivals "the Lit achieved a reputation as a provider of campus-wide, 'relevant' entertainment" (187) and by 1968, many other Canadian universities followed their festival model. However, by the 1970s, student engagement began to wane. Levi argues that "in an age of mass protest, in which students mobilized in reaction to specific causes and issues, a continuing body unconnected to these protests stood no chance of engaging sustained student interest" (189-190).

first fashion show he had ever attended had been for Warden, and he explained that the designer's involvement "was part of a psychedelic festival that took place at the University of Toronto. I think it was 1967." As his *Star* colleagues had 40 years previously, Livingston describes the events: the mind excursion exhibit, the performances from The Fugs, and the poetry reading by Alan Ginsburg. He, too, singles out Tiger Morse, whom he describes as "an avant-garde New Yorker who was the subject of a Warhol movie. She presented vinyl minidresses decorated with flashing lights." Yet poignantly he confesses, "I don't remember the clothes. I remember the designer star. John Warden had bright red hair and was dressed all in white" (Livingstone, "Lady's New Line Looks to The Land" L5). Livingstone does not place his emphasis on the fame and glamour of Tiger Morse, but rather pays homage to a celebrated male Canadian fashion designer, who had also designed the uniforms for Expo 67, something that, in the media coverage during the actual events of Perception '67, hardly warrants a mention. Livingston may well have vaguely recalled the events that shaped Perception '67, as he admits that he "thinks" it took place in 1967; yet for a few days in February 1967, this event monopolized Canadian newspapers both locally and nationally, and enjoyed an echo in an article in *The Globe and Mail* from 1984, in which Livingston clearly recalls the events from Perception '67 with its "mind excursion designed by Michael Hayden, The Fugs, and far-out fashions from Montreal's John Warden and plastic dresses with lightbulbs from New York's Tiger Morse" ("Artists Are Goofing up with Style" F4). In 1984 he made special note of the festival and recognized it as a forerunner for the 1984 avant-garde fashion show, "Dressing Up," which featured artists "showing off and goofing around [...] among other things" (Livingston F4) at the Harbourfront's Brigantine Room. The success of this evening was apparent in Livingstone's account and what he observed; the audience appeared enthralled by a model sporting a

Gernreich-inspired monokini. Mercifully, none of the newspapers referred to this evening as a “bust.”

In reflecting upon Yorkville’s position as a site of conspicuous glamour in the 1960s, what one sees is a revelation of glamour’s “capacity to alter memory, holding a piece of the past continually in the present” (Brown 9). Of course, as the oft repeated joke goes, “if you can remember the sixties, you weren’t really there.” Discussing Yorkville and Perception ’67 through the critical lens of glamour highlights what has been left out and forgotten in the hegemonic interpretations of the period. Glamour constituted an important expression of the city’s identity in the wake of Toronto’s changing youth culture and events such as Perception ’67 demonstrated how fashion and the rhetoric of psychedelia appealed to (and appalled) the public through the language of glamour. It is hardly surprising that Livingston fondly remembered Perception ’67 for the fashions by John Warden and Tiger Morse and not her widely reported antics. Nor does he mention the festival’s failings, as reported in the media. Rather, his memories convey glamour’s capacity for polishing the past to reflect an idealized version of reality. In this regard, Livingston’s recollection of this particular fashion show demonstrates glamour’s far-reaching potential to improve upon the past in the present.

Rochdale’s Raw Realities

In the summer of 1968, a year after the events of Perception ’67, Yorkville’s hip youth began to turn away from the neighbourhood they helped to make glamorous over growing concerns from the press surrounding violence and drug use. The final straw for Yorkville villagers was when the media began to focus its news content on a widespread hepatitis epidemic in the Village. In the wake of these reports, there was a mass migration away from Yorkville and suddenly, its

youth culture was no longer admired for its fashion, beauty, and whimsy, but rather these youth were chastised as dirty and disease-ridden degenerates.⁷² As the glamour of Yorkville began to dissolve in the midst of this panic, in addition to the ongoing fears of escalating violence, many Villagers sought refuge in Rochdale College, which opened its doors in September 1968. An 18-storey complex located at the corner of Bloor and Huron streets, almost half a kilometre from the Village, Rochdale College was designed as Canada's first free university with a focus on cooperative living and experiential learning. At the outset, Rochdale appeared to maintain the glamour of the Village in its self-contained space with a focus on philosophical freedom and collective responsibility, which recalls the glamour of free-thinking bohemians of the past. The reality, however, was rather bleak as many of the same problems that plagued the Village, such as drugs, gangs, and violence, reared their ugly heads once more. On May 30th, 1975, Sheriff's officers began to bang on and break Rochdale's doors with sledge hammers in hand to serve eviction notices after the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation was given title to the building and the college was effectively closed.⁷³

One of Rochdale's enduring symbols is the "Unknown Student," a large bronze statue that still sits in front of the building of a person crouched over in what appears to be a meditative pose. The statue was created by the Rochdale Sculpture Group, and according to the artist, Derek Heinzerling, "The Unknown Student statue is a testament to the decline in hippie Yorkville

⁷² In the chapter "Toronto's Hippie Disease" from *Making the Scene*, Henderson takes the media to task for creating a fear mongering culture against the village and villagers and argues that in fact "the famous Yorkville hepatitis epidemic never really took place" (253). Rather, the media exaggerated the extent to which people were getting sick when the evidence suggests there was only a minor outbreak. Nevertheless, the fallout from the media reports were so damaging that some villagers were asked to leave public places for fear they would spread the disease.

⁷³ There has been much written about the rise and fall of Rochdale including David Sharpe's *Rochdale: The Runaway College* (1987) and *Dream Tower: The Life and Legacy of Rochdale College* (1988) by Henry Mietkiewicz and Bob Mackowycz. Ron Mann's documentary, *The Dream Tower* (1994) is often cited as a revelatory exploration of the Rochdale scene.

culture in the late 1960s [...]. The Statue today symbolizes perhaps the lost idealism of the time, and the end of a significant era in Toronto's bohemian culture" (qtd. in O'Neil). Tellingly, when the statue was first erected, the student faced Rochdale College as a sign of solidarity for the college's students, who chose to turn their backs on society, yet in its present incarnation, the statue faces the street as though turning its back on the darker parts of this history (Fig. 8).



Figure 8 The Unknown Student. © Kathryn Franklin.

Conclusion

As the two quotations that begin this chapter illustrate, Yorkville has been and remains a site of conflicting narratives. For a young Carole Pope, the Village was a haven where she could explore her desires for fame, fashion and sexuality. Gazing out from her tiny room above the

Penny Farthing coffeehouse she wrote that she would “catch fleeting images of visiting rock gods and goddesses, whose limos would inevitably drive along Yorkville Avenue. I remember seeing Cass Elliot and Brian Wilson behind the tinted glass. I wanted to be at least a demi-goddess, gliding along in one of those big black cars” (16). In Pope’s memory, Yorkville represents youthful exuberance and glamorous possibility, far removed from her family home in Toronto’s suburban Don Mills. For the *Star*’s David Allen, Yorkville, as he saw fit to report at the time, was a sinful cesspool intent on dragging down and corrupting Toronto’s middle-class white youth. The concept of glamour does not figure into Allen’s assessment of the neighbourhood since the elements that were so attractive to Pope completely eluded him. He could not envision that the people he was profiling in his article were living in the same area as celebrities that could be swept away by luxury cars with tinted glass windows. Of course, it is difficult for luxury cars to drive through narrow tunnel vision.

To stroll along the streets in and around present-day Yorkville is to hear the clinking of many glasses of expensive champagne delicately held by well-heeled imbibers at chic restaurants frequented by Toronto’s socialites and Hollywood celebrities. In 2012, when William Gibson went to revisit the Yorkville of his youth where he found refuge as a draft dodger he was disappointed to discover that “It’s as though they tore down St. Mark’s Place and built the Trump Tower.” He further lamented “my Bohemia is gone” (qtd. in Bunch). While Yorkville no longer sports the bohemian glamour of its past with hip boutiques and coffeeshops overflowing with long-haired youth and artists, its current incarnation as an affluent and respectable neighbourhood for Toronto’s wealthiest reveals a different glamour, one that is steeped in luxury and elitism. Alison Bain argues that “the counter-cultural glamour that was played up in the media was soon exploited by land speculators, developers, realtors and ultimately the upper-

middle class” (423), and for this Yorkville has become a symbol of gentrification in Toronto, or as Joni Mitchell sang of the changing neighbourhood, “they paved paradise and put up a parking lot.” As the real estate prices began to rise in the 1970s, the artists that had given Yorkville its bohemian hip identity moved westward, like the beatniks in Gerrard Village before them, and many started taking up residence in Rochdale before it closed in 1975, as well as in Queen Street and the Ontario College of Art (now the Ontario College of Art and Design University). The irony therefore was heavy handed when in 2007, Toronto’s Luminato festival, an international arts festival, paid homage to the 40th anniversary of the Summer of Love with a tribute to Yorkville’s hip history. According to *The Toronto Star*: “The sight was slightly surreal as local 1960s- and 1970s-era bands rocked out on a stage in front of a towering Williams-Sonoma sign. Meanwhile, a handful of hippies in their 50s smoked pot next to curious passersby who clutched cellphones, Holt Renfrew shopping bags and specialty coffees” (Sorensen A8).

The glamour and luxury that radiates from the neighbourhood’s current incarnation as the city’s toniest shopping district is what Judith Brown would refer to as glamour’s “sheen of indifference” (37), which comes from a luxury that few can afford. This is certainly a far cry from the spirit of collectivity that once characterized the neighbourhood’s philosophy in the 1960s. Nevertheless, as I maintain, the concept of glamour remains slippery. Indeed, at first blush, the hippie ethos appears as a repudiation of glamour’s trappings of wealth, status and celebrity. Yet, glamour figures into the communal aesthetic language of the counterculture with its focus on authenticity, desire and the limits of the mind. Moreover, pop culture’s insistence on the glamour of the 1960s through music, fashion and film, elevates the narrative of this period to a mythic status which ultimately confirms this generation’s ontology of glamour. Certainly, as Wilson notes, the myth of the bohemians is inherently seductive, possessed of a glamour that

continues to endure across geographies and eras. She cites the work of Joanna Richardson to emphasize this point:

The hippies [...] recall the Bousingos of the 1830s. The takers of LSD descend perhaps from the hashish-eaters of the 1840s. The modern student demonstrations sometimes recall the battle of Hernani and the wilder excesses of the *Jeunes France*. The behaviour is similar for the background is much the same (Richardson qtd. in E. Wilson, *Bohemians* 218)

In other words, *plus ça change*. For Yorkville, though, change it did, and this change heralded a new translation of glamour for the neighbourhood, as will be further illustrated in Chapter Seven's discussion on Atom Egoyan's 2009 film *Chloe*.

The indelible legacy of Yorkville's performance of conspicuous glamour became subject to controversy when in 2006 a condominium project was in development using the name "The Bohemian Embassy." As part of their advertisement campaign to lure hip Torontonians they drew upon the image of Pat McDonagh's mod girl from the swinging '60s in full mod regalia to recapture the glamorous experience of the era. Don Cullen, one of the founding members of the original coffeehouse, penned an op-ed in the *Toronto Star* in 2007 lamenting that "the condo being built is an enormous complex which will do nothing for the literary sub-culture, nothing for the folk music community, nothing for chamber music, cabaret satirical revues and a host of eclectic artistic activities for which my Bohemian Embassy existed" (Cullen). More condemnation of the building's use of the coffeehouse name followed with local artist Michael Toke nicknaming the place "Bohemian Embarrassment" (qtd. in DeHaas). One detail that the condo developers unintentionally got correct was that using the image of the fashionable mod women made famous by McDonagh was a reminder that the glamour associated with the

Yorkville bohemia was a result of women artists and entrepreneurs, like McDonagh, who played a large role in shaping Yorkville's glamscape. The following chapter will continue examining the important role that women, such as Carole Pope, and collectives, such as General Idea and Pope's band Rough Trade, played in developing a reading of glamour for the city through their art and performance which, too, was bolstered and emboldened by the bohemian myth of Yorkville.

Chapter Five: Glamour on Display: Performing Glamour in Toronto

The 1970s was an important period for Toronto's art scene, in which the city came to think of itself as Canada's most important art centre (Monk, *Is Toronto Burning?*). Montreal had traditionally been considered Canada's world-class arts destination due to its cosmopolitan culture, innovative cinema and the growing popularity of Leonard Cohen.⁷⁴ However, the fervour for Montreal's scene had been considerably cooled by 1970 after Pierre Trudeau's use of the War Measures Act in response to the October crisis followed by the Quebec nationalists taking power in 1976 (Sheehan 143). Toronto, therefore, was an attractive option for would-be artists who were interested in capitalizing on the city's recent popularity in the aftermath of the city's youthquake. By the early 1970s, Yorkville was no longer a popular destination for artists as increasing gentrification took hold; many artists were forced to relocate to make way for new land development and high-end galleries (Mathews 2851). Rosemary Donegan points out that "what is unusual about the 1970s and 1980s [in Toronto], is the development of co-operative spaces, workshops, audio-visual studios and performance spaces" ("What Ever Happened to Queen St. West?" 12) that formed out of the displacement for many of the artists from the Yorkville scene. During this period, the federal and provincial arts councils also offered grants to fund spaces that helped develop these community infrastructures, which continue to remain visible in the Queen Street West area of Toronto.

This chapter considers the ways in which artists in Toronto deliberately used glamour as a component of their performance to elevate their position in Toronto's art scene as well as on

⁷⁴ See Alla Myzelev's introduction, "Why Toronto? Modernity, Nationalism and Regionalism" in *Architecture, Design and Craft in Toronto 1900-1940* (2017) for a comprehensive history about Toronto's ongoing competition with Montreal for cultural supremacy.

the global stage. As Chapter Four illustrated, Yorkville's heady mix of youth, bohemianism and fashion generated a spectacular performance of conspicuous glamour in the 1960s. Chapter Five demonstrates how this glamorous exhibition laid the foundation for a different kind of outlandish performative practice of glamour in the city in the 1970s and 1980s. In particular, this chapter focuses on the performance of glamour exhibited by the Toronto-based art trio, General Idea along with their friend and some-time collaborator, Carole Pope, the lead singer of the band Rough Trade. I begin this chapter with a focus on two key expressions of glamour by General Idea: *The Miss General Idea Pageant* and the publication of their magazine *FILE*. I investigate how General Idea understood glamour as a corollary to the city and argue that General Idea's creation myth and their avant-garde tastes present a challenge to the oft lamented lack of mythology and sense of identity in Canadian culture. By strongly engaging with elements of glamour such as fashion, celebrity, and spectacle in their art, General Idea helped to promote an idea of Toronto as a cosmopolitan art centre.

Next, I consider Carole Pope's performance in Rough Trade as an *agent provocateur* in Toronto's burgeoning punk scene in the late 1970s and early 1980s and how her use of fashion and sexuality challenged prevailing notions of glamour's expression as a gendered phenomenon. I make the case that glamour and, by extension, the concept of glam, informed the performative practice of General Idea and Rough Trade. Glam, I argue, is glamour's disheveled descendent. Whereas glamour's surface reflects a cool sophistication and a highbrow sensibility, glam's façade is often slick with sweat and sleaze and purposefully reveals itself as an ersatz lowbrow glamour. Like glamour, glam is difficult to categorize; nevertheless, its expression remains instantly recognizable. The 1970s witnessed a certain bastardization of Hollywood glamour tropes in art, fashion, and music under the label of "glam." The glam aesthetic of the 1970s

emerged out of the counterculture of the late 1960s as a provocation against the values that were central to the hippie ethos, such as authenticity and collectivity. Glam, instead, promoted the individual and the increasing sense of alienation many felt from their wider communities. As a result, the glam aesthetic stood out for its stylistic eclecticism which combined a sense of revivalism and futurity through its synthesis of visual iconography, ranging from Marlene Dietrich to 1960s pop art, Americana, high camp, and space-age chic (Pih 5). The emphasis on space-age themes and alien bodies, such as David Bowie's famed Ziggy Stardust, was intrinsic to glam's ideology and promoted the artist above, rather than among, the audience (Auslander 132). For instance, at the height of hippiedom in the 1960s, many musicians would try to resemble their audiences by wearing flowing dresses and sporting long hair and beards in a message of solidarity. Bowie's audiences, however, would show up at his concerts dressed like *him*. They would attend his shows costumed in homemade Ziggy Stardust outfits with their hair styled in imitation of his flaming orange shag (Auslander 132). In the style of Bowie, Rough Trade's lead singer Carole Pope was not interested in reflecting her audience; rather, she used fashion as a provocation — a glamorous cloak — to provoke and excite Toronto audiences.

Both General Idea and Rough Trade relied on performance as a tool for thinking through the epistemology of glamour. Moreover, as frequent collaborators, their glamorous productions demonstrated the importance of partnerships in Toronto's art scene for generating creative practice. I conclude this chapter by considering the work of the Toronto-based artist and entrepreneur Will Munro. Munro's artistic and business practice in Toronto in the early 2000s was influenced by the performance of glamour of both General Idea and Carole Pope. By drawing upon the work of these Toronto icons, Munro helped to articulate the performance of Toronto's glamscape in the new millennium and in turn redefined the geography of Toronto's

downtown boundaries — a reimagining that continues to resonate past his untimely death in 2010.

General Idea’s Performance of the “Glamorous Artist” in Toronto

General Idea, the artistic collective made up of AA Bronson (Michael Tims, b. 1946), Felix Partz (Ronald Gabe, 1945-1994) and Jorge Zontal (Slobodan Saia-Levy, 1944-1994) formed in Toronto in 1968 — at least according to General Idea lore. Their archives, however, reveal a different narrative that indicates their collaboration only went back until 1969. To paraphrase Dinah Washington, what difference does a year make? For General Idea, that year meant a difference in how they fashioned their creation myth in the cultural imaginary. In the catalogue from the AGO’s *The Search for the Spirit: General Idea 1968 - 1975* (1997), guest curator Fern Bayer recounts an anecdote about sifting through GI’s archives:

Over the course of my research I uncovered an interesting ‘fact’: General Idea has been lying about their age. For years it has been the conventional wisdom that ‘the boys’ [...] began working together in 1968. But how was that possible, I wondered, when Felix Partz was not in the country most of that year, and had not even met his two future partners, Bronson and Jorge Zontal. When I asked AA about this apparent discrepancy, he replied, ‘Oh, Fern, you’ve uncovered our little secret.’ It seems AA, Felix and Jorge had decided to add an extra year to their collective history (that is, 1968) in order to explain the ‘crowning’ of two previous Miss General Ideas [...] (10).

This one-year discrepancy recalls a similar sleight of hand from Chapter Three, where I explored Sheila Heti’s method in *How Should a Person Be?* of forging and articulating her own artistic

space in Toronto through the character “Sheila.” Heti’s character challenges the assumptions of fame, mythology, and glamour in twenty-first century Toronto and, in turn, relies upon creating a mythology for herself and her friends that reflects her, as well as their, glamorous existence in the city. At the end of *How Should a Person Be?* Heti, in her author biography, explains “One could say this book began in 2005, but really it began in 2006.” The book itself was published in 2010. Inherent in the works of these two sets of artists is the persona of the artist as mythmaker – a position that General Idea emphasized through their pseudonyms (Bronson/Partz/Zontal).

Taking their name from other such generals as General Motors and General Electric, General Idea chose to highlight the inherent irony of the idea of collaborative corporate enterprise (Bayer et al. 11). Yet in spite of the capitalist and militaristic industry associated with a “General” or “GI,” the spirit of General Idea was more in tune with the ideals of the Bohemian artists of the nineteenth century who were committed to a lifestyle made up of fictions and outrageousness in order to preserve the myth of the artist: the creative genius against the dull status quo. In this, General Idea followed in the footsteps of aesthetes from the past who engaged with the city’s flirtations with aesthetic values, such as Oscar Wilde who, as discussed in Chapter One, visited eager Toronto audiences to educate them on the merits of the decorative arts and why beauty matters. General Idea’s insistence on the artist as collaborator was also in tune with the Bohemian mindset of the hip Yorkville villagers, who sought to connect with other like-minded hippies in the city through their shared cultural beliefs and practices. Bronson specifically moved to Toronto from Winnipeg to partake in Rochdale’s co-operative housing experiment, and through his work in the city’s alternative theatre scene he met Zontal and Partz.

In her comprehensive study on the enduring myth of the glamorous bohemian, Elizabeth Wilson points to the grand dandy Lord Byron and explains how his ability to consistently

conjure up an air of mystery for him and his coterie contributed to the “Byronmania” to which many future generations aspired (E. Wilson, *Bohemians* 87). Similarly, in the early days of GI, before they had narrowed down to a group of three they “purposely obscured actually, who General Idea was, because we were involved with working and living with a variety of people [...] Everybody was seen as General Idea” (Partz qtd. in S. E. K. Smith, *General Idea* 8).

General Idea functioned in relation to the communal subculture of the 1960s and created what they referred to as a “glamorous commune” (Bayer et al. 10) which suggests a deliberate contrast to Rochdale’s failed glamour. In 1969, General Idea members, moved into a house at 78 Gerrard Street in the city’s original bohemian village, before the hip youth and artists began to migrate to Yorkville as discussed in the previous chapter, and Gerrard Village’s character was expunged to make way for the Toronto General Hospital expansion. Here they established the General Idea Headquarters to entertain their friends and to use their house as a studio space to showcase their art projects.

When General Idea assumed a collective identity early in their collaboration, they encountered challenges on account of the art system’s inability to understand General Idea as a collective rather than a group of distinct individuals (Barkun 460). To counter this perception, they often attended functions as a group and only allowed themselves to be photographed and interviewed as a whole unit. They also used highly mediated strategies to strengthen their narrative as a collective entity shrouded in glamour and celebrity. According to art historian Deborah Barkun, “General Idea alludes to mass production and distribution methods that suggest postmodern strategies of appropriation and dissemination, which the group liberally employed in its own work” (460). While postmodernism was still an obscure concept in the early 1970s (Reynolds, *Shock and Awe* 346), it did not stop General Idea from adopting a recognizable self-

reflexive and ironic style, especially in their work, which often took the form of parody or pastiche. During the late 1960s through the late 1970s, theatrical performance was an important platform for General Idea to communicate their theories on glamour, media, and celebrity. Many of their works involved live audiences and live media transmissions, which they had used in their previous involvement in Toronto's underground theatre scene. The three members of General Idea had in fact met while doing work at Theatre Passe Muraille, which was founded in 1968 as an experimental theatre and originally opened as part of Rochdale College, which was how it came to their attention (Solomon 64n43). One of General Idea's early performance pieces was a multimedia event organized for the International Festival of Underground Theatre at the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts and the Global Village Theatre in Toronto in 1970. *What Happened*, a reference to Gertrude Stein's famous play *What Happened: A Play in Five Acts* (1913), was a complex performance that took place over the three-week festival period and involved a telex machine that the artists used to send Stein's original text, in real performance time, to various institutions including the Toronto Stock Exchange. The artists also used chalk to write the lines from Stein's play on the theatre walls and had a local radio station transmit Stein's words over the airwaves (Felton-Dansky 96). General Idea's staging of *What Happened* is not only an overt homage to Stein's fascination and experimentation with words and forms but the title also makes a reference to the Happenings that were performed in Toronto during the early 1960s: their use of the past tense, *happened*, suggests their postmodern sensibility by blending different works into a new composition. Theirs, too, was a performance imbued by Marshall McLuhan's recently famous dictum that the medium is the message, and their artistic practice made manifest the statement that "the 'content' of any medium is always another medium" (McLuhan 23). For General Idea, their medium was glamour.

Under the various influences of McLuhan, Stein and the Village's display of conspicuous glamour, General Idea proposed an entire society based on the assumptions of glamour and spectacle.⁷⁵ From these ideas and their obsession with exploring the dialectical nature of art and the media, the collective began what they called the "search for the spirit of Miss General Idea," which drew upon McLuhan's notion that the social effects of media deserve critical analysis and should be unpacked for gender stereotypes and celebrity culture. The first performance of the 1970 *Miss General Idea Pageant* happened in the lobby of the St. Lawrence Centre during one of the intermissions of *What Happened*. They used the stock components of beauty pageants – contestants, judges and talent contests – to eventually crown their winner Miss Honey, a member of their wider collective, who "won" based on her ability to successfully use a telex machine (S. E. K. Smith, *General Idea* 11). The pageants became a key element of the group's mythology, and the figure of Miss General Idea a persona through whom they could interrogate fame, glamour, and the mechanics of the art world. They even fabricated a genealogy that traced the beauty pageants to 1968 (even though the actual first performance was in 1970), with the made-up coronation of Mimi Paige, to help lend credence to the myth that General Idea was formed in that year.

Theatrical performance was a powerful medium for General Idea's work in this period from the late 1960s until the late 1970s (Felton-Dansky 95). Their use of the pageant format helped them to explore how glamour, in particular, could be performed on stage for a wide

⁷⁵ Bronson assembled a list of various theorists who informed GI's collective reading and thinking in this period which includes: Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1966), Roland Barthes' *Fashion System* (1967), Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore's *The Medium is the Massage* (1967), Noam Chomsky's *Language and Mind* (1968), Claude Lévi-Strauss' *The Savage Mind* (1970) and *Totemism* (1970), Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* (1970).

audience. Bronson noted that “in a way the beauty pageant is a simulacrum of the art world. You have the talent contests, prizes, winner and losers” (Looz). Yet, arguably, it was not only the art world that General Idea was sending up with its exploration of the pageant spectacle. In Chapter Two, I used the first Miss Toronto pageant in 1926 as a case study to show how this event shaped a specifically Canadian construction of beauty and glamour in early twentieth-century Toronto that evolved over the following decades. For instance, in the 1937 pageant, organizers banned all use of makeup with the exception of a little lipstick to uphold the ideal of “Real girls” (Karstens-Smith). In what could perhaps be described as a tiny gesture of life imitating art, by 1972, two years after the first Miss General Idea pageant elevated talent and innovation over traditional standards of beauty, the Miss Toronto pageant tried to downplay the “beauty” aspect by adding an interview component (Karstens-Smith).

General Idea understood that beauty pageants were a contested terrain amongst feminists and they recognized that by the 1970s, these types of contests were becoming culturally stale which, they also recognized, made them ripe for parody (Monk, *Glamour Is Theft* 46). Their pageants were not interested in “real” or “natural” beauty, rather, they were interested in how the performance of the pageant was able to communicate their conception of fame and glamour. The following year, they wanted to produce a larger-scale pageant to adequately communicate their ideas on glamour, artifice and spectacle. The 1971 Miss General Idea Pageant took place in the Walker Court at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) on October 1st and was presented with all the accoutrements of a pageant spectacle, including a glamorous pre-show red carpet. The artists chose the venue because they found it was “the only location in Toronto combining the appropriate elements of milieu, elegance and formality” (qtd. in S. E. K. Smith, *General Idea* 94n5). If one reads between these lines, one sees that General Idea’s choice in venue was a

shrewd move that enabled their performance to be hosted by Toronto's preeminent art institution. The heavily scripted performance was captured on video to look like a live televised event with the crowd as a stand-in for a television audience. The pageant was judged by prominent members of Toronto's art community and included David Silcox, an Assistant Dean in the Faculty of Fine Arts at York University, Dorothy Cameron, an art consultant, and Daniel Freedman, an actor and one of the original members of General Idea. According to the pageant publicity material Freedman was the "General Idea Glamour Consultant, and the star of the MGM spectacular *Fortune and Men's Eyes*" (qtd. in S. E. K. Smith, *General Idea* 20).

It is worth noting that the confluence between glamour and *Fortune and Men's Eyes* belies its brutal narrative. The film was based on the play of the same name written by Toronto playwright John Herbert in 1967, two years before the decriminalization of homosexuality in Canada. The play had shocked critics across the country for its dramatization of society's treatment of homosexuals and its depictions of horrific prison conditions. Prior to 1969, homosexual acts had been punishable by up to fourteen years in prison, and Herbert himself had been imprisoned for dressing in drag and for false claims of solicitation. *Fortune and Men's Eyes* drew on his experiences in the prison system. Notably in a 1968 *Globe Magazine* article "The Gay World," reporter William Johnson had championed that "Toronto, haven for hippies and draft dodgers, may be on its way to becoming the homosexual capital of North America" (qtd. in Harris 322) and optimistically mused that, as a result of Trudeau's amendments, the "shackles of fear and hate which willy-nilly bind together the homosexual and the heterosexual, may yet free both" (Harris 333). However, despite the new federal law, Toronto still saw the infamous bath raids in 1981 that catalyzed actions such as Pride Week that same year and continues to be widely celebrated in the month of June. Despite the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1969,

many Torontonians in the 1970s still regarded homosexuals as sexual deviants (Harris 220). In 1971, *The Body Politic*, a magazine devoted to gay issues in Canada, was founded in Toronto and has been credited with helping to develop and coalesce Canada's LGBTQ community. Sexuality was a significant theme in General Idea's work and their bold expression of homosexual themes in their art should be understood in this context. Yet, while their work was never censored publicly, these themes would not be commented upon by any of the city's art critics (S. E. K. Smith, "General Idea"). The artistic press never referred to their homosexuality, and to spite and goad the press, the collective tried to make their sexuality as explicit as possible,⁷⁶ and the pageants proved to be an ideal means to this end.

General Idea mailed out pageant entry kits to sixteen artists across North America, who were informed they were finalists in the competition. Theatre scholar Miriam Felton-Dansky argues that their conduit for pageant recruitment allowed General Idea to consolidate a network of artists through "mail art," which was a mode of "countercultural artistic exchange" (99), where artists would send and receive artwork through the mail. Moreover, this mail art approach was in tune with their fascination with McLuhan's theories on the transmission of ideas through various media, which General Idea had earlier interrogated in *What Happened*. The entry kit for the 1971 Miss General Idea pageant required that each person submit a glamour shot of him- or herself in the "Miss General Idea Gown" (Fig. 9). This gown was conceived after *The Globe and Mail* ran a story in the fashion pages on January 22nd, 1970 about General Idea's Headquarters at 78 Gerrard Street in an abandoned dress shop they called Betty's. The contents of the store, which mainly consisted of period dresses hung in a gallery fashion, were described in an article

⁷⁶ By 1985 the *Body Politic* finally published an article on the trio: "Getting the General Idea: Creation of Three Gay Artists."

titled “Authentic Unreality” in reference to the collective’s interest in how fashion simultaneously communicates authenticity and artificiality. The journalist, Joyce Carter, interviewed members of General Idea about how they had come into possession of these clothes from the former owner of the shop. The article placed particular focus on a “brown taffeta dress embroidered in blue” (Carter W1), which was then later christened “The Miss General Idea Gown.”



Figure 9 The Miss General Idea Gown. Picture taken from the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt exhibit: Glam the Performance of Style (2013). © Kathryn Franklin.

Included in the entry kit was a photograph of a drag-queen dressed head-to-toe in leather and wearing platform heels. On the card was written the caption: Artist Conception; Miss General Idea 1971 (Fig. 10), which most definitely set the tone for the pageant.



Figure 10 Artist Conception; Miss General Idea 1971. Picture taken from the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt exhibit: *Glam the Performance of Style* (2013). © Kathryn Franklin.

Marcel Dot, the alter-ego of the Vancouver artist Michael Morris, was declared the winner. The judges felt “he captured glamour without falling into it” (Bronson qtd. in Looz), which meant that he successfully inhabited glamour without letting glamour overshadow his persona. Marcel Dot’s entry photograph (Fig. 11) depicts his head cradled in the promotional hand of the spirit of Miss General Idea, which was “a design taken from a jewelry shop marquee on Toronto’s Yonge Street that once held a diamond made from the technologically advanced material, plexiglass, mimicking the glamour art photography of the 1940s” (Ballantyne 24).

Figure 11 Marcel Dot in the Miss General Idea gown, 1971. Photo: Vincent Trasov. Image omitted due to copyright restrictions. For a reproduction, please consult the following source: http://ccca.concordia.ca/c/images/screen/cca/general_idea/gi025.jpg

Dot is wearing the General Idea Pageant dress draped across his shoulders as he stands with his back arched and legs astride. While his image evokes the glamour poses from haute couture fashion magazines, he is also inculcated in the campiness of the event. While glamour was the platform for General Idea’s pageants, camp was arguably the credo.

The relationship between glamour and camp is reciprocal as one informs the other. Both glamour and camp rely on a certain amount of stylized artifice and a knowing sensibility. A campy display is rarely without glamour and glamour almost always contains an element of camp. Glamour is a heightened illusion of mystery and untouchable perfection and camp reverentially exaggerates these fantasies without tarnishing their allure. In the 1954 novel, *The World in the Evening*, the gay British-American author Christopher Isherwood expressed his views on camp, which preceded Susan Sontag's famous essay, "Notes on 'Camp'," by 12 years despite Sontag's view that Isherwood's interpretation was "a lazy two-page sketch" (Sontag 1). What Sontag may deem lazy is Isherwood's pragmatic approach to the concept with its simple divisions between high and low camp. Unlike Sontag's lengthy meditation on the camp aesthetic, Isherwood gets right to the point and argues "You see, true High Camp always has an underlying seriousness. You can't camp about something you don't take seriously. You're not making fun of it; you're making fun out of it" (125). In an interview for the CBC in 1965, Isherwood further explained to the journalist, Clifford Solway, how he saw these dichotomies as fundamentally different from each other. For Isherwood, high camp "is a kind of extremely sophisticated humour about something in which you nevertheless firmly believe." Whereas low camp "is somebody dressing up as a woman and swishing about and carrying on." While there is no evidence to suggest that General Idea had listened to this CBC interview with Isherwood or read the transcript when it appeared in the Canadian literary journal, *The Tamarack Review* in 1966, General Idea's use of camp, nevertheless, was similar to Isherwood's understanding of camp as a component of gay culture in the 1960s and 70s (Harker). Camp cannot be separated from queerness and many critics have noted that Sontag's essay minimizes and depoliticizes camp's associations with homosexuality. For General Idea, the pageant format was a medium for

exploring the traditional division between high and low culture, or rather the separation between artificiality and art, which, while seemingly parodying pageant conventions, they did take seriously in their work. This campy display of glamorous pageantry also underscores a prevalent radicalism in General Idea's work in promoting queer themes at a time when police raids on gay bars were a regular occurrence in Toronto, thus, acknowledging camp and glamour's capacity for subversion.

After the 1971 Miss General Idea pageant, the group decided to remake the event on a larger, albeit, imaginary scale. By this point General Idea had narrowed their wider collective down to the core trio of Bronson, Partz and Zontal, and the three members realized that the physical pageants involved too much of a time commitment and they, therefore proposed a symbolic gesture of hosting a 1984 Miss General Idea Pageant, which included plans for a pavilion that could fit exactly 1,984 audience members. The choice of year was very deliberate as this futuristic pageant was arguably the apotheosis of their Orwellian convictions concerning mass media and culture in the age of spectacle. That the pageant and the pavilion never came to fruition — they claimed that the pavilion had burned down in an installation in 1977 (Hume, “‘The Problem of Nothing’ General Idea Has Seen the Future and It Was Them”) — only served to underscore their theories about the transitory nature of art and glamour in a media-laden society. Between 1974 and 1978, in anticipation of the faux 1984 Miss General Idea pageant, the artists “created a series of performance pieces aimed at, as they viewed it, training their audience members in the proper modes of spectatorship for the ultimate (and imagined) pageant to be staged years hence” (Felton-Dansky 103). These performance pieces not only helped to uphold and maintain the mythological allure of Miss General Idea, but they also allowed General Idea to shine a spotlight on Canada's general lack of art history (Krishtalka). Through their training

practices, General Idea were showcasing how artists in Canada were forced to develop and teach their own histories.

To further cement their own legacy in Canadian culture, General Idea created *FILE Magazine* in 1972, a parody of *LIFE Magazine*, that showcased the connection between art imitating life and life imitating art (S. E. K. Smith, *General Idea* 22).⁷⁷ *FILE* was, in the words of General Idea, “a cultural parasite carried along in the mainstream blood stream of commercial distribution systems and subtly altered the body of its host” (“Editorial: Stretch That Social Fabric” 3). Put less metaphorically, *FILE* was conceived as a medium that allowed artists to operate outside regular art spaces such as galleries and museums and forge their own identities without the need for formal institutional structures. In its early years, *FILE* published artist projects and directories to help connect artists across Canada and the world (S. E. K. Smith, *General Idea* 55). According to curator Philip Monk, who has written extensively about the trio, “Who knows what the world thereby thought of Toronto, but such dissemination of images [in *File*] of the scene drew artists from across the country to join the Toronto art community” (qtd. in Todd). Monk claims that in the mid-1970s, many avant-garde scenes were moving away from New York’s hegemonic influence, noting, “with its emphasis on video, performance and pervasive camp conceptualism, Toronto fully qualifies as a leader, having invented some of the strategies that New York artists would then go on to claim for themselves in the 1980s” (qtd. in Todd). Janine Marchessault, however, contradicts Monk’s advocacy for Toronto as a preeminent art scene during this period by arguing the opposite:

⁷⁷ In 1976 *Time Inc.* threatened to sue General Idea over abuse of their logo thereby prompting General Idea to alter the magazine’s red and white logo which they did in 1977.

One thing is certain, New York's cosmopolitan performance scenes (perhaps Warhol combined with Joseph Beuys in particular) served as a model in the imaginary registers of Toronto's avant-garde culture. This mirroring was not simply derivative but largely self-conscious. Not only was New York the port to an international art scene (France, Germany and Italy mostly), it had two interrelated characteristics that Toronto did not have: a market for art and a history of artistic contestation. That is, an art scene. ("Film Scenes: Paris, New York, Toronto" 70)

These two contrasting accounts regarding Toronto's status as a preeminent art scene in the 1970s reflect what Toronto art historian, Adam Lauder has called "the Toronto's art scene's notorious resistance to its own historicization" (Lauder). This is not to say that a history of contemporary art in Toronto does not exist, however it has often been left to the artists, musicians and writers to reclaim this cultural memory.⁷⁸ In "Toronto Curating Itself: An Unhistory" the Canadian artist and writer Sholem Krishtalka further addresses the responsibility placed on artists and their networks in the development of the city's art scene:

It's little surprise, then, that the Toronto art scene seems to have been largely invented by artists. Artist collectives and artist-run centres emerged to address

⁷⁸ Since 2011, five exhibitions have opened in Toronto with a specific focus on the art and artists responsible for helping to develop Toronto's creative communities in the 1970s and 80s: Rae Johnson and Herb Tookey's *This is Paradise* (MOCCA, 2011); Philip Monk's *Is Toronto Burning? 1977/1978/1979 Three Years in the Making (and Unmaking) of the Toronto Art Scene* (AGYU, 2014); Lorraine Segato's *The Rebel Zone: Queen Street West Art & Activism 1975-1989* (Daniels Spectrum, 2016); Luis Jacob's *Form Follows Fiction: Art and Artists in Toronto* (Art Museum, 2016); and Wanda Nanibush's *Toronto Tributes + Tributaries 1971-1989* (AGO, 2016). These exhibitions ultimately propose that collective community memory is responsible for maintaining Toronto's art history. Significantly, Nanibush's exhibit addresses how all too often some memories from this period are more privileged than others and her exhibit sought to focus on artists, particularly Indigenous Toronto artists, whose contributions have been historically erased.

this impossibility of nothing. Whether considering General Idea and A Space, ChromaZone and YYZ, or more media-specific centres like Gallery 44, Toronto Photographers Workshop, Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre and Vtape, this self-invention birthed an art community in the 1960s, 70s and 80s—and in so doing, created the conditions that haunt more contemporary issues of Toronto’s curatorial self-representation. (Krishtalka)

Krishtalka’s critique is particularly pointed given how prominently he features as a character in Heti’s *How Should a Person Be?* Heti’s text presents itself as a treatise on the nature of collaboration and artistic practice in Toronto in spite of her eponymous protagonist’s tendency toward solipsism. As a work of metafiction, *How Should a Person Be?* owes a debt to the postmodern work of General Idea. Their spirited exploration of identity construction — recall that *FILE* was referred to as a *megazine* — and artistic practice challenged the conventional discourse of art history, or lack thereof, by providing an unconventional method of “reading” Toronto, inviting the city and beyond to take part in their art through their performances, installations and their magazine articles that addressed its lack of identity and mythology. Marchessault is not wholly incorrect in her assessment that Toronto benefitted from New York’s thriving art scene, as Christina Ritchie illustrates, “Warhol’s Factory scene, with its emphasis on glamour, sexual role-playing and mimicry of media and commercial strategies had a powerful impact on the methods and strategies that General Idea would eventually develop” (Bayer et al. 16). Yet it should be noted that both Warhol and Beuys, whom Marchessault references as the models for Toronto’s avant-garde cultures, were early subscribers to *FILE* (Fusco). Warhol’s own magazine, *Interview*, with its focus on unorthodox interviews with celebrities and artists, was originally published in newspaper format in 1969, and according to Bronson, Warhol

decided to turn his newspaper into a magazine with a colour cover in the style of *FILE* after seeing *FILE*'s glossy covers (Birchall). Warhol, ever the fan of the magazine, even contributed to *FILE* for its *\$uce\$\$* issue in 1981. In Duncan Hannah's 2017 memoir, *Twentieth-Century Boy*, the American figurative artist recalls a meeting with Andy Warhol in 1976 during which Warhol let him know that his work was starting to get noticed because Hannah had been featured in *FILE*: "'I've been seeing your name everywhere.' [Warhol] showed me a copy of *FILE*, where I was mentioned with Richard Merkin and Josef Astor. 'You're really hot right now. Tell me, what do you paint like?'" (Hannah 257). This small detail sticks out for its lack of self-conscious explanation of the magazine's stature. There is no further explanation in the memoir regarding the nature of *FILE* as if to imply that if you were familiar with the 1970s New York City art scene, you should have a sense of *FILE*'s great influence. While *FILE* was writing about art for a global audience that could appreciate the glamour of the art world, the magazine itself was nevertheless part of the wider distribution of Canadian-made art.

In 1975 General Idea published a "Glamour" issue, which was comprised of a treatise on and definition of glamour and, specifically, how glamour is mediated through celebrity culture and artistic enterprise. General Idea understood glamour as a wholly tautological phenomenon — only glamorous individuals are recognized as glamorous:

This is the story of General Idea and the story of what we wanted. We wanted to be famous, glamorous and rich. That is to say we wanted to be artists and we knew that if we were famous and glamorous we could say we were artists and we would be. We never felt we had to produce great art to be great artists. We knew great art did not bring glamour and fame. We knew we had to keep a foot in the door of art and we were conscious of the importance of berets and paint

brushes. We made public appearances in painters' smocks. We knew that if we were famous and glamorous we could say we were artists and we would be.

We did and we are. We are famous, glamorous artists. This is the story of

Glamour and the part it has played in our art. (*Glamour Issue 22*)

General Idea's glamour manifesto was fourteen pages and written in dense prose that liberally reworked philosophical and literary texts to support their mandate. In particular, excerpts from Roland Barthes *Mythologies* were rewritten by substituting the word "glamour" for "myth" under the suggestion that "glamour is theft" (Monk, *Glamour Is Theft* 16), thereby invoking Barthes' question that "since myth robs language of something, why not rob myth?" (*Mythologies* 147). General Idea not only robbed myth, but in effect they robbed theory to create the image of the glamorous artist. For General Idea, if glamour is theft then inherent in glamour is "its ready but empty mythology (berets, paint brushes, palettes, in a word FORM without content) the shell which was art was simple to invade" (*Glamour Issue 32*). In using, or robbing, the language of myth as proposed by Barthes as part of a greater system of communication, General Idea propose that a similar glamour system exists that "replaces Marxism as the single revolutionary statement of the twentieth century" (36). General Idea's vision was to expose artificiality in their work by making themselves over in the image of what others perceived art and glamour to be, explaining: "it was like gripping the two horns of the modern dilemma, culture in one hand and nature in the other and forcing them through the narrow eye of our affliction, which is glamour" (qtd. in Bayer et al. 11). General Idea used the "affliction of glamour" to create the conditions for generating visibility through the Canadian art scene.

At the time of the publication of the Glamour manifesto, glamour was no longer in vogue within the Toronto art scene. According to a 2011 interview with AA Bronson, by then the only surviving member of General Idea:

The early 70s were like a continuation of the '60s, especially in North America and it was definitely an antiglamour aesthetic. Warhol and his factory were considered kind of gauche. David Bowie was the first one to make glamour O.K. again. Our whole emphasis on glamour was a provocation. To be glamorous in Toronto was politically incorrect and kind of ridiculous. We were always accused of being dilettantes and in a way it was provoking those same people to continue accusing us. (Looz)

Rock historian Barney Hoskyns observes that, “glamour was the antithesis of hippiedom: for long hair puritans, glamour symbolized affluence, capitalism, ‘show business’” (qtd. in Auslander 40). Bronson supports Hoskyns’ claim in an interview with David Vereschagin: “[Glamour] was the last subject in the world that anybody would mention. And the same with money and fame [...] in the early 70s that was the last thing in the world they [young artists] would want. It would have meant the end of their careers probably, if they were demonstrably any of those things. Although secretly, of course, they wanted all three” (qtd. in Vereschagin 29). General Idea, for their part, let the secret out all over the pages of their *FILE* magazine.

In *FILE*’s first issue, Bronson writes, “Seduction and Glamour are intrinsically related. Seducers are entirely natural objects, their characteristics a portrayal of physical beauty and sexual potency” (General Idea, “Mr. Peanut Issue”). Seduction and glamour are also important tools for advertising, which was partially what General Idea were doing in the pages of their magazine, thereby providing a modicum of notoriety for their colleagues in spite of their

supposed protests against wanting to appear glamorous and famous. By profiling their friends, artists and musicians, General Idea effectively created their own version of the society page in the same vein as *Life*'s profiles of the rich and famous. *FILE*'s mission was to "make a sort of cross-Canada network of artists" (S. E. K. Smith, *General Idea* 54) to engage with other artists that may not have been aware of each other's work. More importantly, in addition to these pages featuring wild outfits and parties and promoting future gigs for their friends, *FILE* provided a forum for artists to showcase their work across the country and eventually the international art scene, with Toronto at the foreground.

In "The Humiliation of the Bureaucrat" (published in 1983), AA Bronson wrote that the Canadian artist was:

Desiring to see not necessarily himself but the picture of his art scene pictured on TV; and knowing the impossibility of an art scene without *real* museums (the Art Gallery of Ontario was not a *real* museum for us), with *real* art magazines (*artscanada* was not a *real* magazine for us), without *real* artists (no, Harold Town was not a *real* artist for us), we forgot that we ourselves were real artists, because we had not seen ourselves in the media [...] as such an artist desiring such a picture of such a scene, such a reality from sea-to-shining-sea, then, it was natural to call upon our national attributes – the bureaucratic tendency and the protestant work ethic – and working together, and working sometimes not together, we labored to structure, or rather to untangle from the messy post-sixties spaghetti of our minds, artist-run galleries, artists' video and artist-run magazines. And that allowed us to see ourselves as an art scene. And we did. (qtd. in Wood 57)

AA Bronson imagined a “dream community connected by and reflected in the media” (qtd. in Woods 57) as his ideal version of the artist-run centre. Bronson nods towards the trend of art collectives and centres that developed in the 1960s in and around Toronto, yet his vision is not one that supports these scenes as a reflection of Canadian identity but rather as an opportunity to be *seen* as “real artists.” When Bronson writes about a “dream community,” he is making a connection with McLuhan’s “global village,” whose defining quality was precisely that it was not an actual village. General Idea wanted a scene that was emulative of the glamour that surrounded the myth of the artist. For General Idea, the presence of an art scene, and with it the accoutrements of glamour and fame, was just as important as the art that they produced.

The significance of glamour for General Idea’s artistic practice has been written about by many scholars, such as Monk’s *Glamour is Theft* (2013) and examined in the 2011 retrospective *Haute Culture: General Idea* at the AGO. What has been less clearly investigated in the scholarship on General Idea is that their artistic work and visual practice of pageantry, glamour, and celebrity were predominantly influenced by women in Toronto. Granada Gazelle, Miss Honey, and Mimi Paige were the inspirations for the original Miss General Idea, and they were a part of the original collective before General Idea became a group of three. The art world as beauty pageant metaphor, “in which talent competitions, winners and losers, prizes and celebrity take part” (Bronson 19), could not have been realized without the participation of Toronto’s women artists. In the following section I focus on General Idea collaborator, Carole Pope, from the seminal Toronto glam and punk band Rough Trade, and show how her performance and expression of glamour was informed by the work of General Idea and by the rhetoric of second-

wave feminism, which inspired a rising generation of Canadian women artists.⁷⁹ Pope's provocative performances were inspired by General Idea's credo of glamour, and in turn she used her stage as a space for a glamorous exploration in Toronto that embraced same-sex female desire and an androgynous fashion that ultimately shook up the foundations of Toronto's glamscape.

Shaking the Foundations: Rough Trade, General Idea and the Pavement of the Glamscape

On September 18th, 1975, General Idea mounted a large event titled *Going thru the Motions*, like the previous 1971 Miss General Idea Pageant, the event was staged in the Walker Court inside of the Art Gallery of Ontario. *Going thru the Motions* was in fact an installment of the Miss General Idea beauty pageants, and it introduced their iconic V.B. Gowns: wearable art pieces that looked like two pyramids made up of venetian blinds, one on top of each other, and were meant to evoke the Canada pavilion at Expo '67 with its iconic inverted pyramid (Bayer et al. 50). Supplying the music for the performance was the band Rough Trade, so named because of lead singer Carole Pope's fascination with gay male iconography. Rough Trade wrote two songs for *Going Thru the Motions*. One was called "I Like It, but Is It Art?" a tongue-in-cheek critique of the art world with lyrics such as "Sylvia Plath getting gassed, Warhol getting shot by Solanis, I like it, I like it, I like it, but is it art?" Their other song, "Beauty Queen," was a fitting ode to every kind of pageant queen that Pope could think of, singing, "You're not a drag queen or a dinge queen or a

⁷⁹ See Susan Swan and Margaret Dragu's *Queen of the Silver Blades* (1975) about figure skater Barbara Ann Scott; Marien Lewis' *Dance Soap* (1973) about wedding rituals; *Torch Song Showcase* (1976) which featured Carole Pope, Dianne Lawrence and Suzette Couture doing interpretations of Cole Porter, Bessie Smith and sixties pop songs. Pope notes that they were "wearing long dresses, standing ankle-deep in Lake Ontario holding flaming torches aloft. The image of that photo shoot has stayed with me" (65).

rice queen or a dairy queen [...]” (Pope 64). Pope, too, found the institutionalized sterility of the gallery environment at the AGO to be a perfect space to highlight the absurdity of the pageant. She reminisces that “it was such a high to camp it up at the AGO,” although she is also quick to note that “under the guise of art, people will tolerate almost anything” (64).

Pope and her partner, Kevan Staples, formed Rough Trade in Toronto in 1975. In her autobiography, *Anti Diva*, Pope explains, “The first time I heard the term Rough Trade I knew it was the perfect name for our band. After I’d shown Kevan a photo of a stud wearing a leather motorcycle jacket and nothing else, he agreed with me” (35). While the band featured a rotating cast of musicians, Pope and Staples remained the core members throughout the band’s fifteen-year musical career.⁸⁰ General Idea first encountered Rough Trade at Grossman’s Tavern in Toronto’s Chinatown, where they were performing, a meeting that would prove fortuitous and later cement a creative relationship between the two sets of artists. In *Anti Diva*, Pope gushes over the singularity of Toronto in the 1970s: “At that time Toronto was alive with creativity and no one seemed to feel threatened by anyone else. In those days the arts community operated on a much smaller scale, and the scenes were so closely connected and interlocked that they energized each other” (62). More importantly, it was an inspiring period for women artists in the city as women’s performance art in Toronto took shape in the early 1970s (Buchan 88).

Shortly after *Going Thru the Motions*, Pope was asked to play a secondary role in an all-female fashion show called *Glamazon* conceived by General Idea co-conspirator Granada Gazelle, performance artist Dawn Eagle, and photographer Isobel Harry. The fashion show took place at the St. Paul’s Centre on December 14th and 15th, 1975. The show was in three acts, and

⁸⁰ The band officially broke up in 1984, but Staples and Pope continued to play concerts, reunions and one-off shows up until 2001.

featured models wearing clothes from the 1940s to the 1970s. *Glamazon*'s purpose was to upend the constant barrage of images in popular culture that reinforced tired representations of traditional women's roles. This performance was particularly influential for Canadian artist David Buchan, another member of General Idea's larger coterie, who said that *Glamazon* was an inspiration for his performance-based art. "Glamazon," he wrote, "recreates the runway fashion-show format to make its point — using sewing patterns as 'blueprints of former times' to document how women saw themselves and were seen" (Buchan 87). Whereas General Idea used the beauty pageant to interrogate and parody concepts of beauty, fashion, glamour, and the media institutions that create them, the *Glamazon* installation piece, produced entirely by women, used the runway as a stage to deconstruct the fashion show by depicting women not simply as passive consumers of beauty, fashion, and glamour but as engaged participants in these industries. The fashions from the show were made from "over two hundred collected and assembled [patterns] by the artists, represent[ing] a selection of feminine personas — the housewife, school girl, debutante, career girl, sensuous plaything and jaded, somewhat faded beauties. They are brought back to life with the invocation of departed aesthetics, with the help of the corresponding fetish objects" (Buchan 87). The artists used patterns from the popular women's magazine *McCall's* and looked to the ROM's and Eatons' archives to stitch together these various runway looks, effectively capturing the evolving modern Toronto woman through the postmodern entanglements of glamour and camp.

There is very little documentary evidence from the *Glamazon* show, which speaks to a larger negation of women's performances in Toronto during this period. Philip Monk suggests these records are missing "because [women's performances] were not taken seriously in their time — perhaps seen to be only entertainment or mere women's work" (*Is Toronto Burning?*

31). This was the background from which Pope had to claim her space in Toronto's arts scene. Women performers have historically had to contend with the misogyny within these art scenes. Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie describe the situation for women musicians in particular in an essay originally published in 1978:

Any analysis of the sexuality of rock music must begin with the brute social fact that in terms of control and production, rock is a male form. The music business is male-run; popular musicians, writers, creators, technicians, engineers and producers are mostly men [...] The problems facing a woman seeking to enter the rock world as a participant are clear. A girl is supposed to be an individual listener; she is not encouraged to develop the skills and knowledge to become a performer. (qtd. in Auslander 195)

Rough Trade were clearly working against this blueprint. While Toronto in the 1970s saw the rise in the punk scene with bands such as the Dishes, the Diodes, and Teenage Head, for the most part, with a few exceptions, these bands were primarily made up of young white men with aggressively chauvinistic stage presences. Carole Pope not only had the distinction of being one of the first women in Toronto's newly emerging punk and glam scene, but her songs about same sex female desire were an unapologetic celebration of her homosexuality as well as, as the group's name emphasizes, a subversion and revolt against the norm. Conversely, General Idea expressed an indifference toward what they considered "gay art": "We did not find it interesting at all, no more and no less interesting than defining yourself as a Canadian artist which was worse than being gay" (Bronson et al. 88). Pope, however, made these aspects of her identity front and centre in her performance, which, for better or worse, also made for titillating fodder in the city's newspapers.

On February 21st, 1976 the headline of *The Globe and Mail* blasted: “Carole Pope: Erotica with an Electric Touch.” Journalist Bryan Johnson followed up by providing background on the band’s name: “In homosexual street jargon, trade is a male prostitute, rough trade is the black leather jacket variety — into heavy ‘b&m’ (bondage and masochism). So it’s not exactly a surprise to go looking for the rock band Rough Trade in a steamy little club on Yonge Street and find yourself face to face with the most androgynous, overtly sexual lead singer this side of David Bowie” (B. Johnson).⁸¹ Pope notes, “By 1976, Kevan and I had morphed into queens of androgyny. We were a combination of punk, bondage and glam. We were into marketing” (49), which meant that they would plaster the city with their outré posters with slogans such as “repulsive yet fascinating” as if daring the city to see them perform. According to Pope, “I wasn’t your typical non-threatening girl singer. My voice and sexual androgyny were powerful” (39). Pope draped herself in ciré fabric and donned polyester jumpsuits, black bondage suits, and fetish heels “as an excuse to show a lot of skin” (Pope 40). She permed her hair in the fashion of theatrical excess to give the impression she was larger than life, and her trash glam aesthetic provoked the predominant male hetero rock hegemony of the time where hyper masculine performers like Bruce Springsteen were at the top of the music charts. Dressed in outlandish outfits and over-the-top makeup, Pope’s look went beyond gender: *she* was the performance, and

⁸¹ In 1983, Rough Trade in fact did open for David Bowie in Toronto for his *Serious Moonlight* tour. According to Pope, Bowie was so impressed by Rough Trade that he asked them to tour more dates with him. After six dates, however, the tour was heading to California, Australia and New Zealand and Rough Trade did not have the financial support to continue along with the tour (Pope 146-9).

she *was* glam.⁸² She performed a gender-bending glam in Judith's Butler's understanding that "gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time — an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (519). I contend that Pope was not as interested in the performance of gender norms as she was in the glamorization of gender. Laura Mulvey discusses the construction of "female glamour as fantasy space" and focuses on glamour's "investment in surface," which she argues "is so intense that it seems to suggest that the surface conceals 'something else.' What might this 'something else' be? To what extent does it guard against nameless anxieties associated with the female body outside its glamour mode? [...] Her image triumphantly creates a spectacle that holds the eye and distracts it from what should not be seen" (*Fetishism and Curiosity: Cinema and the Mind's Eye* 48). Certainly, the glamorous surface that Pope created with her outlandish appearance reflected the anxieties that her performance engendered in an arena that was predominantly male.

Pope's on-stage persona in the late 1970s and early 1980s was definitely not in character with the wholesome Canadian songbird image of Anne Murray or even Joni Mitchell. Dubbed "Madame Raunch" by the *Globe and Mail* in 1977 for her songs about autoerotic love, pimps, and prostitution, Pope's image was steeped in Toronto's downtown culture, easily summed up by Caroline Azar, the vocalist for the Toronto all-female experimental post-punk band Fifth Column: "The 70s Toronto punk scene was so pure because it was a mix of really wild glam

⁸² I should note that Pope may disagree with my insistence on placing her in the glam camp. In her autobiography she writes of the mid-seventies: "Glam was over; we were sick of lamé, cross-dressing decadence. It was all about pushing the envelope" (90). She saw her work becoming more in tune with the ethos of punk culture, which arguably shared many of the tenets of glam in its performance of excess.

street trash mixed with egghead art school intellectualism” (qtd. in Worth 68). This mixture of “glam street trash” and “egghead art school intellectualism” was spectacularly rendered on the covers of many of Rough Trade’s records. The band deliberately chose General Idea to shoot and design their album covers because, as Pope acknowledged, “glamour was always a part of their credo; their art was devoted to redefining it and making it their own” (66). Rough Trade’s first cover collaboration with General Idea was in 1980 with their second album *Avoid Freud*, followed by 1981’s *For Those Who Think Young*, *Shaking the Foundations* in 1982, and finally *Weapons* in 1983. According to Pope the title, *Avoid Freud*, was her comment about “the fucked sexual mores that afflicted most of Western society” (143). By this point in their career they had already amassed a considerable following from notable international stars at the time, such as Elton John and Tim Curry, and many New York celebrities made a point of catching their shows when they were performing in the city (O’Toole A3).

Avoid Freud’s album cover features Pope holding a martini glass, and on the back Staples is holding a tuning fork. This was the beginning of a pattern in which Pope was always on the front of the album covers and Staples on the back. On one level, this could be read as a playful subversion of the old adage that behind every successful man is a woman. Staples, on these album covers, is literally the man behind the woman. Read on another level, these album covers contradict Frith’s suggestion that the basic problem for a female rock performer was “not whether rock stars are sexist, but whether women could enter their discourse, appropriate their music, without having to become ‘one of the boys’” (239).

There is a striking similarity between the cover of *Avoid Freud* and the album artwork for Debbie Harry’s 1981 debut solo album *KooKoo*. The cover depicts an airbrushed closeup of the Blondie front woman’s heavily made-up face with four spikes going into one side of her head

and out the other. Harry wanted famed *Aliens* visual designer H.R. Giger to create a cover that would mark a clear departure from her Blondie persona with its portrayal of gothic femininity. In the same way that Rough Trade hired General Idea to capture their spirited mix of glam, punk and fashion, Harry wanted Giger for the way he played with opposites in “the beautiful, horrible mix of biology and machine, the Alien” (Harry 208). On this cover, Harry is moving so far away from being “one of the boys” that she has made herself over into an alien being. Similarly, Pope’s brazen façade disrupts audience expectations of meek femininity as she too gazes unflinchingly onward.

The cover art for *Avoid Freud* shows both Carol Pope and Kevan Staples dressed in Thierry Mugler suits with massive shoulder pads, their flesh completely air brushed and bronzed with make-up. Mugler was the designer of choice for the most glamorous rock stars in the 1980s. According to Gundle he, alongside other fashionable media darlings such as Versace and Jean-Paul Gaultier, “developed vibrant personal elaborations of glamorous themes that matched the demand for ever new eye-catching and dream-inducing visual experiences” (*Glamour* 346). Drawing upon these glamorous themes, Rough Trade, on *Avoid Freud*, resemble “beautiful iconic beings” (Pope 67), who perpetuate the myth of the rock star as well as the myth of the glamorous artist, both of which were also integral to the work of General Idea. The repetition and evocation of these myths is how glamour emerges in their work, as glamour “from its earliest instance, linked with magical transformation” (Brown 10) is like the transformation that all artists seek: Pope’s larger-than-life persona or General Idea filling empty spaces with glamour as they “moved in on history and occupied images, emptying them of meaning” (General Idea, *Glamour Issue* 22). These artists are not aiming for simply the illusion that glamour affords but

rather the opportunities that glamour provides for reshaping their art, from institutional banality to celebrity drenched splendour.

The most famous single from *Avoid Freud* was “High School Confidential.” The song was originally commissioned for a lurid film called *Cruising* about a serial killer who preyed on gay men starring Al Pacino, and it was meant to be sung by Mink DeVille, one of the original house bands at New York’s CBGBs; however the producers decided not to use it (Pope 142).⁸³ “High School Confidential” reached the eighth spot on the Canadian radio CHUM Chart on May 30th, 1981, despite not being included in the film and being censored by many radio stations on account of the controversial lyric: “She makes me cream my jeans when she comes my way.” The song focuses on a teenager who has a crush on a seductive young high school girl. Throughout the song it is not immediately clear whether the teenager is speaking from a male perspective or whether the lyrics are referencing Pope’s lesbianism. The title, too, was cleverly coded as a double entendre meant for those in the queer community, who understood the song’s implicit meaning. According to Pope, “many straights didn’t get the double entendre, and gays embraced it as an anthem” (144). The song remains their most popular track.⁸⁴

The opening stanza of “High School Confidential” begins, “She’s a cool, blonde, scheming bitch” with each adjective clearly punctuated by Pope’s raspy voice. From the very outset, Pope invokes the “cool distance of glamour” (Brown 163) in her language, which relies on using words economically to create the aspirational image of the girl who resembles a combination of Anita Ekberg and Mamie Van Doren. She ends the first stanza with the repetition

⁸³ Rough Trade’s song “Shakedown,” with its lyrics focusing on speedometers on the speedway, perhaps made for a more on-the-nose fit and was included on the *Cruising* soundtrack.

⁸⁴ On September 10th, 2020, “High School Confidential” was inducted into the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame.

of the lyrics: “The girl can’t help it, / She really can’t help it now,” which recalls the 1956 film of the same name starring Jayne Mansfield with a title song by Little Richard. Summoning icons long acknowledged as Marilyn Monroe imitations —Mansfield and Ekberg in particular, Gundle argues, were more than imitations, “with their outsize breasts, [they] seemed more like parodies,” (*Glamour* 254) — demonstrates Pope’s postmodern pastiche. She similarly adopts Little Richard’s camp queer persona in the music video for the song as she swaggers on stage dressed in what appears to be a man’s tailored white suit as she rolls her eyes back ecstatically to compare the students’ looks to Dagmar, the 1950s pinup star. Pope’s musical and visual “quoting” consciously mimics the glamour of 1950s American mass consumption and repurposes it for her 1980s urban glam aesthetic that had helped to put her and Rough Trade on the map.

The song’s popularity earned Rough Trade a Juno nomination and an opportunity to perform it onstage at the 1981 awards show. During the performance, Pope ran her hands down her body and crotch to screams and applause. According to Pope, k.d lang saw this carnal display on her television screen at home in Edmonton, and this action had a big impact on how she, as a future queer-identifying singer, presented herself. She told Pope that “seeing you set a tone for me that I could be out, no question. I was inspired to be as outrageous as I wanted to be” (qtd. in Pope 144). As an effective performance of glam, Pope communicated to her audience that sex, fame, and desire were not solely the domain of men and that women had agency over not only their bodies but also in creating alternative ways they could be perceived.

Visual culture, particularly fashion, was important to Rough Trade, and “Fashion Victim,” another popular single from *Avoid Freud*, was an overt homage to Pope’s relationship with style and its undercurrents of glamour. She belts out: “I’m a victim of fashion, fashion and

accessories,” which criticized how people perceive the world of fashion and the people involved in it. Despite the light-hearted nature of the song there is a moment Pope sings, “You hate my avant-garde friends / They understand and appreciate me / We’re all victims of fashion and accessories.” Then the song takes a turn, as if to suggest that Pope is acknowledging that her position as a queer glam star might not resonate well with the affluent WASPish denizens of Rosedale or the Leaside matrons that Phyllis Brett Young sends up in *The Torontonians*. In an interview in 2007 for *The Toronto Star* Pope said that “We were so repulsed by the slovenly look of most bands that we resolved to bring some semblance of theatre into our act. We wore clothes by Vivienne Westwood, Toronto’s Marilyn Kiewiet and Sandy Stagg and the orgasmic leathers of Claude Montana” (qtd. in Zekas). Pope claimed the “Fashion Victim” song was both ironic — and not. She explained “I got really into fashion. Fashion is an art form, [...] It was the ’80s when radical designers like Comme des Garçons changed the form and textiles changed. Balenciaga, Chanel — all were artists. I was being sarcastic but I believed it was an art form. Though there are people addicted to shopping” (qtd. in Zekas). While Pope rhymes off the names of internationally lauded designers, her larger point is that Toronto in the 1970s and 1980s was, as Pope put it, an “upheaval in art, fashion and lifestyle” (qtd. in Zekas).

Toronto’s hip designers, such as Marilyn Kiewiet, Kevan Staple’s partner and owner of the design label Blitz, and Sandy Stagg, owner of the popular vintage store Amelia Earhart in Yorkville village (who could claim the honour of being the foot model for the “Miss General Idea shoe” for the cover of *FILE*’s glamour issue), were instrumental in helping artists such as Pope and General Idea in creating their glam aesthetic. Yet it was not only Toronto’s artists who benefitted from their glam fashion sensibilities. In “The Blitz Kid: Falling Victim to Fashion,” Toronto-based writer Derek McCormack describes how he discovered Kiewiet and her label

Blitz as a queer youth in Toronto in 1982 because Carole Pope thanked her in the liner notes of *Shaking the Foundations*:

There was Blitz. The fall/winter collection was on the racks. The sweater I picked up looked a little like the coat Carole Pope wore. It was double-breasted with a flap that came down the front. [...] When I slipped it on I became — who? I became Carole Pope. I became Kevan Staples. I became somebody who might be in Rough Trade's world: an artist, a fashion designer, a makeup artist or hairstylist. I wanted into Rough Trade's world. (53)

For queer youth, the lyrics “If I take off my clothes / My carefully contrived image goes / I'm so afraid to show the real me” carry a particular resonance. As Gundle notes, “the relationship between fashion and glamour is a complex one. One enduring feature of glamour is its identification with fashion, but it is not always clear which aspects of ‘fashion’ are glamorous” (*Glamour* 15). For McCormack, the fashion that Pope and Staples wore validated his sense of self and glamorous aspiration: “she confirmed a feeling that I had from an early age: gays were made for fashion, and fashion was made for gays” (51). While he does not elaborate upon this statement, there is an implicit understanding that for a young gay boy like McCormack growing up in the small town of Peterborough, fashion was an escape from the ordinary, and Pope was the glamorous conduit. Indeed, Pope inhabits the aesthetic ideal of *true glamour* that Carol Gould proposes in “Glamour as an Aesthetic Property of Persons.” For Gould “true glamour” emerges from individuals imbued with those intangible qualities that project “an imagined range of possible [...] actual experiences and lives” (240). The “pull” of Pope's glamour allowed her audience to participate in her “particular expression of imagination and personal uniqueness” (Gould 246). Pope recognized this pull when she joined General Idea's coterie.

It is no small coincidence that Derek McCormack was also a “Miss General Idea.” Three years after his introduction to Rough Trade, he visited the AGO to see a retrospective exhibition of General Idea’s work. McCormack was so enraptured with General Idea’s production of glamour that he immediately proclaimed himself “Miss General Idea 1985.” McCormack writes of his fondness for the figure of Miss General Idea, who reflects his nascent adoration of Pope and fashion: “I was smitten. She was a creature of glamour, and for me glamour was a synonym for fashion, and fashion was a synonym for gay. Her duties: perverting and playing with beauty, fame, and sexuality” (31). All of these ventures into glamour were only available to him by making his way to Toronto. After his self-crowning, he got back on a bus to his hometown of Peterborough, where he attempted to do his “best to embody the title” (32) by adopting General Idea’s arch style in his writing and art.

Rough Trade’s 1983 album *Weapons* was another General Idea designed cover. Pope took her usual spot on the front cover of the album, and Staples once again appeared on the back. Half-naked body parts surrounded the performers in a grid pattern design. Both men and women were used in this shoot to create what Pope described as “an erotic wall of flesh” (169). Pope did not so much become “one of the boys,” as Frith has suggested was the only choice for many female musicians during this time period, as much as she created an entirely new discourse within the glam aesthetic, one where she is in the centre and the rest are in effect, bit players. The emphasis on glistening, sweating bodies recalls General Idea’s promotional campaign for their pageants, which highlighted certain body parts such as a pair of legs or hands posed delicately as if synecdochally offering the “general idea” of glamour much in the same way that Barthes saw Garbo’s face as a “Platonic idea of the human creature” (*Mythologies* 74).

However, by 1983, *The Globe and Mail*'s Liam Lacey devoted an entire article to Rough Trade's "image problem," lamenting that "the trouble involves those dungeon and jackboot descriptions that dog the band, and a conviction that the print press keeps forcing the band to wear a skin it would just as soon shed. Carole Pope wastes little time in getting to the point: 'All this stuff about how 'outrageous' and daring we are, this 'raunch queen' label that I get...' says Carole. 'It's got nothing to do with me'" (Lacey, "Rough Trade Grapples with an Image Problem"). Pope's lament that these labels that have been forced on her have nothing to do with who she is as a person highlight the impermanence of glamour's performance. Much like the B movie stars Pope sings about in "High School Confidential," hers is a glamour of its time, and what the critics were suggesting by the mid-1980s was that their act "started to wear thin and was no longer sustainable" (Niester R8). By 1984's *O Tempora O Mores*, the first album that General Idea did not art direct, Rough Trade decided to disband after their album only found moderate success.

In 1986 Bronson, Partz and Zontal relocated to New York City, and Rough Trade were on their farewell tour. Pope went on to work on a solo career and had a much-publicized affair with Dusty Springfield. Meanwhile, General Idea continued engaging with concepts relating to communication transmissions, which culminated in the design of their famous AIDS logo in 1987 (Fig. 12).

Figure 12 General Idea's AIDS Logo, 1987. Image omitted due to copyright restrictions. For a reproduction, please consult the following source: <https://ago.ca/collection/object/98/48.1-.3>

This logo continues to broadcast on posters, billboards and the internet. Based on Robert Indiana's LOVE painting (1967), General Idea wanted a logo that would be plastered everywhere; in other words, the logo was designed to "infect" as many people as possible, much

like the disease that infected two of its members, Felix Partz and Jorge Zontal. The AIDS crisis also negatively affected Pope's solo career as *The Globe and Mail's* David Livingstone noted while in attendance at her concert in April 1987: "After AIDS, songs about sweaty sex, sweaty et cetera ring with undeniable, if unwanted, irony" ("Too Many Echoes of the Rough Trade Years" C4). In 2000, Pope published her autobiography *Anti Diva*, which chronicles her erratic childhood and follows her move to the Yorkville scene in 1967, where earlier incarnations of Rough Trade, under different names such as O (after *The Story of O*) and The Bullwhip Brothers had their beginnings, as well as detailing her rising stardom and ending with her current life in LA. In her autobiography, Pope reflects upon her role and contribution to the Canadian music scene: "If it wasn't for me there wouldn't be any blatantly sexual chick singers in Canada, [...]," then she quickly adds, "no, my ego isn't that big; it's just that I think I made a somewhat warped contribution to music in Canada by throwing the love that dare not speak its name in people's uncomprehending faces" (233). What Pope does not include in her autobiography, however, is that while she makes a case for her importance in the cultural fabric of the country, her dominion over the musical landscape, especially in Toronto in the late 70s, was not completely embraced by everyone in the Toronto punk glam scene. Steven Leckie from the Viletones, a hard-core Toronto punk band, wrote a manifesto in 1977 and distributed it in Toronto bars to raise awareness of the growing crop of young punk bands in the city: "I was looking to accomplish a couple of things with that. One was to sort of raise the cultural stakes a bit, and to serve notice to Rough Trade and Goddo, because they ruled, those two especially" (qtd. in Worth 52). No doubt after almost ten years of being in the spotlight and crowned "Madame Raunch" by the *Globe and Mail* in 1977, the band, and Pope in particular, was tired of the persona that was expected of her:

I'm not sure if we should have disbanded Rough Trade [...]. It was just so difficult for us. The lack of a Canadian star system is not just negative space: the Canadian media tend to denigrate artists after they achieve a certain level of success. On top of that, I was typecast by the Canadian media as this evil dominatrix/raunch queen. Talk about low self-esteem. [...] In the end, Kevan and I both felt like parodies of ourselves and that is not a healthy way to function as an artist. If we had it to do all over again, I think we should have taken time to regroup and reinvent ourselves. (151-152)

Pope's observation regarding the Canadian star system is a familiar grievance that recalls Margaret Atwood's reprimand that Canadians tend to cut down their tallest poppies. General Idea was also not immune to criticisms of selling out and becoming stale. Toronto-based artist Bruce Eves remarks, "General Idea were johnny-come-latelies. They rewrite their own history. Everything they say I would take with a giant grain of salt. AA Bronson [...] was like a total careerist. He wanted to work in a national gallery. He wanted big name galleries. We just held that in such contempt" (qtd. in Worth 64). I would argue, however, that General Idea's ambitions were well stated in using glamour and with that the accolades of success as part of their manifesto despite the connotations of being "gauche." Pope's similarly steadfast devotion to her carefully crafted, self-stylized nature belies glamour's cool sheen. She may have not wanted to admit that there may have been a point at which she was considered musically stale, especially since she and Staples, along with General Idea, were some of the forerunners in the aesthetic revolution in fashion, music and art in the 1970s and 1980s. In any case, their legacies continued to pave the Toronto glamscape for the twenty-first century.

Will Munro: A Reflection through the Paved Glamscape

In 2012, the Art Gallery of York University mounted the retrospective *History, Glamour, Magic*, which celebrated the work of the visual artist, activist and entrepreneur Will Munro, who had tragically died of brain cancer at the age of thirty-five in 2010. The use of “Glamour” in the exhibit’s title was not only a nod to the artist’s fascination with glamour as a mass-cultural form which he would redefine for his own countercultural vision, but “Glamour” and its antecedent, “History,” also draws attention to the ways in which Munro borrowed from past countercultural artists, such as General Idea and Carole Pope, to communicate his ideas on glamour and its potential for transforming the city’s urban imaginary.

In the early 2000s, Toronto’s downtown corridor felt the presence of Will Munro: he practically single-handedly turned Queen Street West into what has affectionately been described as Queer West.⁸⁵ Munro’s *Vazaleen* nights, queer club events that took place in traditionally “straight” spaces such as Toronto rock and roll venues the El Mocambo and Lee’s Palace, challenged notions of heteronormativity while simultaneously encouraging the spirit of collectivity, much like General Idea and Rough Trade before him.⁸⁶ In this spirit, *Vazaleen* was a space to remind Torontonians of their queer culture and history. In 2002 Munro said of his club night:

I try to promote queer culture and queer art in a context that most people don’t think artistic — a bar [...]. At the same time, I want the parties to highlight

⁸⁵ Ken Moffatt’s “Dancing Without a Floor: The Artists’ Politic of Queer Club Space” provides a historical overview of Munro’s influence as a community organizer, particularly in his *Vazaleen* club nights (Moffat). See also *Army of Lovers: A Community History of Will Munro* by Sarah Liss, which provides an oral history of Munro’s work, friends and life.

⁸⁶ Initially the night was called “Vaseline,” but after lawyers from Procter & Gamble sent some pointed letters to Munro — reminiscent of *Time Inc.* suing General Idea for using *LIFE*’s font — he changed the name to *Vazaleen*.

queer rock history, to show people where the things they take for granted come from. A lot of performance art comes out of rock culture. Think of people like Little Richard, or Carole Pope, who invented an entire way of presenting yourself publicly as queer. (qtd. in Monk and Chhangur 109)

Munro's use of the bar space recalls Peter Bailey's argument that the barmaid in Victorian England was the social bearer of glamour as her position behind the bar recreates a theatrical stage creating a distance from the public yet leaving her available to the male gaze. Munro, by working in and against a framework of glamour, created a space that disrupted predominant notions tied to glamour in the city, which is to say, white, rich, and for the most part female. The bar at a *Vazaleen* night was often tended by drag queens mocking the conventions of Hollywood glamour tropes with over the top hair and make-up.⁸⁷ In this regard, the *Vazaleen* parties were understood as a celebration of diverse bodies, cultures and sexualities in the city. Moreover, these events were reminiscent of General Idea's pageants of thirty years' prior.

The influence of General Idea on Munro's work is readily apparent in his *Pavilion of Virginia Puff-Paint* (2004), an installation art piece based on the fictional artist Virginia Puff-Paint, who has a fondness for glitter and downtown Toronto artists. The work was co-created with Toronto designer Jeremy Laing. This installation was a clear nod to the *Miss General Idea Pavilion*, right down to the General Idea credo to be "famous, glamorous artists." Indeed, GI's mandate to live and breathe this practice was also Munro's (Balzer). While other art critics and writers have explored Munro's work through an activist queer lens and as a community builder, I

⁸⁷ Many of these observations are based on my own attendance at these evenings in the early 2000s.

would define Munro's work through his practice of what I would call radical glamour.⁸⁸ Munro deliberately chose locations for his club nights and art parties far from the environs of Toronto's gay village, and in doing so he sought to reclaim Queen Street West and showcase that art, music, sexuality and gender do not need to be contained by Toronto's neighbourhood boundaries. Terre Thaemlitz makes the case that the history of glamour is "both a history of oppression as well as resistance" (Auder et al. 50), and I regard Munro's work as working within both an activist and glamour framework to address the city's lack of awareness of its own art/queer/social history. In 2006, Munro became a co-owner of the Beaver, a bar located in the West Queen West strip. The bar's cheeky name was a reference to Canada's official mascot as well as the slang term for a part of a woman's anatomy. The space was designed to encourage community and became a home base of sorts to Toronto's younger queer community.

In "Rotate This, Stitch That, Paste This, Poster That" Emelie Chhangur and Philip Monk detail Munro's devotion to creating an inclusive space, but also a space that traces Toronto's queer/art histories. They argue that "It was important for Will to trace histories back to queer sources and equally important to show others in this queer consciousness raising. Will was teaching by including himself in the lineage. This was why it was critical for him to import queer underground icons as if they were a natural part of the surroundings here in Toronto" (109). Underground icons such as Carole Pope became part of the promotional campaign for his *Vazaleen* nights since he "was determined to get women to attend." He was determined that women should "know instantly that this was their space as much as anybody else's" (109). Pope, in fact, performed at one of the *Vazaleen* nights for a younger generation who would have likely

⁸⁸ For a nuanced discussion related to Munro's queer activism, see: Hart: 2004; Moffat: 2006; Archer: 2010. With regard to Munro's community and arts development in the city, see: Liss: 2013; Monk: 2014

been unaware of her “Madame Raunch” label and who would have supported her sexualized performance in an event space devoted to queer urban subcultures. Moreover, much like General Idea, who brought their brand of avant-garde queer art to more publicly sanctioned spaces such as the AGO instead of staying in the underground theatres where “their kind” resided, Munro sought to disrupt the imaginary divisions of Toronto’s queer and music scenes. Munro’s use of glam and punk recalls Simon Reynolds argument that “glam points to a peculiar susceptibility within pop to becoming enthralled by its own archive of stylized images and period-specific sounds, a latent capacity to fold back on its own history” He later explains that “glam turns history into a wardrobe full of costumes, and as such parallels and intertwines, with fashion, the first area of popular culture to succumb to retro’s auto-cannibalistic archive-raiding logic” (“The Rift of Retro: 1962? Or Twenty Years On?” 73). Munro’s work, with its “auto-cannibalistic archive-raiding logic” and references to Pope and General Idea, was a tangible exploration and reminder of Toronto’s glam history for those that did not know such a history existed.

Conclusion

The period from the late 1960s to the 1980s in Toronto showcased how artists such as General Idea and Carol Pope influenced the way the city experienced music, art, fashion and above all glamour. Although, it was not just Toronto that these artists were influencing. General Idea’s expression of glamour had a far-reaching affect. Inspired by the first Miss General pageant at the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts in 1970, the British artist Andrew Logan developed the “Alternative Miss World Competition” in London. The event was in part a continuation of GI’s work to develop a community under the banner of glamour where everyone was welcome to take part in the competition (Mulholland 92).

In 2016 the AGO mounted an art retrospective that focused on the innovative and boundary pushing art created in Toronto during the 1970s and 80s and included photographs and the dress from the 1971 Miss General Idea Pageant. *Toronto: Tributes and Tributaries, 1971-1989* made the case that “When performance emerged as a medium in Toronto in the 1970s, artists who made this type of art were often people of colour, Indigenous, queer and/or women — people whose bodies had been erased by mainstream society, or were only regarded as problems needing solutions” (AGO, label). As this chapter demonstrates, queer artists such as General Idea and Carol Pope refused to be erased in a city that was intent on erasing queer spaces in the 1970s and 80s. Pope prefaces her autobiography by making the argument that she and Staples: “ended up pushing musical and sexual envelopes. We morphed androgyny, humour and various musical genres into one twisted freakish phenomena [sic]. We became a myth, a cult, something for people to cling to: an echo of a blip in time that encompassed the late seventies and the eighties, when we thought we were invincible” (Pope *xi - xii*). Of course, Rough Trade did not become a “myth” and a “cult” on their own; they needed a collective of like-minded aesthetes, such as General Idea, who, through their collaborations, encouraged others to act out their glamorous escapades which, in turn, provided a blueprint for Will Munro’s “Queer West.” Through Munro’s art and parties, General Idea’s vision of glamour, celebrity and collectivity continued to be communicated throughout the city. While Pope refers to this time period in her life as a blip, glamour’s signature remained imprinted on the city.

In the following chapters, the fluidity and shifting topography of Toronto’s glamscape from the bohemian glamour of Yorkville’s hip scene to the seedy glam of Yonge and Queen Streets will be further discussed as the performance of glamour moves from the stage to the screen.

Chapter Six: Grotesque Glamour in Toronto Film

The 1933 film, *The Man from Toronto* is an unremarkable romantic comedy about a wealthy British woman, Leila, whose inheritance is threatened if she does not marry a rich Canadian bachelor named Fergus, the titular man from Toronto. The film was based on the play of the same name written in 1919 by Douglas Murray and debuted on Broadway in 1926. While the film is largely forgettable, the title may stir a glimmer of recognition for those familiar with one of the main actresses from the stage production, Peg Entwistle, who regrettably became famous for climbing to the top of the “H” of the Hollywood sign and jumping to her death.⁸⁹ Despite Toronto’s marquee placement in the title, the city does not feature prominently at all. Rather, Toronto is merely a cipher for the subtle differences between British and Canadian life, such as when Leila laments: “Can — you — imagine — me — married to an American accent?” (Murray 29). To be sure, *The Man from Toronto* may be a cinematic footnote, yet the film is symbolic of the ways in which Toronto has been, and continues to be, used as a supporting player, rather than the lead.

In present day Toronto, a simple stroll along the city’s streets could lead to stumbling upon Dracula’s London abode, or perhaps a brief foray into Depression-era New York, or maybe even a rare glimpse into a thriving Pompeii before Vesuvius’ eruption.⁹⁰ If any city were to embody Sir Walter Scott’s assertion that glamour “could make a ladye seem a knight,” Toronto’s chameleonic ability to glamour the senses by taking on the characteristics of multiple

⁸⁹ I am grateful for Karina Longworth’s podcast, *You Must Remember This* for introducing me to Peg Entwistle and for providing details about her performance in *The Man from Toronto* (“Peg Entwistle (Dead Blondes Episode 1)”).

⁹⁰ See *Dracula 2000* (dir. Patrick Lussier, 2000); *Cinderella Man* (dir. Ron Howard, 2005); *Pompeii* (dir. Paul W. S. Anderson, 2014).

metropolises, throughout the centuries, certainly makes a compelling case for itself. In “Toronto: City of the Imagination,” Tom Ue writes: “Toronto’s standing in for another city, though it is itself a modern one with its identity emerging in its own right, is part of its rather paradoxical presence in the global imagination” (6). On one hand, Toronto is widely recognized as a modern cosmopolitan city; on the other hand, Toronto, unlike celluloid cities such as New York, Los Angeles and London, is more often than not, used as an anonymous urban backdrop.

The first modern Toronto film to receive a wide domestic release was the 1964 coming-of-age film, *Nobody Waved Good-bye* directed by Don Owen. This film was a turning point for Toronto cinema. In *Nobody Waved Good-bye*, Owen captures the insularity of the city from a teenager’s point of view, complete with abandoned parks and garish shopping centres. Film critic Jason Anderson points out Toronto’s WASPy blandness in the film and then asks, “who’d bother waving goodbye to all that?” (69). Nevertheless, the years following Owen’s film proved to be a fertile period for many Toronto filmmakers who sought to capture the city as a culturally relevant cosmopolis and not simply a backdrop for other urban centres.⁹¹

The following two chapters demonstrate that a number of cultural developments occurred in the post-1960s era of Toronto film which facilitates reading glamour into the city’s depiction on screen. These developments include the creation of the Canada Cost Allowance (CCA), the Toronto School of Communication, the emergence of the Toronto New Wave, and the growing popularity of the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF). An examination of these often-

⁹¹ See Wyndham Wise’s chapter, “Up from the Underground: Filmmaking in Toronto from *Winter Kept us Warm* to *Shivers*” in *Toronto on Film* ed. Geoff Pevere (2009) for a comprehensive overview of this period in Toronto cinema.

complicated relationships offers valuable insight into the cultural discourses that shaped how Toronto participated in the global production and circulation of glamour both on and off screen.

This chapter's focus is glamour's expression in Toronto film of the 1970s and 1980s in the following three films: *Outrageous!* (1977) directed by Richard Benner, *Videodrome* (1983) directed by David Cronenberg, and *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing* (1987) directed by Patricia Rozema. I have chosen these films because of the way they showcase what I refer to as grotesque glamour cinema. Grotesque glamour cinema, I argue, infuses the sheen of glamour (that particular aesthetic that contains the elements of indifferent luxury, a "certain textual frost, the cold surface, glistening and apparently impenetrable, and an increasing distance between subjects and their desires" (Brown 37)) with the anxieties, horror, and awe of contemporary society. These three films use grotesque glamour in competing genres: queer, horror, and fantasy, to suggest a diverse representation of glamour for Toronto. The grotesque here is an interpretation of the mutable city, where change is represented as alluring and connects to the broader history of Toronto as a glamorous city.

Being *Outrageous* in the Capital Cost Allowance Era

Glamour confirms a particular kind of intellectual labour in early Toronto cinema from the 1970s and 1980s. Whereas Hollywood glamour forms part of "a system of visual enchantment" (Gundle and Castelli 86) to obscure its role in the American capitalist machine, the glamour that manifested from English Canadian film emerged as an expression of dissent in the Capital Cost Allowance (CCA) years. The CCA was introduced in 1974 to help the financing efforts of the Canadian Film Development Corporation (CFDC), which had been established six years earlier. Ostensibly, these policies were put in place, alongside the Canadian-content provisions

implemented by the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), to promote and further Canadian culture (Acheson and Maule). While in theory this was a positive initiative meant to increase Canadian film production — which it did, as well as providing valuable experience for craftspeople and the growing industrial infrastructure —, in practice, however, the money was mainly secured for projects that were considered bankable. Because the Canadian federal government allowed investors to deduct 100 percent of their investment in Canadian films from their taxable income, many films often featured second-rate Hollywood stars, despite a mandate to promote Canadian culture. This was an era in Canadian cinema marked by the “tax-shelter” film, which created a considerable boom for Canadian film production between 1975 and 1982.

The most successful films to emerge from the CCA era were Ivan Reitman’s *Meatballs* (1979) and Bob Clark’s *Porky’s* (1981), two films that were noteworthy for their American style gross-out comedy and lewd subject matter. The success of these films was, as Benjamin Wright argues, not “so much proof of Canada’s colonization, but [shows] how Canadian filmmakers engage with and appropriate the structural, narrative, and aesthetic values of classical Hollywood cinema” (24). Many of these directors understood that under the tax shelter laws they had to appeal to a broader audience, which invariably meant that they favoured horror films and comedies over more arthouse fare. Yet, in spite of the incentives for Canadian film companies to produce commercial friendly films, in the years during and following the introduction of the CCA, certain Canadian directors seized the opportunity to carve a niche for themselves by

making films that fell outside the boundaries of commercial tastes.⁹² Indeed, there was a fair amount of disdain from cultural critics, who regarded many of the commercially successful films that came out of the tax shelter era as cheap imitations of Hollywood productions. In this regard, many of these films tend to get ignored in the discourse of Canadian film scholarship since many critics felt that the films from this era did not reflect a sophisticated national cinema (B. Wright 21).

Outrageous! was a notable exception to many of the more popular puerile productions. While the film was a product of the CCA era, it was one of the few films in the Canadian cinema of the 1970s that became a commercial success, despite its subcultural appeal. The film screened in 1977 at the second year of the Festival of Festivals, now rebranded as the Toronto International Film Festival, and was immediately hailed a ground-breaking Canadian film not only for its frank depiction of homosexuality on the screen but also for being the first Canadian film to earn widespread distribution in both Canada and the United States.⁹³ According to Jim Kelly, the film's director of photography, the success of the film lies in the quality of the acting. He writes that "the acting is so uniformly excellent that it is positively 'un-Canadian.'" He goes on to argue:

⁹² Famously, after a screening of *Shivers* (1975), David Cronenberg's film about parasites that turn people into zombie-like nymphomaniacs, the journalist Robert Fulford took the opportunity to rage against what he saw as the debasement of Canadian culture in his article for *Saturday Night* magazine with the pointed title: "You Should Know How Bad This Film Is. After All, You Paid for It." Fulford took particular offence that the CFDC was using tax-payer money to "subsidize junk" (qtd. in Wright 20).

⁹³ *Winter Kept Us Warm* (Dir. David Secter, 1965) is generally considered the first English-language Canadian film to depict homosexual themes. While it was the first English-language Canadian film to ever to screen at the Cannes film festival, as a strictly independent art-house film it didn't receive the same fanfare that followed *Outrageous!* from the film festival circuit. Claude Jutra's *À tout prendre* (1963) is considered Canada's first explicitly gay-themed feature film. See Matthew Hays' chapter "Where is Here? Here is Queer: Four Defining Bent Moments in Toronto Films" in *Toronto on Film*. Ed. Geoff Pevere (2009).

I have noticed that almost all Canadian films contain at least one atrocious performance; at least one person in each film seems to be unable to say their lines with conviction [...]. *Outrageous* is an exception to this generalization, and it is un-Canadian in this specific sense: all the performers say their lines in a believable fashion. It does not have those moments when a poorly said line breaks the flow of the narrative by forcing you to think about the awkward way in which the line was said. (20)

The film's main star, Craig Russell, was singled out for his performance as Robin Turner, a gay Toronto hairdresser who dreams of catapulting his local drag-queen career to international stardom. The film was loosely based on Russell, who was, in fact, a Toronto-based performer and hairdresser who had gone to high school with Carole Pope.⁹⁴ According to Pope, while in high school, he had been the president of the Mae West fan club (6), which would later prove fortuitous for Russell's career. After moving to Los Angeles, Russell was briefly West's personal secretary, and when he moved back to Toronto, he received modest fame for his compelling drag performance of West in addition to other Golden Age of Hollywood grand dames in Toronto's gay bars (Fletcher).

Outrageous! is based on the short story, "Making It" by Toronto-based writer Margaret Gibson from her 1976 short story collection *The Butterfly Ward*. Gibson's epistolary narrative recounts the exchanges between her two fictional characters over a period of two months in 1974-75: Liza, who lives in Toronto and Robin, who is performing his drag act in Los Angeles.

⁹⁴ Here, Russell shares a similar biographical detail with Harris Milstead, better known as Divine, who was a hairdresser in Baltimore before his larger-than-life drag appearances in many of John Waters' films.

The story's details came from Gibson's personal experiences living with Craig Russell in a small apartment in Toronto when she was seventeen and struggling with mental illness. Despite the film's success, Gibson made little money from its release.⁹⁵ Russell, however, won awards for both best actor and best actress (a first!) at the Virgin Islands Film Festival and was named best actor at the Berlin Film Festival ("Craig Russell, 42; Did Impersonations Of Female Film Stars" 24).

The film version follows the antics of Robin, who has set his sights on a life less ordinary. Robin's routine becomes unsettled when his best friend Liza Connors, a woman with schizophrenia, played by Hollis McLaren, leaves the confines of her psychiatric hospital to live with him. After Robin borrows one of Liza's gowns and dresses up as Tallulah Bankhead for a costume party, he discovers that his talent for female impersonation offers opportunities for minor celebrity. He MCs a Drag Queen night at a local gay bar and begins to work on his own drag routine. When his boss at the hair salon fires him for performing out in the open, where potential clients could see him and would presumably draw conclusions regarding his sexual preferences, Robin decides to move to New York City to try to make it big as a performance artist.

The language of glamour, both visual and textual, unfolds in *Outrageous!* as a provocation. The film opens with flashes of the CN Tower juxtaposed with a drag queen in the foreground performing his act on a stage. The camera glides across the city capturing Toronto's iconic streetcars and the construction in and around Queen Street and then sets its focus on Liza breaking free from the hospital, likely the infamous Clarke Psychiatric Institute now referred to

⁹⁵ See Val Ross' interview with Margaret Gibson, "Re-examining Margaret Gibson IN PERSON," *The Globe and Mail*, 2 December 1993, for a more nuanced discussion about her career and the fallout from the film's release.

as the Centre for Mental Health and Addiction (CAMH), and running toward Robin's house. For contemporary viewers watching *Outrageous!* for the first time this opening scene may seem reminiscent of Stephen Elliott's *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994) or John Cameron Mitchell's *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (2001) — the latter having been shot in and around Toronto —, where the interplay of glamour and kitsch is meant to entice and delight the audience with raunchy overtures filled with pop music and sequined costumes.

Outrageous! however, does not aim to seduce or placate its viewers in the same way as these other films in its opening sequence. In 1977, the year that *Outrageous!* debuted, Canadians had only recently digested the implications of Pierre Trudeau's famous 1969 maxim concerning the bedrooms of the nation, and as Chapter Five illustrated through General Idea's glam campification of the pageant model and Rough Trade's raunchy queer performance of glamour, there was still an undercurrent of homophobia in the city that many artists in the city were working against. Throughout the 1970s, gay bars along Yonge Street were continuously subjected to police harassment amidst a rising moral panic. By 1977, many queer Toronto activists were forming coalitions at City Hall to block the American singer turned anti-gay rights advocate, Anita Bryant and her "Save the Children" campaign, which promoted dubious and despicable associations between homosexuality and child rape. These protests, however, were unfortunately undermined when the missing 12-year-old body of Emanuel Jacques was found on July 29th, 1977. Jacques had been murdered and sexually assaulted by four men who had taken the boy to an apartment above a body-rub parlour on Yonge Street. In the aftermath of this tragic event many of the hard-won rights that the city's gay community fought for were seriously threatened, and there were increased calls to action against Yonge's "Sin Strip" (Sismondo 213). This was the contentious backdrop *Outrageous!* was playing against. To be sure, the uneasy

interplay between homosexuality and mental illness that unfolds in the opening sequence plays into dated notions about homosexuality as a form of mental illness. Similarly, the film also plays with the problematic suggestion that a shared struggle exists between homosexuals and those living with mental health challenges. Indeed, this is the message the film tries to cheekily convey in its opening credit scene as the drag performer lip synchs: “It ain’t easy in this crazy world.” Nevertheless, the film’s sunny outlook for its two protagonists stands in stark contrast to earlier Canadian films, which depicted grim circumstances for their marginalized characters. For instance, *Fortune and Men’s Eyes*, the 1971 Canadian film starring General Idea affiliate, Danny Freedman “contributed to the victim theme that was developing strongly in Canadian consciousness in the 1970s” (Melnik, *One Hundred Years* 117). *Outrageous!*, which similarly depicted gay themes and oppression, worked against this framework to successfully showcase a positive portrayal of gay culture for a wide commercial audience.

Arguably the insistence that glamour functions as dogma in *Outrageous!* as a form of protest against the Toronto status-quo may seem overly facile, yet to dismiss this argument would undermine glamour’s capacity for subversion. To this end, Benner’s vision of Toronto in *Outrageous!* is almost poignantly unglamorous. The film captures familiar Toronto landmarks such as Honest Ed’s, a monolithic discount store that stretched about a block west on Bloor Street, and Sam the Record Man, a Canadian music store well-known for its downtown Toronto location’s iconic spinning neon discs, which lit up the corner of Yonge and Dundas streets. These large commercial establishments are highlighted alongside the many seedy dollar bin stores and arcades that line the downtown streets. The 1970s Toronto of *Outrageous!* does not exhibit the wealthy 1950s glamour of *The Torontonians* nor does it convey the same flair for the

hip conspicuous glamour of 1960s Yorkville. Rather, *Outrageous!* portrays Toronto through the eyes of the struggling poor and working class.

In one scene Robin is decked out in full drag and begs Liza for money to take a cab to his party. She shakes her head and tells him he will have to take the streetcar instead because she is completely broke. Robin is appalled:

Robin: “What star takes the streetcar?”

Liza: “Judy Garland... clang, clang, clang went the — ”

Robin: “TROLLEY! But that was on the MGM back lot *darling*, not
 down St. Clair Avenue!”

What this witty repartee belies is not only their financial precarity, but also the very real danger that Robin and his friend could encounter dressed up in drag while taking public transit. It is interesting to note that in this same era in Toronto, many lesbians were being denied access to bars for not “perform[ing] their gender in conventional and heterosexual ways” (Sismondo 138). Toronto tavern historian, Christine Sismondo explains that there was one notable person who would have likely been able to circumvent this rule: Carole Pope, but only if she was at the bar performing with Rough Trade. Nevertheless, Sismondo argues that because of this discriminatory practice: “men dressed in drag could often only gain access to bars as performers, never as patrons” (145).

As a drag performer who takes on the persona of various grand dames of Hollywood’s golden age, Robin subtly criticizes Canada’s deliberate lack of a star system and reminds us of Toronto’s ongoing drag performance as a stand in for other cities: “Our entire sense of national identity is based on trying to look like, or pass as, a glitzier, more famous entity” (Hays 142). Hollywood, synonymous with celebrity and glamour, is imbued with the American myth of

success wherein “American society is sufficiently open for anyone to get to the top, regardless of rank” (Dyer 48). Robin despairs of his chances of stardom in Toronto, dryly noting that only Anne Murray is able to fill the concert halls. This small dig at Toronto taste culture also stems from a larger criticism of arts funding in Canada. Whereas the myth of the American dream offers possibility for starry-eyed hopefuls, Robin laments that if he remains in Toronto he will be at the mercy of the Canada Council. Robin recognizes that staying in Toronto will limit his options for success and stardom, and so he leaves Toronto for the decidedly more glamorous New York City.

Upon arriving in New York City, Robin immediately bypasses Manhattan and Broadway, the traditional and historical pillars of glamour and celebrity in the city shaped by the aura of the Jazz age, in favour of the “real” New York City, which does not appear too different from the dime stores and sleazy bars that characterized Toronto. The point is not that glamour favours one city over the other, but rather that glamour resides in the cultural imaginary, as Virginia Postrel points out:

Glamour isn’t beauty or luxury; those are only specific manifestations for specific audiences. Glamour is an imaginative process that creates a specific, emotional response: a sharp mixture of projection, longing, admiration, and aspiration. It evokes an audience’s hopes and dreams and makes them seem attainable, all the while maintaining enough distance to sustain the fantasy.

(140)

The grotesque, on the other hand, often invokes feelings of discomfort, fear and sympathy. If glamour is the expression of these imaginative processes, then the grotesque here might be thought of as narrowing this distance between the fantasy and attainability. When Robin moves

to New York City in anticipation of getting his big break, he comes to recognize that the glamour he is seeking abroad might not be representative of what he had initially imagined. In his chapter on Toronto's queer film history in *Toronto on Film* (2009), film critic Matthew Hays notes that "*Outrageous!* also serves as a brilliantly astute allegory for Canada's shaky sense of cultural identity. Robin and Liza are defiant outsiders, but they also personify the irony of that position: they long to be insiders. Their internalized self-hatred isn't simply due to being queer and crazy; it's tied to a deeply rooted Canadian inferiority complex, too" (141). Indeed, as Robin is about to perform for the first time at the NYC drag club, the MC quips: "We have a new performer in tonight all the way from *Toe-ron-toe*... I love upstate New York!" He continues to further laughter, "I was in Toronto once and the only female impersonator they had at the time... was a *woman*." In spite of the film's ongoing joke that Toronto, and to a further extent Canada, is a cultural wasteland, "*Outrageous!* was [...] participating in the simultaneous and interconnected awakening of nationalism and cinephilia in English Canada" (Waugh 115). The film's success suggests a certain type of glamour associated with the Canadian film industry in the 1970s; an "awakening" to the possibilities for glamorous production:

Glamour became in the 1970s a paradigm of distinction that was more widely available than ever before. Rock performers and innovators like Warhol showed that dressing up and constructing a fabulous self with elements of media heritage, cosmetics, and coloured costumes was available to all, regardless of whether they lived in New York or Wolverhampton. (Gundle, *Glamour* 346)

Gundle's representation of glamour in the 1970s is arguably more of a description of the glam aesthetic as discussed in Chapter Five, with his references to rock performances, Warhol and

pastiche. Nonetheless, Gundle's version of 1970s glam suggests an element of the grotesque with its assemblage of different selves in pursuit of the construction of glamour. To this end, *Outrageous!* participates in this production of grotesque glamour in its raw vision of the city and in this regard, the film's narrative champions its protagonists' quest for glamour — a sentiment that reinforces the architecture of glamour that began to flourish in Toronto in the 1970s.

In the years after the CCA era a distinct Canadian style emerged, and one could credit the money from the CCA with helping to create profitable film careers, especially for one of Canada's most well-known directors, David Cronenberg, whose films have shaped the body horror genre, where the site of horror is derived from bodily annihilation and is often referred to as Perversion Chic.⁹⁶ The phrase "Perversion Chic" has been used by scholars and cultural critics to describe a particular type of Canadian cinema in the 1990s that does not fit into the typical commercial Hollywood paradigm,⁹⁷ that is, films such as Cronenberg's *Crash* (1996) and Lynne Stopkewich's *Kissed* (1997) which "incorporate a concern with marginality, manifest in narratives of deviant sex and bodily transformation, with a distinctly Canadian sense of the realities of contemporary life" (J. Morgan 211). Arguably *Outrageous!*, with its slippery depiction of mentally ill and transgressive bodies, could make a case for itself as an early adopter of Perversion Chic film in its celebration of national subversion (Morgan 212). Yet rather than Perversion Chic, I suggest the sobriquet "Grotesque Glamour" as a more *à propos* classification for films such as *Outrageous!*. The grotesque refers to the interlacing of contradictory elements

⁹⁶ John Powers appears to have coined the phrase "Perversion Chic" in the March, 1997 issue of *Vogue*, in which he singles out two Canadian films, David Cronenberg's *Crash* (1996) and Lynne Stopkewich's *Kissed* (1997), for their "pathological taste for dark, anti-heroic, sexually transgressive dramas" (qtd. in B. D. Johnson).

⁹⁷ See Lee Parpart (1999); Jason Morgan (2006).

and the juxtaposition of opposites as defined and explored by theorists as varied as Mikhail Bakhtin, who asserted that the grotesque aesthetic in art and literature was a product of medieval carnivals, folk festivals, and popular culture,⁹⁸ and Mary Russo, who defined the grotesque as a construction of the feminine, arguing against the implied misogyny of the grotto-esque as a bodily metaphor for the “senile, pregnant hag” as suggested by Bakhtin.⁹⁹

The end of *Outrageous!* finds Liza struggling with her schizophrenia and pregnant by one of her boyfriends. Her doctors warn her that pregnancy could be potentially dangerous due to her mental illness and the various medications she takes. When Liza miscarries, she meets up with Robin in New York City to seek comfort; Robin acknowledges that they have both taken their own various paths down the so-called rabbit hole — a Bakhtinian reference to the grotesque’s celebration of openness and lack of boundaries — citing the famous adage from *Alice in Wonderland*: “We’re all mad here!” The movie concludes optimistically as Liza, donning a boa, and Robin in full Hollywood star mode run on to the dance floor of the club, laughing and dancing among the drag queens. The film’s carnivalesque denouement is a performance of anxiety and glamorous excess, a grotesque celebration of the unconventional, the post-partum body in an orgy of men adorned in glitter.

The word glamour is itself a grotesque. Its etymological roots indicate a combination of grammar and splendour, knowledge and deception. Grotesque glamour cinema is certainly not confined to Toronto’s urban landscape. Buckley and Gundle articulate a type of grotesque glamour during the golden age of Hollywood cinema:

⁹⁸ See *Rabelais and His World* (1963).

⁹⁹ See *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess, and Modernity* (1994).

In the past glamour involved a masking of sexuality with luxury, that is to say, the costumes and sets of Hollywood films were rendered rich and opulent precisely to deflect accusations of immorality in the same way that the high luxury of the courtesan was intended to create a facade of respectability. If something was rich, then it was also moral, argued Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer boss Louis B. Mayer. In reality the un-respectable could only partially be masked and glamour came to be marked by a relationship between the classy and the sleazy. (344)

It is precisely the paradoxical combination of the “classy and the sleazy,” that is, the two unlike qualities of vulgarity and elegance, that forms part of the essence of both glamour and the grotesque. These disparate elements are never more pronounced than in David Cronenberg’s “body horror” film *Videodrome* (1983).

Putting Flesh on the Mechanical Bride: *Videodrome*

Cronenberg’s vision of Toronto in 1983, maintains the urban grittiness displayed eight years prior in *Outrageous!* In the opening scene of *Videodrome* a streetcar goes by as Max Renn, played by James Woods, enters the seedy “Classic Hotel” — a stand in for the actual, and still very seedy, Palace Arms Hotel on King and Strachan Streets.¹⁰⁰ Filled with the noise of children crying and men arguing, the Classic Hotel is a fitting space for Max to have his meeting with two Japanese pornographers interested in selling their films to Max’s cable company. Max is the

¹⁰⁰ The Palace Arms is a 125-year-old heritage building that provides low-cost rooming and boarding for mainly poor middle-aged men. There is ongoing debate that the hotel will be eventually sold to developers for its desirable location: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/last-call-at-the-palace-arms-developers-covet-the-king-west-property-but-where-will-its-poor-tenants-go/article25156724/>

president and part owner of Civic-TV, a small, adults-only Toronto television network that specializes in sensational programming focused primarily on sex and violence. Civic-TV is not so subtly modelled after City-TV, the Toronto-based television network that had gained a reputation as a purveyor of racy television in the 1970s for its often-unconventional content, in particular showcasing softcore pornography referred to as *Baby Blue Movies*. Max, too, appears to be loosely based on Moses Znaimer, City-TV's founder and executive producer, whose programming decision to screen the *Baby Blues* in 1973 generated substantial revenue for the station. The *Baby Blues* generated considerable interest worldwide, noticeably in the U.S., where a Port Arthur newspaper in Texas declared: "Try Toronto television for the best in 'blue' movies" (Retrontario). In 1975, Znaimer decided to retire the softcore programming because he had already generated enough publicity for City-TV and because they were running out of films to screen. This is the same predicament that Max finds himself in *Videodrome* as he tries to seek out even more sensational programming, musing that he would like to see "something that will break through, something tough." He visits the office of Harlan, who operates Civic-TV's satellite dish, which can pirate broadcasts. Before Max enters Harlan's office, the camera lingers on the building's white satellite dish, following its slow purposeful movements as it receives its signals from other communication satellites. The satellite signal plays an important role in the film as it allows Max to first encounter "Videodrome," the torture porn television show from an unknown origin. Max believes Videodrome is the future of television and orders Harlan to begin pirating the show, which immediately sets off a chain of events that eventually lead to Max's downfall.

I am interested in the satellite dish as an icon of glamour in Toronto in the same way that Judith Brown interprets cellophane as a modernist dimension of glamour, citing it as "pure

surface, as the plastic without depth that provides the transparent gloss and promises to perfect one's leisure, at least aesthetically" (150). Virginia Postrel similarly regards the wind turbine as a form of glamour, noting its "sleek, graceful lines [combined] with the mystery of newness and distance" (57). These elegant structures advocate for the glamour of new technologies; for Toronto in particular, a focus on the satellite dish's totemic glamour underscores the city's relationship to the field of Communication Studies with the litany of celebrated media theorists that emerged out of the Toronto School. While not a formal institution, the Toronto School was the name given to the literary and media theorists who addressed how technologies of the media of communication are far more influential than their content and who explored how media technologies have a dominant influence not just on individuals but on social structures and culture. Scholars such as Harold Innis, Northrop Frye, and Marshall McLuhan became household names as a result of their research, and the city became known as the centre for the study of the social effects of media technologies.

Cronenberg acknowledges his debt to the scholarship of the Toronto School in the filming of *Videodrome*. In an interview with Cronenberg, Carrie Rickey identifies the various power structures that the film mediates through multiple operating technologies. Cronenberg wryly responds:

'Sounds too McLuhan to you?' challenged Cronenberg as I attempted to sort out *Videodrome*'s cluttered iconology. 'Well, you know McLuhan was from Toronto...' the director noted of the media theorist who said, 'The medium is the message.' (As to whether there's something intrinsically Torontonion to Marshall McLuhan's and Cronenberg's visions of life mediated by media, it's

worth mentioning that the Canadian director Atom Egoyan is likewise obsessed. But that's another essay). (Rickey)

Certainly, there is something to Rickey's point about the city's identity being characterized by its various media operations, especially when Toronto's most recognizable icon is the CN Tower, the tallest free-standing broadcasting tower in the Western hemisphere. *Videodrome* is primarily concerned with television, a *cool* medium in McLuhan's terms. Television, according to McLuhan, was at odds with the glamour of the film stars and made fame appear banal: "the audience participates in the inner life of the TV actor as in the outer life of the movie star" (McLuhan, *Understanding Media* 339). In the Videodrome world participants become unwitting stars in a program of their own hallucinations — fusing hot with cold. The word "Videodrome" is, of course, a fusion as well, a portmanteau meaning a video course in constant motion that runs through the human brain and slowly erodes the boundaries between reality and fantasy. Read this way, the Videodrome itself is a glamorous grotesque, a television transmission that overpowers the individual and transforms the mind and body into a different and abject level of being. As Professor Brian O'Blivion, the McLuhanesque cultural analyst and philosopher, explains to Max:

The battle for the mind of North America will be fought in the video arena: the Videodrome. The television screen is the retina of the mind's eye. Therefore, the television screen is part of the physical structure of the brain. Therefore, whatever appears on the television screen emerges as raw experience for those who watch it. Therefore, television is reality, and reality is less than television.

Steven Shaviro has suggested that "the brutally hilarious strategy of *Videodrome* is to take media theorists such as Marshall McLuhan and Jean Baudrillard completely at their word, to overliteralize their claims for the ubiquitous mediatization of the world" (121).

While *Videodrome* draws heavily from McLuhan's seminal *Understanding Media* (1964), as well as dabbling in theories of spectacle and the body,¹⁰¹ I contend that McLuhan's earlier writings offer an insight into the glamour of the Videodrome.

In *The Mechanical Bride* (1951), McLuhan's commentaries on images of women in North American media addressed the "highly charged displays of affect and melodrama" (Marchessault, *Marshall McLuhan* 57). He goes on to explain:

The visual and not particularly voluptuous character of commercially sponsored glamour is perhaps what gives it so heavy a narcissistic quality. The brittle, self-conscious pose of the mannequin suggests the activities of competitive display rather than spontaneous sensuality. And the smartly turned-out girl walks and behaves like a being who *sees* herself as a slick object rather than is aware of herself as a person. 'Ever see a dream walking?' asks a glamour ad. The Hiroshima bomb was named 'Gilda' in honor of Rita Hayworth. (*The Mechanical Bride* 99; italics in the original)

McLuhan reads these types of media advertisements as the "the interfusion of sex and technology" (93), which encourages a disassociation from the human body. Women, in particular, McLuhan argues, are often treated in magazine advertisements as an assemblage of grotesque parts: lips, legs and hips, a sentiment which is reinforced in Chapter Three in *The Robber Bride* when Roz finally understands Zenia as simply the work of "the Frankenstein

¹⁰¹ See William Beard's chapter on *Videodrome* in *The Artist as Monster: The Cinema of David Cronenberg* (2006) for a discussion addressing how Cronenberg seamlessly integrates the media theories of McLuhan, Debord and Baudrillard. Beard notes that "*Videodrome* has attracted perhaps more commentary than any other Cronenberg film to date. [...] Marshall McLuhan is of course the starting point for Cronenberg here [...], but scholarly commentators have immediately gravitated to Foucault, Debord, and especially Baudrillard as providing models according to which the film can be explicated" (124).

doctors” who have put her together. In *The Female Grotesque*, Mary Russo discusses Cronenberg’s exploration into the gendered performance of womanhood and how he sets this performance against a backdrop of misogynistic expectations of her physical body. Russo focuses primarily on Cronenberg’s 1988 film *Dead Ringers* and she makes the case that: “Her body is not adequate; it only approximates femaleness in a culture which identifies the body of the mother with the female body” (Russo 110). When women deviate from these socially prescribed roles, then they, as Russo argues, are rendered as monstrous grotesques. Whereas Chapter Five demonstrates how General Idea upended ideas relating to this type of “glamour cake” (Marchessault, *Marshall McLuhan* 57) femininity by incorporating diverse bodies in their Miss General Idea pageants as part of the greater spectacle, in *Videodrome* it is precisely the freedom from the physical body, and concomitantly, societal expectations, which makes this radical technology so alluring for many of the characters, specifically the film’s female characters.

This compulsion toward these physically dissociative experiences is introduced early on in the film when Max is on a television panel with pop-psychology radio personality Nicki Brand, played by punk icon Debbie Harry. They are joined by Professor O’Blivion, who insists on only making appearances via a television set by explaining aphoristically: “The television screen has become the retina of the mind’s eye. That’s why I refuse to be on television, except on television. Of course, O’Blivion was not the name I was born with. That’s my television name. Soon all of us will have special names, names designed to cause the cathode ray tube to resonate.” The guests are invited to debate the effects concerning the rise of sexual and violent content on television. While Max defends his cable company for only providing what the viewer wants to see, Nicki argues that “we live in overstimulated times. We crave stimulation for its

own sake. And I think that's bad" even though she admits that she, herself, is in a constant state of hyper-stimulation which makes the prospect of Videodrome so appealing to her.

Nicki is the embodiment of the "smartly turned-out girl," who sees power in objectification as long as she's in control of her image — she understands, as her last name suggests, that she is a brand. Adorned in a bright red dress and matching painted lips, she clearly stands apart from the others on the panel. However, when Nicki succumbs to the seduction of the Videodrome; her body ceases to exist, and only her image manifests in Max's hallucinations as a grotesque reality. Caroline Evans notes that "if glamour is constituted in women's magical power over men to enchant and allure, it is also a castration threat" (124). To be sure, she appears to Max on a television screen, cooing seductively "Come to me" while Max's television set becomes engorged until only Nicki's signature red lips, the replaceable consumerist parts of the human body that McLuhan discussed in *The Mechanical Bride*, are visible on the screen beckoning Max to enter her so that, presumably, she can symbolically consume him. As a former member of Andy Warhol's Factory entourage, Debbie Harry, the photogenic front woman from the band Blondie, represents a certain type of 1980s feminized urbane glamour. Like Carole Pope, hers was a glamour that was sexual and had a hard edge but was clad in designer fashions. In her memoir, *Face It*, Harry writes of her performance in *Videodrome*: "One critic said that I might have been the first postmodern tough cookie" (251–52) in reference to her character's mash up of femme fatale and cyborg. She was a *Gilda* bomb waiting to detonate.

As Max becomes increasingly under the influence of Videodrome's hallucinatory effects, his chest cavity develops into a fleshy slit, the epitome of the grotesque, leaky, porous body, that allows him to place videotapes and guns inside himself as if to feed his wound. This yonic gash suggests that part of his own growing monstrosity is a result of his transgressive sexual and

violent desires. At one point he pulls out a gun from this slit, only to discover that it has morphed into his hand to reveal a flesh gun complete with pus and veins. Through a videotape, O'Blivion explains to Max what is happening to him and then confesses to being Videodrome's first victim:

Your reality is already half video hallucination. If you're not careful, it will become *total hallucination*. You'll have to learn to live in a very strange new world. I had a brain tumour and I had visions. I believe the visions cause the tumour and not the reverse. I can feel the visions coalesce and become flesh. Uncontrollable flesh. But when they removed the tumour, it was called Videodrome.

Nigel Thrift refers to glamour as the "technology of allure" (291). Glamour, Thrift argues, blurs the boundary between person and thing. Grotesque glamour in *Videodrome*, on the other hand, manifests as abjection, or as Julia Kristeva puts it in her essay on the abject and the powers of horror: "the body's inside [...] shows up in order to compensate for the collapse of the border between inside and outside" (53). By the film's end, Max is a physical grotesque made up of an uncontrollable flesh from the body's inside. He is both monster and creator in the ongoing search for power, which can only be conferred through the glamour of new technologies. When Max confronts Bianca, the daughter of Brian O'Blivion, he realizes that he is doomed to a similar fate as the professor: "At the end," Bianca says "[O'Blivion] was convinced that public life on television was more real than private life in the flesh; he wasn't afraid to let his body die." In return he lives on in television screens as a glamorous grotesque, radiating the aura of celebrity.

Debbie Harry and James Woods, both American actors, are the marquee names in *Videodrome*. The glamour that naturally accompanies the cultivated image of celebrity reveals

itself to be raw and gritty in the guise of Woods and Harry;¹⁰² the rough and industrial surroundings they find themselves in only serves to intensify this characterization. The Toronto they inhabit is filled with flyers pasted on buildings, constant construction, and sprawling desolate landscapes. No doubt there is a whiff of *chutzpah* in having Videodrome, this “next big thing” in television programming, broadcast from a tiny cable station in Toronto. In *Toronto on Film*, Geoff Pevere, editor and former film critic for *The Toronto Star*, calls *Videodrome* the ultimate Toronto film: “Toronto had never seemed weirder [...] Significantly, it also marked the introduction of a new Toronto onscreen: the imagined city, Metro as metaphor” (62–63). In other words, *Videodrome* conferred upon the city a raw sensuality steeped in sex, media, and transgressive bodies. Significantly, “Long live the new flesh!” is *Videodrome*’s cri de coeur.

Caroline Rosenthal argues for the city as flesh as a corollary of the urban imaginary: “[T]he production of urban space correlates with the making of bodies. Body and city are both just as much material entities as they are representational concepts placed in specific symbolic orders — orders that are informed through and by each other” (4). In *Videodrome*, Toronto is a hyperreal space where the flesh is a Platonic ideal and the glamour of the cathode ray tube reigns supreme. In one scene, the audience is introduced to the Cathode Ray Mission run by Bianca O’Blivion. This inner-city style “mission” allows social derelicts to have access to television so they can return to the “world’s mixing board,” which is the network of information and signals that allows these people to function in regular society. This scene at the Cathode Ray Mission is

¹⁰² To further underscore this point, Debbie Harry wrote the foreword for *Grit and Glamour: The Street Style, High Fashion, and the Legendary Music of the 1970s* (2016), a collection of photographs from photojournalist and author Allan Tannenbaum.

rather short but provides a lot of background on Cronenberg's hypothetical and imagined Toronto: a city at the mercy of its programming and emergent technologies.

Videodrome's "tech-noir" overtures, that is, the fusion of film noir with the darker legacies of technology, positions the city as a site of danger and intrigue.¹⁰³ Cigarettes, film noir's fetish piece, feature prominently in the film. Upon first meeting Nicki on the television panel, Max's first word to her is "Cigarette?" Nicki, as femme fatale, offers to burn her breast with a cigarette after seeing something similar done on one of Videodrome's shows. William Beard argues that "in Cronenberg's world, smoking, drinking or sexual activity produce disastrous consequences" (161), which of course is true for the characters in the film yet in creating this world, Cronenberg has also augmented the character of Toronto. The cigarette, as argued in Chapter Three, functions as a means of suspending the passage of time, and Cronenberg's Toronto is imbued with a sense of timelessness with nods toward the city's techno past and possible future. It is significant to note that the noir style from the 1930s and 1940s challenged glamour conventions by using hard lights when photographing women as well as giving the opportunity for cinematographers to light certain actors unfavourably as a means to illuminate the character's less savoury qualities.¹⁰⁴ According to Andre Spicer and Helen Hanson: "The first trend made noir more glamorous; the second, more grotesque" (Spicer and Hanson). I argue that Cronenberg's *Videodrome* uses a similar approach in his vision of an imagined Toronto with no trace of "the good" but only the sheen of the glamorous grotesque.

¹⁰³ The name, "Tech Noir" is a reference to the name of the nightclub in *The Terminator* (1984) where the protagonist, Sarah Connor, hides from the deadly Terminator who is trying to assassinate her. (Auger 11).

¹⁰⁴ In *Second Skin: Josephine Baker & the Modern Surface*, Anne Anlin Cheng draws on the work of Richard Dyer to illustrate how this form of classic Hollywood lighting has been central in "reflecting the centrality of whiteness in Western visual culture" (111).

While *Videodrome* is very much a product of the 1980s with its focus on VCRs and satellite dishes, its themes of the dangers of an over-mediated public, technology consumption, and hypersexuality remain as relevant as ever. Four years later, Patricia Rozema explored many of these elements in *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing*, but while *Videodrome* depicts Toronto as a site of the hyperreal, in *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing*, Toronto's urban landscape is imagined as a surreal canvas of glamorous escape.

Mermaids Cresting on Toronto's New Wave

Patricia Rozema's *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing* was the first English-Canadian feature to win an award at Cannes, taking home the Prix de la Jeunesse and then subsequently opening the Toronto Festival of Festivals in 1987. According to Julia Mendenhall, "*Mermaids* is one of the most influential feature films to be made within the English-Canadian filmmaking milieu because its financial success precipitated what is called the Toronto New Wave" (26). The Toronto New Wave was the name given to the group of Toronto film-makers that included Atom Egoyan, John Greyson, Bruce McDonald, Don McKeller, Deepa Mehta, Rozema, and many others who made successful films, both nationally and internationally, in the 1980s and '90s. In "Surfing the Toronto New Wave: Policy, Paradigm Shifts and Post-Nationalism," Canadian filmmaker Brenda Longfellow provides a comprehensive history of the Toronto New Wave and makes the case for the crucial role of the government granting bodies of arts councils and film co-ops in allowing this movement to thrive. She contends that what made the Toronto New Wave films stand out was their unabashed embrace of the cosmopolitan and a desire to connect with an international art cinema audience:

The Toronto New Wave defined its own response to the reality of globalization and to the globalizing monolith of American mass commercial cinema by modelling itself around a European art cinema with an aesthetic preference for critical distance, multi-levelled reflexivity and ironic detachment. Branded with a bold sense of style and distinctive authorial thematics, preoccupied with the themes of urban alienation and the disappearance of authenticity from mass-mediated consumer societies, the films of the New Wave addressed an international taste *habitus* or niche market forged through its cinematic connoisseurship and cosmopolitan affinities. (124)

Longfellow points out that even a film like *Outrageous!*, which ostensibly featured metropolitan concerns, was similar to many Canadian films that were coming out in the 1970s that “were modelled around a documentary observation of space and a powerful sense of regional and local geographies” (122). As previous chapters of this dissertation have argued, the dismissal of the garrison mentality and a desire for Toronto to be recognized on an international level has been important for Toronto artists and writers for articulating and endorsing Toronto as a glamorous cosmopolitan city.

The Toronto New Wave were interested in elevating the city as a site for deep critical and psychological introspection. George Melnyk notes: “The city seldom evokes a sense of freedom or liberation in Canadian cinema. Whether one is viewing Montreal filmmaker Jean-Claude Lauzon’s *Léolo*, with its dark, anguished interiors and tormented souls, or Torontonians Atom Egoyan’s *Exotica*, with its even more intense atmosphere of repression and soulful hunger, one feels besieged, claustrophobic, and unnerved” (*Film and the City* 10). Whereas Melnyk regards the urban spaces represented in Canadian film as oppressive, I argue that they offer a counter-

narrative to the garrison mentality by drawing upon a grotesque glamour aesthetic to explore the changing dynamics of Canadian city life. Glamour includes the dark, the torment, the longing for another person, place or era while the grotesque explores the limits of established order and power.¹⁰⁵ Peter Stallybrass and Allon White illustrate how grotesque images “are both reviled and desired. Repugnance and fascination are the twin poles of the process” (4–5). In this, I am reminded of Rough Trade’s posters with the slogans “repulsive yet fascinating” that announced their particular brand of glamour. These twin poles arguably work in tandem with glamour to stretch the boundaries of pleasure and desire. Ultimately, I maintain the Toronto New Wave capitalized on this sense of grotesque glamour in their depiction of Toronto on screen to challenge staid stereotypes of Canadian urban living.

In *Mermaids*, grotesque glamour is a dynamic experience. The opening scene begins similarly to *Videodrome*, with a woman talking to an unseen audience through a television screen. The audience learns this is Polly Vandersma, played by Canadian actress Sheila McCarthy, who begins to confess her life story like a modern-day female David Copperfield. Polly is a quirky woman with bright-orange messy hair and large eyes that suggest a bewilderment toward the world around her. She admits that she is “organizationally impaired,” which is why she is at the mercy of her temp agency to find any kind of work to keep her financially afloat. Through Polly’s televised narration the audience learns that she is an aspiring photographer who finally manages to secure a job working at a trendy art gallery in Toronto. It is run by the worldly and elegant Gabrielle St. Peres, whom Polly refers to reverentially as “The

¹⁰⁵ Theatre and visual cultural historian, Kate Holmes, argues that “Glamour and the grotesque are different because glamour pushes at the border, whilst the grotesque just oversteps it” (Holmes). However, I maintain they share a reciprocal relationship. The grotesque can be glamorous just as the glamorous can be grotesque.

Curator” played by the French-Canadian actress, Paule Baillargeon. The plot of the film hinges on Polly’s inadvertent involvement in an art fraud scheme between Gabrielle and her lover, Mary Joseph. Gabrielle has been passing off Mary Joseph’s glowing, light-filled canvasses as her own, and Polly is disgusted when she finds out about this deception and lashes out at Gabrielle by tossing a cup of hot tea in her face. The film ends with Polly finishing her taped confession on the television screen as a scarred Gabrielle, and Mary Joseph visit her apartment to apologize.

Rozema conceived *Mermaids* as an examination of “the merciless negative judgements of the Toronto elitist high art milieu” (Mendenhall 48) after she had received a particularly nasty review in *The Globe and Mail* for her short film *Passion: A Letter in 16mm* (1985). Yet for all its subtle jabs at Toronto taste culture, *Mermaids*, unlike *Videodrome* which exhibits an abject anxiety toward the mediated city, completely delights and actively takes pleasure in the city as an imagined space. Through Polly the audience is able to experience Toronto kinetically. She rides her pink bicycle excitedly across the city and revels in the downtown cityscape, taking pictures of the people and places that bring her passion and joy. As a photographer, Polly sees and attempts to capture the city in its most glamorized form. In this regard, David L. Pike notes “[Rozema] is one of the few Canadian directors to celebrate contemporary architecture unequivocally” (*Canadian Cinema* 82); certainly, Polly’s camera is consistently skyward as she photographs the city’s glass structures, such as the “glowing leaf surfaces of the Royal Bank” (Mendenhall 91). These shimmering surfaces make multiple appearances throughout the film: the sun-reflected waters of Lake Ontario as she listens to the titular mermaids singing; the radiant glow of the art canvasses; and in the final scene when Polly opens the door to her photography studio and reveals a luminous nature scene filled with gilded leaves twinkling in the sun. Here is glamour in its most uncomplicated guise, drawing on the viewer’s pleasure of the glittering

surface. Judith Brown argues “The pleasure of glamour thus operates on the premise of denial, on fantasy, and on a willingness to gild the world around us with a knowledge of its necessary ephemerality and thus its inevitable loss. Yet the pleasure of the glitter offers some compensation, at least in the moment, for the thing we cannot have” (171). For Polly, Toronto’s art scene is predicated upon the triangular configuration of glamour, failure, and loss. For the most part she has mainly experienced the latter two as her most recent photographs were dismissed by Gabrielle as “simpleminded,” which makes her retreat further into her glittering fantasy world for glamour’s momentary pleasure.

These fantasies are fully realized when Polly develops her photos in her studio apartment bathroom. She refers to these fantasies as “visions,” which only appear to her while she admires her work. These visions are rendered as black and white episodes meant as a comic take on arthouse surrealist cinema, specifically in the style of Ingmar Bergman, who was “a profound influence” on Rozema’s work (Pike, *Canadian Cinema* 80). In Polly’s first vision she uses suction cups to climb the side of the Royal Bank building while styled in the fashion of a wool clad superhero —complete with a toque featuring a Canadian flag emblazoned on the front. As she climbs the glass facade that overlooks the city’s significant landmarks, such as the CN Tower and old City Hall, one of her suction cups fails to seal itself to the side of the building causing her to fall. Yet as Polly begins her descent, she is suddenly propelled skyward as the “Flower Duet” from the opera *Lakmé* triumphantly heralds her ability to fly. She then kicks her legs excitedly in delight at the great expanse of the city filled with sky scrapers and tree-filled parks as her wool cape trails behind her to the swelling operatic notes of the duet. As discussed in Chapter Two, the modern girl represented a positive view of linear modernity, and she was frequently associated with towering skyscrapers with her fashionably lean and elongated body,

which made her blend into the urban landscape. As Polly soars across the sky above the skyscrapers and the phallogentric CN tower, she transcends the Toronto modern girl and gestures toward Toronto's postmodern turn. Beginning in the early 1980s until the early 1990s when the recession halted the city's building expansions, postmodernism was a popular architectural form that was used throughout the greater Toronto area. The most prominent example of this style in the city is the Lillian H. Smith Library on College Street. The library was built in 1995 and is immediately recognizable for its "ornamental façade, copper roof, a whimsical griffin and winged ion at the entrance" (Micallef). Certainly, Polly is the ultimate pasticheur. Her fantasies, which appear in black and white, mimic the style of other artists, blend together scenes from different eras, and develop, much like her photographs of glittering Toronto buildings, into her own compositions.

The title of the film is a reference to "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by T.S. Eliot, who also liberally borrows from recognizable cultural figures in his work. In his poem, Prufrock asks:

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?

I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.

I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me. (lines 122-25)

Whereas Eliot's Prufrock grows weary from the tedium of the everyday, Polly revels in the siren song of the city that sends her off on her pleasing visions. Initially she aspires to be one of the women who come and go "talking of Michelangelo" ("Prufrock" 13-4) and day dreaming that she would have similar "sophisticated" conversations with her beloved curator — her supervisor at the art gallery, where she has found steady work as an administrative assistant. In one of her

visions she imagines herself walking on water discussing Freudian theory as the curator basks in her worldliness and intellectual rigour. In these alternate realities Polly positions herself as having mastery over the things that she cannot control in life, such as finding success as a photographer or having others take her seriously. The irony, that Polly is soon to find out, is that while Gabrielle, the curator, speaks the language of an artist, it is later revealed that she is passing off her girlfriend's paintings as her own, and her sense of art, much like the conversation by the women that Prufrock observes, is superficial.

In another vision Polly hears the voices of the mermaids singing their irresistible song as she stands on Toronto's Scarborough bluffs overlooking Lake Ontario. The figure of the mermaid particularly resonates with my conception of grotesque glamour. The mermaid, the mythical creature with the top half of a woman and bottom half of a fish who lures sailors to their deaths with their singing, is an obvious physical grotesque. However, unlike the monstrous creatures that are often associated with the grotesque, the mermaid, with her ability to charm and seduce, cuts a glamorous figure. In Polly's vision, she is adorned in an old-fashioned outfit and she travels by antique streetcar past the majestically rendered Bloor Viaduct and glass cut skyscrapers, making her way toward the edge of the city. As she sets out a picnic of grapes and wine, she hears the music of the mermaids. Their song plays over sublime shots of crashing waves over Bluffer's Park as the camera takes in the vast natural surroundings. This Romantic depiction of the city stands in stark contrast to the industrial vision of Toronto as seen in *Videodrome* and to a certain extent in *Outrageous!* Indeed, conjuring up a powerful sense of place through the twin lenses of the sublime and grotesque connects the city to a greater tradition not typically associated with Toronto's urban aesthetic in the 1980s. Between 1982 and 1983, Canada experienced one of its deepest recessions in 50 years and contrary to expectation, during

1981-1986, the rate of gentrification accelerated throughout major Canadian cities such as Toronto (Ley 230). The haunting combination of past and present in Polly's vision suggests a particularly sensuous glamour for the city as well as a nostalgia for a time when the city was not yet the centre of high-density stressful urban living as showcased by her unencumbered streetcar ride.

In *Mermaids*, glamour is a revelation, an expression of desire and ecstasy. The leitmotif of the "Flower Duet" that accompanies many of Polly's visions calls attention to a larger dialogue, a duet of sorts, of women's sexuality and longing — Polly's attraction to her art gallery boss and her desire to fit into the glamorous spaces of Toronto's art world. In this, Polly's plight is no different than that of the protagonist in "High School Confidential" who just wants to get the girl, and her desire to be recognized as a glamorous artist too shares a similarity with the work of General Idea and Sheila Heti's narrative in *How Should a Person Be?* One can also note the long-lasting presence of the "Flower Duet" in popular culture. In his column in *The Globe and Mail* on June 1st, 2002, Russell Smith discusses how all too often the public learns about a piece of music from movie soundtracks and not from the original source material: "Like many people, I first heard the *Flower Duet* from Delibe's opera *Lakmé* in Patricia Rozema's *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing*" (R. Smith, "Classical Perns Had a Life before Soundtrack Fame" R12). When Smith recently discovers a CD called *Classical Chillout*, he is dismayed to find on the CD's label that the duet from *Lakmé* is advertised as "from the British Airways TV ad." In 1989 the song gained immense popularity after British Airways released their famous "Face" advertisement, which featured a reimagining of the song by the Greek composer Yanni and the former Sex Pistols manager, Malcolm McLaren. *Mermaids* was not the first film to use the "Flower Duet." The song was used four years prior in the 1983 film, *The Hunger* starring

Catherine Deneuve as the vampire Miriam and David Bowie as her lover. The song plays over as Catherine Deneuve's aging vampire character, herself a glamorous grotesque, attempts to seduce the famous Dr. Sarah Roberts, played by Susan Sarandon. As Miriam tells Sarah, the song is a love song sung between two women, which prompts Sarah to ask Miriam if she is making a pass at her. In *Mermaids* the song similarly accompanies Polly's feelings of explosive desire. The familiar swelling crescendo of the "The Flower Song" lends credence to Adorno's contention that "listeners are nowhere more tricked by popular music than in its glamorous passages. Flourishes and jubilation express triumphant thanksgiving for the music itself — a self-eulogy of its own achievement in exhorting the listener to exultation and of its identification with the aim of the agency in promoting a great event" (Adorno). The lush orchestration of the "Flower Duet" successfully heightens the sensory experience of the film with the intention of enveloping the audience in a glamorous affect.

Indeed, the totems of beauty, art, and sex contribute to the expressions of glamour in the film, and while scholars of the film are right to focus on its queer protagonist and feminist themes,¹⁰⁶ the film's glamorous affect pointedly speaks to the elevation of Toronto's persona on screen. Rozema writes in her notes that she struggled with writing a proper formal government grant application that would consider her work as having social relevance: "what social issue category could [*Mermaids*] fall under?: death (no) maybe aesthetics...? Sexuality (extensive discussion). Canada/US relations (No). Beauty, art and sex. Yes." (qtd. in Mendenhall 77). The

¹⁰⁶ See: Teresa De Lauretis (1990); Ally Acker (2011); Julia Mendenhall (2014).

film's satirizing of Toronto's art scene enjoys playing with the conceits of glamour through outlandish fashion, glitzy parties, and artistic practices. In effect, the film provides a vision of the glamorous artists that General Idea had described in their glamour manifesto, where the artist as a glamorous body was just as compelling as the art. The celebrated art piece that Gabrielle passes off as her own is a glowing white rectangle that film critics regard as a "clever solution to the common problem of showing art in movies that must play a plot function as 'brilliant'" (Pike, *Canadian Cinema* 85). However, read on another level the visual rendering of the art piece speaks to Toronto's constant position as a sound stage for various Hollywood films. Both are similarly stripped of any specificity. Only Polly's work, which is initially dismissed by the French curator, arguably a stand-in for Montreal's historical and established cultural hegemony, actually engages with the city and showcases the unconventional beauty, not unlike Polly herself, that exists in and around the skyscrapers.

Conclusion

In January 2020, entertainment news outlets were reporting that Hollywood actors Kevin Hart and Jason Statham would be teaming up in an action comedy called *The Man from Toronto*. This updated version seemingly has very little in common with its 1933 predecessor. In this iteration, the marriage plot has been replaced with a case of mistaken identity and the hapless "Man from Toronto" must escape the deadly grasp of a trained assassin. As of June 2020, reports have indicated that Jason Statham has been replaced by Woody Harrelson, with no doubt more replacements to come. One may draw a connection between these replacements and the similar ease with which Toronto has historically been disguised, or replaced, by other cosmopolitan centres on screen. In contrast, this chapter has illustrated how Toronto film of the 1970s and

1980s placed Toronto in the spotlight. The films discussed in this chapter appeared in international film festivals and captivated audiences with their grotesque glamour aesthetic, which helped to shape the characterization of the city through a unique lens. Notably, the Toronto New Wave provided a platform to showcase the realities of the growing multiculturalism in the city. Directors like Clement Virgo, Atom Egoyan, and Deepa Mehta heralded a cinematic shift by casting diverse voices and bodies that reflected the immigrant and multicultural experience in the city. As the next chapter illustrates, in the post New Wave years many of these same directors continued to challenge the paradigms of the city both racially and cinematically. In particular, Deepa Mehta's musical romantic comedy, *Hollywood/Bollywood* (2002) offers "the spectacle of a Toronto both giddy and glam" and "suggests that the cinematic history of Canada's largest city may be in the process of writing itself a new chapter" (Pevere 25). Indeed, Mehta's vision of the city, which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, provides a fresh perspective on glamour for Toronto in the twenty-first century. In concluding this study, I show how the grotesque glamour of Toronto's earlier cinema of the 1970s and 1980s makes way for a different kind of glamour, one that is steeped in the accoutrements of luxury, sophistication and wealth in twenty-first century Toronto film.

Chapter Seven: Cinephiliac Glamour in Early Twenty-first Century Toronto

Film

For eleven days in September, a glamorous coterie of celebrities, directors, producers, and various movie industry moguls descend upon Toronto for its annual film festival. In 1994, The Toronto Festival of Festivals officially changed its name to the Toronto International Film Festival; since then, it has gone on to become one of the most widely recognized and largest film festivals in the world. In 2009, the festival began to adopt the shorthand TIFF and championed orange as its signature colour. This branding was significant as prominent European festivals like Cannes, Berlin, and others tend toward rich reds and gold hues, while the more relaxed North American festivals like Sundance and SXSW skew towards ambers and magentas. As anthropologist Sarah Dillard Mitchell observes in her ethnography of TIFF: “The slightly muted orange places TIFF in a kind of middle ground between the two groups showing off its ability to be both sophisticated and casual” (128). TIFF’s ability to straddle these two facades was similarly commented upon by *Toronto Star* fashion columnist, Karen von Hahn, who mused in 2014, TIFF’s 39th year, that Toronto remains “a city still more comfortable with street chic than full-blown glamour” and then quickly points out “But I, for one, think that’s a good thing. Like the city itself, which is more fun to know than pretty to look at, it’s our lack of pretension and offhand chic that makes us worthy of the spotlight” (Von Hahn). Nevertheless, since its inception in 1976, one of the festival’s mandates was to bring glamour to Toronto. Mitchell argues “[The original festival organizers] wanted to emulate the flash, the fashion, the fast-pace—the schmoozing and boozing—that the high-profile European fests had to offer. All were considered an integral part of the festival experience” (136). The founders of the festival, Bill Marshall,

Dusty Cohl, and Henk Van der Kolk, used their experiences at Cannes, Berlin and other festivals to organize Toronto's festival in a way that would capture the attention of a global film culture but would also appeal to Toronto's cinema-going community (Mitchell 107).

From the beginning, Toronto festival audiences have often been singled out for their film savviness and their appreciation for more highbrow fare. As film critic Richard Corliss argues, "However much glamour the star vehicles bring to Toronto, the real value of the festival lies in the foreign art films and the knowledgeable audiences who seek them out" (qtd. in Czach 143). Hollywood and international directors specifically seek out these TIFF audiences because they are "cinematically literate, diverse in [their] tastes, and curious" ("Festival History" qtd. in Czach 144). In this regard, Toronto festival audiences tend to be ethnically diverse and can make broad connections with the transnational histories and narratives displayed on screen (Gupta and Marchessault 251). Corliss is not the first to acknowledge that "the audience is the star" (qtd. in Czach 143) at TIFF. The late American popular film critic, Roger Ebert, who is widely credited for putting TIFF on the map when he first attended the festival in 1977, has similarly remarked that "if a Toronto audience rejects a film, it sends a message to distributors" (qtd. in Mitchell 63). To be sure, glamour, in addition to its associations with celebrity, wealth and luxury, is also affiliated with knowledge and literacy and this praise for Toronto's discerning movie goers is reminiscent of Oscar Wilde's comment in Chapter One that Toronto had the "most interested and intellectual audiences." Indeed, the celebration for Toronto's taste culture is certainly a far cry from the disdain that Robin exhibits toward arts council granting bodies in the city in *Outrageous!*.

This chapter demonstrates how twenty-first century Toronto film purposefully engages glamour's familiar tropes of beauty, wealth, celebrity, and luxury, as seen on TIFF's red carpets,

to engage with fantasies of transformation in the city. I explore the following three films for their treatment of glamour as a corollary of Toronto's status as a world-class twenty-first century city: *Bollywood/Hollywood* (2002) directed by Deepa Metha, *Chloe* (2009) directed by Atom Egoyan; and Sarah Polley's *Take This Waltz* (2011). Whereas the grotesque glamour aesthetic of mid-to late-twentieth century Toronto film engaged with the tension between repulsion and desire of the city on a local level, the films in this chapter focus on Toronto's international glamour as an aspirational condition of the city.

Transnational Glamour in *Bollywood/Hollywood*

In an interview with Wyndham Wise (2002), Deepa Metha confides that *Bollywood/Hollywood* is her love song to Toronto (34). Indeed, Toronto's cityscape fills the screen from the opening scene. The lens of the camera carefully scales the length of the CN Tower and then shifts to a sleek white chauffeured limousine making its way across the Gardiner expressway with a full view of the Rogers Centre (although at the time it was referred to as the SkyDome). The trifecta of the city's most iconic structures juxtaposed with the city's controversial and often loathed highway providing transportation for a luxury car engages with a very different Toronto than previously rendered in the city's cinematic canon. Whereas the films discussed in the previous chapter (*Outrageous!*, *Videodrome* and *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing*) offer a quirky and grotesquely glamorized depiction of the city, Metha's vision of the city, like those of Egoyan and Polley discussed later in the chapter, actively employs a language of glamour that includes subsets of luxury and sophistication.

In his introductory essay to *Toronto on Film*, Geoff Pevere begins his discussion by describing the collective gasp from the audience upon viewing the CN Tower in its entirety in one of the scenes from *Bollywood/Hollywood* for its premiere screening in 2002 at TIFF:

In a way you could say that in order to fully grasp the impact of seeing the CN Tower appear in that theatre, you had to be there. But then that's the point: it was so rare to be there. It was one thing to be in Toronto watching a movie — that was something thousands of Torontonians did every week. It was quite something else to be in Toronto watching a movie set in Toronto. That almost never happened. It could make you gasp. (20)

Of course, as the previous chapter illustrated, this was not the CN Tower's onscreen debut; in fact, the construction of the CN Tower coincided with the first Festival of Festivals in 1976. But, as Pevere points out, "in 2002, there was more to the feeling than just being in Toronto — or perhaps more precisely, in Toronto's presence" (22). The scene that evoked the audience's gasp was choreographed as a Bollywood musical number filled with attractive people from diverse ethnic backgrounds dancing and singing and dressed in bright colourful fashions as the CN tower sparkles in the distance. Therefore, for twenty-first century Toronto audiences conditioned to see Toronto as a stand-in for other cities, seeing that flash of the tower was a revelatory moment of glamour on screen.

The relationship between glamour and Toronto's cityscape mirrors the historical relationship between glamour and architecture. According to Joseph Rosa, "when glamour first appeared in postwar architectural writings, it tended to be employed pejoratively to denote buildings that juxtapose modern idioms or feature relentless geometric patterning on their facades" (124). The CN Tower has been a well-known landmark since its construction in 1976

by Canadian National. Standing 555.33 metres in height, the CN Tower has come to define the Toronto skyline — for better or for worse. The Canadian poet Irving Layton saw the structure's towering height as having, "Pricked God's ass," lamenting further that "he's been shitting on us ever since" (qtd. in Davies 23). Conversely, the American Society of Civil Engineers classified the CN Tower as one of the Seven Wonders of the Modern World in 1995. The CN Tower, no doubt, has become the fulcrum of the city's expression of modern identity despite Mark Kingwell's wry observation that "Toronto is not a city in the modern sense of a unified whole. I suspect it never will be, and probably need not try. Toronto is, instead, a linked series of towns held loosely together by the gravitational force of its downtown core and the pinned-in-place effect of the surveillance rod we call the CN Tower" (37). Kingwell illustrates a particularly unflattering picture of the city as a conglomeration of colourless towns flung together by happenstance. Yet his prose negates how particular sites (and sights) are metonymic of the city's unified appeal. The CN Tower is the marker for the city's centre, or rather the CN Tower is the city's *omphalos*, the Greek word for navel. According to Greek mythology, Zeus released two eagles in opposite directions to fly around the globe; they met at Delphi, which was deemed the navel of the earth, and a carved stone was placed there, the *omphalos*, to mark its centre. The CN Tower, therefore, in recent years has become central to Toronto's urban imaginary and significance while simultaneously conjuring the dangerous glamour of espionage by casually acknowledging the tower's surveillance capabilities.¹⁰⁷ The CN Tower, much like the Eiffel

¹⁰⁷ I acknowledge that the legacy associated with Communist-era observation towers is by no means glamorous, yet the continued fascination with this time period reflects a certain romanticizing, and with it a glamorization, of this particular past. This glamorization is most noticeable in the "Ostalgie" trend, that is, a nostalgia for East Germany, which was arguably made popular through the global success of such German films as *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2003) and *The Lives of Others* (2006) and later trickling into the realms of fashion, art and literature.

Tower before it, is a structure that defines the city. As Barthes wrote in praise of the contemplative pleasures that the Eiffel Tower affords: “The Tower looks at Paris. To visit the Tower is to get oneself up onto the balcony in order to perceive, comprehend and savor a certain essence of Paris” (*The Eiffel Tower, and Other Mythologies* 8). Nevertheless, the Eiffel Tower was similarly maligned by the public during its initial construction as the entrance to the World’s Fair in 1899; however, the Tower has now come to represent the glamour and the romance of the city.¹⁰⁸

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, before the Torontopia ethos discussed in this dissertation’s introduction began sweeping the cultural core of the city, the idea of referring to the CN Tower as a glamorous icon of the city would be laughable to the average Torontonians, who regarded the looming structure as nothing more than a tourist trap. Meaghan Morris shares a similar lack of enthusiasm for the Sydney Tower and its metamorphoses in the 1980s, which she notes was constructed in imitation of the London Post Office Tower and the CN Tower (16). She argues that the tower is less a symbol of Australian modernity and more of a symbol of Australian “positive unoriginality” (16). Rather, the tower, for Morris, was a striking metaphor for the dominant power structures that govern transnational exchanges in Australia: the white gaze from above looking down at the Aborigines (17). Mehta’s use of the CN Tower in *Bollywood/Hollywood* similarly interrogates these exchanges, yet instead of the white gaze looking down on the city’s diverse population, she has a broad constellation of bodies dancing in unison on the balcony of an apartment building. The dancers are high enough so that they catch

¹⁰⁸ Although not everyone approved of the tower’s glory. Guy de Maupassant famously ate his lunch at the base of the Eiffel Tower’s restaurant since it was the only place in Paris that the tower was not visible. Certainly, he would not approve of the long queues that continue to form at this very popular tourist destination.

the sun reflecting from the tower's windows. Her star treatment of the CN Tower, much like the honour from the American Civil Engineers bestowed upon the tower before her, allows Torontonians to see their city and the possibility of architectural glamour through the lens of an outsider — both figuratively and literally.

Mehta is often referred to as a transnational filmmaker.¹⁰⁹ The Indian-born Mehta immigrated to Canada in 1973 and continues to travel back and forth between the two countries for her various films. The makeup of Mehta's filmography focuses primarily on her Indian heritage. Most notably, her famous *Air, Water, Fire* trilogy tackles serious social issues that affect Indian society. Her focus on the Indian experience in Canada, specifically in her adopted city of Toronto, offers a much-needed alternative narrative for the city that acknowledges its increasing diversity. Similar high-profile Toronto-based transnational directors such as the Egyptian-born, Armenian-Canadian Atom Egoyan and the Jamaican-born, Caribbean-Canadian Clement Virgo have been instrumental in changing the cinematic representation of the city away from the standard white stories that dominated Toronto's cinema in the 1970s and 1980s.¹¹⁰ In this regard, the blockbuster nature of *Bollywood/Hollywood* feels like nothing less than an act of subversion, or at the very least a sly wink. There is a scene in Mehta's film where the focus of discussion is a poster for Egoyan's *Exotica* (1994) hung in the bedroom of one of the characters, which prompts another character to inquire whether the director is American or not. This subtle intertextual joke highlights the film's theme of mistaken identity but also serves to remind the

¹⁰⁹ See Jacqueline Levitin's chapter, "Deepa Mehta as Transnational Filmmaker, or You Can't Go Home Again" in *North of Everything* (2002).

¹¹⁰ Virgo specifically has been an important director in exploring Canada as a racialized space. His film *Rude* (1995) reflects the black Caribbean community in Toronto. This turn toward the representation of different voices in the city is a significant change from when a film such as *Goin' Down the Road* (1970) was made as Toronto's multicultural identity was only in its infancy.

audience that the city and country are capable of telling compelling stories. *Exotica*, according to Canadian film scholar Catherine Russell, is “probably the most extensively reported Canadian film of all time” (341), undoubtedly due to its frank depictions of female sexuality and casual nudity. Whereas Egoyan explores the seedy glamour of Toronto’s strip clubs in *Exotica*, aligning itself with the grotesque glamour of Toronto cinema of the 1970s and 1980s with its intertwining themes of animality and sexuality, Mehta offers a particular vision of glamour for the city that reflects her immigrant heritage.

The narrative of *Bollywood/Hollywood* follows the handsome and successful playboy Rahul, played by Rahul Khanna, who made a promise on his father’s deathbed that he would not sacrifice his Indian family values in the face of a more seductive, i.e. Western, alternative. In the years following his father’s death, the adult Rahul is in a relationship with a young pop singer, referred to as “Canada’s Britney Spears,” and wants to marry her, much to the displeasure of his family. After the pop star succumbs to a freak accidental death, Rahul finds himself at the mercy of his family, who insist he find a suitable bride to marry, and more pressing, he must marry a proper Indian woman before his pregnant sister can marry her fiancée as fitting Bollywood convention. In his search to find a romantic replacement for his fallen ex that will appease his family, Rahul happens upon Sue, played by the Indo-Canadian Lisa Ray. Sue is a professional escort that Rahul ends up hiring to pretend to be his fiancée so that his sister can finally get married.

This film’s conceit rests in Rahul’s ignorance of Sue’s Indian heritage. Rahul wrongfully assumes that Sue’s background is Spanish, guessing that her dark hair and tanned skin must be from some sort of Mediterranean heritage. When he first meets Sue, he asks her incredulously,

“You couldn’t be east Indian, could you?” To which she replies seductively, “I can be whatever you want me to be.” Rahul is immediately scandalized:

“Indian girls don’t do *this*!” Rahul insists.

“What’s *this*?”

“Indian girls don’t pick up guys!”

This badinage is a cypher for displaying Sue’s provocative prowess. Indeed, Sue performs a certain theory of glamour. She possesses the ability to enchant and seduce yet maintains an air of mystery allowing for a depth that goes beyond her looks. As Ilya Parkins further articulates on glamour’s magnetic appeal: “One way in which glamorous individuals bewitch is through their aura of mystery, their enigmatic projections of self” (*Poiret, Dior and Schiaparelli* 191). To be sure, throughout the film, Sue inhabits many selves. We first encounter her as an escort with a cryptic past and ambiguous heritage, and then we see her as a daughter, then girlfriend, and finally as a marriageable Indian woman. Specifically, Sue complicates the image of the glamorous woman on screen. She is neither femme fatale nor is she a lady of luxury. Nevertheless, she possesses *sprezzatura*, that is, glamour’s effortless quality that only few people possess. As Carol S. Gould affirms, “Just as the conclusion of a glamorous argument does not have to be true, the self projected by a glamorous person need not be an actualized self so much as a possible self or a suggestion of what the glamorous person’s self might be” (244). Sue recognizes that the glamorous character she exudes is a mirror of the projected desires onto her by Rahul and others — the film’s audience included. In this guise, Sue’s performance of glamour translates to the spaces in the city that are not typically associated with glamour’s sheen by virtue of her character.

In *Bollywood/Hollywood*, the city turns into a spectacle of shiny surfaces and colourful expanses. Fashion, in particular, fits into the glamorous display of South Asian identity that Mehta promotes in her film. The spectrum of pinks, reds, golds, and blues that blanket the sidewalk of the street exhibits the spaces, and its resulting affect, of unexpected glamour in the city. Gerrard Street is commonly referred to as Little India and is well known for its Gerrard India Bazaar, which is “the largest market place of South Asian goods and services in North America.” (“Gerrard India Bazaar BIA”). For non-Toronto audiences this brief foray into Little India offers an introduction to the various ethnic neighbourhoods that make up the culture of the city. Toronto audiences, however, may consider that Gerrard St. consists of two separate parts. Lower Gerrard, associated with “Old Toronto,” has long been celebrated for its ties to the Bohemian artistic community in the 1950s as illustrated in Chapter Four’s discussion on Yorkville, whereas Upper Gerrard was a part of “East Toronto,” which was an incorporated community, later amalgamated into Old Toronto, and currently associated with Toronto’s South Asian community. The implied colonial divide between “Old Toronto” and the multicultural “New Toronto” certainly emphasizes the Eastern and Western cultural divisions and similarities that make up the central thesis of *Bollywood/Hollywood*.

The title itself, *Bollywood/Hollywood*, indicates a disruption. The slash that separates Bollywood and Hollywood is the first part of the title to appear on screen. Amy Fung notes that this forward slash is “a gesture that undermines the difference between Bollywood and Hollywood as an entirely arbitrary choice in examining the Canadian identity” (74). In this, I would argue that Fung misses the point. While she rightly acknowledges that Toronto is often the go-to “film industry stand-in” (75) regularly referred to, alongside other Canadian city stand-ins, as “Hollywood North,” she elides her own argument when she insists that “the culture of the film

is a contest between Bollywood and Hollywood, and Toronto remains simply as a backdrop for the action that unfolds” (75). Toronto does not remain a backdrop in the film but rather is inserted into the gap opened up by the slash between Bollywood and Hollywood. Indeed, this is part of Mehta’s main argument for her film, which primarily concerns alter egos and identity politics as they play out in the city. In this, she shares a similar vision with Benner’s *Outrageous!*, which conceptualized the city in an ongoing drag performance awaiting the right spotlight. “Nothing is what it appears to be,” Rahul’s chauffeur tells Rahul, who himself is in a deception scheme with Sue to keep his parents out of his relationship affairs, and as the film progresses, these bifurcated identities continue to unfold. Upon discovering that Rahul’s chauffeur moonlights as a drag queen, referring to himself as “the first drag queen from the land of the Kama Sutra,” Sue assures the chauffeur that she will keep his secrets and that she, too, is “kind of partial to multiple identities.”

Melnyk further addresses the importance of deconstructing identities, which is at the heart of Mehta’s film: “The syncretism implied in her work is meant to construct an urban imaginary that erases national boundaries in favour of transnationality and an integrative urbanity” (*Film and the City* 158). So too, Mehta’s work also interrogates the transnationality of glamour. Glamour is arguably a lynchpin in the Bollywood/Hollywood dialectic. As Sue inspects her purchases from her *Pretty Woman* style shopping spree, she muses, “All this make-over reminds me of a Hollywood film,” to which Rahul’s chauffeur responds, “Holly-bolly, Bolly-Holly. Same wood, different tree” (the latter phrase also happens to be the name of Mehta’s production company).

Mehta’s use of glamorous tropes — fame, fashion, wealth, and beauty — are touchstones that audiences can easily identify and allow them to be swept up in the film’s fantasy of a young

man finding his true love. Yet, read on another level, Mehta challenges the expectations of glamour by unabashedly focusing her film on a successful South Asian family in the suburbs of Toronto. Melnyk touches upon the various levels of seeing a work like Mehta's:

There are certain issues of cultural politics at work in films like *Bollywood/Hollywood* that are addressed to diverse theatrical audiences: Indo-Canadians seeking a cinematic self-image, diasporic Indians in countries outside of Canada who can relate to the narrative and characters, and non-Indo-Canadians with their own ideas of the South Asian community. (*Film and the City* 159)

Depictions of glamour on film certainly favour the beautiful, urban, wealthy, and white. Scholars of glamour such as Gundle and Dyhouse acknowledge these uncomfortable representations of glamour on the silver screen that historically privilege young blond starlets while exoticizing those that do not fit into the Hollywood studio system mold. In her chapter on Josephine Baker, Judith Brown refers to the performer as the epitome of “primitive glamour,” which further adds to the suggestion that glamour functions differently when attributed to non-white bodies. To this point, Anne Anlin Cheng asks, “Is glamour’s lamination always and never more than commodity fetishism?” (112). Cheng meditates that Baker’s allure was a result of her “sheen,” or rather, the light that was able to radiate from her skin and hair. Nevertheless, she argues, Baker’s sheen was coded as “hard” while white Hollywood starlets like Marlene Dietrich, Joan Crawford, Greta Garbo and Jean Harlow were praised for their “glossy lure” (Cheng 112). In this regard, setting *Bollywood/Hollywood* in multicultural Toronto provides fertile ground for ideas relating to the appeal of global glamour — a topic which is noticeably ignored in glamour’s long history.

Notably, however, in a review of *Bollywood/Hollywood* in the *Hindu*, India's national English-language newspaper, Chitra Mahesh criticizes the film for its "rather slow pace and some very dull visuals." She emphasizes that since the film was produced in the Bollywood spirit, it "could have done with more glamour and color" (Mahesh). Yet what does it mean to have *more* glamour? Is the texture of glamour so easily quantifiable? Or put simply, does glamour have national identities? *Bollywood/Hollywood*, therefore, predicts a certain shift away from what Melnyk refers to as "Toronto's formerly staid Euro-Canadian identity" (*Film and the City* 160–61). He goes on to explain that "when Mehta locates a Bollywood-style dance number with a mulitracial cast against Toronto's greyish-white downtown skyline, she is playing with urban iconography, making the dance number symbolize multiple worlds and identities that now define Toronto" (160). Arguably, glamour is made up of multiple identities. Elizabeth Wilson distills glamour to its base properties, noting that the "end result is the sheen, the mask of perfection, the untouchability and numinous power of the icon" ("A Note on Glamour" 105). Mehta's film is as much about the Indian diaspora as it is about exploring Toronto's new, more complicated imaginary in the twenty-first century. Mehta's use of the luminescent surfaces of the CN Tower and the sleek, streamlined bodies that move in tandem to the music against the backdrop of the glimmering city demonstrates the glamour multiculturalism has bestowed upon Toronto. Celebration, however, turns into meditation as the bright coded glamour that fills Toronto's streets in Mehta's film dims in favour of glamour's cool sheen that coats the city seven years later in Atom Egoyan's *Chloe*.

Toronto's Sophisticated Glamour in *Chloe*

Like Mehta's *Bollywood/Hollywood*, Atom Egoyan's *Chloe* (2010) showcases a Toronto seldom previously portrayed on screen. The cinematic rendition of the city encourages the audience to fall under Toronto's allure with its depiction of an impossibly chic and cool city all the while detailing the crumbling relationship of a wealthy Rosedale couple played by Julianne Moore as Catherine, a doctor unsure about the fidelity of her husband David, a flirtatious musicology professor played by Liam Neeson. Whereas Mehta's Toronto shimmered with bright red and golden hues, Egoyan transforms Toronto into a glamorous metropolis interpreted through the muted blues and greens more commonly found in the pages of glossy fashion magazines. More precisely, Egoyan suggests a counternarrative to the puritanical "Toronto the Good" slogan that characterized the city for more than half of the twentieth century. Read this way, *Chloe* appears as a twenty-first century corollary to *Videodrome* in its tale of sin and seduction yet massaged for a different media-literate generation better accustomed to the information age's ubiquity of luxury and excess.

In an interview in the *Toronto Star* film critic Peter Howell asked Egoyan if he was currently having a "love affair" with the city given his last two films, *Adoration* and *Chloe*, were shot in Toronto. Egoyan responded:

I always have. My first feature *Next of Kin* was shot in Kensington Market. It was totally Toronto. I think *Exotica*'s Toronto, *The Adjuster*'s Toronto. *Ararat*'s Toronto. These are different areas of Toronto and different sorts of feelings of Toronto. But these last two are taking a broader view of the city and are trying to imbue it with a sense of romance. I mean *Adoration* is sort of a

desolate and kind of grungier sort of feeling of the city. And [*Chloe*] is certainly more glamorous. (Howell; italics in original)

The glamour that *Chloe* exudes reflects a specific and selective view of the city. As *Globe and Mail* film critic Liam Lacey points out, “You don’t see the suburbs, strip malls or ethnic neighbourhoods. Instead, we get a partial view, like an erotic photograph that focuses on the subject’s nape or earlobes and leaves the rest out” (Lacey, “Toronto as a Sexy, Self-Involved Femme Fatale”). The opening shot of the film lingers on actress Amanda Seyfried as the titular Chloe, a prostitute and the movie’s femme fatale, hired by Catherine to seduce her husband. The film’s audience watches her slowly getting dressed in front of a mirror. Yet the audience is only privy to her in fragments; nylons being rolled on to her legs, lacquered red nails grasping a bottle of lotion as she lathers a bare arm. Her character is further disembodied as she is only a reflection in a mirror. She is the apotheosis of the dream walking in McLuhan’s glamour cake advertisements. *Chloe*, the film, is replete with shots of glass and mirrors, reflecting and aggravating what Liam Lacey refers to as the “self-consciousness and fragility of the characters.” Yet I would argue that Chloe, the character, is anything but self-conscious. She, like Deborah Harry’s Nikki Brand before her, revels in her role as what Laura Mulvey would describe as the “woman displayed as sexual object” (Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” 8). She is in control, not fragile, and looks at her mirror as if in a type of diptych, where in one frame she is taking pleasure in looking at herself while in the other she watches the audience’s reflection looking at her looking at herself.

Chloe is an adaptation of *Nathalie*, a 2003 French film starring Gerard Depardieu that takes place in the Paris demimonde of brothels and bohemian cafes and bars. By swapping Paris for Toronto, Egoyan attempts to do what Mehta did with *Bollywood/Hollywood* and what Sarah

Polley's Toronto-based film *Take This Waltz* (2011) does by offering a counternarrative to Toronto's designation as simply a stand-in for more seductive cities. As Atom Egoyan has noted in other interviews, the city has a distinct iconography that audiences in other cities feel they recognize but cannot quite identify, because they have seen it in the movies. Egoyan goes so far as to say: "Toronto is like Chloe, paid to be something else" (Lacey, "Toronto as a Sexy, Self-Involved Femme Fatale"). However, Toronto is not like Sue Singh from *Bollywood/Hollywood*, despite both characters sharing a similar profession. Sue, unlike Chloe, has a "no sex" and a "home by twelve" rule, which adheres to the conventions of Bollywood cinema. In this regard, Mehta's Toronto does not radiate the same level of visceral sexuality as *Videodrome* and *Chloe*. Her Toronto is governed by the same romantic gloss that colours Rozema's *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing*, which gives the city a chaste quality. Egoyan's explicit insinuation of Toronto as prostitute, on the other hand, alludes to a greater history of cities compared to women of the night. As Elizabeth Wilson notes, "Paris was the city sexualised. Poets sometimes likened Paris to a prostitute, but more often sang her phrases as a queen. Either way, the city was inescapably female" (E. Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City* 42). Liam Lacey similarly writes, "Toronto is the femme fatale. Stiletto heels, hair clips, lingerie and mirrors mark a space that's distinctly feminine." It is significant to note that *Videodrome*, a film which is ostensibly concerned with similar seductive themes, does not register as Toronto's "first true city-film," the designation given to *Chloe* by Canadian cinema scholar David L. Pike.¹¹¹ While Cronenberg introduced Toronto on screen as a city that was simultaneously hallucinatory and cerebral

¹¹¹ See Pike's lengthy post in *Bright Lights Film Journal*: <https://brightlightsfilm.com/atom-egoyans-chloe-sex-cinema-high-and-low/#.XxIDhS2z1p8>

through his exploration of the Toronto School's theories of mass media and his satirizing of Toronto-based media institutions such as City-TV, the film itself does not actually show much of the actual city. *Chloe*, on the other hand, purposefully frames Toronto through a feminine lens to satisfy a masculine scopophilia.

The seductive opening scene sets the tone for the entire film. As the camera pans away from Chloe, who at this point has left her boudoir to walk along the tony streets of Yorkville with one of her clients, the camera turns to Catherine staring out at her from her glass-walled office, an aesthetic that is further underscored when we see the house she lives in with her husband: a neo-modernist glass house designed by local architect Drew Mandel, with floor-to-ceiling glass panels allowing total observation from any point. The sterile glass house (from which Catherine certainly casts stones), in conjunction with the overwhelming shots of mirrors and window panes from the glass dome of Allen Gardens, including lingering shots of the sleek sheen of Koerner Hall and the ROM crystal, belabour the film's central theme of lost intimacy and the spectacle of beauty. Nevertheless, the subtext of the film reveals in its most prominent secondary character: the city of Toronto. The glass, crystal, and mirrors that constitute Egoyan's vision of the city serve to highlight its inherent glamour, placing Toronto on par with other world-class cities.

Egoyan slyly suggests a comparison between Toronto and Paris in the choice of locations he has his characters meet. Many of the characters frequently gather at the Café Diplomatico. In Egoyan's vision, the Little Italy café with the large boulevard patio resembles the Café de Flore in Paris, which was made famous by the literati of the 1920s and is currently a hot spot for fashionistas and other glamorous personas. The panoramic shots of the café filtered through warm hues make it seem like a place where socialites congregate before heading out at night.

However, in reality, the Café Diplomatico, or as locals call it “The Dip,” is a rather rundown-looking greasy spoon with very cheap coffee. In another scene in which Chloe makes up a story that she has gone to visit Allen Gardens with David, Egoyan angles his camera so that it focuses on the large glass dome of the conservatory, which is evocative of the Beaux-Arts style of architecture — in her vision Chloe remarks while walking through the conservatory that she feels like she is suddenly in a different country. More pointedly, Catherine and Chloe rendezvous at the Rivoli, a well-known bar and restaurant located on the city’s hip Queen Street West. The name of the bar conjures up the Rue de Rivoli, the well-known Paris street filled with chic stores on the one side and the Louvre Museum and Tuileries Garden on the other. Egoyan demonstrably emphasizes the inherent chicness of the cafe by using seductive low lighting and wide-angle lenses to make the space appear impossibly cool. The bar was established in 1982, although according to local Toronto historian, Doug Taylor, the building was once the site of the city’s earliest vaudeville and burlesque house, and silent movie theatre. The theatre was originally named The People’s Theatre and opened to the public in 1911 but was changed to The Rivoli in 1925 (D. Taylor, “Toronto’s Old Rivoli (People’s) Theatre on Queen West”). In the early 1980s, The Rivoli was a bar and exhibition space “designed for performance and socializing” (Marchessault 69) for Toronto’s art scene and it was “clearly positioned as a critical hub in the Queen West arts scene around which symbolic capital circulated” (Deveau 326). The Rivoli is one of the few Toronto institutions that survived the onslaught of gentrification in the 1980s along with The Rex, Horseshoe Tavern, Peter Pan (which was owned by General Idea sometime collaborator Sandy Stagg) and The Queen Mother. Indeed, Margaret Atwood’s allusion to many of these bars and restaurants in *The Robber Bride*, as discussed in Chapter Three, is a nod toward the novel’s theme of resiliency in the face of adversity. Through The

Rivoli, Egoyan draws a connection with the Rue de Rivoli, a street named after Napoléon's victory against the Austrian army, at the battle of Rivoli, and these venues which have long been recognized as surviving against the forces intent on "killing the eclectic vitality of the street" (Fischer et al. 4). By fashioning a relationship between Toronto and Paris, Egoyan strengthens his representation of Toronto as a site of glamour, rebellion and seduction and one that is imbued with a rich cultural history.

Egoyan also appears to borrow from Paris' status as a fashion capital by highlighting the fashionable qualities of his protagonists. Chloe, which is of course the name of a well-known French fashion house in Paris, immediately connects his eponymous character to this greater tradition of fashion spaces. When Chloe and Catherine first meet, they are in bathroom stalls and the camera lingers on their very expensive high heels. These heels are the only parts of them that are visible, recalling the opening scene where the audience first encounters Chloe in bodily fragments. Their sense of fashion tenuously connects the women as Chloe gives Catherine her hairpin — a bit of visual wordplay as the hairpin becomes a literal "accessory" to Chloe's murder at the end of the film. This hairpin, which is also a symbol of their forged bond, is made even more prominent in the film's parting shot, which features Catherine turning away from the camera with the pin in her hair displaying her connection to Chloe even in death.

The narrative's preoccupation with fashion as a class signifier reveals itself in the way Chloe sneaks into Catherine's house to seduce her son yet finds herself preoccupied with Catherine's expensive clothes. Chloe is intrigued not only by Catherine's class status, but also the manifestations of it, and physically touching and putting on Catherine's clothes allows Chloe to insert herself into Catherine's life. Pike writes: "Egoyan backs a number of shots with fashion billboards or hoardings, but it's not clear what they mean, whether they're commenting on this

city replete with spectacle (the old 1980s reading of his early films) or simply showing us what Toronto looks like circa 2009, another aspect of its sleek bars and chic restaurants.” Surely it is a combination of both. *Chloe* invites the audience to be seduced by the sumptuous way in which the city is depicted. The poster for the film focuses primarily on Amanda Seyfried’s oversized eye as if mediating the audience’s desirous gaze much in the same way the billboard of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg haunts the narrative in *The Great Gatsby* in its scrutiny of the decadence of the Jazz Age. Similarly, Egoyan’s film actively encourages its viewers to engage with the city as it is in the present, which is at once Egoyan’s vision of the city as spectacle and wealth, as well as the exploratory potential for the glamorous and fashionable city — as if daring Toronto to one day be on par with world class cities such as New York and Paris.

Chloe, as Egoyan earlier pointed out, is an embodiment of the city. She enjoys the anonymity of urban life, where within the spectacle of the city she can escape into a new identity, a role Toronto often enjoys. Yet at the same time, *Chloe*’s references and sense of the city are so blatantly Toronto, we see lingering close-ups on street signs, local cafes and trendy new restaurants and hotels; even Toronto’s maligned streetcars, as Peter Howell points out, get the glamour treatment, pushing Toronto out from the shadows of anonymity and into the spotlight. As Pike further argues:

Chloe’s Toronto is fascinating on a number of counts. It is, almost, exclusively, a city of wealth and power, counterpart to the sleek and sexy locations that grace so many Manhattan-set erotic thrillers and high-powered romances, advertising the city’s world-class stature. But doing this to Toronto had a special thrill, because Toronto is famous above all as the anonymous stand-in for other cities. Moreover, when playing itself in Canadian cinema,

including many of Egoyan's early films, it was predominantly used as a locus of modernist alienation, not as a site for rediscovering one's identity. (Pike, "Atom Egoyan's *Chloe*: Sex Cinema High and Low")

The original screenplay for *Chloe* was set in San Francisco yet Egoyan successfully argued that it would work better for him in Toronto since he could use his "nativist knowledge of the locale" (Pike, "Atom Egoyan's *Chloe*: Sex Cinema High and Low") to strengthen the city's character in the film.

Egoyan has repeatedly stated in interviews that he intended his portrait of Toronto to draw out the class dynamics and divisions of the city; however, in his depiction of a fashionable chic city he neglects to present a low Toronto to contrast with the high that we see. We know that *Chloe* occupies a precarious position within the city. She gazes longingly and awkwardly at Catherine's expensive Ravine House, emphasizing her outsider status (Pike, "Atom Egoyan's *Chloe*: Sex Cinema High and Low"). Certainly, *Chloe* revels in the glamour of the city's moneyed society. The conspicuous glamour that features on screen, from Catherine and David's opulent house to the high-end fashion that seductively adorns its women characters, and finally, to the public spaces of the city that are filmed through a lens of exclusivity. Yet, to paraphrase Richard Florida, whose city is this? While Toronto is given the cosmopolitan treatment, allowing audiences the freedom to blatantly *gaze* and marvel at the unexpected glamour of the city, the reality that the film confirms is that the luxury of living in Toronto's vogue spaces are affordable to very few. I, therefore, contend that Sarah Polley's *Take this Waltz*, which was released two years after Egoyan's film, offers a counter-argument to *Chloe*. Whereas Egoyan's Toronto is defined by a cold, detached, sophisticated glamour that compels the audience to gaze at the city

in a sexualized way, Polley's Toronto is sexual but not sexualized; rather, her Toronto is a utopic vision of the city as a glamorous carnival of sweaty libidinal desire.

The Psychogeographic Glamour of *Take This Waltz*

The opening act of *Take This Waltz* takes place in Louisbourg, Nova Scotia, and is replete with images of lighthouses, crashing ocean, and a wide expanse of nature scenery framed by the community's historic fortress. The protagonist, Margot, is visiting the historic centre to update its brochures as part of her freelance position with the Canadian Heritage department. While at the fortress, Margot becomes an unwilling actor as she is compelled by one of the costumed soldiers to help flog an "adulterer" as part of a piece of re-enactment theatre. Much to Margot's annoyance she is taunted by a handsome young man in the audience who yells at her to "put her back into it." As Margot leaves to return to Toronto, she finds herself seated next to the same young man, who introduces himself as Daniel. She later discovers that he is her neighbour, thus setting in motion the breakdown of her marriage as she eventually leaves her husband for Daniel. On the surface, the bucolic scenery of Louisbourg juxtaposed with Toronto's urban chaos sets up a familiar country/city binary, mirroring the freedom that Margot feels being in the natural world with Daniel as opposed to the confinement of domesticity in the city with her husband, Lou. Yet Polley's film resists this patent narrative by simultaneously showcasing a Toronto that luxuriates in its natural scenery, particularly delighting in the city's beaches and parks. While on the surface Polley's film is a meditation upon the nature of love, adulthood, and family dynamics, my reading of Polley's film focuses on her exploration of the boundaries of Toronto's urban imaginary, yielding a glamscape unique to the city.

Ultimately, I see Polley's film as reviving the Torontopia ethos that was popular in the early aughts as previously discussed in the introduction to this dissertation. In "Torontopia in the Age of Ford," Toronto-based journalist Carl Wilson outlines the reasons for the seeming collapse of this civic-minded based philosophy: "Torontopia actually died of misunderstanding. Like Christianity, say, or America, its decline is due to amnesia about its real importance" (C. Wilson, "Torontopia in the Age of Ford"). Polley's film, a year after Wilson's eulogy for the movement takes up the challenge by "painting a picture of how I see Toronto" (DVD interview) that incorporates many of the tenets used in Torontopia's initial mandate to build up the identity of the city. Wilson outlined Torontopia's mission: "It said you didn't have to look to New York or L.A. or London to find out what was exciting in the arts or urbanism or ideas, nor need you pump up Toronto's always fragile self-esteem with blather about 'world-class' whatchamacallit" (C. Wilson, "Torontopia in the Age of Ford"). The seeds of Torontopia had their basis primarily in civic engagement and activist communities; as theatre scholars Laura Levin and Kim Solga point out, "most of the city's 'utopian' initiatives consistently employ explicitly theatrical forms of urban dramaturgy as they attempt to reconfigure traditional models of public space and trigger new forms of civic engagement" (Levin and Solga 38). In "TO Live With Culture: Torontopia and the Urban Creativity Script," Levin particularly notes the influence of Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (1967) on the Torontopia movement, specifically Debord's insistence on resisting the "banality of urban life" (Levin 290). In this, I suggest that *Take This Waltz* participates as a study of the psychogeography of Toronto, drawing upon techniques from Debord's Situationists such as *dérive* and *détournement* to further the Torontopia dialogue in its guerrilla-style theatre of imagined space that challenges the prescriptive mechanics of the "world-class city."

The concept of *dérive*, to drift or drifting, has its origins in the activity of *flânerie* as described by Baudelaire. Debord, however, places greater emphasis on the role of chance by explaining that participants must “let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there” (Debord). Arguably, Polley’s film is a combination of both *flânerie* and *dérive*. We see Margot as the film’s *flâneuse*, who experiences the city as a desirous canvas, often randomly following Daniel along various pathways of the city. The attention to the colour red, from Margot’s and Daniel’s red painted houses to the glaring red sunset as Margot travels along College Street and eats at restaurants with red interiors, makes the city resemble a beating heart. Here her work functions within the framework of Baudelaire’s “Spleen” poems that depict the poet wandering city streets detailing his anxiety concerning the rise of the new Parisian society in the wake of Paris’ modernization. Paris, once again, is a point of comparison for Toronto, yet whereas Egoyan draws inspiration from Paris’ seemingly effortless world class glamour to showcase a similarly sophisticated Toronto in *Chloe*, Polley’s connection between Toronto and Paris arises from the symbolist French poets and their sensual and aesthetic experience of the city. For Baudelaire, Paris needed a cleanse from the disease of modernization that threatened to eradicate the purity of Parisian antiquity (the spleen is the organ that cleanses the body of impurities and was typically associated with a melancholic temperament based on the four humours of Hippocratic medicine). Polley meanwhile envisions the downtown urban core as the heart of the city. Thus, if Baudelaire’s Paris is melancholic, Polley’s Toronto is sanguine.¹¹² The film’s poetic sensibilities are made clear in the film’s title, which is taken from the Canadian singer-songwriter and poet Leonard Cohen’s 1988 song “Take This Waltz,” itself a

¹¹² The four bodily humours and their correspondent temperaments: black bile (melancholic), phlegm (phlegmatic), yellow bile (choleric) and blood (sanguine).

tribute to the poet Federico García Lorca. While Cohen's song takes place in Vienna and not Paris, the disorienting movement of the waltz in Cohen's song, nevertheless, underscores the theory of the *dérive* in Polley's film as her characters similarly "yield to the flood of [...] beauty" by waltzing, that is, following the city's pulse to propel their passions to get away from those relationships that have "been dying for years."

Similarly, the concept of *détournement*, that is, the act of rerouting or hijacking a previous work, is particularly instructive in Polley's work. The practice of *détournement* on the psychogeographical maps "shatters the ordered and functional representations [...] created by such [conventional] maps, and subverts their illusion of reality" (Pinder 419). Film scholar Jim Leach uses the phrase "magic spaces" (96) to describe Polley's curated vision of downtown Toronto. Indeed, magic is an appropriate label considering the geographic liberties that Polley takes in her visual rendering of Toronto's urban landscape. Margot tells Daniel that she lives at 62 McLaughlin Crescent, a street conjured up somewhere near Queen Street and Dufferin Street in the city's west end. The actual filming location took place at 62 Mackenzie Crescent, a street in the Beaconsfield Village, an area north east of Queen and Dufferin (Dennis 72). The geographical locators, Queen and Dufferin, are likely meaningless for those unfamiliar with Toronto's cartography; however, for those who know the city well, it becomes apparent that Polley is filming the city with a geographic sleight of hand. In one scene Margot and Daniel head for a coffee at a shop that appears to be around the corner from where they live after they run into each other outside of their houses. In the next shot they are sitting down at a café in Kensington Market, a shabby chic neighbourhood enclave located about a forty-minute walk from where they supposedly live. As David Fleischer sarcastically writes in *The Torontoist*: "So, like, she runs into [Daniel] one morning and they go for an early coffee. Apparently, there were

no shops open between their neighbourhood and Kensington Market, because they hike all the way over to Essence of Life Organics” (Fleischer). In eliding the geographical markers of the city, Polley creates her own vision of the city, which is a “slightly utopian version of Toronto” (Milzoff). In one particularly inventive scene, Margot meets up with Daniel at the Beaches, and they decide to go for a walk and end up at Trinity Bellwoods Park, and then they make their way back down to the ferry that will take them to Centre Island, the most popular of Toronto’s three primary islands because of its Centreville amusement park, where they will ride the famed “Scrambler.” As a Torontonians, this journey makes little to no sense. Indeed, for the average Torontonian to do this trek by foot would make for a very long, exhausting day as there is a considerable distance between the park and the beach. Yet, Polley is not interested in having the city make sense, but rather, in the practice of *détournement* she is redefining the makeup of the city.

Noticeably, the CN Tower is absent in Polley’s film. In its place are vibrant neighbourhood city streets filled with beautiful young hip people in bars and restaurants, sprawling green parks and areas surrounded by a wide lake that places value on a different iconography for the city. Leach also regards Polley’s Toronto as a utopian landscape that, along with the magic spaces, “wants to draw us into Margot’s desires, creating utopian spaces full of potential in which she is unable to find a place and that are finally revealed as unrealistic” (Leach 94). Certainly, words like magic and utopia mixed with the seemingly unrealistic, recall the Torontopia ethos that Polley valiantly draws upon in her use of *détournement* to channel the seductive city.

There is also a sense that Polley is engaging in a subtle form of culture jamming in her casting of Michelle Williams as Margot. Williams rose to fame in the late 1990s for her role in

the popular young adult television series, *Dawson's Creek*. In watching *Take this Waltz* it seems, whether intentional or not, that Williams' past acting experience on this teen drama series amplifies Polley's sense of geographical subversion in the film. While *Dawson's Creek* took place in the fictional town of Capeside, Massachusetts, keen observers would note that Dawson Creek is a very real city located in northeastern British Columbia. There is a case to be made that by casting Williams as a Canadian living in a vibrant neighbourhood in Toronto, she is highlighting how all too often the American film and television industries use Canadian settings for entertainment but do everything possible to disguise any element that might reveal its actual Canadianness. As Aurora Wallace underscores, "Such place insecurity has been felt especially strongly in Toronto, where critics of U.S. production in Canada see it as yet another instance of American cultural hegemony expunging authentic Canadian experience" (159). Polley further corroborates this assertion in an interview:

I haven't made a conscious effort to make my films feel overly Canadian, but they feel that way because I haven't disguised what they are. We're so used to seeing where we live disguised and meant to look like the States, that the second you don't do that it seems like you're being overly nationalistic and really laying on the Canadianness [*laughs*]. I had one agent in L.A. say to me, when he read the script, 'This story could just be so much bigger if you based it in New York.' And I thought it was so funny; like, you can't have a film set anywhere else and have it be universal? The more a film is specific about where it is, the more the universality of the story resonates, I think. (qtd. in Milzoff)

In her essay on Berlin and the slippery geographic composition of time and space in Tom Tykwer's 1998 *Run Lola Run*, Susan Ingram takes exception to Tykwer's claim that the film "could just as easily be set in Peking, Helsinki or New York, the only thing that would change is the scenery, not the emotional dimension" (qtd. in Ingram, "Running on Empty: Berlin as a Chronotope of Persistence in *Run Lola Run*" 136). Ingram argues that given the film's geopolitical dimension, it could not have been filmed anywhere else and more crucially, it could not have been filmed in any other time. Similarly, Polley's film could not have taken place in New York nor could it have been set in any other time period. At its core, *Take This Waltz* is a snapshot of the waning days of the Torontopia ethos. Of course, Polley's film is not "specific" in its geography of the city but the cartographical ellipses that permeate her film function to make meaning for the city as a space of utopian idealism, magic and, by extension, glamour.

While Polley and her crew never use the word glamour, opting instead for words such as "desire" and "vulnerability" in describing the tone of the film, there is an implied glamorization involved in the film's literal rose-coloured framing of the city which heightens Toronto's allure. The insistence on the colour red emphasizes not only the heart but the heat, blood, and passion of the city as well as what Ingram refers to as the "specific cultural historical imagination" which like a beating heart "reveals the pounding rhythm of the city's peculiar dynamism" (Ingram 136). The way the city is artificially bathed in bright reds and golden yellows is made abundantly clear in the DVD's bonus features, which include interviews with the actors where their skin and hair appear dull from lack of colour saturation. The cinematographer, Luc Montpellier, said that the film was meant to resemble "a bowl of fruit" by providing a rich, wet texture to each frame. In *The Glamour System* (2006) Gundle and Castelli devote an entire chapter to the colour red as a purveyor of glamour, noting that "the language associated with red underlines a narrative of fire,

heat, directness, passion” (111) — it was the *Moulin Rouge* and not the *Moulin bleu*, after all. Nevertheless, the heat and fiery passion associated with the colour red contrasts with Judith Brown’s assertion that “glamour emerges only in restraint” (16). In Egoyan’s *Chloe* the glamour of the city revels in its wintry landscape. As Brown notes, “the world of white and snowy scents is the beckoning fantasy, the uncomplicated sheen of perfection for which we long, the beautiful stasis that, in its austerity, demands nothing from us, allows us to exist simply, without the complications and demands that go with human living” (26). The cool and detached glamour that *Chloe* exhibits is manifested in the blue-green tones of the film and the luxurious interior spaces of the city shielding the characters from the cold outside. *Take This Waltz*, on the other hand, take place during one of the city’s notorious summer heatwaves and Polley makes sure to coat each of her scenes with a film of sweat. Polley’s Toronto offers a counter-narrative not only to Egoyan’s Toronto in *Chloe* but also to Brown’s version of glamour’s negative aesthetic. Indeed, *Take This Waltz* is a glamourized vision of the city without the luxury. The glamour exhibited in Polley’s Toronto is not found in expensive hotels or chic bars that resemble Parisian cafés; her Toronto is filled with community pools and public parks that provide a shared sense of space and has more in common with the crowded streets in Paris that Baudelaire describes in his *Spleen* poems. While glamour is often characterized by its inaccessibility, which may seem anathema to public space, Polley finds charm in the city’s public arenas, or what she may characterize as the true magic spaces of the city.

In *Take This Waltz*, many of these magic spaces are coded as feminine. To be sure, Toronto’s film industry, as with Hollywood’s, is dominated by male directors. While Geoff Pevere does not adequately address this inequality in his sweeping history of Toronto film, his

commentary on the future of Toronto on film confirms my theory that glamour can offer a liberating narrative space not only for the city's men but for the women as well:

If the Toronto seen in Don Owen and Don Shebib's first feature from the 1960s represents the merging of a certain cautionary counter-urbanity with the filmmakers' shared verité documentary style, by the time Egoyan and Cronenberg are shooting Toronto, the city seems almost hermetically sealed from any intrusion of incidental reality. Toronto has become a closed set, an airtight metaphor. In the movies of the Dons, the mingling of actors and passersby, like the meshing of script and incident, allows glimpses of a real city at a specific moment: that those are real Torontonians paying parking-lot fees in Owen's film or real winos dancing in the park in Shebib's adds more than a veneer of surface authenticity — it allows the city to play itself, to infuse a bit of its uniqueness into the drama, to be not just a setting but an active participant in its own rendering. (60)

For all of Pevere's male nostalgia for the Toronto in Owen's *Nobody Waved Goodbye* and Shebib's *Goin' Down the Road*, movies like *Take This Waltz*, *Chloe*, and *Bollywood/Hollywood* with their strong female protagonists show how progress in the city allows for a certain type of freedom for women to actively participate in what the city has to offer. Levin and Solga outline the challenges that women have historically encountered in reclaiming their freedom of space in the city:

Scholars of women in urban space have repeatedly noted that the price of a woman's freedom to walk was, at the beginning of the modern period, a quite literal one: women were permitted to appear in public to shop or to sell;

otherwise, their wandering risked crossing a dangerous border, and risked male violence in retribution. Walking in the city might seem substantially easier for women today, but the risks of being watched uncomfortably or even threatened physically remain. (46)

The absence of these specific threats and discomforts for the female protagonists in Polley's film may be regarded as another instance of her use of magic spaces. In Polley's glamorized version of the city, women have the freedom to walk alone without danger and risk. In the last scene of *Take This Waltz* the camera lingers on Margot as she makes a solo journey to Toronto's Centre Island to take a ride on the Scrambler. Margot's sense of *jouissance* is palpable. She closes her eyes and smiles as she sways to the movements of the ride while The Buggles' 1980 hit "Video Killed the Radio Star" plays diegetically overhead. In the background a curtain of iridescent strands shimmer in the light. As the mechanics of the Scrambler move in every which way, miming the chaos of Margot's year, the rush of glamour is made manifest in the constant motion of desire.

Conclusion

In recent years, the Toronto International Film Festival has bathed the city in a glamorous gloss of celebrity, fashion, and *paparazzi* filled galas. Indeed, TIFF has been crucial for Toronto's image as a sophisticated multicultural urban centre with a thriving film scene full of creative talent and attentive cineastes. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, many Toronto filmmakers keenly understood this seismic shift from Toronto the Good to Toronto the Glam and actively employed glamour as a strategy to illuminate the complex cosmopolitan culture of the city. Mehta's Toronto is luxurious and worldly, Egoyan's is sophisticated and cool, while

Polley's is a utopic urban oasis of carnal desire. These disparate portraits form a triptych of a city comprised of multidimensional glamour.

In 2012, a pair of New York filmmakers, Julie Pacino (daughter of the famous actor Al Pacino) and Jennifer DeLia, came to TIFF hoping to find a location for their film *The First*, a drama based on the life of Mary Pickford. The filmmakers had been unfamiliar with Pickford's biography until they had visited a Mary Pickford exhibition a year earlier at the festival and were shocked to discover that "America's Sweetheart" was actually Canadian. "Just by chance they checked out the show, learned that Pickford was born a Toronto girl and before you know it, I hear they're working on a movie about her," said TIFF's artistic director, Cameron Bailey (Barnard). DeLia agreed that "the whole thing was Toronto" in reference to Pickford's roots and the way the film came together. As Chapter Two demonstrated, Mary Pickford forged a connection between her Hollywood stardom and place of birth, thereby, bestowing on Toronto a sheen of cinematic glamour in the early twentieth century. In return, Toronto, literally cemented this connection in 1915 when they changed the name of The Auditorium Theatre to the Pickford (D. Taylor, *Toronto Theatres and the Golden Age of the Silver Screen*), which was down the street from The Rivoli (People's) Theatre and was consequently their main competition. Nevertheless, by the twenty-first century, as this chapter has argued, Toronto is no longer in need of external celebrity to glamorize its image. Toronto has become a star.

Conclusion: From Good to Glam

On the evening of August 4th 2016, I was in the auditorium of Massey Hall, Canada's oldest and most esteemed concert hall. The hall was gifted to Toronto in 1894 to encourage "an interest in music, education, temperance, industry, good citizenship, patriotism, philanthropy, and religion" (*Massey Hall* | *The Canadian Encyclopedia*). On this particular evening, however, there was no temperance in sight as the crowd eagerly awaited a performance from the Toronto-born queer electroshock artist Peaches. The electronic musician, artist and performer burst onto the stage in a sequined outfit made to resemble glittering fallopian tubes, as if she had just come from raiding Elsa Schiaparelli's closet. The dignified neoclassical design of the nineteenth-century Massey Hall was clearly incongruent for the evening's events: Peaches' performance certainly would have raised more than the eyebrows of the concert hall's namesake. The irony was not lost on Peaches as she encouraged the audience to join her in cursing loudly at the top of our lungs: "Can you believe we're singing *FUCK* in Massey Hall?" A few months before the Peaches concert at Massey Hall, the singer was on the CBC explaining that the artist who had had the most profound influence on her music was Carole Pope. She was particularly struck by how Pope "said things that I probably can't say on CBC anymore" (Hosein) as if foreshadowing her own Svengali-like command over a willing audience to gleefully squeal the "F" word in the austere Massey Hall.

That night at the concert, while I watched Peaches mesmerize her audience with a dazzling performance of music, gymnastics, and pyrotechnics, I recognized that her performance was informed by almost a century's worth of Toronto glamour. Hers was a performance imbued by excess, queer pageantry, and a grotesque glamour sensibility. During the show, Peaches referred to Toronto's long-suffering nickname "The Good," and then proceeded to pump up the

music and gyrate, her sequins catching the light to cast a twinkling glow throughout the concert hall. At last, she bellowed into the microphone: “I think we’re beyond *good* now.”

We are.

This dissertation began as an exploration into developing a reading of glamour as a dimension of Toronto’s urban imaginary. While assembling this research, I thought I would identify perhaps a few literary texts, films, and personalities, mainly in the latter half of the twentieth century, to satisfy the scope of a doctoral thesis. It never dawned on me the extent to which I would be scouring, squinting, and risking my eyesight poring over local Toronto news articles from the mid-nineteenth century, or watching Beatnik Happenings from CBC archival footage, or even riding my bike across the city to explore important landmarks, complicated ravine networks, and the Toronto islands to fully appreciate the complexity of glamour’s narrative in the city. As I soaked in this vast array of material, I recognized what should have been obvious all along: Toronto’s history of glamour is a stratum— and will continue to build upon this foundation.

In my introduction to this dissertation, I confessed that, as a native Torontonians, my reading of glamour in Toronto was often touched by nostalgia and familiarity. Glamour, as this dissertation has argued, is an affective experience. While scholars such as Stephen Gundle and Clino Castelli maintain that no theories of glamour exist, they make the case that “any theory of glamour would have to take account of its imaginative appeal, seductiveness and artificiality” (Gundle et al. 8). These nonlinguistic effects convey glamour’s sensuous practice, but they also demonstrate the difficulty in pinning down a precise definition of glamour. Through my research into the study of glamour I have discovered that perhaps the best definition of this slippery concept lies in a letter by Sigmund Freud to his friend and colleague Dr. Wilhelm Fleiss

regarding his fondness for Egyptian collectibles. As Freud explained to Fleiss with an almost naïve exuberance: “These things put me in a good mood and speak to me of distant times and lands” (Handy). Freud’s simple expression of pure enjoyment over the momentary feeling of being whisked away beyond reality’s purview speaks to the personal practice of glamour.

As these preceding chapters have demonstrated, glamour is a component of Toronto’s narrative and identity. Of course, this is only one narrative—this dissertation offers *a* history and not *the* history of Toronto glamour. In this regard, the study encourages others to follow the various narrative threads of glamour that serve to illuminate Toronto’s urban imaginary. In particular, the exhibition of glamour could be studied alongside the development of the Toronto Sound, the name given to the blend of R&B and rock music emanating from clubs in Yorkville and the Yonge Street scene in the 1960s “that catapulted David Clayton-Thomas, Domenic Troiano, Eric Mercury, and others to stardom” (Levine 236). One popular artist from the Toronto Sound era, Jackie Shane, keenly understood that “Show business is glamour. When you walk out there, people should say, ‘Whoa! I like that!’ When I walk out onstage, I’m the show” (qtd. in Hall). While writing this dissertation I learned of the passing of Jackie Shane in 2019 and the influence she wielded over the Toronto Sound. Shane was a Black transgender soul singer from Nashville, who built a loyal following in Toronto after moving to Canada in the 1960s. Her outlandish performance and over-the-top appearance often led to comparisons with Little Richard, and in 1963, her song “Any Other Way” rose to the top of the CHUM charts and remained there for 20 weeks. Shane was an artist who knew how to brandish her glamour both on and off the stage. She “was always decked out in glamorous sequined gowns, high heels and plenty of jewelry, and did little to hide what was at the time considered to be cross-dressing” (Rancic). Arguably, Shane’s performance of glamour anticipated General Idea’s gender-bending

pageantry, Craig Russell's drag performances of glamorous grand dames of Hollywood, and Carole Pope's unapologetic sexuality. Shane continued to perform in Toronto until the 1970s and eventually relocated to Los Angeles where she completely disappeared from the public eye. A more in-depth analysis of Shane's work and performance alongside other Black musicians who helped to develop the Toronto Sound would provide a valuable contribution to the study of Toronto's glamscape.

As I began this dissertation with a memory, I wish to conclude with another one. When I was a child, my entire family would go over to my grandmother's house every Sunday night for dinner. While the adults would enjoy a cocktail (or two) before we all gathered to eat, my older sister and cousins would pass the time watching television in the living room. As the youngest in the family, I wasn't given much of a choice of what we would watch, and I would often sneak off to play with my Barbie dolls or read my Garfield comic books. That is, until I heard the distinct staccato of synthetic musical chords from the television, which would compel me to return to the living room. Once settled in, my eyes would be captivated by the long-limbed models who sashayed down the runway often sheathed in shiny fabric or occasionally nothing at all, which was definitely scandalous and thrilling for a child to see on cable TV. From 1985 until 2008,¹¹³ the singular opening progression of "Obsession," by the musical group Animotion, would blast from the TV monitors of many Toronto households on Sunday night. Many viewers set their channel to the local television station, City-TV, to watch the charismatic host of *Fashion Television (FT)*, Jeanne Beker, provide insight into the glamorous world of fashion.

¹¹³ In 2008, *Fashion Television* was sold to CTV and ran on a specialty cable channel until it was canceled in 2012.

Fashion Television told fashion stories and news from a Canadian perspective and often placed Toronto at the forefront of these narratives. Deborah Fulsang, a former fashion editor for *The Globe and Mail*, opines that the allure of this show was in its “unorchestrated glamour” (323), which provided the audience with a candid “behind-the-scenes” experience of the fashion industry. Susan Ingram describes the friendly and affable Beker as the “Canadian Oprah” (Ingram, “The Reverse Diversity of FT Fashion Television” 248) and notes that neither television host came “from the kind of family background one would associate with glamour” (249). The juxtaposition between the glamour of the fashion world and Beker’s quotidian Toronto home life was part of what made FT so appealing, not just for Torontonians, but also for viewers across the globe who had come to associate Beker’s first hand fashion knowledge and amicability with the city. Moreover, the show’s seamless coverage of Toronto’s fashion week, alongside those in Paris, Milan, New York, and London provided an expression of fashionable cosmopolitanism for the city.

In 2014, Beker co-curated an exhibition at the Design Exchange in Toronto titled *Politics of Fashion | Fashion of Politics*. The exhibition was inspired by her own political awakening during the swinging sixties in Toronto. The entrance to the exhibition featured a photograph of a 17-year-old Beker in a yellow bikini dancing at a Ronnie Hawkins concert as part of the 1969 Toronto Pop Festival. The combination of fashion and politics in this context is instructive in framing Beker’s glamour as analogous to Toronto’s burgeoning counterculture. While the exhibition was concerned with fashion and politics on a global level, Beker’s insistence on her own narrative as a driving force for the exhibition reinforced the city’s position as a site that informed her career as a beacon of fashion, glamour and celebrity. As Beker acknowledges of her stage debut at the Hawkins concert: “the whole experience was downright exhilarating, and it

unquestionably contributed greatly to who I am today” (Beker 142). Beker deliberately positioned Toronto as a glamscape worthy of global coverage and extended research on the evolution of her career and how the rise of FT precipitated a shift in Toronto’s fashion journalism could fill an entire volume on Toronto glamour.

I return to this dissertation’s opening epigraph from AA Bronson, who recalls the heady days of the 1970s when glamour in Toronto was considered “politically incorrect” and “ridiculous.” Yet, what Bronson and the rest of General Idea understood was that despite claims



Figure 13 Tunnel of Glam. © Kathryn Franklin.

of being unfashionable or ridiculousness, glamour is unmistakably pleasurable: *These things put me in a good mood and speak to me of distant times and lands*. The sheer pleasure associated with glamour was artfully displayed at the corner of Yonge Street and St. Clair from 2019-2020. Tucked behind an alleyway was the Tunnel of Glam, an interactive installation designed by Toronto-based art collective Studio F-Minus (Fig. 13). The small corridor was decorated with 14 million reversible sequins, which happy wanderers could brush up against, and they could take photographs of themselves tracing the contours of the sequins to reveal their shimmering

colours. The Tunnel of Glam was a “loud, vibrant, glamorous centrepiece” designed to “influence the way the space looks and feels through the simple swipe of your hand” (“Yonge +

St. Clair - Tunnel of Glam’”). In other words, the tunnel was a haptic experience of glamour right in the heart of the city.

We’re beyond good now.

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