

TORONTO – A CITY OF NEIGHBOURHOODS:
KENSINGTON MARKET, LITTLE ITALY AND LITTLE PORTUGAL

CARLOS TEIXEIRA

Toronto is known as a city of neighbourhoods. Much of its social/cultural landscapes have been shaped by the diversity of immigrant groups that settled the city. This field trip will explore Kensington Market, a major reception area ("port of entry") throughout the 20th century, as well as two of the most colourful ethnic neighbourhoods: "Little Portugal" and "Little Italy". The central theme will be the changes that these neighbourhoods have undergone as a result of immigrant settlement and "rejuvenation" over the years.



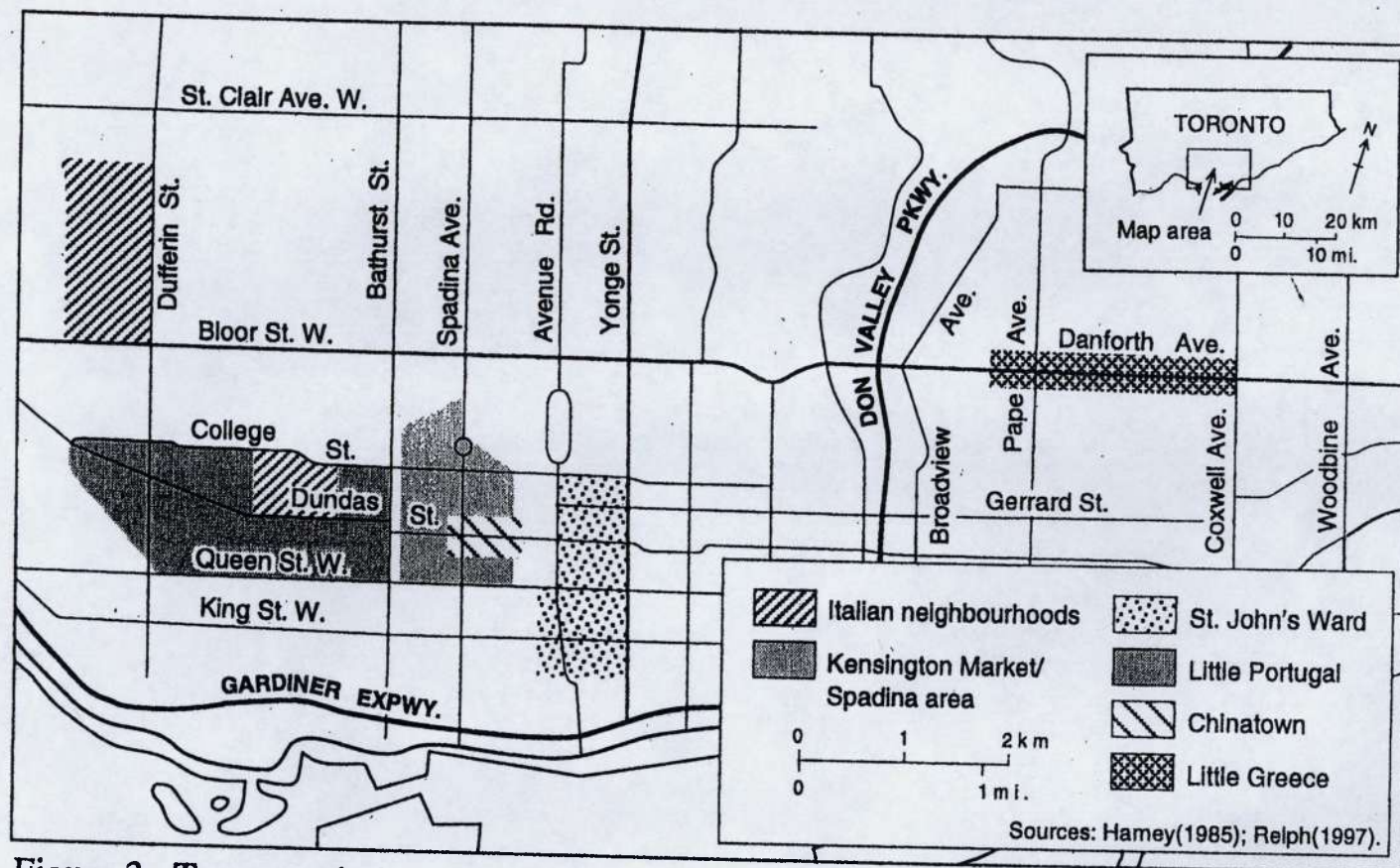
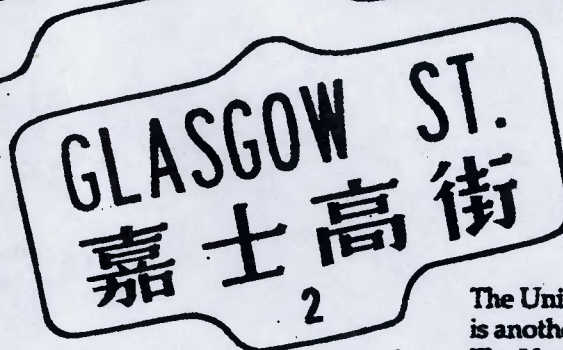


Figure 3. Toronto ethnic neighbourhoods, 1900-1970.

Special Signs, Special Places



Are you interested in fashion, antiques, boats, dance and theatre? Do your folks come from the Azores? Do you want to speak Chinese or visit a university?

Then all you have to do is follow this City's special street name signs.

Just a few short blocks West of City Hall is the Fashion District, easily recognizable by its attractive, coloured street signs. Here, you can see where the newest styles are not only created, but actually manufactured. Highly visible in this area are many wholesale and retail garment outlets.

How about antique collecting or picking up a one-of-a-kind item in a super flea market? The place to visit is Harbourfront, again easily identifiable with its own distinctive street signs. There's a whole lot more waiting for you at Harbourfront. Theatres, dance groups, boat watching, dining in a nautical atmosphere, fabulous shopping at Queens Quay.

The University of Toronto campus is another popular place to visit. The U. of T. has its very own street name signs. You can't miss them. As for Chinese - Toronto is blessed with not one, but several areas where "East meets West". Terrific stores and friendly service abound. The City's bilingual street name signs bid welcome to all visitors. And as for the Azores - take a short trip north and west to Dundas St. West. You'll see the signs and be made to feel right at home.

Table 9.1 **Ten Leading Countries of Immigrant Origin: Canada, 1951, 1968, 1984, 1996**

1951	1968	1984	1996
Britain	Britain	Vietnam	Hong Kong
Germany	United States	Hong Kong	India
Italy	Italy	United States	China
Netherlands	Germany	India	Taiwan
Poland	Hong Kong	Britain	Philippines
France	France	Poland	Pakistan
United States	Austria	Philippines	Sri Lanka
Belgium	Greece	El Salvador	United States
Yugoslavia	Portugal	Jamaica	Iran
Denmark	Yugoslavia	China	Britain

Sources: McVey and Kalbach (1995); Citizenship and Immigration Canada Web page: <<http://cicnet.cigc.ca/>>.

Multicultural Toronto

Diverse population

Here are the top 10 sources of immigration to Toronto*:

Country/Number of people/% of total

People's Republic of China	18,305	16.9%
India	15,600	14.4%
Pakistan	10,478	9.7%
Sri Lanka	4,142	3.8%
Philippines	3,909	3.6%
South Korea	3,457	3.2%
Iran	2,983	2.7%
United Arab Emirates	2,214	2.0%
Russia	2,126	1.9%
Jamaica	2,025	1.8%

From other countries: 39.6%

* Year 2000

Foreign born

The immigration breakdown of the 2001 census will not be available until next year. Data from the 1996 census shows that half of Toronto's population was foreign born, nearly 30% have been here less than 20 years and 14% have been here less than 10 years.

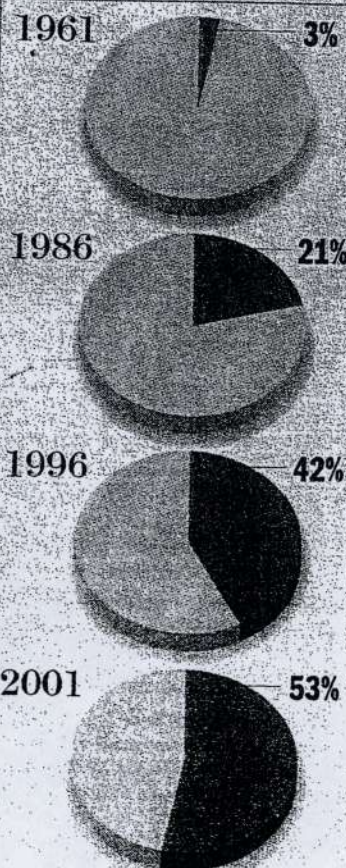
Per cent of population



City of colour

In 1961, visible minorities made up 3% of Toronto's population. Estimates put the current figure at 53%. Twenty-five per cent of the city's visible minority population is Chinese, 25% is South Asian and 20% is Black.

Visible minority



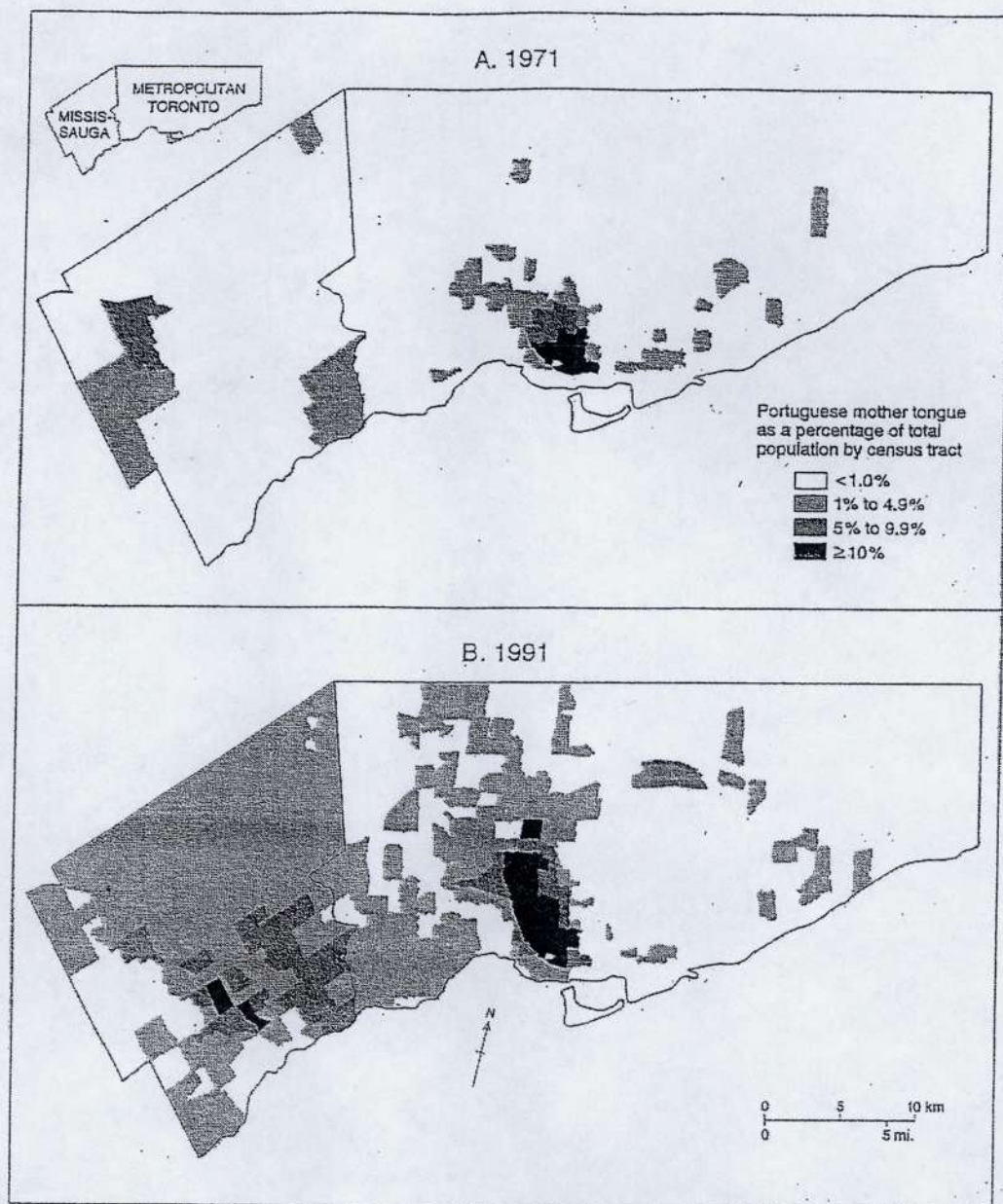


Figure 14.3. Portuguese mother tongue, as percentage of population, Metropolitan Toronto and Mississauga: (A) 1971 and (B) 1991. *Source:* Data from Statistics Canada

High costs of high style

Older owners struggle to stay on the strip

Continued from B1

"The people who come here to dine aren't the people who come here to shop," he said. "It's busiest in the evening when we're shut down."

Natola said if he didn't own the building, he probably couldn't afford to stay in business.

It's a tale told up and down the strip.

"The only people who can afford the high rents are the coffee shops and restaurants," explained real estate broker James Patricio.

"They stay open longer and can make more money than the little businesses that have been here for years."

He said soaring property taxes "are scaring a lot of people."

At the same time, rising house prices aren't frightening anybody. Where buyers once tried to knock down selling prices, they often enter bidding wars for the best properties.

"It's all part of the trend of people — especially younger executives with lots of money — moving back into the city," Patricio said.

The latest change came quickly.

In the early part of the century the area was predominately Jewish. An Italian wave came in the 1950s, giving way to a Portuguese influx a decade or so later.

But it's taken young, monied professionals just a few short years to transform this section of College into party central.

While it's still called Little Italy, the Italian core long ago moved farther north, up around St. Clair Ave. W.

Even the Portuguese community is just a shadow of what it was at its peak, replaced by a multicultural mix that defies definition.

But amid the glamour and copper faux finishes of the fancy new eateries, a few tradi-



JIM WILKES/TORONTO STAR

NOT ABREAST OF THE TIMES: Frank Sardinha of Brasil Portugal Butcher has noticed an influx of people in the neighbourhood but his business has actually declined.

ing in the heart of the strip, which made president Johnny Lombardi so famous the city put his name on some of the street signs.

Or the accordion music blasting from the open front door of MVP, a music store that bills itself as "the largest manufacturer and distributor of Italian video."

Or farther down the street where churrasqueira chicken sizzles on the grills at Frank Sardinha's Brasil Portugal Butcher.

The shop sits on the spot where a synagogue existed half a century ago. A Jewish graveyard used to be out back, but that was moved too

area after arriving from Portugal in 1970.

Although he now lives in Mississauga, he still loves to work in the old neighbourhood.

"So many different people have lived around here," he said, dishing up takeout orders of chicken and roast suckling pig.

"Now the Chinese are coming in from the Kensington Market area. Young people, too — lawyers, doctors, business people, professionals."

"They're paying top dollar for everything — homes, apartments, restaurants."

But they're not spending much of it on

A lot of the incoming dollars go to restaurants with names like Veni Vidi Vici, Eat My Martini and Fellini Ristorante.

The recent shooting of the owner of Coco Lezzone, another upscale eatery, passed with little notice and hasn't hurt customer traffic.

While Steve Salari recovered in hospital, his restaurant was open for business the next morning.

Detectives hunting another restaurant owner in the shooting and long-time locals figure it's just a blip, not part of a trendy turf war.

"Crime hasn't gone up over the past few years," said Sergeant Randy Arnold of 14 Division's community response unit.

"The only thing that has changed is the traffic — it's a lot busier and harder to get a parking spot."

Despite the competition, Sergio Goncalves decided the area was ripe for yet another restaurant, so he's preparing to open Sintra by the end of the month.

Behind papered windows, a team of carpenters, plumbers and painters is working furiously to turn an old lounge into a Portuguese wine bar and grill.

"There's steadier business up here, more foot traffic," Goncalves said. "It's just a very trendy area."

"Everybody wants to live at College and Clinton. All the trendy young couples want to settle down here."

Some long-time residents admit they're sick of hearing the word "trendy," but others just savour the changes in the passing parade.

"I love the atmosphere," said Mary Ann Ellis, who lives in the house where she was born 61 years ago. "You can see happy people enjoying themselves."

"There are so many things to do in the summertime, including a wonderful evening street festival."

"It's good for the older people, too," she said. "They may complain about the noise, but at least it's alive, not like a re-

BY JIM WILKES
STAFF REPORTER

It's been called one of the hippest neighbourhoods in North America.

But the boom along a west-end strip of College St. has been a bust for many long-time shopkeepers who say they can't compete with dozens of trendy new eateries.

The blocks flanking Clinton St.

have become a mecca for those seeking the glitz of upscale restaurants that have popped up over the past few years.

It just hasn't translated into a bonanza for business owners on the fringe of the strip.

"It's a great place for food, a great place to see and be seen," said Erik Sigurdson, a 33-year-old

systems analyst who comes to the strip a few nights each week. "It sounds like a cliché, but here is where it's at."

Don't tell that to Eugene Natola, who's been running his Celestino Shoe Store since 1963 a block or so west at Montrose Ave.

Please see High, B5

Everyone's going to College

As area takes off old shops are struggling

TORONTO STAR, MAY 11, 2000 P. B1, B5

The post-war suburbs have become the main immigrant settlement areas

Immigrants make up a large proportion of the population in each of Toronto's six former municipalities, but in North York, Scarborough and York they make up over one-half of the population.

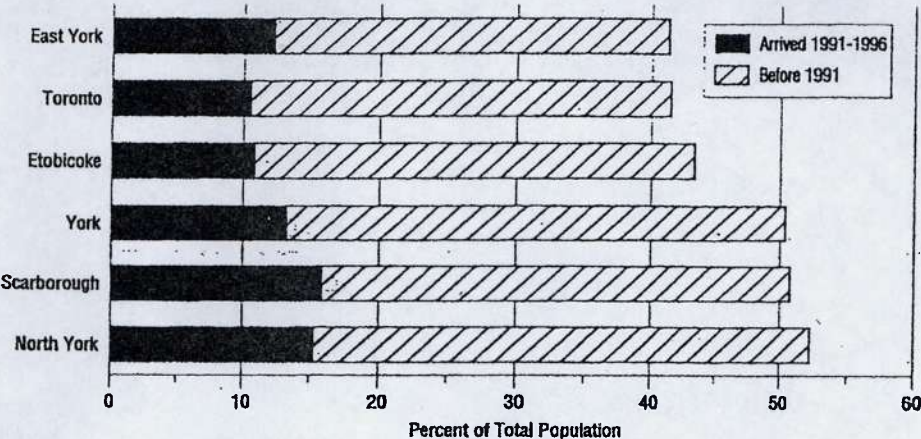
This concentration in the former suburban municipalities is even more marked with recent immigrants. Scarborough and North York have about 90,000 recent immigrants each, compared with 68,000 in the former City of Toronto. Recent immigrants make up 15.9% of Scarborough's population, and 15.3% of North York's, compared with 10.5% of the population residing in the old city of Toronto.

TABLE 5: IMMIGRANTS IN TORONTO

Place	Population	Non-Immigrants	ALL IMMIGRANTS		RECENT IMMIGRANTS (1991-1996)	
			Number	% of Population	Number	% of Population
City of Toronto	2,385,400	1,260,990	1,124,410	47.1	315,470	13.2
East York	107,800	63,305	44,495	41.3	13,140	12.2
Etobicoke	328,700	186,175	142,525	43.4	35,645	10.8
North York	589,700	281,535	308,165	52.3	90,120	15.3
Scarborough	558,960	274,735	284,225	50.8	88,710	15.9
Toronto	653,700	382,475	271,225	41.5	68,435	10.5
York	146,500	72,730	73,770	50.4	19,410	13.2

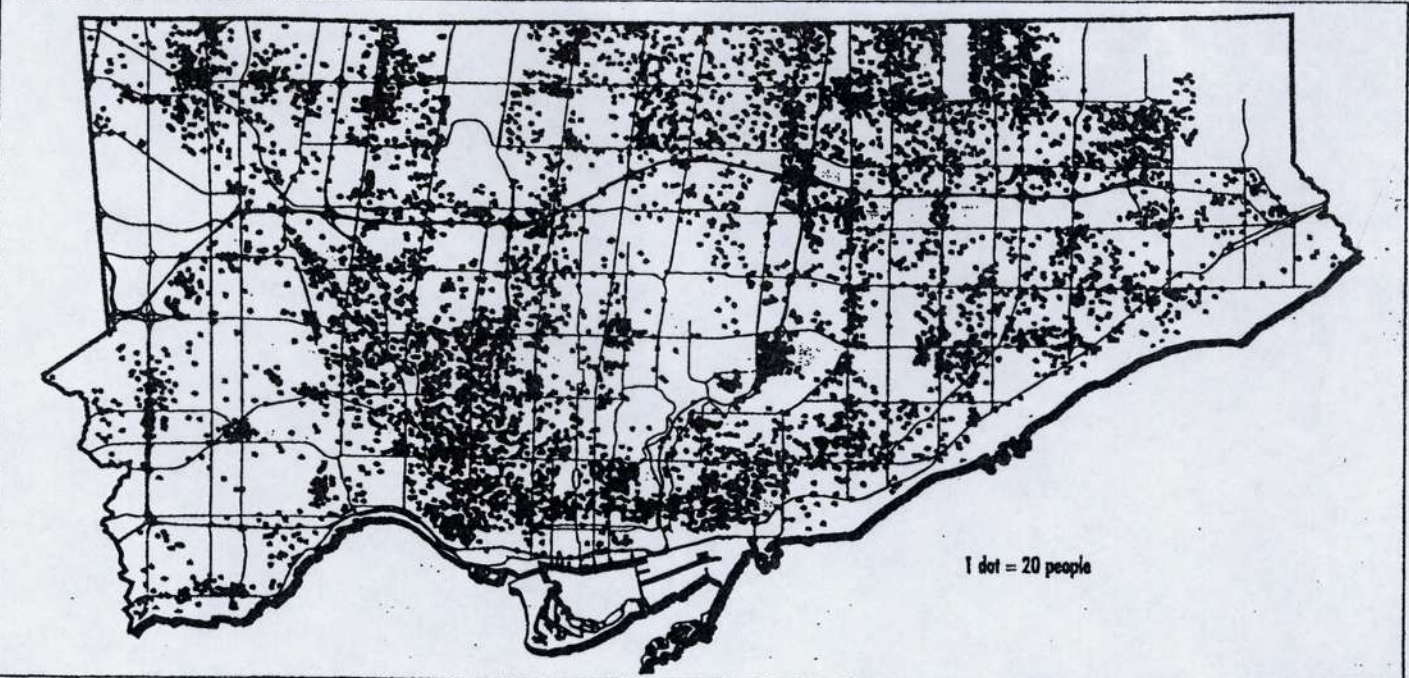
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population

CHART 7: TORONTO'S IMMIGRANTS BY COMMUNITY COUNCIL DISTRICTS AS PROPORTION OF POPULATION



Recent immigrants are spread across the City

MAP 2: SETTLEMENT PATTERN — RECENT IMMIGRANTS TO TORONTO (1991-1996): TOTAL = 315,470



WHEELS FOR SWEETIE GIRLS. B2 / BOOZE AND LOOSE? EME, D7

Metropolis

SECTION » TORONTO STAR » SUNDAY, AUGUST 10, 2003 ★ thestar.com

Three questions
for the folks at
the beer fest, B6

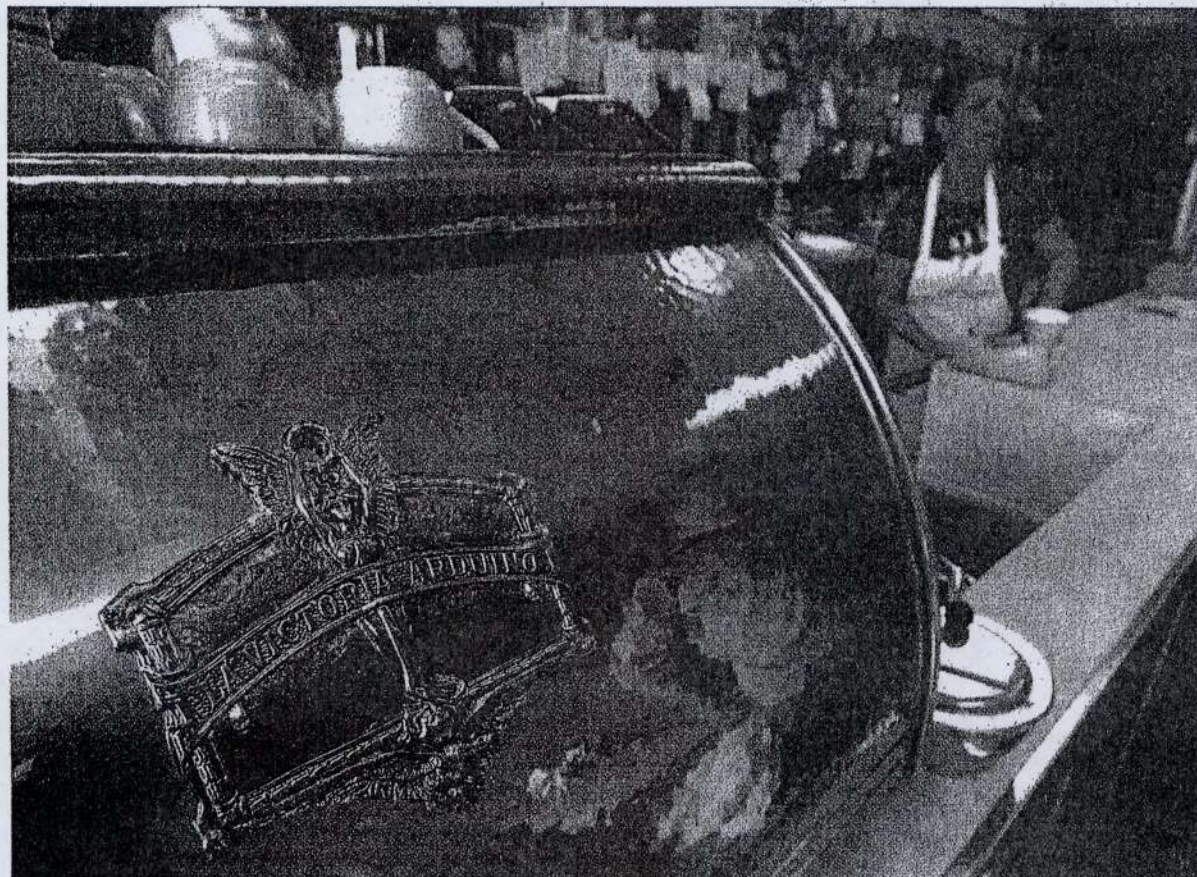


Left: Fadi Hakim, left, and Josh Dauria, two co-owners of The Chelsea Room. "Everybody wants Dundas to do well," says Hakim.

LUCAS OLENIUK/TORONTO STAR

Life, death and Dundas

The Jews and Italians before, the Portuguese owned their west-side streets
Then the children moved out and the money moved in, *by Murray Whyte*



From his spot behind the bar at The Chelsea Room, the low-key urban hotspot he and his partners opened earlier this year, Fadi Hakim can see her: Withered arms crossed tightly, frayed nightgown ruffled against her chest as she shakes her head, stares, mutters something in Portuguese and shakes her head some more. Old and frail, she makes her way downstairs most nights, her face clenched in deep concern, and fixes the bar across the street with an icy gaze that carries a chill through its broad glass panes.

"Her husband, too — he just sits there in the window all day and stares," says Hakim, 30, his unruly black mop of curls spilling over his thick, black-framed glasses. "Sometimes, I look over there and I wonder if this is really happening."

It is the one thing Hakim and his disapproving neighbours have in common. Here on Dundas West, a long-time bastion of the Portuguese community, change has come, and disbelief appears to be the standard reaction on both sides of the divide. Stretching west from Bathurst through to Ossington and beyond, decades-old Portuguese grocery stores, fish shops,

travel agencies and cafés are giving way to not only an ever-expanding Chinatown but a new, moneyed class

trickling north from Queen and south from College in search of the next urban frontier. Wedged between the weathered ethnic amenities are a small but growing number of shiny new boutiques, restaurants and bars courting exactly that clientele.

For the new guard, it's both a practical matter and a matter of personal taste. Commercial rents on both College and Queen Sts., long since purged of their immigrant identity by the influx of urbane sophisticates, are three or four times what they are on Dundas. And as gentrification peaked on those streets, it also created an atmosphere Hakim grew to disdain.

"It started getting pretty annoying down there," he says. Until recently, Hakim owned a restaurant, Citron, on Queen W. near Manning Ave., along the street's most gentrified corridor. "Too many people were coming from Rosedale or the suburbs. I had to get out."

What he found on Dundas was a new opportunity with a still small but devoted clientele. But there's friction here as well. Across the street, at Acor Restaurant, a sign festooned with a golden eagle glows dully into the night. Hakim recalls an effort to buy coffee there once. "They won't serve us," he says. "They literally ignore us. My partner went in once and the coffee was

sitting right there in front of him, but the guy just shook his head: 'No. No coffee.'"

Down the street, in a space that once housed a Portuguese soccer club, Musa, a restaurant with Moroccan-inflected nouveau cuisine, is among the leaders of the new on Dundas. Amy Fleischmann opened here two years ago, drawn not only by the rent but the ethnic richness. She considers the quandary: If the same forces that transformed Queen and College have turned to Dundas, will it suffer the same fate? "We cross our fingers that no, it won't," she says. "But that's the fear."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

For Carlos Teixeira, 45, this stretch of Dundas St. has been many things over the years. Most recently, it's been the well of his deep academic fascination with patterns of immigrant housing and migration. A professor of social geography at the University of Toronto, Teixeira's doctoral thesis is focused on this area, stretching from the ethnic cauldron of Kensington Market along College and Dundas to the west.

But most enduringly, it has been something else: Home. "This was my mother-in-law's house," Teixeira says, stopping at 4 Palmerston Blvd. The row house has a brick façade covered in red paint that's peeling in places. Inside now are apartments, but the building's power over Teixeira, a tireless package of enthusiasm, remains undiluted. "Oh, my. When I come here, I still feel it," he says quietly.

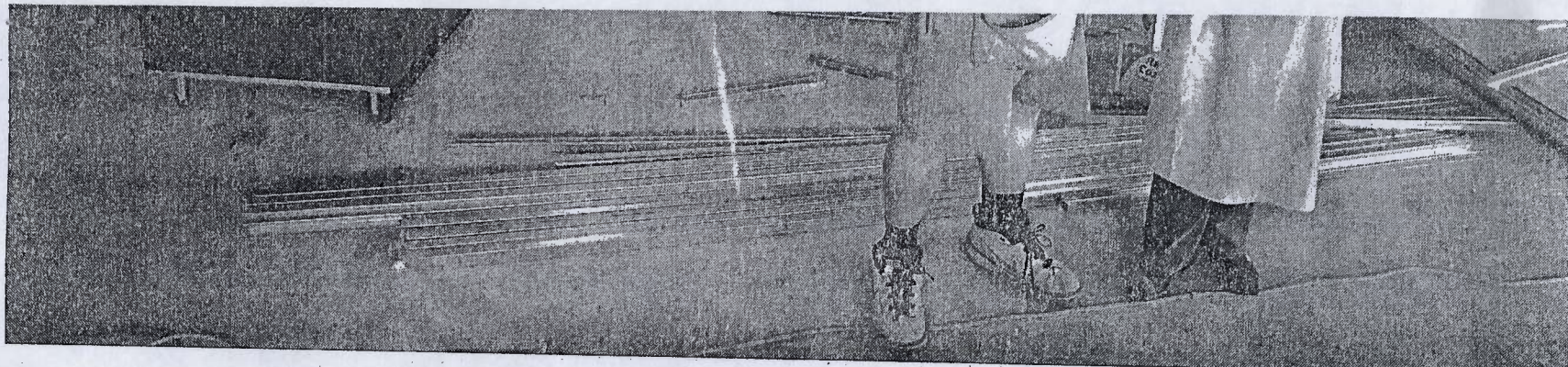
The house was sold four years ago, but Teixeira's roots in the neighbourhood run deep, as does his passion for it. He moves from place to place, reeling off personal histories: Two sisters from the Azores lived here, you should see Senhor Peireira's garden. He remembers the bakeries, the fish stores, the vibrancy of Dundas in the '70s and '80s, when the area's status — "Portugal Village," the street signs say — was unmistakable.

But like any of the Portuguese neighbourhood, which is celebrating 50 years in Canada this year, those roots are slowly being unearthed. "Between Bathurst and Ossington, you can see the changes like that," he says, snapping his fingers. "Store after store is closing its doors."

Amid the vacancies is another new presence. Storefronts festooned with Chinese characters dot Dundas at Bathurst, gradually growing sparser as the street unspools to the west. This is natural, Teixeira explains. Since the 19th century, Kensington Market and the arteries stretching west from it have been the zones in which immigrant groups have clustered.

Eastern European Jews came to the market first, eventually working their way west to Bathurst and up the immigrant corridor along Bathurst to Eglinton and Lawrence, now the heart of Toronto's Jewish community.

► Please see Portugal, B2



The Old meets The New: Ken and Mary Connors take a break at the future home of the new Caffe Brasiliano, across the street from the much smaller old location. On a strip where gentrification looms, Brasiliano is something of a saviour, both of the street's original character and its life in general.

STEVE RUSSELL/TORONTO STAR

'This is their paradise'

► Portugal From B1

Next, in the early part of the 20th century, the Jews were supplanted by the Italians, who spread west along College, then up their own immigrant corridor into the northern suburb of Woodbridge. As the Italians migrated outward, the Portuguese, who first arrived in Canada in 1953, grew to replace them in the '60s and '70s, working westward along Dundas to lay claim to the area as far as Ossington and beyond. The Chinese, spilling from an ever-swelling Chinatown, are now walking the same path.

The process is called invasion/secession, Teixeira says, and is nowhere near as threatening as the term sounds. "Ethnic communities go through a life cycle. They're born, they grow and then they dilute and disperse," he explains. Along Dundas, though, that age-old churn has slammed into another, perhaps more powerful force: gentrification.

Off Dundas, with its Chelsea Room, Musa, and boutiques such as Speed Scoot, a scooter shop, and Georgie Boleworth, a high-priced fashion boutique, the story of change is best told in housing prices. Since the last boom, which deflated in 1990, both house prices and the buyers themselves have undergone a dramatic shift.

"Since 1995, 1996, the prices have surpassed by far any of the prices of the last boom," says Lino Perreira, a real estate agent who has worked in the neighbourhood for decades. "Before, it was mostly Chinese buying. Now it's the Canadians — the white Anglo-Saxons, professional people, doctors, lawyers, movie people, people in the arts. The good properties, that's who's buying them, and they are willing to pay a lot."

Teixeira's mother-in-law bought her house, a large, brick Victorian, for \$19,900 in 1969. Now, near Dundas, on such streets as Palmerston, Euclid and Manning and west to Beaconsfield, they rarely sell for less than \$300,000; prices between \$400,000 and \$500,000 are common. One house, a squat, weathered brick box on Palmerston, exemplifies the process. After it sold recently for almost \$400,000, its new owners gutted it immediately and began rebuilding inside its hollow brick shell.

This phenomenon, Teixeira says, is already transforming Toronto's core, from its storied cosmopolitanism to one of blandly chic homogeneity. "Toronto's immigrant reception area used to be here, but no longer, because immigrants can't afford to live in central Toronto anymore," he says.

Walking along Robinson St., a thickly treed enclave of row houses that parallels Dundas to the south, Teixeira spies an old acquaintance from his time on Palmerston: Manuel Soares, his face creased with age, waves Teixeira over from his front porch, where he sits with his wife. The men exchange animated greetings, speaking quickly in Portuguese, and Teixeira is ushered through the front door.

The immaculately kept living room and dining room are filled with statues of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. The walls are lined with photos of children and grandchildren long since moved to the suburbs. Outside, the tiny backyard is thick with the broad leaves of Soares' personal tobacco crop. The plants grow in perfect rows, drooping at the top under the weight of the

leaves, which measure at least 20 centimetres across. Some hang on a line above, drying in the sun. On a small patch of concrete, Soares, 65, reaches into a bag of dried tobacco and, using a contraption that inserts the richly scented substance into a waiting paper tube, builds himself a cigarette.

"This," says Teixeira, looking to his friend warmly, "is their paradise. They will never leave here."

Like many Portuguese of his generation, Soares is too attached to the area to ever consider moving along the immigrant corridor that, in the last 10 years, has taken his neighbours, in increasing numbers, westward to Mississauga. "In Mississauga, you need a car to go to the store, you need a car to go to church. No," he says, shrugging. "This," he says, gesturing to his yard, his home, "means everything to me. I will never leave."

Soares is typical of his generation of Portuguese, for whom home ownership was sacrificed above all, often at the expense of education. But his children have left the area, and the first generation is dwindling with age, a fact born out in the empty storefronts that dot Dundas St. where once-thriving Portuguese shops once stood.

It's a common pattern, Teixeira says: First-generation immigrants arrive in a central area and, over the course of a generation or two, move beyond it in an effort to dissociate from their humble roots. "For them, the ultimate graduation is to a big house in the suburbs. It is there that they find the ultimate sign: 'Hey, you succeeded.'"

Since 1981, the process has been swift. According to Statistics Canada, in the Little Portugal area from Bathurst to Dovercourt along Dundas, the number of native Portuguese speakers has been more than cut in half, from 5,290 in 1981 to 2,630 in 2001. In the past two years, immigration from Portugal has all but stopped and the suburban exodus has quickened. "The number of houses being sold by the Portuguese is amazing," Teixeira says.

Now, with the new, more moneyed arrivals, another factor is at play. "The

'The children of these immigrants could no longer afford to live here'

Carlos Teixeira, geography professor

children of these Portuguese immigrants could no longer afford to live here, even if they wanted to," Teixeira says. "In the next 20 years, Little Portugal will no longer be Little Portugal. Let's be realistic: Little Portugal will decrease considerably in terms of numbers of Portuguese and their businesses. All we'll see are vestiges of the Portuguese community, not a Portuguese community itself."

Soares is stoic about his fading community. "I'll miss the Portuguese here, but what can I do?" he says.

What seems poised to take its place, however, leaves Mr. and Mrs. Soares with mixed feelings. Next door is a Chinese family, a house three generations deep, filled with children. The Soares' trade produce with them across the waist-high fence, break the language barrier with a gift, a smile.

"It's normal," Soares says of the new arrivals. "When we came, we took over from the Italians. They're just like us."

But on the other side looms a privacy

fence — the hallmark of another kind of newcomer. "It means they don't accept us as neighbours," says Mrs. Soares solemnly. "I was offended. My friends thought it was because there was tension between us."

Truth to tell, that tension exists. Back on Dundas St., Teixeira goes over a checklist: A Decadóra, a jewellery store, De Sousa Winery, House of Azores cultural centre — "These are the survivors," he says. But even they won't be able to hold out forever. "This is sandwiched between two highly gentrified streets. So the pressures will come," he says. "These people need their Starbucks and Second Cups, their chic stores. Soon, they will have them."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Ken Connors knows the word for them. After all, he's one himself. "I was the last cake on the street," says Connors, the affable, lively owner of Caffe Brasiliano, a Dundas St. institution since 1966. He glances downward, lets go an embarrassed chuckle and explains. "In the last few years, I've seen a lot of munchie cakes moving in — you know, upper-yuppies, the Canadians, that's what we call them. Anyway, they're the ones coming now."

It's a twist on the original expression — mangiacakes, the cake eaters, a reference to the Canadian-born privileged class adopted by the Italian and Portuguese immigrant communities here in the core — and it means no offence. But now, as Dundas St. transforms, it is telling nonetheless. Next door, at A Trainera, middle-aged Portuguese men cluster out front, smoking and talking. The blinds are drawn and the smoke wafts out on the street. The message, as is the case with many of the so-called social clubs along this strip, is clear: Not everyone welcome.

But at Brasiliano, it's the opposite. "This place is like the U.N.," says Al Gertler, a local jazz musician who has lived in the area for seven years. "Ken and Mary (his wife) treat everybody exactly the same way. The difference they make to the quality of life in the neighbourhood is incalculable."

When they met, Ken was one of them — an Irishman, a cake, the only one in the neighbourhood — and Mary was Portuguese. Together, they made Brasiliano into an institution remarkable in the area for its diversity. Now, perhaps because of that, it's remarkable for another reason: its ongoing success. From its opening hour at 5:30 a.m. through to its early-evening close, Brasiliano is a hive of multiculturalism. Local Portuguese mingle with cab drivers of all ethnicities, for whom the spot is a favourite refuge. The cakes are drawn by the coffee — the best on the city, most in Brasiliano will attest — that is used in several trendy restaurants along the strips of College and Queen.

Brasiliano is more than a survivor. Its inclusiveness has allowed it to become part of the newly woven fabric of the street without sacrificing the past. Later this year, the café — a tiny, over-wide hallway, really, with a bar up front and a take-out food stand in the back — will move across the street to a space almost four times its size. On a strip where gentrification looms, Brasiliano is something of a saviour, both of the street's original character and its life in general.

Business on Dundas has been suffering since 1990, when the CIBC

branch at Dundas and Euclid pulled out. Krupi's, a much-loved Portuguese bakery, died soon after. Businesses closed, second-generation Portuguese began to leave and the slide began. "Dundas has really been, how can I put it, in nowhereland," Ken says. "I don't know why, but this part of Dundas has never really taken off."

For that reason, some of the new businesses are not feared, but welcomed. "It's been fantastic, actually," says Jason Girard at Speed Scoot. "There are so many people saying that this stretch of Dundas has been dying. Since we've been open, a lot of people have come in and said 'Thank you for opening a real store.'"

Over the past 10 years, so many of those real stores have gone. "Over there was a butcher, that used to be a clothing store," recalls Manny Alves, 32, pointing out empty storefronts across the street from Brasiliano, where he sat talking with neighbourhood friends on a recent afternoon. "But it's turning over now, and that's good. It's been dead here for too long."

Victor Da Silva, 42, shrugs. "Yeah, but 15, 20 years ago, the people that lived here supported the community," he says. "Now, it's about the money, and who has it. That's all."

Alves just shakes his head. "Change is good," he says, "but a lot of people can't accept change if it's too fast."

Change along Dundas has very much been incremental. And for the new guard now installed there, that's exactly how they want it. "The whole idea is to be part of it, not replace it," says Hakim. "You need a little bit of grit. That's what makes it interesting."

Fleischmann agrees. "Nobody wants another College St. Just the smells there — so much cologne, I can't stand it," she says. "I want the things that make the neighbourhood to stay. I want there to be fish stores and grocery stores. Culturally, I love it."

The process, however, is not selective. "Queen will soon be saturated. College is already. So what will happen here?" Teixeira says. "I think it will be a tragedy. Toronto will lose what makes it unique in North America, its ethnic character. Growth is necessary, but we cannot forget our past."

Hakim doesn't think the threat is so dire. Last weekend, thousands made the trip in from the suburbs for the Senhor Da Pedra festival, an annual celebration in Trinity-Bellwoods Park that spills over into the street, recalling, if only for a couple of days, the neighbourhood that was. "The Portuguese influence is heavy. It's not like they're just going to pack up and go away," he says. From inside The Chelsea Room, he points out a couple of storefronts across the street, one abandoned, the other inhabited by a Chinese family, which is using it as their home, the drapes pulled tight. "We're thinking of opening another bar there, or maybe there."

A couple of doors down, next to Ferreira Photography, where sun-faded portraits of Portuguese families are propped in the window, another bar is under construction. Cocktail Molotov, whose proprietors own Ted's Collision, a bar on College St.

Hakim considers the situation. "Everybody wants Dundas to do well — not necessarily gentrify, but succeed," he says. He pauses, glancing expectantly toward the doorway across the street. It is dark and still. "It'll happen," he shrugs. "It'll happen."